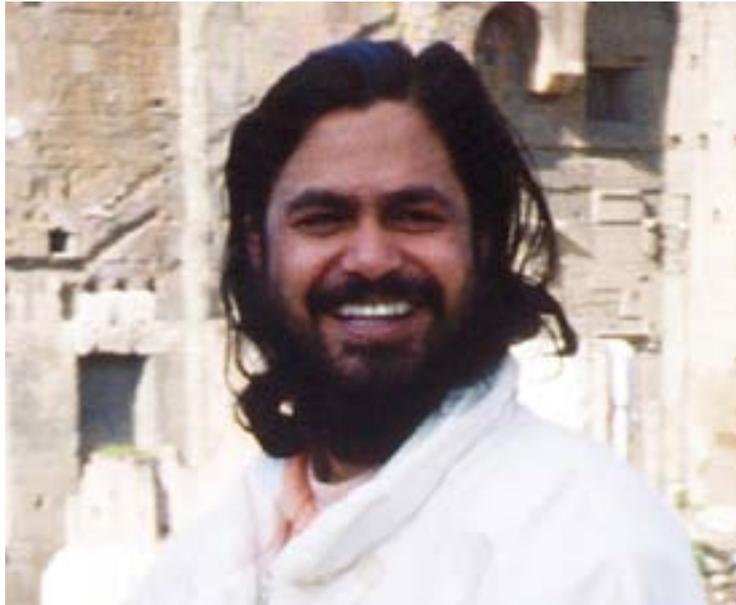




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Swami Paramananda in Italy, 1989. Photo: BP.

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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CONTENTS

Prologue

Induction

The Condor of Transformation
The Adder's Message
Ios in my Heart
The Ashram in Rishikesh
Cosmic Lotuses
An Indian Yogi on Mt.Tron

(1) Paramananda's Smile

Unexpected Visit from South India
Letter from Swami Paramananda Giri
Captivity in Rishikesh
First Meeting with Paramananda
Tripti Ma
Five Days in Ranchi
Mantra-Diksha
Ramakrishna Darshan
Problems in Alvdal

(2) The Art of Meditation

Adaptation to Banagram
Life in Paramananda Mission
Mental Communication
The Journey to South India
Mahashivaratri and Balyogi Darshan
Malaria and Sannyasa
Omkaram
Banagram and Kathmandu
Malaria in Norway

(3) Transcendence

Sadhana at Shantibu
Hissing Kundalini
Within Paramananda's Aura
Guru Kripa
Visit by Friends from Norway
Asgeir's Passing Away
Turiya at Shantibu
"... how the Rishis breathe"
Baul in the Himalayas

(4) Life together with Paramananda

Arrival in Norway
Paramananda's Genesis and Life History
The Peace Plateau on Mt.Tron
The Truth about Anandacharya's Rebirth
Baul on Mt.Tron
"... we are almost the same ..."
-Around Europe by Inter-Rail
Journey to North Norway
Lost Manuscript

(5) The University of Peace at Mt.Tron

Pilgrimage to Banagram
The Caves at Udayagiri
Tripti Ma goes to Norway
The Mt.Tron University of Peace Foundation
Paramananda comes again to Norway
Picnic on the Ganges
Paramananda Visits Norway a Third Time
Art of Life Course at Savalen
Difficulties and Plots

(6) Forever Paramananda

Last Appearance in Norway
Messages and Predictions
Paramananda Leaves His Physical Body
Great Sorrow in Banagram
Separation and Disintegration
Paramananda's Last Lesson
Essential Teaching
Who is Paramananda?
Paramananda's poem "I"

Deduction

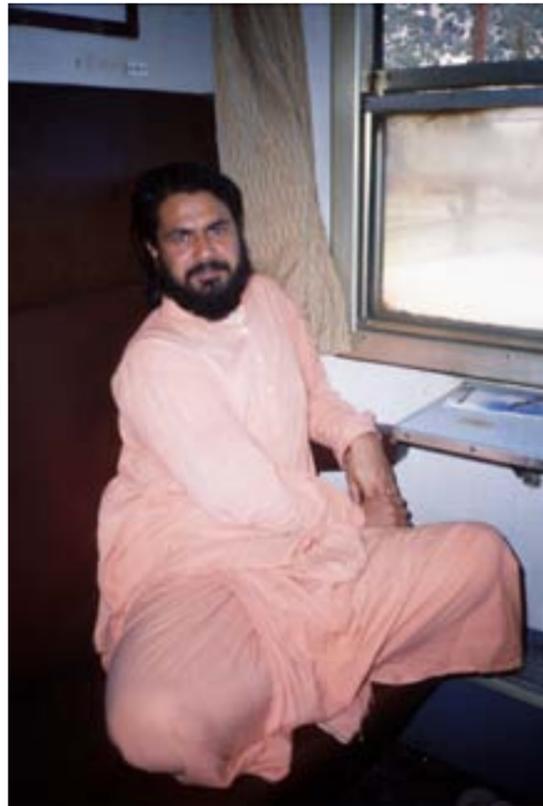
Reincarnation and Rishis
East and West
Science and Spirituality
"Soul" and Mind
Guru and Sishya (Teacher and Pupil)
The Quest for Truth
The Purpose of Life

Epilogue

LIFE TOGETHER WITH PARAMANANDA

Around Europe by Inter Rail

On January 31st 1990, the day after we had celebrated my mother's birthday, we entered a south-bound night train in Moss to embark on an Inter-Rail journey across Europe for the next three months. The journey went through the south of Sweden to Copenhagen in Denmark, and then via Puttgarden and Hamburg to Frankfurt in Germany. There Indian Usha met us at the railway station and took us by local train to her home in the small town of Hanau, where she lived with her German husband Jürgen and their adopted Indian daughter Shubhra, who was also Usha's niece and the sister of my friend Saurabh. Paramananda told me that actually Usha was a princess of a royal lineage from Lucknow. At their home we also met Shanti for the first time. She was German, but had been given her Indian name by the famous Indian mother-saint Ananda Moi Ma, with whom she had spent some time earlier in India. Her elder sister, Francesca, had met Ramananda Avadhuta in Uttar Kashi. We stayed with Usha for nearly five days and met several of her friends there.



