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*Swami Paramananda at Dalsbygda, Os, Norway 1989.
Photo: Torleif Sund.*

IN SEARCH OF TRUTH

MY EXPERIENCES WITH SWAMI PARAMANANDA

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A YOGI IN THE WEST

BJØRN PETTERSEN

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Bjørn Pettersen

and

Mt.Tron University of Peace Foundation
2560 Alvdal
Norway

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LIFE TOGETHER WITH PARAMANANDA



The Peace Plateau on Mt. Tron with the Monument in front. The Monument is a memorial to Anandacharya and the first stone to the University of Peace. Photo: BP.

*Left:
Paramananda and Bjørn by the Monument on the Peace Plateau, reading the words of Anandacharya carved in Norwegian: Christ is full of mercy, others change, He is eternally the same.*

*Below:
Paramananda is correcting the shape of the symbol OM inside the grave of Anandacharya on Mt. Tron. Behind in the distance Lake Savalen. Both photos: Torleif Sund, 1989.*

*Next page:
The flat stone where Paramananda and Bjørn were sitting, overlooking the Peace Plateau. Later people have put many stones on top of that seat. Photo: BP.*



The "Peace Plateau" on Mt. Tron

Ten days after Paramananda arrived in Alvdal, Torleif, Glenn and I took him for a trip up Mt. Tron. We drove by car up to the so-called "Peace Plateau" where we visited the monument to Swami Sri Ananda Acharya, which is also the foundation stone for the University of Peace which he said would be built there in the future. From there we walked the three kilometres to Ananda Acharya's grave on the west side of the mountain. There, some of the many people who visit his grave during summer had made a big OM with small, white stones on top of the grave. Paramananda was not quite happy with the design of the symbol, so he made it into the right shape. From the grave we climbed up to the top of the mountain, 250 metres higher than the grave. We had warm and wonderful weather for the whole trip, and from the top we had a most splendid view of a large portion of South Norway. From there we followed the road down to the "Peace Plateau" where our car was parked.

On the way down we stopped by a large, flat stone with a wonderful view of the whole plateau. Paramananda and I sat together on the stone and he started to tell me about the plateau and the University of Peace:

Bjørn, this plateau is very nice. From here it looks like the back of a tortoise, and that is very auspicious. I have only seen two or three places in the Himalayas

with the same good vibration as here and one of them is Mt. Kailash. Anandacharya really found the right place for the University of Peace, because this is really a peaceful place where there have been no wars, feuds or bloodshed in the past, and also not any natural disasters. The atmosphere here is very good.

And then he pointed towards a certain area of the plateau and said:

