



Living and Disciplining

In the Hindu World

K. VENKATESH

My name is Ventakesh and my home is India. I was brought up in a strict, high caste Hindu family, and we had our own pooja room where we had daily prayers to the Hindu gods. We maintained all the Hindu festivals and were very diligent to fulfill all the requirements of our Hindu faith and religion.

My father was a highly-placed government official and very orthodox in all his practices. He treated with disdain the religion of the Christians because of their habits of smoking, drinking and dancing. He viewed them as unclean. His overall impression of the Christianity of the

West was molded by what he saw in the Western movies, especially from America.

Because my father occasionally had to travel to America on behalf of the Indian government,

he observed the values and practices of the Americans directly. He was very impressed with the technological advances of the West but felt they were quite inferior when it came to their lifestyle and personal values. He did meet one man who was very kind to

K. Venkatesh is an international scientist with experience in both the USA and India. He is an aeronautical engineer by training and is also a very committed believer who follows Jesus.

MY FATHER WAS A HIGHLY-PLACED GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL AND VERY ORTHODOX IN ALL HIS PRACTICES. HE TREATED WITH DISDAIN THE RELIGION OF THE CHRISTIANS BECAUSE OF THEIR HABITS OF SMOKING, DRINKING AND DANCING. HE VIEWED THEM AS UNCLEAR. HIS OVERALL IMPRESSION OF THE CHRISTIANITY OF THE WEST WAS MOLDED BY WHAT HE SAW IN THE WESTERN MOVIES, ESPECIALLY FROM AMERICA.

him, and he explained that he was a Christian. But generally my father was very skeptical of Christianity.

After I completed my undergraduate studies in one of the top Institutes of Technology in India, I got a scholarship to study in America. My father was reluctant, but he agreed that I could go on the basis that I stayed away from religious cults and weird groups. I was happy with that arrangement and proceeded to start my postgraduate studies.

Upon my arrival at the university, I met a group of Christians who were very nice to me. They helped me to get furniture for my new apartment and introduced me to many of the facilities on campus. I appreciated this very much. Then they invited me to a discussion group where they talked a lot from the Bible. I felt they were trying to convert me. But I continually argued with them and that got tiresome for everyone.

Then I went on to my PhD studies in aeronautical engineering, hoping to work in one of the top research labs when I returned to India. However, at the beginning of my PhD program, tragedy struck my family. My sister's marriage had been arranged to a young man, and it was all going well for a few months. Then the young man became abusive towards my sister and began to beat her. Then he became very demanding about money as my family was quite well off. My sister wrote to me that she was very unhappy and did not know what to do. My parents were distraught and began to visit many temples and made many prayers

to the Hindu gods. I also did the same in the Hindu temple in Atlanta and prayed every day to many of the Hindu gods. But things got worse. Then my parents came to find out that the family of the young man had lied about him and his credentials and that they were really after our family wealth. My parents were distraught and could only think of divorce. But that is a very slow process in India and the other party has to agree, which seemed very unlikely.

Several of my Christian friends had continued to have discussions with me. Now I told them of my family problem and explained that I would have to go back to India as divorce would be a huge family embarrassment and my family had spent so much money on the wedding. They were humiliated and did not have very much financial resources left as they were hoping that I would get a good salary when I graduated.

My Christian friends said that they would pray for me and they continued to inquire about our family situation. Although I had not been

particularly impressed about their arguments for Christianity, I was overwhelmed with their love and interest in me with my family crisis.

I went back to India to help with the divorce proceedings of my sister, hoping to expedite the process. But it did not look very hopeful, and all the family members were very depressed, especially my mother, who wept all the time.

I decided one day to look at the New Testament that my Christian friends had given me in America and began to read through the story. It was a bit hard to follow as I had no idea about the actual story of Jesus. But I got to Matthew 7:7 and read Jesus' words, "Ask and it will be given you." I decided to try praying to Jesus. The Hindu gods had given no answers and I thought at least I can try praying to Jesus. What could I lose? So I prayed to Jesus that he would make the divorce proceed quickly.

The next day, we heard from the other party that they were ready to agree to a divorce. The following day we were able to proceed with the legalities and before long the matter had been settled. I could not believe that my simple prayer was answered so quickly. Then I began to read the New Testament with great eagerness. This person Jesus never spoke about the Christian religion but only spoke about following Him.

When I returned to the USA, I met another Hindu man who told me that he also followed Jesus. He was not a practicing Christian who went to church, but he maintained his own Hindu culture and social habits, and he loved Jesus and read the Bible and he knew it very well. He explained to me that he was a Hindu by his first birth and was proud of this heritage which was from God and showed me Acts 17:26, where God is explained as the one who determines where and when we are born. Then he explained how he had experienced a second birth, when he became one of God's children and a member of His kingdom. This second birth was not a physical birth but a spiritual birth and as God's Spirit lived in us we would gradually become very attractive people who cared for others and helped them in their troubles. He showed me John 1:12 and so I decided to believe in

Jesus. As a result I became one of His children and knew that my past was forgiven and that I had a great hope after I died.

Immediately I Skyped my sister in India and told her what was happening to me. She was also very interested as she had witnessed the answers

to all the prayers that I had made to Jesus regarding her divorce and how Jesus had answered every prayer. She too has now experienced Jesus in her life and no longer prays to the Hindu gods. The changes in her attitude have touched my mother and father, who are now showing a lot of interest.

I have since returned to India, and I am very much part of our Hindu community. I am engaged in all the activities of our family and extended family. There are many discussions about Jesus, and I am sharing the Bible with many people in our community. Because of my academic qualifications and the good job I now have, I have a very good standing in our community, and so people listen to me. I continually explain to them that I am not trying to "convert" them to Christianity but to "convert" them to Jesus as they live out their lives in the Hindu community. Now I have quite a few friends who are also following Jesus, and we meet regularly to pray together and share the Scriptures and to encourage each other. We sense that God is going to cause many people in our community to know and love Him. We are claiming the verse Isaiah 60:22 that a little one shall become a thousand and that a small one will become a mighty nation and that God will hasten all this in His time. This is already beginning to happen. f