

## India's Famous Monkey King

Several years ago, Jyothi Raj was a depressed man - he selected a rock high on a fort wall and decided to jump to his death from it. The rock presented a quandary though - there was no easy way to get to it. But Jyothi managed to climb up anyway. He observed and emulated the monkeys around him on the face of the fort wall. When he finally got onto the rock, he was surprised to hear cheers of approval and applause from onlookers who had observed his ascent. He had a revelation - he didn't want to die. That day, he became a monkey climber.



"A monkey is the world's best climber. I'm turning from a human into a monkey" Jyothi said with a smile.

Jyothi's story starts of as quite a sad story - he was born to a poor family in Southern India. At the age of seven, because he was afraid of being punished at home, he ran away to a nearby city.

As he grew up, Jyothi was a victim of neglect and cruelty. "A man used to look after me and he used to punish me a lot. When he did such things, I was very hurt. And I used to question my place on the planet."

He supported himself by working various part-time jobs at a mixture of shops and homes. One day, a family accused Jyothi of stealing money - he did not steal the money. Jyothi had had enough. He was bitter and disgusted with life, he made up his mind to end his life.

"I came to the fort and planned to jump from a rock," he said. "But there was no route to climb to it. Then a monkey came and climbed that rock. When I saw that, I thought, 'I will also climb like that.' Then jump from the top to die." He ultimately reached the top, but at the top, he realized his new destiny.

"When I reached the top a lot of tourists who had come to see the fort started to cheer and encourage me. They wanted to know if I was a champion rock climber. And they said they had never seen someone climb such a huge rock. They talked to me with so much love."

"It was then that I realized that such adventures make it easy for you to find a spot in other people's hearts. So I continued solo-climbing by observing and emulating monkeys." Jyothi began to climb the fort walls regularly, got to know the monkeys and began to duplicate their climbing techniques.

Gradually, he began to become famous. Tourists came to video his climbs and share them on YouTube. These videos of Jyothi executing highly risky stunts on the walls have gained him fame and attention. Ultimately he has become known as 'Monkey King'.

Monkey climbing is not as easy as Jyothi makes it look. He has spent many years practicing monkey climbing. "Climbing is very difficult. I've been injured a lot," he said. "I've broken both my legs, my hands, my lower back and my head. But I've never let my heart break. Now, there is no pain in my heart because everyone is so nice to me. The entire village treats me like a son, so that makes me feel very nice."