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*And he gathereth his children from the four quarters of the earth; and he numbereth his sheep, and they know him; and there shall be one fold and one shepherd; and he shall feed his sheep, and in him they shall find pasture (1 Nephi 22:25).*

### ***Transplanted***

*Benoy Tamang*

*Benoy Tamang, a son of Nepalese parents, was reared in a home where his father was a British Army officer. Respect and propriety were simply a part of life. Benoy was born in Singapore, graduated from high school in Hong Kong, and because of his father’s assignments traveled extensively throughout the world. However, it was not until he accepted a scholarship to BYU-Hawaii that he faced a most serious challenge to his background from a most unexpected source, a young woman. Mr. Tamang received his M.B.A. degree from BYU in 1989. He and his wife, Angela Dawn Adams, are the parents of four children and live in Alpine, Utah, where he works for a computer software firm.*

It’s amazing how powerful the impact of mothers is on their children. With my own family, I can see how my wife impacts the language, thoughts, school and skill levels, and confidence of our children. It is also wonderful to see the tight bond of love that my children share with their mother. I, too, felt the same for my mother, and there is still no better mother in the world for me than she. My mother, who had given birth to me, had raised me as her first and precious son, and had endured the difficult role of motherhood on my behalf, experienced the most difficult time accepting my new lifestyle as a Latter-day Saint. She could not understand that this decision, though seemingly innocent at first, would lead her eldest son (the eldest son, in my culture, has the first responsibility to look after his birth family) to marry a Caucasian at a ridiculously young age, to marry in a temple that my parents could not enter (they stayed outside in the grounds of the Hawaii Temple), and then to live thousands of miles away among Latter-day Saints rather than be close to her at home. And though she saw the wonderful attributes and love that Angela has for our children, along with the gospel in action at our home when she once came to visit us, sadly my mother died without understanding fully the meaning of my decision. That decision, though right, hurts a little when it comes to the memory of my relationship with my mother during the last years of her life.

My family is from Kathmandu, Nepal, and Darjeeling, in northern India. At some time in the past, with the influence of British rule, my family became Protestant Christians. My parents’ families were large, and both their parents died while my parents were very young. My father joined the British army as a Gurkha soldier in his seventeenth year, and over the years he rose in rank to become a British commissioned Gurkha officer. On an extended leave, he was fortunate enough to return to Darjeeling and to marry a pretty, intelligent, nontraditional, opinionated young lady—my mother. Because of the military lifestyle, our family moved between countries every two years. I was born in Singapore, and we lived in India, England, Hong Kong, Singapore (again), Brunei, and Nepal. Life was based on acquiring and losing friends regularly throughout our growing years. Because of the constant moving, we had to learn to rely on each other. We were a very happy family. Although we children grew up with a British education, our parents brought their own strong culture of tradition, hard work, education, and family devotion to us children.

Looking back, religion in our family was more tradition than anything else. We would try to go to church every Sunday. We were taught that God and Jesus exist. We learned the Lord’s Prayer and repeated it nightly. I followed and did not understand, or did not try to understand. As a teenager, I distinctly remember using the excuse of homework to miss Sunday church at 11 A.M. My teenage years were too busy with school, friends, sports, and family to allow space for other thoughts. But I had heard of Mormons—they were people that I occasionally heard mentioned on television when cowboys made their way through a western town.

My life started to change during my senior year of high school. My cousin, Subas Subba, came back to Hong Kong from BYU-Hawaii as a graduate and a new member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He started talking to me about where I wanted to go to college. Of course, I mentioned Hawaii, where I knew there was plenty of sun, surf, and bikinis. He told me that he had just come back from a tremendous college where I wouldn’t be lost because of its modest size, where the location I was right next to the beach. And yes, there were lots of pretty girls. And, oh yes, it was a Mormon institution. I don’t believe I heard the last part, and I enthusiastically agreed that it sounded like the place for me. Incidentally (but now I know it was not incidental), Charles Goo, a dean at BYU-Hawaii, *happened* to be in town, and Subas arranged for Brother Goo to meet me at our house. Looking back, I am embarrassed now because

I greeted him in our home dressed only in shorts and flip-flops (Hong Kong can be unbearably hot in the summer). Although it seemed miraculous then (but not so when I look back and see the hand of the Lord in action), Brother Goo extended a scholarship to me to attend BYU-Hawaii the fall semester after my graduation from high school.

