

# Svami Sadananda Dasa

Hard as a Thunderbolt, Soft as a Flower



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Kishordas



Shri Shri Guru-Gauranga jayate!

As it is now 34 years since Svami Sadananda Dasa disappeared, my personal perspective on my Divine Master is mainly based on his vani, his living words in his translations of the Shastrams, his notes and letters, and what his elder disciples have told me from their meetings with him. I only met him in person on a few occasions before his disappearance in 1977, from which I can relate some personal experiences later in this article. A God-sister of mine, Kalakanthidasi, has added some important points.

For more information about Svami Sadananda Dasa, we refer to the website [www.sadananda.com](http://www.sadananda.com).

Dasadasanudasa,  
Kishordas & Kalakanthidasi

**1-Q: How did Svami Sadananda come in contact with the teachings of Gaudiya Vaishnavism?**

In the winter of 1933, when he was 25 years old, he met Svami Bon in Berlin and through him he later got the work “Sree Krishna Chaitanya” by Prof. Sanyal. There he found the answers to all the questions he had nurtured for many years:

*It is since the year 1922 that my life was engaged in the search for a deeper conception of Religion, Truth and Godhead – than the religion of my confession. I have never been interested in worldly learnings.*

*I have been studying the Comparative History of Religion and reading the best books and scriptures of the different religions – not for scholarly purpose but for finding out the way of the realisation of the natural function of the soul. (Letter to Svami Bon, January 12, 1934)*

This led him to intensive studies of Gaudiya Vaishnavism and further contact with Svami Bon and Bhakti Pradip Tirtha Maharaj, who both gave him initiation at the Math in London in the beginning of 1934. In April Sadananda wrote in his first letter to Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati:

*Blessed by Your Divine Grace I was initiated by Sree Swami Bon and received the holy Name from Sree Tirtha Maharaj.*

Sadananda then worked for the mission both in England and Germany until Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati invited him to join his mission in India, where Sadananda arrived in September 1935, together with Svami Bon and Baron von Koeth from Germany.

**2-Q: Did Svami Sadananda ever speak about his years in the Gaudiya Matha in India? What places, what events, and what personalities and godbrothers did he mention?**

He could only serve his Gurudeva in the Gaudiya Math from September 1935 till January 1937. From his notes it seems that he followed Bhaktisiddhanta on his tours, took notes from his lectures etc. Most of the time he was certainly engaged in studying the Shastrams, preparing lectures himself and writing articles for the Harmonist.

Not much is known about his relation to his God-brothers during this time but we know that he never felt at home in the Gaudiya Math. Moreover, already then his health was fragile. He never believed in “organized religion”, and in his article in the Harmonist, “Society – Community – Math”, one can see that his vision of the true Math was rather utopian, as it implies a society of absolutely pure vaishnavas. He seems to have had difficulties in fitting himself into the *real* organisation, with all its shortcomings. In some notes from Darjeeling, July 12, 1936 one can read:

*You must have your own sensitive, i.e. organic system, tailor-made, no suit off the peg. It is only when you subserve yourself and your environment to the necessities and rules of living according to your personal conditions that you*

*can render your fellow beings a service. Judges of character can see through your automatic skeleton suit in the same manner as you can see through the armour of conventions, into the corrupt “substance” of the kernel – insincerity.*

*Only those who are truly existing [who are “sat”/premabhaktas] can teach – and those are the last who adopt the pose of a teacher. The others can “talk about” being more humble than a blade of grass, but cannot live a comrade-leader-fellowship as Christ has done, because in this case they fear – with perfect justice – that they would lose the possibility to be a teacher, in other words: their “respect”.*

*In the best possible way, you should withdraw from the marketplace and shape your life, in all expressions of your being, as a direct consequence of your true relation to God. Watch out for stereotypes, which will kill you, and what is worse, the thing itself. Be free!*

