

New Roots Review

December 2023



**NEW ROOTS
MINISTRY**

Their First Calling is Serving Him

by Fred Wilgenburg

Singh “Aaron” and Puspa Tamang: Unlike most Bhutanese refugees in Sioux Falls, Aaron was Buddhist instead of Hindu, and he was initially sent to India rather than Nepal as a refugee. Aaron grew up worshipping the Buddha, which continued as he was in Delhi, India for 18 years, mostly working in a restaurant.

Aaron had a Christian friend in Delhi, so he started going to the friend’s Catholic church. The worship and the traditions were confusing but interesting to Aaron, so he continued going to mass, even giving donations to the church. Still, he identified as a Buddhist.

Puspa grew up in a small Indian village in northern India. Like most Indians, she and her family were Hindu. As young adults, Puspa and her sister moved to Delhi, India for work. Her supervisor at work was a Catholic Christian and she invited Puspa to church. Similar to Aaron, Puspa did not give her life to Jesus at that time, but the Catholic church perked her interest.



Having a meal with Puspa (right) and Aaron (middle).

Meanwhile, Puspa’s parents came to know Jesus in their small village. *(This is common as Christians visit their fellow villagers who are Hindu or Muslim, do acts of kindness, offer words of encouragement and prayer, and invite them to church.)* Her parents’ newfound faith caused Puspa to more strongly consider faith in God. After fifteen years in Delhi, she attended a Pentecostal church, fully receiving Jesus in her life.

Aaron and Puspa met through friends and married in 2000. Aaron eventually followed in his wife’s footsteps, surrendering his life to Jesus in 2009. Upon coming into the family of God, they have not looked back spiritually, mutually and continually seeking God’s will and call upon their lives as Christian leaders among their largely lost peoples. In 2016, they were able to come with their daughter (now 21) and son (now 14) to the US. Right away they sought to be bi-vocational, both working the second-shift at Smithfield Foods in Sioux Falls, where New Roots Ministry does chaplaincy, along with leading/pastoring in one of the Nepali churches. As there arose strong enough leadership in their Nepali church, they sensed God calling them elsewhere for ministry. Upon praying about and visiting Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, Cincinnati, Ohio, and the twin cities of Minnesota over the past year, and seeking to sense where they can be most useful for the Gospel among Nepali people, a few months ago, they sold their home in Sioux Falls, and moved near Minneapolis, Minnesota. They live among a population of Nepali people where there is no church worshipping in the Nepali language. They plan to be bi-vocational again as a couple, working jobs while planting a church from where the Gospel can shine. Their vision as a couple, both in their 50s, is to lift up a new —>



Merry Christmas to you all! Besides ushering in life at Christmas through the coming of the Messiah, God is blessing our region with warmth—53F on December 6 & 7!

Continued...

Donations are always appreciated!

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Million and Merhawit, husband and wife, came to the US in 2019. After two months of an adjustment-period required by the receiving agency, Million started working for Smithfield Foods in Sioux Falls. Merhawit began working after four months. Million works first shift and Merhawit works second shift, 5-6 days/week. Working different shifts eliminates the need for daycare for their three young children. However, they don't want to do this for too long as they see each other only in passing on weekdays. But, in part, this allowed them to buy a house after just three years in the US.

Here's more of their interesting life-story: Both Million and Merhawit are of the Kunama tribe in Eritrea, Africa. Kunama are a persecuted minority in a country that has a longstanding dictatorship. As Million describes, besides being persecuted, life feels futureless and hopeless for Kunama people. If you met Million, and his warm, vivacious personality, you would not imagine he was Kunama, or that the first time he met his dad was when he was 20 and in the refugee camp in Ethiopia. Regarding spirituality, both were inactive (*Merhawit's last name is Mohamed as her ancestors were Muslim.*) until they met Swedish Lutheran missionaries who shared the Gospel in Eritrea. At that time, Million, Merhawit, and others came to Jesus personally, and they haven't looked back. Currently, they are part of a healthy Kunama Lutheran Church, where Million is a leader and an assistant to the pastor, who also works at Smithfield.

Million is excited about the future for his family. They love the US, especially the opportunities for getting good education. Million is taking classes at a technical college to get his GED (*equivalency of a high school diploma*), with a desire to ultimately become a registered nurse. After he achieves that, he hopes Merhawit can pursue her vocational dreams.

While wanting to become a nurse, Million's main sense of calling is as an ambassador of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20). He is good at befriending people of all backgrounds, and I have been blessed to witness him effectively sharing his faith with fellow employees. He would like to receive theological credentials, which is why we discuss him possibly taking Timothy Leadership Training with us. With that, he wants to be especially useful to his church, possibly even leading a church plant, which he would do bi-vocationally.

A prayer: "Father, bless us with the enthusiasm that Million and Merhawit have for the life and opportunities You give us, and move within us to make the most of Your blessings, for Your glory and the continual coming of Your kingdom. Thank-you for giving us so much! Through Jesus, Amen."

generation of believers.

A few points to consider: 1) Be kind and pray for those you know, and if you feel your church could be a good fit, especially if they do not go to a church, invite them to your church. If not, tell them about a church which may be a good fit. 2) If they start to attend church, but they seem largely non-committed to God, encourage them to give their lives fully for true refreshment. *It's interesting how long Aaron and Puspa attended Catholic churches without making a life-changing decision for Jesus.* 3) I don't know how possible it is to be bi-vocational, but let's be inspired by this couple's commitment to serve God wherever and however.

What is New Roots Ministry?

It's "a springboard for new Americans & their churches." This is done through workplace chaplaincy (we provide chaplaincy at Smithfield Foods & we train & place bi-lingual chaplains on commercial farms), through Timothy Leadership Training, through hosting special educational events, through empowering new American pastors, leaders, and their churches, through offering unique Service Opportunities—serve in, or visit, stores owned by new Americans, then hear their stories, through helping people navigate the American system and achieve their goals, like education, through driver training for new Americans, and through Everyday-Ambassador Practicum.



Million joined me in leading worship.