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Swami Paramananda at Lyngseidet, North Norway, 1995. 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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THE UNIVERSITY OF PEACE AT MT. TRON

Paramananda Visits Norway a Third Time

At the height of the Norwegian summer, on Sunday July 30th, Torleif, Tripti Ma and I received Paramananda at Oslo Airport. From a distance, as soon as he eyed us in the reception hall, his face lit up in a big smile and with his arms raised high he shouted loudly:

I am free, I am free!

Even if there was an ever increasing number of people who wanted to meet Paramananda and who occupied his time while in Norway, his stay was like a holiday for him compared to what he had to face daily in India where our holy Western notions of “privacy” and “protection of one’s privacy” are entirely absent! The word does not even occur in the vocabulary and there is absolutely no understanding of it. So every time he visited Europe he had good rest and a welcome change in his otherwise very busy and exposed life. Most of all he liked the informal and easy way we are socializing here, without lots of social conventions like the touching of feet, etc., that are prevalent in India.

In India all the people were doing this all the time, but here in the West nobody did it. It was a handshake usually at the first meeting, and then a hug or embrace after becoming better acquainted, as is customary all over the Western World these days. And as there is no tradition here about gurus or holy persons, they all treated him like they do everybody else, and he liked that very much. He always wished to be one of us, and had the full freedom of being so and enjoying this while in the West. Here, nobody had too many preconceptions or expectations of him or, worse, made demands on him to perform a certain role or fulfil a position, as so many did in India. As he never wished to disturb or interfere with anyone’s ideas, faith or feelings, he let them relate to him as they wished themselves, which usually meant that they followed their Indian traditions.

From the airport we went straight to a Chinese restaurant in Oslo and had lobster, which Paramananda ate with great relish and actually swallowed the whole thing, shell and all, to the utter amazement of the rest of us. Afterwards I drove him in my car to Alvodal, as he had foretold last time he was here, but which I could not believe then. But as usual Paramananda was right. On the road shortly

before entering Alvodal, we passed a heavy goods vehicle which we had been following for quite some time. But when we were about half way past the long vehicle I discovered an oncoming car in the distance in front of us and I realized that the long, straight stretch of road was not long enough and my car’s engine was not powerful enough to successfully pass the goods vehicle, which, against all odds, was driving quite fast. Still I pressed on and on until, at the last moment, I managed to squeeze my car past the lorry and onto the right side of the road as the oncoming car passed us – to the loud sounding of the horn of the big vehicle behind us. The highly dangerous situation put my heart in my throat for the rest of the ride, and reflecting on the fact that I was not alone in the car, but that I had just exposed my very dearest to an extreme life-threatening danger, made me feel very sad and grieved. When we reached Shantibu I turned to Paramananda and said with a resigned voice full of guilt and bad conscience:

“I cannot believe that I actually did that!” But he was completely calm, as he had been at the time of the incident, and just said: “Well, you need to be more aware next time.”

Perhaps he had got too used to all the “near-death-accidents” or incidents which are happening on Indian roads all the time, to which nobody reacts or even lifts an eyebrow, for it has become, actually, integrated into their very driving style.

Again many friends from far and near came to spend time with Paramananda. From Italy came Claudio and Brunella, from London Bryan and Shanti, who now lived together there, from Sweden came Andreas and his Finnish girlfriend Stella, and a new acquaintance, the Finn Olavi together with his Swedish girlfriend Katharina, and then Usha came from Germany. Some stayed for some days or a week while others stayed for several weeks. We experienced wonderful warm days and bright nights of summer with Paramananda, in which he talked about and explained everything between heaven and earth in his own unique way. And not only because of what he said, but also because he was the one he was, being physically present with him was itself a great experience – so full of unconditional love and positivity, and so present and engaged in everybody. And then there was a lot of humour and fun, too, and everyone felt really integrated and very united.



*Paramananda at Shantibu, summer 1995, here with Bjørn (top left) and Tripti Ma (top right). Photos: Tripti Ma and BP.
Above left: Usha (Germany), Bryan (England) and Tripti Ma in the garden. Above right: Tripti Ma in front of her greenhouse.*

Both photos: Unknown.

Below left: Andreas from Sweden in the kitchen.

Bottom left: Claudio from Italy in the garden.