In Hawaii, I fell in love with the climate, the beaches, and the warm and friendly people. There were lots of huge Americans and Polynesians with bone-crushing handshakes and beaming smiles. I learned that “What’s up?” was more of a “Hello” than an inquiry into my health and well-being, and that it did not take a long response to answer. People genuinely approached each other and were sufficiently personal that, like home, they were willing to greet each other with hugs and kisses. While I was determined to succeed on the academic side of BYU-Hawaii, I was equally determined to adamantly refuse any approach to learn about the LDS Church, even though I had to take some Bible courses as a required portion of my degree. I remember making a personal commitment to go through the program without letting the religion affect me.

Right after the September enrollment, at one of the dances where I was stunned to find out that no alcohol was served (I remember asking, “And they have fun here?”), I saw a lovely, tall, blonde young lady, and I asked her to dance. I found out her name was Angela. She politely avoided pronouncing my name until she could clearly hear it. We became intrigued by our opposite characteristics. Angela Adams had beauty, brains, and a great spirit. Over time, she gently introduced me to her beliefs and values. I found them astonishing. I could not believe that students on campus did not drink alcohol, smoke cigarettes, or use foul language. I found it amazing that people believed in being chaste. My world was so different, and all those new concepts seemed unnecessarily harsh and restrictive. Listening to Angela, it sounded like one was to live as a monk! I repeatedly used the argument that since I had not killed anyone, since I was not out to intentionally harm others through words or actions, and since I was a fairly likeable guy who no one in the past seemed to think needed changing, why would I need to pay any attention to such a severe form of religion? Wasn’t one hour of church enough? Other friends and members of the Church also supported Angela, but I saw no need to change. So I vigorously stood my ground when anyone tried to convince me otherwise. I particularly remember relishing moments when I walked through Sunday crowds, dressed and lined up to go to church, with my surfboard or boogie board, and dressed just in shorts and flip-flops. I was sure that I received lots of nasty looks, and that was fine with me.

On Sundays, with her heart full of tenderness and with the spirit of love, Angela would try to explain her love for Jesus Christ and his gospel. For my part, I made her cry every Sunday, right after she bore her testimony (even now, she says that bringing this “one soul” was all the missionary work she could do for a life time). I would ridicule her beliefs, her faith in such trivial topics like abstaining from tea and coffee, and keeping the Sabbath day holy by not studying, shopping, or boogie boarding. I kept strongly recommending that she keep her testimony to herself, but she wouldn’t stop. Some of her friends shared their testimonies with me, and after a while I knew that they were all ganging up on me. I thought they were being friends only to try to baptize me. I did not like meeting them, particularly with the full-time missionaries. Those missionaries, with their perpetual smiles and ulterior motives, were to be shunned. I always looked away if I saw them coming. If they extended their hands to shake hands, I would look down at their hands, scowl, turn around, and walk back the way I came without any hesitation or embarrassment. I was very focused on not letting them get close to me in any way. After a while, I believe I succeeded in scaring Elder Schmidt and Elder Barker away.

But I did recognize some amazing things that BYU-Hawaii and its student population exhibited. Almost without my noticing it, the general atmosphere of the campus began to seep into my heart. In time, it would help to bring about a most important change for my life. For example, there seemed to be an air of peace and tranquility. The people were happy and continuous smiling. Teachers and students seemed to be interested in each other. I rarely heard any swearing and, of course, saw no drunken brawls. People seemed to be modestly dressed. While I thought that was prudish, it seemed fitting within that overall atmosphere. Or was their conduct causing that atmosphere? Angela seemed unaffected by stress, and most things did not fluster her. I was amazed that when a dorm-mate borrowed something from her and went back to the mainland without returning it, Angela dismissed it as “just a material thing.” I was ready to strangle the other girl! I couldn’t believe that the social occasions and dances could be so fun without drinks or drugs. And most amazing, when I did sneak looks into church meetings, I would find big, hulking men, who previously were ripping each other up in a game of touch rugby, shedding tears as they addressed the congregation. What would make these guys openly cry in front of girls? Why would they allow themselves to repeat this scene regularly?

Then, one day, while the missionaries were still interested in seeing me, Angela gave me a challenge that changed my life. She said, “If you think you are so smart, then why don’t you use your head and see if our church is really true, instead of just ridiculing my faith and beliefs. How can you tell if you haven’t tried to find out whether it’s true?” It was a “How can you tell something doesn’t taste good if you haven’t tried it?” question. After about seven

months on campus, enjoying the people, I was intellectually intrigued by her question and agreed that her logic was right. So, to the missionaries' amazement, I went up to them and asked if I could take the lessons. I'm sure that they didn't know whether to laugh, cry, or run.