Paramananda on the train at the start of our European journey. Photo: BP.

On February 5th we travelled on to Stuttgart to visit the family of a friend of mine, Simon Kraft, before continuing to Tübingen where Shanti lived. There we also met her sister Francesca. We stayed overnight at Shanti's and left early next morning for Munich where we had to change trains to continue through Austria to Italy. In Munich we visited the technical museum and stayed overnight in a youth hostel. The next day, after buying some food for the journey, we continued by rail, crossing the Austrian Alps in splendid sunshine under a cloudless sky, passed through Verona in Italy and reached Florence where Alex and his friends met us and drove us to their home in Carrara.

As we had eaten the food we bought in Munich on the train, and I had eaten quite a lot of it since I felt very hungry, I had acquired a splitting headache by the time we arrived in Florence, and shortly after entering the car and being exposed to the famous Italian driving style, I felt strong nausea, asked the driver to stop the car, opened the door and vomited in the gutter while still sitting in the front seat. Privately, Paramananda later advised me to eat only little while travelling and never fill



Paramananda and Usha, who met us at the railway station in Frankfurt. Photo: BP.



Usha, Shubhra, Paramananda and Jürgen, Usha's German husband, at their home in Hanau. Photo: BP.

the stomach. As he himself ate only little or moderately he could have told me about it at the time, but seeing that I didn't connect my headache and vomiting to the excess eating on the train, he kept silent and let me have the experience first, and only then did he give me the advice.

Carrara is world famous for its beautiful white marble and has had opencast mines from the time of the Romans. It is a nice, small, town with a traditional look beautifully situated between the sandy beaches of the Mediterranean Sea to the south and the Appenine mountain range to the north. In the centre of town there is a typical, traditional open air 'piazza' where the inhabitants used to gather to socialize in the evenings. As there is plenty of marble in the area, this white limestone has been used widely in public buildings and even as kerb and paving stones in the streets. A small river runs through the town, and at that time the water was completely white due to the marble dust from the mines higher up. It actually looked like



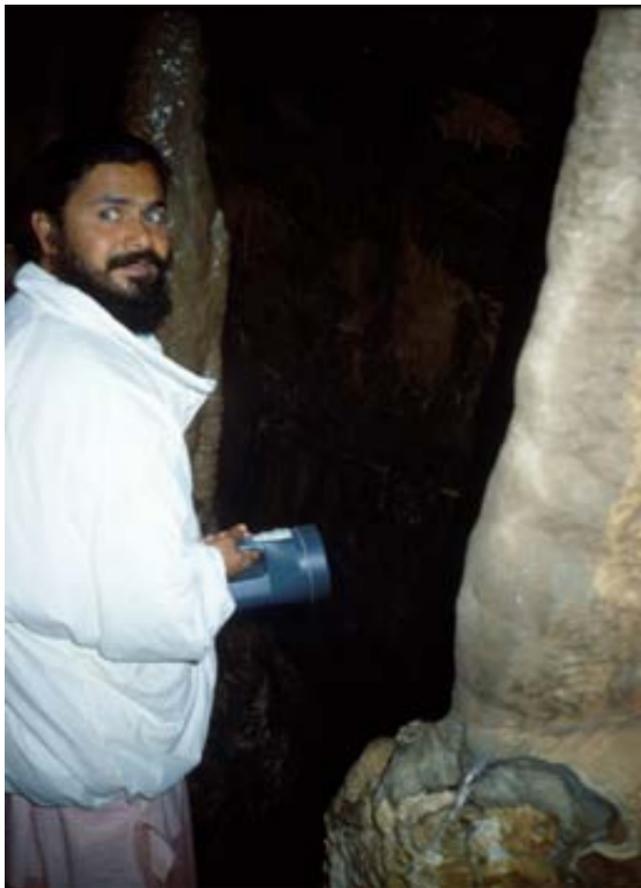
Some of the open marble quarries at Carrara. Photo: BP.

Carrara had a river of milk running through its centre! We arrived in this picturesque town on February 7th and were accommodated in an apartment on the first floor of a big, old house owned by Alex' family for generations. Paramananda and I slept on mattresses on the floor in an open, narrow corner of the living room, so we had to sleep pretty close together, but we soon got used to it.

We spent some very nice and intimate days together with Alex, Claudio, Brunella, Ilario, Marco, Niccola, Patty, Francesco and others. Paramananda felt that the Italians had much in common with Bengalis and were very warm-hearted. During the day we used to go by car on small trips in the surrounding area, and in the evenings we had *satsanga* with Paramananda all through the night, sometimes until daybreak. One evening during *satsanga* a man of our own age silently entered the room and sat down quietly to listen to Paramananda. I immediately noticed him and his pleasant nature, and



Bjørn, Ruggero, Niccola, Mario, Claudio, Ilario, (partly hidden, Marco?), Francesco, and Paramananda sightseeing in the mountains of Carrara. Photo: Brunella.



Above: Paramananda enters a natural marble cave near Carrara (left). Scene from an open marble quarry at Carrara (top right).

Paramananda holding satsanga in Alex' flat in Carrara with Claudio behind (below right).

Below: Paramananda and Marco heading towards the Colosseum in Rome with Alex behind (left).

Paramananda, Alex, Claudio and Marco outside some of the ancient ruins of Rome (top right).

Paramananda and Alex viewing Rome from the top of the St. Peter's Cathedral in the Vatican state of Rome (below right). All photos: BP.

Paramananda with Marco, Alex and Claudio at St. Mark's Square in Venice (left).

Paramananda with a view from one of the many bridges crossing the waterways of Venice.