Below right: Brunella from Italy is doing the dishes in the kitchen.

All photos: BP.





Top left: (From left:) Johnny, Mette, Bjørn, Anders and Paramananda, with Anders' children, Christian and Magnus, in front, at Shantibu. Photo: Tripti Ma.

Top right: Katharina (Sweden), Paramananda and Olavi (Finland) in the flower garden of Shantibu. Photo: BP.

Middle left: Kari Ada (hands), Tripti Ma, Paramananda and Brunella in the living-room of Shantibu. Photo: BP.

Middle right: Bryan, Brunella, Claudio, Bjørn, Shanti and Knut Helge (from nearby Os) while sightseeing at Røros. Photo: Tripti Ma.

Above left and right: Picnic and satsanga with Paramananda in Alvdal Vestfjell: Kari Ada, Anders, Claudio, Knut Helge, Brunella and Tripti Ma. Both photos: BP.

As there could be really many present for lunch or dinner, and some would show up unannounced just at meal-time, it sometimes happened that this was a problem for those in the kitchen preparing food. In those cases there would be an acute shortage of food, yet it was out of the question that anybody present should not be offered the same food as everybody else, even if they came unannounced or perhaps beforehand were completely unknown to us – nobody should have to sit and look at the others eating, that would never happen at Shantibu. On

several such occasions I saw Paramananda quickly enter the kitchen to help with the cooking. Very discreetly he then went straight to the pots and started to stir, while he told Tripti Ma and the others not to worry. He asked them to find more plates so that he could portion out the food for each one, and even if the pots were relatively small and there would perhaps be almost no food left in them, there would always be enough food for everyone when Paramananda did it that way.

Once a whole family of two parents and six children suddenly entered the room while we were sitting and eating. Paramananda at once got up from the table and hurried in to the kitchen to handle the pots with food. Then I felt curious to know how it actually happened that there would be enough food for everyone when only Paramananda handled the pots. This time I knew for sure by seeing for myself that there were only a few tablespoons of food left in the pots and not at all enough even for just one child, so I wanted to see with my own eyes how Paramananda did it. I therefore went into the kitchen myself to fetch plates for our new guests and while passing Paramananda tried to lean discreetly over his shoulder to get a good view into the pot that he was handling. But he was fully aware of my intention and bodily manoeuvre, and tilted the pot while at the same time moving his body to block my view, so I could not see anything. Therefore I was never able to witness this phenomenon directly, but there was never any doubt that he actually materialized more of the food that was already made. This happened many times at Shantibu whenever Tripti Ma felt puzzled and at a loss in the situation, and I know also from my disciple friends in India that they had also noticed the same phenomenon there in similar situations. Paramananda never made any show of it and never even wanted us to know about it or that it happened, but hid it and only did it as making a virtue of necessity in a demanding and difficult situation.

This time there were also two stories in the national media about our plans for the University of Peace on Mt. Tron. First the VG newspaper published a report with a huge picture splashed across the middle pages on August 30th, and then there was an interview with Paramananda and me on NRK Radio broadcast on September 28th. As far as I know that is the only extant radio interview with Paramananda. VG had a photo of Paramananda but no interview.

By the beginning of September all the visitors to Shantibu from afar had returned to their respective homes and home countries, and we were ready to take Paramananda on a boat trip with the Coastal Steamer all along the northern coast of Norway. As Kari Ada's father owned shares in the company, we could buy the tickets at a substantially reduced price. Paramananda, Kari Ada, Tripti Ma and I therefore left Shantibu for Trondheim on September 6th and embarked on the express Coastal Steamer "Nordlys" ("North Light") in bright and splendid autumn weather with lots of sea birds on the water. It was a wonderful journey on a route often called "the world's most beautiful boat trip", in the mixed waters and weather that characterizes this long coast with so many islands and fjords. After exactly four days and nights on the water we disembarked at the small northern town of Kirkenes close to the Russian border, at a latitude of nearly 70 degrees north and the same longitude as Cairo in Egypt.



From the voyage with the coastal steamer Hurtigruta along the coastline of North Norway in September 1995. Bottom: Paramananda in front of the ship at a landing in Stamsund. All photos: BP.





