



**A death...  
Valley of the shadow of death... And  
The shadow of the Almighty  
By Saju**

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**A death...  
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A preface is needed for this small booklet. The narration you see here is an experience of mine. Even though it was short, it was powerful. As the title suggests, it is a three faceted experience.

**A death:** It speaks of my brother's unexpected demise. The thoughts about death begin there.

**The valley of the shadow of death:** As you know, a missionary who is frequently on the move, especially in Indian villages, has to acquaint himself with diverse food habits, climatic conditions and various other ethnic peculiarities. Sometimes, our body doesn't keep pace with our mind. I had contracted hepatitis virus through contaminated water, which damaged my liver and in the valley of the shadow of death myself, while attending my only brother's funeral service.

**Shadow of the Almighty:** Proficient doctors could not give me any hope of life. I was confronting death face to face. However, God was a reality to me even in my death bed. Both life and death stood side by side but neither bothered me. God helped me to look up to Him. The shadow of the Almighty was my delight. When your soul awakes to Him, life or death makes no difference!

This book is an attempt at giving a glimpse of the blissful experience of a mystic who considers Jesus as his only reality. I pray that those who read this book, appropriate this experience as their own.

Shalom, Saju

# 1

November 20, 1997

It was a sunny day! Around noon time, the express train from India's capital New Delhi reached Kottayam, a prominent town in God's own country, Kerala. Wow! It was a tiresome journey. It was good, though! Jessy's aunt, who boarded from Ittarsi Railway Station, was with me. She has to alight here. Uncle Joy was there to receive aunty. I also stepped down to the platform to say hi to uncle.

To my surprise, I could see many of my relatives on the platform... Sunny, my brother-in-law, Josechayan, Jessy's cousin... Why, all of them? I was sure they didn't come to receive aunty. What brought them here, then? To welcome me back home? No way! I am a frequent traveler, a "voyager" and I should not expect anyone on a railway station platform to wish me "bon voyage" or "welcome home!"

"Why, Sunny? Why everybody?" I asked my brother-in-law. He didn't say anything.

"Are you disembarking here, Saju?" Josechayan asked.

"No, I am on my way to Thiruvalla."

Thiruvalla is the nearest railway station to my village. Why should I get down here!

"I am coming too" said Josechayan.

The train began to move... I got in and Josechayan also accompanied me.

"From Kottayam to Thiruvalla by a super-fast train, Josechayan? Are you crazy? Why do you spend big money, when you can take a bus for a few bucks?"

Josechayan was not listening ... He just gazed at me and asked: "Now tell me, what news is there in the mission field?"

I tend to forget everything when someone enquires about mission activities. Josechayan must be eager to know the details as he himself has visited the fields many times.

"Wow! It's great! You remember Josechayan, the village we visited last time... Pippariah... close to our Jorthalla mission station...? By the grace of God, we were able to start a worship service in that village. Around thirty people attend the service. Three people were baptized. Of course it is a breakthrough in village evangelism! You should see it for yourself! As you enter in to the village, you

hear “Jai Massih”. They have started greeting each other in a Christian way! A great experience!”

I looked at Josechayan. He was not as excited as I expected... What happened?

“When we excel in ministry, we should expect some sorrow in our personal life... right? You yourself taught us that we should pay a cost to gain something... Right?”

What Josechayan said is true. But I couldn't consider his words relevant to the occasion. I could smell something incongruous in everything that happened during the last one hour.

“Tell me Josechayan... what's wrong? Are you hiding something from me?”

“Saju, I am sorry! Somehow, I have to break the news... Rajuchayan, your brother, is no more! He has entered in to his eternal home!”

What shall I say now? I was staring at emptiness. Then I came to my senses... I have lost my only brother!

In 1990, Rajuchayan had a heart surgery. Those were days of anguish for me. I cried and prayed. The doctors were doubtful about the success of the surgery but he came back to life from the operation table.

Now, his demise does not just put me in uneasiness as in the days of his surgery. When somebody is in sickbed, I am distressed. When someone dies... I am sad, but not dismayed. I feel I could do nothing... God's 'finishing line' is drawn. His will is done! Now the only thing I can do is to bow before His wisdom and quiet my soul.

“I do not concern myself with great matters or things too wonderful for me. But I have stilled and quieted my soul; like a weaned child with its mother, like a weaned child is my soul within me...” Ps 131: 1, 2

“David pleaded with God for his child who was sick. He fasted and went into his house and spent nights lying on the ground. But his child died.

Then David got up from the ground. After he had washed, put on lotions and changed his clothes, he went into the house of the LORD and worshiped. Then he went to his own house, and at his request, they served him food, and he ate.

His servants asked him, “Why are you acting this way? While the child was alive, you fasted and wept, but now that the child is dead, you get up and eat!”

He answered, “While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept. I thought, ‘Who knows? The LORD may be gracious to me and let the child live.’ But now that he is dead, why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I will go to him, but he will not return to me.” 2 Sam 12:16-23

Rajuchayan lived seven more years after his heart surgery. It was at this time that he came to a living relationship with Jesus. Now, a cardiac arrest has taken his life. But he died 'in the Lord'. "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord." Rev. 14:13. Now I should thank God for giving my brother a blessed extended seven years that allowed him to die in the Lord.

