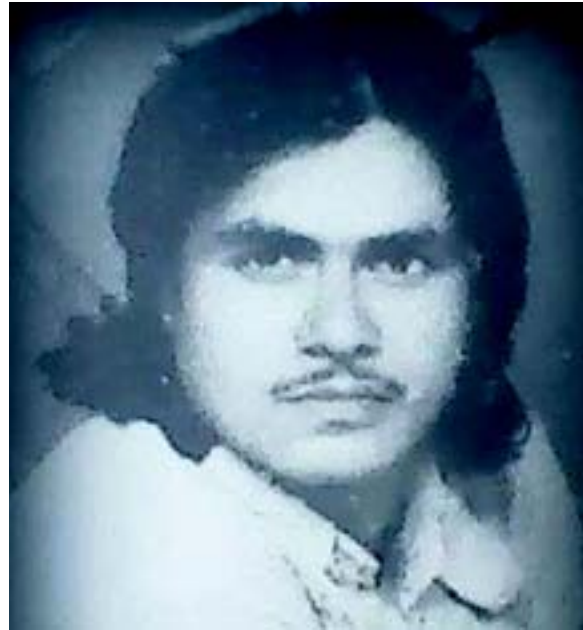




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*"Robin" in his youth, before becoming Swami Paramananda.
Unknown year and photographer.*

IN SEARCH OF TRUTH

MY EXPERIENCES WITH SWAMI PARAMANANDA

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A YOGI IN THE WEST

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and

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LIFE TOGETHER WITH PARAMANANDA

Paramananda's Genesis and Life History

The very same evening, Paramananda told us about how he came into being, his birth and the story of his life – a biography I had only heard in fragments from others before, but which I was now to hear from the very source itself. Anne Kristin, Anne Siri, Torleif and I sat and listened, completely spellbound, to this most wonderful, fantastic and unique story, which is here retold, in summary, from memory.¹⁾

Paramananda told us how he had been in a state of Pure Consciousness, where everything is in perfect equilibrium and without time, space or modifications of any kind. Then, in all this unchanging, suddenly something happened – it was as if something was “knocking” his consciousness as an identity, and gradually he gained consciousness of himself as an identity and became conscious of the whole creation. Then he also became aware of The Seven Rishis in the Himalayas, who together, through the performance of a *yajña*, a ritual, called upon him. They said it was time for him to return now – that the condition of the Earth had become so horrible that he was needed here now – so they beseeched him to incarnate on Earth to prevent mankind from exterminating itself. He accepted their heartfelt prayer, and by that ritual they then made his causal and astral bodies so that he could appear on Earth as a spirit. With his spirit-body intact on Earth he only had to incarnate in a physical body.

So he followed the course of the Ganges downwards from the Himalayas through the plains of North India as a spirit, while all the time he was on the outlook for a **good mother** who could give him that material, earthly body. When he came through the village of Krishnadebpur in the Burdwan District of Bengal, he saw a pious woman and mother who, after a long day of work, had put all her children and whole family to bed for the night, and was herself sitting absorbed in prayer to Krishna. It was a full moon night and the mother was deeply absorbed in the chanting of Lord Krishna's name when he entered her body through her open mouth, and she became pregnant with him without any participation or influence of any father. He remained in her womb for twelve months before his body was fully developed and he was ready to take birth. During the period of gestation he was all the time fully conscious and could follow everything that happened outside the womb. For instance he didn't allow her husband to have sexual intercourse with her for that whole year as he considered it harmful to him-

self, so he influenced his mother mentally to prevent it from happening. Inside the womb he was sitting in Lotus posture, and when finally his mother gave birth to him in the home, he came out with his legs first. They were stretched out during the delivery, while his arms were raised above his head with the palms together, so that his hands were the last part of his body to come out. In this way he greeted the world and did *pranam* to it.

At this point in the story Paramananda got up from his chair and demonstrated on the floor how the delivery had happened. “It could have been a little dangerous for my mother to give birth in that way”, he added, “but everything went on quite fine without any difficulty.” He did not cry at the time of birth, but remained completely silent. Also his body was different from everybody else – it had developed and got rid of the various small bone fragments and other substances which we have retained from the ape stage in evolution and which no longer have any function in the human body. He also did not have any protruding larynx as men have. He said that in the future this will be the kind of body which all humans will possess. His parents named him ‘Rabindranath’ or ‘Robin’ for short.

A very typical trait of his childhood was that every night he used to roam outdoors with Mother Kali. At midnight, when the rest of the family were asleep, Mother Kali would always come to him and wake him up, saying: “Hey, Robin, come – it's time to go outside now!” And then the two of them would roam everywhere in the neighbourhood of Krishnadebpur, where he grew up, and played and did all kinds of funny things that children do, like bathing in the Ganges and stealing fruit from the gardens, and thoroughly enjoyed themselves until early dawn. Then she brought him back to his house to go to sleep before anybody else woke up. This happened every single night for several years of his childhood. But as he grew older he started to question why this only happened to him and not to any of his other playmates, and he started to think that maybe he himself was the cause of it. He therefore decided to conduct an experiment. The picture of Mother Kali at the family's *puja* place, was replaced with a huge radish which he had bought in the market, and he then started to worship it in just the same manner and with the same fervour as he had always been doing to Mother Kali. And quite right, the following night this huge radish came to him and asked him to come along! Then he understood that it was all a projection of his own mind, and he immediately stopped worshipping anything and instead only observed neutrally.

