

# From Hinduism to Christ

*Ravi and Neeta Pasupuleti*



What Paul said of the Thessalonian Christians sums up the testimony of Ravi Pasupuleti, an Indian Christian working for Christ among his own people in his home town of Visag in southeastern India: “Ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God” (1 Thessalonians 1:9).

Ravi was born in 1968 into a typical Hindu family. His parents were both medical doctors, so from his earliest years he knew that they had high academic expectations of him. Like many Hindu parents, they did not burden him with much religious training. Ravi grew up worshipping Hindu idols but found that there was little connection between Hindu worship and real life. As a Hindu he recalls that he had “no absolute morality and was without a true fear of God and love of neighbour.” Hinduism taught him that after this life he would be reincarnated and that to have any chance of coming back as a decent human being he would have to be perfect in his present existence. Since he knew he was far from perfect, he felt only hopelessness at the thought of a future life.

If Ravi’s religious education received scant attention, the same was not true of his secular schooling. His parents expected the best from him, and he applied himself to his studies with evident success. While at school he developed a passion for many extra-curricular activities. First among these was cricket, a game fanatically supported by vast numbers of Indians. With many other students he also felt a “fatal attraction” for “movies filled with violence, stupid romances, meaningless duets [song and dance routines], and other such rubbish.”

In due course Ravi obtained a bachelor’s degree in mechanical engineering. Then he set his sights on emigrating to the United States. “America is a dream place for a budding professional, a place where there is money and glitter. The green card

[which grants permanent resident status] is like a passport to heaven to a young person in India. So naturally I went to America to obtain a master's degree in computer science with the intention of settling there after my studies."

Ravi had very definite plans for his life as he contemplated life in the United States, but the Lord had other plans for him. Ravi went to America seeking a better life; the Lord met him there and gave him eternal life. On his arrival in America in 1991 a Christian family befriended him and shared with him many Bible truths, things he had never heard before. They also showed him their faith in action by the love, joy, peace, and unity they enjoyed even as they faced life's problems. A year later Ravi transferred to a different college and had to move to

took classes from Dr. Michael Barrett, the assistant minister at Faith Free Presbyterian Church. Greatly impressed by Dr. Barrett, he decided to visit the church. What he heard there blessed his soul. "God came down in a powerful way and touched me with the preaching of the Bible. Week after week I continued to go there and after about a year I became a communicant member. Through the ministry at Faith I have come to know more of Christ and the benefits I have in Him. There I learned of the Reformers and their zeal for God and there God's word became an inspiration in my life." That inspiration was very evident in Ravi's burden for souls, particularly in his involvement in the church's outreach ministry in the poorest section of Greenville.

the Presbytery received him as a Free Presbyterian missionary and licensed him as a missionary pastor.

As he returned to India in 1998, Ravi faced the important question of how to find a Christian wife who would stand with him in his work. Remaining single in his culture would be a scandal and a hindrance, but finding a suitable wife in the tiny minority of Bible-believing Christians in India would not be easy. The Lord would have to make His will known very clearly. So Ravi prayed and his Christian friends in America prayed with him, and the Lord did make His will known. Not long after his return to India Ravi met and married his wife, Neeta.

Unlike Ravi, Neeta was reared in a Christian home. She learned the stories of Scripture but was concerned to know that

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another city. There again the Lord brought him face to face with the gospel. Two Christian men began to visit his apartment every Thursday. They shared more Bible truths with him and encouraged him to continue reading the Scriptures. One night in his reading Ravi was confronted with the question, "What shall I do with Jesus?" That night God gave him the willingness to trust Christ. Then and there he became a Christian.

At once Ravi was a new creature. The most evident changes were that the Lord gave him a new peace and sense of purpose and a power he had never before known to overcome sin. Hungry for more Bible knowledge, Ravi enrolled at Bob Jones University in Greenville, South Carolina, in 1994 to study for a Master of Arts degree in Bible. There he

Ravi had always intended to remain in the United States and pursue a career there. His computer skills guaranteed him a lucrative position, but as he neared the end of his period of study at Bob Jones, he found that the Lord was burdening his heart for missionary work in his homeland. As he struggled with the decision, God spoke to him from 2 Corinthians 5:14–21 and Mark 8. The love of Christ overcame him, and, in his words, "The struggle was resolved and I decided that I must obey God's call and be His representative in India."