"When the child died, David got up from the ground, he went into the house of the LORD and worshiped." That's exactly what God wants me to do now. So let me praise the Lord for what He has done in his wisdom!

My childhood reminiscence is not so colorful with memories of the times I spent with my siblings. I was ten years younger to my brother and twelve years to my sister. When I was three, my sister went to a distant town for higher education. When I was five, my brother also left me for his studies, leaving me all alone at home. To add to the woe, I became a rheumatic patient at the age of ten. Doctors said I had a problem with my heart. Every joint in my body ached. I had to forget about the school playground. Coming back from school, I burrowed in my studies. I snuggled with letters. My life was like a game of solitaire. My views, beliefs and temperaments were shaped not by the presence of my siblings, but by their absence!

I had known my brother, only from a distance. I still liked him. When I introduced him to my friends, I did it with pride. That's a worthy legacy someone could leave for their bereaved- a good name!

Suddenly, I realized I was still gazing into emptiness without speaking a word to Josechayan. I came to my senses and bowed my head. A drop of tear rolled down my cheek and fell on the ground! "Had Rajuchayan died eight years back, that would have been heartbreaking. But now, he died in peace... and that gives me peace!" I said.

Samkutty, our former pastor, was waiting at Thiruvalla railway station. While driving me home he described what had happened. The death happened yesterday, in Dubai. He was alone in his apartment. His driver came in the morning, but the door was closed. Office staff telephoned him, but there was no answer... Finally, the police came and opened the door. He was lying on the bed, dead!

He was formally dressed, probably about to leave for office when he suffered a cardiac arrest! Who knows!

Suddenly I remembered Bobby, my brother's only son. He is still a high school student. I thought more of him, than of others. When my father died, I also was a high school student. To add trouble to distress, my hands had suffered a fracture then, from a simple fall from my bicycle! Even at that time, my brother was in Dubai. I had to take all the serious decisions single-handedly.

By this time, I had said farewell to many of my beloveds: at age fourteen, to my own father! He also died of cardiac arrest. In the hospital bed, he was writhing in severe pain. I was standing close to him. "Son, pray for me" he said – something he had never before asked me to. I had never seen him praying, nor seeking somebody's prayer. He never professed his religion outwardly. I didn't know what was happening. I could do only one thing- obey!

I prayed... I couldn't finish my prayer... while I was still praying, he breathed his last!

Then my grand father... grandmother...I was a silent witness to their departure from this world . I was the 'responsible relative' to lay them to rest. Then, in a car accident in Bangalore, both my paternal Uncle and aunt died. I reached Bangalore to share the responsibility of their interment.

At home, everyone cried at my coming. I could feel the depth of their sorrow. "Bobby cried only after seeing you," said Jessy.

Tears are no symbol of weakness. Shedding no tears is no symbol of bravery either. In deep sorrow, some cry, others don't. But crying releases sorrow.

A young soldier died in battle. His young wife didn't cry even after seeing his remains. "She should cry, for she shouldn't die" said somebody. The bravery of the deceased was narrated to the wife. She stared at them with no tears...

It is part of a poem. The last lines go like this:

"Rose a Nurse of ninety year  
Set her child upon her knee  
Like summer tempest came her tear  
Sweet my child, I live for thee..."

Neither the sight her husband's remains nor the narration of his character, made her cry; it was the sight of the woeful child that helped pour her heart out.

I think I also feel like crying, not when I see the remains of the dead, but seeing the cry of the bereaved. Still, I would dry out my tears by allowing my thoughts to wander over the inevitability of the cessation of human life in this world. Wise or foolish, rich or poor, all alike should stand before this silent and unambiguous visitor in helplessness! I should admit the fact that death, even of some one close to me, does not dip me in a big jolt.

Why, I wonder, the death of a person does not strike me down. May be I am not so serious about the presence or absence of a certain individual; or, my love towards individuals are not as deep as I think it is! If Jessy, my wife or one of my children dies, can I take that death at ease? May be I can't! However, I know for sure that I am not going to breakdown in distress. Is it due to the lack of my love for them? Don't I love them deep enough to make their absence wound me deeply? Sometimes I speak about this predicament with Jessy. "Shallow is my

love towards folks, including you” I say. “You say it because you have it in your heart, man” Jessy would console me. However, I still doubt the depth of my own love.

I was weary in everyway. I felt feverish. I wanted to lie down for some time. I was thinking about how the death of another person affects my mind. “Forget about the death of others...” I said to myself. “How would you react to your own death?”

My mind would not be there to reflect on that situation. One day I should meet death face to face. If that day is today, what would be my response? Would I be serene at my own death? Reclining on the bed, I unleashed my imagination to put me on a deathbed... Am I ready for a cessation from this life?

## 2

Sundays are beautiful... However, this Sunday was not so. Rajuchayan’s mortal remains will reach Trivandrum airport tomorrow morning. I should start tonight to reach the airport early morning. I felt some heaviness in my body, as though someone was pulling me down to the earth!

We received the remains without any difficulty. L K Roy, my friend in the customs was waiting for us in the airport. The formalities were simple.

