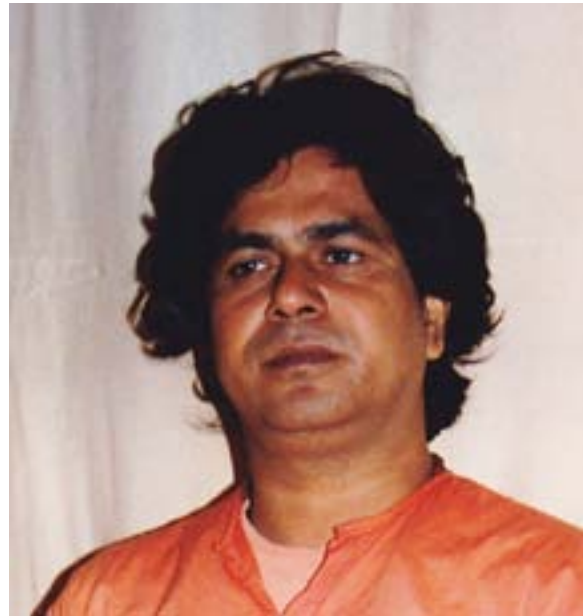




# The Mt. Tron Mail

SPECIAL EDITION No. 24

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*Swami Paramananda at Shantibu, Alvdaal, Norway, 1990. 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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# THE UNIVERSITY OF PEACE AT MT. TRON

## Paramananda comes again to Norway

Paramananda next visited Norway in summer 1993. He first travelled with Bryan to London, arriving on April 4<sup>th</sup>, from April 22<sup>nd</sup> he was in Italy with Alex and all the other friends of Carrara, and then in Germany with Usha and other friends. I met him at Oslo Airport, Fornebu, on Tuesday June 29<sup>th</sup> together with a new friend, Johnny, as well as Torleif and Anne Siri, now with their two daughters Sandra and Anja Helene. After lunch with Anne Siri's family in Oslo, Johnny drove Paramananda and me to his friend Unni at Tønsberg where we stayed overnight. The next day we went back to Oslo where Paramananda met still more new friends, and the following night he and I took the night train alone to Alvdal.

