



The Mt. Tron Mail

June 2005 • Mt. Tron University of Peace Foundation • No. 2 Vol. 8



Sri Ananda and the famous poet Arne Garborg on Tronsvangen during their work translating the great Indian national epic "Ramayana" from the original Sanskrit via English to New Norwegian, summer 1921. (Photographer unknown).

60 years since the passing away of Sri Ananda

This year it is 60 years since **Swami Sri Ananda Acharya** (Sri Ananda), the "father" of the University of Peace, passed away in 1945. In this edition of The Mt. Tron Mail we shall take a closer look at the vision, life and work of this man during the 27 years he lived at Tronsvangen beneath Mt. Tron in Alvdal, Norway.

Sri Ananda was the Indian sannyasin and professor who ended his professoriate in India to spend all of his time in meditation in a cave in the Himalayas. Here he had a thorough experience and he received a message to travel to the West to teach "The Wisdom of Peace". For more than two years he stayed in London and then travelled to Norway just after the outbreak of the 1st World War, and came - after a couple of years with a series of lectures on Indian philosophy at the universities of Oslo and Stockholm - finally to Alvdal and settled on Tronsvangen in September 1917 as a young man of 35 years.

His five years younger friend and helper, the engineer Einar Beer from Oslo, had come before and found the place on a mission from Sri Ananda who shortly afterwards also came together with his English secretary, Miss Edwards, who was originally an acquaintance of Mr. Beer. Both had first met Sri Ananda when he was lecturing in Oslo. Later, about 1920, Miss Jewson, commonly known as Samvida, came over from England. These two English ladies, together with the Norwegian Einar Beer, became the most central persons for the rest of Sri Ananda's life.

The village people of Alvdal found the sannyasin name Swami Sri Ananda Acharya too difficult to pronounce, so they used his family name Baral instead. Sri Ananda, therefore, is known throughout the entire district as Professor Baral or just Baral. His Gaurisankar Seter, his white horse Bolkari and his throne-like chair are all inseparably tied to the memory of Sri Ananda in the mind of the village people.

Professor Baral on Tronsvangen

Why exactly Alvda?

People always ask why exactly did Sri Ananda choose Alvda? It is not easy to give a simple answer but he knew that he had a mission in the West and circumstances finally brought him to Mt.Tron in Alvda. After spending his first five years in the Western world in big cities he had become weary of city life and asked Mr. Beer to find a place for him in the Norwegian mountains. Sri Ananda had only stretched out his arm towards North-East when he talked with Mr. Beer in Oslo, so Mr. Beer took the train up Gudbrandsdalen to Hjerkinn and from there travelled further by car down Follaldalen to Alvda where he came to know that an old guest house was for sale on Tronsvangen. So this was the direct cause for Sri Ananda to end up in Alvda.