We reached home by 11’o clock in the morning. Thampichayan, my cousin, grasped my hands and said... “Oh! Now your body temperature would be at least 105°F.” He is a physician. He gave me some medicines. I didn’t want to take any, not even a pill! I felt everything around me spinning... people, houses, trees... everything! Somehow, I swallowed the pills.

The casket was opened...The remains were taken out. Loud cry everywhere! I didn’t look at anybody. I could not! I was struggling with my eye movements. Somehow, I reached inside the house. I tried to release my weight upon the couch, but I failed. I felt heaviness inside and outside. I was shivering deep within, while my bones were burning...

“Hey, you should not be lying down like this,” I said to myself. “See, it is brother’s interment day. You are the responsible person... get up!”

I got up, went out and paid for the hearse and the wages to those who carried the casket.

Somehow, I managed until the funeral was over. Many times I was about to fall. James, our pastor was holding my hands. Everybody looked at me with sympathy. ‘The death of his brother has shattered him,’ they thought. I knew, my

body was weaker than my mind. Rites were over. I settled the fiscal transactions with the church. Reaching back home, I did not talk to anybody. Falling on the bed, I slept. "Poor guy, let him sleep", thought everybody. In fact, it was more than a sleep. For the next fifteen hours, I didn't know what was happening. Was it a trance? No way! I didn't see any vision... I was off... from everything...

The next day, relatives were returning ... one by one! I bid them bye in a pale way. What else could I do? I thought I was walking with a ton of weight on my shoulders. No one could help me get it down. All who grasped my hands burned theirs! Jessy insisted that I go to a clinic. Clinical blood tests were normal. Sitting near the physician, I was shivering. "Need to observe him continually," said Thampichayan: "Get him admitted in Muthoot Hospital."

Jessy called Dr. Renu, her friend. Her husband is a physician in that hospital. He somehow smelt the seriousness. I was immediately admitted! Repetition of all tests followed. Liver enzymes count was abnormal... SGPT was 1000, where the normal is less than 40. Dr. Jolly moved his trained fingers over my chest and abdomen. He could feel my liver swollen. "Don't walk back to your room... call for a wheelchair," he said. I didn't speak anything, but was asking myself... 'How healthy was I just three days back, and now, on a wheelchair!' However, in my heart I thanked Dr. Jolly for providing me with a wheelchair, because I knew I could not walk back to my room normally.

Even a heavy dosage of ciprofloxacin i. v. could not pull down the thermometer mercury line. Alternate shots of antibiotics and dextrose were in vain. Next day, the SGPT was 2000! It was not just increasing, but doubling! By a touch of his hand, Dr. Jolly could feel the danger of the enlargement of the liver. He realized his helplessness.

Physicians and a gastroenterologist frequently visited my room. They couldn't do anything. They were mere human beings, limited with their medical knowledge!

Dr. Renu called Jessy to her home. Dr. Jolly wanted to say something, but not a glad tiding! "Liver is enlarging too fast, Jessy. Look at the enzymes count. It is doubling. That is a bad sign. The viral attack is chronic. It is beyond our capacity to handle. Better to shift him to PVS hospital where Dr. Augustine is practicing. But I doubt even they can do anything, as the growth of the liver enzymes count is at alarming speed. Anyway, Jessy, be courageous! I have to say, be prepared for anything! Nevertheless, we will pray!"

Jessy reached back my room, gasping. She was pale!

"What did the doctor say?" I asked.

"I heard you preach you are not afraid of dying, Man...Are you afraid now?" She smiled... a pale smile! She is like that...

"Jessy, stop the silly talk... tell me what the doctor said." I was a little angry.

“The doctor said...,” she sat beside me... “Be prepared for anything!” Now she was broken.

# 3

The sun was still behind the horizon and Sunny was driving the car to PVS hospital. Slouched on the back seat, I allowed my mind to wander ... who knows if I am going to die one of these days? Would I come out of this illness? Can I expect a healing? Dr. Jolly has lost hope, I knew. Can Dr. Augustine perform a miracle? Who knows?

I remembered the time I allowed my imagination to watch my death! Was this the time to experience the reality of what I was trying to imagine?

Am I ready to die? Am I hanging on to a secret desire to continue living for a few more years? I failed to find an answer. Continuation or cessation of my own life is beyond my control! I did not get an assurance of healing either from man, or from God!

It was last evening that Jessy informed me of the gravity of my disease. According to the doctor, I might not make it if the present situation continues. During night, I could not think about it. I was almost in a swoon. I didn't even pray. And now, we were more than an hour away from the hospital. I had the time to pray, if I wanted to.

What shall I pray for? That I should not die now? Who am I to tell God that I should not die? Doesn't He decide my destiny? I can let God know my desires, though. I can go to Him and say, “God, let me live for a few more years!” But, is that my desire?

Life... it was good! Hassles were there, but blessings followed. Toil all the night, but ease at His Word... Visions of transfiguration! Revelations of messianic incarnation! Then, proudly standing beside Him at His appearance... Fear again, at the shadow of the cross.

Tears of breakdown! Yet again, casting of nets... Realization of nakedness...

The coal fire on which the fish was prepared was cool compared to the fire in the eyes of the one who prepared breakfast. That was not a fire of wrath, but a fire of love! “Do you love me more than these?” the question was sharp enough to tear the torso deep. He dipped me in the ocean of His love by commissioning me to tend to His sheep!



