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Swami Paramananda at Ranchi, Bihar, 1983. Photo: BP.

IN SEARCH OF TRUTH

MY EXPERIENCES WITH
SWAMI PARAMANANDA

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A YOGI IN THE WEST

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DEDUCTION

Reincarnation and Rishis

The subject of reincarnation and reincarnated people has, through the many years with Paramananda, become a considerable part of my life, so much so that I feel the need to communicate some of my experiences in this field, especially since my very life is a living proof of the phenomenon of reincarnation.

In India among the Hindus and others this is part of daily life, but in the West it is still less well known and for the most part unaccepted. However, in the USA serious research on reincarnation is going on and so far this has independently found much of what is already established knowledge in India, for instance that reincarnation most commonly occurs around three years after each death and that strong or deep mental impressions from one life will mark or influence the next life. Another known factor is that strong attachment to persons or places in one life may cause the next birth to be near these. For the most part research findings show how mental influences in one life participate in the formation of the next life. So far the research is mainly concerned with finding again or rediscovering identities from one life to another, and demonstrating the connection or the similarity of identity. It is interesting and commendable that serious scientists focus on this, thus breaking with the deep-rooted remonstrance in the age-old heritage of religious dogmatic concepts, together with the taboos of modern science where it is great sacrilege to postulate anything else than the purely material cause of our origin.

On the other hand it is high time for this development as this knowledge is several thousand years old and recognized reality for hundreds of millions of people in the East. In Tibet, for instance, the identification of reincarnated lamas is a very old science. The very transition from death to a new birth has been dealt with in detail in the chapter “The Truth about Anandacharya’s Rebirth” in the section “Life together with Paramananda”. It must be understood that in this evolution the law of reincarnation is inseparable from the law of action in the sense of cause and effect, which in India is called ‘karma’. Both of these are very natural, logical and scientific, and they have nothing to do with faith or belief. In fact they represent such obvious realities of life that it is almost laughable that the West does not readily accept them – which

is only due to an ingrained superiority complex, ill will and what I call “learned ignorance”. The well known and widely popular expression ‘transmigration of souls’ is completely misunderstood, if by ‘soul’ one means ‘atman’. Nothing ever happens to atman – that is really not possible! What passes from one body to another is mind and individual identity – never atman. There is no such thing as atman in plural – atman is always one and the same! Moreover, the popular notion about karma and reincarnation that a human being may be reincarnated as an animal or almost anything, is also highly misunderstood and has been taken out of its proper context. Reincarnation is, like most other things, bound by evolution, and as such moves continuously forward. If there is any backward movement it will only be accidental – it is not the regular way. But if it happens it proves that mind and the mental impressions are superior to physics, which is also commonly seen in the general adaptation of species.

The years with Paramananda have made me rediscover and identify many incarnations, both together with him when he was in physical body, but also later on. For instance, I have rediscovered the identity of both my parents, after they died in 2002 (mother) and 2006 (father), within the family. However, it all started with the company of Paramananda who had many well-known identities in his inner circles. As already mentioned in the chapter “Picnic on the Ganges”, Paramahansa Yogananda’s identity had been reborn as Mihir or Swami Prajñananda, who left his body in 2005, only 47 years of age, and who by now most certainly has been born again. There were, and are still, many such mahatmas and rishis around Paramananda who are well-known names in the world. Sri Aurobindo was one of those who were born again among his disciples in this life, this time born in Italy.

Another was the great Sufi master Hazrat Inayat Khan. When I visited Banagram in 1987 I brought with me a photo of Khan which I felt looked very much like Swami Purnananda in the ashram. “No, not Purnananda”, Paramananda immediately remarked when I showed him the photo and told him about the similarity with Purnananda, and then he laid his one hand over the brow and his other hand over the mouth and nose of Khan in the photo, so that only his eyes were visible; “don’t you see now that those are exactly the eyes of Devendranath?” And I could do nothing but agree, because the similarity with