All photos: BP.



later in the early morning, when Paramananda and I went to bed, I mentioned the incident when that man entered the room and said that I got the feeling of an Indian yogi, and Paramananda nodded affirmatively. Later Paramananda said that in his previous life that man had been a very famous Indian yogi. The man was named Ruggero and he soon became a very close friend.

On February 12th we went on a three day car tour to Rome, Assisi, Padova and Venice. Before Rome we spent the night in sleeping bags in open caves at an old Etruscan burial site called Necropolis. It was bone chillingly cold at night, around zero degrees centigrade, and I think nobody slept much. Early in the morning at sunrise we gathered at the cave openings to get a little warmth from the sun, and Paramananda told us many of his experiences during the night – about the various destinies of the Etruscan people who had been lain to rest in the graves there several thousand years before. He also said that at a certain point in time Buddhist monks had also been staying there. In Rome he completely refused to enter the Colosseum – he said the vibrations there left from the Roman times were too horrible and gruesome. So none of us entered. But we visited the Vatican State and saw St. Peter's Cathedral. From the roof we had a

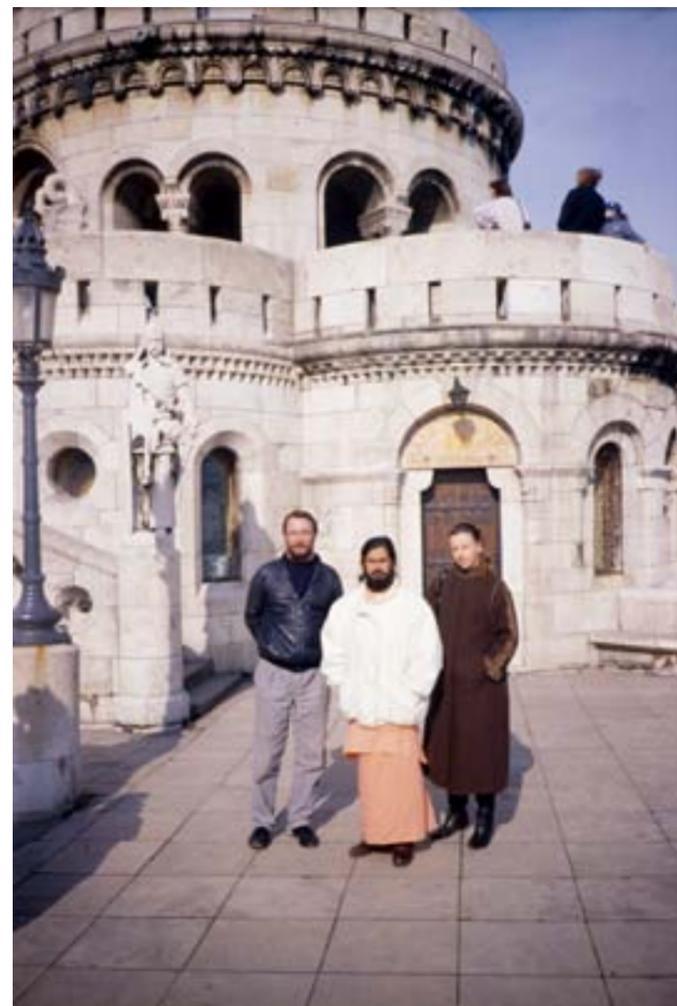
splendid view of all of Rome. We spent the night in Assisi and the next day we saw the church that Francis had built himself.

In Padova we visited Ilario's mother and stayed overnight, and Paramananda held *satsanga* there for many of Ilario's friends. The next day we went on a day trip to Venice where we happened to arrive in the middle of the annual carnival. There we shared a one square metre pizza, and Paramananda remarked that 'pizza' surely had come from the Himalayas, where in earlier times the original was called '*pishtok*' (Sanskrit), and that it must have found its way to Italy via Marco Polo and the Silk Road.

The next day we took leave of our many good Italian friends and went by train from Padova to Vienna in Austria, where we arrived on February 16th. As we were on a very tight budget and Vienna was a rather expensive city, we agreed to ride the longest tram route back and forth to have a kind of inexpensive sightseeing. Our plan was to go on from Vienna to Budapest in Hungary, but the earliest train was not until the next morning, and as we could not afford a hotel we spent the night on wooden bench seats in the huge railway station – a rather sleepless, cold and noisy night.

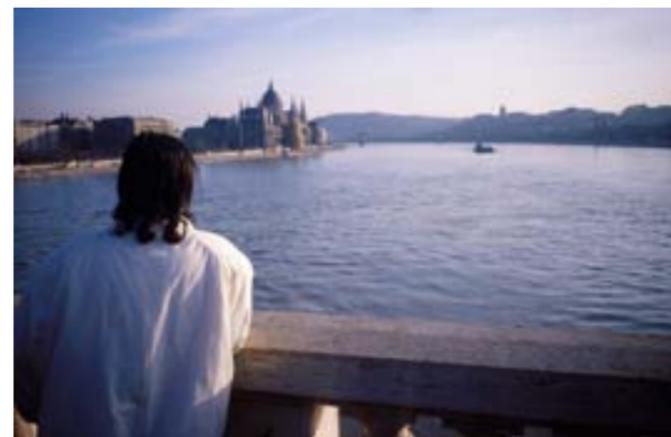
So the next morning, when all the restaurants and shops opened at 8 o'clock, we were first in line for buying a hot cup of tea to warm up. I added a little cognac to mine and was amazed how refreshing and strengthened I felt afterwards. At that time, on Paramananda's first visit to the West, he would never taste any alcohol anywhere, not even at the dinner table in Italy where it is a long-standing tradition and everybody drinks wine just like water. Sometimes I almost teased him a little for that, so on his next visit he had changed his firm mind about these things. When I asked him why he replied very innocently, like a small child, "I thought something would happen to me" (if he tasted it). I laughed inwardly and felt a bit of joy that even he could show common ignorance, i.e. fall victim to the spell of *maya*.