I must insist that I really enjoyed life with Jesus. I could meet Him without fear, even when I was a failure. Life was never a burden for me... Should I ask Him to prolong my life?

Life was blissful. When he entrusted me with the gospel, I was excited. Living as a partner with Him in the mission was a real blessing. It might have been nothing to Him, but for me, His call was everything that I needed. Even when I failed, I ran to Him to conceal myself in the warmth of His bosom!

What would I have been doing if I were not laboring in His vineyard? I do not know. I hadn't thought of such a state. Even in my wildest imaginations, I didn't want to think of something other than His vineyard! This is my testimony: "therefore having this ministry by the mercy of God, I do not lose heart." 2 Cor 4:1-RSV

Life blessed me by giving wonderful friends! I was bound with them in the love of Calvary. My friends were all time friends! They were pouring love upon me. The love I obtained was many times more than I gave away. My friends could do only one thing- love! I really enjoyed friendship. Life was good! Should I pray to make my life longer?

How about welcoming death? Death would not be bad too. Even now, life is colorful in the presence of Jesus. Death will take me to His eternal presence! How magnificent would it be living in His continuous presence! Paul desired to depart from the body and be with Christ. He says that is far better (Phil 1:23-RSV). May be the vision of the "third heavens" was haunting him all his life. All the things he had seen in the spirit, he wanted to experience in reality. To reach that stage, he had to "depart" and be with Christ. However, he was not insisting on a sudden leave or absence. Even though he was in the Roman prison, he was ready to go on living in the body, if that would mean fruitful labor for Him!

"I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death." Paul said. He was hard pressed between the two. "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain... What shall I choose? I do not know! I am torn between the two..."

I also was in such a dilemma... what shall I choose? Death... or life?

God was standing before me as an archer. I was the bow in His hand! What shall I pray for?

There are three prayers, out of which I can choose one.

One: Use me Lord, or I rust.

Two: Lord, do not bend me much... for I might break down!

Three: Lord, do, as you please... even if that means breaking me...

My prayer should be the third one. I am his bow! Who am I to ask him not to bend hard? Even if I am broken down, what is it for me?

# 4

Sunny was driving so fast, we reached earlier than expected. Sini was waiting at the hospital entrance. Joji, Kochumon... many of my friends were present.

Sitting on a wheel chair, I inquired about hospital admission. Sini said it was taken care of! I asked again, about the advance payment needed for admission.

"Everything has been done... you need not worry about that," Sini said.

PVS Hospital was best known for its efficiency, but also for its heavy bills. They ask advance payment for treatment. "Shylock is better man, you get well there, but seeing their bill, you die!" said Sunny. Last night, when I was advised to be admitted in PVS, it was uncertain where we would find the money. We had to get money even before the banks opened! I kept my calm. I wanted them to see God's provision. Now, even before we reached hospital, everything was done!

After some time, Kochumon said: "Saju, I have some cash for you. Shall I hand it over to Jessy?"

He didn't wait for my reply... I didn't even ask how much money it was. Kochumon gave 35,000 rupees to Jessy. In a few hours, Jessy had 75,000 rupees in her hand!

"Hey, this is interesting!" Jessy took her style! "Early in the morning, the problem was to find the money for advance hospital payment. Now, look, I cannot keep all this money in my wallet. The real problem has started now! How can I walk around with such a huge amount of money?"

My sister was surprised to see what was happening! "True, boy... we have savings in the bank... but to find this much money even before the bank opened... it is God's hand that works!"

She would scold me for being a heavy spender and saving nothing. "When you are in need, you will be in trouble... Who will take care of you?" she would ask me. I never answered her questions, because I knew, the sweetness of tasting the goodness of God cannot be explained. Now, she could see the Lord's doing for His lowly servant!

Blood test result arrived! SGPT was 4075. Again, it was doubled in one day. Dr. Augustine was surprised to see the multiplication of enzymes count. "It is a chronic viral attack," He said. It must be a multi viral hit... 4,000 is okay, but it has just started only... Liver is so enlarged and count might continue mounting for the next one or two weeks. What shall we do? We can do nothing against the virus. Only thing we can do is giving some liver corrective medicines..."

The best gastroenterologist of South India could give no word of encouragement! He was right in his diagnosis. Mine was a multi viral attack. I entered into a world of yellow. Everything, other than urine was yellow. Urine was close to red! I lost my appetite. Jessy forced me to drink tender coconut water. I drank but vomited immediately. My bile acid changed the clear water to yellow fluid. Throwing up became my frequent exercise!

For fear of falling down, I stopped walking even inside the room. Lying on the bed, I stared at the walls. "Why are the walls painted yellow?" I asked Jessy. She said it is painted white. I saw everything yellow. I was sleeping always, but felt I should sleep more. I loved dreaming, but my dreams were yellow too... It was like wearing yellow goggles, even in sleep.

