

Testimony of Hindu convert

My parents are from Kolkata, India. They arrived in the UK in 1970. My siblings and I were born here which makes me 2nd generation British Indian. Or some might say confused?! 😊

Religion played an important role in my life right from an early age. Not only were my parents practicing Hindus but we also belonged to the Brahmin caste. Brahmins are right at the top of the caste system and belong to the priestly order. Naturally for our family, it was a matter of great pride and prestige to be born as Brahmins. Our Hindu neighbours would come to us for help on spiritual matters because we were considered to be the holy people. We took our religion seriously and obeyed the strict rituals and ceremonies that accompany the Hindu faith. We had a purpose built shrine in our home where we regularly worshipped our many gods.

This was the spiritual backdrop I grew up in. The Asian culture I had been exposed to and the religion I believed in. Of course I had heard about Jesus, but as far as I was concerned, He was just a White God for white people. Just like I was born a Hindu, I assumed that every Westerner was born a Christian and that this was a Christian country. And when I saw the many problems in society, I wanted nothing to do with the Christian faith. Frankly, I was proud to be a Hindu.

At the age of 19, I left home to go to University and it was there that I met committed Christians for the first time. They weren't like my other friends. I quickly began to realise that there was a BIG difference between Christian culture and Western culture. I couldn't quite understand it, but I knew that my Christian friends had something special in their lives. I was drawn to them and was interested in their faith and began asking questions.

When they spoke about Jesus, it was as if they were speaking about a very close friend of theirs, someone who they had a personal relationship with. I didn't have that in my life, when you believe in hundreds of different gods, it's very difficult to have a personal relationship with any of them.

One time I remember being deeply offended by their suggestion that Jesus was the only way to receive forgiveness for our sins and the only way to receive eternal life. I was so angry that someone could even dare to suggest that to my face. But I'll tell you one thing, I never forgot it. The truth hit me so hard, it stayed with me... and years later would prompt me to go to Church.

University finished in 96, I lost touch with my Christian friends and I forgot all about Jesus. But He did not forget me. For the next couple of years, I got on with my

life but always at the back of my mind, I knew there was something missing. I began to crave for a purpose to my life. I tried various things to make myself happy but I always ended up feeling empty. And for the first time, I began to feel guilty for the wrong things I had done. It was then I remembered what my Christian friends had told me about Jesus....

In Autumn 97, I walked into a church all by myself. It was only across the road from where I lived and I found myself going regularly just to listen to the sermons. I envied the Christians, I so wanted to be like them but coming from a Hindu background, I knew that only holy people can please god and that definitely wasn't me. So what would Jesus want with a sinner like me?

I never spoke to anyone in the Church, I didn't want to. I hid at the back and kept a very low profile. I always ran off as soon as the Service ended. But one day I was stopped in the Church car park by someone. He asked me if I had ever heard of Alpha, an introductory course on the Christian faith and then swiftly introduced me to a couple who were running the next course in their home. I really did not want to go but felt obliged to as they had now seen me. I remember walking to their home thinking, ' Just go this once and never again.' But God had something else planned.

The more I learnt about Jesus, the more I was fascinated by Him. I began to learn that when Jesus died on the cross, He made it possible for my sins to be forgiven. And when He rose again, He made it possible for someone like me to go to Heaven. This was an alien concept to me. All my life I was told that only strict performance of religious duties and purity of mind and body can bring you near to God. But now suddenly I came across this new teaching that there is nothing I can do to earn God's forgiveness, nothing I can do to earn a place in Heaven except through faith in Jesus.

And so I started to pray to Jesus that He would come into my life.....and He answered my prayer. Once Jesus began to live in my heart, outward change was inevitable. I couldn't bow down to idols anymore, I couldn't worship animals anymore, I couldn't visit temples anymore. And I couldn't lie to my parents anymore. It took me one whole year to tell them I had become a Christian. I was afraid that if I told them the truth, they would disown me. I wanted the best of both worlds: to follow Christ and to be accepted by my family.

So I led two separate lives. While I was living away from home, I was a Christian. And when I went back home to see my family, I became a Hindu again. But Jesus demands more and so He chose the day when I would tell them.

Hindus believe in many gods but on this particular day we celebrated the goddess Kali. She was the main goddess of our household; she had pride of place on the altar. Just like people look forward to Christmas, in our family we looked forward to Kali's day. **AND THAT WAS THE VERY DAY JESUS CHOSE FOR ME TO TELL MY PARENTS!**

As you can imagine, it ripped my family apart. There was a lot of pain, anger and division. I definitely ruined Kali's Day. The hopes and dreams of my parents had been shattered. In one moment, I went from being a precious daughter to being treated like an outsider for betraying my parents and for bringing shame and dishonour to the family.

The pain of rejection was unbearable. During that difficult period my Church were amazing, they lifted me off the floor, fed me, prayed for me and took care of my needs. In fact they did everything that a family usually does and I truly believe God gave me another family.

And Jesus didn't let me down in fact He came through for me in quite a miraculous way. With time, He helped my parents to calm down and understand that they hadn't lost their daughter to some Western religion.

Eleven years ago my Dad made a commitment to follow Jesus. Suddenly I was no longer the only believer in my family. He too stopped bowing down to idols.

In my family it was my mother who was most hurt and offended by my conversion: so much so that for ten years she was too ashamed to tell anybody. My relationship with her deteriorated. However five years ago, my mother decided to put her faith in Jesus too. It's the first time that Christians are a majority in our family!

Over the years, one particular scripture has stood out for me: Acts 16:31 *'Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved- you and your household!'* and I know that it's only a matter of time before my brothers come to know the Lord too.