The Lyngen Alps as seen from the ship in the bright light of the full moon, shortly after sunset after having left Tromsø. Below left: A Sami and his reindeer in front of a traditional tent (lavvo). Below right: The world famous North Cape in Norway. After that is the North Pole. All photos: BP.



The day before the boat had anchored at Hammerfest and a bus trip was arranged (included in the boat trip package) to the North Cape plateau. Quite unbelievable, but that day was the only day during the whole season without fog, they said, so we were blessed with unforgettable hours on this world famous northernmost viewpoint towards the Arctic Sea and the North Pole. While there I was reminded that Anandacharya also once came there, 73 years earlier, during autumn 1922, and wrote a short poem there. We stayed overnight at Kirkenes and went early next morning by bus to the town of Alta – a ride of more than 10 hours. We also spent one night in Alta before travelling farther by bus the next morning to Kari Ada's birthplace and childhood home at beautiful Lyngseidet by the mighty Lyngen and the Lyngen Alps in the county of Troms, where her parents Hans Petter and Marith received us very heartily. Younger daughter Lise was there too and later also the elder daughter Hanne with her husband Harald joined us. And then Lise's friend Mette showed up. Mette was of Sami descent. We had met her in Banagram during the winter, and she had also spent some days with us at Shantibu during the summer.

We spent more than five days together at Lyngseidet enjoying bright and colourful autumn weather, with lots of short local trips both on land and on water. One day a friend of Hans Petter took us all out on the fjord in his fishing boat so that we could try fishing with hand held

line from the deck. We just threw the line with six or seven hooks without bait over the side and then immediately hauled up five or six coalfish of two to three kilos each every time, again and again. It was quite incredible how many fish there were and that we could catch them so quickly and so easily. After a short while we had all caught so much fish that we had to stop and go home where Hans Petter and Marith, assisted by Paramananda, got busy in the kitchen making fish cakes. In no time at all we could all assemble at the table, with great appetites to relish four huge bowls containing a total of 71 warm, freshly made fish cakes. We ate them on their own without any other food, so that we could really enjoy the fish. Fish was Paramananda's favourite food and he had already got the taste for this distinctively Norwegian dish, but it was the very first time that he (and also Tripti Ma and I!) savoured the home made and completely fresh taste. And, since he had even participated, himself, not only in making them but also in fishing for them, so the complete food making process was intact, from sea to table, it was evident to all that he really enjoyed himself.

Early morning on Monday September 18th Tripti Ma and I travelled by bus from Lyngseidet to Tromsø and took a plane from there via Bodø to Trondheim. From there we drove in our own car, which had been privately parked, back to Alvdal. Paramananda was to spend another week in the family's cabin at Lyngen to have complete rest. He flew directly from Tromsø to Oslo on the



Top left: Picnic near Lyngseidet. Here; Bjorn, Harald, Mette, Tripti Ma and Heika in front. Photo: Hans Petter. Top right: Marith, Tripti Ma and Hans Petter fishing from the fishing boat. Above left: The landscape in Lyngen is most beautiful. Above right: Paramananda and Kari Ada enjoying the view by the sea. Left: Parts of the Lyngen Alps in the crisp clear air of colourful autumn. All photos: BP.

26th of the same month, and Tripti Ma and I fetched him from the airport and drove him to my parents' home in Moss. After spending two days there and then three days in Oslo with Knud and Kari at Ljan, Paramananda left

Norway by plane on Monday October 2nd for Germany and our friends there, while Tripti Ma and I had already returned to Alvdal the day before as Tripti Ma had to start a new job on that Monday.



The postcard Paramananda sent to Tripti Ma from France clearly shows his sense of humour!

Art of Life Course at Savalen

This time in Europe Paramananda finally got to visit France. He sent a postcard from Paris to Tripti Ma and me dated October 7th and one from Provence dated October 24th writing that he has visited many places and that the country is beautiful but very expensive. After two months with our friends in various countries in Europe, Paramananda returned to Norway on December 3rd. He was received by Anne Kristin and Harald in Oslo. Tripti Ma and I brought him by car from Anne Kristin's parents the next day to a hired hall in Oslo where many people wanted to meet him for *satsanga*. The following day Paramananda gave two lectures at the Brandbu Folk High School before we went on to Alvdal the same evening. During the two months of absence of Paramananda, Tripti Ma and I had prepared for a course with him on his return. That was to be an "Art of Life" course which was to prepare the ground for the same course at the Mt. Tron University of Peace in the future.