I had visitors... my friends! Why don't any of them crack a joke? May be they all think I would die soon. I remembered even at this point I didn't pray either for rescue from death or for release from life! "What shall I pray for?" I asked myself. Deep within, I had neither an aspiration for life nor the fear of death. Again, I failed to pray any definite prayer. Then I heard a mellowing voice coming from the air:

"Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me..." Ps 23:4

It was not a chorus, but a solo. I saw David striking the strings of his harp and dancing with joy...

I knew I was walking through the shadow of death... But I shall not fear any evil. Does it mean that I would not die? Does it say that I shall come back to life through a miracle, as if I am resurrected from the dead?

Why should I not fear any evil? Is it because I am assured that I will not die? But I did not get any assurance of life!

What is then, the evil that the Psalmist mentions here? Death? Is physical death an adversity? I didn't believe it. Even when death was as close as my breath, I was unable to consider death as a disaster. How can I consider it as 'evil' when I know that it takes me to His eternal presence?

"Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I need not fear any evil, for you are with me..."

True, I am walking in the shadow of death. May be death is waiting for me. Even if that happens, no evil will touch me, for even if I die, you are with me. Only one thing is 'evil' for me... that is a separation from His presence. Death is not evil, as it cannot separate me from His presence.

Yes, I could experience His presence even on my deathbed! He was standing beside me... I closed my eyes. He sat on my bed. I was silent. I could feel him holding my hands. I dared to converse with Him... He was talking too. However, he said nothing about death... May be because I didn't ask him. On the other hand, may be the time for such a talk has not yet come.

All my friends came to know about my sickness. People from different parts of India, Middle East, Europe, U.S., Canada, Australia... all started calling me over phone. Once again, I realized the glory of friendship. They all love me... They care for me... Everywhere my friends were praying for my healing.

When I heard them share their care, I felt ashamed! While all are crying and praying for my healing, I am here not asking God for a definite healing...

Sunday!

I was sure, in hundreds of worship services, people were praying for me. My friend Babychayan, a scientist turned pastor, visited me in the evening and asked about the blood count. I answered that they had not been taking any blood test for the last couple of days. "The doctors are confident that the count is multiplying..." I said.

"Ask them for a test, Saju" he said: "We all are praying. I am sure, God has done a miracle." Babichayan was confident.

"Why don't you ask for a blood test", I asked the doctor the next day, during his routine visit round. "There is no need man," the doctor said... "It is increasing... in fact, as you know. It has been multiplying in thousands on a daily basis and now, it could be well above 10,000. I told you... it would continue to increase at least for the next ten days. Moreover, there is nothing we can do about it."

"Well, what if it is decreasing...?" I asked.

"Optimism is always good, my friend. But we should be realistic. In your case, it is a multi viral attack and, it is severe. However, if you insist on a blood test, I can scribble one ..." He jotted down a few blood tests on the medical file.

In the evening, the nurse came running to my room: "Surprising!" she said excitedly. "A miracle has happened... Your liver enzymes count is decreasing..."

They expected above Ten thousand, but now, it was less than a thousand! God had done His work. God had shown His mercy. He had honored the prayers of my friends... Praise the Lord!

# 5

Although the liver enzymes count diminished, my bile acid discharge was increasing... Much damage had happened to my liver. Earlier, I was seeing everything yellow, and now, people see me yellow. My whole body turned yellow. When Jessie gave me my yellow T-Shirt to wear, I asked her to throw it away. "No good in wearing it", I said: "It is as if I wore no shirt at all!"

I lost weight. I was unable to walk. Still, I used to bathe every morning and dress well! That is the only 'work' I did. All other times I kept myself on the bed, well dressed! My grand mother used to say, "even if you are lying in a coffin, you should be well dressed" I am neither a dead man nor lying in a coffin... I am on a hospital bed. Yet people considered it as my deathbed. However, I wanted to be neatly dressed even in the hospital. I was joyful in my heart. I wanted my friends to relax...

George Uncle and Maxy Mena came to visit me. Seeing me lying down on a sick bed in formal dress, Maxy started laughing! "We came to see somebody on death bed, and were prepared to cry for some time... Here, look! A man in formal attire!" Praising God, they left.

The Doctor said that the liver was still enlarging and advised me not to get up from the bed. 'My recovery must be similar to the healing of Hezekiah', I thought. He was healed without the help of any physician. But, he had to "apply an ointment of figs and spread it over the boil, to get well again" Isa. 38:21. The declining of the liver enzymes count is of course a miracle. However, rest is needed for the rebuilding of the damaged liver.

I thought of heeding the doctor's advice to take complete rest. I loved it. If I could read, it would have been okay. But I was unable to read. All pages were "yellow pages" for me. What shall I do?

When Finny Jacob came, I asked him to bring me an audio cassette player. When Johnson from Operation Mobilization came, I asked him for the audio Bible.

When there were no visitors, I cuddled up in the world of the Bible! Two weeks back, my mind was wandering in the world of death. Then I was walking in the valley of the shadow of death. Now, I was dwelling in the secret places of the most high... in the shadow of the Almighty!

That was an excellent experience! I shut my eyes to the scenes of the street and closed my ears to the noises outside. Even the humming of the ceiling fan was alien to me. I heard only the sound of His breath. I burrowed in to His bosom and said:

"You are my refuge!  
You are my fortress...  
You are my everything...  
You are my God!"

