

Lauri Davi's story

<http://www.freeratio.org/showthread.php?s=75c44c00b720f00b45514d561943d57e&t=72552>

a rundown with comments by Jan Mares

This is an instructive case of a gradual paradigm break-up, from fundamentalist Protestantism to liberal Protestantism to atheism, over the period of twelve years (age 18-30).

The author is a young woman with quite an inquisitive and independent minded nature. These two characteristics were fundaments of her problems in her particular tradition.

It all started with growing up, living on her own and losing her circle of friends.

"A few months later I turned 18 and was on my own bona-fide, living independently, working and going to school. However, much to my dismay, the "core group" of friends that I had become close with through the youth group, one by one dispersed; many went away to various colleges (mostly Bible colleges), a few, once out on their own, seemed to adopt dramatically different lifestyles overnight, and the rest were so caught up in school/work life that our group quite rapidly disintegrated within a short period of time. Although I still went to church when I wasn't working or going to school, I found myself feeling adrift without a lifeboat, and I began to feel disillusioned with my faith. In a gradual way, I slowly "slipped away" from my daily devotions/prayer/etc., and as I became involved in other "worldly" things (other threads give more detail on this) I eventually compartmentalized my faith and belief into something that didn't affect my day to day life. In terms familiar to Christianity, it would be accurate to say that I "backslid" (although I had been a lifelong Christian), or perhaps MORE accurately, became "of the world, and not just in it."

This is the process of secularization due to material influences (asat sanga). The full-fledged (ideally 24h) spirituality gradually shrinks to a Sunday morning thing and starts to resemble a hobby.

She married a husband who was a strict fundamentalist like his whole family.

Then came some fleeting questions posed by another person which became seeds of doubts.

"I was riding with one of the producers from my firm to a client meeting a good half hour away from our office. As was my habit, I talked freely about my church activities and the conversation turned to some subtle but pointed questioning on his part as to the history of my belief. In short, he asked me a few questions (about doctrine relating to the history and plurality of world religions) and I realized, in a sudden and quite jarring way, that I had no idea how to answer his question. Although I mumblingly weaseled my way out of a direct answer on the spot, the exchange was like a dash of cold water in my face. When I went home that night and relayed the conversation to my husband, we discussed it and I came to a fateful conclusion (though I didn't realize it at the time).

"After much soul-searching, prayer and what I felt was the Spirit guiding me, I decided that if I was to be the "best witness possible" for Christ, I needed to know my stuff. With what I can only describe as single-minded purpose, I began reading voraciously not only modern apologetics, but the works of individuals such as Bertrand Russell and William James (The Varieties of Religious

Experience, a must-read IMO). I surmised that if I were to be able to take on the skeptics and questioners, I needed to know their turf and speak their language. It was out of my desire to strengthen my faith and witness that slowly but surely, and in a profoundly unsettling way, the first cracks began to appear in the foundation of my world-view. The most frustrating part was that it was quite beyond my control; in spite of the hours I spent in prayer and reassurance that I sought from trusted friends "more mature in the faith", the information that I was absorbing was creating realizations in my mind that were as impossible to stop as the incoming tide."

Reading opposing views without very good background in one's tradition (jnana and vijnana) and the guidance of an expert (guru) leads to such confusing results. Prayers didn't help. Doubts grew. Actually, the more she searched, even by participating in a Bible study course, the more questions were coming up. Neither her husband nor anyone in her Church could answer them, rather they were negative about questioning itself. Recommended books didn't help either.

This is the main weakness of Abrahamic traditions with their simplified information meant for simple people in very different cultural setup, to add to the confusion. The history of the Church is not taught to laity (due to some significant skeletons in the cupboard) and the other religions are considered evil (especially in Protestant churches).

"I began to wonder at an elemental level exactly why it was that those I trusted for answers seemed either unable or unwilling to provide rational and reasonable answers.

This "disconnect" between my husband and me planted a seed of discontent in our marriage that would, eventually, germinate into a full-fledged "battle of the ideologies" which sadly and inevitably, could not be "won" by either party in the truest sense of the word."

There comes the loss of trust. In the absence of trust one tends to dismiss even rational answers which don't fit into his new paradigm.

This led her to resent the 'standard prefab answers' as 'black and white' and irrational, wanting to think for herself and find her own replies. Soon she began resenting the Biblical submission of a wife to a husband as opposed to everyone's responsibility for his own salvation, finding fault in apostle Paul.

This is the 'dharma vs. paradharma' conflict. Dharma of a wife is a service to her husband. Even if he's fallen or asuric, she gets her merits. Examples: wives of asuras like Bali or Ravana.

The paradigm split, accelerated during the visit of Israel, led to a divorce. Her husband, supported by his family and church, was against secular family counselling, her strict condition. Her church friends distanced themselves from her. Only her grandparents who brought her up remained her unflinching support.

She often speaks about frustration, depression, etc. in this process, especially when talking about faith. The voice of conscience, Paramatma, the 'small still voice', is always with us and let's us know when we do something wrong.

Ironically, as she was straying away from the faith, her biological mother who left her young in care of grandparents and lived a 'wild life' went the opposite direction, returning to the faith and trying to convince her daughter to return to her faith as well. Same thing happened to her biological father and his wife which left her, with her sister, as the only two atheists in the family. Quite a remarkable arrangement of Providence.

"It would probably be an understatement to say that I avoid contact with them whenever possible."

Quite frustrating, isn't it? America is full of theists, where to go...?

Her last sentence: "I was seeing the world around me with new eyes, strange and wonderful at the same time, and I had the sudden sense that if I wanted to, I could fly."

Are you reminded of Genesis?

3:5. For God doth know that in what day soever you shall eat thereof, your eyes shall be opened: and you shall be as Gods, knowing good and evil.

3:6. And the woman saw that the tree was good to eat, and fair to the eyes, and delightful to behold: and she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave to her husband, who did eat.

3:7. And the eyes of them both were opened: and when they perceived themselves to be naked, they sewed together fig leaves, and made themselves aprons.

What is this 'good and evil'? It refers to dvandva, dual vision of the material world, gained by eating a karma phala, fruit of one's work. As long as one doesn't learn to work without attachment to the karma phala, one is bound in samsara in many different bodies. Human body isn't adapted to flight though.