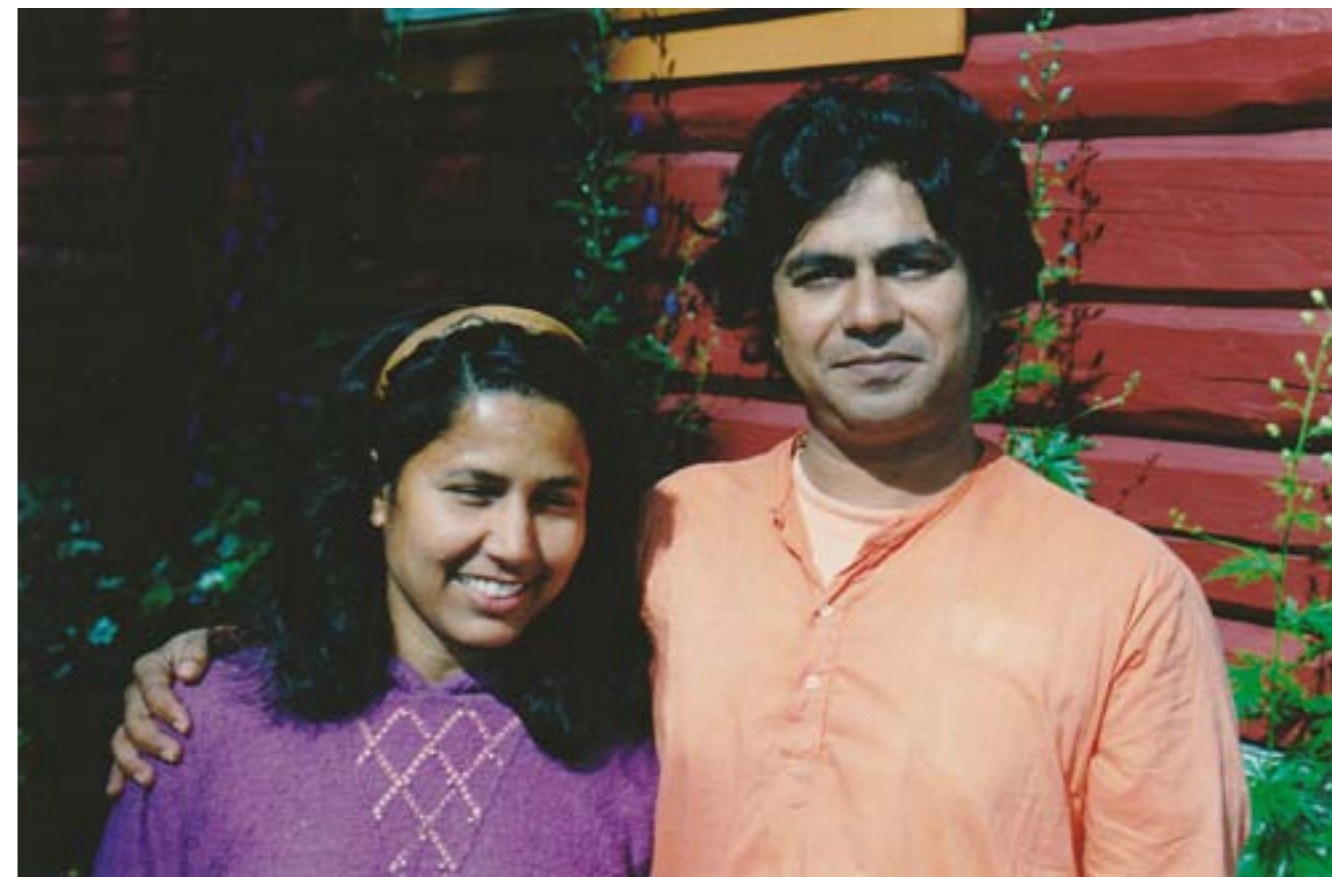
We reached Shantibu at about 04:00 hrs in the early morning and were received by Tripti Ma on her birthday, July 1<sup>st</sup>. She could hardly ask for a better birthday present than the presence of her guru Paramananda! Sometime later, when I was alone with Paramananda, he told me the following, of which I had already suspected something, but which now was finally confirmed:

Tripti Ma was Gauri Ma in her previous life. The two of you met on a pilgrimage at Udaya Giri and became very good friends, and resolved to help each other. Tripti Ma has had *savikalpa samadhi*.

Gauri Ma was a well-known sannyasini and the only sannyasini of Sri Ramakrishna. She started a women's ashram in Calcutta in 1895, based on the ideals of Ramakrishna and inspired by his wife, Sarada Ma, who often visited the centre. Gauri Ma was a great pioneer for sannyasinis in India and she was about 24 years older than Anandacharya. In this life the difference was only five years, in favour of Tripti Ma. <sup>1)</sup>

The same night Kari Ada came from Os, and was ever present at Shantibu for as long as Paramananda was there. She was always busy in the kitchen with Tripti Ma, because every day we had visitors who wanted to meet Paramananda and many of them stayed overnight. On Sunday that week there was a full moon which in India meant *Guru Purnima*, and several 'India-friends' came on that day to be initiated by Paramananda. And as always there were lots of *satsanga* with him all day and night until the early hours of dawn.

On July 16<sup>th</sup> Kari Ada brought him by air to Lyngseidet in Troms, North Norway, where she was from and her parents lived. He stayed there for the rest of the month, not returning to Shantibu until Saturday July 31<sup>st</sup>. That day Andreas from Sweden came to see him, and also Knud and Kari, Kjetil Thorsen, and two students of Knud's from Trondheim who had the University of Peace as their diploma exercise. My sister Kristin and her family had already arrived the night before. Paramananda therefore spoke at length about the University of Peace that evening.



Above: Tripti Ma and Paramananda at Shantibu, Alvdal, summer 1993.

Below left: Paramananda, Bryan, Tripti Ma, Kari (Glenn's partner), Glenn, David (son), Ole (Bjørn's father), Bjørn, Eva, (Bjørn's mother), Trond (Bjørn's brother), and Kari Ada at Shantibu. Below right: Paramananda cuts a piece of his favourite cake, homemade soft cake!

Bottom: Paramananda in front of the office at Shantibu. All photos: BP 1993.