Shortly afterwards we sat on the train to Budapest. I had already corresponded with my Hungarian friend Erzebet, who lived in Budapest and with whom we were to stay during our visit there. Once before, many years earlier as a 17 year old student on my first Inter-Rail tour in Europe, I had visited her and her family. Erzebet and I had been fellow pupils at a folk high school in Norway for one year, and at that time she had learnt to speak very fluent Norwegian. She met us at the railway station with her husband and she had arranged for us to stay in the vacant apartment of her sister-in-law, who was then



away on holiday, while we were in Budapest. There we could manage everything ourselves and make appointments with Erzebet at our convenience. That was an excellent arrangement which suited us very well. Budapest was also very cheap and actually cheaper than India at that time, so we had no problem travelling around the city on our own. We stayed in Budapest for three days and then on February 20th went on by rail to Belgrade in what was then Yugoslavia.

Belgrade was a pretty odd experience. We found accommodation in a private house where we were packed into a small room with many Indians. It became noisy and tiresome, and I got a headache and wanted to move to another place but Paramananda made me relax and accept the situation. The next morning we wandered aimlessly around the city, waiting for the train to Sofia in Bulgaria a few hours later. This was shortly before Yugoslavia disintegrated into gruesome civil wars, and just at the time we were there the national currency was in freefall – with galloping inflation. As we were hungry, we tried to buy some food in a kind of restaurant, but they had only meat dishes which Paramananda didn't like to eat. After some searching and investigation I found that they had spinach stew and ordered one portion for each of us. Paramananda took only one spoonful and then pushed the plate aside with a grimace. He said it had been made with pig's fat. There was nothing else to eat, not even biscuits or snacks, so Paramananda had to go hungry. However, I ate up my portion and the rest of his to at least fill my stomach somewhat. Paramananda therefore wanted to fill his stomach by drinking tea. He had already drunk a cup of tea when we arrived there, and paid as much as 40 Dinars for it. One hour later the same cup of tea cost 120 Dinars, and shortly before we jumped on the train we paid an unbelievable 240 Dinars for a little cup of tea! The whole atmosphere in Belgrade felt horrible and people seemed very stressed and aggressive, so we felt a certain relief when we left there.



Paramananda in Budapest, Hungary.
Left: Together with Erzebet and her husband.
Above: Viewing the big city from one of the many bridges crossing the mighty Danube river. Both photos: BP.



Paramananda walking towards the huge public building in the early morning where we could freshen up a little, Sofia, Bulgaria.



Paramananda outside the University of Sofia in Bulgaria.
Both photos: BP.

In the evening after dark we crossed the border to Bulgaria, which at that time was still very much a communist country. Two uniformed border policemen came to check our passports. They left with Paramananda's passport and were away for quite some time. It seemed a bit worrying and when they finally returned with the passport they demanded 40 US dollars for it. There was nothing else to do than to pay these uniformed and armed, state-employed robbers, even if it felt rather rough. We arrived in Sofia by midnight and immediately went out in the streets to search for a hotel. But everywhere was dark and closed. We knocked on the door of a few hotels, but everywhere we were actually chased away with loud yelling. It was really disheartening. All day we had been travelling without food or rest, and we were tired, hungry and exhausted. And then, of course, I wanted Paramananda to feel as comfortable as possible on his journey and not suffer unnecessarily. So now I felt really helpless. But nothing ever affected Paramananda that way. He could easily master any situation and turn any unfavourable situation into something positive. So when he saw my despair he turned to me and with a comforting voice said with wonderful enthusiasm:

Bjørn, this is no matter! We can walk around in the streets and look at everything the whole night and really get to see Sofia!

Fantastic! Only Paramananda could do that – could inject lots of energy into a near energy-less condition with just a few words. We therefore set out wandering with a feeling of adventure and enthusiasm to see Sofia 'by night'! Luckily, we travelled light with an absolute minimum of luggage, and we had been able to press everything we needed, including sleeping bag, into two simple shoulder bags, one each, so we didn't have to carry heavy loads. Another positive factor was that there were street lights everywhere, and there were no problems of traffic or noise. Bulgaria was a typical communist country at that time, and perhaps even a rather undeveloped one also. Throughout the night we didn't meet a single per-

son or a single vehicle in the streets of the capital of the country – everything was closed, blacked out and silent as if under a curfew in a state of emergency. Streets and buildings were of such a standard that I felt myself transported to Middle Ages Europe – nay, it was really difficult to grasp that this also was Europe!

Shortly after daybreak long queues formed outside every shop before they opened, and inside there were almost no wares on the shelves. Food was extremely scarce, but we managed to buy a few oranges which we ate immediately, and nothing else. After a little walking we arrived at a huge, public building in a big park. Luckily its doors were open. We entered the building – apparently there was no one else inside – and we found some toilets where we were able to wash a little and freshen up. For some reason or other Paramananda didn't have his *gamcha* with him – it was perhaps left behind in Budapest. So when I had used mine thoroughly and it was almost sopping wet, he asked me to borrow it. I didn't know that he had mislaid his *gamcha*, so I was taken by surprise by his request and didn't want him to use my too well-used one, and therefore looked at him with a mixture of hesitation and refusal. "Hey, what difference does it make!", he said, almost a little irritated or provoked, and snatched my *gamcha* and started to dry himself as if it was a completely dry and clean towel he had in his hands.

In the afternoon we returned to the railway station. It was a huge, heavy colossus in typical communist style. There we had to wait for many hours for the train to Istanbul in Turkey, and while we were waiting there a Bulgarian, who spoke a little English for a change, approached us. He quickly became very impressed by Paramananda and wanted him to teach him meditation. Paramananda initiated him into meditation there and then and gave him some instructions, and afterwards he took leave of us in a respectful manner and disappeared without us even knowing his name. Finally we boarded the night train to Istanbul and travelled the whole night and most of the next day.