**3-Q: Did Svami Sadananda often speak about his Guru, Srila Sarasvati Thakura? What sort of things did he say?**

Everything Sadananda did was in the spirit of “Prabhupada’s seva” and when Srila Sarasvati Thakura disappeared Sadananda suffered immensely. Being extremely ill in India, sometimes unable to perform his Shastra-seva, he often writes to Vamandas in Sweden: “When will Prabhupada finally call me back?” and in the next moment he thinks of Vamandas and his friends in Sweden and writes: “I cannot imagine that Prabhupada will call me back when Vamandas needs so much material from me.” In a letter from 20.9.55 he writes to his disciple Vamandas (Walther Eidlitz):

*I myself would never have been where I am today, if not already as a youth I doubted what people, poets, scholars said and prepared myself to learn the most strange languages, just to be able to read a text that dealt with God and the meaning of life in the original text itself and free myself from what others read into it from their mind and heart.*

*Then, on the second day after my arrival here, my Gurudeva told me: “The first thing you have to do is to collect all what you learned, read,*

*excerpted, felt, know. Put it in a big bag and throw it into the sea where the sea is deepest and start anew.”*

*Once when I felt sad, because I hadn't been raised as a Hindu in India and didn't have the inner associations that every Hindu has together with the concepts deva, devi, avatara, bhakti etc., he was even angry and said: “You missed nothing. It is a blessing that you did not imbibe all these associated ideas. You would have learned only **wrong** things. There is nothing to be learned from people, poets etc. You have to learn from God directly – i.e. what God teaches in His Own words.”*

#### **4-Q: Who was Vamandas and what is his connection to Svami Sadananda?**

The Austrian Walther Eidlitz (Vamandas, 1892–1976) was a successful writer even as a youth. Some time before the outbreak of the Second World War, he felt an irresistible yearning for going to India to study its ancient religion, and went there with the intention to bring his family along later. The war interfered with these plans, however, and, as the family was Jewish, Vamandas' wife and son were forced to flee from the Nazis, and, eventually, found refuge in Sweden. Meanwhile Vamandas, as an Austrian citizen in India, was interned in an Indian camp, where he met his Guru, Svami Sadananda Dasa, who in that place began his uninterrupted teaching of him. (See Eidlitz' book “Unknown India”)

After his release from the internment camp and before he left India for travelling to Sweden, Svami Sadananda and Bhakti Hridaya Bon Maharaja came to Bombay to see him. Svami Bon wished to initiate him into the Gaudiya-Vaishnava tradition and from him Vamandas received his spiritual name Vimala Krishna Vidyabinode Das. From his first Guru, Shri, he had already got his name Vamandas, and for some reason Sadananda continued to call him so even after his initiation.

A few days later, in July 1946, Vamandas returned to Europe and Sweden and worked there continuously to spread the knowledge of the Shastrams, the Revelation of God's Word-form, through lectures, courses and books. All this time, Sadananda assisted him with untiring devotion by

providing him with material and correcting his misconceptions. Some books (especially the German book “Die Indische Gottesliebe”, in Swedish “Krishnas Leende”) unfortunately contain many errors, because Vamandas was still mixing mysticism into the teachings of pure bhakti. The later books, however, and above all his work, “Krishna Caitanya, Sein Leben und Seine Lehre” (Stockholm University 1968), give a brilliant survey of the essence of Shastric Revelation.

In spite of the mistakes Vamandas had made in the beginning, Sadananda wrote in one of his last letters to him: “Tell your friends, that everything they do for you, they do for me as well.” We cannot be grateful enough to Vamandas. In addition to all the books he wrote, he also brought Sadananda to us, here in the West. By his lifetime achievement Vamandas broke new ground, presenting in a European language a knowledge that at that time was practically unknown in the West.

**5-Q: What did Svami Sadananda do after Bhaktisiddhanta’s disappearance?**

After the disappearance of his Gurudeva in January 1937, Sadananda went on a study tour and pilgrimage all over India, from Badrinatha, close to the Tibetan border, to Cape Comorin (Kanya Kumari, South India).