As he grew up, there arose many problems because he wasn't quite like other children. He was the sixth child of twelve but little Robin was very different from all the others and his parents became increasingly worried about him. For example, when his mother was to give him a bath, he felt the sensation of water on his skin was so nice that he would immediately go deeply into the sensation of water and only concentrate on water, water, water, whereupon he would lose all outer consciousness and go into the *samadhi* of only water. And in the same way this would happen with fire or any of the elements, or with food or song or almost anything at all. Suddenly, without any warning, the boy would go into *samadhi*, apparently senseless, and all those around him would think him sick or that something terrible had happened to him. His parents tried everything from doctors to witchdoctors, from medication to exorcism, but nothing helped. At last, in utter desperation, they saw no other option than to commit him to a psychiatric hospital. They had tried everything else, so they did this in good faith and really thought it would be helpful to him. He was nine years old then and went to the fourth class of the primary school.

At the mental hospital he was kept in a closed ward where he was treated by electroshock, which was very horrible and which made a very loud kind of sound in his head. But he never lost consciousness, so they repeated the treatment again and again. After ten such “treatments” he understood that he had to act as if unconscious since only then would they stop. When he had been there for about four months, one day he suddenly discovered an open door which somebody had forgotten to lock, and he quickly slipped out and escaped from the precincts. Then two years as a street boy followed where he competed with cows and others for the leftovers from the fruit and vegetable market for his daily food. It was a cut-throat time in which he received many shocks from people. Once, in a railway station, when he had had nothing to eat for many days and he asked a traveller for some money to buy food, he received instead a kick to his stomach and fainted. When he regained his senses he found himself in the care of the impoverished porters of the station, who gave him food and water. After this incident he made a promise to himself never to ask anybody for anything, and that he should do something for orphan children in the future.

During those years as a street boy he wandered over large parts of India and saw lots of social destitution and injustice, and, not least, how many religious leaders lived in great luxury by ruthlessly exploiting their followers by playing on their superstition and ignorance. All these things made a strong impression on him, and he promised himself that he would work to change all this inhumanity in the future. In several of the places he

passed through during his wanderings, where he felt that the people were particularly oppressed and troubled, he made a promise to come back later, as an adult, to do something to help them out. Most of his ashrams today are established precisely at these places, like his ashrams in Azim Ganj in the Murshidabad District, where we find, amongst others, the Satavisha Social Welfare Society for destitute women.

Once, during his wandering, when he came to a Buddhist monastery in Buthan, the monks there told him that it was necessary for him to learn self-defence. He therefore stayed with them for a couple of months to receive training in Kung Fu, but after a while he felt it was too much just a physical exercise. When eventually he left there and continued his wandering alone on foot through the jungle, he soon experienced the benefit of his training when he was attacked by a leopard. He managed to protect himself in such a way that the leopard gave up its attack and disappeared. In the end he came to Haridwar and Rishikesh in the Himalayan foothills of North India, where he met many sadhus and sannyasins. Only then, at last, he felt a great relief, because finally there were people who understood him and accepted him as he was.

One evening, as he sat alone by the shores of the Ganges, two *naga*-sannyasins, a man and a woman, came to him and gestured silently to follow them. He did so, and they wandered uphill, deep into the mighty Himalayas. They wandered for many days without stopping, and whenever he felt tired or hungry, they found a certain kind of leaf which they laid on his navel, and instantly he felt lots of energy and was able to continue walking. Where they went was far away from any human settlement and there was no food to be found. Sometimes they also ate *shilajit* or “stone sweat”, which is extremely rich in minerals and gives lots of energy. After several days of wandering deep in the Himalayas they arrived at a huge cave where the two *nagas* took him inside. Deep inside the cave, in pitch darkness, after his eyes had become accustomed to the dark, he dimly observed the contours of a man sitting in the lotus posture. As the figure was not moving he first thought it to be a sculpture carved in stone. But then the *nagas* started to chant *OM* loudly in front of the figure, again and again, and after a while, to his great amazement, he saw that the figure started to move and come to life. Then he understood that this was a human being, and the man signalled to him to come close. The man then gave him a message for his life, which is secret and which he therefore cannot reveal, but he understood that the person in front of him was the famous Babaji.

Paramananda here added that Babaji had been created by the Rishis in the Himalayas so that they should have a representative of themselves in a physical body who did not have to be born and die and reincarnate over

and over again, like they had to do, but could live continually in this world. ²⁾ Babaji is not 500 years old, as some literature maintains, but nearly 12,000 years old (Paramananda actually said the exact number of years, but as it was not noted down, unfortunately it was later forgotten). All who have a certain, great spiritual mission in life, have to come to Babaji to get a message. (On a later occasion Paramananda told me that he used to be mistaken for Babaji wherever he went in the Himalayas, and if we look at the photographs of the so-called “Herakan Babaji” – one of several known temporary manifestations of Babaji in India, who for some years in the 1970s and early 1980s, stayed in the Almora District of the Himalayas – we see a great physical resemblance to Paramananda, especially in his younger years).

After this incident Paramananda or Robin, as was his name at that time, continued to travel all over the Himalayas with the *naga* couple for several years. In reality this couple were the incarnation of Shiva and Parvati, and they brought young Robin to all places of importance and to all great saints and sages everywhere in the entire Himalayas. Once, as they were wandering in the Hindu Kush mountains in the Western Himalayas they lost their way and, after many days of walking through a desert, ended up in Basra in Southern Iraq. The population there became scared when they saw the completely naked, very dark skinned couple and boy with their long, matted hair, and started to throw stones at them, so they turned around and went back by the same route.

