

Narrative of the Conversion

OF
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“The Lord is gracious and full of compassion ; slow to anger, and of great mercy.”

THE above text is entirely adapted to my case. The Lord has dealt with me graciously, patiently, and mercifully. Born and brought up as I was in an idolatrous and highly superstitious, though very respectable, Brahman family in Bengal, in the district of Burdwan, I had a great obstacle to the saving knowledge of Christ, for I had from my infancy such views instilled into my mind, that when I came of age I looked upon Christians as “Mlechchhas” (*i.e.*, people who are of low origin, and are destitute of internal and external purity), and their religion as a human fabrication, got up and propagated with a view to bring down the high and respectable distinctions, maintained in societies, to their low level. I was, therefore, averse to Christianity, and spared no argument against it. I was known in my school as one of the bitterest opponents of Christianity, and when my honored teacher, Rev. R. C. Bose, M. A., received my letter from Bengal, he was astonished to find that I was going to embrace the religion for which I had shown no sympathy before him. Thank God ! who can change the stony heart, and is willing and ready to save the vilest sinner in the world. Indeed, “nothing is impossible with God.” O, how the Lord bore patiently with my obstinacy, and taking compassion on me left me not to myself to perish, but guided me by His Holy Spirit, that I might be saved. Glory be to God !

A short description of how my faith in Hinduism was shaken ; what religion in its place I tried to substitute ; what means I adopted to know the truth ; how I came to the conclusion, that Christianity is the only way appointed by God, by which salvation is attainable ;

and how the assertion of the Lord, "my grace is sufficient for thee," has been proved true in my case in acceptance of His religion, and in overcoming the trials and difficulties brought on me on that account, is given below :—

It was the teachings in the Methodist Mission High School at Shahjahanpur in North-West Provinces that convinced me thoroughly of the folly of idolatry which I clearly saw was insulting to reason and dishonoring to God, and consequently it could not have been sanctioned by Him. My honored teachers were Revs. J. David and R. C. Bose, M.A. I am greatly indebted to them for their kind instructions imparted to me with love.

Convinced of the impropriety of idolatry, I was made uneasy, and the conviction of my safety in the shelter of Hinduism being removed, I became anxious to search after the truth, but how to find it out was a question. It did not, however, take me long to find out the way. I knew how my teachers asked God for help and guidance every day before opening the school, which seemed to me reasonable and proper, and I thought that I could also adopt the same way, and that God would surely hear and help me in finding the truth. I now began to pray in private every day, and to make inquiry about the Vedic religion which I was repeatedly told by my relations and Hindu friends was a revelation from God and entirely free from idolatry. To my surprise I found, however, *first*, that although it may not teach the worship of images, it is still a system of idolatry ; for it teaches the worship of many gods and goddesses who are generally objects and phenomena of nature deified, and are sometimes even human beings exalted to high rank, such as Indra, Yama, &c. ; these gods quarrel and fight with one another, and are not ashamed of stealing, lying, deceiving, and of even committing adultery of the vilest description. *Secondly*, the hymns of the Rishis are generally addressed for worldly prosperity. The Rishis do not seem to feel the burden of sin, and consequently no fervent desire is shown to be free from it. The way of salvation from sin is not satisfactorily taught. And *thirdly*, there is no evidence to sustain the

claim that the Veds are revealed books—a chain of very great importance. Such being the Vedic religion, it is not adapted for rational beings and far less so for sinners who, feeling the burden of sin, groan under it and earnestly desire to be liberated from it.

