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Written submission.

I knew he was *The Man* at our first contact: Swami gave me a pretty intense scolding. It was an amazing experience to have felt “seen” but not shamed or humiliated. We also had an argument about money. I wanted to give Swami a donation but he blasted me because he didn’t want money or gifts of any kind. Looking at the condition of his moth-eaten sweater and unruly haircut, I already knew he wasn’t interested in a pressed chudder.

“Well then,” I said, “I’ll give it to Mr. Bush, Swami. You have to have money to run the center.”

“All right, all right,” he said. So I gave the money to Mr. Bush [a non-monastic resident who served Swami and the center].

I was mightily impressed! The swami was absolutely not interested in creature comfort and definitely not invested in being served like royalty. In fact, he regularly mowed the lawn and waited on the devotees himself. Swami insisted on feeding me every time I showed up in Portland. He served the devotees at every function and was as much a Mother as his own Divine Guru.

I came to Portland about twice a year for many years. I was never afraid to speak my mind to him, and, though he always managed to scold me—I had a very different experience than what I had experienced in my Catholic convent background. I always felt completely free to be myself and felt supported by Swami. For example, it was Swami Asheshananda who gave me instruction on becoming a therapist, even though he carried the Indian party line on psychotherapy. He had told me how I should *not* go back to graduate school, and then mid-sentence, reversed it, looked at me and said quietly, “You *MUST* do this work!” I think he knew it would be an unfolding of my particular karma, and it surely has been.

I have never lost my respect for my guru, Swami Asehananda, because he always held appropriate boundaries. Swami was adamant about not allowing *any* pious attention and personal adulation. He did not court personal favorites. I can feel the presence of my guru today—perhaps more than ever—in a most subtle but vibrant way. He has been the perfect guru for me.

Submitted February 2007