

***Q&A: A man attacked for being a pastor***

*Kuldeep\* didn't see the man with the axe, but sensed his presence just before the attacker struck his first blow. Thankfully, Kuldeep survived the assault on his life. But he still says, today: Safe? I'm not safe. This man could attack me again any day. It's all in God's hands.*

***You grew up in a Hindu family. Could you describe how you became a Christian?***

I've been a Christian for more than 30 years. After I became ill, I tried everything to heal me. I come from an important Hindu family. My father was a village chief. During every festivity, we were always the first ones to perform the rituals.

***Could you explain those rituals to us?***

Yes. We sacrificed a lot of animals to the gods and also to some goddesses. We did these things to appease the gods, so we'd have a good harvest.

***What happens if you don't sacrifice?***

There won't be any rain, the fields stay dry, and people die.

***That's very serious. We understand you performed Hindu rituals to heal yourself. Is that correct?***

Yes, but nothing worked. Then someone told me, "You should pray to Jesus and you will be healed." After I had heard that, I went to a nearby pastor. He prayed for me. The moment he began to pray, I felt prickly all over my body. It wasn't a nice feeling and I left the church. I didn't go again, but the pastor came to visit sometimes. Every time he did, I felt prickly and I warned him not to come again.

I still wasn't healed and went to more temples to offer more gifts. I also went to people who performed black magic and participated in their rituals. The pain never left me. I stopped my job as a worker in a mill and worked as a rikshaw driver for some time. But my body wasn't in a good condition.

***Did you get healed eventually?***

Every day on my way back to work, I passed the pastor. And every day he insisted I came to him so he could pray for me. I refused. But because nothing worked, I became very angry. I stopped believing in all gods. Then one day, the pastor called me again and I decided to give his God one more chance. The pastor told me to get rid of all my idols and come back to his church. I did what he asked. The pastor anointed me with oil, prayed for me and I was finally healed. I felt very light. I wanted to read the Bible and to pray.

***And now, more than 30 years later, you've become a pastor ... and you've been attacked because of it.***

Yes, I'm now a pastor and an evangelist. Of course, I knew there was resistance against my ministry. "You have converted [Hindus]!" [Hindu radicals] say, or "You are against our gods!" [The day I was attacked] seemed an ordinary day like all others. I came home and asked my wife to boil some milk. Then I went outside in the dark and stood on the veranda. I was a little sleepy, but I still wanted to take

a few minutes to pray and praise God. So, I closed my eyes. That's when I felt someone walking by. I instinctively raised my hands. That's when the axe struck me the first time. In total, he hit me six times. My nerves in my hands were damaged and several bones were broken. After I screamed, some villagers ran towards my house. They thought I had been bitten by a snake. That's when the man left. But I had lost a lot of blood and was unconscious. After I was brought to the hospital, the doctors gave me 12 packs of blood. I barely survived.

***What happened after the attack?***

We called someone who was a partner of Open Doors. He came as soon as he could. Because of my injuries, I couldn't work and the other Christians are too poor to care for me and my family as well. He came to visit me in the hospital—he was the only one who came—and provided us with groceries. He also prayed with me.

***How is your wife? Was she afraid, or perhaps she is still afraid?***

Yes, she was very scared and she still is scared. Just after the attack, people didn't think I would survive. But I was able to go to a better hospital and I didn't die. Instead I can continue to testify what God did for me. But I'm not safe. My wife knows that. She still sends me to preach, however. This is what we live for.

***Were you angry with God that He allowed this to happen to you?***

Not angry with God, but very angry with that man. He was arrested but is out on bail. There are times that I would like to take revenge.

***Does that mean you have forgiven him?***

Yes, I have forgiven him. But as I said, I'm still not safe. What if he attacks again? It's all in God's hands.

***You have been a believer for over 30 years. How has India changed? Could this attack have happened in the 1980s?***

No, India has certainly changed a lot. You see, people think that Christ is a religion, but He's not a religion. He is the way to eternal life. I've been bought for life. But Hindus think we try to convert them to a different system. That's not true. We want them to believe in and follow the Person.

***So Hindus are afraid of being converted. Are they more afraid now than compared to 30 years ago?***

Yes. That's why persecution is rising in India. Hindus believe that Americans come to India, offer money and convert people to Christianity. It's a tactic to dominate the world, they think.

*\*pseudonym used to maintain security*