I grazed myself in the rich inner feathers of His wings... A child can run in to his mother's breast for any or no reason...

Lord, You are my resting place... I have nowhere else to go. You are my habitation and I want to see me become your dwelling place!

Oh! The bliss of becoming His dwelling place! I felt dipped in celestial joy. Is this, what is called mystical experience? I always looked at mystics in admiration. It is not easy to become a mystic... What does it mean to say "not easy"? Does it mean that if you try hard enough, you can become a mystic one day? Can somebody wake up one fine morning and declare that he has decided to become a mystic?

Nothing bothers a mystic. He is an alien to his surroundings. He neither sees nor hears the things around him. He is dwelling in another world... in the shadow of the Almighty! He looks to the world only through Jesus... He is alive, only to God!

The words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer are true: If you become a disciple of Jesus, then Jesus is coming in between you and your normal life. He blocks you in from your way to the world. You are helpless to move to where you were rambling. That is the cost of discipleship. Jesus is becoming your immediate reality. You can touch the world only through Him...

If Jesus is the immediate reality of a disciple, who is He to a mystic? I believe Jesus is the only reality to a mystic! His presence arrests you to continue in His presence! He would hate anything – father, mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters, yes, his own life- to gain Jesus as his friend!

Hate is indignation... When we find something of great value, everything we once counted gain is mean and rubbish... Jeremiah experienced this. No object of merry making attracted him... "I sat alone because your hand (your presence) was on me and you had filled me with indignation." Jer. 15:17.

The life of a mystic is great... Even though he lives in this world, he is otherworldly. His mind transcends all rationality and reaches a state of ecstasy where he finds his home!

Am I a mystic? I am sure; I enjoy His presence very much. However, I am yet to reach a place where I forget the whole world and immerse myself in the ecstasy of His presence. I was sad to realize that I am not a mystic. "But you are on the way..." I tried to cheer myself up. I knew, however, that I was just trying to soothe my soul. Finally, I said, "My dream is to become a mystic!"

I wanted to be alone. But, I had visitors, my friends. I could not ignore them. When they leave, I snuggle to the warmth of His wings. The magnificence of His presence swayed me in the celestial world. I closed my eyes, ears and my mind to the world around me. I forgot where I was. It was not a sick bed. It was not the valley of the shadow of death. No nausea now, no yellow either! Only light!

“Oh God Almighty, my Lord, my King How lovely is your dwelling place!”

I heard the chirping of the songbirds near His court. Where men retreat with fear, the sparrow has found a home and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may have her young! Faith escalated me too into that inner court

I dared to walk in through the torn curtains. With confidence, I approached the throne of grace! I cried for mercy. In my yearning for Him, my understanding fell to futility and my soul fainted... seeing nothing! hearing nothing! It was a musical silence! I felt that I am transformed in His presence. I felt life flowing into me. In its splendor, my body and mind were leaping for Him. Gyrating around the throne, I danced for Him. “Praise to you, my Holy God! I adore you, my Lord!”

I could only do one thing... praise Him! How blessed am I to have the blessed one, as my own!

“After this, I looked and saw before me a great and countless multitude from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in the presence of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: “Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.” Rev 7:9-10

To my surprise, He stepped down from His throne. He took my hands in his arms and started dancing with me!

Lying down in my sick bed, I experienced His strength. The Valley of Baca is no more a weeping valley. The shadow of death, which I was passing through, became a place of springs... I was wet in the autumn rains! The springs were turned into a pool. I knew I was going from strength to strength.

In between Babu, my old time friend, came with a counsel! (He is a professional counselor) He told me a beautiful story. A man wanted to make his three year old daughter a great pianist. So, she was forced to practice piano till late nights. Her tender fingers ached and she cried. The father was cool, but strict... “My dear, I know your little fingers ache... But I want you to become a great pianist. Even if you suffer now, you need to undergo strict practicing to make my dream about you a reality!”

“Man, we are like that young child!” said Babu. “Many times, we also ask “Why me Lord? Why should I suffer all these?” There is only one answer... God has a dream!”

I liked the story... and the message too! Babu has become a good counselor, I thought. But the last question... "Why me Lord...?" I have never queried that to my Lord!

One day the doctor came to my room. "If you want to go home, I can discharge you..." he said. I was surprised to hear that; because my bilerubin count was increasing still. It was reaching near to the 20 mark instead of less than one, which is the normal count. "We were worried about the liver enzymes, that has come down. The terror is over. Now, you may go home, but take complete bed rest. Don't think about traveling and other excruciating jobs for a longtime."

I was happy. While being admitted here, going back alive was doubtful. Now, within two weeks, a joyful release! Praise the Lord!

# 6

Discharge news was joyful... But how can we pay the bill? We had no idea what the bill would come to! We had only given an advance of Rs. 10,000/-. If the bill comes as a blow, what can we do?

Some money was sent to the mission field from the 'first day's collection'. The balance was with Sunny. That of course, was only a small amount. Sunny said he would arrange some more money. But if the bill is beyond his capacity, what can be done? Jessy went to the cash counter to know how much the bill would come to. They asked her to wait...