The only known picture of Gauri Ma, about 1900. Unknown photographer.



Tripti Ma at Banagram, India, 1984. Mark how both are holding their hands in these two pictures. Photo: BP.



Above: Paramananda with 3 years old Sandra, at Torleif and Anne Siri's, Os, summer 1993. Photo: Torleif/Anne Siri.

Below: Paramananda and pilot Svein Ellingvåg, Tynset, before the flight. Photo: Torleif Sund.

Aerial photo of the "Peace Plateau" taken by Paramananda! The Monument is barely visible at the exact centre of the picture.

Below right: TriptiMa, Kari Ada and Paramananda receive information about the new library in Alexandria, Egypt, by architect Kjetil Thorsen at his office at Snøhetta, Oslo. Both photos: BP.



During the next week, the whole of which he spent with Torleif and Anne Siri at Os, Trishan called from India with the information that Tapeswarananda had been bitten by a dangerous poisonous snake and was in hospital in dialysis, and that a huge cancer tumour had been detected in the brain of Tarun. Both cases were very serious and critical, and Paramananda said that Tapeswarananda, who was an old man, would be dying now. But in the end Tapeswarananda survived, while young Tarun died.<sup>2)</sup>

On Sunday August 8<sup>th</sup> our friend Svein, who was a pilot and lived at Tynset, arranged for a local flight with his small, private propeller plane, above Tynset, Alvdal and Mt. Rondane, and allowed Paramananda to take the controls for a little while. The intention was that Paramananda, Torleif and I were to go with Svein in his four seater plane, but Anne Siri was quite determined that she and not I should be on board, and so it happened. Afterwards Paramananda said that according to "The Divine Plan" it was I that should have come along in the plane and not Anne Siri, but that did not happen. So, apparently, individual will is able to change or override Divine Will! Paramananda had also said something similar about the University of Peace when he once noted that:

*It is not my project, but the idea has been accepted by the Divine.*



At Knud and Kari's at Ljan, Oslo, prior to Paramananda's departure from Norway, autumn 1993.

Above left: Knud, Kari, Paramananda, TriptiMa, Kari Ada and Bjørn. Photo: Knud Larsen.

Above right: Knud and Kari had a wonderful place; here the veranda in afternoon sunlight, with TriptiMa, Kari and Knud, while Paramananda relaxes in an easy chair below the big birch tree outside in the garden, overlooking Oslo fjord (over, right).

Both photos: BP.

Paramananda always had good rest among the pine trees at Knud and Kari's at Ljan (over, left). Photo: Knud Larsen.

Another thing that came up at this time was that Paramananda expressed a wish to do *kayakalpa*, which implied that he would extend his life with a new cycle of 47 years. As mentioned earlier he talked with me about this for the first time in May 1989 in Banagram, and again in the same place on November 3<sup>rd</sup> 1990. Once more it came to his lips after Torleif took him and Bryan, who had come over from England three days before, to Anne Siri's hut in Rondane the next weekend. Paramananda and I had already been there together with Torleif in 1989, so this was his second time there. When they returned to Shantibu and I was alone with him, he said to me:

*I am thinking of doing kayakalpa here in Norway in the future. But then I need to be completely alone for many months and nobody must disturb me. I am thinking it will be good to do this in Rondane. You can also do kayakalpa.*

So therefore we spent much time during the next years exploring the possibilities for Paramananda to have a one year residence permit for Norway again, and our lawyer friend at UDI tried in various ways to work out a possibility, including a bill for a change of law.

After a few days at Shantibu we went with Paramananda to Oslo via my sister Kristin outside Hamar, Anne Siri's family near Lillehammer, and Brandbu Folk High School, taking six days altogether, during which time Paramananda also visited Saswati at Gjøvik alone. In Oslo, where we arrived on August 24<sup>th</sup>, the same day as Bryan left for London, we stayed with Knud and Kari at Ljan. We met many friends there, and on one of those days we visited Kjetil Thorsen in his office at Snøhetta.