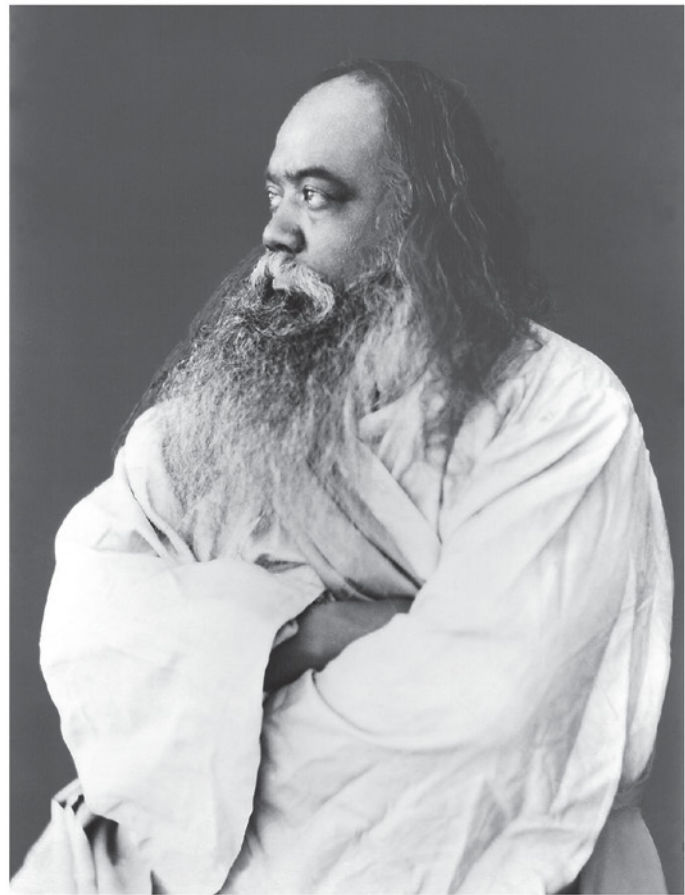
The "father" of the University of Peace

When Sri Ananda came to Tronsvangen for the first time and especially when shortly after that he walked up to the "Peace Plateau" on Mt.Tron, the memories of his great vision of the University of Peace came back to him from his childhood: "From my earliest childhood this great idea used to come to my head of how to lead all the nations together and bring Peace permanently to this Earth by establishing the great University of Peace. Wandering alone I used to think out every detail of this great plan. In England I never thought of it and in London and elsewhere I often thought that I had forgotten something but could never find out what it was. It is only here on this great mountain that the plan again revealed itself to my brain" (from Einar Beer's notes). When Sri Ananda saw the "Peace Plateau" it was clear to him that the first future University of Peace had to be there.

In two of his books published in 1921 - "Karlina Rani" and "Kalkaram" - he presents the main contents of the idea, which in short is to establish a series of Universities of Peace in the mountains of many countries around the world. One student from each country shall live together with their teachers in each of the universities. Study will last for 21 years and every year the students will move to another university in another country, until they have studied all over the world and have come to know, and become friends with, all the races, cultures and nations of the world. After completing their studies the students will go out in the world and teach people the Wisdom of Peace and in the bond of friendship tie together the people and nations of North and South, and East and West. Only in this way, in Sri Ananda's opinion, could peace be brought permanently to this war-ridden planet.



Sri Ananda with his horse Bolkari on Tronsvangen about 1927. Photo: Einar Beer.



Swami Sri Ananda Acharya, 1928. (Photographer unknown).

Was Sri Ananda a buddhist?

It is a common understanding among village people that Sri Ananda was a Buddhist, but this is a misunderstanding, as his many books clearly bear witness. He was neither a Buddhist, Hindu, Christian, Muslim or anything else, even if religious persons from various backgrounds whom he met often thought that he represented just their religion and faith. Men like Sri Ananda never belong to any religion and never preach any particular teaching - they are deeply rooted in their own spiritual experience and realization. For them all religions are like a "kinder-garten of spirituality", which only represents a starting point for a quest. For them the spiritual is universal and the same for all - it doesn't depend on dogma, doctrine, ceremonies, rituals or any other thing but only the purely human or humane. The sincere and conscientious quest, which starts outside oneself with the reading of holy scriptures and visiting churches, temples, mosques and pagodas, will always end up with the naked con-templation of one's own Self. It is this Self-Realization (also called "God-Realization") which characterises men like Sri Ananda. The human being has everything and is itself the key to the very mystery of Life, it only needs a little help to get rid of its own illusions and ignorance, which it also carries in abundance.

In India, men like Sri Ananda are mentioned with the designation of respect, Rishi, which means a "seer" or sage. He was also a yogi - one who practises yoga - which is a physical, mental and spiritual science about how one harmonizes and unites the individual with the universal. The science of yoga is independent of any religion or doctrine and can be practised by every sincere seeker of truth.

Life on Tronsvangen

Sri Ananda was an incredibly exotic element in village Norway at the time. No one had ever seen or even heard about anything like him at these latitudes. The famous Norwegian humorist and great son of Alvdal, Kjell Aukrust (who was a small boy at the time), once said in a radio interview that "to see Baral riding on his white horse down from Mt. Tron to the centre of Alvdal, with his turban, long hair and beard, and flowing orange silk robes, yes, that was really the fairytale itself for the boys of Alvdal!" Contemporary journalists wrote that to see Sri Ananda on Tronsvangen was like seeing "a lotus on snow" or like seeing "a hummingbird on a birch branch". The words were obviously missing but the contrast of the pictures was clearly showing all the same!

In the first ten years on Tronsvangen, Sri Ananda was enormously productive from day one. He wrote and published as many as 21 books during this period - allegories, collections of poems, philosophical messages, collections of songs, dramas, a textbook in ecological farming, cookery book, translations from Sanskrit, etc., etc. - first through big international and Scandinavian publishing houses and later published by his own Brahmakul. Several of his books were published in two languages, English and Norwegian or Swedish. Coincidentally, together with the language genius Miss Edwards, he wrote a huge philological and etymological work with its base in all the Sanskrit words of the Rig-Veda (the oldest Indo-European document), of how these original words could be traced in the other, later Indo-European languages. Unfortunately this work was never completed and the manuscript was later lost. From 1928 all Sri Ananda's book writing and outward work stopped and he would withdraw more and more.