On his pilgrimage, mostly on foot, he gave many lectures at universities, colleges and monasteries, visited holy places, discussed with scholars, lived in caves with solitary sages, collected manuscripts of the Caitanya movement, was a guest at the homes of great maharajas and industrialists, but always lived as a mendicant, till he was arrested and put in an internment camp in September 1939 – due to his German citizenship.

**6-Q: Did Svami Sadananda ever speak about his years of prison internment in India during World War II? What events did he relate?**

From his own and Vamandas’ notes one can see that he suffered tremendously from being denied to practise his religion, to have vegetarian food, a secluded place for his worship etc. Nevertheless, he spent most of his time translating

the Shastrams. Several times he was on the verge of death but decided to continue to live for the sake of Prabhupada's seva and to assist Vamandas. He writes:

*As a matter of fact, there can be no opposition against Krishna and those who want to serve Him, but opponents are deputed by Him to give us the chance to serve Him. Outwardly I might be degraded to an outcaste, but all the denial of cult and food cannot put out the fire of Divine Prema in my heart; it is rather increasing. All possible opposition from all quarters, simply to exhaust all the possibilities to obstruct my serving temper, to give me the chance [to prove], that a mleccha [outcaste]-bhakta of Gurudeva never stops and never gives up His service. (8.6.44)*

On another occasion, on the verge of death, he tells Vamandas:

*My mission was just this, to be born as a human being far away from India, in Europe, and in spite of countless difficulties still become Prabhupada's friend. He told me that we have always been together since eternity.*

Before his release, in July 1945, he writes about his hardships in his notes:

***To whomsoever it may concern***

*The spiritual ecstasies experienced in the cult of Shri Shri Radha Govinda are of such an uncommon and extraordinary character, that though of Divine origin, the spiritual madness and intoxication appears to those who have not realised them, as symptomatic of insanity, epilepsy or lunacy. The Krishna-dedicated souls are, therefore, instructed to hide these experiences from the view of outsiders, nay, it is considered base and low to expose any of these experiences to the view of those who are averse to the unconditional service of Shri Krishna and indulge in the intellectual or emotional exploitation of whatever they come across in their so-called human life, which is – in reality – only another form of bestial life – being void of the true meaning of life: to serve God unreservedly and unconditionally. [...]*



*It was the order given to me by my Divine Master that I should devote all energy I can spend to the study, exposition, translation and explanation of Shrimad Bhagavatam and Shri Caitanya-Caritamritam. The hostile attitude of the authorities and the cointernees in the wings towards a “renegade” of European civilization, the complete failure to instinctively apprehend the real nature of myself and the purpose of my life made it advisable to adopt every means to pretend to be a sahib and European. I know it for definitely that had I strictly adhered to the principles of my cult, i.e. strict Hindu-diet, dissociation from atheists and non-vaishnavas and insisted on the exercise of my cult and worship, the authorities would have been pleased to send me to a lunatic asylum to get cured of the religious frenzies. I did not care for the opinion of others but was eager to adopt any means to keep the body physically fit to provide the strength at least for a few hours of study and translation of the Shrimad Bhagavatam. [...]*

*Besides, wherever I was, I tried by a sort of mimicry to adjust myself to the ways of my surroundings to have the chance to come in contact with other internees for the purpose of clearing the misunderstandings about religion in general and Krishna-cult in special (Sanskrit and philosophy **classes** to the Christian missionaries, priests; lectures etc.). [...]*

*To an outsider this appears as inconsequence – but what else could be done. To insist on my cult and diet – was the way of a troublemaker, “let him die if he is so foolish and fanatic” – and when **apparently** I followed the advice – “you adjust yourself to the camp-life” – I was criticized for not being sincere in my religion, being a fake sadhu. It is time now to bring home to the intolerant mind of the authorities and cointernees that I am not a fake **sadhu** but a fake **sahib**. [...]*

*To my own conscience I have fulfilled my task as an eternal servant of Krishna and Prabhupad, born in a European body. I am glad that I was spared **no** difficulty and trouble, because it fostered my will to find new and new ways to serve Him.*

Being released, but now afraid of being expelled from India, he writes:

