



The Mt. Tron Mail

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Mt. Tron University of Peace Foundation

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Help orphans in India!



Swami Paramananda together with Harald Harnang and Hanne Giæver, Lyngseidet, Troms, 1995. Photo: Hans Petter Giæver.



Orphans at Paramananda Mission, Banagram, West-Bengal, India. The photos are from January 1995. Since then a large kitchen cum dininghall has been built for the children. Photos: BP.

New sponsorship organisation in Norway

On the 10th of October this year, in Narvik in Nordland, an organisation was formed for those interested in "supporting with economical aid and other forms of practical support the work Paramananda Mission is doing for orphans in India", as the trust's objects clause states. The name of the organisation is *Støtteforeningen for Paramananda Mission's barnehjem i India* ('The Organisation of Support for the Paramananda Mission's Orphanage in India', shortened SPM). The initiative to form the organisation was taken by the married couple Hanne Giæver and Harald Harnang in Narvik, who are also the founders. They are both friends of Swami Paramananda who established Paramananda Mission in India. The purpose of the organisation is to organise a solid and secure way of support for a growing number of orphans at the Paramananda Mission in India.

Unique possibility

The readers of the Mt. Tron Mail hereby get a unique possibility to - in the spirit of the coming University of Peace - help needy children in their right environment, and at the same time to have the satisfaction of a relatively close contact with their children of support, which the surveyable environment in a small organisation creates. All organisational work is based on voluntary effort. And with a registered resolution (§6 in the foundation document) that the organisation's working expences will not exceed 5% of the turnover, there is no danger that the collected money will disappear in administration. There will also be published a quarterly newsletter for all SPM-members. On the next page we will give a short presentation of the Paramananda Mission and its work.

Paramananda Mission in India

Swami Paramananda and the beginning

Paramananda Mission was founded in October 1978 on the outskirts of the small, poor village of Banagram, far out in the countryside of Bengal, by a nearly 24-year-old young man with unusual experiences of life. Swami Paramananda is a most extraordinary man who started his welfare organisation from a tiny clay hut, solely with the help of a handful young dedicated apprentices and friends, who only owned what they wore. An all-encompassing love for the human being together with an unshakeable will to help, was the working force. In eleven years prior to this he had been wandering alone all over the breadth and width of India, without money or support, and learned to know his country and people. Especially the miserability of the poor, with the ruthless exploitation of the weak, made a strong impression. And often pestered by others, and with days in a stretch without food or shelter, he had no difficulty in identifying himself with the poor, destitute and helpless children and orphans who grow up in the street of India, without love, care, proper food or education. His feeling of pain and compassion gave him a rare spiritual experience, and by the end of his long and lonely journey, he decided to return to his native land of Bengal to serve his needy fellow human beings.

Paramananda Mission to-day

What Swami Paramananda has achieved since the start in 1978 is fantastic and impressive. After 21 years of untiring efforts the Paramananda Mission is to-day a well established spiritual and welfare organisation which is engaged in various welfare activities, and which has more than twenty centres spread all over West Bengal. Some are found also at other parts of India. Common for all of them is that they lie on the outskirts of small, poor villages in districts with neglected and suppressed population. As mentioned before the main centre lies by the village of Banagram in Burdwan district, in idyllic and peaceful surroundings with a wide horizon and green agricultural fields on all sides. It is a widespread complex covering a total area of 20 acres and housing around 400 members, including children, teachers, kitchen personnel, gardeners and co-workers of various kinds. The financial responsibility for Paramananda Mission is borne mainly by friends and followers of Swami Paramananda. They all contribute spontaneously and consider it a great opportunity to be able to support a noble cause. Still, the organisation has as its goal to become self-sufficient in time through small-scale industry which produce handmade articles of various kinds, and this has already started. The main centre at Banagram also has enough cultivated land to be self-sufficient with food both for inmates and for visitors.

Welfare activities

Paramananda Mission offers help and services in mainly three different areas: 1) **Orphanage**, i.e., home and school for orphans; 2) **Medical treatment**, i.e., free diagnosis, medication and treatment within homeopathy, pathology, ayurvedic medicine, acupuncture, acupressure, yoga therapy and other forms of natural treatment for physical and mental illnesses, and 3) **Spiritual guidance**, for those who are truth seekers and wish help and guidance. Paramananda Mission also print and publish books by Swami Paramananda, and has a large library with reading room open for all.