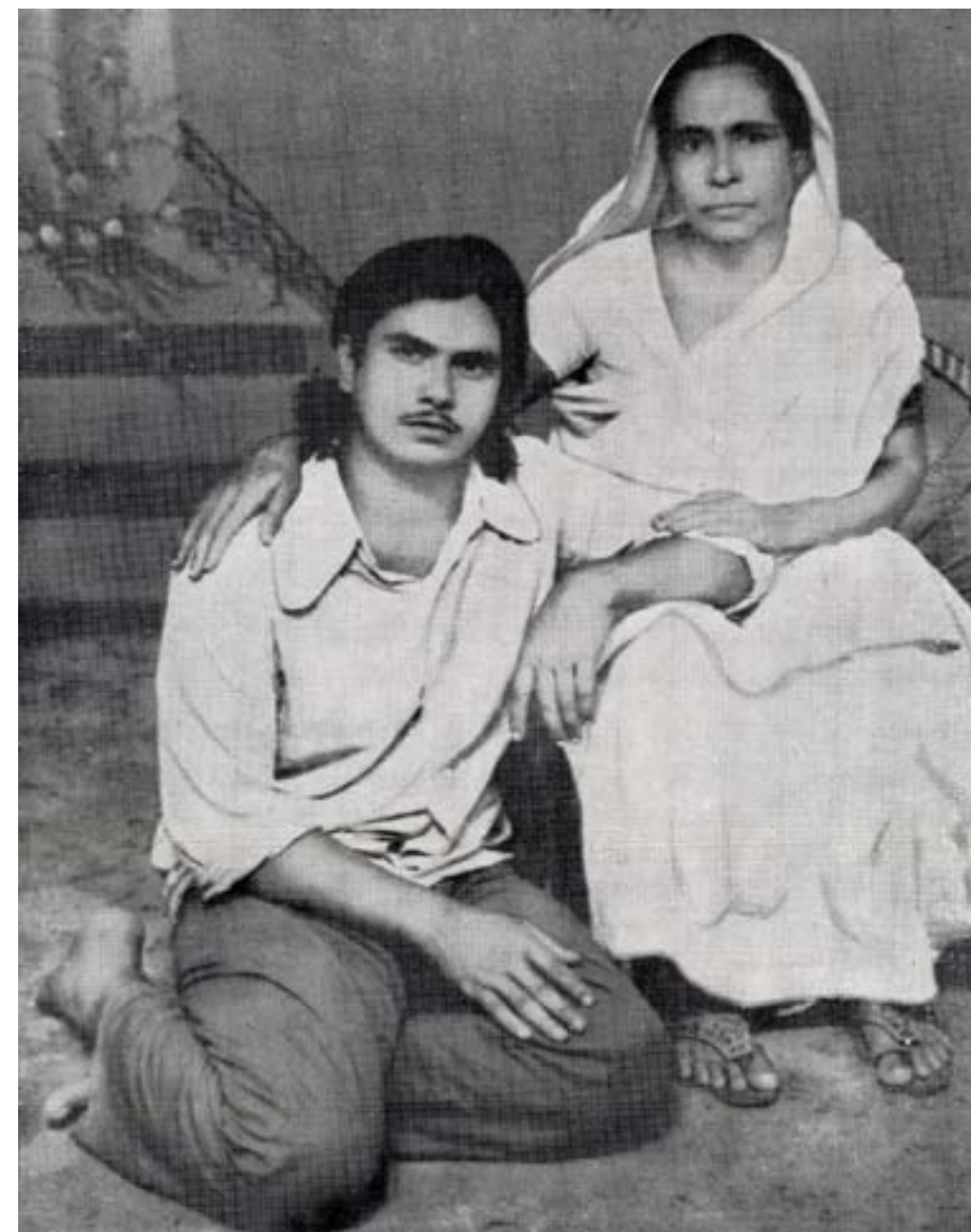
Another time, when he was walking alone, he suddenly heard a voice in front of him which spoke to him in Pali, the language of the Buddha. The voice appeared through a phenomenon called *akashvani*, which is a technique used by some yogis to communicate over vast distances. The voice guided him. Robin followed its directions and after walking for a few hours he came to a cave with a huge boulder covering the entrance. After lots of toiling he managed to move the boulder enough to enter the cave. A foul smell met him there, and after a while, when his eyes had become accustomed to the dark, he saw a male person sitting in the lotus posture in front of him who proved to be a very old Buddhist monk. The very first thing he did was to ask Robin two questions: “Are there metal swans on the water now?” At first Robin could not understand what he meant, but after thinking a little he came to the conclusion that it had to be modern steel constructed ships that he meant, so he answered in the affirmative. Then he asked: “Are there metal birds in the sky now?” And again Robin answered in the affirmative, thinking that he must mean aeroplanes. “That’s good”, the monk replied, “then my time has come!” And he let Robin understand that his 800 years of meditation on physics and the natural laws of physics had come to an end, and that it was time for him to leave his physical

body. And he wanted Robin to help him with that. But first he transferred all of his knowledge and wisdom to Robin, and that was the reason why Paramananda knew absolutely everything about this subject and could discuss at length any physics theme with any physicist. The modern terms he gradually picked up from students and scientists who later visited him in Banagram.

Paramananda also once told of an incident when he and another yogi friend had come across a newly crashed bus full of dead people. The night before the bus had run off the road and fallen several hundred metres into a narrow gorge. All the people in the bus were just like a homogenous, formless, bloody, meat dough and apparently no one had survived. But as they took a closer look at the bus they suddenly heard a child’s cry from inside all the meat dough, and they managed to dig out a small girl who, most incredibly, had survived without a single scratch on her body, and they gave her to a family in the nearest village.

