

Tributes to Jacquelyn “Vijaya” Wilcoxon

From Swami Sarvadevananda:

Vijaya was a very dear devotee. I was able to meet her when I last visited Portland, and I also talked with her over phone a few days before she left the body. Now she is surely in supreme peace and joy with Sri Ramakrishna and Holy Mother.

We really will miss her. She was such a wonderful devotee.

She was so thankful for everything she received from the Vedanta Society and the blessings of the sadhus, specially of Rev. Swami Swahanandaji, her guru. During her last days she used to live always in the thought of the sadhus. She would leaf through the photo albums full of pictures of our swamis. Sri Ramakrishna and Holy Mother were just before her eyes, and she spent most of her time with them.

From Swami Ishtananda:

Om Namō Bhagavate Rāmakrishnāya

With a very heavy heart we are bidding farewell to our dear Vijaya.

When the news of her receiving Hospice Care came, we were already warned for this day. But, nevertheless, our hearts filled with deep sadness after learning that she has moved on to Sri Ra-

makrishna Loka. But again, I wonder, should we be looking sad at her final departure most appropriate way for a wonderful devotee of Sri Ramakrishna—Ma Sarada, that she was?

To my mind her picture comes always with a broad and genuine smile on her face. When I met her at her assisted living facility in Portland, Oregon on July 7, 2019 she had that same “Vijaya” smile and she looked happy. She did not complain about her situation or anything. Within her limited space and physical restrictions she seemed to be enjoying her private time with the Holy Presence in her shrine.

From the very beginning of her arrival at San Diego, maybe in 2001, she became firmly connected with our monastery in all possible ways. I am glad to remember that I had some role to play in her getting a permanent job with health insurance and also getting initiation there. She maintained that friendly relationship with me till her last. After her retirement from her job she spoke to me about the possibility of her moving to Florida. Her great bonds with Subrata and Madhuri in connection with many years of enthusiastic participation in the San Diego choir was one of the reasons, she told me. She could continue to sing as before, alongside them, at St. Petersburg center. But she eventually opted for Portland as her retirement home due to other reasons. However, she continued to call me over phone from time to time, and she subscribed to our weekly email blog-posts, of which she was a regular reader. Whenever I had a visit to the Portland center, she made

it a point to meet and talk to me as many times as would be possible.

It was different situation when I was visiting Portland center in connection with their July 4th annual program in 2019. She was wheel chair bound and living in an assisted living facility. It was impossible for her to come and meet me at the Vedanta Society. Sri Ramakrishna–Sarada Devi solved the problem. Jane and Terry Hohner are two wonderful devotees and long time pillars of the Portland center. Moreover, Jane had been continuously visiting Vijaya on daily basis to help her in all possible ways. She offered to arrange for my visiting Vijaya at her place after the Sunday service on July 7th, 2019. Vijaya was beside herself in joy to see us. We had a nice long chat that afternoon. I was happy to see her cheerful and doing well.

It would be a cliché but still let me repeat that everyone has to die one day. In her life and death Vijaya shall remain an inspiration to all devotees. Her strong faith in Sri Ramakrishna–Holy Mother Sarada–her Guru, living cheerfully maintaining a strong bond with her spiritual organisation (Sangha), and an attitude of total surrender to God filled her entire life overflowing with joy. Sri Ramakrishna also took good care of His dear devotee, it appears. So, instead of becoming sad let us celebrate her life.

Glory be to Sri Ramakrishna! Glory be to Sri Sarada Devi!

From Swami Harinamananda:

I can tell you is she was a very serious, sincere spiritual aspirant, always smiling and cheerful. She would take coming to the temple very seriously and loved to associate with all sadhus and devotees.

She was a gifted singer and loved to hear from her beloved Guru, Swami Swahanandaji. Whenever his name was mentioned, she would light up.

When I first came to San Diego as the resident monk, she warmly greeted me and was so enthusiastic and supportive about the programs that we did.

We do miss her and feel she is now with her Guru.

Jai Ma

From: Jayanti (Pamela Howe) in San Diego:

What I would add is a personal remembrance. When I had to take over my mom's care during the last stages of dementia, Vijaya's experience working with seniors was both a help and major comfort. She often prepared me for what to expect, including Mom's rapid decline when we were forced to remove her from the carehome she had gotten used to. Without Vijaya's guidance, life would have been much more difficult.

From Abhay (Phil Galloway):

I'm very sorry to hear of the passing of our beloved Vijaya. She was a wonderful Sister to me

when she was living in San Diego. She had tremendous Guru-bhakti for our mutually-beloved Revered Swami Swahanandaji Maharaj, and she and I could talk about him for hours.

Vijaya took her sadhana very seriously. She never missed a Sunday talk or a big puja, and was there for most classes if she didn't have a work conflict. She was also generally a part of our "karma yoga" days when we would get the monastery spic and span for big pujas or other important gatherings. She was sincere and loving, and was also a very good person with newcomers when they would be attending their very first talk or class in San Diego.

She was also a wonderful singer and an integral part of the musical component at the San Diego Vedanta Monastery. During Swami Ishtanandaji's time as the Assistant Minister in charge of San Diego, he very much supported music as a part of the San Diego Sunday services. This was also during a time when our music director, Subrata (Jay T aylor), was on a creative streak and seemed to be writing at least one new devotional song every month. Vijaya was always front and center learning them during our Sunday Vedanta sing-alongs, and then later when they would be incorporated into the regular song book and sung after spiritual talks, she would always be a steady anchor for the other devotees to sing with. She was also a part of Swami Atmavidyanandaji's Vedanta Choir, which included many of our best singers throughout the Vedanta Society of Southern California, and I know that she loved singing with them very much. I can still recall the joyous smile on her face as she

sang “Keep The Name Spinning Round In Your Head” during one Choir performance at a church in San Diego. One other memory is that sometimes Vijaya would sing a lone acapella song after the morning puja before the Sunday spiritual talk. To sit quietly in the shrine while she sang in her clear and loving voice was all the proof one would need that she had taken her sadhana very seriously indeed.

One other memory is that for about a year during the 2000’s, Swami Atmarupanandaji gave a monthly half-day retreat at our Piñon Hills center (about 140 miles away from San Diego) and many times Vijaya would ride up with me to the retreats. The two-plus hour drive each way would breeze by as we talked about our guru, sharing stories and insights about him. We both shared a sincere loving devotion to our Guruji, and I truly think that had the drive been 5+ hours each way, the trip would have gone by every bit as fast.

Vijaya was a wonderful Sister and a very sincere devotee to Thakur and Mother. While I will miss her very much, I know that she oriented her life correctly towards sadhana. When in her sixties she finally met her Guruji, she took her spiritual practice very seriously and dove as deep as she could, following his teachings and advice with diligence and sincerity. I have no doubt that Mother was waiting for her on the other side.

Hari Om Ramakrishna! Jai Thakur! Jai Ma! Jai Swamiji!