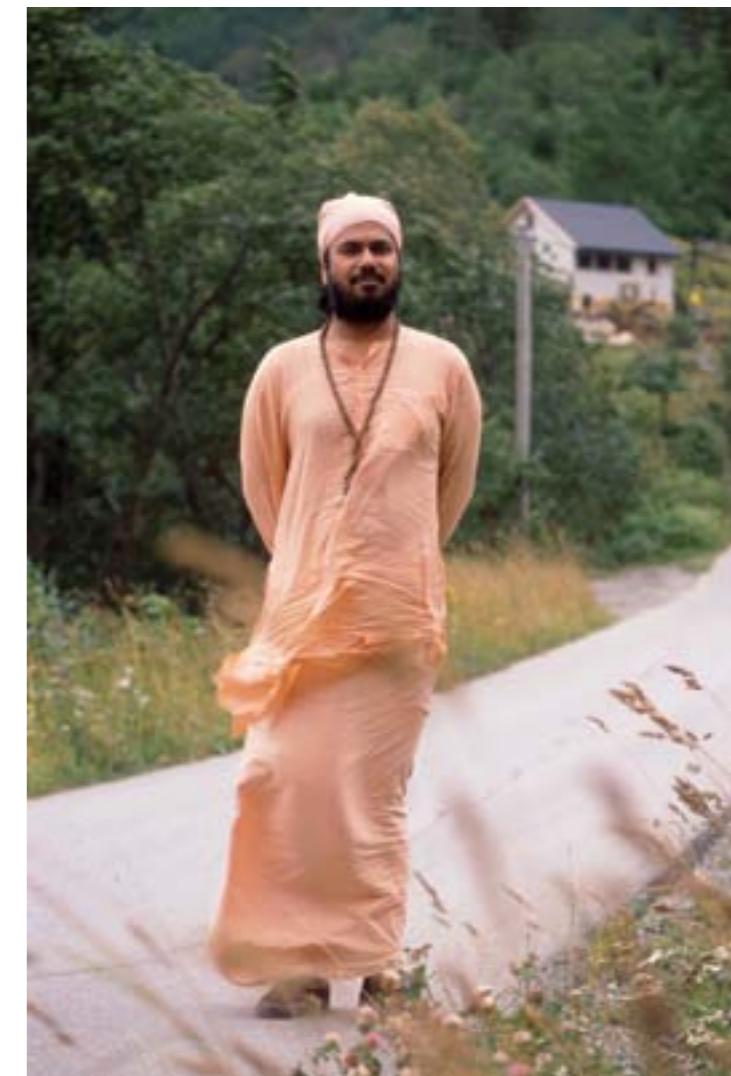
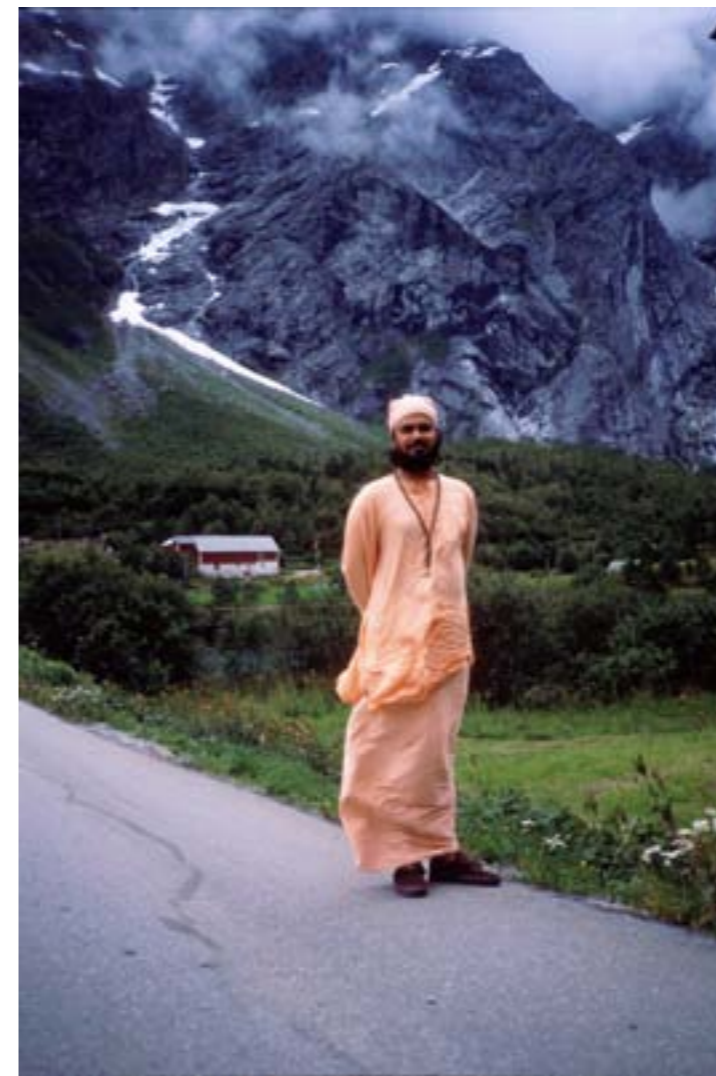
Look, Bjørn, the University of Peace is already there in its subtle form, it only needs to be manifested. Peace universities have been here in earlier times, too. The Himalayas are now disturbed by war and military activities, and no longer fit for meditation or spiritual work. From time to time it thus happens that the Himalayas are being disturbed for various reasons, and every time it has happened throughout the ages, all the rishis, yogis, sannyasins and mahatmas have taken the Vedas with them and fled here to the *Uttara Kuruvarsha* – to Scandinavia – and taken refuge here for a period until the Himalayas have become peaceful again. Exactly this is happening again now.

Uttara Kuruvarsha is mentioned in the great epics and in the *Puranas* or *Sagas* in the Post-Vedic Sanskrit literature of India, and the *Uttara Kurus* were known as a very peace-loving people with strong and independent women, and without social differences – everything that Scandinavia is known for all over the world even today!





Bjørn (standing) and Paramananda (sitting) at the very top of Mt. Tron. Behind (top right) there is an old telecommunication tower which was erected in 1960, hence the road all the way up to the top of the mountain. Below we see also Glenn, and Lake Savalen in the far distance. All photos: Torleif Sund, 1989.



Paramananda in Romsdal on the way to Volda in August 1989. Both photos: Torleif Sund.



