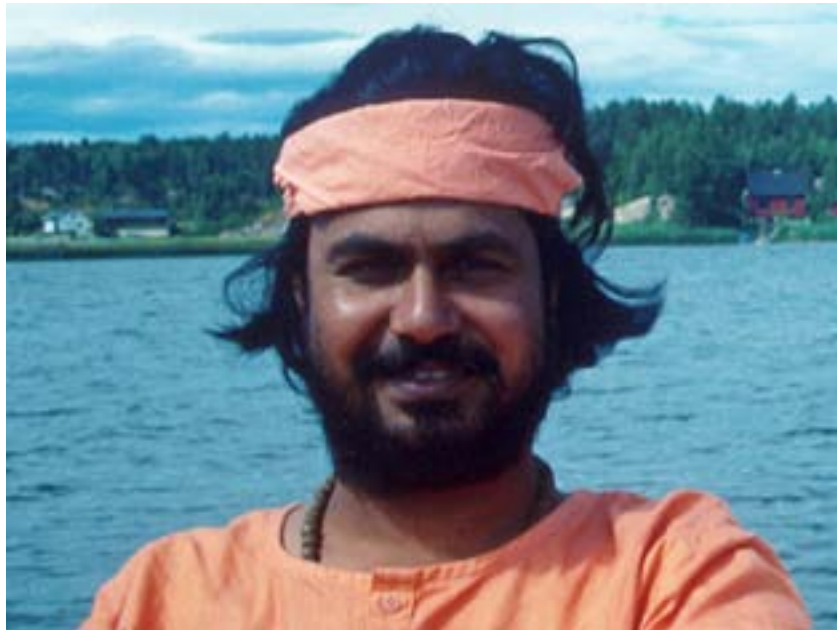




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Swami Paramananda, Vannsjø, Moss, Norway. Photo: Anne Siri Rodum.

IN SEARCH OF TRUTH

MY EXPERIENCES WITH
SWAMI PARAMANANDA

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A YOGI IN THE WEST

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and

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LIFE TOGETHER WITH PARAMANANDA

Arrival in Norway

We arrived at the airport in Moscow early in the morning and had to wait three and a half hours for our next flight to take us on to Norway. This was the very first time that Paramananda had travelled by air or beyond Asia. When we were to check in at the gate, Aeroflot and the airport staff in Moscow managed, as usual, to create unnecessary difficulties for the passengers. A chaotic and complex situation suddenly occurred, because for some incomprehensible reason or other, they wanted to put Paramananda on another flight than mine, and boarding for that flight was just about to close at a different gate somewhere else in the terminal.

Later I understood that we were victims of their usual policy of retaining stopover passengers for as long as possible so that they could fill up all their flights, regardless of how long the passengers had to wait and without informing them beforehand. That Paramananda and I were travelling together made no difference to them. The manish lady behind the counter, with her scandalous lack of spoken English and her rude manner, almost chased Paramananda away from the gate we were at. With utmost difficulty, I had, after all, managed to get some general view of the situation, told Paramananda his new gate number, pointed out the direction to it and asked him to run as fast as he could, while I had to stand back and could only watch him running randomly at high speed. There was nothing I could do about it, because there was no time for me first to go with him and then come back to my own gate, and I was also not allowed to go out from my gate. Moreover, several men in uniform, who also did not speak English, had come to the gate, apparently to help separating us. There was no force: if you didn't want, you had to! Therefore, I worried a lot whether Paramananda had managed to find and catch his flight, or was still running around and searching for his gate. That we had been abruptly and unexpectedly separated in this way was, of course, a terrible situation to experience for one who had never before been to an international airport or travelled in this way, but I tried to convince myself that I was much more worried than he was.

Later he told me a fantastic story about what had happened to him after we were separated and he had had to run. He had been running haphazardly without understanding anything about the gate number or anything else, he said. But then suddenly he had been contacted mentally by a yogi friend of his whom he knew from the Himalayas.

This yogi possessed many *siddhis* or supernatural powers and had been following us on our travel on the mental plane. He had led Paramananda to the right gate and told him what to do, and had advised him how to act at every stage. So everything had been going on very smoothly, Paramananda said, and there had been no problems. And he added that it happened sometimes in his life, that this yogi came to his aid with practical matters in this world that he himself was unfamiliar with.

It turned out that Paramananda's flight went straight to Oslo while mine went to Oslo via Stockholm in Sweden. Paramananda was the last to enter his plane which had been waiting for a while just for him, to fill the last seat. So to fill up the plane they had to use people who were originally destined for other flights, and the same thing happened to my flight which was also waiting past departure time for extra passengers to fill all the seats. The keeping of various timetables and itineraries seemed deliberately to be tampered with.

