

SUSHIL KUMAR SHARMA, EX-HINDU PRIEST, INDIA

Rating: 4.4

Description: A Hindu priest's journey to Islam.

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Returning to his room after praying the Isha prayer^[1], Abdur Rahman, 42, an Indian national, sits down with a pen and a mind full of thoughts. He is writing the story of his life, "Pandit bane Musalmaan" (Hindu priest becomes Muslim) in his mother tongue, Hindi.

He works as a storekeeper in Saudi Binladin BTAT Construction Company at the King Abdul Aziz Endowment Project opposite to the Grand Mosque.

Before coming to Jeddah (May12, 2002) and accepting Islam, Abdur Rahman was known as Sushil Kumar Sharma. His hometown is Amadapur, a small village in the north Indian state of Haryana. He was born in an orthodox Hindu family who were privileged with conducting religious rituals in the village's temple.

While staying in the company's accommodation in Jeddah, a colleague of his gave him some Islamic books in Hindi. He was then transferred to Riyadh to work for a project at Princess Noura University for Women.

"It was at the company's housing camp that I met a number of Muslims from India and Pakistan who explained me the religion of Islam," said Abdur Rahman.

"Among them was one of my closest friends, Saleem who hailed from Rajasthan (a northwestern state of India). Both of us shared the same room. During leisure time he narrated the stories of Prophets of Islam and read out Hadeeth (sayings of Prophet Muhammad, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him).

"My heart trembled. I began to question myself. What would happen to me after death? Will my sins put me in the Hellfire forever? I was afraid of punishment in the grave for the sinners and non-believers," he recalled.

"I began to spend sleepless nights. I knew it was time for me to embrace Islam and become a true follower of Prophet Muhammad, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him. At last my lifelong search for truth ended here.

“The next day morning I revealed my intention to embrace Islam to my friend Saleem and other colleagues in the camp. There was jubilation in the company. Everyone was happy, they congratulated and hugged me.

“It was also the system of universal brotherhood with no difference of caste, color, creed or race that attracted me towards Islam,” Abdur Rahman said.

The following day a meeting with the members of the Cooperative Office for Call and Guidance in Al-Batha, Riyadh, was arranged. The Imam of the camp’s mosque asked him to say the “Shahada” (i.e. the Testimony of Faith).

“I recited La ilaha illAllah Muhammad-ur-Rasool Allah wholeheartedly, accepting Allah as my Lord and Muhammad as His Messenger. The Imam suggested me to change my name to Abdur Rahman, which I readily accepted.”

Soon, Abdur Rahman was transferred to Bahra, a town located near the Makkah-Jeddah highway. “The project engineer there was very pleased to know I had embraced Islam. He was very kind towards me and extended all help and cooperation,” Abdur Rahman said.

“But I wanted to be closer to God. I prayed to God to transfer me to Makkah. My prayers were answered and I was transferred to the project I’m working on currently which is located in close proximity of the Grand Mosque.”

His main concern now is his family back home.

“I now have a big task before me: To take the message of Islam to my family members.” Abdur Rahman has a wife and two sons, a seven year old and a sixteen year old.

“I have told them on phone that I have accepted the religion of Islam and have become a Muslim. At first they did not believe me. My wife told me she would decide only when I return to India on vacation. Everyday I am making Du’a (supplicating God) and pleading to God to guide them to the Right Path and soften their hearts to accept Islam,” said Abdur Rahman with tears in his eyes.

“I may also face lots of opposition from relatives, friends and co-villagers. But I am determined to face them. I am confident that God will help me,” he added.

Abdur Rahman also had some words of advice for everyone else.

“I would like to convey the message to all non-Muslims of the world to accept Islam and be successful in this life and in the Hereafter. It also saddens me to see so many Muslims not following the religion of Islam as preached by our Prophet. I appeal to them to stop imitating other people.”

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