After spending barely two months in Norway this time, on Friday August 27<sup>th</sup>, we all took leave of Paramananda, who first flew back to Usha and friends in Germany, and after three weeks there, to Bryan in England, until on October 6<sup>th</sup> he flew back to India. It was a rather short but intense meeting with Paramananda at Shantibu this time, with many people wanting to meet him always. Just before we left Shantibu for Oslo, Paramananda smiled to me and said:

*Bjørn, I think that next time I come you will have a car!*

These words came as a big surprise and sounded completely unlikely. When all of my friends, when they reached 18 years of age, got their driving licence, I was almost proud of not doing so, and I thought then that I would never have a car. At Shantibu I had even fantasized about having a horse, so the thought of suddenly having a driving licence and driving around in a car felt completely far out and unrealistic. But his words worked in me, and only a few days after he had left I started to think about getting a car. On December 8<sup>th</sup> that year I acquired my driving licence and on January 20<sup>th</sup> 1994 I had bought my first car for 15,000 Norwegian Krone, paid for by Kari Ada.

During his first visit to Norway Paramananda had already taught me in detail how to teach meditation and give initiation, and thus authorized me for this task. Before leaving this time he told me to start initiation on a huge scale in Norway and added that I should charge 500 Norwegian Krone per person. This was so unlike the Paramananda that I had come to know, who never did anything on a huge scale and never charged anything for his services. As there was absolutely no response in me to this, I never did anything about it. Actually, quite immediately I viewed it as a test from him of whether I had any desire or greed in this direction.

But very soon this could quite well have been a great test, because in the next months after Paramananda had left, we experienced harder times than ever at Shantibu. We had absolutely no income and the work suffered setbacks on various fronts, and at the same time there were people who deliberately worked against us. Whereas until now we had been feeling that we had made some progress, suddenly there were reverses, and many conditions that had been stable and predictable, suddenly turned to their opposite. I therefore wrote many letters to Paramananda during autumn and winter describing the difficult situation to him. The first part of a letter from him, written in Azimganj, shows his advice and care for

my well-being in this situation:

Azimganj, 30.12.1993

Dear Atman Pakhi\*,

I have received your letter. Don't be depressed. When anybody comes forward to do a good work he may face many attacks and problems. He will have to defy all these and proceed. God helps those who work for the great interest. You are working for the great interest. Those who work for the great interest are blessed. Go on with your work unmindful of untoward incidents. ...