Devendranath became striking when he did that! Devendranath’s sannyasi name in this life was Swami Visuddhananda, and he left his body in 2017. The identity of the world famous Bengali poet and Nobel Prize Laureate Rabindranath Tagore is also among those who are his sannyasi disciples in this life. Otherwise Paramananda revealed the identity of three of Ramakrishna’s disciples, Rakhal, Yogin and Kali who were otherwise known as Swami Brahmananda, Swami Yogananda and Swami Abhedananda respectively, as none of them would be among his nearest disciples in Banagram in this life. ¹⁾

Another well-known name in the world is Jiddu Krishnamurti who left his body in California on February 17th 1986. Only a few weeks before that, on January 4th that year, was his very last appearance in India, in Madras. Devendranath had brought Paramananda to the public event and made arrangements for him to meet with Krishnamurti after the show. Paramananda then asked him how it was that he could be so against ‘guruism’ when it was obvious to all that he had become a guru himself, but he did not receive any clear answer from Krishnamurti to this question. But the next time I met Paramananda after this incident, in 1987, he enthusiastically told me that he had met Krishnamurti in South India – that he had “seen a very small and delicate man who was just like a rishi, and he was the same identity as Nagarjuna”. Nagarjuna was a very sharp Buddhist philosopher and logician with great influence who lived in

the 2nd and 3rd Century A.D. Afterwards I often thought about why Paramananda had told me about this specific meeting – there were so many other interesting people that he also met but who he didn’t tell me about.

Many years later, in 2010, I was visited by a young ethnic Norwegian man who was born in 1991 and who had contacted me by e-mail prior to the visit. From the very first contact I felt that there was something very special about this young man, which was only greatly enhanced during the visit. So much so that it kept me awake at night, thinking only about who this man could be. Finally I did something which I otherwise would never do under such circumstances –I asked Paramananda. And immediately I got an answer: Jiddu Krishnamurti. The answer surprised me, but when I looked him up on the Internet and read about his life, I found that everything concurred with my observations and experiences with this young Norwegian, and besides, the interval between death and new birth was right. He was really extremely “self-made” and kind of stubborn, and when later he had a girlfriend, he confided in me that all of those romantic and sexual experiences felt completely new and foreign to him. I certainly did not reveal my discovery to him, and later we have lost contact. An amusing little additional detail is that history reveals that Nagarjuna in his time visited *Uttara-Kuruvarsha*, Scandinavia, as did also Krishnamurti, so that the connection to this part of the world was already established long ago.



The author (in blue) together with Bharat Tiwari at the entrance to the author’s hut at Satavisha, Azim Ganj, Murshidabad, December 29th 2013. The hut was built on the very site where Paramananda first told about his plans for Satavisha. Photo: Nirmukta Prana (Chaitali Ma).

Otherwise, Paramananda pointed out two young Norwegian boys when he was in Norway in 1989, who were the children of families we knew and who he said were mahatmas (both are living quite ordinary lives with family and jobs in this life). Later, after Paramananda had left his physical body, I have myself identified three or four other ethnic Norwegians who are mahatmas, together with a girl in one of the immigrant communities of Norway. Moreover, at Shantibu in 1989, Paramananda told me that many mahatmas now will be born in Norway on account of the University of Peace.

Then there are many indications that the identities of both Osho and Vivekananda are again born among the friends of Paramananda in India during the mid 1990s and that they met with him in their early childhood. Regarding Osho, Paramananda asked me on a couple of occasions what I thought about him. At the first time of asking Osho was still known only as Rajneesh or Bhagawan Sri Rajneesh. There were so many others he could have asked my opinion about in the same way, but he only asked me about Osho, and it is only many years later that I have come to understand why. I was pretty harsh in my criticism of Rajneesh, and Paramananda told me some secret incidents from his life and explained why his mission had become a little perverted. He also criticized Rajneesh for having given the same teaching to all – to huge masses. Paramananda otherwise never used to criticize any saint. The next time he asked me this question Osho had already left his body (January 19th 1990). Again I was quite merciless in my criticism of him, but Paramananda

remained thoughtful and silent and just listened to me. I felt that there was something about Paramananda, as if he was brooding on something, and finally he said: “Well, at least he tried”, by which he meant especially Osho’s attempt to loosen up the rigid and suppressed sexual inhibitions of people. Only then I understood that Paramananda had a soft spot for Osho and that he loved him dearly like a son.²⁾