We had been in contact with the Savalen Mountain Hotel where one of the Hektoen brothers, who both recently had taken over the management after their parents, showed me around in their apartment hotel, which I found quite fit for our purpose. And when he heard that all the income from the course would be given in full to Paramananda's orphanage in Banagram, he spontaneously declared that his hotel would sponsor the whole

course! We therefore had a completely free stay there for as long as the course lasted, from Friday December 8th to Sunday December 10th 1995, worth about 10,000 Norwegian Krone at that time. The hotel also most willingly helped us with the purchase of all the food needed, so that we could buy it at the same basic price as the hotel did.

It was all in all a really very generous gift, and the 32 course participants, from all over Norway, had three very important and unforgettable days together with Paramananda at Savalen. The participants were of all ages and the eldest was 75 years old. He was also the one who had travelled for longest to come there – three long days! It was really impressive, especially because he was in very poor health and was taking very strong pain killing medicine. Poor physically, yes, but how mentally positive! And with an unbending will to meet Paramananda. We did not know him before and how he had heard about us was something of a mystery because we did not make any announcements or advertisements for the course – the news was only spread from friend to friend. Luckily, he was extremely satisfied with the course and was moved to tears as he took leave of us at the course's end.

During the course we all sat very comfortably and nicely in the living room with a fire burning in the open hearth and with lots of white snow outside the windows. No one else was in the apartment hotel, so there were no disturbances from others. And for the very first time Paramananda allowed me to take down notes directly as he spoke. But only I and no one else was allowed to. The reason was that we should preserve a written ground-

work for the later activity at the University of Peace. Paramananda sat in a chair by the fireside and all the others sat close by in chairs and sofas, facing him. The course was named "Art of Life – Art of Living", and a smiling and lustrous Paramananda spontaneously started thus, completely without any notes:

My motto in life is: 'Simple living – high thinking!', not luxury living and poor thinking! Consciously or unconsciously we all want to find the Truth about our lives. If you want to *realize* Truth it is very easy, but if you want to *learn* it, it is very difficult – because Truth is very simple and natural, but if you try to explain it, it makes complications. Truth cannot be explained, it can only be realized.

Life is a journey to reach Perfection:

Education is the manifestation of Perfection already in man. Our education system today with diplomas and degrees is only giving us a license to earn money.

Religion is the realization of Truth already in man. Religions of today makes people separate from each other. The world does not need more religions, we need humanity.

Humanity is conscience and sincerity. Still we are only *Homo sapiens* – we are not yet human. We are not yet civilized. Be human! Lack of conscience and sincerity bring misuse and demoralization. We need diversity, not separation and duality.

Ego makes 'isms'. The concept of Hell is the kingdom of the Ego. The concept of Heaven is the kingdom of Love. Resurrection is the death of the Ego and the awakening of Consciousness to enter Heaven.

Realization comes through practice, not belief. Science is hypothesis, observation and implementation – like philosophy, yoga and art of living.

There are seven principles of life:

First there are three needs of life which are food, cloth and shelter; and then there are three necessities of life which are health, education and security; and then there is a purpose of life which is the seventh and final principle, and that is perfection or spirituality.

In spirituality there are three steps:

First we have to learn the language of the body; then reading our mind; and lastly knowing our Self. Because only by knowing our body and mind can we know our Self.

Nature is our mother – if we exploit nature we get sickness and disturbance ...

And thus Paramananda continued by delving thoroughly into the first part of the course which he called "**Learning language of body**", with seven degrees of human food – what is beneficial to our health and what is not;

with life style and how to breathe correctly and how to relax the body; the body's organs, meridians and energy; about how the course of the body's energy either works outwardly or inwardly, etc. Thereafter he went on with the second part of the course which he called "**Reading the mind**":

We are reading so many books, but we do not read our mind. Books are only the reflection of mind, because Truth cannot be written or expressed. Everybody has problem in mind, so how to read the mind? Reading the mind starts by concentrating the mind or making tune in mind ...