The elders of the church in Greenville recommended Ravi to the Presbytery for work in India. On his way back to his homeland he spent some time in Northern Ireland, where

they were not just stories but truth. As a little girl she had difficulty understanding the message of Christ's substitutionary death until her aunt, a children's mission worker, was able to explain the gospel to her in terms she immediately grasped. The day she did so, both Neeta and her sister received Christ as their Saviour. When she was just eleven years old Neeta heard a message on "wasted years," years not spent in serving Christ, and was lastingly impressed. From that time she had a desire to make her life count for Christ. Later, when she was considering how best she could serve the Lord, an evangelist advised her to study hard and qualify for a career so that she could use her position to witness for Christ. Neeta took the advice and in due course qualified as an orthodontist.

In India, marriages are arranged between families, and that was the case with the marriage of Ravi and Neeta. After the preparatory steps, the families met at a hotel for a formal breakfast. Only then were Ravi and Neeta permitted to talk together and try to get to know each other. They shared their testimonies and their views on spiritual matters. Then they parted to lay the matter before the Lord. Believing it to be His will, they decided to marry.

Ravi and Neeta are now serving Christ together, sharing a common burden. Neeta's joy is evident in her testimony: "I have a wonderful husband, kind, understanding, and caring. He is a living miracle . . . and a true man of God. Our zeal and passion to serve God match well."

That service is not easy. Recently India has seen a lot of Hindu fanaticism directed against converts to Christianity. Extremist Hindus allege that Christian preachers bribe people to convert by giving them handouts. Ravi says, "The extremists represent Christian love and service—kindness and mercy shown to the poor and down trodden—as allurements to become Christians. The extremists don't understand that true conversion is the work of God through the preaching of the Bible and [that] they can do nothing about it. And they don't realize that *they* should be giving out goodies also to desperately needy people instead of attacking those who are trying to be good Samaritans to them."

As a result of other fanatical Hindu charges against Christian workers Ravi has decided not to accept Western financial aid for himself or his ministry.

He explains: "There is a need for Christian witnesses in this country. I desired to be one. In India many believe that Christian work exists only because of money that comes from the West. I have high regard for Western



One of the families that attend Ravi's church on Sunday.

Christian support for the gospel work, but the Devil is using some fanatical Hindus to take advantage of this support. These fanatics charge that their 'culture' and 'values' are being wiped out by Western money. It is true that many so-called preachers in India

are getting rich with Western money rather than using it for the furtherance of the gospel. In the light of all this my personal burden is that Indian work should plead with God to work without Western church support."

To meet their needs and those of their ministry Ravi and Neeta are seeking to support themselves. They have just completed a new clinic for Neeta to practice her dentistry, and Ravi works as a computer programmer. They carry on a soul-winning ministry despite all opposition. A number of souls have been saved, including a Roman Catholic family and some members of Ravi's extended family. Ravi is involved in personal evangelism, in Bible studies among the students in colleges, and in home Bible studies and prayer meetings. He and Neeta are praying that the Lord will soon build a local church. Currently, six to seven people gather in their home each Sunday morning to worship together and study God's word, and Neeta has four children in her Sunday school class.

Ravi and Neeta request nothing but prayer for their ministry. Despite their determination to support themselves by their own labours, they still hear the charge that they are in the business of converting people for money. In India that kind of slander can very easily ignite violence. Ravi does not see that danger as a reason to back off his evangelistic labours. He writes, "Pray that I might know God's will as how to move forward. The current persecution of the church should propel the cause of Christ in India."

Fired by a sense of God's call, motivated by the reality of His love, and upheld by the might of His power, Ravi and Neeta will prove that the Lord still blesses the faithful preaching of His word, despite all that Satan does to hinder it. ■