Many years later I saw for the very first time a video recording of Osho and heard him talk, and only then did it become clear to me the very high state of consciousness he was in. My criticism about him to Paramananda was only based on the practical, visible effects of Osho’s work and mission, which I found not only distasteful but even quite hopeless. Several years later I had the great pleasure of meeting him reincarnated as a young student in India – as an unusually innocent and lovable soul with an extreme purity of mind and who lived a very simple life with his mother and father and younger sister. Without me having the faintest thought about Osho in relation to this young man, it was he himself who first confided in me that he felt that he had been Osho in his previous life. Just like me when I read the books by Anandacharya for the first time, he had also recognized every word when he first read the books by Osho. This young man was by no means any banal fantasist with an overly active imagination or one having needs indicating that he would be making it all up. On the contrary he was a very calm, decent, and harmonious boy. His words surprised me, because I would not have associated this young man

with Osho in any way, but that he was a mahatma, was quite clear to me beyond any doubt. And then also the interval between death and birth was quite right (well over five years). Later on I thought that it was this encounter Paramananda wanted to prepare me for, and at the same time I was able to guide this boy about *baul sadhana*, which just then was a great need and want and help for him. We have met several times after that and become great friends.

From experience, and on reflection, it seems to me that most great incarnations, i.e. those who manifest the Divine more or much more than average, after a “spiritually prosperous” life, having perhaps gained recognition or at least been able to influence and help many, in their next life will have a lesser degree of manifestation and live a quite anonymous life. Myself included. Why is that? After a life of very hard labour and lots of sacrifice it is kind of a holiday and a period of rest for the brain. Less jocularly, it will otherwise serve two very important purposes: Firstly, not to store any “identity ego”; and secondly, to gain more experiences from “common life”, so as to be able to better feel and understand our fellow human beings. If you are a rishi your particular identity will incarnate again and again, and the gaining of ever more experience is important to be able to give the proper assistance to others in need. In India I see now a clear tendency of those great people coming into various positions for governing the country.

Who are the Rishis? From Hindu Mythology we learn that the Rishis were “the mind-born sons of Brahma [God], created by Him for the protection of all life, including gods and men”. Originally there were seven Rishis, but during the ages many more have come through evolution. However, the seven original ones have come by divine descent and not ascended through evolution. These classical Seven Rishis (*Saptarshi*), who are also called *prajapatis* (the patriarchs), are the persons to whom the Vedas (the holy scriptures of the Hindus) were revealed. Also, the two great epics of India, Ramayana and Mahabharata, together with most of the other post-Vedic literature, for instance the philosophical systems, originate from the Rishis. Paramananda told me that the Rishis are born again and again continuously in this world, so that they are always here keeping a watch over everything. It makes sense when you think about the life, teaching and influence of all those towering characters who, even speaking only about those in modern times, have been and are the heroes of very many of us, like Swami Vivekananda, Hazrat Inayat Khan, Sri Aurobindo, Rabindranath Tagore, Paramahansa Yogananda, Ramana Maharshi, Ananda Moi Ma, Jiddu Krishnamurti, Osho and several others, who all have been dynamic representatives for the eternal, unchanging truths, giving expression to them in various ways in accordance with the

level of understanding of their audience and the current conceptions of society at any given time. And that is one of the unique features of Indian philosophy, that it is always renewing itself – so that, at one and the same time, it maintains both the oldest and the youngest spiritual ideas and conceptions of humankind.

Having said all of this it is important to observe that even if there is variation in this creation, there is no distinction or real difference. As previously mentioned, the Atman is one and the same in all! That *apparently* there are differences, is in accordance with the practical use: We use a 100 watt light bulb to light up a relatively big room, while we only need a 60 watt light bulb for a smaller room. Similarly, we need a 40 watt bulb for a table light and a 20 watt bulb for a decorative light, and so on. The luminosity is different in the various units, in accordance with the need and use, but the electrical power is just the same whatsoever! The source is always the one important thing, not the name or the form or the strength of the outlet. And this, then, is what all the Rishis always live by and teach!