He told us in detail about the nature of mind; about how it always depends on something and how it is relative because there is always an object in mind; and about how the active mind always is in a state of duality; about the impermanency of the mind, because what we see and feel and experience is always in relation to our mood or angle of mind, which again has been formed on the basis of our sense impressions, etc. He pointed out how we first have to relax the mind before we focus it, so then finally we can observe it as a passive witness. And then in the end he went on to the third and last part of the course which he called "**Knowing Thyself**":

Everybody, knowingly or unknowingly, is looking for peace and bliss. Any kind of material or object cannot give you peace or bliss. **It is in your nature – in your Self.** Peace is not outside – you cannot buy it from the market, nor can anyone give it to you. It is not manufactured. **Peace is a feeling of life when your nature is in harmony.** Through peace conferences you cannot get peace. You can only feel it – it is abstract and individual. If you are in peace others can also feel that peace. Peace is inside you. **Bliss is yourself – that is You! We can give joy, happiness and pleasure, but we cannot give or exchange bliss. We can only realize it through our Self.**

He told us how the very inner tendency of life is to conquer each other and that consequently, 90 percent of all education, scientific research, commerce and resources are used for destructive purposes; that we cannot ignore this tendency, but we don't know *how* to conquer, and that we have to conquer by *wisdom, love and service*; how there is no creed, cast, sect or gender in spirituality or spiritualness, but that everything is the manifestation of Pure Consciousness – totally freedom; he quoted Rishi Asthavakra saying: "There is no bondage and no liberation – you are ever free", and then asking: "How can we experience this? **Don't try to look – witness!**" Finally Paramananda spoke to us on evolution and the purpose of life:

Why this life and existence? To feel ecstasy and bliss! In the beginning there was nothing, only the *wish* of Pure Consciousness to enjoy Itself. That *wish* is **OM** or *Pranava* which is the cause of *Prakriti* or Cosmos. But there was no duality – only unity.

Then he went on to enumerate the 16 *kalas* or wishes of Creation, which each include two million life cycles:

- 1 Kala = **Inorganic life**: time, space (height, length and width) and matter (plasma, gas, liquid and solid) – *downward manifestation*
- 2 “ = **Organic life**: vegetation
- 3 “ = **Biologic life**: virus, bacteria, worm, insect – *forward manifestation*
- 4 “ = **Egg life**: fish, reptile, bird (manifestation of mind)
- 6 “ = **Animal life**: mammals
- 8 “ = **Manusha (Human being)** – *upward manifestation*
- 10 “ = **Deva** (highest manifestation of human being): conscience and renunciation
- 12 “ = **Rishi** (realized: top of *ascending*): wisdom and love manifested
- 14 “ = **Avatar** (*descending*): 8 mental powers, and ability to teach and preach
- 16 “ = **Purushottama** (Perfection: the complete satisfaction of Brahman): ability to enjoy himself (alone) and to transfer it to others as well, and being both man and woman – *Complete*

And then he continued by explaining the ten *avatars* of the Hindus – that they are totems or symbols of the theory of evolution:

1. **Mina-Avatar** (Fish) = mind manifestation
2. **Kurma-Avatar** (Tortoise) = egg manifestation
3. **Varaha-Avatar** (Boar) = mammal manifestation: big thyroid: horizontal life
4. **Narashima-Avatar** (Beast-Man) = *Homo habilis*: transition from animal to human being
5. **Vamana-Avatar** (Pygmy) = *Homo erectus*: thyroid weak/pituitary strong: vertical life: first man manifestation
6. **Pashuram-Avatar** (Neanderthal man) = hunter/warrior
7. **Ram-Avatar** (*Homo sapiens*) = farmer
8. **Krishna&Balaram-Avatar** = Spiritual manifestation + farming
9. **Buddha-Avatar** = Non-violence, renunciation and compassion: social conditions + education (Buddha, Christ, Chaitanya, Ramakrishna)
10. **Kalki-Avatar** (White horse + sword) = ending the *Kali Yuga* with dynamic spirituality

(white horse = velocity and strength;
sword = wisdom)

Then at the end he most brilliantly solved the famous “Riddle of the Sphinx” from antiquity by once and for all explaining that the Sphinx represents a ‘condensed theory of evolution’: The snake tail depicts the *downward movement* of evolution, while the lion body depicts the *forward movement*, and finally the human head depicts the vertical or *upward movement* of evolution.

