

I was born in Jaffna, on the isle of Sri Lanka. As the son of a Hindu priest, I followed the footsteps of my father and also wanted to become a priest. When I was ten years old, my father was killed in an accident. I had to burn his body according to the customs of our religion. This was a most abhorrent experience – too much for my young life and I got severely depressed.

THE STORY OF A FORMER HINDU PRIEST

I did not receive any love from my fellow people and was driven into deep loneliness. I was left alone with my gods and I began to cling to them more than to anything else in this world.

When fifteen years old I was introduced to the duties of priesthood and as a consequence became a member of a higher cast. I was not allowed to have fellowship around the table or marry with a member of other casts. Then a religious and political war broke out and many, mainly young people were killed. It became very dangerous for me to remain in Sri Lanka. My relatives advised me to flee immediately to India. With a heavy heart I was leaving my family, my relatives and the ritual services as priest in the temple, fleeing to Tamil Nadu in South-India.

THE ONLY WAY OUT SEEMED TO COMMIT SUICIDE

After a few months my savings were all used up. The visa had also expired and I lived on the streets of Madras. Due to the war, I had lost all contacts with my family. The people around me didn't help me. So I prayed to 'my' Hindu gods for hours, but without any answer. It became clear to me that those gods did not see nor hear me. In my despair I destroyed all my statues and pictures and I cried, "Isn't there any real god on this earth? Who can help me?" The only way out I saw was to end my life.

When I came back to my lodgings, I suddenly noticed a picture of Jesus Christ that had been hanging on the wall for a long time. Unknown thoughts came to my mind. Could this Jesus I had heard about, be of any help in my situation? "If you really exist, Jesus, then please help me now. If nothing happens, then I clearly see no purpose in my life." I seriously prayed in front of the picture.

Shortly afterwards, a man turned up who was looking for needy boys to take to a Christian orphanage. He found me and took me in. There I heard for the first time about the love of the God of the Bible and about what Jesus Christ had done for me, a God who had become man, not to demand anything of me, but to meet my personal needs and make me happy.

"Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed" (Isaiah 53:4-5).

I soaked these words in like a dry sponge. Before that I had been reading Hindu books very carefully, but these had only increased my fear and left me totally helpless. Not one of the millions of gods could have paid for my debts and my depressions had become more severe. Often I had been tortured by the memories of the burning of my own father's body.

I started reading the Bible and I felt increasingly hungry for God's Word. I was very interested in the stories and I wanted to know them in detail. In this way I came to understand the truth about God which he wants everybody to know. I experienced the Lord's strength in different situations and the depression I had suffered from for years completely left me.

A NEW PERSON

Hindus believe that sin brings a curse into a person's life. When I read the Bible it became clear to me that I was a helpless sinner in God's sight. According to Hindu teaching, I would have to be reborn and live another life,

maybe as a cow or a fly. This perspective had given me little hope for the future. How glad I was, finally to have found the One I could confess my sins to. Jesus Christ forgave them all and set me free from the bondage of sin. I handed my life over to Him and was baptised in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. As a sign of the change of lordship, I also changed my name Shiva, the name of the highest Hindu god. I chose to be named Peter, for Jesus had given Simon also this new name, Peter.

Some time later I fell seriously ill with yellow fever. Not even the doctors knew what to do. However, I clung to the truth, that Jesus Christ had often healed people in hopeless situations. Matthew 20:29-34 records the story of two blind men in Jericho who cried for help, begging Jesus to heal them. When Jesus saw their faith, he had pity on them and healed them.

I firmly believed that Jesus was still the same and would heal me, as we read in Hebrews 13:8, "*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever.*" I asked like the blind men had done. For hours I called to Jesus in great pain but in firm faith, "Lord Jesus, please, heal me, too! Have mercy also on me! I do not let you go until you heal me." Suddenly I felt a power flowing through my body. I knew at once that Jesus Christ had healed me. O, how I praised Jesus for helping me a second time. First he had healed me spiritually and this time physically.

WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU?

I was overwhelmed by how much God had done for me. Out of great thankfulness, I prayed to him, “Lord, you have saved me from eternal damnation. You have forgiven my many sins and granted me new life, strength and hope. Lord, you have healed me. I should have been punished for all my sins, but you have gone to the cross for my sins, you have suffered on my behalf in order to save me. You have opened my eyes to the truth and have removed all my false gods. O God, how unmeasurable is your love! What can I do for you out of thankfulness to you?”— As an answer to this prayer the Lord gave me a vision for the many people living in darkness and suffering under Satan’s power. I felt an urge to testify to them what the Lord Jesus had done for me. I wanted to tell them the ‘Good News’.

The Lord used me to tell many Hindus and Muslims in South-India how wonderfully He had saved and healed me. As a result a number of them got converted and started believing in Jesus Christ. Many years later, when I lived in Europe, I got blinded and captured by the high living standard and capitalism of modern Switzerland. The burning love for my Saviour Jesus Christ had been pushed to the background. Then one day God showed me clearly, that so many Christians bear His name, but only few follow and serve Him truly. I too was one of the big

crowd! I cried bitterly and prayed, “O God, what should I really do?” God asked me, “Will you really follow me?” This question touched me deeply. I broke down before God, repented and re-dedicated my life to the Lord.

WILL YOU REALLY FOLLOW ME?

A brother in Switzerland had already pointed out to me the low spiritual state of my heart and confirmed to me that God was calling me once more into His service. God showed me clearly that I should open and support a children’s home for orphans and poor children in Sri Lanka. At first this seemed impossible, but today I can testify that God made His vision come true. God gave the needed funds and cleared the way. With the help of God there exists now a ‘Maranatha’ children’s home in Sri Lanka.

“Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world” (James 1:27).

WILL YOU ACCEPT THE HELP OF JESUS?

Jesus Christ saved me from utter hopelessness and gave my life a new meaning. In the same way He wants to meet the needs of anybody. Dear reader, I sincerely ask you to consider the following facts: Jesus Christ wants to save you! Satan wants your eternal punishment. Who for do you

decide? Consider that Jesus alone is able to save you and set you free. We live in the last days – Jesus Christ will soon return, to take the believers (saved ones) with Him to glory.

“In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent” (Acts 17:30).

Will you now pray the following prayer: “Dear Lord Jesus, I come to you with all my sins. Please forgive me my many debts and cleanse me with your blood. I want to follow you from today onward and become your disciple. I’m dedicating my whole life to you. Please give me your strength and lead me according to your will. Please open your word, the Bible, to me so that I understand it and may follow it in faith. Amen.”

If you have any more questions and if you are really hungry for the truth, then please, read the Bible, for the Word of God is your ‘meeting point’ with Him.

Jesus calls you!

Peter Sivakumar

A NEW LIFE FOR SHIVA

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