For fully ten years Robin roamed the Himalayas until one day, as a 21 year old young man, he decided to return to his family in Bengal. They had all thought him long since dead and got quite a shock when they saw him. His father had died one year earlier, and he found his mother and his siblings in a very bad condition as his elder brother did not perform the traditional duties of the eldest son as provider of the family. Robin then promised his mother that he would take up an ordinary profession and earn money for the family. He got a job in Government service, on a rural electrification project, installing power lines, and worked at this for two years until his mother understood that he had quite other plans for his life and released him to follow his mission. But it was during this time, as an employee of the electrical department, while reaching out to various villages in the countryside of Bengal, that he met his first friends who later became his disciples, and that he first visited the small village of Banagram.

Later, when Paramananda and I were alone in Shantibu, he told me how he had come into contact with Devendranath and Trishan. He had met Devendranath at Dakshineswar temple outside Calcutta, where Sri Ramakrishna used to reside, when once he had visited there. They had started a conversation and Devendranath had told him that he had come from Nandyal in South India to search for the new incarnation of Ramakrishna. Paramananda said that Devendranath was almost like a mad man at that time, going almost without sleep or food for days, fully focused on finding the newly incarnated Ramakrishna. In some parts of the rich literature on Ramakrishna, it is written that he himself had said that he would be reborn in the Burdwan District of West Bengal in the 1950s, and that in that life he would be a Baul. Devendranath had read this, and, as a great admirer of Ramakrishna, he became fixated on finding him



*Robin and his mother shortly after his homecoming after 12 years absence.
Studio photo.*

in this new life. So he travelled to Bengal to search, and came back to Dakshineswar over and over again to find any clue that could put him on the right track, and so it was that during one of these visits to Dakshineswar he came to converse with Robin. They soon became good friends, Devendranath became impressed by Robin and he spent more and more time with him.

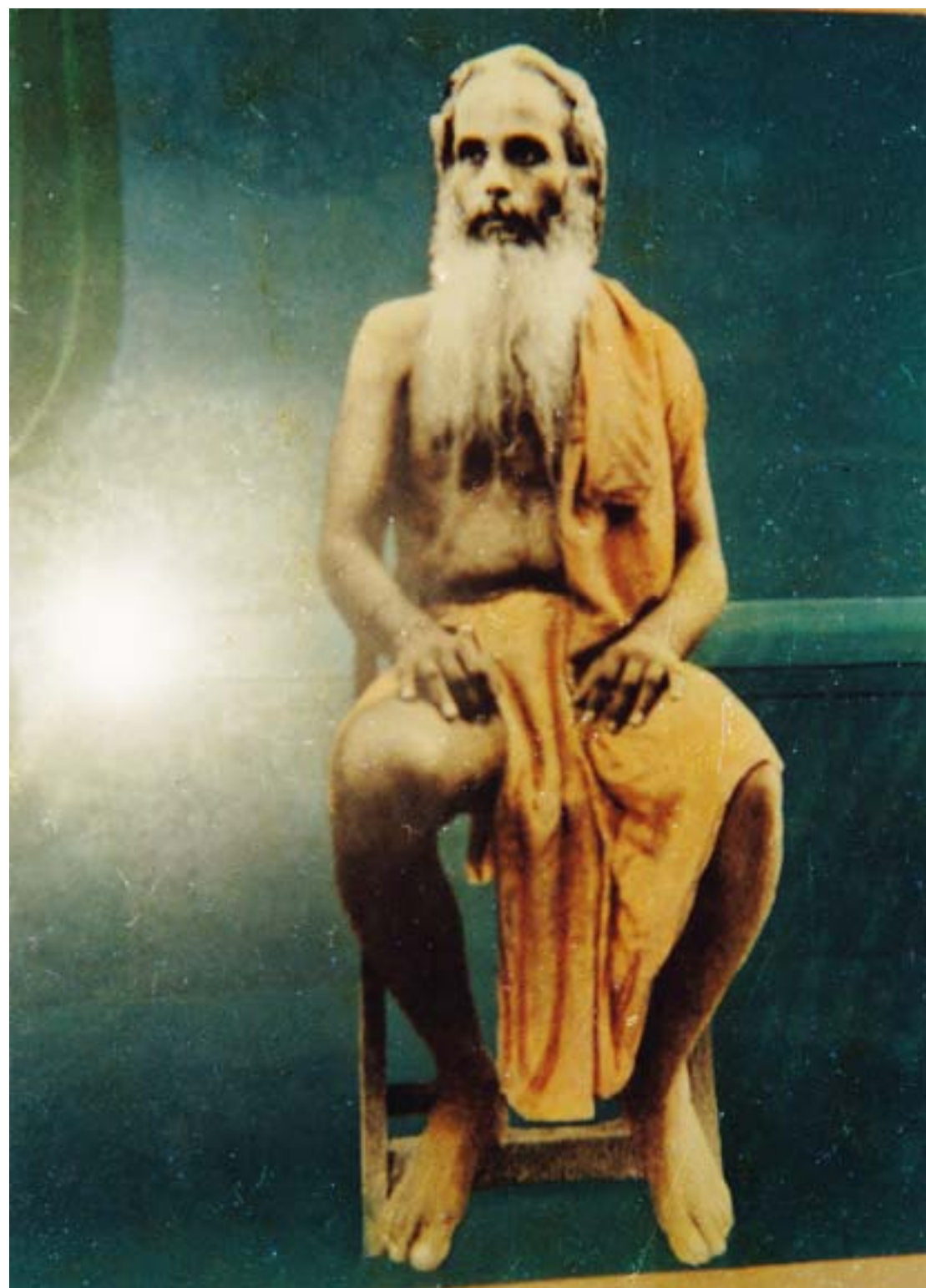
Something similar also happened in the case of Trishan. One day when Robin, together with the electrical department, had come to Madhyamgram village in Burdwan District, he visited a small ashram established and run by Trishan. They started talking and became acquainted. Robin noticed that early every morning Trishan travelled by bus to various destinations in all directions from Madhyamgram and returned late at night. When Robin asked him where he went all day, every day, he withdrew himself and didn’t want to talk about it. “Oh, you wouldn’t understand”, he answered categorically.