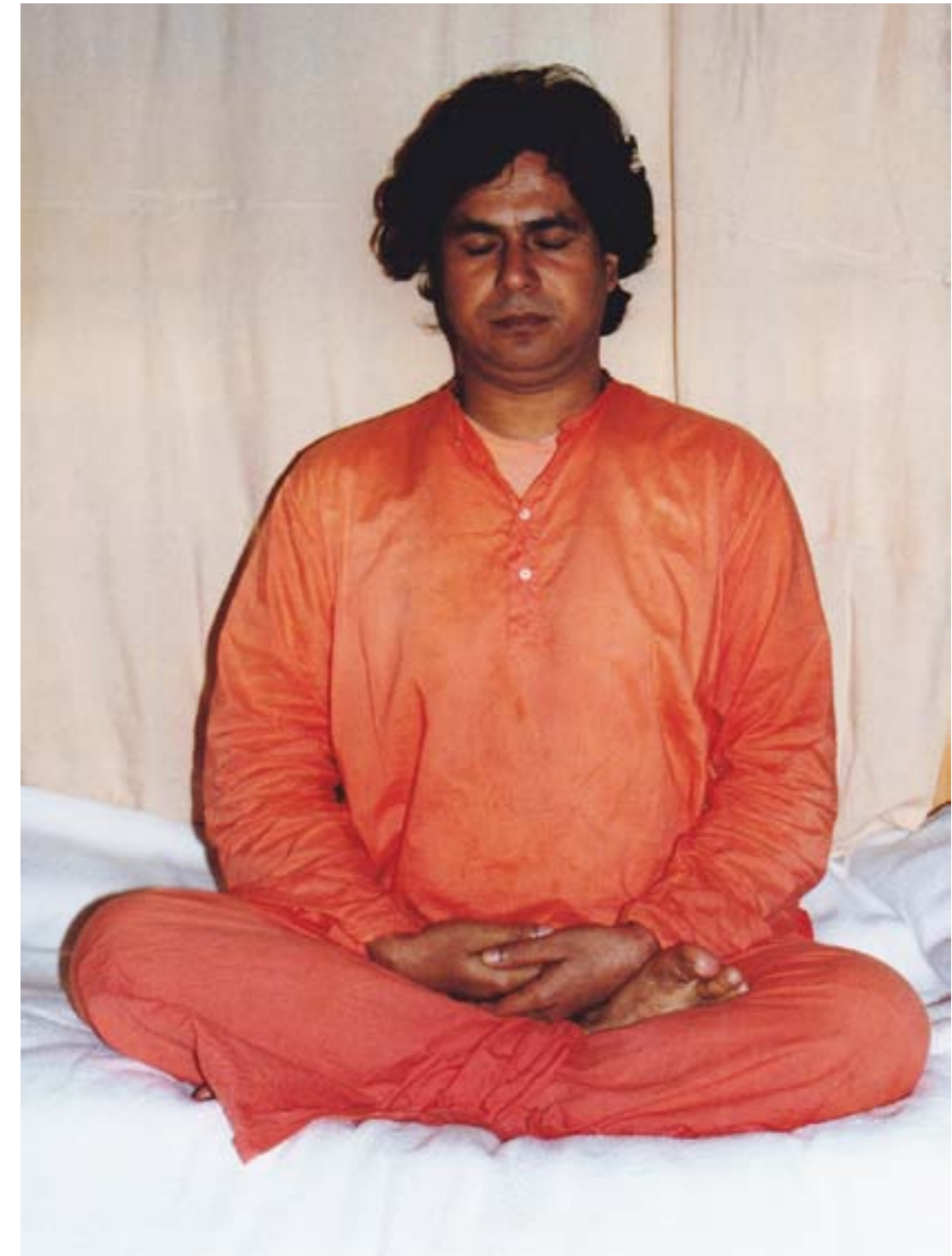
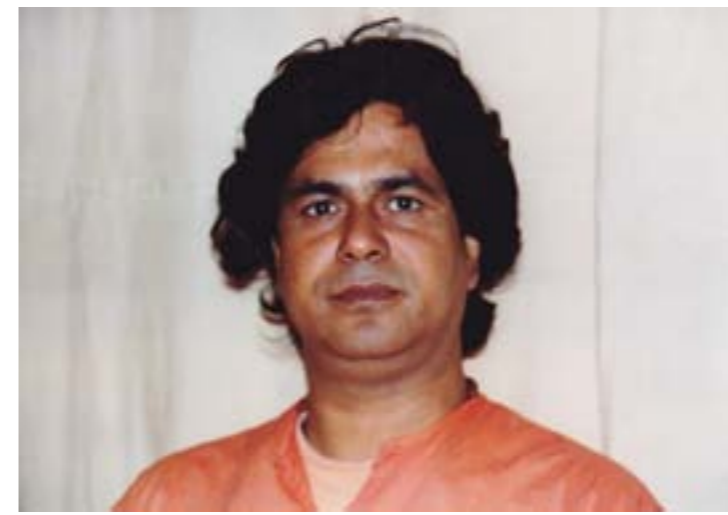
\*(Paramananda sometimes called me "Pakhi", which means 'bird' in Bengali, on account of my great fascination and interest in birds).

These were conditions I had already experienced many times before in my life and knew very well, but it was always very reassuring when I could hear something like this from Paramananda and thus have his confirmation. I therefore continued my work with renewed courage and endured all the ordeals, until from the summer of the next year some fundamental, positive changes happened – especially about economy. The next time Paramananda visited Shantibu he asked me how it had been going on since his last visit – if I had managed to give initiation to a lot of people and earned lots of money. And when smilingly I answered in the negative he was clearly satisfied. But even if he should have meant this and actually wanted me to do it, still I would not have been able to do anything like that, as it is so deeply contrary to my nature to do any "God business". But luckily there was no danger that Paramananda really would have wanted me to do it. One of Paramananda's most distinct characteristics was, exactly, that he never took advantage of his own position or his many followers' admiration to aggrandize or enrich himself in any way. <sup>1)</sup>

*Left: Paramananda at the end of the table as he used to sit at Shantibu. Photo: BP.*

*Below, from left: Kari Ada, Tripti Ma, Ann Kristin, Unni (Johnny's partner), Paramananda, Espen (Unni's son), and Bjørn.*

