

Death of a Guru

Rabindranath Maharaj

Rabindranath Maharaj entered the world with a long and proud history behind him. His family tree read like a who's who of Brahmin priests. Growing up in the West Indies he trained as a Yogi, following as was expected in the footsteps of his famous father for whom many Hindus claimed avatar status — one of the great gods living on earth. Rabi's father was treated like the other household gods being washed, dressed and fed daily. His admirers claimed he had experienced the bliss of Nirvana thereby escaping the seemingly endless cycle of reincarnation. Yet although Rabi admired his father, his incredible spirituality put a strain on his relationship with his son. In Rabi's own words:

“Because of the vows he had taken before I was born, not once did my father ever speak to me or pay me the slightest heed. Just two words from him would have made me unspeakably happy. More than anything else in the whole world I wanted to hear him say, ‘Rabi! Son!’ Just once. But he never did.”

“For eight long years he tittered not a word, not even a whispered confidence to my mother. The trance-like state which he had achieved through Yoga used to be considered peculiar by those unacquainted with eastern mysticism. However, ‘altered states of consciousness’ have gained acceptance in the West, through hypnotherapy, autosuggestion, guided imagery, Yoga, T.M. and

visualisation. My father was the ultimate example in real life of what the Yogis and gurus, now famous in Europe and America, teach. He lived what they talk about, as few men ever have.”

“No-one, not even my mother, ever knew the exact vows he had taken; they could only be surmised. Sitting in the lotus position, the toes of both feet turned up on top of his knees, on the board that he also used for a bed, he passed his days in meditation and the reading of the sacred scripture. Nothing else. Mantras (repeated Hindu prayers) are considered a necessity for meditation, creating vibrations that attract deities. But my father was even beyond the use of mantras. We all considered him to be in direct communion with Brahman. So completely had he turned within to realise the true Self that he never acknowledged any human presence, although admirers came from miles around to worship him and to lay before him their offerings of fruit and flowers, cotton, cloth and money. No one ever aroused a response from him. He seemed to be in another world.”

“Even as a small boy, a fierce pride stirred within me whenever I heard my father praised. With awe and respect, religious Hindus spoke of him as one who had the courage and conviction to tread higher and mysterious paths. In the opinion of many, including the greatest pundit (expert in Hinduism) I ever knew, my Father was an avatar. I heard that word for many years before I really understood what it meant. How good it sounded —and so very special! I knew that I was special too, because he was my father. One day I would also be a great Yogi.”

Then tragedy struck. Rabi’s father died. His stiff body was placed on a great pile of firewood and sacrificed to Agni the god of fire. Standing nearby, Rabi’s mother somehow found strength to

follow the teaching of Krishna: she would mourn neither the living nor the dead. Not once did she cry as the flames consumed her husband's body. Rabi's father was widely mourned and sadly missed especially by Rabi who soon suffered another crushing blow. Shortly after her husband's death, Rabi's devout Hindu mother left their home in Trinidad, in the West Indies, to go to India to scatter her husband's ashes on the river Ganges (which is also worshipped as a god). She did not return to see her son for many years, choosing instead to pursue a career in Yoga. She eventually became one of the top Yoga instructors both in India and the Caribbean.

Despite the double shock of losing his father and his mother, Rabi remained determined to become a guru. He moved to live at his grandmother's spacious house. (His grandfather had died of a heart attack when Rabi was still young). Rabi says:

“Nana [Rabi's grandfather] had been heavily involved in Hindu occultism and was critical of those who merely philosophised about their religion without learning to use supernatural forces. As I grew older, Ma [Rabi's grandmother] confided in me about a secret she had kept in her heart for years and had shared only with Aunt Revati: that Nana had sacrificed his first son as an offering to one of his favourite gods. This was not an uncommon practice, but it was never spoken about openly. Nana's favourite deity was Lakshmi, a goddess of wealth and prosperity and consort of Vishnu the preserver, who demonstrated her great powers when Nana rose at almost one leap to become one of the most powerful and wealthy men in my native Trinidad. When the small frame shack that Nana had built for his family and business mysteriously burned down, he replaced it with a huge house that became a landmark on the road from Port of Spain

to San Fernando. No one could fathom where the money had suddenly come from. Not many of the hundreds of thousands of immigrants from India and their descendants had been able to accumulate wealth so easily and so suddenly. We all believed that powerful gods had helped him. In turn he had given his soul to them.”

Like his father before him, Hindu priests, holy men and psychics all predicted that Rabi would become a great Hindu. He began his training for the Hindu priesthood at the ashram in Durga under the supervision of a highly respected head priest. Hanuman, Shiva, Krishna, Ganesha and others, including the cow god, became his favourite deities. Rabi’s experiences were often intense and deeply spiritual:

“Nothing was more important than our daily transcendental meditation which Krishna advocated as the surest way to eternal bliss. But it could also be dangerous. Frightening psychic experiences awaited the unwary meditator. Demons described in the Vedas (Hindu scriptures) had been known to take possession of some Yogis. ‘Kundalini’ power (or energy flow) said to be coiled like a serpent at the base of the spine, could produce ecstatic experiences when released in deep meditation — or, if not properly controlled, could do great mental and even bodily harm. The line between ecstasy and horror was very fine. For that reason we initiates were closely supervised by the Brahmacharya (celibate priest) and his assistant.”

