

# Looking Back

## My Encounters with Sadananda and Vamandas

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<https://www.sadananda.com>

*Do you see my point – I did not come to make disciples; I want to be a friend of those very few who desire to get a glimpse of a path and goal which is possible to reach. One should know each other very well and such understanding may take a long time. (Sadananda, letter to Kid, 27 April, 1974, extract.)*

I, Kishordas (Kid Samuelsson), write these brief lines to give you my recollections of the course of events in connection with Svami Sadananda Dasa<sup>1</sup> (Ernst Georg Schulze) and Vamandas (Walther Eidlitz) from 1972 to 1977, recollections of my personal experiences in my encounters with them. And I do this because my friends have asked me to do so. I will also give a brief account of the events that took place after their physical presence here. I am very well aware of the fact that memories are unreliable and as far as possible I will therefore use written sources as support.

When you read these lines, you must get the impression that I am a very egocentric person, but what else can I do than to tell my own story. My part in this Play is very insignificant. By providence, by Shri Radha's compassionate mercy, I became remotely connected to Sadananda and his seva (service of God) here on earth this time, that is all.

First of all, a few words on my background: I was born on All Fools' Day, in 1949, in Stockholm, where I spent my childhood and youth. As a child, I spent my time *playing*, in my own world, whose borders ended two blocks away. When I reached my early teens – to my great surprise – I suddenly found myself *thinking*, in a world without end. I remember devouring heaps of books, adopting and rejecting ideas and isms at lightning speed – and not feeling at home anywhere. I considered myself a seeker, with a strong wish to know the meaning of life in its deepest sense, and

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<sup>1</sup> Hereafter called Sadananda or Svami.

spent a lot of time at libraries, where I also came across Walther's books<sup>2</sup> in Swedish: *Krishnas leende* and *Indisk mystik*. I was very young when I first found these two books in a library in Stockholm, and probably did not understand much of what I read, but they made a strong impression on me. Strangely enough, I cannot recollect Walther's book *Den glömda världen* which was first published in 1948.

I will not go into any details here, of what I read and did during the turbulent 1960s. Let us just say that I was also a normal teenager who was tossed here and there by the winds of change. Nevertheless, during these years in pursuit of truth, I became more and more eager to reach the point where I felt that my *present* life would begin for real. So far, it was more a matter of *neti, neti: not that; no, it was not this and it was not that, either*, that I was in quest of.

In the summer of 1972, I met my wife, Maria Hillfon, at a TM (transcendental meditation) course in Norway. I had been meditating regularly most of the time since 1967 – when the movement was still in the bud – and had even become a TM teacher. I became more and more disappointed, though, the more I understood of the philosophical tradition behind it. Already in 1961, Svami wrote to Vamandas:

*You must not feel too sad when poor fellows as this "Maharshi" catch the foul fish from the surface of the water, when the idiotic worship of the so-called Indian has gone so far that the poor souls are stupid enough to think and believe that a so-called mantra without shakti [can lead to Bhagavan], without any notion of who, what and how Bhagavan is, and who it is that is to be led to Him. They do not realize that this cannot be more than a curiosity, like when foreigners in India buy souvenirs in the form of tiger claws and relics from Taj Mahal. (Extract from the letter "Bhakti is for Those Who are Atmically Disordered", 4 January 1961; my translation.)*

At first, I was not really aware of the different sampradayas, the disciplic successions of India, and their different schools of thought. I just felt that the meaning of life lies in the transcendent. But gradually I understood that seva, the loving service of Godhead without ulterior motives, seva for seva's sake, to give joy to the object of this love, was the meaning of my life.

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<sup>2</sup> For information on Vamandas' books in English, German and Swedish see the following link: <https://www.sadananda.com/index.php?lang=en#text-downloads>, retrieved 10 November, 2022.

1972 was the year when Walther Eidlitz published his Swedish book *Livets mening och mål i indisk tankevärld*, which finally convinced me that bhakti, unadulterated service of Godhead, was the supreme path and goal. When I realised that Maharishi belonged to the school founded by Shankaracharya, labelled Advaita-Vedanta, it made it impossible for me to continue with TM. Shankaracharya proclaims that the undifferentiated, formless Brahman is the only reality, and that everything else is illusion.

In contrast to this, the school of bhakti states that Bhagavan (the personal Absolute), the jiva (the living being) and the world of Maya are all real, and that the natural function of the living being is to serve the personal Absolute through bhakti, which is God's Own potency of pure knowledge and joy, which is bestowed upon the jiva by a bhakta. The philosophical terms were the same as before, but redefined, seen in a completely new light. Soon, I also read the following in Walther's book on Krishna-Caitanya<sup>3</sup>, concerning the leader of Shankaracharya's disciplic tradition in those days:

*Even in Navadvipa, before Caitanya had become a mendicant, He had thought of the philosopher Prakashananda in Benares (Kashi) in anger.*

*And while He was speaking, He became filled with the awareness of being God, the Lord, and gritting His teeth, He said (to Murari), "The sannyasi Prakashananda sits there in Kashi, and with great ardour this fellow cuts My Divine bodily form into pieces. He explains Vedanta and denies the eternity of My Divine form! He was struck with leprosy and still he does not learn anything. Innumerable universes are (ultimately) founded in My Divine form (of Being, Knowledge, and Joy). And this fellow has the boldness to say, 'All this is illusive' ... Whoever denies that I am [eternal] Divine bodily form will perish. [My translation.]*

The same year, 1972, Walther's book from 1948, *Den glömda världen*, was republished. It perfectly matched the book mentioned above, *Livets mening och mål i indisk tankevärld*, which presented the philosophy. *Den glömda världen* provided inspiration by letting me follow Walther in his footsteps, in his pursuit of the meaning of life, and experience his encounter with Sadananda in the internment camp in India. In this way, I already knew them to a certain extent, before I met them in real life.