A hundred or a couple of hundred thousand is common bill in PVS. Another person who was afflicted with Hepatitis, had to pay two hundred and fifty thousand bucks at the time of discharge! I may not have to pay that much! My healing comes in the 'miracle category.' Anyway, the uncertainty continued even in the afternoon.

Jessy had Rs. 5,000/- in her wallet for daily needs, but she forgot it at Bethel Sabu's house, where she was staying during these days. Jessy asked James to go there and bring that money. If Sunny comes even with Rs. 150,000/-, we should not be in trouble for lack of 5,000/- that Jessy forgot.

After James left for Sabu's house, Jessy went to the hospital office again. By that time, the bill was ready. It was only Rs. 11,145/-. Out of this, Rs. 10,000/- were given as advance. The balance was only Rs.1,145/-.

Jessy was staring at the accountant. She couldn't believe her ears! Where we expected a hundred thousand plus, it was only thousand plus. Miracle was not only wrought in the astonishing decrease of liver enzymes, but also in the bill amount!



“Will you pay the bill right now?” the counter staff asked. Jessy looked at her purse. She had Rs. 1,135/- . Ten more rupees were needed. She saw James coming back. “James, we need ten rupees more. Give me.” She said.

“Sorry Jessymmamma, It is only five...” James became nervous... It is interesting to see him nervy. When Jessy said ten, he thought it was 10,000/-.

“Not 10,000, James, it is a simple ten bucks note... you must have it in your pocket!” she said.

After paying the bill, Jessy ran to the telephone booth.

“Sunny, no need for money, you just come with the car...”

“Hey, what happened? No discharge today?”

“We got a discharge... Money is paid...”

“Money paid? Where from?”

“From here itself, man...”

“How come? Are you...”

“You just come back, man...”

Sunny reached the hospital within the hour.

Dinner was with Sabu. Cissy prepared a great meal.

“Rescue from the mouth of grave, at last... How did you feel Saju, when you met death face to face? Why don't you just write those things down?” Cissy made such a suggestion for the first time.

“Should write,” I said to myself... If I write, what should be the title? It should be, “A death, The valley of the shadow of death and The shadow of the Almighty...” I decided!

# 7

31 December! I was in Jessy's house at Kottayam. It was almost two months that I was recuperating; Along with hepatitis, gout arthritis also found my body as a place of abode! My right thumb was as stiff as a concrete piece! No painkiller could quench the pain on my thumb.

Jessy, the kids and all others went to church to attend the watch-night service. When I was alone, Jesus came and sat with me. "Hi, everyone will receive a new year's message from the church tonight. What is your message for me?" I asked Him.

I couldn't hear any voice. My eyes were stuck on the description of the temptations of Jesus. I walked with Him in to the wilderness.

"Do you believe that you are the son of God? Are you sure?" I heard a sneaky voice. The accuser sketched a query with his tail.

"What is your assurance? Even after forty days of fasting, you are ravenous. Why should a son go hungry? Why should a son bear pain? Why should he be afflicted? If you are the son of God, why don't you just exercise your authority as a son...? Why don't you just command these stones to be turned into loaves of bread? Why can't you just command the pain to abscond from your body? If that happens, you can quench your hunger; and you will get an assurance that you are a son..."

"I don't need any miracle as a proof for my assurance," I said. When I hear each word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord... that becomes life for me. His Spirit communicates with my spirit, and gently says to me, "You are mine, my child!"

I will not doubt His love, even when I am in hunger, affliction, hardship or persecution... He speaks to me, and that's enough.

The tail of the accuser was straightened and I could see him fleeing.

I did not receive a spirit that makes me a slave to fear, but the Spirit of sonship. And by Him, deep within, joyfully I cry, "Abba, Father." Rom 8:14-16

Lying down on the bed, I gave my hands into His arms. "Speak to me so that I may live..." I cried to Him.

He was kind enough to speak. I tasted honey in His words. That cooled my belly and became life to my body!

Then His disciples came to Him. "Lord, we know you are hungry. We have brought food for you."

He looked at them with compassion. He told them about the food that they didn't know of, food that made Him content. To them, His answer was a puzzle to be solved! For a moment, I too, failed to unfold the mystery. When it was resolved, it filled my soul! His will He disclosed...

I am no more a slave, but His son. He spoke to me as a friend... Oh how sweet are Thy words to my taste, my Lord... sweeter than honey to my mouth! He

scribbled His will in my mind. His spirit strengthened me to obey it. His mighty hands made it possible!

Yes, He is my beloved!

"I delight to sit in his shade,  
And his fruit is sweet to my taste.

He has taken me to the banquet hall,  
And his banner over me is love.

Strengthen me with raisins;  
Refresh me with apples,  
For I am faint with love.

His left arm is under my head,  
And his right arm embraces me"

*Song of Solomon 2:3-6*

# 8

By January, my blood count was returning to normal. I was still weak in my body. One day I went to attend the 'Kumbanad' convention. While getting out of the car, I fell... That was the first time my friends saw me with a beard.

Doctors advised me to take complete rest. My friends insisted that I do not plan long travels at least for the next one year.

By March, I felt normal in my body. My eyes were longing to see the mission fields. The words of my beloved spoken to me in my 'solitary watch night' were reverberating in my ears...