But during all the years until the outbreak of the 2nd World War Sri Ananda received innumerable guests and visitors who all usually got a warm meal, a long lecture about any theme between heaven and earth, and a gift at the time of departure. Whole school classes, parties and clubs could direct their tour to Tronsvangen to pay Sri Ananda a visit who would then usually sit on his big, homemade chair with wheels - where he could sit cross legged like in his homeland - in his study surrounded by his many books. On the meadow outside his two horses were grazing, the billy goat was tethered to a long rope and a pole, the pig moved freely in and out of his cave in the earth, the ducks and the geese were bathing in the pond, the roosters strutting in the yard and the pigeons flew in the sky, while the big black oxen were tethered to their stall in the cowshed. Sri Ananda was presented many old domestic animals from village people who refrained from taking their lives and thus kept a kind of old home for tired domestic animals in Alvdal. On Gaurisankar Seter they were allowed to live and to die a natural death. His white horse Bolkari was 20 years old when he got her and she lived for another 19 years before she died. Perhaps she is the oldest horse in Norway?



Gaurisankar Seter, December 1945. Photo: Einar Beer.



Sri Ananda in his flower garden about 1930. Photo: Einar Beer.

Friends and foes

Sri Ananda was very well liked and highly respected among his neighbours on Tronsvangen and among the village people of Alvdal and in the district in general. He made many good friends who were both lay and learned among Norwegians, the Sami people and foreigners. He was popular among visiting children and throughout the years he sent a great number of letters, poems and greetings to all those whom he had come to know in Alvdal. During the 2nd World War he defied the blacking out order of the Germans and let an oil lamp burn incessantly in the window on the first floor of Gaurisankar Seter during the whole occupation. The light showed clearly far down in the village in the dark winter nights and the people of Alvdal only called it "The Baral Star". As a British citizen (India was part of the British Empire at the time) it was especially dangerous for Sri Ananda during the German occupation but two men from the village had made solemn vows to protect him with their own lives if necessary. Luckily it never became necessary.

But there were town people in Oslo who had made Sri Ananda the object of their hate because he had spoken strongly against spiritism, which was a very popular activity in the higher circles at the time. Several central persons in this social set were first his friends and had arranged several series of private lectures with Sri Ananda on Indian Philosophy. But when they wanted him as a frontman for their spiritistic seances and he refused most strongly, grounds were made for slander and opposition, which only grew stronger and more extensive through the years. After some time it developed into a big conspiracy against him with threats of murder among other threats, and even attempted murder. Personally he didn't care about this but they succeeded in tarnishing his good name and reputation and putting an end to his outward work and activity. And it is they who, to this day, are the reason that his many books have not been re-printed and published anew.



Return address:

Mt. Tron University of Peace Foundation
Shantibu
2560 Alvdal, NORWAY

To:

The Mt. Tron Mail - the newsletter for those interested in the establishing of the Mt. Tron University of Peace

<i>Publisher:</i>	Mt. Tron University of Peace Foundation	<i>Address:</i>	"Shantibu", 2560 Alvdal, Norway
<i>Editor:</i>	Bjørn Pettersen (Chairman of the Foundation)	<i>Phone & Fax:</i>	+47 62 48 78 56
<i>Issues:</i>	Quarterly 4 times a year	<i>E-mail:</i>	shanti@tronuni.org
<i>Languages:</i>	Norwegian and English	<i>WEB:</i>	www.tronuni.org
<i>Prices:</i>	Subscription of support NOK 300,-/year (US\$ 43,- UK£ 30,- EU 43,-) Single copies NOK 30,-/piece	<i>Postal giro account:</i>	0809 2227007
		<i>IBAN:</i>	NO94 1895 2650 935
		<i>BIC-address:</i>	SHEDNO22
		<i>Bank name:</i>	Sparebanken Hedmark



Sri Ananda's grave at about 1400 metres on Mt. Tron. In the horizon is seen Mt. Snøhetta due West.
Photo: Mittet (personal assignment), 1975.

Inspiration for the future

But if Sri Ananda's work on the outer plane was hindered, he worked even more intensely on the inner plane. During all of the 2nd World War he fully isolated himself in prayer and meditation in his room. He said: "I am not sitting up all these nights in vain. I am creating here on Mt. Tron a spiritual power from which the whole world will have to take if they will be liberated from annihilation and war."

On the Day of Armistice, the 8th of May 1945 Sri Ananda went into a state, which in India is called Samadhi - a state of the highest consciousness and harmony - just as he had foretold in a poem 25 years earlier. He remained in this state for over a month and was declared dead on the 13th of June, after which his body was embalmed. Four o'clock in the morning of 1st July, just as the sunrays shimmered over the mountains, Sri Ananda's coffin was lowered into the grave up on Mt. Tron in the presence of many friends.