And Robin laughed to himself because he knew exactly what was going on. But Trishan was surprised to see that wherever he went he would bump into Robin, and he wondered how it could be that Robin always accidentally turned up in these places. Several weeks went on in this way while Robin pretended to know nothing, and just asked him again and again why he was out every day. At last Trishan admitted that he went out to various places in Burdwan District in search of Ramakrishna. Robin then told him that he didn’t have to search in that way, and little by little both Trishan and Devendranath understood that they had already found Ramakrishna.

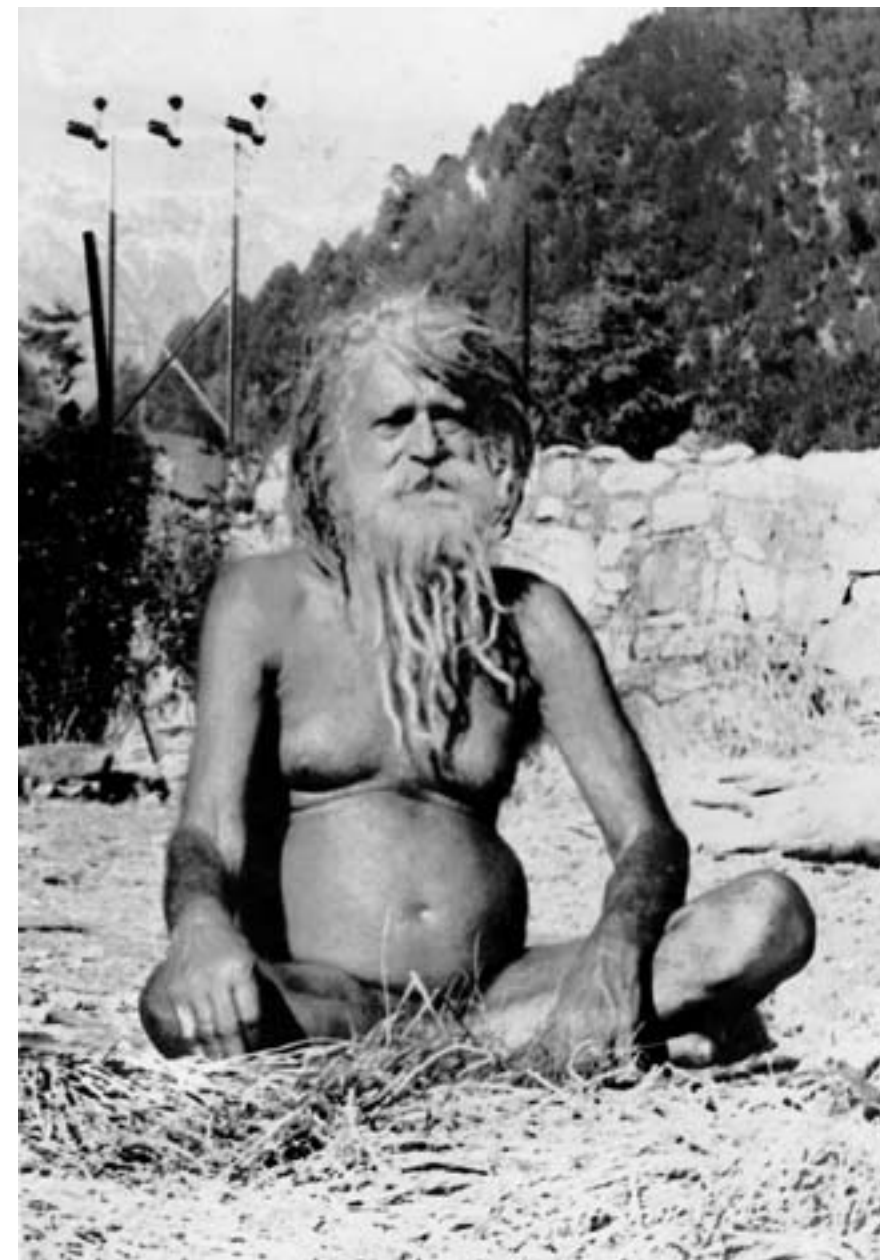
It is a widespread belief or rather common understanding among all of Paramananda’s followers in India, and also abroad, that Paramananda was Ramakrishna in his previous life, though completely without he himself having said anything about it – and very, very far from proclaiming or declaring anything in that direction – it was

really not his nature. He used to refer to his previous life quite indirectly, but all those who knew him very well in this life, and knew about Ramakrishna from the literature, were never in doubt about the relationship – about the oneness of identity. Of the most direct references that Paramananda made to me about his previous life, this one was in Norway during his last visit in 1998. While we discussed moods of mind and emotionality, he suddenly and smilingly exclaimed: “Oh, I was too much emotional in my previous life!” In this life he was certainly not at all emotional, and he also didn’t like others to be so.

