

**Doug Meddaugh** and his wife Priscilla Meddaugh, disciples of Swami Aseshananda, began their long association with the Portland Center in 1971. Priscilla served as a Sunday school teacher there for over 20 years.

*Written submission.*

Priscilla and I were first introduced to Swami Aseshananda in the summer of 1971. We had married a few short months earlier and learned of Swami and the Vedanta center from our elderly friend and landlady, Mary Silk. She spoke glowingly of Swami, and we were intrigued to learn something of this alternative to the Catholicism and Protestantism that we had grown up with and that felt too parochial for our spirits.

Mary accompanied us the first time, introducing us to Swami. We were both so very impressed and inspired by this wise and spiritual soul that we immediately recognized that we had found something special in Vedanta and someone special in Swami. Although it was a few years before we became members and a few more before we took initiation, we felt blessed to have established a relationship with Swami so early in our marriage. Our three children received the blessings of Sri Ramakrishna and Holy Mother through Swami from the time each pregnancy was confirmed, and so we have always felt the strong presence of his spirit and his personal interest in the life of our whole family.

Sometime in our early years in Vedanta, Swami asked Priscilla and two other young mothers to begin a Sunday school class for the children who came to the center. Priscilla continued in that capacity for over twenty years, until our youngest child passed through grade school.

Several characteristics stand out for me when I think back on Swami. He was very intellectual. He had a vast knowledge of both Hindu and Western thought and teachings. He frequently quoted great Western minds such as Einstein, Descartes, Aristotle and many others. He understood and referred to advanced scientific theories that helped illustrate the confluence of ancient Hindu teachings and modern scientific ideas.

Swami showed great love and kindness to our young family, as he did so often to all the devotees. He was famous for giving a good scolding to devotees at times, but that aspect paled in comparison to his extreme compassion.

Swami was a great orator. He never spoke from notes—ever. His lectures were always very dynamic and impressive. Depending on what point he was making, his voice could soften gently and poetically, and then quickly rise with thunderous power.

Swami was a spiritual giant. People could readily sense that they were in the presence of someone who was spiritually very deep and powerful, and who was totally immersed in his beliefs. Even when his sight and hearing were failing him in his nineties, and his body was weakened to the point of requiring assistance for walking, he continued to

come down to the sanctuary each Sunday to speak, until his body finally could no longer make the trip. He was a true inspiration to so many, up to the very end, placing his life “in Mother’s hands,” and offering Mother’s blessings to the many devotees who would come to his bed to pay their respects.

Swami was a tremendous influence on so many people over the years. His influence is still obvious when devotees reminisce about him. Swami lives on, powerfully, in the hearts and lives of many of us who knew him. I will be forever grateful to have come in contact with him so early in my adult life and to have had a chance to be in his presence for so many years. May his spirit forever rest in peace in the loving arms of Holy Mother.

*Submitted July 2008*