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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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and

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FOREVER PARAMANANDA

Essential teaching

Paramananda's teaching is so great that it is almost like that of the Bhagavadgita and it is the teaching of the coming age. I hope that he will forgive me for even attempting to summarize it in writing. May it be acceptable to him and serve its purpose!

Paramananda has revitalized, simplified, clarified and expanded the spiritual concepts, spiritual understanding and spiritual life in every way. He was always most clear and accurate, and emphasized the need for a solid and harmonic foundation before one could even talk about spirituality:

First *naturality*, then *humanity*, and lastly *spirituality*. On the basis of naturality humanity can manifest, and on the altar of humanity spirituality can be realized. Without naturality there is no humanity, and without humanity there is no spirituality! If anyone appears as a great spiritual head, but is artificial and unnatural, and does not show any empathy or common humanity in relation to others, what value, then, has their spirituality? Naturality means that one is oneself and not artificial – that thought, speech and deeds are one – and that one is sincere. To be human means to have an awake and active conscience, and to show empathy and care, and that one is doing to others what one wants others to do to oneself. Spirituality means fulfillment in life – that one goes through life with love and realization towards Perfection.

He mentioned *three ideals for life*, which at the same time are three signs of spirituality, and those are: **Truth**, **Love** and **Sacrifice**. There is no truth without love, and there is also no love without truth. But that which clearly shows if truth and love is present in a person, is his or her sacrifice or unselfish behaviour towards others. Such a human being is truly spiritual and can only do good to their fellow human beings and to society at large. If you want to understand whether a person is spiritual or not – look for his or her self-sacrifice!

Further he mentioned *seven principles of life* of which the three first constitute fundamental needs pertaining to all humans: **food**, **cloth** and **shelter**. Then there are three necessities of life which are: **health**, **education** and **security**. But all of these needs and necessities have a purpose, and that is the perfection of life or **spirituality** in which life reaches its fulfillment. Merely to fulfill material and

mental requirements has no meaning. No one really feels any satisfaction from that, and if they claim that they do so, it will only be for a certain period and it will never give any lasting gratification. Similarly, it is meaningless to talk about spirituality to people who do not have their most fundamental requirements met – that would be really inhumane and an insult to them. So first one has to satisfy the fundamental needs and necessities of life, and only then one can concentrate on the **Art of Life** and **Art of Living**. In the art of life and living there are *three equal steps* (or aspects) comprising all of the human being: head, heart and muscles, or **physical**, **emotional** (mental) and **spiritual**. A spiritual life is a life of wisdom, love and strength in which the human being is always ready for knowledge, compassion and selfless service.

God is reflected in all life and in every human being. Paramananda said very clearly and distinctly: **“Man is the living image of God, so the highest form of worship is selfless service to our fellow human beings”**. “My orphanage, my school and my hospital are my temples”, said Paramananda. He also said that **“Truth cannot be explained, it can only be realized”**, and that **“Realization comes through practice, not belief”**. About the various religions of the world he would say: “I love Jesus, but I cannot understand Christianity; I love the Buddha, but Buddhism is impossible to understand; I love Krishna, but Hinduism is completely incomprehensible”, etc. **“The world does not need more religion – we need humanity.”**

All the problems of man arise from lack of love, individually as well as collectively. Paramananda said that if you can love another human being completely, you will be realized! In his own words:

Love ignores death and conquers fear. Only love can overcome all problems and tragedies in life. The desire to sacrifice oneself for others is a natural tendency with lovers – it is flowing in their veins. Love is a feeling which can be felt by all – love is a language that can be understood by all. Spread your love!

Among what was most special about Paramananda was that he gave **full value to life**. He did not talk about any better state or condition in any “other place” (i.e. Christianity and Islam) or that all of this is a great illusion that you have to beware of (i.e. Hinduism and Buddhism). But he absolutely emphasized the importance of having



Dedicated mothers of various ages by the main entrance to the Banagram ashram, Paramananda Mission. From left: Chaina Maitra, Rupali Das, Sabitri Mitra (Paramananda's mother), and Chaitali Das. The three young 'mothers' are from the women centre Satavisha Social Welfare Society at Azim Ganj, Murshidabad. Photo: BP, December 1999.

a **direction in life towards perfection and realization**. And **realization is only possible in life, through life** – never by escaping from life! Only through a physical body in this physical life, is it possible to realize the Self. Therefore we have to accept life as it is and face all the challenges it gives us. This life is nothing wrong. We are all born into it through the sexual organs of our mother. She has brought us forth and nourished us by the milk of her own breasts. By her love we have life. Therefore he always honoured the maternal feelings and emphasized the importance of motherhood or maternity.