During this time, when he met with his first disciples, they would often see him enter *bhav samadhi* or *sahaj samadhi* (forms of *saviklpa samadhi*). He would, for instance, be sitting and talking to them about high spiritual matters and become more and more ecstatic, and then quite suddenly he would become completely absorbed in *samadhi*. Some of his listeners, on various occasions, then used to test him, to determine if the phenomenon was real or only feigned. Especially Devendranath, the elder among them, was eager to test Robin and to experiment with him. On several occasions they thus burnt his skin with lit cigarettes to see if there was any reaction



Swami Baulananda, one of Paramananda’s two gurus.
Studio photo, photographed from a framed photo.



Ramananda Avaduth, Paramananda’s sannyas guru.
Guruji had said that Ramananda had once expressed a wish to his friend, Totapuri (Ramakrishna’s Vedantic guru), that he wanted a disciple like the one Totapuri had. It was fulfilled with Paramananda!
Unknown photographer.

and he would come out of his *samadhi*. But there was never the least sensation or reaction in Robin who sat firmly and fully absorbed. Many such things happened to Robin, and these first friends and disciples always felt it was a great experience to be together with him. Actually, many of them thought Robin to be a Christian because at that time he would often talk to them about Jesus Christ and often go into *samadhi* set off by the inspiration of Christ. He had been occupied with Jesus from his childhood when he used to frequent a Catholic father in his neighbourhood of Krishnadebpur. But he was highly frustrated by this father, and could not tally what the father said and did with his own understanding of Jesus and his nature. So one day he prayed intensely to Jesus Christ to know the truth, and then Christ revealed himself to him in a vision and said: “If you really want to know me you must never go to any church, never listen to any priest, and never read the Bible!”

The first non-Indians from the West to meet with Robin came during this time. Bryan from London met Robin in the house of a common Bengali friend in Calcutta, together with fellow Englishmen Ray and Gabriel, and became a very close friend of his. At that time Robin also performed various types of *sadhana*, and had a guru who often came to him in his subtle body to guide him and give him advice. That was Swami Baulananda who, as mentioned before, lived in Perentapulli in Andhra Pradesh in South India. He had a small ashram far inside the jungle near the source of the river Godavari, and Paramananda never met him in physical body. But Devendranath actually did, and then he had asked him where he could find the new incarnation of Ramakrishna. Swami Baulananda had then told him that he would find him at Dakshineswar outside Calcutta.

Paramananda had two gurus, and the other was, as already mentioned, Ramananda Avaduth, from whom Paramananda took *sannyasa*. They had met for the first time when Paramananda was only a boy and roamed the Himalayas naked, known as Robin. Late one night Robin found a cave high up in the Himalayas, which showed signs of being occupied, but with no inhabitant to be found inside or outside. As he had been walking the whole day and was tired, he went inside and went to sleep for the night on a bed of dry bark. But the cave belonged to Ramananda Avaduth who appeared after a while. However, the cave was too small for the two of them, so Robin made himself stern and claimed the cave, and told Ramananda to leave. Ramananda, who at that time would have been around 145 years of age, had only chuckled over this rather funny situation, and silently went outside and lay down for the night. Early next morning Robin left and they didn't meet again.

But many years later, after returning to Bengal, when Robin had had a profound vision while sitting beside the Ganges and afterwards decided to join the age-old order of *sannyasa*, he understood that it was from Ramananda, who was also seen in the vision, that he would get *sannyasa*. This happened in 1978 – the same year that the Paramananda Mission was established in Banagram. Ramananda Avaduth was also one of the Seven Rishis of the Himalayas who had invoked him by their *yajña* to make him incarnate on the Earth again. Ramananda was like a living Shiva, and all of his long life had been living in caves in contemplation and meditation in the upper Himalayas, as a Vedantin, more or less in continuous *samadhi*, without taking more active part in life than strictly necessary for survival. After Robin was initiated into *sannyasa* and was given the sannyasi name of Swami Paramananda, he spent, true to tradition, some time in the service of his guru. When two months had passed in this way, Paramananda felt that the time had come for him to leave the Himalayas and go back to Bengal to start his mission there. But first he needed his guru's permission and blessing, so one afternoon, while he was massaging his guru's feet, he raised the topic: ³⁾

Paramananda: “Gurudev, I feel it is time for me to go. I will have to start my work in Bengal, my friends are waiting for me and there is not much time.”

Ramananda: “What will you do? Welfare? This world is an illusion, like the tail of a dog. You can't ever straighten the tail’.

Paramananda: “I know. But the coiled up tail droops downward. I can at least point it towards the sky.”

Ramananda (smilingly): “Find a cave somewhere nearby and spend your life in silent contemplation. Let life take its own course, you should remain passive.”

Paramananda: “You are my spiritual father, my guru. You know me better than anybody else. You know ex-

actly why I have come to this planet, what is my mission in life. Would you still want to discourage me from fulfilling the role that I have come to play?”

Ramananda smiled again, sat up and said: “Let me tell you a story from the Vedanta:

After a prolonged *sadhana* a seeker had attained a special power. He could understand the language of animals and birds and communicate with them. One day a frightened deer came running to his little cottage, ‘Dear monk, please save me! A tiger is chasing me!’ The monk felt pity and asked the deer to hide in a rear chamber. A few minutes later the tiger was at his door, ‘Hey monk! Have you seen a deer in the vicinity in the last few minutes?’ The monk said firmly, ‘No, I haven't. Now please go away and don't disturb my meditation.’ The tiger knew that the monk was not a liar, so he walked away.