Thus my expectation to find the truth in the Veds, the pride of my countrymen, was frustrated, and I was greatly disappointed. I asked God repeatedly whether I had come to a right conclusion, and invariably I received the answer in the affirmative. I now recoiled from searching after the truth in Christianity, being deeply prejudiced against it, although I felt often that it could only be found in the revelation of Jesus. I went on for a time, suppressing my feelings, and trying to find rest in Natural religion, striving at the same time to obey the dictates of my conscience as minutely as I possibly could. At this time Mr. Bose delivered two lectures in the City Hall at Shahjahanpur on “The Defects of Natural religion,” and on “Conscience not a safe guide of man,” and proved to my satisfaction the need of a revelation. My hesitating confidence in Natural religion and conscience was entirely rooted out, and I resolved to accept Christianity, if it could be proved to my satisfaction a revelation from God.

I now began to examine with scrutiny the arguments in favour of Christianity made every day by Mr. Bose in the class, and opposed him on every point he brought forward in support of the Christian religion, so much so that he looked upon me as a most bigoted Brahman in the entire grasp of darkness and bigotry, and called me in the class in joke “Panditjee.” But my opposition to his arguments was never made with a view to fight with him, but to find the truth. I invariably pondered over the arguments of the day at the time of my evening walk, or at any time convenient to me, and almost always his reasonings seemed satisfactory. In this way I was slowly but surely prepared for the acceptance of Christianity. I began loving Mr. Bose and my Christian class-mates, and the religion which they followed, although Mr. Bose never came to

know about it till he received my note from Bengal, acquainting him with the news of my conversion. So my real feelings were not known to Mr. Bose, but at home it was fully known that I was no more a Hindu, for I repeatedly declared by word and deed that I had not the slightest confidence in Hinduism.

Full five years' study and arguments in our Mission High School prepared me to come to the conclusion, that Christianity is the revelation given by God for the salvation of mankind through the Lord Jesus Christ. When I reached this conviction I had a short period of hesitancy about accepting the truth, for I knew that by so doing I would have to undergo a severe trial. I should have to mar my future prospects. I had hope of securing a good Government situation through the influence of my father-in-law, under whose care I was, and who was then Head Clerk in the Magistrate's office at Shahjahanpur, and afterwards Deputy Magistrate in different places, and served satisfactorily under many Magistrates who were always kind to him and glad to do him some favour. I knew that if I would embrace Christianity, he would not only withdraw his helping hand from me, but would try to add to my troubles. I was conscious that I should have to undergo the pain of expulsion from the society of all my relations and friends, and home; that I would have to cast my lot with those whom I knew not; and that people would laugh at me, treat me contemptuously, and, if opportunity afforded, would persecute me. Such fears made me hesitate to accept Christianity. I thought that it would perhaps be better to wait a few years till I would be in a good Government position, but no rest could I obtain from the fact of uncertainty of life. Sometimes the thought would come to my mind that I was quite mistaken, that Christianity was not a religion from God, and that it would be foolishness on my part to expose myself to trouble for nothing. But, I thank God, this sort of thought never got a firm hold on me.

In this state of mind I left Shahjahanpur in December 1874 for Bengal, to spend my vacation days with my relations. I stayed there about two months and a

half, and trifled away about a month in play and chit-chat with friends, giving little thought to my squandering away the precious time I had for my preparation for future life. I was awakened, and determined not to squander away my time any longer. I now devoted much of my time to the study of the Bible and prayer. In about three weeks the doubts about the truth of Christianity, which had hovered around my mind for some time, disappeared entirely, and I began to pray for strength, courage, and determination for acceptance of the truth. The gracious Lord soon prepared me to fix a date for my departure to seek baptism. But I did not know where to go, for I was not acquainted with any missionary in Bengal. I knew, however, that in Kalna, a commercial city on the river Hughlee, in the district of Burdwan, there was a Mission High School; and as the station was only a few miles off from my residence, I concluded that I would go there, where I thought I would surely meet with a missionary. The date fixed was drawing nigh, and my mind began to be greatly troubled. Satan tried to retain me as his prey, but through the grace of God I overcame him. I started on the morning of the fixed day for Kalna, my relations knowing nothing about my intentions. Now came the heaviest trial for me to undergo. Again and again I turned myself to have a last look at the place I was leaving for ever. The thought of my leaving all my relations, friends, community and future prospects, in a word, the world itself, came to me with a power quite unexperienced before, and was very hard to resist. Often and often I felt a strong impulse to return, but I took courage and continued praying for grace. After about a mile's walk through a solitary footpath, I found I could no longer press forward, so I stood still and began to consider. In a moment I received courage to press on, and walked a mile more. Satan seemed defeated, but lo! he attacked me this time so severely, that I was about to return, I turned backward a few steps, but soon halted, and resumed my journey, but my feet seemed to give way. I sat down and wept, and prayed earnestly for strength. My