*In the dark hours, when it appears to me, that the pangs of separation from those who love Krishna – for whose service I came to India – are unbearable, I have repeated visions of living in overcrowded quarters amidst the scorching blazing heat of a fire consuming the small buildings around me. My tongue is parched and I feel suffocated. So far I've had the strength to overcome the depressions, vanishing like thin transparent evening clouds before the waxing moon of my hopes.*

*Now I visualize the hopeless nights with heavy layers of clouds, overcasting the sky without even the chance to catch one ray of the waning moon. I visualize the day when I will be asked as one in a flock of cattle to leave the country in which I was living in the loving service of my beloved Gurudev earlier in my life. Because others, not myself, identify my real person with the perishable covering of flesh and bones, called a German individual.*

*Perhaps it was not practical, considered from the point of view of sound common sense, to agree to the play of identifying myself sometimes with something I was not. Yet, this was the only chance to try to carry to others, occasionally at least, the outside cover of the exoteric mysteries of the art of love for Krishna.*

*I apprehend the day when I will know for certain not to be fortunate to bow down to the samadhi of my beloved Master or to touch the feet lotus of the few great souls left on this earth from all entourage.*

*I feel if I would concede to relax for a little moment, my energy and will power utilized to the last to keep this physical and mental organism running, it would vanish as water from the open hand. Should it be really worthwhile the effort to try to make this body proceed to a country where I have to miss the invigorating rays emanating from the spiritual soil of India, cut off completely from the chance to support myself by the verbal vibrations of real bhaktas, to live after years of internment again alone with no one to talk to or exchange thoughts and experiences, without the many forms and things in this country which awaken associations with Krishna and His descents?*

*Oscillating between the two alternatives of proceeding to a desert or leaving this body to the care of Mother Bharat Bhumi, I cannot make up my mind, and trust Prabhupad and Krishna will decide and make me realize the decision soon and unexpectedly.*

### **7-Q: What did Svami Sadananda do after his years of prison internment?**

With Svami Bon's help he got released and went to Vrindavan. He also went on some tours together with Svami Bon but most of the time he was very ill. In May 1946, he writes in a letter to Vamandas:

*I spent some time in the hospital of the school of Tropical Medicine in Calcutta, but as a result of all investigations and X-rays and what not else, it is certain that I shall never be healthy in my life but remain permanently invalid. I left the hospital and decided to follow Bon Maharaj and accept the invitation of some bhaktas in Assam where I have never been before and to visit some of the ancient shrines in the land of Tantra.*

*After that I shall return to Brindaban which I feel is the centre for my own religious life. I shall try to found an institution of my own in case I can get some relief from the bad physical pain from which I am suffering constantly.*  
(Gauhati, May 3, 1946)

Not much is known about what happened to Sadananda during the following years. One has to keep in mind that it were turbulent times in India then: India became independent and divided into India and Pakistan, resulting in heavy religious conflicts and 1 Mio. people dead. But after things had settled down a bit, in November 1950, Vamandas returned to India from Sweden – where he had found a place of refuge after his release from the internment camp in 1946 – and spent 5 months together with Sadananda in Mayapur, Puri, Mathura-Brindaban and Benares.

After this period Sadananda mostly stayed at a poor friend's house in Howrah, Calcutta, most of the time bedridden. From now on, and for 10 years, he tried to gather strength to go to his friends in Sweden, who regularly sent him money for his survival. During these years he worked constantly with his translations of the Shastrams, sending new material to his friends in Sweden and especially to Vamandas, for his books, lectures and courses in Europe.

But to his great disappointment, he gradually realized that Vamandas could not pass on the teachings he had received from him in its pure form. Still, he continued to help him, even sending him hundreds of pages of corrections to

his second book, “Indische Gottesliebe”, published in German and Swedish in 1955.

