

Live Paramananda!

In Memory of Swami Paramananda

*By Bjoern Pettersen
(29.11.1999)*

It was in the middle of the night, in Norway, when suddenly a most unexpected and shocking message came from India - Swami Paramananda had left his body! It happened just before midnight, on Saturday the 27th November 1999, local time. A whole world of friends, followers and admirers are totally dumbfounded. Immediately it feels unreal that we will no longer be able to see and experience him through our physical senses - that no longer will we catch the infection of his wonderful smile and receive his unutterably loving gaze - that no longer will we experience his great friendliness, and the enormous harmony and joy it was to be together with him in this way. It is a brutal reminder that everything physical in this world is transitory, and that it is more important to remember him in our hearts and to live out the ideals and truths he showed us.

Swami Paramananda was an unparalleled human being. To try to describe him in words seems almost hopeless. He has meant, and means, so infinitely much for an enormous number of people - tens and tens of thousands – all of whom met and developed a personal relation with him during his short but very intense life. They have been used to come to him with their problems, large or small; to reveal their innermost confessions; to seek consolation or guidance; and for initiation into the inner mysteries of life. Or, as it were, simply to experience joy and fun. Paramananda had everything and gave everything. With his spontaneous naturality, simple living, incredible friendliness, sacrificial attitude and infinite wisdom he won our hearts. We felt that he understood us better than we understood ourselves, and therefore he had our full confidence. He never left us disappointed or deserted. When we were children we needed love, security, protection and care from our parents. After becoming adults, able to think and decide most things ourselves, we still find that we are mentally immature and have many of the same fundamental needs, while in addition, we want the answers to all our deepest, innermost questions. For sincere truthseekers it is therefore only natural to place their confidence in a person who displays far more maturity and experience than they have themselves, if, in the first place, one has the good fortune to meet such a full and complete human being.

I first met Paramananda one June day in 1983 at Burdwan railway station in Bengal, while he was waiting for a couple of hours to change trains during one of his regular tours in Bengal. He made an indelible impression from the very first moment. Our eyes met as he smiled his incomparable, winning smile, while at the same time he pronounced my name as no other Indian in perfect Norwegian. Like that we sat and smiled for a long while and I felt that I had met a most heartfelt good friend, that we had always known each other. Only a couple of days earlier I had come from a month's stay with a 'typical' guru in North India. He had a spectacular appearance of which he was very conscious, and he was 'typical' in the sense that he kept a certain distance from everybody else, with himself highly elevated. He was extremely dominating and manipulating, and kept a severe discipline. To come from him directly to Paramananda was like going from night to day without twilight. The difference was almost total. At that time I was also familiar with certain Indian gurus who had come to the West and given the age-old noble tradition a bad reputation. They lived their lives like emperors with their many subjects in the greatest luxury, and with titles as 'His Holiness' and so on. Widely famous, in spite of their dislike for children and hatred of poor people. But I stared into the eyes of something which, intuitively and without any doubt, felt genuine and real. All the years that followed have taught me that I wasn't wrong at that time.

Swami Paramananda has always been kindness itself. So simple and easy, and so releasingly natural in all situations and relations. Always ready to give himself wholly and fully to anybody in distress who needed him. He was extremely dynamic with an apparently inexhaustible powerful energy. All the highest spiritual ideals, noble religious motives and abstract philosophical thoughts, were made completely practical in his life. With his own example he showed us that these noble ideals really are living and attainable, not merely beautiful words we find in scriptures or distant qualities for which we are reaching out. In spite of him having only four years of schooling and never reading books, he was an ocean of wisdom able to hold exhaustive lectures on nearly every kind of subject. He loved children, always took the side of the weak, and was incredibly liberal and understanding about every aspect of being human. Nothing was sin or sinful. He used to say that the only sin was to think about sin. And he never placed himself above others. He clearly said that the highest spiritual

goal is immanent in all of us and that anyone can realise it, if only the sincerity is great enough and the intensity in our yearning is strong enough. His advice and guidance were always tailored just for you, in accordance with your own nature and ability, and always directed towards the process of liberating you, not towards making you dependant on him or anything else. Once he said that ' I have sold myself on the market of life', and surely we experienced that he could never say 'no' to anyone who was in need of him. This total sacrifice was the life of Swami Paramananda in a nutshell.

As early as 1983 he told us that the life span of his body in this life would not exceed the age of 48 years. So those of us who knew him well understood that the time was nearing. Such men as Paramananda never die, they only leave their bodies - consciously. Therefore, except from the purely physical, everything is as before. Live Paramananda!