When I got to know that Walther was still alive, I really wanted to meet him. In the winter of 1972, during a visit to Maria's parents, Gösta and Hertha Hillfon,

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<sup>3</sup> Page 460 in the German original.

Mälarhöjden, Stockholm, I was told that Walther's son, Günther, was married (or had been married) to Kerstin, one of Hertha Hillfon's sisters, and that Maria, as a child, had seen Walther at their wedding. Soon, I came in contact with Walther and invited him to Mälarhöjden. Around this time, he had moved to Waxholm, to Ulla and Torbjörn Fjellström, and Helena Moberg (later Fjellström)<sup>4</sup>. Since the death of Walther's wife Hella in 1967, he had been staying temporarily at different places and was in need of a permanent place to live. In a letter to Vamandas from 8 February, 1972, Svami writes (extract, my translation):

*My dear Vamandas, Thank you so much for your kind letter from 26 January. That you finally have found a permanent place to live, together with nice people, is a load off my mind. I can imagine that you have had a tough time this last year.*

I was overwhelmed by everything Walther told me and wrote down to me right from the beginning. He was very open-hearted, and from now on, until his disappearance in 1976, he wrote down Sanskrit and Bengali verses from the *Bhagavadgita*, from *Shrimad-Bhagavatam*, *Caitanya-Caritamritam* etc., word for word, with their grammatical denominations, and concluded with a translation of the whole verse. He also sang different songs, verses and hymns, often in a loud voice, like Yashomati-Nandana, Gurushtakam, and Shikshashtakam.

When we were alone again, Maria and I went back to Skåne, where we lived in a small village, Maglehem, in a picturesque cottage with thatched roof.

After my contact with Walther, I had written a few letters to Sadananda without getting any answer, which made me a bit downhearted. But finally, I got a letter from him for the first time. In the envelope I found a small sheet of paper that read:

*Dear Kid, got your letters. I am down with heart-troubles. I have not forgotten you; we shall meet. Radhe! Radhe! S* (Undated, the envelope is missing.)

In my letters to Sadananda I had told him about myself and my conviction that bhakti was the path and the goal, and that I wanted to meet him when he came to Sweden next time.

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<sup>4</sup> All three had met Walther at the same time and lived under the same roof as long as Walther lived, in spite of the fact that Torbjörn and Helena had just fallen in love. After some time, Ulla and Torbjörn got divorced. The hub that kept them all together was Walther and his classes.

Around this time, Walther also gave a lecture somewhere in Stockholm. I remember that the huge lecture hall was filled with people and I looked at this little man on the scene and wondered: will he really reach out to everyone and catch their attention? But soon everyone was spell-bound, including myself.

In April 1973, our daughter Frida-Ananda was born. In summer, I went to Walther's summer course in Dalarna, listening to his inspiring lectures with rapt attention. I knew that Svami would come to Sweden this summer, and when we were in Stockholm, on our way to return back home, Majstin Hedtjärn<sup>5</sup> invited us to have lunch at her place, half-way to our home in Skåne. And there we met Sadananda, Majstin and Marthe Calmbach<sup>6</sup> for the first time. In a letter to Vamandas, Sadananda writes:

*My dear Vamandas,*

*Please note: I'll come to Sweden on or about 26.8. I'll be there and want to see you, because I got stirring letters from A. and B. I want to thank you personally, my dear Vamandas, for all you did for these young seekers. ("Young Seekers", extract, 8 August, 1973)*

There he was, Sadananda! He reached out his hand and said: "Guten Tag!" I was struck by the impression that Sadananda was so "normal", and that I felt so much at home, that I belonged there. We and Maria went to the veranda while Maitri and Marthe were cooking, talking and laughing in the kitchen. On the veranda, Maria withdrew a little, and began to breast-feed our daughter, now 3 months old. Sadananda now asked me about my background, about TM and Maharishi, whom he jokingly called the "Foot muff guru" ("Der Fusack-guru") because his clothing seemed to make it difficult for him to walk with ease. He also asked me if I thought that Maharishi was nervous, because he was often seen waving a flower back and forth.

Then Sadananda talked about mukti in terms of eternal pension in a hammock, and bhukti, selfish enjoyment, and bhakti, loving service of Godhead. He also asked me about Gita 13.1–2, which deals with the knower of the field (the individual atma) and the knower of all fields (the Paramatma), and looked happy when he saw that I

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<sup>5</sup> Majstin or Maitri dasi was a very close disciple of Sadananda. She was the epitome of genuine humility. She read Walther's book *Den glmda vrlden* already in the beginning of the 1950s, when she also attended one of his first summer courses. In this article, I will use both names, even though she preferred to be called Majstin.

<sup>6</sup> Marthe Calmbach met Sadananda immediately when he came to Europe in 1961. She lived in Basel and served Sadananda by writing to dictation, typing, washing etc.

had understood these verses properly. – When I noticed that there were a lot of gnats on his arms, he said, “Yes, mycket Mücken, they like me, probably because of all the medicine”, using the Swedish word for ‘a lot of’ and the German word for ‘gnats’. Then we had a long lunch on the veranda, all of us, where we continued to talk until we had to leave for Skåne.

I was very happy, of course, to meet Svami. There was only one thing that was painful: the language barrier. Svami spoke English with me, and even if I could roughly understand most of what he said, it was so difficult for me to say what I wanted to say. But Svami encouraged me to read more and keep in touch with Vamandas and himself. When we left, Svami, Majstin and Marthe followed us to our car, where Svami put his palms together and raised his hands high over his head, as if he wanted to touch the sky, and looked ever so beautiful.

