

# **Worship songs brought a Buddhist monk to Christ**

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NEPAL (BP)—He grew up feeling unsettled in his destiny. As the firstborn son in his family, he thought he would have to follow in his father's footsteps and become a Buddhist monk.

But music intervened into this cultural tradition that should have dictated his future.

## **'There was no peace'**

The former Buddhist monk, now a Christian pastor, recounted his past and the persistent fear that once plagued him: He had been afraid of dying.

"There was no peace. There was no meaning in life," he said in an interview in Nepal. "It compelled me to ask the question: 'What am I here for? And how long? And what happens after I leave this earth?'"

He didn't have answers, so he turned to local religious leaders for guidance. When he voiced his concerns, Buddhist monks tried to assuage his fears by telling him that it was natural to go through storms.

"You may have to go through lonely places," they counseled. "You may have to go a very dangerous way. But do not be afraid. Just keep continuing. Carry on your journey."

But he wasn't buying into the "keep calm and carry on" mantra. Buddhist teaching says some people are born into suffering, live in suffering and die in suffering. This way of understanding existence seemed hopeless to him. What if his destiny were defined by continual suffering?

# **Christian music touched a heart**

The turning point in his story happened deep in the jungle when he went for a walk with a friend. As they walked, his friend starting singing and asked him to close his eyes and listen to the words.

He thought it a bit strange, but he obliged.

As he listened, a sense of peace overcame him. He wondered if the songs themselves brought peace, so he began spending more time with his friend and listening to him sing. Along the way, his friend shared the gospel while explaining the meaning behind the songs. His friend told him if he received Jesus as his Savior, he'd have freedom—spiritual peace and eternal security.

“Thinking nothing about my family or any other thing, I just decided to follow Jesus,” he said. “This is what I’m looking for. This is what I need. So, I accepted the Lord as my personal Savior.”

A smile spread across his face as he spoke of his transformation.

“My heart filled with joy I never experienced before,” he said. “I was so delighted. I forgot all of my questions and all my fears, everything. My whole life was completely changed then.”

## **Peace but not freedom from persecution**

He had a premonition that trouble was ahead, but it didn't keep him from sharing the message behind the Christian worship songs with others.

While believing in Jesus gave him spiritual peace with God, it didn't shield him from persecution—quite the opposite. Almost immediately, his family

began persecuting him for turning his back on Buddhism.

His entire village turned against him. Several of his uncles were witch doctors, and they tried casting spells on him. He had to flee and was forced to wander. Eventually, when he returned home, he was arrested and held five days. His father convinced the local authorities he could make a monk out of him.

Forcefully, they carried out the rituals to make him a monk in front of the community. He was handcuffed. He was threatened. He faced humiliation and danger, but he trusted nothing could separate him from Jesus.

## **Found faithful**

He remained faithful despite those days of painful trials. He went on to plant churches, and now he is pastor of a church where music is an integral part of the worship services. In his church, worship songs continue to bring people to a closer understanding of Jesus, just like they did for him.

Music has a way of weaving itself into the fabric of people's memories, into their present-day realities and into their hopes for the future. While Christian may struggle to remember a Bible verse they memorized, song lyrics seem to cement themselves into our long-term consciousness.

Many followers of Christ remember the songs they began singing as children in church, the songs that encouraged them during dark days in their lives, and the songs that were symbolic of God's faithfulness through difficult seasons.

And, for one former Buddhist monk turned Christian pastor, the songs he plays give persecuted believers the courage to remain strong in their faith.