“During the daily meditation I began to have visions of psychedelic colours, to hear unearthly music and to visit exotic ‘planets’ where the gods conversed with me, encouraging me to attain even higher states of consciousness. Sometimes in my trance I encountered the same horrible demonic creatures that are depicted

in the images in Hindu, Buddhist, Shinto and other religious temples. These were frightful experiences, but the Brahmacharya explained that they were normal and urged me to pursue the quest for self-realisation. At times I experienced a sense of mystical unity with the universe. I was the Universe, Lord of all, omnipotent, omnipresent. My instructors were excited about this. I was obviously a chosen vessel, they said, destined for early success in the search for union with Brahman. The forces that had guided my father were now guiding me. Indeed, seated before a mirror I worshipped myself — and why not? I was God. Krishna, in the precious and beautiful Bhagavad-Gita, had promised this divine knowledge to the one who practised Yoga. This was the nectar for the meditators to drink. It wasn't a question of becoming God, but of simply realising who I really was and had been all the time. Walking the streets, I felt that I really was the Lord of the Universe and that my creatures were bowing before me."

Despite Rabi's self-realisation he was secretly addicted to cigarettes and regularly stole as a way of life. While on the one hand his 'spirituality' grew deeper and deeper, on the other hand the teenage Rabi recognised himself becoming more and more arrogant, proud and selfish. This contradictory state of affairs was apparently quite widespread. Rabi discovered that numbers of his guru heroes were also living wicked lives.

"It troubled me deeply to see how the state of blissful peace I had reached in meditation could so easily be destroyed by a scolding from my aunt accusing me of laziness or of failing to do my fair share around the house. Normally a peaceful person, at such times my temper would flare and I would use harsh language in defending

myself. Once I grabbed Nana's old leather strap with which he had so often beaten the family, and lashed it repeatedly across the backs of several of my younger girl cousins before retreating in confusion and shame."

"Although the peace I experienced in meditation so easily deserted me, the occult forces that my practice of Yoga cultivated and aroused lingered on and began to manifest themselves in public. Knowing that without these displays of the supernatural my following could never be very great, I welcomed this growing spiritual power. Often those who bowed before me would sense a brightness and experience an inner illumination when I touched them on the forehead in bestowal of my blessing. I was only a teenager, but I was already administering the 'Shakti Pat', famous among the gurus and a true mark of the authenticity of my calling. Shakti is one of the names given to Kali, Shiva's murderous, blood-drinking consort, the mother goddess of power who dispenses the primal force flowing at the heart of the universe. How it excited me to become a channel of her power!"

"Often while I was in deep meditation the gods seemed to become visible and talked with me. It would be years before I would learn that such experiences were being duplicated in laboratories under the watchful eyes of para-psychologists through the use of hypnosis and LSD. In my Yoga trances most often I would be alone with Shiva the destroyer, sitting fearfully at his feet, the huge cobra coiled about his neck staring at me, hissing and darting out its tongue threateningly. Sometimes I wondered why none of the gods I ever encountered seemed kind, gentle and loving. But at least they seemed real. I had no doubt about that."

Not until Rabi reached high school did his Hindu beliefs begin to take a few knocks. As a Hindu in a school of mixed religions he occasionally ended up on the receiving end of the mockery of others.

“Do Hindus believe everything is God?” asked one boy.

Rabi nodded.

“You mean a fly is God, or an ant, or a stinkbug?”

“You are laughing because you don’t understand,” Rabi retorted. *“You see only the illusion but you don’t see the One reality — Brahman.”*

“Are you God?” asked a Portuguese boy incredulously.

“Yes,” Rabi responded firmly, *“and so are all Hindus. They just need to realise it.”*

“How are you going to realise what isn’t true?” the boy replied. *“You didn’t create the world!”*

An English boy who seemed familiar with Hinduism said to Rabi while winking at his friends, *“I hear you’re a vegetarian who doesn’t believe in taking any life. Don’t you know that even vegetables have the seven characteristics, of life? So, vegetarians take life too. How about when you boil water for your tea? Think of all the millions of bacteria you kill then.”*

And so it went on. Although on the outside Rabi was as strong as ever, numerous doubts began to assail him.