He said that **motherhood is the highest achievable state in this world**, and that the example of one good mother's self-sacrifice for her child is better than the advice of a hundred wise men! All the really great incarnations throughout history have honoured their mothers. In Banagram I saw Paramananda bow down and touch the feet (making *pranam*) in profound respect to one person only, and that was the very old grandmother of the Mukherjee family in the village, where he had lived before the ashram was built and where he always ate his supper whenever he stayed in Banagram ashram. I know that he also did the same to his own mother. **“If the mother is good, everything is good”**, he used to say. And therefore he was always careful of making good provision for the destitute and troubled women (i.e. Satavisha Social Welfare Society), and he always gave equal status to men and women in all of his ashrams and centres. He said that:

The future of humanity depends on the value we are giving motherhood in society.



Jagu Ma (Jagadishwari), Bhakti Prana, in the flower garden outside Paramananda's hut, Banagram ashram, December 1999. We see that the hut is connected to the new addition to Sadhana Bhavan (guest house), where Paramananda had his own small kitchen, dining table and bathroom. Photo: BP.

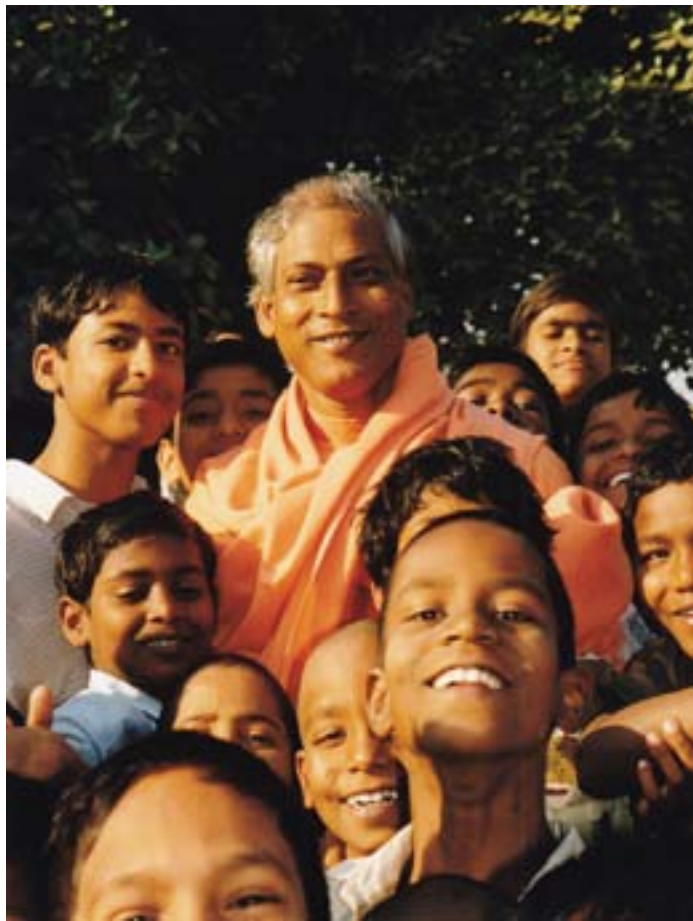
Otherwise, he was always fully awake and aware of everything around him, and he always took a keen interest in everything and took an active part in all the aspects of living in this life.

With Paramananda, woman – in the perspective of history – has finally been placed on fully equal terms and equal footing as man. No one has explained creation and the very **purpose of creation** as he. He says:

Initially there was a Sole Existence or Absolute Consciousness in a non-dual entity. But in that state it was not possible to savour the taste of nectar or to feel bliss, i.e. in the state of Self where there is a total absence of a second identity, one cannot realize oneself and without realization there is no bliss because there is no consciousness of an existence. So It divided Itself in two – Primordial Nature (*Shakti*) and Natural Entity (*Shiva*) – and the great Universe started to take shape heralding the beginning of Creation. The dual existence evoked a mutual enjoyment of nectar with one being the *Parama Purusha* (Original Man) and the other *Parama Prakriti* (Original Power of Nature). But there is not, and can never be, a fundamental distinction between these two entities.

The apparent contradictions serve the purpose of divine play because the one waits for the other for fulfilment. The one alone is incomplete without the other and both yearn for each other for absolute fulfilment. Therefore these are not dual entities but an apparent duality of half entities who merge to become one.

This inclination of Man and Nature towards each other for mutual fulfilment is the mystery of the origin or



Happy boys of Banagram Paramananda Mission! The alternative for these boys would have been a harsh life, probably on the streets of India. Here they get food, clothing, shelter, health, education, security and spiritual company! Left and top, they are together with Madhan Maharaj, Swami Chitbilasananda, who had the responsibility for them. He was also a cousin brother of Paramananda.

