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Written submission.

Among the many Indian swamis I've known over a period of many years, Swami Areshananda was singular in that he often communicated a distinct impression that the spirit of Sri Sarada Devi, the Holy Mother, whose disciple he was, animated his conduct. Now and again I would have occasion to attend a devotional service at the Portland center, and whenever I did I would be struck by the swami's motherly solicitude in connection with the distribution of the sacramental food (prasada): he personally saw to it that the devotees in attendance were properly served and served many of them himself, even to the point of going around with extra food, to offer them second helpings. Only after everyone had been well served did he himself have something to eat.

I have attended many a devotional service at other Vedanta centers and much more often than not the swami in charge had no hand in the distribution of the food; it was usually the case that he was served first.

Submitted Autumn 2008

Blessed and Beloved,

Here, following, is a verbal snapshot of Swami Areshananda (1899-1996), formerly in charge of the Vedanta Society of Portland—a holy man who was one of the more influential of my role models in days of yore. The longest lived of the Holy Mother's monastic disciples, he was deeply imbued with her spirit, and was in and of himself an affirmation of the validity and the innate worth of the quest for the holy grail: spiritual enlightenment, universal love. An acquaintance of mine, spiritually attuned, level-headed, met him for the first time years ago. Shortly thereafter, when I asked him how he found the swami, he solemnly exclaimed, and a note of awe in the tone his voice came through loud and clear: "He is full of God!"

Full of God I myself found him to be whenever I met him, as not infrequently I did over a period of years. At Christmas it was his wont to pay homage to the nativity of the Son of God, an awesome, mighty king even as an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes. Throughout the whole of the Christmas season, the Christmas spirit—a commemorative spirit, of peace, of love, of joy—was vibrantly alive in the swami's person; ever and anon, it was brightly and warmly aglow.

Submitted December 2008