

Binod¹ was just sixteen years old when he decided he was going to join the Maoists. He was angry – both his older brother and his older sister had been killed by the army. As a Maoist he was always on the move, always making sure that the army didn't catch up with him. Some of the time he was in the districts in which we worked, Jumla and Dailekh. I wonder whether we ever passed by each other or whether he ever visited the staff we worked with making demands and threats. Some of the time they were involved in domestic disputes with villagers but Binod found it hard to mete out punishments in cold blood on people when he saw them face to face. The big attacks like the one on Jumla bazaar were a different matter. Binod was an company captain. Orders came from the top and he had to make sure they were followed.

When Binod was twenty, after four years of life as a jungle fighter, the army caught up with him. They wanted to kill him but some senior officer thought he might have some information that would be useful to them. They kept him in a dark tank for nine months and then in custody for another year. I asked what that time was like and he answered, "They gave me agony." – I didn't ask for details of the torture that would have meant.

As a child Binod had known a little about Christianity and during the time he was alone in the tank he began to do a lot of thinking. He had a dream about people inside a church. They were all worshipping and clapping their hands. He was outside, but he couldn't go in. 'I did a lot of repenting' he added, with his eyes low.

Eventually, he was released, but he just couldn't face going to church. A friend took him along but Binod just sat with his head hung in shame. His friend persistently nudged him 'Sing!.....Clap!' he urged. Finally Binod stood up to join in the worship, but as he opened his mouth only the words 'Prabhu, Prabhu' (Lord, Lord) came out as tears poured down his cheeks. He just couldn't stop crying.

Then his friend was pulling at him again 'Sit down'. The worship time was over and the preacher stood up to give the sermon. His teaching that day was on the passage '*Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him and he with me.*' Rev. 3v20. Binod was willing to open the door of his heart and let Jesus enter in. Jesus had heard the repentant cry of his heart and was welcoming him into fellowship.

I met Binod at Susamachar² School of Missions. His face is gentle and he has a warm smile. He's twenty five now but his jungle years have aged him. He is preparing to go out into Nepal in Christian ministry. He'll be armed with a Bible not a gun, and will carry a message of peace and healing, not war and revolution. As a teenager he was an company captain in the Maoists. I pray that he'll be able to use his skills as a leader to draw others and lead others as he ministers. He has known the heartache of seeing family members killed and the guilt of joining the way of violence. I pray that his past will open doors for him as Nepal needs to see those who can forgive and those who can repent, so that communities can begin to be reconciled and rebuilt after a decade of conflict.

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¹ Not his real name

² Not the real name