Later, after the course, Paramananda told me that what he had told about evolution was completely new with him: “**This has never before been said or written by anyone.**” Several of Paramananda’s disciples and devotees have, in English publications in India, tried to reproduce this, but their renderings are very incomplete and they have often misunderstood. They have not managed to recount properly what Paramananda had told them. The representation above is exactly how he presented it in the course, but he had also told me about this before at Shantibu in 1989-90.

The meaning of evolution is a *journey through life to Perfection*. The evolution of the ego has arisen from the feeling of pain and insecurity, but after full security there is resurrection to the ‘normal’. All this is in relativity, but there is no distinction. Ascending and descending is the cycle of Creation. *Brahman* (God) is reflecting in all bodies, only the field is different – the degree of manifestation. *Brahman* is Omnipotent and Omnipresent, but there are three basic moods of manifestation: *Tamasic* mood or lesser manifestation; *Rajasic* mood or moderate manifestation; and *Sattvic* mood or more manifestation. All this is diversity, but there is no distinction. Mood is nothing permanent, it can be changed – by art of life, art of living!

Thus ended Paramananda the course at Savalen, and we were filled by Eternal Truths by a most perfect manifestation of that same Truth!

After the course at Savalen Paramananda went with Kari Ada to Os to help her in her natural medicine clinic. One early morning at this time, on December 12th, I dreamed a most fantastic dream in which I saw myself in the Himalayas together with Paramananda, Swami Baulananda and Ramananda Avaduth. For several years I had actually had a certain feeling of living a kind of parallel life in the Himalayas as a yogi. On my 40th birthday on December 15th Paramananda phoned me from Os and wanted to join in the birthday party in Shantibu in which my parents, younger brother, and my sister and her family participated. But I refused by making an excuse and said it was only for the sake of my family and that I was not really very interested myself, so he did not come. Actu-



The only known photo from the initial Art of Life course at Savalen in December 1995. Photographer unknown.

ally it was only because I would feel too shy to get all the attention of everybody in his presence, which I felt would not be proper or at all nice. Really it felt impossible for me to go through with anything like that, and I would probably not have been able to forgive myself afterwards, even if I know that Paramananda himself would not even have thought about it.

Paramananda was back at Shantibu just before Christmas and then also Kari Ada’s family had come from Lyngseidet and stayed at the Tronsvangen Seterhotell, just a few stone’s throws uphill from Shantibu. Several other friends also showed up during the next days, so during the birthday celebration of Paramananda on December 25th, Shantibu was completely packed with people, including Kari Ada’s big Pyreneean dog, Heika, who was lying in the entrance and who everybody had to step over when going to the toilet or in and out of the house. And thus was the situation for more or less the whole of the Christmas period. I suffered from a powerful crick in my back and had to lie on a mattress on the floor of my office in the other building, so I did not experience too much of all that.

By New Years Eve I had recovered enough to be up and moving about to some extent, so we decided to accept my sister’s invitation to visit her family at Gaupen outside of Hamar. There also my parents and younger brother had come from Moss. Earlier Paramananda had expressed to me the wish to experience a traditional Norwegian celebration of New Year’s Eve, and now he did so thoroughly. It was a great party with lots of food and drink, parlour games, song, dance and music throughout the

night, and, of course, fireworks at midnight. All in all we had great fun and everybody enjoyed themselves greatly, including Paramananda who participated in everything and seemed to really enjoy himself. The three hour long train journey from Alvdal to Hamar, prior to the party, had passed in a blink because Paramananda talked so wonderfully inspiringly to Tripti Ma and me during the whole journey. No back pain or feeling of time or place – as only Paramananda could do it!

Early on the first day of the New Year Paramananda, Tripti Ma and I already took leave of the party and continued by train to Oslo where Knud fetched us from the railway station. Paramananda visited Anne Kristin together with Saswati during the day, but returned to Knud and Kari at Ljan in the evening and stayed overnight there. The next day, on January 2nd 1996 we took leave of Paramananda who went by plane back to India. The same day Tripti Ma and I went back to Alvdal by train where we were met by extreme cold, minus 35 degrees centigrade. Some days later, on Thursday January 11th, Paramananda phoned from India and told me that his mother had just died. I became quite speechless and didn’t know what to say. What to say to a man like him in a situation like that? I also didn’t know his mother except for meeting her only once and very briefly in his hut in Banagram many years earlier. That time I only noticed that I felt that he looked very much like his mother, with the same eyebrows and facial features. Naturally Paramananda understood my silence and only said: “When one’s own mother dies, that is something special.” Six and a half years later I understood exactly what he meant, when my own mother died.



