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Dear Swamis, Monastics of the Ramakrishna Order, Disciples, Devotees, and Associates of Swami Aseshanandaji,

I'm writing to ask your participation in a project to gather reminiscences about Swami Aseshanandaji, the last living disciple of Sri Sarada Devi. The purpose of this project is to preserve the memories, experiences, observations, teachings, stories, etc. of those who were blessed to know him so that others may benefit in the years to come. The intent is preservation with the possibility of publication in some form. Each individual's reminiscence will be released only with his/her permission.

This opportunity to serve also has personal significance as I'd like to learn more about Swami Aseshanandaji. Initiated in my youth during the turbulent 1970s, I spent much of the ensuing years either in foreign countries or engaged in various pursuits. Finally it became clear that I should redirect my focus, and this project suggested itself. Our family recently moved to Portland to be connected with the Vedanta Center.

Because Swami Aseshanandaji always admonished me to complete my higher educational degrees, I received preparation for this current project. Working as an ethnomusicologist, I interviewed many musicians and composers in Britain, the US, and Middle East for research and publication projects.

The way to contribute to the project is quite simple. Your reminiscences could be written or, if preferred, spoken into a tape cassette, which can be conveniently turned on when something comes to mind. Once the cassette is mailed to me, I will then transcribe it. I will return a written copy of your reminiscences should you wish to review or revise anything. Your original ideas will be far better than my suggestions, but if you need some ideas to get started, you might look at the questionnaire below.

If you prefer a live interview I'd be happy to meet with you if possible. Or we could do a phone interview with the microphone on my end capturing our discussion.

Anonymous contributions are also welcome. You may submit materials to me and only I will know the source. It will be published anonymously. Alternately, you may mail something to me anonymously, but I suggest you use a friend's address so I can acknowledge receipt.

If you have videos, newspaper articles, or photos please feel free to send them to me by ordinary mail or scanned email. Anything sent by ordinary mail will be copied and returned promptly. I may also be able to make you a CD or DVD of anything submitted to preserve them for your own collection.

The project has been launched with the first interview of Swami's oldest disciple in Portland. As of December 2008, about fifty reminiscences have been collected, including contributions from several monastics. I'm hoping to wrap up the project in April of 2009 and would appreciate knowing whether I should await your contribution.

Whether you have known Swami Aseshanandaji for decades or just a short time, the information you provide will help us gain a fuller picture of his role and mission within the Ramakrishna Order.

Your questions, comments, and suggestions are welcomed. Please feel free to forward this to anyone who could contribute. Thank you so much!

Sincerely,
Esther Warkov

Swami Aseshananda Questionnaire

1. How did you first meet Swami Aseshananda? Was there anything memorable about the occasion or your first impression?
2. How did your relationship with Swami Aseshananda evolve?
3. How did Swami Aseshananda mold and impact your life?
4. Over time, did you come to certain conclusions about Swami Aseshananda?
5. What were some of the essential teachings of Swami Aseshananda?
6. What were some of his memorable sayings?
7. Are there any personal stories you'd care to share?
8. How would you characterize Swami's pujas, worships, lectures, etc?