*Photo: Johnny Plåt.*



*Paramananda at Shantibu, Alvdal, summer 1993, posing for the photographer, in the log-house ("the office"). Photo: BP.*



*Paramananda in the living room at Shantibu. Photo: Espen.*



*Paramananda and Bjørn at Knud and Kari's at Ljan outside Oslo. Photo: Knud Larsen.*

## FOOTNOTES

1) The very first time I saw the photo of Gauri Ma, before Paramananda told me about her, I immediately felt "Oh, but that is certainly Tripti Ma!" Gauri Ma was known for her strong will and power of accomplishment, or ability to carry out her determination – exactly that is one of the most striking characteristics of Tripti Ma!

2) Correction: In The Mt.Tron Special Edition No. 9 Week 34, I have mistakenly written that Tarun died in 1998, and that he took sannyasa together with the so-called "2nd generation". In fact – he took sannyasa before them, and he died in summer 1993.

3) This being said, Paramananda also said that one should follow the customs and practice in the country in which one was staying and working. He therefore wasn't averse to money being charged for course activity, for example.

## GLOSSARY (simplified)

**atman** – the Self, in which rests the unity of being, including man, nature and God.

**avatar** – divine incarnation; descent of the divine on Earth (in Hinduism there are ten avatars in Creation or evolution).

**Gauri Ma** (1857-1938) – the only sannyasini after Sri Ramakrishna; Tripti Ma's previous identity.

**Guru Purnima** – the full moon of July when the guru is especially worshipped and celebrated.

**kayakalpa** – yogic science which renews and prolongs the cycle of the physical body.

**Pakhi** – 'bird' (Bengali pronunciation of Sanskrit *pakshi*); the author's pet name given by Paramananda.

**sadhana** – 'which leads straight to the goal'; a person's spiritual search or quest for truth (which involves personal commitment and practice); the collected effort – physically, emotionally and spiritually – for the realization of life's end.

**samadhi** – 'union' ('putting together' or 'bringing into harmony'); full absorption in meditation; the eighth and last step of Classical Yoga. See *savikalpa samadhi*.

**Sarada Ma** (1853-1920) – also known as Sarada Devi or Sri Sri Ma (Holy Mother); Ramakrishna's spiritual spouse and a great saint.

**Saswati** – name in female form meaning 'full moon'.

**satsanga** – 'gathering for truth'; a popular type of company with questions and answers, between guru and disciples or spiritual head and audience.

**savikalpa samadhi** – when the mind has become a unity; "universal mind" or "super mind" (but still mind, as different from *nirvikalpa samadhi*, which is without mind). See *samadhi*.

**Sri Ramakrishna** (1836-1886) – the most well-known Indian saint and avatar of modern times, who lived in Bengal and who by his sadhana united all the Indian spiritual traditions, and all the great religions of the World. See *avatar*, *sadhana*, *Sarada Ma*.

**Swami Sri Ananda Acharya** (1881-1945) – born in Bengal, India, into a royal family, but became a sannyasin already in his boyhood, travelled by ship to England in 1912 after a revelation in the Himalayas, and came to Norway at the outbreak of the 1st World War in 1914, lived at Tronsvangen in Alvdal, Norway, from September 1917 until his death at the end of the 2nd World War; in this text usually referred to as Anandacharya, as that is the name Paramananda used for him. The only complete biography about him is that written by Bjørn Petersen: *Swami Sri Ananda Acharya. A forgotten Son of Mother India. His own story. A biography and anthology*. Mt.Tron University of Peace 2019 (ISBN 9788269032628); and by Amazon 2020 (ISBN 9788269032635).

**Tapeswarananda, Swami** – sannyasin before meeting Swami Paramananda; the messenger who was sent to Rishikesh to fetch the author from the jungle ashram there; recently left his body at 106 years of age.

**Tarun** – the author's good friend who died in 1993, and who Paramananda made a sannyasin shortly before he died.

**Tripti Ma** – one of Paramananda's closest female disciples, with the sannyasini name **Samhita Prana**. Born 1st July 1950.

**Trishan** – one of the closest male disciples of Paramananda, who later took the sannyasi name **Swami Parameshwarananda**. Born 19th April 1957.

Continuation follows in the next number next week.