Above: Paramananda in front of the famous obelisk of Istanbul, Turkey.

Below: Paramananda standing at the Bosphorous Strait, looking over to the Asian side from the European side. Istanbul, Turkey. Both photos: BP.



We arrived in Istanbul in the afternoon, exhausted and hungry after two days of travelling without food. Luckily, we soon found a small and cheap hotel where we got a room with a huge double bed. We agreed that first we would take a bath and freshen up before going out for dinner, and only after that come back and finally have a complete rest. But after I had finished my bath and changed my clothes, the bed looked incredibly inviting so I said to Paramananda that I would just lie down for two minutes and stretch my body (which we had not been able to do since Belgrade) before going out for dinner. The next thing I remember was that Paramananda shook my shoulder and called my name, and said that we had to go now for food. At first I could not recollect where we were or my situation or anything at all, but when I regained my senses, understood the situation and checked the time, I found that I had been sleeping for more than two hours and that soon it would be too late for eating at a restaurant.

“Why didn’t you wake me up before?” I asked Paramananda, rather appalled. He looked at me with a loving smile and only replied: “I did not have the heart to wake you up before – you were so tired and you slept so well!”

I felt ill at ease that Paramananda had sacrificed himself for me in that situation because he was just as tired and hungry as me. Luckily, we found a suitable restaurant nearby and ate good food to our heart’s content, and finally we were able to lie down in a good, clean bed for proper rest.

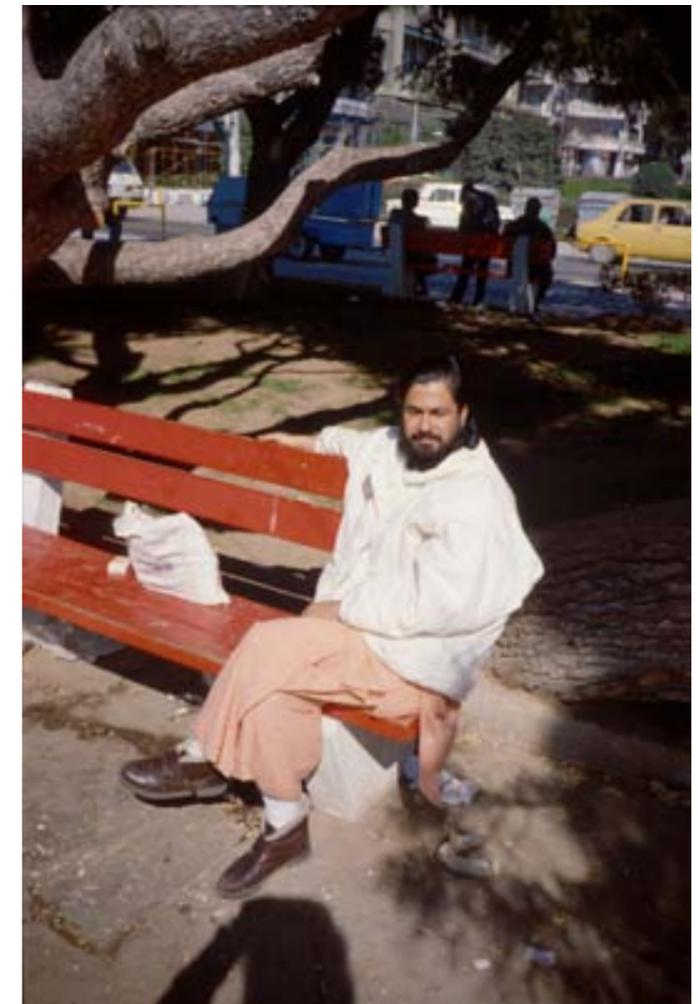
For the whole of the next day we walked about in Istanbul to see the various landmarks. And then Paramananda wanted to eat fish, so we found a restaurant near the harbour where we could get fresh fish. While we were standing at the Bosphorous Strait on the European side and looked over to the Asian side, a man approached Paramananda and talked to him in Arabic. Paramananda replied in Arabic and they entered into a conversation that I was not able to follow. Afterwards Paramananda told me that the man had offered him sex with his younger sister for money but Paramananda had tried to change his mind and make him give up this kind of dirty business.

Late at night we travelled farther south to Greece. The train rolled at an incredibly slow snail’s pace the whole night and all of the next day, not arriving in Thessaloniki until night. It was February 25th and in India they celebrated *Shivaratri* – the night of *Shiva*. Thessaloniki is situated at the root of a land mass that on the map looks like a hand with three fingers pointing southwards into the Aegean Sea, called Khalkidhiki, and the easternmost of these three fingers is called Athos after the more than two thousand metre high mountain on that peninsula. Athos is completely closed to the public and is a sanctuary for the Greek-Orthodox monks there, with lots of churches and monasteries everywhere. Male tourists are allowed to visit with a special permit, but no females are allowed to enter and can only view the place from a good distance by boat out on the water. This is in spite of the legend which tells that it was the Virgin Mary who first found the place and established the first Christian society there.

Paramananda taking some rest from all the walking in Thessaloniki, Greece, near the harbour (below and right). Both photos: BP.



Paramananda expressed the wish to visit Athos because he knew about a monk there who was realized and whom he wanted to meet. He only told me this after we had arrived in Thessaloniki, so we were kept busy finding out how to get there, obtaining the necessary permits, etc., which proved not to be easy, so nearly two whole days were spent for this purpose. In the end we were told that Paramananda, as a Hindu, needed to get a special permission from the head of the Greek-Orthodox Church, the very Patriarch of Constantinople himself, which in practice meant that we had to go back to Istanbul to arrange this. But Paramananda did not want to do that, so we just had to forget about Athos. For me, however, there was no problem as I came from a Christian country, they said, but for Paramananda, on the contrary ... It was really too bad that they should discriminate between people in this way. However, while in Thessaloniki a Greek man approached us in the street, and while pointing eagerly at Paramananda, exclaimed “yonki, yonki”. We presumed he meant ‘yogi’, so Paramananda nodded in the affirmative. The Greek man seemed wonderfully satisfied to have found a real yogi on the street and stutered away in broken English. It ended up with him also getting initiation with instruction in meditation there on the street.