By this time, I had moved off campus. It was my second semester, around March. I had moved in with a family that worked on campus. The mother, who worked in the administration office, was actually very much against the Church (I didn't know that at first, although I knew they were all non-LDS in that house). They put posters up on palm trees advertising their Monday prayer nights, and I remember holding hands with them in a circle and praying aloud in turn. I didn't join the circle after the first time. When the mother of the house found out that I was going to take the missionary discussions, she did everything she could to dissuade me, even crying. So, I felt a lot of doubt and opposition. As for the missionary discussions, I took them in quick succession (I think we finished in two weeks). After the last discussion, I thanked the missionaries for the nice "story" and promptly left. By this time, summer break had started, and Angela had left for home in Los Angeles. I was sad to see her leave.

Now I was left without my conscience, living off campus with anti-Mormons, and had time to think and ponder about my future. One portion of my thoughts lingered on the fact that I was not necessarily an evil person—I hadn't killed anyone, stolen anything much. I lied only occasionally, swore infrequently, didn't smoke or really drink, and was too intelligent to take drugs. BYU's environment was, though a little alien, not too bad to be living in, and the people certainly were good, safe, wholesome, and nice. This was a comfortable environment that had little need for change. Or was I just being lazy? Didn't I have a goal to be better than my parents? Isn't there more to success than earning more, living in a higher lifestyle, and having a better name? And at what point is a name important? How will I honor the Tamang name in the future? Where do children enter the picture? Didn't I want children earlier than my father's thirty-something, so I could play with them and be active? Wasn't there an eternal family concept that the missionaries and Angela talked about that I wanted? I certainly wanted a family and would not want to lose my children, or my parents, just because I died. The concept of eternal families was a very comforting and pivotal point of doctrine that started to grow on me. Certainly, I had come to value my own family growing up; moving from country to country made us a tight-knit family. Wouldn't I want that, and more, for my own family?

I continued to think more about God and what his plan was for us, his children. I started to think about ideas that the missionaries and Angela had shared with me, and it felt somehow comfortable as I really started to focus on my spiritual goals. Though I did not know what was truly happening, looking back I can see that I had planted a seed, as Alma had said, and the seed was starting to grow its root structure. I was starting to dwell on concepts, and they were starting to become familiar. During the missionary discussions, I had read the scriptures very casually and superficially, looking for drama and action. And though I had now learned to pray as the missionaries had taught me, rather than merely repeating the Lord's Prayer, it felt uncomfortable to speak my mind and to address him in more familiar terms. Yet, I found that I rather preferred that to an impersonal, sterile prayer that anyone could say, and yet not really mean anything. The more I started thinking about God and his plan, the more regret I had for taking the missionary discussions so casually. I regretted not praying or reading the scriptures as intently and as sincerely as I had been asked by the missionaries. In fact, I had not followed through on my first commitment—I had not really tried to find out whether the Church was true before dismissing it.

To their amazement, Elders Schmidt and Barker were once again asked to teach me the discussions. This time, I was intent on following through with the full spirit of the discussions. I apologized for my previous behavior, and I asked them if we could go over the missionary discussions again. I was motivated to find out if I liked the "food" by "tasting" it first. I now also had deeper, unspoken reasons for taking the discussions again. So, living where I did, knowing the lady of the house would not like to see me read or pray, I started reading the scriptures and praying, somewhat awkwardly at first, but not missing an opportunity to read the scriptures and pray. The missionaries also spread out the time between lessons, giving me more time to ponder the key points of doctrine. A few weeks into the discussions, I rang up Los Angeles and told Angela that I was taking the missionary discussions again. I couldn't tell whether she was excited or deliberately calm.

After about six weeks of this, I was reading the Bible and came across the passage in Matthew where Jesus was looking over Jerusalem. With a swollen heart, he hoped that the people would come to him for what he was about to do, "even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings" (Matt. 23:37). And he cried out of love and compassion. As I read that verse, all of a sudden I received goose bumps. My whole body started heating up, starting from my heart, and I couldn't see the scriptures any more because tears obstructed my vision. I felt an overwhelming sense of gratitude. I felt so sad and happy at the same time—sad that my Savior felt pain because of my personal unworthiness and hardheartedness and that he had been there all the time, and happy that he would still love me enough to break through my crusty layers and tell me that his gospel was true. Of course, I can explain it now, but all I felt then was an incredible

warmth, love, gratitude, goose bumps (in the middle of a warm day), and confusion as to why I was crying. I was bewildered and also scared because I sensed that this was some form of an answer to prayer. Though it was incredible, I had not really expected such a miracle, nor did I really want it! The truth that I wanted was for purposes of satisfying an intellectual theory on the surface, and hopefully some meaningful questions below; but it certainly should not have led to anything this dramatic or deeply moving.