prayer was heard. I was so empowered now from on high that Satan was thoroughly vanquished, and I cheerfully left behind me the world with its pleasures; rejoicing in the salvation I obtained through the Lord Jesus Christ, and feeling secure under His protection. It was, I felt, as surely as I live, the sustaining grace of God that brought me out of the land of Egypt,—the place of bondage and slavery. The remaining distance, over a mile, I walked with a strength and joy peculiarly felt, and reached the Mission house. I sent word to Babu, now Rev. B. N. Day who had sacrificed a great deal for Christ, and the story of whose conversion is very interesting and stimulating. He was then placed as superintendent over the boys' and girls' schools, and general mission work at Kalna by the Free Church of Scotland. Mr. Day received me very kindly and cordially, and was glad to hear that my instructor was Mr. Bose, who was long ago one of his pupils in the Free Church Institution in Calcutta. I went for a bath in the river Hughlee, flowing close by his house. I soon reached the bank of the river, took and tore off my "janau" (the sacred Brahmanical thread), threw it into the bushes growing on the bank of the river, and had a refreshing bath, no more with the delusion of having my sins washed away by the stream of the river. On return I entered the dining-room and found a tall, black, and bearded man waiting to serve at the table. I at once made out that he was a Mohamedan, and the food, although delicious, I had to press down my throat; but when the dinner was served, I was delighted to find lobsters in my plate, and, as true Bengali, seemed to forget about the person who had cooked them. My kind host entertained me for two days, and as he was then a lay missionary, sent me to Mohanad, a town in the district of Burdwan, occupied by the Free Church of Scotland. Here I found Rev. J. D. Bhattacharjee, a Brahman convert. He has been richly blessed by the Lord in the work committed to him. He was glad to hear that I was a pupil of Mr. Bose whose teacher he was in the Free Church Institution in Calcutta. He received me kindly, but said to me plainly that he would

not baptize me until, after keeping me on trial, it might be for six months, he would be convinced of my sincerity, and that I was at liberty to submit to his proposal or go wherever I pleased. This indifferent way of reception at a time when I had no friend in the world to sympathize with me, made me greatly disheartened, but I readily submitted to his proposal.

A few days after my stay at Mohanad I informed my relations and Mr. Bose of my intentions, and soon after I found my dear aunt in the Mission compound. Sad and worn out as if bereaved of a dearly beloved object, she tried to win me not by arguments but by tears, and the following personal afflictions :—She took her seat under a tree beside the public road passing by the Mission compound, exposed herself to the weather, and would not accept any food. With the greatest of difficulty I succeeded in persuading her to take some food, and sleep under a thatch, put up by a petty shopkeeper on one of the sides of the road, for she would not stay in the dwelling of a Christian. In this condition she spent fully two days, and left the place crying bitterly. A few days after she came again, bringing my uncle with her, and did exactly as she had done before. Again and again she came, and her affection was so strong that she did not stop coming even after my receiving baptism. I tried my best that she might accompany me, but she very reasonably replied that she would be too glad to do so if she could see as clearly the defects in the religion of her forefathers and know Christianity as well as I did.

