

Surroundings, company maketh a man



THIS JEWELLERY DESIGNER PROVIDES A RINGSIDE VIEW INTO THE COMPLEX LIVES AND CHALLENGES OF ACHIEVERS

Queenie-tessential

I sat in front of him. I had just met him for five minutes and I could sense my limbs relax. It had been a beautiful wedding and on my last day, I was packing to leave for Mumbai when I got a call that I had an opportunity to meet Radhanath Swami. It was a boat ride across to the hotel; I hurried on.

His eyes were kind and soothing. He wore saffron robes and sat in *vajrasana* pose. "There will always be pain but not necessarily suffering," he said. I nodded quickly summing up in my

mind that he meant that I keep a positive attitude.

The American swami talked about his childhood in Chicago when his family was going through a rough time. "We had lost everything and my father was working round the clock to keep his family afloat," he said.

"Every day I would hear my father sing in the shower. It was about thunderstorms but with that, the April rain would bring in flowers," he said.

On my way out, I was lucky enough to be presented by him an autographed copy of his autobiography *The*

Journey Home. He also mentioned that his father and brother would be visiting him in Mumbai in the next two days.

Sometimes, some things are meant to happen. The Swamiji had stayed on in the periphery of my mind. Not that we had spoken much, but his presence lingered on.

Two days later, a friend of mine was visiting Mumbai and mentioned that he was going to meet Swamiji. I had taken no contact details from him when I had met him and grabbed the opportunity to see him again. Furthermore, it would be a pleasure to meet his 89-year-old father he had spoken about.

I was greeted by a room of devotees. His kind eyes welcomed me once again and I felt the familiar sense of relaxation in his company. A sense of peace prevailed, my logical mind questioned it. I let go and relaxed.

I met his wonderful father



Geri and his best friend Gary with whom he first left the United States and made his way to Europe.

I also met Hari Sunder who was a Krishna *bhakt*. I later learnt he had spent three months with John Lennon and a month with George Harrison.

Amongst us was also a gentleman who had been the head of the Vrindavan temple and now lives in Los Angeles and is doing a book on Nick Nolte.

Swamiji was asked to talk about one of the experiences in his book. *The Journey Home* traces the journey of Swamiji from the time he left his home in Chicago and made his way into India hitchhiking, driven by a force and a voice that had asked him to go to India.

He talked about his experience during his travel when he almost got sucked in quicksand, which he encountered where the calm Yamuna meets the forceful Ganges.

On a phone call with his father 40 years later when the book had just come out, his father Geri said he had a sleepless night reading that incident.

"What if the quicksand had devoured you?" he asked his enlightened son. "We would have searched high and low without any closure as to what may have happened to you." I detected the pain in his father's eyes as this incident was recalled.

In the book Swamiji later talks about the sand that almost took him in, "The sand was greedy to devour me and the same sand is soft and now gives me shelter. Like sand, a person influenced by circumstances becomes viciously envious or affectionately kind. Our company and surroundings have a crucial effect on our consciousness, so much wisdom is being whispered through every grain of sand we have ears to hear." [Share](#)