

My son is greatly blessed

Mauritius is where my son, Visham, was born on June 13, 1978. And on that small island, he grew up. Today, Visham is known and respected around the world as Swami Vishwananda. It is in Mauritius that I grew up as well. In Mauritius, like India, everyone knows everyone else living in the vicinity. Unlike towns where people do not know their neighbour, in Mauritius people in close proximity are like one big family, and everyone talks to everyone else.

In his youth, Visham played with all the children who lived nearby. The boys of the neighbourhood teased Visham because of his spiritual nature and practices and made fun of him by calling him *Hari Om* and *Jai Gurudev*, but he did not mind. He often kept company with adults as well. Not far from our house was a small forest where an old man named Lala lived alone. In the age-old tradition of neighbour helping neighbour, someone from the neighbourhood cooked for Lala. My son often visited the old man. Lala did not speak a lot; most of the time he sat quietly outside his hut.

Visham was a naughty boy and when he played with the neighbourhood children, he made a mess of things, but he was not a bad child, only naughty. For instance, one day when I was cooking lentils, he placed a small bar of soap into the pot. He was constantly climbing everywhere, which can be a concern for a mother that he may not fall and be harmed. I beat Visham when he did these naughty things. When he put the bar of soap in the lentils, I beat him too much I realize now. Now I feel really sad about all the beatings.

Even at the age of one year, it was apparent that Visham was different from other children. Normally a child asks for sweets, cakes or toys, but my son never asked for those things. He would say, "Give me incense; give me camphor to do yajnas and prayers". When I answered him by saying that I did not have those things, he would say: *You go buy* or *Let's go shopping*. When I went shopping with him, Visham would ask me to buy ingredients for his *yajna*: *agarbathi*, incense and camphor.

At the age of one-and-a-half, Visham was just beginning to walk. Yet unlike other children his age, he prayed and prayed all the time. Visham's grandmother went to the temple every morning and evening. From the time that Visham was small, he could be found by the side of his grandmother going to the temple for morning and evening prayers. My sister used to say, "How can you have a son like that? You never pray". I would answer her, "I really don't know; he has always been interested in God".

I believed in God, but I did not feel the urge inside to pray or go to the temple and put water on the *shiva lingam*. At that time I saw people going to the temple in front of our home, but I never felt the urge to go myself.

Shortly after, Visham started doing *havan*, the fire ceremony called *yajna*. He made a big fire in the middle of the kitchen that threatened to set the kitchen on fire. All the people who were there were scared, but I was not

scared and nothing troublesome actually happened. Then, when he was two and three years old, he began playing he was Krishna. For Christmas Visham sometimes asked for something, but most of the time he played *puja*, saying, *I am doing a puja with Krishna*.