

An extraordinary being

I know Swami Vishwananda as a very close friend. I met him in India at an ashram in March 1998. I was standing in a busy square, waiting for some people, when a young Indian man approached me. He asked me if I were Swiss and I answered, "Yes". His question initiated a conversation that lasted the entire afternoon while we sat together by the side of a busy street in India. From the first moment I met Swami Vishwananda, I felt very close to him.

Two days later Swami left to return to his home in Mauritius. Before leaving he asked me to promise to visit him at his home. However it was in London, England that I saw him next. Shortly after that meeting I travelled to Mauritius to visit, and we continued to develop the very close friendship I had felt the moment we first met in India.

Most spiritual Masters oftentimes interact with others in a very human way while obscuring their realised divinity or spiritual advancement. I am grateful that Swami Vishwananda became my friend in just that way. I know that despite Swami's obvious spiritual attainment, in his heart he is an ordinary person. He acts *normal* when he is engaged in everyday activities, or spending time with friends or travelling. He dresses in the current clothing trends such as jeans, T-shirt and tennis shoes. He is a responsible person, and as the eldest son of his family he takes care of family obligations.

The past nine years during which I have known Swami Vishwananda have been spiritually very intense for him. Within this relatively short period of time, he has accelerated his own and others' spiritual experiences and personal development. That same spiritual advancement would have taken an ordinary person several lifetimes to accomplish. Even though Swami has been actively engaged in spiritual work since a very young age,

he said that his real work would not begin until he became twenty-seven years old in 2005.

Swami Vishwananda is definitely one of those rare persons who actually *know* and are fully conscious of their true self and their Divinity. He can connect with that Greater Reality at will. When the greater connection is made, Swami is no longer that ordinary *person* we see in everyday life. His facial expression and his eyes change as he becomes a radiant being expressing unconditional love. I have witnessed Swami's transformation on a daily basis. Most of the time he behaves as a *normal* person who does not make a fuss about his true Divine self. Those who view him superficially do not recognize the greatness of his soul.

Swami's so-called *miracles* are an everyday occurrence and I have witnessed them on numerous occasions. The phenomena and *miracles* occurring around him are not what impress me most about him. Rather, I continually have a high regard for his ability to assist people in coming for themselves to the awareness that *God is the only reality* and to inspire them to lead lives permeated by spirit. I admire the fact that while Swami is doing all these great things, he somehow manages to stay firmly grounded in physical reality.

Swami has access to great knowledge and stays connected continually to the spiritual world, but he doesn't talk about it very often. I used to bug him to say more by asking many questions. Swami patiently explains to people, over and over, that he doesn't want us to focus on phenomena but on the *Most Important Source of all the phenomena in life and the Love for Him—God!* He advises people that instead of knowing mere theory, it would be more beneficial for them to develop love and cultivate yearning for God in their hearts. He counsels people: "If you fill your heart with love for God and can attune yourself to the

Divine, you will acquire true knowledge that is not found in books and theory”.

Whenever a sick person comes to see Swami for healing, he always tells them that he will pray for them. When a spontaneous healing occurs, he always points out that it is God’s work. I have never heard him say that *he* healed anyone. According to him, there is no one who can call himself/herself a *healer*. I have heard him say of healers that they are only tools in the hands of the Divine.

If there is something that Swami wants to accomplish, he is very determined and will do whatever it takes. He loves to be in the company of others and to laugh a lot. In his free time, he visits pilgrimage sites and paints icons of saints. He is very creative, whether it is through painting or making music, the latter of which means a great deal to him. Any music that is devotionally sung to God, he will like. He has a beautiful voice and enjoys singing together with others. Studying the lives of saints is one of his greatest passions.

Swami Vishwananda is someone who loves God with all his heart and soul in a very pure and childlike way. This approach to loving God creates for him a very personal and natural relationship with the Divine, and thereby he resonates with people in a way that their lives may be transformed. Swami’s goal in life is to touch the hearts of people who are spiritually and magnetically drawn to him in such a way that they are motivated to adopt a spiritual life centred on God.

As a *guru*, even when Swami is being childlike and spontaneous, he radiates a natural aura of authority. He can be strict, but he always tempers it with a kind and caring authority which holds the truth that he knows what is best for his disciples. When one of the *brahmacharis* does something of which he

disapproves, he points this out to him or her. However, instead of condemning that person, he looks for a seed of *readiness to learn from one's mistake and move on attitude*, and then he nurtures and waters that. Swami says, "When you have fallen, it is better to get up again and thereby grow stronger from a painful experience or mistake. Choose not to have painful memories come back again and again and to be tormented by them to the extent of creating physical illness." He is very tolerant toward others. He never tries to convince anyone of his own opinion and he doesn't *moralize*. When people ask for his advice he clearly tells them what they have to do to balance the situation. He then leaves the person's free will intact through counselling them to make their own choices in the end. *Swami does occasionally get troubled himself, but he moves quickly through and past it.*

Once Swami and I went together to Rodrigues, a small island off the coast of Mauritius where we stayed at a small guesthouse. The son of the family who lived in the main house was 20 years old, which happened to be the same age as Swami at the time. The son began mocking Swami, making fun of him as a spiritual person who performed *miracles*, etc. Swami graciously tried a few times to talk to the son in a reasonable way, but met with no success. Soon Swami quietly removed himself from the uncomfortable situation. At that time I was astounded to see that instead of getting hurt or angry, he actually had compassion for the young man. Swami allows people to choose whether they relate to him as *guru*, brother, friend or just a *ordinary* person. *Even though Swami Vishwananda is my guru, he will always be my good friend at the same time!*

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