In December, we visited Maria’s parents again, and invited Walther to their place, where Hertha Hillfon soon was working on a sculpture of him and Walther and I read and talked together.

27 April, 1974, I received a new letter from Sadananda:

*My dear Kid, I did not forget you! I was down with a very bad sinusitis and heart-trouble. Do you see my point – I did not come to make disciples; I want to be a friend of those very few who desire to get a glimpse of a path and goal which is possible to reach. One should know each other very well and such understanding may take a long time. I am coming to Sverige this year and hope – if you so desire – to have good dialogues with you. Did you read the Swedish edition of Walther Eidlitz’ Caitanya-book? With best wishes to Frieda-Ananda and Maria. Radhe! Radhe! Yours Sada*

“The Swedish edition of the Caitanya book” that Svami refers to was a raw Swedish translation of the German original, made by Sigvard Sjögren. He was the one who also translated *Der Sinn des Lebens* into Swedish. The Swedish edition got the title *Livets mening och mål i indisk tankevärld*. He also visited Walther at our place in Skåne, 1974 or 1975, together with his wife and new-born child. Later, I remember that I borrowed this typed translation of the Caitanya book and made a copy of it during a weekend, staying up all night. An aunt of mine, who had a radio and TV shop, let me use their copying machine, which was completely different from the ones we use today, and where each sheet had some kind of coating that had to be developed.

In the summer of this year, Walther visited us in Skåne for a few weeks. See the letter from Svami to Vamandas:

*I am happy to hear that Kid, Maria and Frida-Ananda are fine. Thanks, and Krishna's blessings on everyone there, because it is good for them and you to be together in Krishna's seva. I have a high opinion of Kid – but he does not have to know this, if you think this is the best? (Extract, my translation, 10 June, 1974.)*

Walther told me what Svami wrote in this letter, and he also pointed out that he had written “Śrī<sup>7</sup> Kid Samuelsson” on one of my letters from him, which made me both elated and apprehensive.

In October, when Svami, Maitri and Hertha von Perbandt<sup>8</sup> came to Stockholm, they stayed at the Salvation Army Hotel in the very centre of the city, where I went by car to take them to Mälarhöjden, where Maria and Frida-Ananda were waiting, together with an old friend of mine. First, Svami went to see Maria's painting of Vamandas. He looked amused but did not say anything until we came to a painting with a tree with two trunks. Then he talked about the twin tree in the Damodara-lila.

Svami seemed to be happy, and I was up in the air, of course. After lunch, when we took a walk, I remember that he stopped all the time when talking about important things, so we did not come very far. Among other things, he talked about the 9 characteristics of bhava-bhakti and God's different realms, that they have different intensity, and the difference between God's features of sublime majesty and charming loveliness.

When I replied to his question about the military service, and said I was a conscientious objector, he said that this must apply to all situations. I nodded.

In the evening, I took them to their hotel. In the car, Svami asked me if we could go to see a young man the next day, and I said yes. This young man had written some letters to Svami before he came to Sweden this time. When we parted outside the hotel, Svami said goodbye to my old friend, saying, “I just want you to be happy”.

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<sup>7</sup> Here the word “Śrī” is used as an honorary title, indicating that the person in question has been blessed with bhakti. It has many deep meanings.

<sup>8</sup> Hertha von Perbandt was a German disciple of Svami who had worked as a nurse.

The next day, Svami, Maitri, Hertha and I went to this young boy near Stockholm, where he lived with his mother. Svami talked a lot with him in private there. I had met him before, at one of Vamandas' summer courses. He was very young and bright. On our way back home, Svami looked worried, though, and he told me that he was worried about this young man because of his mother fixation.

During Svami's stay in Stockholm this year, he also went to Waxholm, to Ulla, Torbjörn and Helena, where he also met other people, like Ulf, who later got the letter "Straitjacket" (8 August, 1975):

*Got your letter. There is no need of any philosophy, much less of any dogmatism. Please do not think of Krishna as a separate entity except as a centre of all pre-, sub- and conscious gravitation – of all centrifugal and centripetal energies.*

*The question is not to learn to know Krishna but to get rid of all personal dried-up channels of thoughts and feelings. What you need is freedom and the break-through towards the joy of the joy of all joys – i.e., burdenless-ness.*

*There is no good of thinking repeatedly what others think about the world and God and Self – the thoughts of others are not the bounds of your own experience.*

*First you are not to understand or imagine yourself as a jnani, as a bhakta or anything else, you please try to start like a child anew and feel the pulsation of life in everything and love everything and you can start to do that if you see everything – persons, plants, animals, stars or what it may be – from its point of view not relating it to you – let everything be what it is and do not harm it – just forget to try to master anything not even your own being – why? – because by depriving things, persons and yourself of their own being, you see, realize and dominate shadows, misunderstanding, non-reality.*

*Freedom and bondage are terms of ignorance only – if you have the courage to throw away all the rubbish of clichés, others have used you can have a chance to meet me on the path of "Beyond-Reality" as a comrade and friend on the same path.*

*I try to meet you in Sweden at fall-time – if you feel you should.*

*Do not force yourself to follow the way of others who "enjoy" to vegetate in the strait-jacket of "isms" and musts.*

*From heart to heart, Your Sadananda*

Then I took them to their hotel again and we parted. The next day, or the day after, when it was time for them to go back to Maitri's place, I picked them up at the hotel and took them there with my car.