Paramananda's birthday celebration at Shantibu, 25th December 1995, with many guests.
Two top photos: BP. Two photos above: Espen.

Difficulties and plots

After Paramananda left, lots of problems arose again in the work for the University of Peace. One thing was that we had no funds to work with, another was that neither did the municipality of Alvdal have any resources, whether financial or human resources, to do their part of the work which was municipal planning and adaptation. Without proper organizing on the side of the municipality, it was impossible for us to do anything at all. But still, worst of all were all the plots that were hatched through which two or three rich people of weight and power conspired to influence many other people, and did whatever they could to throw a spanner in the works. They managed to make a lot of fuss with continual negative press coverage, whose purpose was to undermine us so that in the long run we would have to give the whole project to others. This went on with greater or lesser intensity during most of 1996, 1997 and the first quarter of 1998, and took a lot of energy. At times it was very intense and felt

very difficult, with a huge pressure from authorities, media and a variety of organizations and private persons. I wrote many long letters to Paramananda at that heavy time in which I tried to explain the best that I could about what was happening here, while he in his letters to me in reply did what he could to cheer me up, make me understand and go on with my work:

Paramananda Mission,
Banagram
1.10.96
Dear Atman Pakhi,
... Don't despair. Be stern and go on with your work for Peace University. (...) Sinister motives of rogues cannot arrest the progress of auspicious work.

Burdwan
23.5.97
Dear Atman Pakhi,
... Why should you think yourself inferior? You are the child of Divinity. Great power lies in you. Carry on with your work. It is the nature of opposition party to create hindrances. I can realize that you are passing

through struggle. Don't be depressed. Taking the name of God continue doing your work. Don't worry. God will help you.

Paramananda Mission,
Banagram
10.12.97

Dear Atman Pakhi,
... The path of life is beset with hurdles. Without getting discouraged we should keep going ahead. Without reacting adversely towards unpleasant situation and persons we should try to eliminate their negative effect from our minds. This practice will beautify our life. *Mahapurushas* (great men) also got hurt on many occasions, but they did not react towards those hurts. They eliminated their effects from their minds and went ahead. Put up with every adverse circumstance patiently.

The outer pressure was greater than any time before. During all the years at Shantibu, except for the first four years with Einar Beer, I experienced lots of hardship and direct hostility and adversity from outside people, which at times could be rather extreme and felt pretty hard. But actually I never really took any of it to heart, because I knew that I did right according to the outer circumstances and never had any doubt about that. Of course, a couple of times I entertained the thought of moving far away from Alvdal and everything, but where should I move to and what should I do there? I realized my task was at Mt. Tron, so these thoughts always ended up with me staying put and to continue enduring the challenges. Already from childhood I had learnt from my mother to "clench my teeth and move on" and never give up. Moreover, from both my parents during my youth, I had learnt that I had to finish what I had started. This knowledge had made strong impressions that were always prominent in me.

During all the seven years alone at Shantibu, before Paramananda and afterwards Tripti Ma came to live with me, the hardship and hostility of the outer circumstances was not what challenged me the most, it was myself. When one lives alone and locks out all the contact with the outer world, as I did for long periods, and only concentrates on one's inner life, yes, then one really meets oneself for better or worse. So even in spite of all the outer difficulties, I myself was always the biggest challenge to myself. And that made me always feel inner restlessness and longing. But from the outside no one could understand anything of that, because I was always calm and composed and rather silent by nature.

As mentioned before, through the loving and skilful guidance of Paramananda, I came to the end of the road that time and my inner restlessness and longing found

their eternal rest and satisfaction. So that aspect of my life was no longer a challenge. But the outer challenges continued with undiminished strength and renewed intensity. And even if there were many painful attacks on my person, I never took any of it personally or felt them as personal challenges. In any event, if I had been doing that before, perhaps more sub-consciously than consciously, that time was now definitely a past chapter of my life. Amusingly enough, at that time, Paramananda had said in an open sitting in Banagram with many listeners present, that: "Bjørn is the most calm man in the whole world!" This I heard many years later from a young *brahmacharini* and teacher at the school in Banagram, who remembered this incident and these words when she was introduced to me for the first time.

