

## ***Swami Paramananda***

(A short biography)

Swami Paramananda or Rabindranath Das, which was his family name, was born in the early morning of December 25th 1954 into a large and rather poor family in the small village of Krishnadebpur on the banks of the Ganges in West Bengal, India. Robin, as he was usually called, had never been unconscious in his entire life and could for instance recount in detail his existence inside his mother's womb during her pregnancy. Even though he had only four years of primary schooling he was apparently an unlimited storehouse of knowledge and wisdom on practically any subject. Already from his earliest childhood he used to enter quite naturally into the stage which in India is called *samadhi*, which is the deepest and most unitary state of mind a human being can experience and in which one becomes completely united with one's object of meditation or contemplation. As he in this way was not like other children and his parents did not understand what was happening with him, they naturally became afraid and tried every possibility from witch doctors to psychiatrists. Lastly he was committed to a locked ward in a psychiatric hospital from where, however, after half a year he managed to escape. After that he roamed about competing with the street cows for vegetable spills and other food wastes from the markets. For more than two years he lived like this and wandered on foot as a street orphan covering large parts of India. It was not until he reached Rishikesh at the Himalayan foothills in the North of India that he met with sannyasins and other holy men and women who, to his great relief, understood him and accepted him as he was. From there he joined two such persons on a long journey on foot up into the Himalayas where he wandered about for seven years, meeting with many a realized yogi and saint.

At twenty years of age Robin returned to his home in Bengal. There he found that his father had died and that his eldest brother refrained from performing his duties of feeding the family, as is the tradition in India. Robin therefore saw that his mother, brothers and sisters were in a very difficult situation, and he promised his mother that he would find a job to earn money for their livelihood. For about two years he worked in an electrical company, bringing electricity to remote villages. During this time he met many of those who later became his close friends and followers, and the work also led him to the small and poor village of Banagram where later he started his Paramananda Mission. People who met him started to realize that this man was quite extraordinary, for as soon as he had met somebody he knew everything about that person's life, both past, present and future. Moreover, he was able to give full and understandable answers to any question, and to everyone's amazement he frequently entered into *samadhi* just like he used to do in his childhood. He was always extremely friendly and obliging, and always unusually pleasant and interesting to be with. When two years had passed his mother allowed him to start his real work and together with a handful dedicated friends and disciples, he then founded the Paramananda Mission on the outskirts of Banagram village. At about that time he also experienced what is called *nirvikalpa samadhi*, which is a so-called "super conscious stage" without mind where the "soul" experiences itself directly and one becomes what is called "Self-Realized" or "God-Realized" or simply "Realized".

At this time he wore white clothes and was called "Robin Maharaj". Having seen all over India many a religious fanatic and narrow-minded fundamentalist, those titled "swami" and also non-swamis, wearing the saffron coloured robes of the sannyasin but still often oppressing and exploiting the people, he had felt disgusted and had no intention of becoming

a sannyasin himself. But after a vision and in the memory of and deepest respect for those genuine and great personalities before him who had worn the saffron robes, like the Buddha, Adi Shankaracharya, Sri Chaitanya, Swami Vivekananda and others, he decided to revive the age-old and noble institution of sannyasa and become one himself. He therefore travelled to the Himalayas to the person of his vision who had been calling him, Ramanand Avadot, and received the initiation of sannyasa from him and the name "Swami Paramananda".

Back in Banagram, without money or material means and with only a handful of dedicated workers, but with the unshakable will to help all destitute and needy persons by means of true self-sacrifice and enthusiasm of humanity, he gradually attracted ever more people. And in the course of only a few years Paramananda Mission became huge and quickly gained a very good reputation. To-day it is one of the main welfare centres of Bengal where tens of thousands of people over the years have received personal help and initiation into spiritual life and living by Swami Paramananda. Still more people use the welfare institution on a regular basis and receive good help thereof.

Paramananda's philosophy of life or rather attitude to life is wonderfully simple and natural. His motto used to be: "High thinking and simple living – not luxury living and poor thinking!" He said: "The world doesn't need more religions – it needs humanity", and "the highest service to God is service to humankind". Quite contrary to the strong traditions of India and quite shocking to many religious leaders, he refused to erect any temple with the image of a deity in his Mission, saying that his orphanage and his hospital were his temples. He said that the only real temple is the human body and that the deity is there within it. From nature we have got this body and mind at birth and through them only we shall learn to know ourselves. We shall not escape from life but embrace it and uplift it through art of life. He also said: "Only with love can there be peace and social health. The root of all social problems is lack of love. The human society will have to be built on it. If you want to work for humanity, spread the message of love." And he himself with his life and mission was just like an incarnation of love. His personal lifestyle was just as simple and wonderful as his teaching. When some of his more wealthy followers insisted on building a huge and luxurious home for him, in their thinking more befitting, he threatened to leave everything and go back to the Himalayas and never again return to society. While he was in Banagram he always stayed in his small one room thatched clay cottage beautifully made in the traditional style of rural Bengal. His life truly was a continuous sacrifice with no time for name or fame or personal gain.

Paramananda visited Norway and the West four times – in 1989-90, 1993, 1995 and 1998, always based at Shantibu in Alvdal, Norway. During the first visit, when he stayed for a full year, he also visited several countries in Europe. Later, and usually before going to Norway, he revisited some of these countries, especially Italy, England and Germany. During his last visit in 1998 he also visited several African countries before going to Europe. At the first visit to Shantibu he was made aware of the idea of the University of Peace, and as it had been at a standstill for many years he immediately brought it to life and inspired the start of a project for its realization. Most of its present form and content has been inspired by him. Still he maintained that it was not his project.

Just before midnight on November 27th 1999 Paramananda left his body aged only 45 years, according to the span of the life cycle of his physical body of which he had spoken many years before. But his work and great inspiration live on and are very much active today.

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***Some sayings by Swami Paramananda:***

"Dear Atman ("Self"),

Love ignores death and conquers fear. Only love can overcome all problems and tragedies of life. The desire to sacrifice oneself for the sake of others is a natural tendency of lovers, it flows in their veins. Love is an experience felt by all, love is a language understood by all. Spread your love."

"Dear Atman,

Do not think your self to be inferior. Do not think that you are a vile, worthless, poor sinner. You are a human being – Eternal Consciousness and Bliss of God resides in you. You are a manifestation of God. Love is God."

"Dear Atman,

Life is a journey – a journey of love towards fulfilment. Onward, onward, onward towards the Self!"

***"Life is a journey to reach Perfection:***

***Education*** is the manifestation of Perfection already in man. Our education system today with diplomas and degrees is only giving us a licence to earn money.

***Religion*** is the realisation of Truth already in man. Religions of today make people separate from each other. The world does not need more religions, we need humanity.

***Humanity*** is conscience and sincerity. Still we are only Homo sapiens – we are not yet human. We are not yet civilized. Be human! Lack of conscience and sincerity bring misuse and demoralisation. We need diversity, not separation and duality.

***Ego*** makes 'isms'. The concept of Hell is the kingdom of the Ego. The concept of Heaven is the kingdom of Love. Resurrection is the death of the Ego and the awakening of Consciousness to enter Heaven.

***Realization*** comes through practise, not belief. Science is hypothesis, observation and implementation – like philosophy, yoga and art of living. If you want to realize Truth it is very easy, but if you want to learn it, it is very difficult – because Truth is very simple and natural, so if you try to explain it, it makes complications. Truth cannot be explained, it can only be realized."