
My Memories About Indian Culture & Religion

It is impossible not to be awestruck by India. It is an extraordinary country full of rich cultures and diverse landscapes. Perhaps the most defining trait of India is its religion. I spent my childhood and half of my teenage years in a Hindu temple in village called Pura. It is full azure waterfalls that flow into the ocean and around the lush green mountains, dotted with tiny flowers in a riot of brilliant colors and swaying trees coming alive from the sounds gaily chirping birds. The Hindu temple that I resided was right beside the ocean. In my freetime I would wander along its shores in search of sea shells. Nature became my sole companion.

My parents abandoned me at the temple when I was just an infant. I will always wonder why that they didn't want me. I was angry that the gods would allow this to happen to me. Sometimes, I felt like a empty void wandering aimlessly through life. When I tried to convince myself that I wasn't alone my inner voice of reason, failed to agree. "Amal, I need you to go to the market. We need food for the afternoon meal," Preena said. "Okay, I guess we can make curry," I answered. "You seem quieter than usual," Preena said abruptly. "Recently, I have been feeling restless and empty," I said. "You should pray to the gods for peace," Preena replied.

I have many fond memories of the village marketplace. The sharp aroma of exotic spices filled the air. The sounds of buyers and sellers haggling was deafening. Everywhere that the eye could see there were brilliant colors and a dizzying display of merchants selling their wares. Cheerful, carefree children ran through the crowded streets and neighbors greeted one another. The fire in the sky was dying as darkness fell over Pura. The sunset left its mark on the sky. The rain started to hit the ground like thousands of horses' hooves. The turbulent, tropical storm brought with it howling winds and roaring thunder as I looked up at the raging skies in alarm. The rain from the sky started to violently cleanse the earth. I knew that nothing could erase the hole in my heart. As I laid awake on my mat I felt like my fears and doubts about myself were about to swallow me whole. I started to dose off towards the land of dreams and then suddenly a bright light flashed before my eyes.

All of sudden, a man with a face that shown like the sun appeared before me. My heart came to a halt. "Amal, I am a Good Shepherd. I can satisfy the desire in your heart for a family," Jesus said. "Then why did you let my parents leave here at the temple? They could have been my family. Instead you let them throw me away like a piece of garbage," I shouted. "I understand why you are bitter and angry. You can give your heaviness to me. My burden is easy and my yoke is light. You don't have to let your past define you," Jesus answered. "How are you so kind? I asked in a calmer tone. I thought to myself, "There is something different about Him." "I delight in showing mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgement. I slow to anger and abounding in love," Jesus said. The radiant man vanished into the darkness.

I was deeply troubled by the words that He had spoken to me. I didn't know whether to believe him or not. I had not ever met a God that wanted a relationship with me. "Say something, say anything. Why can't you speak? Where is your power?" I wondered out loud. The face of Shiva stared back at me, her face was an eerie immovable block of clay. Shiva did not utter a word back to me. It finally occurred to me that she has ears but cannot hear, a mouth but she cannot

she speak, hands but she cannot touch and eyes but she cannot see. He was different. There was something about his eyes. His eyes were like flames of fire. I was aware that He saw everything about me and yet I was completely at peace. Somehow he could fill the ache in my heart for a place to belong. His voice spoke louder than my all of my insecurities ever could. I don't ever remember a time in my life that I have ever felt like I belonged somewhere.

Many days later I decided to take a walk into the village in search of a missionary. I had overheard the temple priests talking about these missionaries who talked about a God similar to the Man I had encountered. "Subha Dina! Good afternoon! My name is Amal," I said. "Greetings Amal, what can I do for you on this fine afternoon? Reverend Arthur said. "I want to know more about this God that you speak about," I answered. I shared how I had encountered this radiant man whose face shown like the sun. "Well Amal, the Man whom you have encountered is Jesus. He offers eternal life to anyone who believes in Him. Would you like to accept His gift of eternal life?" Reverend Arthur said. It is simple, I believe. It may have seemed like the obvious choice, but I still wrestled with my decision. It is the best decision that I have ever made. I am not on my own. I am not abandoned I have a future and hope. I went to church for the first time yesterday. It moved my heart to see so many believers worshipping my Lord. I have a spiritual family now.

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