

A MEMORABLE MIRACLE IN MY LIFE

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This testimony is about an incident that happened during the early years of my life in America. Today is Saturday, November 16, 2013, but my memory is flashing back forty-one years to the month of December 1972. Even though I do not exactly remember all the specific details surrounding this miraculous incident, I will narrate it as completely as possible, providing some background information of my life during that period.

I was a twenty-three year old student pursuing a Master's degree in English literature at the main campus of Arkansas State University, Jonesboro, USA, having received my Bachelor's Degree in the same field from Kerala University (Catholicate College, Pathanamthitta) in 1970. I had a part-time book-shelving job in the library on campus, working fifteen hours per week. My monthly income was 70 dollars. After separating seven dollars (tithe) for the work of God, I was left with only 63 dollars to pay for my room rent, academic fees, food, clothes, books, stationery supplies, and all other expenses.

Due to the scarcity of finances, during those months I managed with only a couple of pants and shirts. I clearly remember wearing my trousers to classes several weeks without a belt because I did not even have the extra fifty cents needed to buy a belt. My shoes were also completely worn out with holes in the soles. It was an Iranian student who cut my hair to help me save the two dollars needed to get a haircut at the barbershop. In return I cut his hair too, without charging any labor fees. The campus dining halls were closed during holidays, especially for three weeks during Christmas break, and I survived those holidays eating plain bread, bananas, and chips. There was no cooking facility in the dormitory. I had no money to eat in a restaurant.

When the Fall (Winter) semester started in August (1972), I had some savings in the bank earned from my full time job in the summer

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holidays from May 15-August 15. However, by the middle of the semester, I had used up all my savings for different educational expenses. This was the most financially difficult period in my life.

For me, this financial stringency was something new. When I was in India attending college at Pandalam and Pathanamthitta, my father, a well-to-do rubber dealer, regularly sent me a money-order at the beginning of every month to cover all my educational expenses, including my lodging or hostel fees which covered the breakfast, two meals a day, and a 4 o'clock snack. He used to send a little extra money, which I used to buy extra snacks from the coffee shop near the college. As normal for most growing youngsters, I had such a big appetite and quick digestion during those teenage years that I could eat an elephant and still feel hungry in a couple of hours.

However, during the first three years of my campus life in America, I did not have the money to buy any extra snacks, even though I studied until midnight regularly. I ate supper at the university dining hall, which regularly closed at 6 pm. Studying late in the nights, I always got hungry around nine o'clock, my old appetite still in full force. Many students in the dormitory used to take a break regularly from their studies around nine o'clock in the night and would get hamburgers and other snacks with coffee from the vending machines. It was an eight-story dormitory which housed approximately five hundred students. The smell of coffee and hamburgers being warmed up in the microwave ovens used to fill the hallways. My mouth would water (salivate) and my empty stomach would growl, but I had no money to approach a vending machine. So I would step out to the hallway, fill my empty stomach with fresh tap water, and start back for another three hours of studying.

Now I do not consider this a big sacrifice when I think of millions in the world who cannot afford even a single meal a day. However, my belly in those days did not grasp all such Gandhian philosophy on being content with what we have. Besides, studying hard consumed a lot of calories and energy. All the stress related to loading, unloading, and shelving books in the library, in addition to the tension of writing research papers and taking monthly exams for almost every course caused my body (and brain) to consume extra energy, the stomach demanding more food.

The Fall (Winter) semester continued like this from August to December - financially struggling, but still moving forward. The University closed for the Christmas holidays by the end of the first week

of December. To start back to the new semester in January, I needed five hundred dollars in advance payment for tuition fees and boarding. An additional amount (close to 3,000 dollars) was needed later in the semester to pay for the remaining portion of tuition fees and other educational expenses.