But, of course, prolonged, big and strong negatively loaded challenges in the public sphere, which hardly give you a break for drawing your breath, may, at times, feel a bit tiresome. Something of the hardest was to 'separate the wheat from the chaff' as regards who are genuine persons for helping and who are not, and who had a clear conscience in their apparently positive engagement. That was a constant and demanding challenge with lots of learning through trial and error, exactly because you always want to see the positive in all and everything, and do not have the habit of judging by appearances. At the start everybody has the right to a fair chance – that is the fundamental attitude. It is fair and inclusive, but it puts one in a vulnerable position and you have to be prepared for many hard blows.

But life is never one-sided, and certainly there were many positive things happening simultaneously in other areas, with friendly and service-minded people who helped with making progress and comfort.



Tripti Ma by the sea near Lyngseidet, Troms, North Norway, September 1995.
Photo: BP.



*Paramananda at
Lyngseidet, Troms,
North Norway,
September 1995.
Photo: BP.*

GLOSSARY (simplified)

- avatar** – divine incarnation; descent of the divine on Earth (in Hinduism there are ten *avatars* in Creation or evolution).
- brahmacharini** – female performer of *brahmacharya*.
- brahmacharya** – apprenticeship (period of training), or the first of four stages in a Hindu's life; self-discipline, especially in relation to sexuality. See *brahmacharini*.
- Brahman** – ‘The Absolute’; ‘Absolute Consciousness’; ‘God’.
- deva** – deity, divinity; highest manifestation of man, with developed conscience and renunciation.
- guna** – ‘constituent’ or ‘quality’ of nature; that characteristic which makes us able to discern and differentiate one thing from another.
- kala** – ‘wish’; in evolution one *kala* is equal to two million life-cycles.
- Kali Yuga** – the last and shortest of the four *yugas*, which comprise a cycle and alternate in Creation; the present age, which is the heaviest, darkest and most material (least spiritual) of all the *yugas*. See *yuga*.
- mahapurusha** – “great soul”.
- manusha** – ‘man’ or ‘the human being’, or actually ‘the self-conscious, humanitarian human’.
- OM / AUM** – the sacred monosyllable of the Hindus, which is the symbolic representation of Brahman (God); “the primordial sound” from which everything originates, is sustained, and becomes dissolved into; the Absolute's wish to experience and enjoy Itself.
- Pakhi** – ‘bird’ (Bengali pronunciation of Sanskrit *pakshi*); the author's pet name given by Paramananda.
- prakriti** – ‘procreatrix’ or ‘nature’; the source or producer of the universe; the feminine counterpart to *purusha*. See *purusha*.
- pranava** – term used for *OM*. See *OM*.
- purusha** – ‘soul’, ‘man’ (more in the sense of ‘spirit’ or ‘identity’); the positive principle; the masculine counterpart to *prakriti*. See *prakriti*.
- Purushottama** – the Absolute's final and complete manifestation in Creation; Fulfillment or Perfection.
- rajas** – the middle, two-way directed *guna*, representing a moderate degree of manifestation; energy, activity, restlessness. See *guna*.
- rishi** – ‘seer’; Self-Realized sage; the highest level attained by humans through evolution, who manifests love and wisdom; (in plural) ‘the seven (original) rishis’ did not come through evolution, but by divine incarnation, and are the mind-born sons of *Brahma*, who were created for the protection of all living beings, including gods and men, and who are always living among the people on earth (through continuous rebirth) to fulfill this task.
- satsanga** – ‘gathering for truth’; a popular type of company with questions and answers, between guru and disciples or spiritual head and audience.
- sattva** – the most subtle of the three *gunas*, representing a high degree of manifestation; spirituality, light, harmony. See *guna*.
- tama** – the most gross of the three *gunas*, representing a low degree of manifestation; matter, darkness, inactivity. See *guna*.
- yuga** – age or era.

Continuation follows in the next number next year.