In the course of time the monk grew old and died. But he was conscious enough to realise that he was not yet fully liberated from his karmic cycle. He looked into the cause. And Nature revealed the secret. Inadvertently he had been the cause of the tiger's death. The tiger had gone without food for four days and on that particular day he was destined to kill and eat the deer. But because of the monk's intervention he was deprived of what was due to him. He was too tired to try again. Within a couple of days he fell sick and died of starvation. The monk realised his mistake and got ready for a new birth.

In the next life too he became a monk and exactly the same scene repeated itself before his eyes, like an action replay. The deer, scared and panting, pleaded for shelter. But this time the monk remained silent and passive. The deer walked inside and found the rear chamber himself. He hid himself in there. When the tiger came and enquired about the deer, the monk pointed to the direction of the chamber, ‘He is hiding there.’ The tiger went in, caught the helpless deer by the neck and dragged him outside the cottage and went away.

But this time too, after his death, the monk was surprised to realise that he was not yet free from the chains of life. The physical and the subtle elements combined to prepare the grounds of a new birth. Why, he wondered, what went wrong this time? The response was, being a sadhu he had encouraged violence and murder in his own little cottage. The tiger was merely hunting for his food but the monk had become an accomplice to a gruesome killing of a poor deer who had taken refuge in his chamber. The monk understood and accepted the consequences.

The same scene unfolded in the next life. When the deer came to him to seek help, he remained silent and pas-

sive. It found its own way to the rear chamber. When the tiger came and asked the monk about the deer, he remained equally passive and unconcerned. The tiger looked around and went inside, found his prey, caught him by the neck, dragged it outside the cottage and disappeared from sight. Immediately the veil of ignorance lifted, the world of duality disappeared from his vision and he experienced oneness with Pure Consciousness.”

Ramananda paused, reflected for a few moments and looked at Paramananda:

“Do you see my point, son? Life is like this. Can you actually do anything good for others? If you try, you invariably end up hurting someone else. That is how it works. Life is built on contradictions, on the play of opposing forces. And in any case, you cannot avoid falling into the karmic trap yourself.” Paramananda remained silent and continued to massage his guru's feet. In spiritual traditions a disciple should never argue with his guru. If he has something to say he should wait for his guru to allow him. Finally he looked at Paramananda playfully and laughed: “Why are you silent, my son? Don't you have anything to say?”

Paramananda raised his head and looked into Ramananda's eyes: “It is a very nice story from the Vedanta. But with all due respect I must say that the monk took a wrong decision in each of his three lives.”

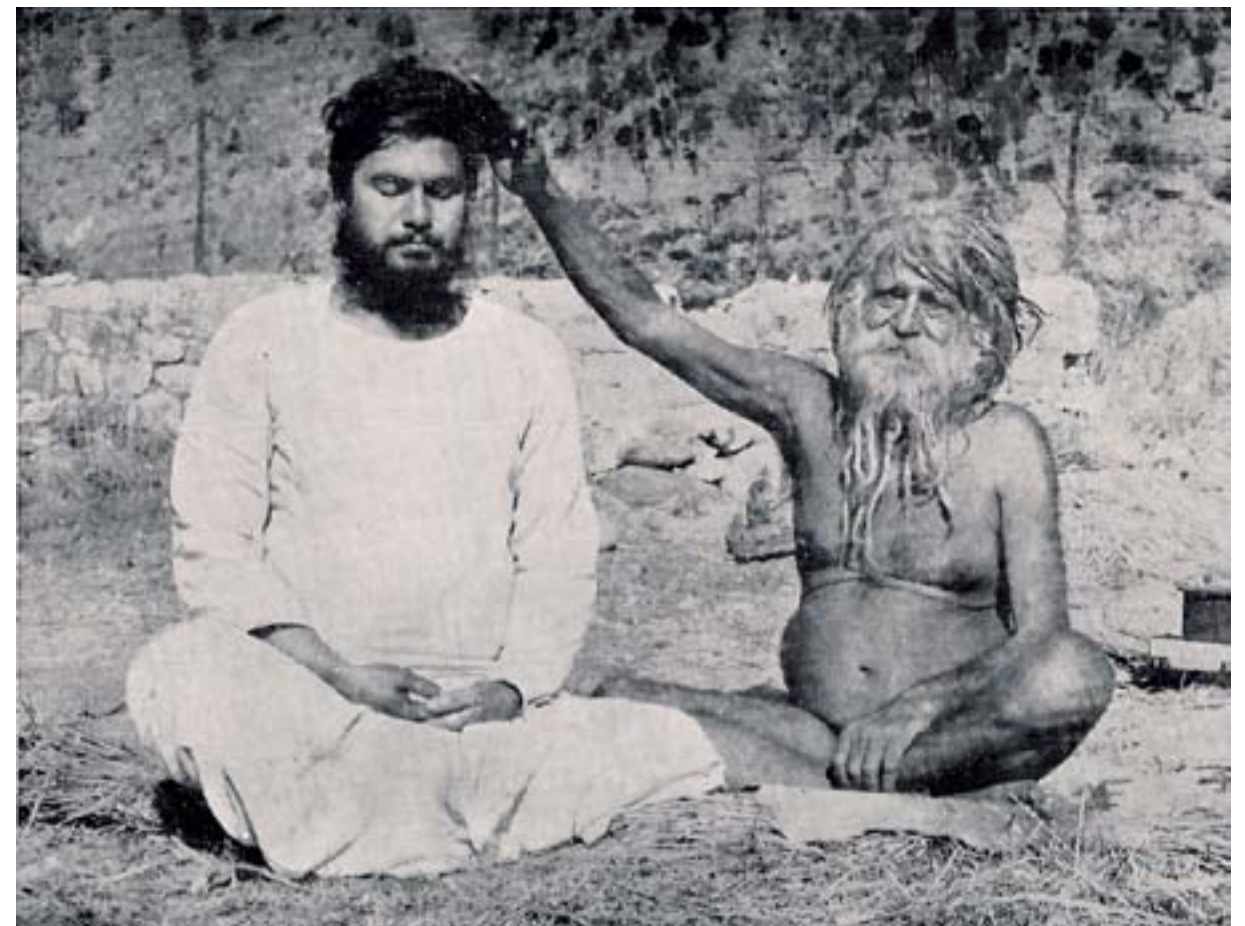
Ramananda was a little surprised by this response. His eyes narrowed as he said: “I agree that he made a mistake in his first two lives. But how can you say that he was wrong in his last life? What would you have done if you were in his place?”