Unfortunately, I did not even have fifty dollars. I didn't personally know any Keralites in the whole state of Arkansas other than my uncle (mother's first cousin) who was about 200 miles away. He was a philosophy professor, having only an average salary. Further, I did not want to depend on him financially, having already borrowed money from him for emergency needs several times in previous months. Also, my uncle did not have much money to spare, having to rent a bigger house to accommodate his wife and daughter, who had joined him in America just a few months back in 1972. Above all, my dignity did not allow me to approach anyone (including relatives) for finances repeatedly.

In those days, scholarships and loans were not easily available for foreign students at the University. If my memory is correct, there were six thousand students on that campus, about two dozen from Asian countries. The spring semester registration had already started in the first week of January (1973), and I had no cash in hand. My education was put on hold - my hopes and ambitions almost crushed. I couldn't take off for a semester because, according to the immigration rules, foreigners on student visa would be deported if they were not registered every semester in an accredited institution. I thought of temporarily stopping my education for a few months in order to work full time and save some money for the following semester. However, the immigration rules allow full time work only in the summer months (May to August). If I broke this rule, that could become another reason for the cancellation of my visa, termination of my education, and immediate deportation from America.

I didn't even think of approaching my local church at Jonesboro for financial assistance. I regularly attended Sunday worship at the Church of God, a Pentecostal denomination with headquarters in Cleveland, Tennessee. (I was born and brought up in the same denomination in India, the local church in our village having started by my father in our house in 1952 when I was only three years old). The church I attended in Jonesboro was a small church with less than fifty members, ninety percent belonging to the lower middle class based on

their income level. The pastor himself had only a moderate salary from the church, and his wife was a student at the University with only a part-time job on campus. I had no human sources to turn to.

I was on my knees from the second week of December to the first week of January, praying and crying out to God several hours day and night, seeking divine intervention, so I could continue my education. I also spent the Christmas holidays writing Christian articles and preparing a few chapters of my first Malayalam book, ZASTRAVUM BIBILUM (SCIENCE AND THE BIBLE), refuting arguments advanced by the atheistic organizations of India. Fortunately, foreign students were allowed to stay in the dormitory during Christmas holidays.

In spite of my earnest prayers day and night, I did not feel that God was moving on my behalf. I had never felt dejected and hopeless like that before. Classes were just about to begin in one week by the second week in January. I did not register for classes because I did not even have a fraction of the amount needed to enroll in any course.

One morning, someone from the dormitory Director's office came to my room on the seventh floor. He informed me that the Director had received a phone call from the Office of the Registrar asking me to contact the office immediately. I did not have a phone in my room because I could not afford it. As far as I remember, I was the only student without phone service in the room. The telephone cables were there on the wall, but they were not hooked up and activated, as I did not have the money to pay the initial activation charges and regular monthly service payments.

Without delay, I went to the Registrar's office. The administrator (lady) in charge of the Registrar's office handed to me a sheet of paper with a name and a telephone number. This was what she told me: "This morning, Rev. Curt Tull, Senior Pastor of the Church of the Disciples of Christ in the city, called this office. He requested me to find an Asian or Indian professor or graduate student or post-graduate student or undergraduate student on this campus who could speak about the religions of Asia for a seminar arranged for the Men's Club in his church."

Indeed, at that time, there was an Indian professor at the university who was a well known scholar and symposium speaker. He was born and brought up in India but moved to Karachi and then to the United States. It was a large campus with scattered buildings in a hilly 1300-acre landscape, and I have seen this professor only twice during my

entire three semesters of study there. Every foreign student and professor was busy day and night pursuing each person's goal in life. Science students stayed day and night in the labs; others in the library or in their rooms studying. The library was open until midnight. There was no spare time for socializing. As far as I can remember, there were also a few other Asian professors and a handful of Asian and North Indian students in the computer division and science areas. Many foreign students lived outside the campus in private lodges or one-bed room apartments with kitchen facilities, so there was no communication between on-campus residents and others outside the campus.

The administrator (lady) explained further: "I searched through the list of foreigners from Asia (and India) on this campus, and it was your name (Samkuttu Chacko) that caught my attention first. My eyes fell on your name. Are you willing to go to speak at the Men's Club in the church?"