All photos: BP. December 1999.

the basis of creation. The projection of the Second in the One evokes Divine Bliss and thus the Universal Creation of Nature is meant for Divine Union. Without the union of the two – individual consciousness or identity and Pure Consciousness or Entity – it is impossible to enjoy the taste or the ecstasy of the eternal play. One is fulfilled in this union and this is the real natural state.

In the Divine Play or Universal Ecstasy or Union of the Static and the Dynamic, which is the condition of *Sahaja Manusha* or **Natural Human**, Bliss is eternal and meant only for enjoyment.

This removes every doubt about the equality of the sexes – of the roles of woman and man, as it is meant from the side of creation. Both sexes reflect equally the Absolute Consciousness or Being, and are equally dependent on each other and complement each other. It also answers the ‘eternal’ question *why* we are here! While this does not mean that one cannot be single and experience all of this inside oneself through the union of individual consciousness with Pure Being, nevertheless it is in this way that it becomes more real and complete, and in harmony with the purpose of creation on the physical level.

Paramananda always took the side of the weak, and on

several occasions he said that in his next incarnation he would have a female body. And not only that – he would also take birth among the caste-less tribal population of India.

As Paramananda gave full value to life – honoured it and loved it deeply – he has also given the necessary explanations of its main principles for us to understand it, hopefully in time before we extinguish ourselves and the nature we live in and depend on:

In this Creation of opposites or polarities *evolution is a journey through life to Perfection*, and with the descending evolution from Absolute Consciousness came also the evolution of the “shadow of Consciousness” – the ego or *ahamkar*, with the feeling of pain and insecurity in life (after full security = Resurrection!). The *descending evolution* is from **Entity** to **individuality** and from individuality to **personality** or from **Unity** to **diversity** and from diversity to **variety**. All this is in relativity but there is no distinction. Descending and ascending is the cycle of Creation and with the descent and ascent of dynamic energy an evolution is completed, which is God’s divine enjoyment and play.

The **static** (*Shiva*) aspect of God or *Brahman* is ‘Pow-

erful’ but has no movement of energy, whereas the **dynamic** (*Shakti*) aspect of *Brahman* is ‘Power in action’ and has two main directions: *gradual expansion*, which is *descending*, and *gradual concentration*, which is *ascending*. And thus the **static** is the eternal Witness of the two movements of Its own energy or **dynamism**. Absolute Consciousness or *Brahman* or God is reflecting in all bodies, only the field is different by the degree of manifestation and also by the three basic moods of manifestation, like *tamasic mood*, i.e. lesser manifestation or *rajasic mood*, i.e. moderate manifestation or *sattvic mood*, i.e. greater manifestation. All this is diversity, but there is no distinction, and mood is not permanent but can be changed – by art of life and art of living! *Brahman* is certainly Omnipotent and Omnipresent!

Describing the actuality of the purely spiritual life he said:

In the ascending evolution when you know that your **ego** is the **shadow of Identity** and your **Identity** or individual Self is the **reflection of Entity** or Absolute Consciousness, you know that in reality there is no such thing as “shadow of Consciousness” or *ahamkar* or ego but that all is only **Atman** and that there is really no difference between **Atman** and **Brahman**! Then you are in **turiya** – beyond all as a complete witness. Everything is happening, the flow of thoughts does not stop – everything is as it is – but you are only a witness. That is the **seer** (rishi) and that is **Realization**!

Another thing which is very special about the teaching of Paramananda, and which fully completes his giving value to life, is that he does not say *nirvikalpa samadhi* is the ‘end of life’ or the ‘ultimate peak of spiritual attainment’, or anything like that. He says that *nirvikalpa* is not the final thing: After *nirvikalpa* starts another yoga and that is the **purushottama yoga** – the perfecting of life and manifestation, which is to see God in all living beings, the whole Creation and everything that exists. Only then is *prema* or Divine Love possible (before *nirvikalpa samadhi* no one can really love). In his own words:

In *nirvikalpa samadhi* one “experiences” the static aspect of *Brahman* and after *nirvikalpa* one experiences *rasa*, which is the experience of both the static and the dynamic aspect of *Brahman* simultaneously, i.e. the static becomes the dynamic and the dynamic becomes the static – they are identical, one and the same!

The dynamic aspect of *Brahman* is all Love and the static aspect of *Brahman* is all Wisdom and together they give the ultimate ecstasy Rasa!

“Realize your Self and enjoy this life”, is his wonderful message!