The Langvatn family in Volda had invited us to visit, so Torleif and Anne Siri took Paramananda and me on a four day car journey to the west coast at the beginning of August via Dovre to Dombås and nearly down to Åndalsnes, from where we climbed the famous “Trollstigen” tourist road, went on to the next great national tourist spot, Geiranger, then took a ferry out across the Geiranger Fjord, passed the spectacular high water falls on the way to Hellesylt, continuing by car and ferry to reach Volda. During this trip we also managed to visit the famous bird cliff and island of Runde, farthest out into the Atlantic Ocean. On the way back we drove via Stryn, Skjåk and Lom through Grimsdalen to Alvdal.

At the end of August and beginning of September Paramananda and I travelled for nine days to Oslo, Moss, Drammen and Brandbu Folk High School. In Drammen, at a yoga school, and also at the school in Brandbu, Paramananda taught meditation to the teachers so that they in turn could teach it to their students. Otherwise, we visited these places at the invitation of friends.

At the very beginning of his stay in Norway Paramananda expressed the wish to learn better English so we made arrangements for him to have English lessons from Anne Siri at her home in Os.* But after the very first lesson he confided to me that he didn’t want to continue with them – it was not his way of learning things. “It is better that you teach me, Bjørn”, he said, but without saying anything further about how that was supposed to happen. He had several questions there and then which I answered but nothing more. However, the next time he held a *satsanga* or talked to anyone when I was present, and I noticed that Paramananda, for a fraction of a second, kind of hesitated, pausing in the middle of a sentence because he was searching for the right word, and at that moment I thought of the correct word or expression in my mind, Paramananda instantly caught it and spoke it. This became a regular practice between us and happened fluently and unnoticed without any break in the conversation or without anyone ever sensing or understanding that I thus ‘fed’ Paramananda with English words and expressions. My own English was far from good, but because I had read all the books by Anandacharya in



Top left: Paramananda, Bjørn and Anne Siri on the ferryboat in the Geiranger fjord. Top right: Leidulv Langvatn, Bjørn, Paramananda and Torleif in Leidulv's boat on the fjord outside Volda. Above and below: Paramananda, Bjørn, Anne Siri and Torleif on a trip to Rundø island. Next page: Torleif, Paramananda and Bjørn eating shrimps at the seashore. All photos: Torleif & Anne Siri.



English, I had a pretty good vocabulary, especially about spiritual themes and terms, so I was able to supply Paramananda with these things in that way. The first time it happened was when he had a discussion with a scientist who had been studying a certain subject for the last ten years. The scientist thus had a very specialized competence in his field, nevertheless Paramananda was able to discuss with him on his terms and level, and in addition could also solve the problems that the scientist could not solve himself.

Then followed a time with visitors to Shantibu throughout the autumn and early winter. First, Bryan came from England and stayed from September 13th to 28th. Andreas from Sweden came and stayed from September 17th to 25th, and Francisco from Italy came and stayed from October 30th to November 6th. As already mentioned, Bryan was an old friend of Paramananda's, while both Andreas and Francisco were relatively new acquaintances, each having first met Devendranath in India who had led them to Paramananda. Bryan and Francisco were about our age while Andreas was a little younger. Last of the long distance travellers that year was Alex from Italy, who spent most of December with us. Immediately before that Paramananda and I had again visited friends in Oslo, Drammen and Drøbak, and Paramananda had experienced his first northern lights (*aurora borealis*) at Shantibu on the 1st of December.

In December Paramananda also tried cross-country skiing for the first time, both on Tronsvangen and at Mt. Hummelfjell in Os. We celebrated Christmas Eve and then Paramananda's birthday on the 25th of December, at Shantibu, together with Alex. On Christmas Eve I dressed up as Santa Claus with a sack on my back and delivered Christmas gifts, as Paramananda wanted to see how we celebrate Christmas traditionally in Norway. And on the next day, his birthday, in the Indian tradition, I made *paramanna* – the sweet rice dish – for him, following a recipe from the cookery book by Anandacharya. It was a very exclusive version of the traditional recipe, using cream and rose water and saffron, and it tasted completely heavenly. To my utter dismay I then discovered that Paramananda was not at all fond of any kind of rice pudding, as he took only a token mouthful. But luckily, Alex loved it and lapped it up, praising it all the while.

