

The western sage

During the same trip to Mauritius, my mother had told me that we had to pay my aunt, my father's sister, a visit in Vacoas, a small town in Mauritius. As I was not happy about spending the remainder of my holiday visiting family, I refused to go! However, my mum was insistent. I compromised with my mum and said that I would only go if Swami came along with us, which he happily agreed to.

It was a Thursday. We travelled quite far in a hot and stuffy bus and finally arrived at my aunt's house. When we got there, my aunt greeted us and apologised, saying: "I am really sorry, I know you have travelled a long way but its Thursday and I go to *bhajans* every week, so I have to leave". Hearing these words was music to my ears! We could go back home and Swami and I could carry on playing! However, much to my disappointment, my mum put a quick stop to these thoughts. She told us that as we had travelled all this way, we would attend the *bhajans* with my aunt and then leave.

We arrived at the venue where the *bhajans* were being held. This was the first time both Swami and I attended a *bhajan-evening*. My mum sat with my aunt on the women's side and Swami and I sat on the men's side. Characteristically, at such events the women's side of the hall was packed all the way to the back, and the men's side only had a couple of singers and musicians at the top of the hall. As we were unsure where to sit, Swami and I decided to sit in the middle of the hall on the men's side. Unusually enough, when we sat down together, we left a gap between us. We had actually started to enjoy the *bhajans* and were clapping and singing when suddenly we both had an urge to look back.

We noticed a curious and striking looking man walking into the hall. He was tall in appearance, of western origin and dressed in bright ochre orange dhoti and scarf. As if this wasn't unusual enough, his hair was incredibly long and grey and tied up in a bun at the top of his head with *rudrakshas* surrounding it. He had dazzling *chandan* painted on his forehead and arms. He also had additional *rudrakshas* on his arms and wrists.

The gentleman decided to sit between Swami and myself even though the entire room was empty. I remember looking at Swami at this point and we both just smiled at each other. After a short while, my mum and I decided it was time to leave the *bhajans* to make our way home.

The journey back was quiet. I think we were all taken aback and captured by the *bhajans*. On arriving at our bus stop, Swami declared that he would attend *bhajans* every week. My mum recommended that he ask his parents' permission before travelling so far alone to attend the *bhajans*.

Some time later my mum received a call from her brother, Swami's father in Mauritius who informed her that Swami had been attending the weekly *bhajans* in Vacoas in secret, and had now decided to dedicate his entire life to God at the age of fourteen years. My mum, like the rest of our family, was astonished at his strong dedication to the Lord at such a young age.

A couple of years later, Swami decided to come to London for the first time. When I met him, I noticed that he had transformed yet again. He had grown his hair long and was able to materialise objects from thin air. He materialised hot strongly scented *vibhuti* for all that were present at the airport. When we arrived home, we sat together and talked about his newfound powers. Swami asked me if I wanted a ring to which I replied, "Yes please!" He then materialised a gold ring for me and explained that it was

identical to *Mata Parvati's chakra* and said that it was very powerful.

Swami then asked me, "Can you remember the day we went to the *bhajans* in Vacoas?" I replied, "Yes bro". He went on to ask, "Can you remember the man dressed as a sage who sat between us?" I replied smiling, "How could I forget?"

Swami went on to explain that that had been the first time *Sri Shirdi Sai Baba* had appeared to him. He had asked Swami if he remembered meeting him. However, Swami replied No. *Shirdi Sai Baba* explained to Swami that he had first come to visit him and his cousin at the *bhajans* in Vacoas. I felt completely honoured in knowing that *Shirdi Sai* was indeed the sage that had sat between Swami and me!

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