When I was driving, Svami, who was sitting to the right of me, gave me an affectionate look and began to sing the Mahamantra – and soon I joined him. After a while, he stopped, and we were silent.

At Maitri’s place, it was soon time to go to bed. Then I heard that Maitri was chasing a rat in the kitchen. The rat then ran into “my room” and disappeared into my bedding. After a while, Maitri managed to catch the rat in my pillow-case and ran out with it under much laughter!

The next day, after breakfast, Svami looked at my stubble and asked if I wanted to use his electric razor. Of course, I wanted to! – Then, after a long breakfast, it was time for me to go back to Stockholm.

After a week or two, Svami phoned and invited me to Maitri’s place, saying, “Do you think we shall let Vamandas come along?” I did not understand anything! What was I compared with Walther? I would have been happy just to take Walther there and then go back home again – and then pick him up again. – I just said that we would both come. Walther and I went there with my car and stayed for a weekend. What happened there was completely overwhelming. In answer to an interview for the online magazine “The Touchstone”<sup>9</sup>, I once wrote:

*I only met Svami Sadananda a few times before his disappearance in 1977, but these meetings changed my life thoroughly. His outer dress and behaviour did not 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.<sup>10</sup> 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 Shrila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakur also often expressed what Sadananda called “aggressive grace”. Many years earlier, in the internment camp in India, Vamandas had asked Sadananda:*

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<sup>9</sup> See [https://issuu.com/gaudiyatouchstone/docs/edition\\_1](https://issuu.com/gaudiyatouchstone/docs/edition_1), page 56. Retrieved 18 October, 2022.

<sup>10</sup> It felt like being naked before him, which was both a bit scary and a relief at the same time, because there was no use trying to hide anything.

– 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; the director of the lila]. 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."*

*Twenty 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 July, 1952)*

*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: "Hast du Rückenschmerzen bekommen? (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”.*

Now I sit here today, writing these lines, almost 50 years later. I also remember that Svami pointed at the huge longcase clock at Maitri’s place, saying:

*Look at the clock, the two cursors are moving, but without the clockwork, which is not visible, they will stop moving. Every little part of the clock is all-important.*

I understood what he was hinting at, what I also could read later in one of his letters to Hella, Walther’s wife (16 February, 1954; extract, my translation):

*It is a pyramid of seva, where the foundation is to know oneself to be dasa-dasa-anudasa. [To be a servant of those who are the servants of those who are the servants of Them.] On this foundation the whole lila develops, and this is why Radha-Krishna love the dasa-dasa-anudasas so much. We must always take care, not to inflate ourselves to a Raktaka or Rasala (servant), a Subala or Sudama (friend), a Yashoda (parent) or a [Lalita or Vishakha] (sakhi; a female friend), and this is why Raghunatha Dasa Gosvami, in a prayer [Vilapa-Kusumanjali, verse 16], in an inner dialogue with Radha prays: ‘The thought of wanting to become one of Your sakhis or female friends – this [being a sakhi] I honour from a distance; may I have love for, a special liking for, becoming one of Your dasi-s [female maidservants]!’ [...] From my heart, Your Sadananda, Radhe! Radhe!*

When Svami and I went for a walk, he asked me if Vamandas had taught me how to repeat the Mahamantra. When he heard that Vamandas had told me that ‘Hare’ (the vocative form of ‘Hari’ or ‘Hara’) in the first Name of the Mahamantra means (only) Radha, he became angry. Later, when all of us were assembled, he said that Hari – the Thief of all Thieves, He Who steals everything from us that stands in the way of bhakti – means all aspects of Hari, of Bhagavan Krishna, and that one should think of this together with the first artha (inner meaning) given by Gopal Guru Gosvami, until one has attained freedom from bhava (samsara)!

When Sadananda gave initiation in the Mahamantra – as far as we know – he showed the disciple how to serve the Tulasi-mala (rosary) he was now given, and explained the riti, the method, how to serve it in the right way. The riti was also given in written form together with Gopal Guru Gosvami’s 16 arthas (inner meanings) of the mahamantra. Sadananda did not say anything about sankhya, how many rounds the disciple should do on the mala, or required a vrata (vow). To some disciples he also gave the Gopala-mantra, for instance to Maitri dasi, who continued

the disciplic succession by giving diksha to some of her disciples (Mahamantra and Gopala mantra). Sadananda may also have given other mantras to certain disciples.

I also remember that Svami asked Maitri if Krishna could do everything He wants to do. Maitri laughed and said that she thought He could. Svami talked for a long time, and then he said that Krishna cannot do everything He wants to do, because *He is bound to His Own nature*.

When we came to speak of Brahma Samhita, Svami asked me to recite the first verse of this text, which I did. Then he said that the anusvara (ḥ) must be heard also. When I asked him about Shvetadvipa, “the white island”, mentioned in this book, he just smiled and said that we would talk about this later. When I used the expression “acintya-bhedabheda-vada” [see below], he became very upset. On that occasion, I did not understand why, but later I could read the following in Svami’s text “Gaudiya-sampradaya-tattva”:

*Mahaprabhu did not create a new system, nor did Jiva Gosvami. Acintya-bhedabheda<sup>11</sup> is an inference, a conclusion, a siddhanta, a conclusion drawn when one considers the Word Revelation as a whole, i.e., 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 term acintya-bhedabheda-vada<sup>12</sup> appears much later. Mahaprabhu and His contemporaries had no intention whatsoever to form a new system in contrast to the existing dissimilar monistic and dualistic systems, but wanted to show that one does violates the Absolute when one tries to squeeze it either into the monistic or dualistic system, and instead of accepting the double statements of the Revelation only accept one.*

Therefore, to call acintya-bhedabheda a ”vada”, a system, a teaching is wrong.