As soon as my letter reached my father-in-law at Shahjahanpur, he sent me a telegram, requesting me to postpone accepting baptism till I would hear from him. He thought of starting for Mohanad at once, but his relations and friends advised him not to do so, for as he had sometime before an attack of melancholy, they feared that he might have had another attack of it if he had failed to prevail on me, and I thanked God he did not come. I was very sorry to hear afterwards that his mind was in a very disordered state when he came to know from me the news of my baptism. His letter fol-

lowed the telegram immediately, which was full of love and entreaty. I answered him as affectionately as I could, communicating the news of my accepting baptism. An answer full of cursing and abuse came, such as I had never expected from him, strictly forbidding me to hold any further communication with him. He has since kept himself entirely aloof from me.

Mr. Bose wrote me a very encouraging and kind letter, and held regular correspondence with Mr. Bhattacharjee and me. Mr. Bhattacharjee wrote to Rev. Mr. Buck, then Principal of the Mission High School at Shahjahanpur, asking his permission to send me to him for baptism as I was the fruit of his labour : but Mr. Buck replied to him that he would look upon my baptism administered by Mr. Bhattacharjee as administered by himself. So I was baptized by Mr. Bhattacharjee in April 1875, in the twenty-fifth year of my age. Rev. Mr. Parker (then and now) our Presiding Elder, Mr. Buck and Mr. Bose consulted together, and thought it best to send for me, and I came back to Shahjahanpur in June 1875, not to live again under the roof of my dear father-in-law, but under the roof of my affectionate teacher Mr. Bose, to whom and Messrs. Parker and Buck I am indebted for ever for their very kind treatment. I received an appointment in our Mission High School, and have since been in mission service.

When I was to leave Mohanad and start for Shahjahanpur, I went to say good-bye to some of my relatives and friends in Bengal. I was surprised to find sincere tokens of affection shown me by them. One of my relations sat by me and wept like a child, and a neighbour of mine did exactly in the same way. It was beyond my expectation to find them so doing. And not only so but nearly all the influential members of my community unanimously agreed to take me back, on condition of my denial of the fact of my baptism. They knew very well that I had lived and eaten with the Christians, and yet they, although very bigoted Brahmans, were ready to break their caste, simply because they did not like to lose me from their community. Some of them caught hold of me, threw the *janau* (Brah-

manical thread) on my shoulder, and folding their hands entreated me not to break it. They kept on persuading me for two days with very kind and affectionate expressions to renounce Christianity and come back to them ; but when they found me too hard to be won, they treated me with scorn and left me. Here I had to undergo another heavy trial, but I thank God I was all along as firm as a rock through His sustaining grace

I cannot conclude this my humble narrative without mentioning how God in His providence has taken care of me and blessed me abundantly with temporal as well as spiritual blessings. I left all that were dear to me for Christ, and He has never left me in want. He has been richly supplying me with all the necessaries of life. How true is His word, "But seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." And above all He has blessed me richly with spiritual blessings. There was a time when I was in darkness and in the valley of the shadow of death, being a prey of sin, Satan, and selfishness; when my heart was full of evil, my mind uneasy, and the thought of death and of judgment was appalling, having no hope for future felicity, but rather apprehension for eternal condemnation, being at constant rebellion with God. But, now I thank God, I have been brought to light and life, have been set at liberty by Christ from the bondage and dominion of sin and Satan, and have received a clean heart and the sweet assurance of all my sins being forgiven. No more I look upon death as an object of dread, but I consider him a friend who would take me to my Father and to eternal felicity in heaven. No more I am afraid of judgment, dear Christ being my righteousness. I am no longer in a state of rebellion against God, but have been reconciled to Him; my selfishness and self have been crucified with Christ, and I live, not to do my will, but to do the will of my Father, who showed His love to me by giving His dearly beloved Son for my salvation. In a word, I am through the grace of God enjoying heaven on earth. How true I find in my experience

the word of my Saviour, "Verily I say unto you, there is no man that hath left houses or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting." Praise, and honor, and glory be to Him with the Father and the Holy Sprit for ever and ever ! Amen.