“My religion was beautiful in theory, but I was having serious difficulties applying it in everyday life. If there was only one reality,

then Brahman was evil as well as good, death as well as life, hatred as well as love. That made everything meaningless, and life became an absurdity. If reason also was 'maya' (an illusion), as the Vedas taught, then how could I trust any concept, including the idea that all was maya and only Brahman was real? If none of my reasoning was to be trusted, how could I be sure that the bliss I sought was not just another illusion? My only hope was Yoga, which Krishna in the Gita promised would dispel all ignorance through the realisation that I was none other than God himself:"

One day Rabi was about to touch the forehead of a woman who had come for his blessing when he distinctly heard an authoritative voice saying, "You are not God, Rabi!" Instinctively Rabi knew that the true God, the Creator of all, had spoken these words, and he began to tremble. In tears he ran to his room. All of his pride, deception, arrogance and sin came before his eyes. He wanted to tell God how sorry he was for his evil actions, especially for stealing worship that belonged to God alone. He entered a period of crisis.

"Day after day, I, who had once thought myself on the verge of self-realisation now grovelled in abject self-condemnation. I thought of all the cigarettes I had stolen, the lies I had told, the proud and selfish life I had lived and the hatred in my heart towards my aunt and others. There had been times when I had even wished her dead, while at the same time preaching non-violence. My good deeds could never outweigh my bad deeds on any honest scale. I now feared the astral travel and the spirit visitations I had once exulted in, yet I knew no other way to search for God than through Yoga. My religion, my training, my experience in meditation had all taught me that only by looking within myself could I find truth, so I tried it again. The

search within, however, proved futile. Instead of finding God, I only stirred up a nest of evil that made me even more aware of my own heart's corruption. My misery only became greater, my sense of guilt and shame a burden impossible to bear."

About this time Rabi met a Christian called Molli. He discovered that she had once been a devout Hindu who claimed to have found true forgiveness, peace and love through turning to Jesus Christ as the only true God. At first Rabi was angry with this Hindu apostate, but as she gently spoke of the God she had come to know as Father, forgiver and provider, and of Jesus Christ who had died for all her sin and guilt and who had given her power to live a life that pleased God, something began to happen to Rabi.

"I wanted her peace and joy, but I was not going to give up any part of my religion! She hadn't said anything about that, but I could see that if I believed that Jesus was God and that He had died for me and could forgive my sins, then everything I had lived for as a Hindu was meaningless."

After half a day's discussion Molli left, but not before challenging Rabi to get on his knees before retiring to bed and ask God to show him the truth. Then, with a wave of her hand she was gone. Alone on his knees that evening Rabi, who had sought self-realisation for so long, now realised he was hopelessly lost. The words of his Uncle came back to him when he described the Hindu priesthood:

"They talk a lot about self-realisation, but only become more selfish!"

Three weeks later, Rabi's cousin Krishna showed him a Bible and pointed to the words of Jesus in John chapter 3 verse 3, *"Unless a man is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."* Rabi, as he read the context, understood that Jesus was not talking about reincarnation but a spiritual birth that makes someone new.

"In the past I had sought mystical experiences as an escape from daily life, which Hindu philosophy called maya, an illusion. Now I wanted the power to face life, to live the life God had planned for me. I wanted to experience a deep change in what I was, not merely the superficial peace I felt during meditation which forsook me the moment I lost my temper. I needed to be born again, spiritually not physically."

The day finally came when Rabi's cousin invited him to a church meeting to hear about Jesus Christ. The preacher, a former Muslim, clearly presented the fact that every person in the world is a sinner by nature and by practice, and that the death of God's Son Jesus Christ on the cross is the only ransom price that God will accept in order to secure personal forgiveness for those willing to turn from their sin and receive Jesus as Lord of their life. Rabi wept tears of repentance for the way he had lived - for his anger, hatred, selfishness and pride, for the idols he had served and for accepting worship that belonged to God alone. He realised that Jesus wasn't just another god among millions, but was in fact the only true creator God who had loved him enough to become man and die for his sins. The Lord revealed the great truth of the atonement to Rabi — he saw by faith that *"Christ died for me!"* With that realisation, fears of darkness lifted and light flooded his soul. He was born again.

Astral travel to other planets, unearthly music, psychedelic colours, Yogic visions and higher states of consciousness now appeared like dust and ashes. The new birth through Christ was not just another psychic trip. Rabi knew on the authority of the Bible that God had forgiven his sins. Never had he been so genuinely joyful as tears of repentance turned to tears of joy.

“For the first time in my life I knew what real peace was. That wretched, unhappy, miserable feeling left me. I was in communion with God and I knew it. I was one of God’s children now. I had been born again.”

Since his conversion to Jesus Christ in 1962, many of Rabi’s relatives have become Christians too. Through the written and spoken word his remarkable story has spread throughout the world. He now warns that Hindu philosophy is spreading through Western culture in the form of mind-altering drugs, Yoga, self-help seminars and the New Age movement and that the gods he used to worship are demons deceiving millions of unsuspecting seekers. His message is unpalatable to many but unerringly true:

“There can be no mixing of Hinduism and Christianity. Jesus Christ alone is the answer to mankind’s spiritual need.”

Three verses from the New Testament make this clear:

“Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other Name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved.”
(Acts 4:12)

“There is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all” (1 Timothy 2:5-6)

Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth and the life. No man comes unto the Father but by Me.” (John 14:6)