

REBIRTH OF A YOGI: Rabi Maharaj's Story



"I believed as a Hindu that I was Brahman, that I was divine, that my father was divine, that everything was divine".

My father, who was a famous guru in his community, was perhaps the most religious man I have ever known. He was a guru in the real sense of the word. He was a yogi, an ascetic, who renounced everything including his own marriage. He renounced the world in order to reach *moksha* in this life; he didn't like the thought of reincarnating yet another time, coming back again and again and again.

He made a vow not to speak to anyone, not to go anywhere, not to do anything other than to meditate and read the Hindu scriptures, not even to eat and cook food. He was already vegetarian, so he just bought a banana a day. He really took the Hindu scriptures at face value. Krishna, in fact, prescribes this way of life to the man who means business, and my father did mean business.

He died mysteriously one day, when the health doctor ordered that his hair had to be cut. The moment they put scissors to his hair he fell back dead.

Then there was my death as a young up-and-coming Brahman guru, a Brahman Hindu, a young Hindu priest (I like to refer to myself as a yogi rather than as a guru but they mean almost the same thing). I had seen many of the inconsistencies of Hinduism. I realised that my father had wasted his life. I realised that fact, because I had always known that God is God, that the real true living God is there, that he exists, though I didn't know him myself. Neither my mother nor Hinduism nor any religious leader taught me about God as I know him today. Yet I always knew that he existed.

I believed as a Hindu that I was Brahman, that I was divine, that my father was divine, that everything was divine. Yet deep inside I knew that God was there, and it was difficult to relate those two things. So I had to give up one, *how* I didn't know. I was tempted to give up my awareness of God and keep true to Hinduism, trying to be as true as possible to the faith. I knew it was impossible for man to become God. So that was my first and major dilemma, not knowing the real God but knowing he was there, and not being able to find him in Hinduism.

Then, second, whereas Hindus believed that I was perfect and divine, and whereas I tried to believe it with my head, deep in my heart I knew I wasn't divine. I knew my own imperfections, my own limitations.

I did what every good Hindu does to find truth: I looked into myself. "Look away from everything, look into yourself." When I looked into myself, I didn't see God. I saw sin.

I came to this realization because I tried to be honest with myself. I always recommend honesty. It was one of the greatest helps for me, in my search for truth. And so I needed forgiveness for sins, but I couldn't find it in Hinduism. There is no such thing there as forgiveness of sins. When Hinduism talks about sin, if it does, it means something completely different. The only sin in Hinduism is to believe that the physical world is real. As far as I could understand, Maharishi uses the world sin to mean stress, but sin and stress are two different things. If you have stress you can get away where you can get some

fresh air. Sin and stress are totally different, but then again Maharishi is using the word as a typical Hindu.

But I knew that I had done wrong things. I wasn't a very bad person but I recognised that I was a sinner, and it is very un-Hindu to admit that you are sinner.

Vivekananda said in Chicago, at the world's parliament of religions in the 1890s, "It's a sin to call a man a sinner." Well, I recognised I had done wrong things. I wanted some kind of deliverance from that. I wanted freedom from my sin and guilt, and Hinduism did not provide for that. Hinduism teaches karma: what you sow you reap; the law of cause and effect. No one can change that, not even the Hindu gods. Although there are different kinds of karmas, there is no karma in Hinduism where you can get rid of your sins. Some Hindus believe that by meditating a lot and prophesying a lot and practicing yoga you can balance things out, you can cancel out misdeeds of the past or of the past life but it's still not the same thing.

When the Brahman or the guru talks about becoming pure, he does not mean having your sins washed away or having your sins cleansed. He means entering a state of consciousness where you are no longer an individual. You're so blown up, so expanded, that you are beyond individuality. You are then God. And when you become God or when you realise you are God, you are longer impure, you are pure. Now as Christians the greatest impurity is to entertain such a belief, or such a thought: that you are a God. That's as base one can get. The fallen angel Lucifer wanted to believe that he was divine, he was God. He didn't like the idea of almighty God above him or over him, somebody greater than he was. So what Hinduism is teaching as utmost purity is, in the eyes of the Bible or in the teaching of the Bible, utmost impurity.

The third dilemma I had was the matter of the future. I wanted to know where I was going. I wanted to know who I was and why I was existing. Again employing honesty, I realised that it is impossible to become God in this life, or another life, or a million lives from this one. I still, however, believed in reincarnation, that one would come back again and again. But I decided I didn't want to come back as a human being. I didn't even want to come back as a Brahman which is the highest caste, a great honor. The lower caste people, the untouchables, and the pariahs would give anything, they would give all their money, they would do good works, do yoga and meditation, to be reincarnated as a Brahman.