In February 1953, Sadananda’s bhakta-friend in Howrah, Gauranga Ghoshe, wrote to Vamandas:

*You know with great, great difficulties all of us here tried our best to snatch him from the hands of Yama. You cannot imagine how his condition was since September: severe pain, his head getting cold all of a sudden during day or night. Doctors, injections, protein, medicines from Canada, careful diets at tremendous cost somehow made him get to read.*

*All on a sudden he decided to start on Murari’s notes. He went to a house of a man not far away from here only to sit there all the nights till dawn and write and think and write, and finishing Murari’s notes he was quite finished himself, as in that house there was nobody to look after him, to give him diets and medicines at hourly intervals as advised.*

*When your manuscript came, he worked like mad night and day and did not listen to anybody. The day after it was dispatched he collapsed and with great difficulties he was brought back to my house. We nurse him by turns, but you know we can give only our time and strength and love for him.*

#### **8-Q: When did Svami Sadananda return to Europe from India?**

1961 A small group of Swiss had realised Sadananda’s deteriorating state of health under the deplorable living conditions in Calcutta and offered him a flight to Basel. In Basel an oral surgery operation healed his fever that had lasted for many years and – in combination with other tropical diseases and several failed surgeries in the internment camp – had often brought him to the verge of death. In the following he lived in Basel and payed periodical visits to Sweden in the summers.

#### **9-Q: Did you ever meet Svami Sadananda personally?**

I only met him a few times before his disappearance in 1977 but these

meetings changed my life thoroughly. His outer dress and behaviour didn't reveal anything extraordinary – on the contrary. But my distinct feeling was that he was not of this world and that he could read every secret thought I had. On one occasion I spent a few days with him together with his disciple Vamandas (Walther Eidlitz) and I was appalled at seeing 80-year-old Vamandas turn into a 5-year-old boy in the presence of his much younger Gurudeva. Hard as a thunderbolt, and for 2 days, Sadananda criticized him severely for the many mistakes he had done in his translations of the Shastrams etc.

Before, in Vamandas' book "Unknown India" I had read that Shri Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakur also often expressed what Sadananda called "aggressive grace". Many years earlier, in the internment camp in India, Vamandas had asked Sadananda:

– *Why do they torment you? Give you the worst place in Wing II, without air and light, spread lies about you, that you once again act as a troublemaker. As if they want to catch you in a net.*

– *To get out the extreme of seva. Yes – Yogamaya [God's Own, internal shakti, attracting towards the Centre of all existence]. She behaves like vikarshana-shakti [the external shakti, Mahamaya's repelling force, hurling away from the Centre of all existence].*

– *And why do people hate you? It seems that your methods of "aggressive grace" fall back on you as karma.*

– *Aggressive grace is ahaituki [causeless].*

– *You mean cit, without karma?*

– *Yes.*

– *And why do they hate you?*

– *Because they feel that I am firmly rooted in something. This is what the philistine hates most of all, when someone is firmly rooted, as he is not, "he is drifting". (Notebook, Vamandas)*

On the day of our departure Sadananda's mood changed and he embraced both Vamandas and me heartily, with tears in his eyes, expressing a kind of affection I had never experienced before. Then I knew what the words

qualifying the Guru meant: “Hard as a thunderbolt, soft as a flower.”

20 years earlier, Sadananda wrote to Vamandas:

*You must not be unpleasantly affected by my severe criticism of your faults. It is because I love you so deeply, Vamandas, for your absorption in the bhakti cult, that I allow myself to be so hard on you, who has sacrificed so much for me. But you may rest assured that your sacrifices will not stay by me; they go like sunshine through wide-open windows to **Him** and **Her**. (Letter 19.7.52)*

The day before, he also showed me his great sense of humour when I suddenly, out of gratitude felt the need to kneel in front of him. Then he looked at me with a smile, saying: “Have You got some pain in your back?”.