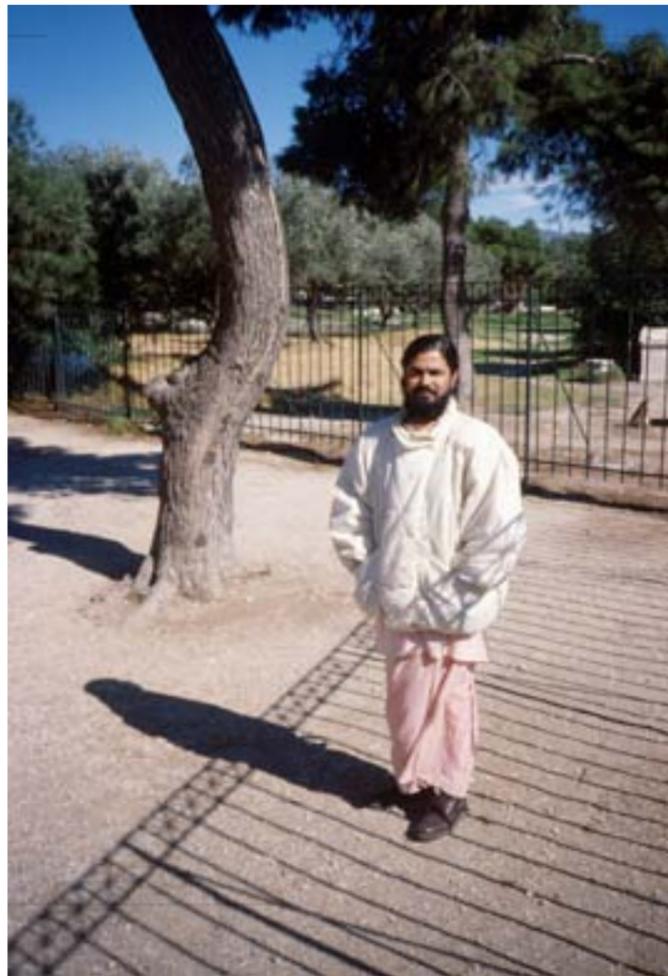
Later in the day we continued southwards, passed the beautiful, snow-clad, nearly three thousand metre high, Mt. Olympus, home to all the Greek gods of mythology, and arrived at Athens in the night. There we found accommodation in a hotel close to the railway station. The next day we went to the neighbouring harbour town of Piraeus, which is practically an extension of Athens towards the sea. There my friend Nikos lived with his family. As I had met Nikos ten years earlier and did not have his address, I had not been able to write to him beforehand. But after much effort I managed to find his name in the telephone directory and rang him from Athens. However, his apartment was so small that I didn't like to ask him to put us up for a few days. We therefore went to a small hotel with a view towards the Aegean Sea. But after only one night I understood that we could not afford to continue staying there, and after discussing the matter with Paramananda, we agreed to ask Nikos if we could stay in his workshop, which he had showed us the day before. Nikos was an engineer who made machine parts for the American air base in Greece. His workshop was rather small and filthy, but it contained a separate room with a bed which Paramananda said would quite suit him. I slept just outside this room, on a mattress on the floor. Otherwise there was a toilet and a gas ring with some kitchen equipment, so Paramananda was quite happy with the situation.



Ilario, Alex and Paramananda having breakfast in Nikos' workshop in Piraeus, Greece (above). Below (and below right): Paramananda at the Acropolis, Athens. Top right: In Athens.



Every morning we went to the nearby market to buy eggs and tomatoes and a few vegetables, and back in the workshop Paramananda made delicious omelettes which we ate with great relish. Sometimes we were invited to dinner at the home of Nikos. Thus we slept in the workshop at night and ate breakfast there in the morning, and while Nikos and his employees worked in the workshop the whole day Paramananda and I roamed Athens and visited museums and other places of interest. But we also had to go to some embassies to obtain visas for Paramananda, which we hadn't had time for while in Norway. On Friday, March 2nd we visited the great Acropolis with its famous ruins of the temple of Athene, goddess of wisdom, from the fifth century before Christ, beautifully situated on a hill above the town.



Paramananda on the upper deck of a ferry leaving from Piraeus for Ios in the Aegean Sea. We bought four kilos of fresh oranges as it was just at the start of the orange season in Greece – one of Paramananda's favourite fruits. All photos on this and on the previous page: BP.



For a total of ten days we lived like that in Piraeus before travelling by ship to the Aegean islands. However, we had already visited the nearest island, Aigina, during these days. In the meantime Alex and Ilario had come from Italy to join us, so in the evening of March 9th, we four took the ferry from Piraeus to Ios, via Siros, Paros and Naxos, with only four kilos of newly harvested oranges as our provisions. The orange harvesting season had just started in Greece and Paramananda was very fond of oranges. I had already been twice to the island of Ios, in 1977 and then in 1980, when I met up with Nikos, who most kindly had invited me to go on a vacation with him and his family to their cabin at Peleponese.

We were accommodated in a small lodge in the village with a beautiful view of the harbour and the ocean. It was before the start of the tourist season so there were practically no people on the whole island.

Out there on a small island in the beautiful Aegean Sea with the unique, wonderful Greek light and friendly people, Paramananda taught us what he himself called "**The Gospel of New Life**", which was all about *Baul*. For two most wonderful days Ilario, Alex and I listened to the eternal truths of Paramananda on what he said would be the teaching for the coming age. Exceedingly wonderful!