I agreed, then thanked her for mentioning my name to the pastor, choosing my name from a list with dozens of names.

I called the pastor. The same day, he came to the campus to meet me personally. He explained that for several months, the Men's Club had been studying the major religions and missionary works in all continents and major nations of the world. They already covered the continent of Africa with a guest speaker from that area. The first Saturday night of January was designated for Asia, particularly the nation of India. The Pastor was searching for an Asian or Indian professor or student, who could do a presentation on major religions of Asia, focusing on the culture and religions of India.

I said that I had never done any seminar-type presentations before in USA, but that I would prepare a speech to the best of my abilities. He responded, "Sam Chacko, do not worry about preparing too much; just share a few things that you already know about the religions of Asia, especially India. We want to know about Hinduism, Buddhism, and other religions in your nation and your continent." I was more than willing, though a little nervous about the challenging responsibility.

He came in his car that Saturday evening to take me to the seminar. I spoke on Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Jainism, and the impact of foreign Christian missions in India and Asia. I also led a question-answer session at the end, and then ate supper with the club members. They asked more questions about Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam in the Asian continent than about Christianity. They were particularly curious to know

about Buddhism. They were also very interested to know about the schools and hospitals that missionaries had built in Asia, including India. They were a group of men who were more interested in gaining knowledge about other cultures than about what missionaries did to convert people to Christianity. After the seminar, I received an honorarium of fifty dollars.

The pastor took me back to my dormitory around 9 pm. As I was getting out of the car, he offered the following parting words: “Sam Chacko, I know that you are alone here far from your home land. You have no parents or relatives here. You have no car either. But consider us as your friends and parents. If you need any help from us or need a ride, feel free to contact me.” Then he handed me his address card. Actually, during the conclusion of the seminar also, the pastor openly said that I should consider them as my friends available to help.

After reaching my room, I did not go to bed, but knelt by my chair, and as usual started praying that God would supply the needed finances, so that I could register and start back my education by January middle. During the prayer, I felt strongly in my heart that Pastor Curt Tull was sent to me by God like the raven was directed to the hungry prophet Elijah with a piece of bread in its beak, as recorded in the Bible. So I felt I should accept “the bread” and ask Tull for some financial help. Something told me deep in my heart that the lady in charge of the Registrar’s office was also an agent of God. She spotted my name in the list before any other Asian or Indian names. Some may see it as a mere accident or pure coincidence, but I had no doubt that it was a divine intervention.

Churches normally use only Christian speakers for Sunday services, but they invite Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists, or members of other religions for seminars and panels conducted by religious clubs. As a matter of fact, Pastor Tull’s church was an open-minded church, and they would have preferred a non-Christian speaker. Many such churches want to hear people from different religions, so they could enlarge their knowledge of world religions and cultures. They also prefer to hear from non-Christians who look at Christianity from the perspective of an outsider.

Pastor Tull could have called another college, junior college, company or hospital in the same city or in a nearby city or village and located an Asian or Indian professor, medical doctor or engineer who was more qualified than me to speak on Asian or Indian religions. There

were many North Indian physicians and engineers in the region. Rev. Tull could have picked their names and numbers from the telephone directory. The university Registrar could have picked a Hindu, Muslim, or Buddhist student or professor from the list of Asian nationals at the campus. The University has a couple of branch campuses in the area where the registrar could have located Indian or Asian instructors. There were many Buddhist students from Japan and Thailand at the main campus. Indeed, I believe it was divine providence that led her eyes to my name, as you will see below from what happened in the following days.

Late that Saturday night in January after my seminar presentation, I started writing a detailed letter to Pastor Tull explaining how I was in a financial crisis. I completed the letter early next morning. Touching every line, I prayed and prayed Sunday morning, took the letter to church keeping it in the Bible. Sitting on my regular pew in the church, without anyone noticing, I took the letter in my hand and prayed. Returning from church, I continued to pray all Sunday afternoon and night. Monday morning, I prayed again touching the letter tightly, raising the letter in my hand toward heaven, my eyes full of tears. I walked in my room to and fro, left and right, then knelt by my bed spreading the letter on my mattress and praying earnestly.