During the time Vamandas and I stayed at Maitri’s place, she did not seem to bother at all about Svami’s scolding of Vamandas. Hertha, on the other hand, seemed to

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<sup>11</sup> Acintya-bheda-abheda. Inconceivable simultaneous distinction and non-distinction. Bheda = distinction, abheda = non-distinction. Acintya = Only cognizable through the realization of the unrestricted import of the Shastrams. (Shridhara in Vishnu-Purana-tika 1.3.2)

<sup>12</sup> Vada = teaching, system of thoughts.

be rather surprised and taken. I do not think she knew about the “Corrections”<sup>13</sup> before she came to visit us later when we had moved from Stockholm to Skåne. But Maitri was joyful all the time, spreading harmony around her wherever she was. And Vamandas? – He looked ever so happy, in spite of being wounded by Svami’s harsh words! And why should he not? Now, he was together with his Guru again. Was he aware that this was the last time – this time?

Later in autumn, Svami returned to Basel, and I hoped I could see him again the next summer. – In January 1975, a postcard from Svami arrived:

*God’s blessings on you, Maria, Frieda and Mrs and Mr Hillfon. I got your letter. The photocopy of Devanāgarī-alphabet I will send in January. Thanks for Walther’s statue’s photo [The photo of Walther’s sculpture, made by Maria’s mother]. Please give my best wishes to E. I felt so happy in your company in 1974. Rādhe Rādhe*

19 June, 1975, I got a new letter from Sadananda:

*Dear Kid, Thanks for your phone etc., statue of Vamandas [picture of the sculpture of Vamandas] etc. Please let me know if you go to Siljansee [Vamandas’ summer course]. How long are you to stay in P.L. 3151, S-290 12 Degeberga? [our cottage in Maglehem]” Thank you so much – nobody informed me if Eidlitz got the Dr.H.C. actually. He wrote on 28.3 that he does not know if that rumour is true or not. I got a small slaganfall [stroke] in the meantime but since yesterday I am a bit better. I could not follow what you said on the phone yesterday – have you reached your goal?<sup>14</sup> How are you, Maria, and Frida? I have nobody here free for correspondence on my behalf, please excuse delay. Please tell Vamandas and Maitri I cannot come now. Is the Bhagavatam you got in Stockholm, printed in Gorakhpur, India, with English translation or not? Please send me the address of the bookseller. I think of you, Yours in the One Seva, Sadananda*

This summer, Walther stayed with us for one month in Skåne. See Walther’s letter to Svami (21 June, 1975), my translation:

*My dear Svamiji. I have been here with Kid, Maria, and little Frida since 26 May – except for 2 days in Lund on the occasion of the conferring of doctor’s degrees in the cathedral. It is great joy to be together with Kid and work together with him.*

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<sup>13</sup> Sadananda’s 300 pages corrections to Vamandas’ book *Die indische Gottesliebe*.

<sup>14</sup> What I said on the phone was, “Please, help me to attain my eternal goal!”

*Among other things, we are working with Prabhupada's last vani and now we read the Raya Ramananda chapter in C.C. Kid is like a loving and helpful son and friend of mine. I also have very good contact with Maria and the little one. They invited me to come to Mälarhöjden (Stockholm), if it is not possible to stay in Waxholm any longer, to the place you once visited, because they want to make this their residence from 1 August, the house that belongs to Maria's father and mother, the sculptor Hertha Hillfon. Hertha Hillfon wants to make a new sculpture of me. As a conscientious objector, Kid has to do some civilian service from 11 August, probably at a museum in Stockholm. [...] On 30 June I will fly together with Maria to my course in Indian philosophy in Dalarna. Kid will stay here by the south coast of Sweden and take care of the child. My address until 10 July: Folkhögskola Leksand (Hantverket), S-793 00 Leksand.*

Later that summer, we moved to Mälarhöjden, Stockholm. Unfortunately, Svami could not come to Sweden this year, so 1974 was the last year he was here.

In January 1976, Walther suddenly began writing his last will at our place in Stockholm. (See appendix!) Maria's parents were witnesses, signing the document. I was shocked, apprehensive, had no idea how to serve this spiritual heritage. Later, Ulla said that I had received a heavy rucksack! I was speechless, and Walther himself did not explain anything, but later I gradually came to realise that this was actually great, great Mercy, an invitation to do some seva, in spite of all my imperfections. At that time, I was 27 years old and Ulla 12 years older.

Walther's blood tests had been bad for some time and finally it became clear that he had far advanced cancer. He said that he wanted to die in full awareness, and not in a haze of morphine in hospital. Ulla then told us that she had to go to her parents in the north of Sweden, to work there for some time, and that the situation in Waxholm was uncertain when she was away.

After all, Walther was very ill at that time. Because of this, she asked if Walther could come to us in Mälarhöjden before his summer course, and if we could take him to his course and help him there, and then return to Mälarhöjden again. We said yes and took the decision to help him to have a natural death in Mälarhöjden, because this was what he wanted. We knew that Walther could not live much longer and that he had talked to his doctor who was positive and promised to be available and give the help that was needed. Maria's parents were also positive, and Maria's father said that 20 years ago, he had done the same for his mother, in this very room.

Ulla was not only a dear friend of Walther and us – and still is – she was also a nurse. She said she would help us as much as she could when she was back from the north, but that she also had to work. In the second half of June, Walther came to our place. He got “my” study room on the first floor, adjacent to the bathroom. The room was painted white, had skylights, a balcony, and a large writing table with bookshelves.