The small, beautiful island of Ios in the Aegean Sea. Left: Paramananda and Ilario near the harbour. Above: The village. Below: Paramananda viewing the harbour from the veranda of our lodge.





Above and below: Views from the edge of the volcanic crater where the village is situated on the island of Thera (Santorini). It is a huge volcano which is long since extinct and which exploded in prehistoric times. Ilario, Alex and Paramananda are writing postcards to friends (bottom).

Right: Three photos from the Knossos Palace on Crete, the biggest island in the Aegean Sea. All photos: BP.



Then we travelled farther by boat to the famous volcanic island of Thera or Santorini. There the village is situated very spectacularly on the edge of a long since extinct volcano, which in about 1635 B.C. exploded and destroyed the island's Minoan culture. We sat on a veranda and enjoyed the spectacular view while we spent most of the day writing postcards to friends. The next day we continued by ship to Crete, which was the final destination of our journey in Greece. We stayed for a whole week and visited several of the famous spots on the big island, with a rented car that Alex drove. The starting point of these local journeys was the capital Heraklion, where we stayed in a small hotel. Naturally we visited Knossos, and Paramananda explained to us the symbolism of the beautiful, but very strange and peculiar, frescoes there from the Minoan culture more than four thousand years earlier.



Paramananda at the Lassithi plateau in the early morning. Photo: BP.

Right: Departure from Piraeus to Patras and then crossing the Adrian Sea to Brindisi in Italy. Nikos and Bjørn (above), and Ilario, Nikos and Paramananda (below). Photo (above): Alex Lattanzi. Photo (below): BP.

One day we drove up to the highland of the beautiful Lassithi plateau with snow-clad mountains around and lots of almond trees in bloom. There we rented a room from a private family and stayed overnight. During our stay there we went still higher up to see a big natural cave called "The Cave of Zeus". While we were standing there in front of the cave opening and Alex and Ilario were a little way off, Paramananda turned to me and said that I had lived in that cave in the far distant past:

This used to be *your* cave. You came here from India and spent the rest of your life here.

As usual I was quite dumbfounded by such highly surprising words from Paramananda. Again he had placed my life in an enormous perspective. Once at Shantibu, some months earlier, while he talked to me about *Baul* and that I had had problems with my sexuality in every life, as an example of what consequences my problems could cause, he remarked almost a little angrily and reproachingly that in one life I had come from India to Greece and there I had begot a son who later attacked India! As usual there was no further elaboration either from his side or mine, but I immediately realized who this son must have been, which tallies with the uncertainty of his origin in many of the historical sources.

After ten days in all on three of the Greek islands we left Crete on March 19th and sailed back to Piraeus and Nikos' workshop. Nikos was a very friendly and jovial soul who looked like Greece's answer to Marlon Brando. In typical Mediterranean fashion he expressed great passion for the opposite sex, and when he asked Paramananda many questions about this theme he was taken into Paramananda's room and received instructions on various techniques of *baul sadhana*.



We stayed for another five days in Piraeus before embarking on a bus to Patras and then on by boat across the Adriatic Sea to Brindisi in Italy. Exactly the same route I had taken myself in 1977 but in the opposite direction. From Brindisi we continued by train via Rome and Viareggio, and in the morning of March 27th we reached Carrara and were back in Alex's house.

This time we stayed for fully twelve days in Carrara and were completely at home with all the friends there. On our first visit there Paramananda had already told us one night that Brunella in one life had been his mother. He even said the exact number of lives back, while tears rolled down Brunella's cheeks. Her partner Claudio also had been an Indian sadhu, and Alex and Ilario had been a married couple running a little road-side tea-shop somewhere in the Himalayas, when Alex had been a woman. Francisco, too, had spent his previous life in India as a well-known sannyasin – a type of nature that he certainly had again in this life too. Otherwise Paramananda pointed out that the sculptress Patty reminded him of his elder sister in India.

One day we visited an old fortress village in the mountains. Inside its castle we were guided around by a lady who fervently and with great sensitivity narrated a gruesome story in which long ago a young lady, who had become pregnant outside wedlock, had been sealed alive in a hidden room in the thick walls of the basement where



Above: The castle in the mountains where our female guide told that horrific story.

Right: At the seaside where Paramananda told us most intimately about Jesus Christ.

Next page: The leaning tower of Pisa, with Claudio and Marco in front. All photos: BP.

she died. When we came out Paramananda told us that our lady guide was the very same person reborn who had been shut up in the secret room in the basement and died there. After that life she was only bent on letting the world know what horrendous crime had taken place there, and by doing so she would finally become mentally free from her obsessive thoughts.

This incident and story made a strong impression on us, but there were many other happenings which made a very positive impression. During many of these days Paramananda talked to us very intensely about the life of Jesus Christ. It was so vivid and touching that we could not manage to hold back our tears, and we felt as if we were there together with Jesus himself. Especially I remember one day that we spent by the seaside, when there was a quite fantastic intimacy and feeling among all of us. No one could narrate like Paramananda and no one knew better what he was talking about – he actually was what he talked about.



On April 8th we left Italy by plane from Pisa for London, after visiting the famous leaning tower of Pisa. At Luton Airport we were met by Bryan who drove us to his home. In London there were also *satsangas* every night in Bryan's apartment, who invited his friends to meet Paramananda. During the day we went about in the city and frequently visited big book stores. Paramananda wished to see if there were any good publications on Tantra in the West and commissioned me to buy whatever I could find on the subject. In all we purchased about ten to fifteen titles but only one of them was approved of by Paramananda.



We stayed with Bryan for two weeks during which we went to Manchester for two days to visit Una, a Bengali who had married an Englishman and settled with her family there. I had met Una some years earlier on the plane from Moscow to Calcutta. Her mother was Bengali and her father Punjabi – a combination Paramananda said was ideal. She was beautiful and well built, strong and of sound health, and was unusually independent for an Indian woman. Just at the time we were there, her mother had also come to visit from Calcutta, and she prepared delicious Bengali dishes to Paramananda's great satisfaction.