Man shall live by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord... I was sure I was getting it. To Jesus, His food was to do the will of Him who sent him and to finish His work. What else is there for me, to fill my belly? If I am not fulfilling His will, I am starving. His disciples saw the harvest as a four-month far event. But when I raised my head and looked to the field, I saw it more than ripe!

"I should leave for North India" I told Jessy.

"You should, if God has spoken" she answered. I had no doubt about God's assignment for me.

Again, the word became life! "When the LORD brought back the captives to Zion, we were like men who dreamed." Ps 126:1.

It was a human impossibility. The Nation was in ruins for seventy years! Neither the inhabitants of the city nor the exiles were capable of rebuilding it. Their foes ridiculed them as feeble Jews who cannot restore even the city walls. "What they are building - if even a fox climbed up on it, he would break down their wall of stones!" they said. (Nehemiah 4:1-3) To them, they were "heaps of rubble-burned." Can you expect stones to turn alive when you burn rubbles?

Those who even dreamt of the restoration of Zion were branded insane. However, who can resist the will of God? The one who created rocks from nothingness can certainly bring back stones from rubbles! To the utter marvel of all the neighboring nations, Zion was restored.

God's restoration process is always unique, in that it would be great and perfect, turning all human anticipations upside down. His work would be as perfect as you would dream about it!

# 9

My health was restored so fast, as though in a dream! I was active again in the mission fields. To reach from one station to another, I drove the jeep, through rough ways, four to five hours continuously. Even where our young missionaries were tired, God helped me to be active. I enjoyed the uniqueness of God's restoration in my life! I was laughing within me... It was the laughter of amazement, adoration and gratitude!

"Our mouths were filled with laughter... The LORD has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy." Ps 126:2-3

After a few months, I reached, Damoh again. No gas in the Jeep; No money to buy it either. We wanted to go for a meeting at Imlai village, ten kilometers away from Damoh.

"We will go on a bicycle" I said to James.

"No way! You are..." James was afraid of allowing me to ride a bicycle. "If it is needed, I will ride the bicycle for you. You just sit in the back," he said.

"I am okay," I said. "God has healed me. I will take the bicycle myself."

Returning after cycling twenty odd kilometers, I was gasping... but I was laughing! God's restoration is perfect. I thanked Him for His mercy.

Those few months were part of an unforgettable era in my short life! Time is a great donor. It gives you experience. Time is a great eradicator too. It wipes off the memories of your experiences. The death and the valley of the shadow of death were strong experiences. But, its memories were fading. However, His words, His will and His works remain without fail.

Shadow of the Almighty... It was such a powerful and persuading experience. Time could not fade those memories. It is my prayer, that time would never do that!



### Finishing line

Beloved,

I thank you for spending your valuable time reading this book. True, I have narrated the divine healing experience of mine here, but my intention was to tell you how much Jesus was real to me when I met death face to face.

I don't claim this to be a unique experience. You too, can experience God's presence in reality. I share it with you for you to know this fact.

Those who do not fear death, fear nothing. To put an end to the fear of death, the feeling of ambiguity after death must be obliterated.

Through my friendship with Jesus, I have inherited an eternal life.

Now, the reality of the other world is unveiled. I know where I am going... I am going to be with Jesus. Even death cannot separate me from Jesus. It is this assurance that makes me smile at death.

Are you a friend of Jesus? Do you walk with Him? If you do, I thank God for you. Even if you meet death face to face, you will do it with a smile. I am not saying you are going to die today. If you are a true disciple of Jesus, you will peacefully face both life and death.

However, if you are still uncertain about what will happen to you after death, my friend, with all humility I encourage you to get an assurance of eternal life, by entering into a friendship with Jesus.

Some people have a relationship with Jesus, but it has not grown to the depth of a friendship. Let me remind you that you are losing a world of joyfulness. I plead with you my brethren to make your relationship with Jesus a celebration.

"So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in Him, rooted and built up in Him, strengthened in the faith" Col 2:6-7

Dear friend, when the relationship with Jesus becomes your first priority, when He becomes your immediate reality, you will fear nothing. Leaning on His bosom, you will hear the heartbeat of Jesus. Neither death nor life will put you down. You will be in His safe hands.

I hope we can pray to Jesus for a profound friendship with Him... Now!

Let us say to Him:

“Jesus, I need to grow in your unfailing and unceasing friendship. In life and in death I need you to be with me. I want to experience you every moment of my life. I want to see you, hear you and touch you in a deeper way. Hear my prayers Oh Lord, Amen!

Cover back



### Life or death?

Swinging on a balance between the two, Saju smiled at the world.

“I am least bothered” He said. “Even in the valley of the shadow of death, I have somebody with me. His name is JESUS”

To me, Jesus is not just a religious idea;  
He is real.

He lifted me from the deep pit of my hopelessness;  
He is my savior!  
He holds my hands when I walk through the valley of the shadow of death;  
He is my companion.  
He talks to me tenderly, and gives me partnership in His great mission;  
He is my friend!

He is my eternal beloved, who one day will take me to the world beyond, where  
He prepares a home for me!

**A death...**

**Valley of the shadow of death... And  
The shadow of the Almighty**

by

**SAJU**

A small book with a touch of mysticism. You can read it in one sitting. This will lead you to find a way to life abundant!