Then, when he emphasized the utmost importance of sambandha-jnanam and defined the atma and the subtle and gross body, he suddenly asked me, his eyes flashing:

*Do you know the meaning of the word “Radha”? It is derived from the two Sanskrit roots “ra” and “dha”. “Ra” means “to give”; like a flash of lightning Radha grants Krishna, the deep, dark mystery, insight into His own being – and then She immediately withdraws again, removes Herself, “dha”.*

**10-Q: What was Svami Sadananda's demeanor/character and what did he stress as the most important message of Gaudiya Vaishnavism?**

He was very hard on himself but extremely tolerant and understanding when it came to others. In a letter to Mario Windisch, February 25, 1968, Bhaktivedanta Svami writes about Sadananda:

*In Bombay sometimes we lived together and he used to treat my little sons very kindly. His heart is so soft, as soft as a good mother’s, and I always remember him and shall continue to do so.*

Still, Sadananda could not stand distortions of the bhakti-philosophy. This

made him very upset.

Regarding the universality of the message of Gaudiya Vaishnavism he writes to Vamandas:

*You must not forget that Eternal Power, wherever it is at work in the world, is expressed in the images of thought of the prevailing time and culture. To really be able to gain a factual and positive value from Vamandas' lectures and bring it into one's own life, one must try to look through the seemingly Indian attire and see the essence – for true Knowledge is conveyed to **mankind** and is never Indian, Asian, European or African. (19.6.61)*

But he was clearly aware of the difficulties:

*Mr. A. is of the opinion that "Sweden is too small for Sadananda". – Tell him that the **world** is too small for me. I might find two or three people in a whole continent, who can understand what rasa is and who are able to appreciate a work of rasika as the Bhagavatam or Caitanya-Caritamrita. Here in India there might be two or three persons?*

*To me it is as for Angira Muni in Bhagavatam VI. He came to Citraketu and wanted to offer him the highest gift there is – but found him longing for descendents. Everyone longs for something else, not for inner freedom. Everyone wants to remain slaves, just change clothes and chains, no one wants to cast them aside. (Letter to Vamandas 1960)*

*Bhakti is difficult, the individual is completely **alone** with God and it is very, very difficult for one – even if he had a Guru – to actually **practise** bhakti in the West, i.e. to sense what is **cit** behind the veil of the seemingly **Indian** appearance and covering (externally and linguistically).*

*99,9 % of those who listen to you and read your books while they search will cool down after their first enthusiasm and go on searching somewhere else. People want to bring themselves, the concrete man himself, into bhakti – man, whose worthlessness they are unable to realize, because they don't know and experience anything else than what they daily and since millions of lives before have known and experienced as their "I".*

*Even Mahaprabhu and His Own co-players came to a deadlock – when no one else was eligible to receive bhakti. Not to expect anything, not even physical and mental “shanti”, inner peace, in one’s heart of hearts, as God’s gift in return for our efforts – this is only for those few who are the noblest of the noble. [...]*

*Haven’t I myself, before the war, given lectures, explained the Shastrams? Thousands – and except a few, has anyone been able to make a 180° turn from self-centredness to God-centredness? And yet, those two or three are worth the effort. (8.11.59)*

He also stresses that the Gaudiya Vaishnava Sampradaya is the only tradition that acknowledges the Shastrams en masse, which gives their full import:

*Mahaprabhu did not create any new system, nor did Jiva Gosvami. Acintya-bhedabheda is a conclusion, a siddhanta, the conclusion drawn regarding the Revelation. When the Upanishads talk about unity and duality, distinction and non-distinction, and with this double statement want to make a statement about God’s nature, it follows that God simultaneously is form and not form, one and manifold etc. This may be contrary to the laws of human logic, but God and His nature are in no way confined to obey mundane, human laws of thinking.*

*The word acintya-bhedabheda-vada appears only later. Mahaprabhu and His contemporaries had no intention whatsoever to create a new system in addition to the existing opposition between the monistic and dualistic systems, but wanted to show that one does violence to the Absolute, when one tries to squeeze it either into the systems of monism or dualism, and instead of accepting the double statements of the Revelation only adhere to **one** side of it. (Gaudiya-Sampradaya-Tattva, notebook Mayapur 1959)*

**11-Q: What do you consider the most important among the writings of Svami Sadananda?**

Sadananda never published anything himself, saying that Vamandas’ writings were for the public, his writings for the few. He devoted most of his time to translate the Shastrams into German and then dictated them to his friends.