In spite of his severe illness, Walther was determined to hold his summer course, which took place from 29 June to 7 July. I took him to the course, having made a bed for him in the car. He was very tired on this last course of his, was coughing a lot, and burned the candle at both ends.

Then Walther and I went back to Stockholm. He was now completely drained. Back in Mälarhöjden, we were all trying to make the best of the situation. I was working the whole day at the museum, and Maria was supposed to do some art work and take care of Frida, who was now 3 years old. But Walther was a very patient patient.

Nevertheless, after some days, I got an idea! I had in mind to explain the whole situation to my supervisor at the museum and see what he said. To my great surprise, he became very touched and said: “You are supposed to be here till September but what you are doing now at home is of much greater importance. You are free. You don’t have to be here anymore.”

Two weeks before Vamandas’ passed away, Maitri wrote a letter to him (9 August, 1976; my translation):

*Dear Walther! [...] I heard from Marianne<sup>15</sup> that your [summer] course in Dalarna was particularly good. I am glad to hear about the [Swedish] book Guds lek, [the first part of the Caitanya book] and that the second part of the book will be published in Swedish, too. [The complete book was not published until 2013.] But most of all, I thank you for the book Den glömda världen, which was my first guide to the world I had searched for since long. I hope you understand that I am very sorry to hear that you are seriously ill, but I am glad to hear that you can be with Maria and Kid at their place [in Mälarhöjden, Stockholm]. You cannot be at a better place. And I say as I said to Erik [Maitri’s husband] when he was ill: “As the Paramātmā (or maybe Kṛṣṇa in cittam?) arranges everything, in accordance with my karma, this is how it must be, and this I willingly accept”. Just imagine,*

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<sup>15</sup> Marianne Sandström, another Swedish disciple of Svami, who met him already when he returned to Europe in 1961.

*Walther, what a fortunate life you have had! You have met a true bhakti-Guru and received instructions from him, which is the most wonderful thing that can fall to the lot of a living being. And through books and lectures you yourself have also guided others on the bhakti path. This is the most precious, the best thing that can happen to a human being. I know that you are happy and grateful for this. I can never be grateful enough for having met Svāmī and you! It is so good that you can read and talk with Maria and Kid. Just imagine, the Master of speech, Svāmī, cannot speak!<sup>16</sup> Give my love to Maria and Kid! Rādhe! Rādhe!*

Reading this letter now, I remember how happy Walther was when he read these lines. This makes me also think of Svami's last (?) letter to Vamandas (25 August, 1975; extract, my translation):

*Dear Vamandas,*

*Many happy returns on your birthday. May Shri Krishna's mercy prevail and give you strength to serve Him many years to come and disseminate His message to the people. [...] Please, give my regards to all my friends in Waxholm [...] and say that I wish them all the best. I hope to find everyone in high spirits when I meet them in the autumn, and, of course, you also, my dear and loyal Vamandas. I thank everyone who thinks of me, although, I am not allowed to write.*

*Radhe! Radhe!*

*Always from my heart, your Sadananda*

*Tell everyone – what they do for You, they also do for Me – Everyone here sends their regards.*

We, Ulla, and sometimes Helena, helped Walther as well as we could. He went through different phases: sometimes he was worried, and sometimes he was beaming; his whole room was shining! – He ate less and less, and in the end, also drank less and less. A few times, he took one half of a sleeping pill, but no pain killers.

Now and then, friends of Walther also came to see him. A few also came on his birthday, 28 August, the day when he stopped breathing. The atmosphere was very peaceful and joyful that day. Everyone knew that it would be over soon.

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<sup>16</sup> Caused by strokes. When Maitri went to see him in the hospital in Basel the last time, in March 1976, she gave him foot massage, and then he suddenly said: “Careful with bhakti!” (See “Svami's Europa Jahre”).



At that time, we did not know much of Vaishnava conduct, how to help a Vaishnava during his last days. We knew about the Name of course, and when Walther stopped breathing, we were sitting around his bed, singing the Name, while Ulla and I were holding his hands.

After some time, our 3-year-old daughter came into the room and saw Walther lying there, peaceful, with Tulasi leaves on his forehead and surrounded by loving friends. She asked: “Is he dead now?” No fear, no desperation, only peace prevailed.

After some time, we realised that we must now phone the police, to inform them. This is a standard procedure when someone dies at home. The police came, asked some questions and left. Later this evening, a large, black car stopped outside our house. It came to take Walther’s body to the mortuary.

Soon after these events Ulla made arrangements so that everything Walther had in Waxholm, which was relevant in connection with his will<sup>17</sup>, came to our place, where Ulla and I continued to sort everything out, in accordance with his will.

After some time, we took everything meant for his son Günther to his flat in Uppsala, in a huge cardboard box, i.e., everything else than Walther’s Indological papers and books, like other books, photos and personal belongings.

Translations and books were everywhere in my room now, and I did not know how to serve this spiritual heritage! My English was poor, my German non-existent, not to mention Sanskrit and Bengali! Walther had told me that I had to learn German and English very well. This I *had* to do. But when and how?

Walther’s funeral took place at Skogskyrkogården (“The Forest Churchyard”) in Stockholm, where his ashes were spread in a memorial grove. I have no clear memories of the funeral, except that his son Günther read verse 5:56 in Brahma-Samhita:

There, the forms of His Own potency are His beloved ones,  
and their only Beloved is the supreme personal God.

There, the trees fulfil all wishes, the earth consists of cit-jewels,  
and the water is nectar.

There, every word is a song, every step is a dance,  
and the flute Krishna’s beloved female friend.

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<sup>17</sup> See appendix!