Nor is it important or at all necessary to be something or someone particular, so who or what one has been in one’s previous lives has absolutely no meaning. And that is exactly why we are born in ignorance without any recollection about our previous life. In every new physical life we are starting anew with a blank sheet, which in itself is completely fine. I guess most people still would choose ignorance if they had the choice, for who would want to remember all their failures from past lives? I am only dealing with the theme of reincarnation here because it is a neglected and highly misunderstood fact, which is an actual and real phenomenon – and I think it is important that we should know this as a reality of life, because it can help us to live more harmonious lives together in society, and we will have a wider perspective on ourselves in creation. However, to those who think that they have to be a someone or something in this life, I ask: “Can you be *more* than Atman?” As a general rule life has shown me that the more you see on the outside, externally, the less there is on the inside, internally: Anyone who talks incessantly as if he or she suffers from logorrhoea or diarrhoea of the mouth, talks only to hide that he or she actually has nothing to say; and anyone who puts great emphasis on his or her looks or outer appearance as regards material belongings, titles, pomp and splendour, does this to hide that he or she actually has nothing inner of value or importance. A Self-Realized human being has no such need to emphasize him or herself. He or she may stand completely naked and alone, in broad daylight, without feeling the slightest shyness or uneasiness. If people look at you or not, or are aware of you or not, is of no concern. Everything is as it is – and that is quite fine!



The author (in blue) together with Bharat Tiwari by Bhagirati Ganga just outside Satavisha, Azim Ganj, Murshidabad, December 31st 2014. Photo: Nirmukta Prana (Chaitali Ma).

East and West

Once Paramananda told me about a very ancient story belonging to the oral tradition in the Himalayas among yogis, sadhus and sannyasins, which goes as follows:

Brihaspati and Sukracharya were two brothers who could not agree as to what was the right way of finding the Truth. Brihaspati maintained that the Truth could only be found by the inner way – through contemplation and meditation – while Sukracharya was of the opinion that the Truth could be found only through systematic and objective observation of all the outer phenomena. Both felt that the other's way of thinking was completely hopeless and they could not agree or compromise at all. They therefore broke up and went their separate ways. Brihaspati moved with his people up into the Himalayas, whereas Sukracharya travelled westward with his people and finally settled in the European Alps. The descendants of Brihaspati became 'the people of the East' (i.e. "South Caucasians") while the descendants of Sukracharya became 'the people of the West' (i.e. "North Caucasians").

This captivating, several thousand year old story, shows exactly the fundamental difference between the East and the West – on what the people of the two different hemispheres like to put emphasis, with what they like to identify, and what it is they regard as really valuable or not in life. In the East they have a unique and extensive knowledge of the human being, physically, mentally and spiritually, which has been revealed in deepest meditation through the ages. Whereas in the West they have developed everything which has to do with natural sciences, politics, organization, economics, civic rights and so on – all regarding the outer reality of life.



Common Wanderer, *Pareronia valeria*, Satavisha, 02.02.2015. Photo: BP.

Both have an inherent tendency to suspect or even discard the other, but during the last century or so there has been an increasing understanding of the need for the mixing of the views and practical experiences of both cultures, for the benefit of all the people in the whole world.

However, there are a few points of marked difference on which there is a particular need for focus on the side of the Western reader. In the prospectus to his first lecture on Indian philosophy in Stockholm in 1916, Anandacharya explains the fundamental differences in thought between the East and the West, which philosophers, academics and other intellectuals in the West have a particular difficulty in understanding and accepting:

Of three reasons it is infinitely difficult, if not impossible, to understand the true standpoint of the Hindu only with the help of literature, and without the assistance of oral teaching, because

- 1) much of the interpretation has not yet been reduced to writing;
- 2) the understanding of the philosophical truths depends on *sadhana*, i.e. simple living and high thinking; and
- 3) Hindu-philosophical terms do not correspond to the European in meaning.

General predispositions of the Hindu mind in contrast with those of the European mind: the first positively confirms the possibility of directly experiencing the final truths – which the latter categorically denies.

As we, in the West, firmly believe that reading is sufficient in itself to understand absolutely everything, this is very far removed from the traditional approach to knowledge in the East. The importance of sound, rhythm and the oral tradition of the *gurukula* system in India (point 1 above), has been dealt with in previous chapters of this book, and the whole of this book certainly sheds light on the importance of *sadhana* (point 2 above). The third and last point above, about the lack of correlation of spiritual terms, will be dealt with in the following chapters.