These dictated and typed texts from some of the main Sanskrit and Bengali sources will gradually be checked and translated into English and hopefully published in the future. Personally, I consider his corrections to Vamandas' second book "Die Indische Gottesliebe" most important, because it goes to the bottom with all possible kinds of misconceptions we all might have in the beginning. Reading it on a regular basis is a training to redirect our mind from being self-centred to becoming seva-centred. One cannot ever train this enough.

From Sadananda's own point of view, at a certain time in India, the Caitanya Bhagavatam seems to have been of utmost importance to him. He writes to Vamandas (6.8.1955):

***Everything which you have read so far about Caitanya Deva – from sources and books – is reduced to a pale reflection before the effulgent moon of this work. Believe me, without this work you cannot have any idea what lila is, especially with His Own. This is no exaggeration. [...]***

*It presents the complete theology of Caitanya-lila, but by way of telling the events of His life, not theoretically. I have translated word by word, technical expressions in parentheses. It may well be my testament. With the Caitanya Bhagavatam it all started when I arrived in India – should it be the close, too? [...]*

***This work is as much revolting to the Indian general religiosity of the past as of the present.***

*He and His Own are no humans; They come and go, become visible in time and space and become invisible into the realm beyond time and space (Vaikuntha) again, which is omnipresent, only not perceptible directly, as long as the highest level of Knowledge and Love (bhakti) is not attained. You are my true child, Vamandas. For your sake I have translated this work the last days. You must not mix things and present/ think a sickly sweet Caitanya.*

**12-Q: In what countries did Svami Sadananda preach in Europe and during what years? What type of programs did he have?**

He wanted to stay in the background and let Vamandas meet the public. Vamandas wrote books, gave lectures in Sweden, Germany and Switzerland and had summer courses in Sweden. Sadananda himself mainly focussed on his translations and dictating them to his disciples and friends.

**13-Q: How many persons came to Svami Sadananda in Europe to become his disciples?**

Only a few who met Vamandas came to Sadananda. It is hard to say, but maybe he didn't give initiation to more than a dozen during his lifetime, in India and Europe. But some others, who only met him briefly, now consider him to be their shiksha-Guru, by listening to his vani in his texts, as well as others who never met him in person.

**14-Q: What was Svami Sadananda's view of Christianity or Western religion in general?**

He followed his Guru's view that Christ was a shakti-avesha-avatara, a great human who is permeated by Vishnu's shakti and knows himself to be God's servant or son. In a letter from 15.03.54 he assures that:

*We have no reason to doubt that actual and real Christ – not what is going on to be given as “Christ” – is **the** way to God the **Father**. In relation to Him we are like children, but this father-children relation is only one of the possible forms of relation the soul can have to Him, and it implies the great danger to look at Him as the Divine Order Supplier or Department-Store Director to whom we may appeal for redress of our moral, intellectual, physical or spiritual wants and needs.*

*Christ has not given replies to the most burning problems of our soul and relation to God, because possibly, this was not needed or intended by this form of Divine Descent. Christian mystics have tried to express higher individual forms of their own realisations with the vocabulary of Christianity – but **actual** and real revelation expresses itself in **Words** and **Ideas** and they appear too meagre and lifeless in these mystics. Had they come in contact with Hindu*

*Shastrams and not late classical philosophy they might have found more encouragement and scope.*

Yet he was working on a manuscript about the religions and philosophies of the world, calling the latter in total an aberration compared to Vaishnavism:

*In this manuscript will be explained, beginning with Mose to Nietzsche and Marx, from Christ to Mohammed and Buddha till the “Weiße-Käse-Apostel” [“cottage-cheese-apostle”, Joseph Weißenberg, 1855–1941] and Anthroposophy, that **everything**, really everything is an **aberration** and that even the best of it is only a portico to what the Karmakhanda parts of the Rigveda start with. The manuscript will please nobody; it is straight and hard as the Gita and Bhagavatam XI are. The manuscript is directed towards those, who are in doubt about their religion and ask, **not** towards those who already have decided against a God, who is not tailored to man’s needs. To those He grants, via His Maya, unwavering faith in what does not lead to the goal. (Gita 7,20–23)*

He pointed out that...