I immediately called the missionaries and told them that I had to see them right away. When I saw them, I almost shuffled to them in embarrassment. With the feelings still so fresh, I asked them what I was feeling and what was generally going on. Of course, the missionaries didn't know why I had called them and were probably expecting the worst again. But when I told them what I had just experienced, they broke out in huge smiles that radiated out from their faces. I'm sure they were relieved beyond measure, happy to see their prayers and hard work had paid off, and probably also thought, "Gotcha!" They patiently explained that I had received my own testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ and that the goose bumps, although new to me, were one of the ways that I became alerted to the presence of the Holy Ghost. They also reiterated the scriptural reference about the burning in the bosom and how it signified the truthfulness of the gospel. I walked away dazed, happy, and scared about the ramifications of this new experience, with a growing understanding that my life was going to change. But most of all, I could not shake off the feeling of deep love that I was continuing to receive from my Savior, a personal and caring Savior, who took the time to answer such a temporal person as myself. To that end, I have never forgotten his love, and I still treasure that burning sensation, feelings of gratitude, and the unexpected warm tears that streamed down my face that summer day in Hawaii.

I called Angela on Father's Day, 1984, and told her that I was going to be baptized the next week. Angela did not doubt the reasons for why I was being baptized, nor did she quiz me, because, as she told me later, I would not make such a commitment without deep conviction. She also knew that this decision was my own since she was too far away to influence it. It was a wonderful day for both of us. She said later that she cried with joy, and probably relief. I remember telling my landlady (she starting crying in despair), and then I quickly moved out. I called and asked my parents for permission to join the Church. My mother said, "Fine, as long as you don't bother us with it." Though my faith was just growing, I knew that I could not doubt what I had experienced and what I continued to feel as I read the scriptures and started hearing testimonies from other people. I could not turn back. I had "tasted the food," and it was absolutely delicious. It meant that I could no longer go across campus on Sundays in shorts and flip-flops and with a surfboard just to make the Saints angry or jealous, and that I had to improve my many different weaknesses. And I had to do them not because of Angela, the missionaries, or the intellectual knowledge that I had gained during this period, but because I sincerely found out that Jesus lived and that I loved him, and he had been there for me all this time. I could not turn my back on my Savior and Creator. If he was willing to stick it out for me, then the least I could do was acknowledge his love and presence by joining his Church, understanding his requirements, and living so I could see him without shame. Even though I was terrified about public speaking, I now understood why all those Saints stood up in front of their peers and openly shed tears of testimony. I gradually started to understand.

About a week and a half later, I was baptized in the ocean by my faithful missionaries, Elder Schmidt and Elder Barker. And though I did not go on a mission, I made a promise to Heavenly Father that I would make my life a mission on his behalf and serve in whatever capacity I could as if I were a full-time missionary. And as with all good things, there were trials, including Satan's attempts to thwart my baptism by sowing seeds of doubt. But due to the great counsel and intervention of friends and ecclesiastical leaders, I was able to make that promise to be baptized and to be one of the newest members of his true Church. That baptism morning was a glorious morning, and one that I will always cherish. The only person missing from that special occasion was Angela.

Angela has now been my best friend and wife for almost twelve years. I still remember the phone call to her Dad three years after my baptism. I called Claude Adams on the phone and point blank offered him fourteen cows in exchange for his daughter's hand in marriage. Without hesitation, Brother Adams said, and I remember this clearly, "Fine. As long as it's in the temple." We have four lovely children, who, thanks to the temple, are sealed to us under the covenant of eternal marriage and family. We serve, we love, we pray, and we continue to grow in the gospel together.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is so true that it cannot be pushed onto any individual. Its precious message can only be received with love, example, and gentle guidance. The gospel requires personal testimony and understanding before it can be preached. For that, I will ever be grateful to my wife. The love that Jesus has for all of us is incomprehensible, magnificent, and readily available to those who wish to receive it. Growth comes from some pain, a lot of effort, and self-mastery over the natural instincts of this world. The goal of this life is to be self-correcting every day, and to seek for guidance from him on high. Even within the Church, I have realized that if there is no continual growth, then we are moving toward Satan rather than Jesus and Heavenly Father. As much as I passionately love the gospel, I know that every member of this Church must also find that self-propelling testimony that fuels daily evaluation and growth. I no

longer become bitterly disappointed at members who have erred or gone astray. I feel compassion for them and rekindle my own sense of urgency in doing that which is right for myself and my family.

Hopefully, my mother can now better understand what we are trying to do.