The stars in heaven consist of pure knowledge  
and Divine joy: 'Supreme light'.  
This and everything else there, is rasa,  
direct, loving service, through and through.  
From eternal cows flows the ocean of pure milk.  
Time has no access there;  
time, which is (here) split into fractions of seconds.  
In serving love, I worship this truly pure realm,  
which is secluded like an island  
and inaccessible from other realms.  
Goloka, it is called, the realm of (pure) knowledge.  
There are only a few of those who are truly existing,  
who roam this earth, and are aware of this land.  
(*Brahma-Samhita* 5,56, freely after Sadananda's detailed translation)

A few weeks later, Maria and I were married in our garden in Stockholm. One of Hertha Hillfon's sisters, a priest, officiated at the wedding. Providence saw to it that it took place on Radha's avirbhava, the day of Her appearance, which was shimmering in a mesmerising golden light that afternoon.

At the same time in Basel, Sadananda was still in hospital, very ill.

For some time, we had nurtured the wish to live in the countryside. In the winter, we borrowed a house in Skåne from friends. There we had a look at an old farmstead and managed to get a loan in the bank. 1 April, 1977 we move in.

On Easter Monday Maitri phoned. – Svami had left us!

By being ill for such a long time, Svami gave us the opportunity to get used to a life without him, without his vapu, his physical presence here on earth. But we still have his vani, the sound, the vibration of his transcendental words, his teachings, waiting to be listened to, not only by us, but by so many new souls in future. And by serving his vani we are always connected.

Now that neither Sadananda nor Walther were present here in their physical forms, a new phase of our lives began, in which Maitri was of utmost importance for us and many others as well. Vamandas called her Maitri, the Friend (of everyone). Svami also often used this name for her. In a letter to Mario (from 13 September 1974), he also calls her "our Swedish Yogamaya", who is the Director of the Divine Play, probably because of her swiftness, her adaptability, her modesty, her serving

attitude, her good temper, her harmonising character, her ability to arrange everything to the best with ease, and what not. The following years, Maitri and I had a lot of contact, which gave me the opportunity to ask her about Svami and Vamandas, about her husband Erik, who passed away in 1968, about Hella, who passed away in 1967, and about everyone and everything, including herself.

Two years of hard work of renovating our new place and building a studio for Maria followed, and I was almost 30 years old. Our daughter now went to school every day, and I got the idea to study English and German at the university in Lund. I got a study loan and had to study at high school first, which took 3 years, because I had to get full points in all subjects in order to be admitted to the school of education and borrow all this money at my advanced age. But I never intended to be a teacher, I just wanted to learn English and German to be able to serve our spiritual heritage in some way. Altogether I studied for 7 years. Strangely enough, I never had to pay back my huge study loan because my income was always too low.

Before this, however, in December, Maria and I went to Vraja for 2 weeks. We did not know much about India in those days, we only knew what we had read from Sadananda, and we imbibed everything like innocent children, large-eyed and with wide-open mouths. There they were right before us: the river *Yamuna*, the mountain *Govardhana*, and the pond of Radha, *Radha-Kunda!* At Radhakunda we met Krishnadas “Madrasi Baba”, who together with his elder brother had studied philosophy in Bombay when they were young. One day they came to know that Sadananda was to give a series of lectures on Mahaprabhu, lasting for 10 days. They attended the lectures, which had the effect that they soon left their philosophical studies, heading for Vraja! Krishnadas remembered that it was very hot during the lectures, and that he had served Svami by fanning him.

During a couple of days, Krishnadas then showed us some of the important places in Vraja, ending with a nightly parikrama (circumambulation) of Mount Govardhana, bathing in the enchanting light of the full moon. – We will not dwell there now, however. This is a tale of its own. Let us return to Sweden!

After Svami’s disappearance, Marthe Calmbach, who lived in Basel, used to go to Maitri on her summer holidays. Then she took a plane to Copenhagen and stayed at our place for a few days, before we went to Maitri by car. Then I went back to our place, and then back to Maitri again, to bring Marthe back here before she returned to Copenhagen. – But who was Marthe?

The day after Svami's arrival in Basel, 14 June, 1961, Marthe came to see him in the hospital because she had met Vamandas before and heard about Svami from him. She was a young woman who had worked as a dressmaker and had created fashion drawings in Paris. She did much seva for Svami in Basel, wrote to dictation, and typed a great deal of what we have today. Svami used to spend his weekends working and dictating in her small flat, where he felt at home.

In the beginning of the 1980s, Maria and I spent one week at Marthe's place. We were younger than her and liked her "Bohemian style" very much. We read together for hours each day, and one day we went to see Svami's grave, where we took pictures of his then snow-clad grave at the Hörnli cemetery in Basel. The gravestone has unfortunately been removed in the meantime and the area has been levelled.

One day, we also paid a visit to Phyllis Imhof, in whose house Svami lived from 1963, a house filled with upper middle-class furniture and hand-painted porcelain, painted by Phyllis herself. In this spacious house she served Svami in his everyday life for 14 years, first together with her mother, and then alone.

Before we went back to Marthe's flat, Phyllis unlocked the door to Svami's study, with all his books, where we also took some photos. Phyllis then showed us Svami's minimal bedroom and asked Maria if she would like to rest there on his bed for a while, which she did.

In 1987, Marthe suddenly disappeared one night. Everyone was puzzled. No one knew for sure what had happened to her, but after a long time, her body was found in a sluice of the river Rhine in Basel.

In August 1987, Phyllis wrote and told me that I had to come to Basel quickly and take care of Marthe's Shastras before it was too late. I told her that I had to do my very last exam at the Uni first. When I did this a few days later, Maria was waiting in our car outside the Uni, and then we went to Basel directly. 7 years of studies were now over and I was ready to do some translation Guru-seva. I got the feeling of living in a fairy tale! Seven years of hard work had given me the key to fulfil the purpose of my life!