When my flight arrived in Stockholm and I finally got the opportunity to phone my parents in Norway, where Paramananda was to arrive and spend the first days, I learnt, to my great relief, that he had already reached there and everything was quite fine! I could therefore relax, and as the journey continued, luckily, I was able to extend a hand to a lonely Bangladeshi woman with a little child who was going to visit relatives in Oslo and who was also travelling by air for the first time. I helped her in the same manner as I would have helped Paramananda, so the physical separation between us had not been in vain after all.



Paramananda enters the arrival hall at Fornebu, Oslo Airport, on Norwegian soil for the first time, July 11th 1989. Photo: Torleif Sund.



2nd day in Norway. Here, at Tronvik on Jeløy island at Moss, in the yard of Bjørn's parents – Bjørn, Paramananda and Anne Kristin Seiloe Smith. – July 12th 1989. In the background the farm "Grønli" can be seen, where Bjørn's mother grew up.

Photo: Torleif Sund.

I had actually foreseen the possibility of untoward incidents with customs and immigration for Paramananda upon arrival at Oslo airport so I had arranged for my friend in The Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI) to meet Paramananda at the airport and assist him if any difficult situation would occur, for I wanted to ensure that in no way should his very first meeting with Norway be unpleasant. And he did meet Paramananda even before going through any of the controls and inspections, and as a member of the immigration authority he had personally led him through all these barriers, so all of that had only been pleasant and nice for Paramananda. Then Torleif and Anne Siri, together with another friend, Anne Kristin, met him in the arrivals hall and drove him by car well over 60 kilometers to my parents' house in Moss.

When I finally arrived at my parents' house at Jeløy island outside the town of Moss, Paramananda had already eaten and retired to his room on the first floor to rest after the long journey and a day of rigours. He had gone to his room rather early in the evening but he didn't come down to us before we all went to bed around midnight. When Paramananda did come down it was 3 o'clock in the morning and everybody else was fast asleep. But the Norwegian summer night is quite bright and he had no watch, so he thought it must be the middle of the day and

he wondered where all the others might be. He thought that this is Norway, so they must have gone to work. So he was sitting alone in the living room until, several hours later, people eventually woke up and came down to the ground floor. It was a rather comical first encounter for him with the bright Nordic summer night.

Otherwise, some of his first impressions of the country he expressed as "green and clean" and that people had good civic sense. The first day after our arrival we took Paramananda along on an idyllic boat trip on a big lake and water system attached to Moss, in the boat of my younger brother Trond, and the next day we spent walking along the seashore at the southern edge of the island in the Oslo Fjord.

Later the same evening we left Moss by car to visit friends at Kjeller outside Oslo, where we stayed overnight. The next day we continued to the family of my elder sister Kristin at Ringsaker outside Hamar, where we also stayed overnight. And then, the next day, on Saturday July 15th, we drove up beautiful Gudbrandsdalen, crossed over the mountain at Venabygd with the majestic Mt. Rondane, and then down Folldalen to Alvdal. We were received at Shantibu by Anne Siri who served lunch. She had gone by train the day before to prepare and get everything ready for our arrival.



Same situation as the last picture above. Paramananda explains that this type of flower grows wild in the Himalayas and is called "Krishna-krantha". Thinking about the climate in Norway, just before the departure from Delhi, Paramananda had an "alpi" made for him, a long kirtle which is often used by sannyasins and sadhus in the Himalayas. He also had one made for me, but somehow I never got to wear it.
Photo: Torleif Sund.



Top: Paramananda is telling about fruit trees that grow in the Himalayas, among which several are also found in Norway. Here with Bjørn, Anne Kristin and Ole Pettersen, Bjørn's father, who died in 2006. Photo: Torleif Sund.
Bottom: Paramananda, Torleif and Bjørn on a boat trip at Vannsjø, Moss. Paramananda was always very happy with water in all forms and situations. Photo: Anne Siri Rodum.





Bjørn and Paramananda together in a boat at Vannsjø, Moss, July 1989. Photo: Anne Siri Rodum.



Top: Paramananda and Bjørn, together with Bjørn's sister's family, Gaupen, Ringsaker, Hedmark, July 14th 1989. Photo: Torleif Sund.



Bjørn and Paramananda ready for the last leg on the way to Shantibu in Alvdal, July 14th 1989. Photo: Torleif Sund.

Continuation follows in the next number next week.



Below: At Bjørn's sister Kristin and her family at Gaupen, between Moelv and Hamar. From left: Bjørn, Paramananda, Anne Kristin and Torleif, on their way to Shantibu in Alvdal. Photo: Svein Krogrud.