Alex' story in relation to me was very special. He entered my life through a letter from Italy, addressed to Brahmakul, asking to come for a visit. I wrote back and welcomed him, and soon afterwards, during autumn 1987, he came to Shantibu and stayed for a couple of weeks. His story went like this:

With an inclination for Indian philosophy and spirituality, and with an attraction towards the Himalayas, Alex, on his tour in India, had ended up in a small village in the Almora District. Outside the village was a cave with a yogi. The cave was known as "Babaji's Cave" as the legendary Babaji was said to have manifested there once. The yogi who now lived there had come from Bengal and was a *mouni* – one who has taken a vow of silence. Alex lived in the village, but would go to the cave every day to spend time with the *mouni*. As his mind was brim full of questions Alex could not help but ask this yogi all of them. But as he was a *mouni* he could not reply to Alex by speech, so every time he picked up a book which was lying next to him, turned the pages until he found what he was searching for, pointed with his index finger to some sentences in the text and made a sign to Alex to read from them. Alex did so and immediately got an answer to his question. This happened again and again every day that Alex visited the cave. Eventually, when Alex was to return to Italy and went to the cave for the last time to take leave of the yogi, he received a present from the yogi. It was the book with which he had answered all Alex' questions. On the title page of the book was written: Yoga of Conquest. By The Swami Sri Ananda Acharya. The Brahmakul, Gaurisankarmath, Scandinavia 1924.





Top left: Bjørn, Paramananda and Anne Siri at Rundø island outside Volda in August 1989. Behind is the Atlantic Ocean all the way to the shores of North America. The other three photos above: We are all bathing in the river at Os where Torleif and Anne Siri lived, 40 km north of Alvdal. Here Paramananda is demonstrating to Bjørn and teaching how to float in the water on your back in padmasan.
Below: Paramananda, Bjørn and Glenn in discussion somewhere in Dalsbygda, Os, where Glenn and his family were staying at the time.
All photos: Torleif Sund.

Paramananda, Anne Siri, Bjørn, Torleif's aunt and uncle Berit and Finn, at their home in Os. Berit and Finn were extremely warmhearted and hospitable, and always wanted to serve Paramananda some nice traditional dishes, which he relished greatly.

Paramananda, Anne Siri and Bjørn at the terrace of Torleif's and Anne Siri's home, where Paramananda and I often went. Sometimes Paramananda also stayed with them for a few days alone. Both photos: Torleif Sund.





Top left: Bjørn, Paramananda, Torleif and his parents, near their farm in the late autumn. Above: Paramananda, Alex and Anne Siri in Torleif and Anne Siri's home at Os, Christmas 1989. Right and bottom: Paramananda as above. All photos: Anne Siri & Torleif.



Paramananda trying cross-country skiing in December 1989. Top left: At Hommelfjell, Os. The other two photos: At Tronsvangen, Alvdal, on the slopes of Mt. Tron. Below: With Bjørn. All photos: Torleif Sund.





Paramananda at Shantibu, July 1989.

Left: Drinking tea.

Top: Playing on a ceramics flute from Central America, with Glenn.

FOOTNOTE

* When I first met Paramananda, during our first meeting in 1983, we communicated with Devendranath translating and he would only say a few words in English himself. From my next visit to India in 1984, we always communicated directly and I never felt that he had any difficulty in expressing himself in English. At one time when we were discussing the English language, and I was praising it he disagreed, saying it didn't give any good feeling speaking it.

GLOSSARY (simplified)

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.

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

mouni – one who is observing 'mouna' or silence.

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.

paramanna – Bengali sweet rice dish boiled with milk, raisins, cashew nuts and spices, preferably made with the very tiny, naturally sweet and scented rice called "Govinda", which only grows in certain places alongside the Ganges.

purana – 'saga'; part of the post-Vedic Sanskrit literature of India.

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.

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.

sanskrit – 'the perfect language'; that language which is nearest to the root of all the languages in the Indo-European group of languages, including the majority of the European languages together with the languages of North India, Iran, Armenia, etc. (also the Scandinavian languages, except Sami and Finnish); the language in which all Vedic and Post-Vedic literature is written (as with Latin, no longer a living language but an academic one, though there is still a kind of colloquial Sanskrit spoken among the yogis and sannyasins of the Himalayas).

Uttara-Kuruvarsha / uttara-kuru – old Sanskrit name for Scandinavia and its 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.

Veda – 'knowledge' or 'Divine Wisdom'; denoting the oldest scriptures of the Hindus, consisting of four books – Rig-Veda, Sama-Veda, Yajur-Veda and Atharva-Veda – written in Sanskrit, and which have formed the basis for all later literature of India; traditionally transmitted orally by recitation of words, melody and rhythm, only very late in prehistoric time were they written down, i.e. reduced to text.

yogi – one who masters yoga; practitioner of yoga.

Continuation follows in the next number next week.