Now I also remember Svami's last words to me at Maitri's place, when Vamandas and I went there together. After Svami's severe scolding of Vamandas, I did not know what to do! Should I really stay by Vamandas if he was so hopeless? It was at that moment Svami embraced us both with so much love, with tears in his eyes.

Then he took a firm hold of my arm, saying, “Stick to Vamandas!” Well, I had done so, and finally also complied with Walther’s request to learn German and English.

Now we met Phyllis at her place again. Phyllis then took us to Marthe’s flat, which was now empty. The property owner had bought everything in Marthe’s flat from her father, who was still alive. In fact, we already knew the property owner, since we visited Marthe a few years earlier. He now took us to the cellar and showed us all of Svami’s typed works in so-called Klemm-mappen, standing there neatly on a shelf behind an unlocked door clad in chicken wire. He did not know what to do with them and was happy that we took care of them.

At Phyllis’ place we also got a lot of books, notebooks, typed sheets, and some of Svami’s more personal belongings, like his Giridhari, his seal etc. The next day, we put everything in the car and drove nonstop all the way back home, because we did not dare to leave the car.

Back home, there is yet one great obstacle: To become a teacher, I was supposed to study yet another year at the school of education, and I had a huge study loan and did not know what to do. I only had one thought in my mind: to begin translating Svami’s works.

One night, I had a dream in which I found myself locked up in a grey cellar without windows and doors. But I was determined to find a way out, and suddenly I saw a crack in the wall. I moved closer and felt the presence of God, making me bow in wonder. In the crack I could see a chrysalis, out of which a huge entity, resembling a combination of bird and butterfly, rose. It had the most wonderful bright colours and flew up in the sky.

Then I woke up, filled with great joy. I will find the way! I talked to Maria and we made a deal: I would translate Svami’s texts into Swedish and read aloud to her, because her knowledge of German and English was inadequate. I would also be in charge of the ground services here at home, so she would have more time for her work as an artist. We would give it a try!

Sometime later, I got a letter from Mario Windisch (Mandali Bhadra Dasa) in Germany. I had never met him, only heard about him from Vamandas. Mario had just heard from Phyllis that Marthe was probably dead. I invited Mario and his close friend Oliver Hertel (Vasudeva Dasa) to Högåsa, so we could meet and talk about everything that had happened.

It did not take long before Mario and Oliver arrived with the ferry to Trelleborg. By then I had translated a lot of Svami's "Corrections" into Swedish and we read in them here, in German and in Swedish, being extremely grateful to Svami for this extraordinary work of his.

This was actually the beginning of our annual reading week here each summer, and other meeting, where we read and translated Svami's texts together. One after the other, others also joined. And now that both Vamandas and Svami had left us, everyone sought refuge in Maitri, who was our senior-most Vaishnava and self-evident authority. Just to watch her *listening* to the texts we read together was absolutely enchanting.

The coming years, I translated a lot into Swedish, and soon others also joined. At first, I was using a typewriter, but during the 1990s computers became more and more common, and soon I also got one.

By the end of the 1990s we made Sadananda's and Vamandas' first website. To begin with, this site was only accessible to ourselves, because I really did not know if this was the right thing to do, to publish Svami's works like this, even the most basic ones. Majstin always reminded us of Svami's last words to her: "Vorsicht mit Bhakti!" ("Careful with Bhakti!") When people who have turned their backs on God and His service hear or read about God, the bhakta and bhakti, they will easily think and say things that are derogatory, which will hurt themselves spiritually. Weighing the pros and cons for a very long time, and questioning my own motives, I finally decided to take the risk and make the website accessible to the public, which does not mean that we publish everything on the website.

After a few years of translation seva in Svami's "Bhakti workshop", I felt the need of some extra, qualified help, so I began to pray to Svami: *Please send us a helper, we cannot do your seva alone.* – And after some time, Katrin Stamm (Kalakanthidasi) appeared. She had much of the knowledge, the qualities and the capacity we were in need of, and has now done many great things in Svami's Bhakti-workshop: translating, organising Sadananda's website, creating different Facebook pages, connected to the Vaishnava world: cooperation with the Journal of Vaishnava Studies, the Bhaktivedanta Research Centre in Calcutta, Ferdinando Sardella, Stockholm University and Måns Broo, Åby Akademi in Finland, and many others around the world. She never met Svami in his physical form, but considers him to be her shiksha-Guru, and she has been initiated by Maitri dasi, her diksha-Guru, and is therefore a link in the disciplic succession.

2016 I got leukemia and realised that I had to make plans for a future without me. Ulla Fjellström and I then made the decision to give the complete spiritual and personal literary estate of Svami and his main disciple Vamandas to Katrin Stamm as a gift. Today, this estate has been transferred to her place in Flensburg in Germany. Surprisingly enough, I have also recovered and can continue my Guru-seva together with my godsiblings, my dearest friends. Let these words of Sadananda serve as a blessing for all of us:

I think of you.

Yours  
in the One seva

Sadananda

# Appendix

Från: Catarina Ahlfors <[catarina.ahlfors@stockholm.se](mailto:catarina.ahlfors@stockholm.se)>

Ämne: Bouppteckning

Datum: 29 december 2011 10:47:17 CET

Till: "[info@sadananda.com](mailto:info@sadananda.com)" <[info@sadananda.com](mailto:info@sadananda.com)>

1 bilaga, 192 K

Översänder beställd bouppteckning Dnr: 4.1.4---21955/11 Med vänlig hälsning  
Catarina Ahlfors

