

Pravrajika Sevaprana, a disciple of Swami Prabhavananda, lived in Holy Mother's House, Portland, for a year before entering the San Francisco convent in 1976 and received brahmacharya vows from Swami Aseshananda. She lived and worked in the Ramakrishna Mission Sevashram in Varanasi, India.

Excerpted from a letter of April 2007, sent from Varanasi, India.

Please accept my greetings and best wishes on the Swami Aseshananda project. Those of us who were blessed to know Swami Aseshananda Maharaj will never forget what love and light he brought into our lives. Really, we were so lucky to have had his blessings, were we not?

I first met Swami Aseshananda in 1972 at the opening of the Women's Retreat House of the Vedanta Society of Northern California in their Olema Retreat. There were thirteen swamis present. I had only been in Vedanta for two years but had met my diksha guru, Swami Prabhavananda, who was a disciple of Swami Brahmanandaji. When I first saw Swami Prabhavananda, tears came to my eyes and I knew that this was what I had been searching for. My whole life changed. It was as though I had come home. I saw him as full of Light and I never thought I would feel anything like that again with anyone.

Yet when I first met Swami Aseshanandaji, I again felt a wonderful attraction and a power coming from him. Later I understood that the guru shakti comes through different forms but it is the same power of God, and that one may have upa [secondary] gurus as well as be blessed by them.

Anyway, through various circumstances, I ended up living in Holy Mother's House in Portland under the guidance of Swami Aseshanandaji for one year before I joined the San Francisco convent in 1976.

I remember that when I first moved to Portland, Swami Aseshananda took me aside into a room alone and quoted a Vivekachundamani verse of Sankara to me. The translation is: "Fear not, there is a way to cross the realm of relative existence. I will show you that way." And his words had power in them! Then Swami fed me with his own hands like a mother. I received so much from him and in the end also received my brahmacharya vows from him.

To me, Swami was the embodiment of Holy Mother Herself. I remember that whenever I asked him a serious question, he would go into the shrine and after sometime he would return and say, "Mother says" Whatever it was, you knew Mother really did say it. She was a living presence there.

The Swami was full of blessings, and an energy, shakti-power, emanated from him. Even when he scolded, one felt somehow attracted to him by that love.

Even after I joined the convent in San Francisco, I always felt a loving support coming from Swami. Once, after he gave vows in San Francisco to the nuns, I was serving him and helping him to give interviews at our old temple. I had to call him from his room and I found him lying on his bed holding the pictures of Thakur and Ma to his heart. I will never forget that sight! He was just like a child.

When I lived in Portland, I remember I once felt very tired and decided I would not go to the center that evening for vespers. Soon the phone rang and it was the swami. He said, "You come here." When I went he met me and said so sweetly, "You see, when you come here I can look into your mind and help you." What grace we had!

As you know, Swami was very fond of Sankara and never tired of quoting him. He also was always feeding us with prasad, just like a mother.

I want to thank you for this opportunity for me to take a little time just to remember. We were blessed to sit at the feet of this great soul. May the Mother bless you always and ever, and through this project.

I remain always at the feet of Sri Ramakrishna and Holy Mother.

With love and best wishes,

Pravrajika Sevaprana

P.S. I just remembered one other among many such incidents. Towards the end of Swami Aseshanandaji's life, he had cataracts and became really blind. Once when I was visiting there we were all trying to have the simple surgery done. They would have even come to the center, I think, to do it. It would have been just a couple of hours to complete the surgery. Swami Aseshanandaji did not want it. His final statement (and the way he said it) indicated that the conversation was over. He declared: "*I have seen enough!*" Of course he was close to one hundred then and, indeed, I'm sure he *had* seen enough!

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