Daily life and lifestyle

About 350 children are to-day taken care of by the organisation. Here they get thoughtful consideration and what they need of clothes, food, education and care of various kinds. Those who

want and possess abilities, get higher education. And after finishing school or studies, the organisation helps them to establish themselves in life by finding house and work through their innumerable friends and contacts all over India. Most of the adult members are dedicated souls who - besides their own spiritual practice, and in the renunciation of family life and personal career - have wished to work voluntarily and wholeheartedly within those areas which interest them the most, with simple means under



Swami Paramananda together with village children from Banagram, in Paramananda Mission, October 1984. Photo: Asgeir Arnesson.

modest conditions, and who remain satisfied with basic necessities. They are of both sexes, come from all classes of the society, and have different religious and ideological backgrounds. No artificial book of rules has been made guide for their activities.

About 150 sick people visit the ward to get medical aid daily, while twice as many come in the weekends. Large numbers also come to listen to or to participate in the daily, open conversations with Swami Paramananda when he is present, or to get initiated in meditation or spiritual life, or only to show their respect, as is the tradition in India. All these people come from far and near, and none will leave without having at least one warm meal.

There are no temples in Paramananda Mission. They are replaced by orphanage and ward. There are also no dogmas or set of disciplinary life-rules. Here spiritual, religious and philosophical ideals are made practical. The human body is the only real temple of God, Swami Paramananda says. He says furthermore that true education is humanity based on conscience and sincerity, and that spiritual life does not deny or reject anything in life, but it rather embraces life and transformes it to perfection by art of life.

Live Paramananda!

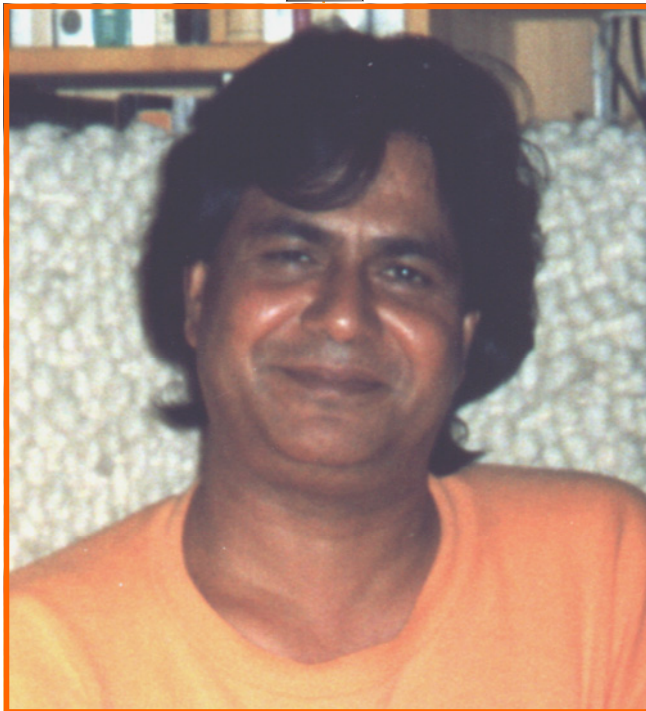
In Memory of Swami Paramananda. By Bjørn Pettersen (30.11.99)

The Mt.Tron Mail was written and completed with articles about the sponsorship organisation and the Paramananda Mission, when suddenly a most unexpected and shocking message came from India - Swami Paramananda had left his body! It happened shortly after midnight, the night to Sunday on the 28th of November, local time. A whole world of friends, followers and admirors are totally dumbfounded. Immediately it feels unreal that we no longer will be able to see and experience him through our physical senses - that we no longer will catch the infection of his wonderful smile and receive his unutterably loving eye - that we no longer will experience his great friendliness, and the enormous harmony and joy it was to be together with him in this way. It is a brutal reminder that everything physical in this world is transitory, and that it is more important to remember him in our hearts and to live out the ideals and truths he showed us.