At Manchester railway station, as we were returning to London by train, by chance we bumped into Ray who was also now living in Manchester. Ray was an old friend of Bryan's and Paramananda's from when they travelled together to India that first time when they met Paramananda or Robin, and Ray had shortly after visited Paramananda again in Banagram, but more recently they had been out of touch with one another. In London we visited the famous Madame Tussaud's Wax Museum, the London Planetarium, the Zoological Garden, the British Museum and the British Library, and several other attractions. We also took a boat trip on the Thames, visited Hyde Park, saw Buckingham Palace, Big Ben and other sights.

On April 22nd we left England by ferry to Holland and sailed overnight from Harwich to the Hook of Holland where we arrived early next morning. From there we continued by train to Amsterdam. We had to wait for four hours in Amsterdam for our next train through Germany to Denmark and from there to Stockholm

in Sweden, so we used the time to stroll around in the streets to have a look at life, and Paramananda suggested that we should look at everything without any prejudice. Beforehand I had warned him a little about the famous liberality of Amsterdam regarding sex and drugs, i.e. the sex industry and cannabis mainly, where everything would be open and exposed. We saw most of what was to be seen that didn't cost us anything, including various exhibitions. While we thus were walking around Paramananda suddenly turned to me with a smile and said:

This is better than India! This is also not good, but it is better than India!

I heartily agreed! Paramananda had taught me that neither indulgence nor suppression of sex were the right way but, still, indulgence was better than suppression on account of all the terrible perversions that suppression of sex leads to. This is now more and more coming to the surface with all those most horrible rape cases that shame India, and which is caused by most inhumane attitudes towards women and sexuality in general in the wider Indian society, where, unfortunately, suppression has been the only way for countless generations.

We arrived in Stockholm, Sweden, on April 24th and were well received by Andreas, who took us to his little apartment at Söder. We stayed there for three days before Andreas took us by train to Uppsala, where he also had a home and where we spent the rest of our stay in Sweden. Andreas was very inquisitive and asked Paramananda lots of questions, and then there were also many *satsangas* with the friends of Andreas at night. One day Andreas showed us a documentary film about one of the most famous mediums in Sweden at that time and Paramananda explained to me how such phenomena arise through 'self hypnosis' – how the medium is hypnotizing him or herself to believe that he or she is a medium of external identities, but that in reality they only mediate from their own mind and sub-consciousness. On the last day in Uppsala we visited the famous historical monuments from the Viking period, and on April 30th we left Sweden and arrived back at our starting point at Moss in Norway, where again we stayed with my parents.

We had then been away for exactly three months. After two nights in Moss and one in Oslo, we headed back to Alvdal and Shantibu on May 3rd, and our great journey together in Europe was concluded. During this journey, while sitting on the train (I think it was in Germany), on one occasion Paramananda had told me that the whole of the Communist Eastern Bloc would soon fall and be dissolved, and that his travel in Europe had a connection to that. At Shantibu the summer before he had already told me that the Berlin Wall was soon to fall. As is well known it fell on November 9th 1989.



Most of that time Carraran Italian friends gathered at Patty's apartment.
 From left: Paramananda, Patty, Mario, Brunella (seated), Ilario, Claudio, Alex (partially hidden), Bjørn, Ruggero and Francesco.
 Photo: Unknown.

GLOSSARY (simplified)

Ananda Moi Ma – Bengali mother saint (1896-1982) who met Paramananda three times, and who is mentioned in the famous autobiography of Paramahansa Yogananda.

baul – philosophy with man at the centre, physically, emotionally and spiritually; practitioner of the *Baul* Philosophy; wandering, mystical truth-seeker and musician/singer in Bengal.

baul sadhana – *sadhana* with a partner of the opposite sex, mainly following tantric principles. See *baul*, *tantra*.

gamcha – multi-use thin cotton towel in Bengal (not terry, more like a very, very, big handkerchief).

maya – “illusion”; the world; the seeming duality and manifold; impermanence, transience.

pishtok – Sanskrit name of a kind of baked item which most probably is the origin of the Italian ‘pizza’.

Ramananda Avaduth – Paramananda’s sannyas-guru, who resided in the upper Himalayas, always completely naked, and who lived to about 160 years of age; the author’s *paramguru*.

sadhu – a person who performs *sadhana*; respected and revered, wandering holy man or woman in India.

sannyasin – a dedicated truth-seeker who wears saffron coloured robes, usually with the title *swami* and *ananda* as suffix in the name, who has renounced family happiness and personal career to help people wake up spiritually.

satsanga – ‘gathering for truth’; a popular type of company with questions and answers, between guru and disciples or spiritual head and audience.

Shiva – ‘in which everything rests’; the static aspect of the Absolute; “the transformer” and last part of the Divine Trinity, in which *Brahma* (the creator) is the first and *Vishnu* (the sustainer) is the second, and therefore he who gives *mukti* or liberation at death; the male principle, which is worshipped in the symbolic form of a *lingam*; *Shakti*’s counterpart; the “king of the yogis” and the origin of all yoga (i.e. the first yogi).

shivaratni – ‘Shiva’s night’; the new moon of February when Shiva is worshipped and celebrated, traditionally accompanied by fasting and meditation, the sannyasa ritual is most usually performed on this date. See *Shiva*.

tantra – ‘liberation through attraction’; spiritual system and method which fully accepts the human being as it is, and offers spiritual development from the human’s most basic level – its sexuality.

yoga – ‘conjunction’; spiritual science that unites the individual with the universal in the human being; the second of the six main philosophical systems of India, established by Rishi Patanjali and called “Classical Yoga” or Asthanga Yoga, consisting of eight parts or steps – *Yama*, *Niyama*, *Asana*, *Pranayama*, *Pratyahara*, *Dharana*, *Dhyana*, *Samadhi*.

Continuation follows in the next number next week.