Paramananda: “I would have taken the right decision the first time itself.”

Ramananda: “So you are talking about a fourth possibility?”

Paramananda then smiled and said: “If the deer had come to me asking for shelter I would have promised to protect him and helped him to hide in the rear chamber. Then the tiger would have come to ask, ‘Have you seen a deer?’ I would have said, ‘Yes, he is here, I have asked him to hide in that chamber. Since I have offered him shelter I cannot hand him over to you. But I can see that you are hungry. Here is my body, you can take it.’”

Tears flowed from Ramananda's eyes as he embraced Paramananda, and after a few minutes he looked into his eyes and said: “What you have just told me goes beyond the Vedanta, it is pure and unconditional love. Probably I was waiting to hear something like this from you. This is the only way to lift the world from its own misery. I bless you with all my heart. Go and fulfil your mission!”



Ramananda is giving his blessing and energy to Paramananda. Notice his small body. Unknown photographer.

FOOTNOTES

1) This is the history as I heard it directly from Paramananda himself. It has been important for me to retell it as closely as possible to how I remember hearing it from him without embellishment. It is an enormous story that was only summarized briefly for us who were listening. There are other sources in English from Shree Ramendra ("A Journey to Perfection") and from Joydeep Maharaj (Internet) who report on parts of his life story in more detail and in more florid language, and then, of course, a lot of literature about him in Bengali (Charaiveti and other sources). But here I only relate the story just as I have heard it from the very source himself.

2) Babaji is a kind of living 'safe-deposit box' for the Vedas. The Rishis are born again and again continuously, just like everybody else (see the first chapter in "Deduction about "Reincarnation and Rishis"), but right from childhood they are rishis and therefore truth seekers. But the immense strain of always having to go through birth and death, and being born in ignorance to ignorant parents, like everybody else, and perhaps having to spend a large portion of their lives to realize themselves, i.e. to regain their natural state of being and their identity as rishis, also exposes the eternal wisdom – the Vedas, of which the rishis are the authors and bearers – to this strain too.

Therefore they created Babaji to have a representative of themselves who would not have to go through the burden of reincarnation and other challenges as they would have to do every now and then.

3) This story has been collected from the writings of my brother disciple Joydeep Maharaj, which is published on the Internet, so I haven't heard it myself directly from Paramananda. I had previously only heard fragments of the story from Tyagiji and others about a certain "conflict" which had arisen between Paramananda and Ramananda in the Himalayas when Paramananda wanted to leave him and go back to Bengal, and about Ramananda's statement that "many have tried to straighten the dog's tail". This had always felt like a gap in my understanding of Paramananda's life history, so it was an immense joy to suddenly read about it in the Internet in Joydeep's lively language. The story really reflects Paramananda's life in a nutshell and tells us everything about his nature. And, not least, the choice he made then is the reason why we can learn about it here! This story has now been published in book form, together with other stories from Paramananda (Joydeep: "Mystic Tales", Notion Press, Chennai, 2017).

GLOSSARY (simplified)

akash vani – 'ether-voice' (also one of the names of the Indian national radio and television broadcaster).

Babaji – name of a living being created by the Rishis some 12000 years ago, who is a continuous bearer of Sanatana Dharma and the Vedas.

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.

bhav – 'feeling', 'mood', 'emotion'.

bhav samadhi – samadhi set off by emotions or a certain condition of mind. See *samadhi*.

guru – 'from darkness to light'; spiritual guide who dispels ignorance and confers wisdom.

naga – 'serpent'; (here) Shiva worshipper and truth-seeker who is always naked and often smeared in ashes.

naga-sannyasin – same as *naga*.

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.

pranam – respectful greeting, found in various forms and variations.

puja – worship by rituals, with outer objects, like flowers, incense, food and other effects.

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 fulfil 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.

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

sahaj(a) samadhi – 'spontaneous *samadhi*'; one of several forms of *savikalpa samadhi*. See *samadhi*, *savikalpa samadhi*.

samadhi – 'union' ('putting together' or 'bringing into harmony'); full absorption in meditation; the eighth and last step of Classical Yoga.

sannyasa – a free and loosely organized age-old order of spiritual world teachers, who spread culture and spiritual science to all parts of the world; the last of four stages in a Hindu's life, in which one dedicates oneself fully and completely to the search for truth; a three day ritual which frees the individual from all social bonds and duties of society to become a sannyasin or sannyasini. See *sannyasin*.

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.

savikalpa samadhi – when the mind has become a unity; "universal mind" or "super mind" (but still mind, as different from *nirvikalpa samadhi*, which is without mind).

shilajit – "stone sweat"; black, tar-like substance, with smell somewhat like sheep droppings, found on south-facing rock walls in the Himalayas, extremely rich in minerals, eaten by yogis.

yajña – Vedic ritual of sacrifice.

yogi – one who masters yoga; practitioner of yoga.

Continuation follows in the next number next week.