Swami Paramananda was an unparalleled human being. To try to describe him in words seems almost hopeless. He has meant, and means, so infinitely much for an enormous amount of people - tens and tens of thousands - who all have met him and developed a personal relation with him during his short, but very intense life. To him they have been used to come with their problems, small as well as big; to reveal their innermost confessions; to seek consolation or guidance; and to get initiated into the inner mysteries of life. Or, as it were, only to experience joy and fun. Paramananda had everything and gave everything. With his spontaneous naturality, simple living, incredible friendliness, sacrificing attitude and infinite wisdom, he won our hearts. We felt that he understood us better than we understood ourselves, and therefore he got our full confidence. He never left us disappointed or deserted. When we were children we needed love, security, protection and care from our parents. After becoming adults and being able to think and decide most things ourselves, we still find that we are mentally immature and have many of the same fundamental needs, while in addition, we want the answers to all our deepest questions. For sincere truthseekers it is therefore only natural to give their confidence to a person who displays far more maturity and experience than they have themselves, if, in the first place, one is so fortunate as to meet such a full and complete human being.

I met Paramananda for the first time at the railway station of Burdwan in Bengal, a day of June in 1983, while he was on one of his regular tours in Bengal and made a change of trains with a couple of hours halt here. He made an indelible impression from the very first moment. Our eyes met as he smiled his incomparable, winning smile, while at the same time he pronounced my name in perfect Norwegian as no other Indian. Like that we sat and smiled to each other for a long while, and I felt that I had met a most heartfelt good friend and that we had always known each other. Only a couple of days earlier I came from a month's stay with a 'typical' guru in North India. He had a spectacular appearance of

which he was very conscious, and he was 'typical' in the sense that he kept a certain distance to everybody else, with himself highly elevated. He was extremely dominating and manipulating, and kept a severe discipline. To come from him directly to Paramananda was like going from night to day without twilight. The difference was almost total. At that time I was also familiar with certain Indian gurus who had come to the West and given the age-old noble tradition a bad reputation. They lived their lives like emperors with their many subjects in the greatest luxury, and with titles as 'His Holiness' and so on. Widely famous, in spite of their dislike for children and hate of poor people. But I stared into the eyes of something which, intuitively and without any doubt, felt genuine and real. All the years later have taught me that I wasn't wrong at that time.



Swami Paramananda.

This is the last photo of him in Norway, taken in Oslo in September 1998, by Knud Larsen.

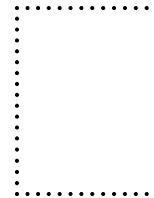
Swami Paramananda has always been kindness itself. So simple and easy, and so releasingly natural in all situations and relations. Always ready to give himself wholly and fully if anybody was in distress and needed him. He was extremely dynamic with a powerful energy which apparently seemed inexhaustible. All the highest spiritual ideals, noble religious motives and abstract philosophical thoughts, were made completely practical in his life. With his own example he showed us that these noble ideals really are living and attainable, and not only beautiful words we find in scriptures or distant qualities we are reaching out for. In spite of him having only four years of schooling and never reading books, he was an ocean of wisdom that could hold exhaustive lectures on nearly every kind of subject. He loved

children, always took the side of the weak, and was incredibly liberal and understanding at every aspect of being human. Nothing was sin or sinful. He used to say that the only sin was to think about sin. Ad he never placed himself above others. He clearly said that the highest spiritual goal is immanent in all of us and that anyone can realise it, if only the sincerity is great enough and the intensity in our yearning is strong enough. His advice and guidance were always tailored just for you, in accordance with your nature and liability, and they were always directed towards the process of liberating and not towards making you dependant on him or anything else. Once he said that 'I have sold myself on the market of life', and surely we experienced that he could never say 'no' to anyone who was in need of him. This total sacrifice was the life of Swami Paramananda in a nutshell.

Already in 1983 he told us that the life span of his body in this life would not exceed the age of 48 years. So those of us who knew him well understood that the time was nearing. Such men as Paramananda never die, they only leave their bodies - consciously. Therefore, except from the purely physical, everything is as before. Live Paramananda!

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Waiting for the municipality of Alvdal...

When we now enter the year 2000 we hope that the politicians and authorities of Alvdal wake up and initiate the planning work for the Mt.Tron area. The new city council is committed to follow earlier resolutions, and it doesn't require much of the municipality to consider plans and arrange for activity.

The Mt.Tron University of Peace Foundation is dependant on the municipality's regulation of the ground on the 'Peace Plateau' and that they arrange for our plans for a peace university there. The foundation stone has already been laid down and the Foundations planning is well on and the plans well known. We are now only waiting for the municipality of Alvdal to keep their promise and continue *their* planning.

Alvdal has been given a grand and attractive project for free and without much self-effort. The Foundation has been patient for a long time. The municipality should take action now!



*The Monument on the Peace Plateau.
15th of November 1999. Photo: BP.*