Monday early morning, while walking to the post office, I tightly put the letter close to my chest to figuratively transfer my painful heartbeat to the letter. I entered the post office, paused near the mail box for a few minutes, and circled the area praying with wet eyes and a dry tongue. I attempted to drop the letter, but pulled my hands out to pray again for the letter - my hands down the box, then back, down and back again and again. Finally I dropped the letter releasing it from my right hand and saying to the letter like this: "Holy Spirit, please travel with this letter. God, let this letter reach Pastor Tull tomorrow itself. Let it not be lost in the midst of thousands of other letters. Let the mail carrier deposit the letter in Tull's mail box in front of his house on time. Let it not slip out from his bag. Let him not deliver it to the wrong house number. Let Pastor Tull be home when the letter reaches his house. Let him not go out of town."

After I mailed the letter, I reached my dormitory. I approached the public phone-booth on the first floor of the dorm. I touched the phone and prayed: "Lord Almighty, when Pastor Tull calls me, let it be good news. Let the voice of my financial deliverance come through this

phone.” For the next 48 hours, I was mostly on my knees praying and crying to the Lord Omnipotent.

Actually, my life that week was at the end of a one-way street with no path to proceed. It was the first time that I had ever approached anyone for a financial need other than my family. In three days, the pastor responded to my letter by phone: “I have good news for you, Sam Chacko. I telephoned the church committee members, and they unanimously agreed to pay all your educational expenses in advance at the university office this week, including your boarding and food.”

Pastor Tull continued: “Go ahead Sam, and register for classes today. I already talked to the Registrar and made arrangements. Not only that, my church will pay your entire educational expenses until you complete your Master’s degree.”

Many of the 300 members in Tull’s church were financially well-to-do people, several of them being bankers, businessmen, company managers, engineers, doctors, and other highly paid professionals, as well as widows who inherited considerable wealth from their deceased husbands.

After talking to him on the public phone at the corner of my dormitory hallway, I went back to my room. I couldn’t stop crying for hours. I almost lost my physical strength thanking God as I could not contain my joy. I was physically and mentally exploding after tasting the miraculous providence of God. I did not go outside the room for a few hours, but lay down on my bed overwhelmed by the mercy of God toward me.

This miracle happened forty-one years ago in January 1973. As I conclude this testimony now, wiping tears in my eyes, the following Bible verse is reverberating deeply in my heart: “Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and you shall glorify me.” (Bible, Psalms 50:15).

Pastor Tull invited me to attend his church regularly, but I never attended the services there, except a few months later when I was asked to speak again when Tull was away on vacation. The doctrines of his denomination were much different from my Pentecostal faith. Mainly, his church, as far as I knew then, did not believe in the visible Second Coming of Christ. There were also other doctrinal differences. However, the members of the church were a group of very kind people. I continued to attend the Church of God in Jonesboro, a small church pastored by Reverend T.L. Henderson.

Pastor Tull's church supported me financially until I completed my M.A. degree in July 1973. Then I moved 510 miles away to the University of Louisiana at Lafayette (ULL) to pursue a Ph. D. degree. I was admitted to the university with a teaching assistantship, where I taught two classes each day and earned enough money to further my education and research for the next four years. I also got a tuition-waiver scholarship at the new university, so never again did I have to pay any fees for my education. Whenever I think of this miraculous experience, a famous song composed by the famous musician T. O. Chisholm bubbles out of my heart:

*“Great is thy faithfulness, Great is thy faithfulness
Morning by morning new mercies I see
All I have needed, Thy hands hath provided
Great is thy faithfulness, O God Unto me.”*