But I didn't want to come back even as the greatest guru on earth. Because I knew the corruption of man. I knew the corruption of the Hindu priests and the Brahmans. I knew that many gurus were money grabbers. (I don't want to say all of them, but most of them.) I think that my father was about the only exception I knew. He couldn't be bothered about money; people were putting money at his feet, but he never looked at it. That is the real guru. The real guru belongs to the

Himalayan caves, not in jumbo jets flying and not ensconced in a big hotel in Switzerland.

So I had a kind of alternative hope, a substitute hope, which was to come back reincarnated into a cow. I regarded a cow as very sacred and holy, as most if not all Hindus do. I thought the cow was pure and innocent. I used to worship a cow every morning for about an hour, in the hope that I would be rewarded by being reincarnated into a cow. One morning the cow tried to attack me, while I was worshipping it. I had to run for my life. That shattered my cow-worship, my cow-hope, and everything. That was the end. So there I was. Without hope.

And you know, Hindus still came and bowed before me. When my father died, people had already been reverencing me, not just after his death but before, because I was a very special child. Many believed that my father was an avatar, an incarnation of one of the Hindu gods. Many believed that my father was really divine, that he really was on a level with Krishna or Shiva, especially because of the life he lived. The more you withdraw yourself, the more you become as ascetic, the more you enter into silence, what the Hindus call *samadhi*, the more the Hindus would respect you. That was the case with my father. So people revered and respected me, and admired and worshiped me, on the one hand, because of my father, because of who he was and the life he lived. I was his only child.

But of course being a Brahman was another reason why I would have the respect of other people. All Hindus have respect for Brahmans. You're supposed to give gifts to the Brahmans, you're supposed to pay obeisance to the Brahmans. Also I was a very religious child, vegetarian, who practiced yoga and meditation from a very early age. At the age of five I practiced yoga and meditation consciously of my own free will. People saw my sincerity, saw that I really meant business. I didn't compromise the faith. I was aspiring to become like my father.

My mother and other Hindus taught me that my father lived the best possible life any Hindu, any man, could live. As a child I accepted that in good faith. And any child would like to be like his father. He was my great hero, my great idol. So I started preparing myself to be like him.

When he died, I was about seven years old, and his mantra fell on me automatically. So then the disciples who were worshipping him gave their allegiance to me. They began to look up to me and have great hopes in me. In fact, when I was born there were all these predictions and prophesies that I was going to be a great guru. I was going to be a famous yogi and would have thousands and thousands of followers and worshipers all over the world. Every time somebody read my palm they would say the same thing. The palmists came to my house just to tell me that. They had psychic information, and they found themselves moving toward my home to tell me this. I tell in my book details about some of the things they told me that never have come to pass.

Do you know what I have discovered? Satan can inspire people to prophesy about the future, to predict the future. But Satan doesn't know what lies ahead, what is in the future. The only thing Satan knows about the future, that he is really sure about, is what the Bible teaches about the future. In that sense he knows all about what is going to happen to the future – as taught in the book of Revelations and Daniel and the Gospels and Paul's writing, etc.

So those predictions really made me feel I was somebody special. It really lifted me, to know I was going to be this great yogi. In that expectation I had the blessings of my father's life, and his disciples, and all the Hindus in the community, and my mother having great hopes in me. But now I didn't know where I was going. I had no hope for the future, and that really left me crying. I felt like a big hypocrite. But in my heart I knew I wasn't. I was like a living schizophrenic, and I couldn't go on for another day.

Various incidents were turning points in my life. For instance, I used to go out into the forest to meditate. I had an aunt who lived way out in the country. There were lots of forests out there. I went out into the forest to meditate one morning. I stood on the edge of a ridge overlooking a precipice, with a mountain and flowers and trees and everything. I'd just meditate on the world as a whole. Suddenly I heard a rustling behind me. I turned around to see a huge snake coming at me slowly, with all intention to bite. And it reminded me of Shiva. I worshiped, and Shiva had this cobra around his neck in the pictures that I worshiped. This snake looked so much like a cobra it reminded me of Shiva. I thought at first that it was Shiva coming to me, but then it was attacking. I started calling the name "Shiva" and the snake was coming closer. I couldn't run; if I ran, I would fall along the precipice. I called on Krishna. I called on Vishnu. I called a whole list of them and nothing was happening.

Then I suddenly remembered that my mother (and this is very unusual, because she is very anti-Christian; she is a Hindu philosopher) had taught me when I was a kid that there was a god whose name I could call if ever I got in a mess. If ever I had a big problem and couldn't find the solution, this was a god of protection. In Hinduism you have the god of wealth (in this case, a goddess), you have the god of knowledge, and you the god of protection. There was also a god of protection in Hinduism but this god she told me about was named Jesus. I didn't know who Jesus was; all I knew was the name.

And the moment I called the name "Jesus," this snake just spun around and bolted like lightning. It was the first time I came to realise that there was power in the name of Jesus. I stood there spellbound, that it should work. Then I kind of tried to brush the incident aside. But it was the first confrontation, a first experience of anything real about Jesus.