FOOTNOTES

1) Usually, Paramananda did not reveal anyone's identity in this way, only if there was a certain reason for doing it. All of these three have been living rather "ordinary" lives in this life. The one who was Yogin I have known quite well in this life, but he who was Rakhal I somehow never met. On February 16th 2015 I had the pleasure of meeting that one who had been Swami Abhedananda previously. We met in a private home in Kolkata and it was our second meeting. The first time was in Delhi in 1989, just before Paramananda's departure to Norway, and as there were many other people present, we were not properly introduced. At that time he was a married man with a young son and worked as an executive. Now he lives in Kolkata and his great hobby is bird-watching, just like myself. He told me that when he first met Robin (Paramananda) in 1975 he noticed five unusual qualities of his that made a strong impression on him: Robin had exceptional energy; he had exceptional compassion; he always related to other people on equal terms; he had the ability to read others' minds; and he had the ability to see the past, present and future.

2) Osho really did everything wrong – whatever mistake could be made, he made it – regarding all kinds of organizing of his spiritual community. Even if Sheela and others did all of the planning and practical matters, as the ultimate head of the organization he was the one responsible, and his attitude inspired all of it. He allowed everything to happen as it did.

So what is the lesson from this for those who are eager to try to organize spirituality?

I. Do not teach the same to all – people are different – no large scale therapy.

II. Do not make your own closed groups or societies with specific, common clothes or symbols or other effects, or things which will make you appear sect-like.

III. Integrate in society – be open and understanding and inclusive – you are there for them, for the common people. In poor countries, make and run first-aid institutions for the poor people, like schools, orphanages, hospitals, etc., and in rich countries make and run art of life and living institutions. It is the common people and society at large who need our help and influence, so everything will be open for all.

IV. All organizations and organizing should be kept to an absolute minimum – only enough to serve its purpose and to survive. The organization is not made for the sake of organization or organizing.

V. For spiritual people practice is the only thing (*sadhana*) – no big discussions, arguments or show, or trying to explain everything. Be the example you want others to see.

GLOSSARY (simplified)

Anandacharya – See *Swami Sri Ananda Acharya*.

atman – the Self, in which rests the unity of being, including man, nature and God.

baul – philosophy with man at the centre, physically, emotionally and spiritually.

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

gurukula – the ancient school system of India in which the pupils live with their teachers.

karma – 'action', 'deed'; popularly known as the 'law of cause and effect' in relation to man.

mahatma – 'great soul'; honorary title of certain, special truth-seekers who stand out from the others. See *atman*.

prajapati – 'mind-born son of Brahma' (God) or 'the master of the living creatures' (also means 'butterfly!'); another term for 'rishi'. See *rishi*.

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.

sadhana – 'which leads straight to the goal'; a person's spiritual search or quest for truth (which involves personal commitment and practice); the collected effort – physically, emotionally and spiritually – for the realization of life's end.

Saptarshi – "The Seven Rishis" (*Sapta Rishi*); "Charles's Wain" or the constellation *Ursa Major* or the "Great Bear" of astronomy and astrology. See *rishi*.

Swami Sri Ananda Acharya (1881-1945) – born in Bengal, India, into a royal family, but became a sannyasin already in his boyhood, travelled by ship to England in 1912 after a revelation in the Himalayas, and came to Norway at the outbreak of the 1st World War in 1914, lived at Tronsvangen in Alvdal, Norway, from September 1917 until his death at the end of the 2nd World War; in this text usually referred to as Anandacharya, as that is the name Paramananda used for him. The only complete biography about him is that written by Bjørn Pettersen: *Swami Sri Ananda Acharya. A forgotten Son of Mother India. His own story. A biography and anthology*. Mt.Tron University of Peace 2019 (ISBN 9788269032628); and Amazon 2020 (ISBN 9788269032635).

Uttara-Kuruvarsha / utara-kuru – old Sanskrit name for Scandinavia and their people; the land of the Northern Kurus – a highly revered and respected, peace loving people, with strong and free women, and without social differences – who were regarded as holy, in spite of being foreigners and thus barbarians.

Continuation follows in the next number next week.