This is something of the most essential of Paramananda’s teachings and messages to us, which, as a common term, he used to call **“Baul”**, and which he said would be the teaching for the future of humanity. ‘*Baul*’ means that there is full harmony between the three aspects which constitute a human being, i.e. spiritual, emotional and physical, so that there is complete equality between the head and the heart and the muscles of the body, or that thinking, feeling and ability, or knowledge, compassion and strength have fully equal status in life (in Indian terms it will be the full harmony between *Brahma*, *Vishnu* and *Shiva*, or Vedanta, Bhakti and Tantra). (See the chapter “Baul on Mt.Tron” in the section “Life together with Paramananda”; see also the chapter “Art of Life Course at Savalen” in the section “The University of Peace at Mt.Tron”). In Paramananda’s own words:

Essentially the idea of *Baul* is entirely human as one does not have to think beyond the framework of the physical body and that is why the gross body is a *Baul*’s greatest asset because it is a means with the potential by which Naturality or the original and natural state can be attained.

And then he always insisted on living a simple life. Once a very rich merchant visited Banagram who felt very bad that Paramananda should live in such a poor, small mud hut, like the common villagers, and therefore offered to build a grand castle for him. But then Paramananda threatened to leave the plains and go back to, and disappear deep into, the Himalayas and never again return to the society of man. He also never accepted any black money. And he had never any need for show or to emphasize himself. When he went to the *Kumbha Mela* it was as an onlooker, not riding on a big elephant in a huge procession with lots of pomp and ceremony and splendour, as do so many of the religious and spiritual heads. The very few who were with him on these rare occasions sometimes experienced that he would suddenly disappear from them for a while, and then suddenly reappear. When they asked him where he had been he just replied that he had discovered a realized person and therefore went to see him.

He also never had any need of announcing solemn declarations on his own behalf which would promote his own person, or any need to establish any truth or any teaching. **His only concern was to truly and wholeheartedly help his fellow human beings.** But there can be no doubt that Paramananda, with his emphasis on naturality, humanity, maternity and the value of life has given us, as a complete ‘spiritual package’, *the exact medicine for our time*. A most wonderful and most needed gift to a near lost humanity on the brink of extinction.

Who is Paramananda?

As I said at the start of the prologue it feels almost impossible to give a sufficient account of Paramananda. What I say about Paramananda here in this book is first of all an account of my concrete experiences with him in his physical company as I experienced them, and what he has said to me on such occasions, but also my personal experiences with him through dreams, letters, etc. In other words: My direct experiences with him. Naturally, this is fully subjective from my side, i.e. how Paramananda has related to me, and how I have perceived and understood this, in line with my limited ability to perceive and understand, and to express myself in literary form. Of course, it has to be so. And therefore, accordingly, I have addressed the whole book as a subjective autobiography, even if at the same time I am introducing Paramananda to an international audience. So when now, in this chapter, I attempt to speak more deeply about Paramananda, both as a phenomenon and beyond phenomena, the reader should be specially aware of this circumstance because I do not wish to colour Paramananda with my personal perspective. My wish is that all those who are reading this – each and every one – will have their own apprehension and feeling about Paramananda, which will be only theirs!

If I shall attempt to see Paramananda in a wider perspective, for humanity and for the world, I see him as the so far greatest manifestation of the Divine in this Creation – as a *purushottama* or the Absolute's final and complete appearance in matter (as also Krishna was in his time). And placed in our turbulent time with a very specific task, I see him as the one the Hindus call *Kalki Avatar* – the tenth and last of the divine incarnations in Creation, who ends the *Kali Yuga* with dynamic spirituality. *Kali Yuga* is the present age, which is the last and shortest of the four cyclic *yugas* or ages in the Hindu Cosmology, and which is the heaviest, darkest and most material (least spiritual) of them. *Kalki Avatar* is not first of all a person or an identity, but represents, as all the nine avatars before him, a pronounced passage or a marked distinction in the evolution of life – like a big leap forward. For example, the previous avatar – Buddha Avatar – was represented not only by the person Gautama Buddha, but also by Jesus Christ, Chaitanya and Ramakrishna over a period of 2,500 years, manifesting non-violence, spiritual culture and social conditions in the development of man. However, all the avatars are always manifestations of the same identity.

Within *Kalki Avatar* we have also seen the Rishi Swami Sri Ananda Acharya (1881-1945) appear with the right symbols for this avatar, who, according to the scriptures, will be riding on a white horse with a sword in his hand and fight evil. Anandacharya may be seen as the immediate forerunner and road clearer for Paramananda, who personified this avatar more than any other we know of. And when we know about the relation of Anandacharya and Paramananda (see the chapter “The Truth about Anandacharya's rebirth”) it gives meaning to the big picture. Incidentally, it may also be mentioned here that Paramananda was born in the “Year of the Horse”, according to Chinese Astrology, with the element ‘metal’.