Immediately after the completion of my doctoral research in English Literature at ULL in May 1978, I visited India. This was my first trip to India after coming to America in 1970 because I did not have the money needed for an air ticket. While in India, I was introduced to a twenty-year old godly lady Pushpa by evangelists P. A. V. Sam and Mary Koor. My parents and I, after seeking the will of God in prayer, arranged my wedding. On July 13, 1978, Pushpa and I got married at the Assembly of God Church, Adur. After she arrived in America, we lived together near ULL campus for a few months. I taught in the ULL English Department for one year as a part-time temporary instructor. In 1979, we moved to Mississippi. I accepted a full-time assistant professorship, and taught there college-level for seven years. Then I moved back to Louisiana in December 1986. I have been teaching literature full time for thirty-four years (since 1979). I have also been writing books and tracts to tell people that the saving, forgiving, healing, and delivering power of God is available to all who pray to God through the name of Jesus Christ, the mediator between God and man, the heaven-sent sacrificial lamb of God who died on the cross to atone for the sins of humanity, rose again on the third day, and now reigns in heaven at the right hand of God Omnipotent.

Dear reader, are you facing any kind of crisis like the one I faced back in 1972 and 1973? Or, are you facing a more serious crisis than what I faced? Do you feel that you are at the end of a one-way street like I felt in 1972? You see no path to proceed? Are you depressed? Are your friends, relatives, and doctors declaring that your situation is hopeless?

I would like to tell you that the Almighty God who answered my prayer back in 1973 is still alive and is in control of every situation in the universe. He will rescue you if you call upon him. Prayer can move the hands that move the universe. I suggest that you attend a prayer meeting or a convention or a gathering where people pray together. You will experience divine miracles when praying together with other people.

When a group of people prayed together during a “crisis-night” in the book of Acts, chapter 16 (Bible), miracles began to happen. All 28 chapters in the Book of Acts are full of various kinds of miracles. The first four books of the New Testament (the Gospels of Mathew, Mark, Luke, and John) are full of true stories of people in deep trouble who were rescued by God when they prayed through Jesus.

Are you confused about how to pray and to which God to pray. You hear about many gods in the world today. Do not follow what people say. Do not blindly believe everything that every writer and speaker conveys, including me. Read the New Testament, examine every page and every incident. Read the books of other religions and compare their messages. Search for the truth as you compare. Finally, the truth will strike your heart. Then follow your own inner voice. If your own inner voice is not clear, sit down, pray, and meditate for hours and days asking God to solve your confusion. The omniscient God will give you a clear revelation in your heart on what the truth is and who the true God is. Do not resist your conscience, but yield. Do not be afraid of people when making decisions of eternal consequence.

As for myself, I found Jesus Christ as the most towering figure in world history. I have examined the major books of every religion in the world beginning from the Babylonian epic GILGAMESH written 4,500 years ago, and I am convinced that Jesus Christ is the truth, the way to eternal life.

I challenge you to study the life of Jesus by reading about his earthly ministry recorded by his disciples in the four Gospels. Examine whether Jesus meets the qualifications to deserve the following titles “The Savior of Sinners,” “The Deliverer from Problems,” “The Miracle Worker,” “The Only Path to Eternal Life.” No other person in history ever claimed that he or she was sent from heaven to give man eternal life. Examine whether the claim of Jesus is trustworthy by reading what his disciples wrote about him after living with him, walking with him for three years. The four Gospels written by the disciples of Jesus are only about 118 pages long (in the New Testament). Those pages may decide your

eternity. Take my humble advice seriously.

Do not wait too long to study and search, for time is moving fast. You are only a heartbeat away from death. You have no chance to decide your destiny after death. But now, your choice can decide where you will spend your eternity - in heaven or in hell. Let your conscience, the inner voice of your spirit, and the Word of God be your guide as you choose your destiny. I hope, your answer would be “YES” to your conscience.

16 November 2013

Websites in which Dr. E. C. Samkutty’s video sermons, audio sermons, audio songs, books, articles, and tracts are uploaded:

ezhamkulamsamkutty.com, ecsamkutty.com, ecsamkutty.net

Other websites not officially connected to E.C. Samkutty, but may have his programs uploaded:

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ഏഴംകുളം സാംകുട്ടിയുടെ കൃതികൾ

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