*The Western or Christian conception of world and man cannot be the basis to understand bhakti. Virtue and sin are relative terms, concerning the false ego of man. The atma by constitution belongs to the **cit**-realm, but as he is an atom of cit only, he requires cit-shakti to realise His and his nature. **Bhakti is the shakti to know and to love. As soon as this shakti is given, the atma becomes mukta in the original sense. He does then everything from His point of view, not from the atma’s or much less from the point of view of the present ego.***

And in his corrections to Vamandas’ book “Indische Gottesliebe” he writes:

*Already for that reason – the fact that the religions outside the Vedic Word Revelation have no clear conception of the most basic principles, not even the nature of the atma, God’s form etc. – can the indistinct stammering of these religions on no account lead to God, at the very most, some time in a later life,*

*be a preparation for listening to what real Revelation is and learn what the Divine Sun of Wisdom is compared to the mystic, smoking oil lamp.*

As a model of how to present Vaishnavism to the West he named the first introduction of Buddhism as a positive example:

*The classical Buddhism, e.g., was first presented in this manner to the West and quite objective accounts, not tied to any personality, have helped many westerners to sincerely worship and love Buddha, **without** externally forming a new cult, without forcing an external dramatic “conversion”. When Buddhistic groups were formed it already went wrong; and where attempts were made to bring East and West closer in the “form” of Western philosophy or comparisons with Christian theology etc. (Otto, Deussen, Dr. Radha-Krishnan), all went wrong.*

**15-Q: What did Svami Sadananda consider as his task in regard to his friends in the West?**

In a letter to Vamandas 12.11.54 he writes:

*Nirguna-bhakti has nothing to do with the Indian, the Eastern, it is beyond **every** human emotion, every soul, Eastern or Western. Bhagavatam and bhakti imply something **completely** un-Indian. Being able to appreciate them requires a **complete** break with the Indian **and** Western. [...]*

*First of all, you must give yourself and the people a **clear**, distinct “psychology” and “philosophy” – as a **foundation**. You are **not** Mahaprabhu who by His mere command “say Krishna!” granted the atmas bhaktishakti, so that the disciples immediately grasped and could discern what the atma, the cittam, the world, God, Brahma and Krishna and their mutual relation is. If nothing but “Hare Krishna etc.” was enough, then there hadn’t been any need for Shuka to instruct Parikshit in the philosophy of the Bhagavatam etc. for 7 days and nights!*

17.10.55 he writes:

*The correct approach to the Life and Teachings of both Shri Krishna and Chaitanya Mahaprabhu depends on the correct understanding of some fundamental principles of what is called Shastrams. Shastrams do not mean “Scriptures” but that which is meant to guide – and if necessary – “chastise” man’s intellect when he intends to approach Divinity.[...]*

*I feel I shall write for all of you what I **myself** would have needed when I came to India first and tried to understand the Bhagavatam but there was nobody to get me a correct guide as to what to forget and what to keep in mind when starting for a spiritual life under the guidance of Chaitanya Deva. So that others who like myself want to go that path may have less difficulties than I had, I give a short summary of what expects us and from what ideas we have to separate us – how dear they might be to our heart – if we desire to grasp a bit of the mystery of the Bhagavatam. Please, there is nothing like “mysticism” in the Shastrams, everything relating to the world, the atma and God, so far He is concerned with the world is terribly clear and leaves no place for a groping in the dark and indistinct sentimental complexes.*

And a few years later:

*It’s all about those noble-spirited ones, who are able to tread the most glorious path in this age of discord, – **as a consequence of their service during former lives – and to collect those**; and secondly, for the future, in words and writings establish that there are such glorious, great Divine things, completely different from what man expects and senses, to help those like Sadananda to be able to truly perceive the highest truth. (Letter to Vamandas 1959)*