Paramananda said himself that he had only been able to give 0.24 % of his power in his life as Paramananda here on this Earth, because it was the maximum of what the Earth was able to receive now. And even that was too much for us sometimes. At times when he was talking to us, he would suddenly stop very abruptly and then say that he was not allowed to say more (on that particular subject). And he could also say things like he was giving us too much – much more than we could possibly digest: “I am giving you 250 volts, while you are satisfied with perhaps only 50 or 100 volts.” He also said that simultaneously with his life here on this planet, he saw himself manifested and working on countless other planets in the universe (he even said the exact number of planets, but that I cannot remember – only that it was a very large number).

It is a continuous work going on of bringing the divine into matter or down to the plane of everyday life (cf. my determination for my own life after *turiya*). And therefore we are born into the “lower castes” in this life, and have to live and toil like everybody else.



Paramananda, Ranchi, Bihar, July 1983.
Photo: BP.



More happy children of Banagram Paramananda Mission. Top left: The big open playground by the old banyan tree. Top right: In front of the old school building. Above left: At the entrance to Paramananda's hut. Above right: On the playground. Below: Section of the big pond with the kitchen, dining hall and Sadhu Bhavan (rooms for all the sannyasins) in the background. All photos: BP, December 1999.





Inside the hut of Paramananda at Shantibu, Alvdal, Norway,
November 27th 1999. Photo: BP.

GLOSSARY (simplified)

- ahamkara** – “ego”; ‘the I-making faculty of man’, originating from fear and insecurity as an apparently separate individual; ‘I am the doer’.
- 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.
- Brahman** – ‘The Absolute’; ‘Absolute Consciousness’; ‘God’.
- guna** – ‘constituent’ or ‘quality’ of nature; that characteristic which makes us able to discern and differentiate one thing from another. See *rajas, sattva, tamas*.
- 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*.
- Kalki-Avatar** – the tenth and last divine incarnation in Hinduism, who ends the *Kali Yuga* with dynamic spirituality.
- Krishna** – the most famous and beloved of all India’s deities, the main figure of the Bhagavadgita or ‘The Lord’s Song’ (“the Bible of the Hindus”), which forms part of the great epic Mahabharata.
- Kumbha Mela** – the world’s greatest, peaceful gathering of people in which about a hundred million Hindus have congregated for a holy dip in the river every third year at Haridwar, Allahabad (Prayaga), Nashik and Ujjain in turn. The *Kumbha Mela* alternates between these four places, so that it returns to each every twelve years.
- nirvikalpa samadhi** – that form of *samadhi* which is without any object in mind and which therefore cannot be explained, in contrast to *savikalpa* and other forms of *samadhi*; also known as “opposite *samadhi*”, completely different from all other forms of *samadhi*. After complete *nirvikalpa samadhi* there is no more cause for rebirth.
- parama prakriti** – original power of nature.
- parama purusha** – original man.
- pranam** – respectful greeting, found in various forms and variations.
- prema** – divine love or ecstatic love; the highest and most intense form of love, which is only possible after *nirvikalpa samadhi*.
- purushottama yoga** – the yoga that starts only after *nirvikalpa samadhi* or Self-Realization, which is to see the divine or God in all living beings, the whole Creation and everything that exists. See *nirvikalpa samadhi*.
- rajas** – the most flexible of the three *gunas*, representing a moderate degree of manifestation; energy, activity, restlessness. See *guna*.
- rasa** – ‘juice’, ‘essence’, ‘elixir’; the most intense and ecstatic form of pleasure or bliss in life.
- 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.
- sahaja manusha** – natural human, with the right identity and without any confusion.
- sattva** – the most subtle of the three *gunas*, representing a high degree of manifestation. See *guna*.
- Shakti** – ‘power’, ‘energy’; the dynamic aspect of the Absolute; the female principle; the counterpart of Shiva. See *Shiva*.
- Shiva** – ‘in which everything rests’; the static aspect of the Absolute. See *Shakti*.
- tamas** – the most gross of the three *gunas*, representing a low degree of manifestation; matter, darkness, inactivity. See *guna*.
- turiya** – “the fourth state of consciousness”; the transcendental or super-conscious state, beyond the three ordinary states of consciousness – waking, sub-conscious and unconscious; the “Rishi state” or realized. See *rishi, nirvikalpa samadhi*.

Continuation follows in the next number next week.