Another incident was that once a woman was bowing at my feet. She was putting at my feet what may have been a whole month's wages. She had worked hard in the sugar cane field, cutting cane in the hot sun. **One always feels proud when somebody bows before you; it gave me a good ego trip. But I suddenly felt a pang of conviction and I heard a clear voice saying to me, "Rabi, you are not God."** I left this woman bowing there, and I went into my room and locked the door and I began to cry. I broke down. I didn't like to have people seeing me cry. I was so proud about being Brahman and guru and all that. But I really wept. I was sorry, but I didn't know how to say sorry, or to whom to say sorry.

I knew that something was wrong. I was empty. I was lonely. I was unhappy in spite of all my transcendental experiences, my mystical experiences, seeing visions of the gods when I meditated, having trances, hearing "mystical music," seeing different colors, and other psychedelic trips I was having. They were very deep and very profound and "meaningful" at the time. I felt that I was one with the universe. I had attained Brahman.

But inside I was empty. I knew that something was missing. There was a vacuum in my life that no amount of meditation or yoga could fill.

I remained in the room determined to find the truth. Knowing that God exists, I knew that there must be some way to know him, some way he could communicate himself to me. The God I knew in Hinduism was not the real God I knew was there. I was really determined to find the truth. I locked myself away for four days, not talking to anyone, not eating any food, not going anywhere. The other thought that was going through my mind was that if I couldn't find the truth I could commit suicide. I'd end it all. I'd probably start from scratch again.

But it was at the end of those of four days that a young woman came to my home to share the gospel with me. The gospel that God loves you, that Christ died for your sins, that God wants to come into your life. And that he can come only through Jesus who said "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man comes to the Father except through me."

I had never heard in Hinduism that God is a God of love or that God loves me. God is impersonal in Hinduism. He cannot be a God of love because Brahman is *nirguna*, without attributes or qualities, the same sort of thing Paul Tillich talks about in his existentialism.

That really kind of knocked me over, especially the fact that Jesus died to forgive all my sins. In Hinduism, you do the dying for the gods, the gods don't die for you. (There are over three billion gods in Hinduism.) I only saw that afterwards. You wouldn't even want to expect it in Hinduism.

But the fact that God is a God of love really shook me up, and also that God wants to come into my life. God wants to come into my life? That was something very new to me, that was very un-Hindu. I am God. I am divine. I am one with Brahman. Krishna doesn't have to come in me.

The Hare Krishnas jumble the whole thing today. They have corrupted Hinduism. Because when you say, "Christ lives in me." They say "well, Krishna lives in me." But that is not Hindu to say, "Krishna lives in me." And when we say, "Christ lives in me," they also say "Well, Christ lives in me too – but we call him Krishna." It is all so wrong to equate Christ with Krishna, to put them on the same power, to make them one. They are worlds apart. You have Krishna saying, there are many ways leading to the same goal. On the other hand, you have Christ saying, I am the only way or the way. And many other differences.

But back to the story. This young woman said to me, "Rabi, do me a simple favor before you go to bed tonight. Just ask God to show you the truth." Well, I was really offended. An outcaste (she was not an outcaste before her conversion but in my eyes she was an outcaste), a reprobate, telling me, a high caste Brahman, to ask God for the truth.

At the age of 15, I knew enough of Hindu philosophy to take a stand. I was really bitter with her. I argued with her. I told that I would never become a Christian not even on my deathbed – little did I know that I was already on my deathbed. I told her I was born a Hindu, I would die a Hindu. And I was really upset that she left Hinduism. It's the most atrocious thing any Hindu could do.

I had to count the cost after she had told me this. I did go to my room and I did drop on my knees and I did cry out to God for the first time and said "God, please show me the truth." The Holy Spirit was ministering to me during the next few weeks, showing me my needs and showing me my need for forgiveness. The Spirit showed me that Christ is the only way, the only one I could turn to. And I had to count a very heavy cost. What are all the Hindus to think? What is my mother going to think? What if Christ is false Hinduism is right? That meant I would fall to the lowest pit in my next life and I'd have to work my way up again. I'd need a million reincarnations and millions of years.

I finally got on my knees and prayed a simple sinner's prayer. "Lord Jesus, I have read the Bible. And I heard that you died for my sins. Please forgive me and come into my life. Please forgive me and bring me into contact with the true God."

After that, I felt tons of darkness go out of me. I felt black things going out of me. I felt totally free for the first time. I didn't know that I was bound or what possessed me, what was in me after all this spirit contact, all this spirit worship. I had thought that the experience of occult things was all part of the Hindu salvation. But it was only at that moment when I was freed from it that I realised that I was bound, really bound. I could understand the hundreds and thousands and millions of people that were into it, not realising they are bound.

I experienced a light come in to me, a real light. And you can understand that for me it was coming from extreme darkness into extreme light. I found a new joy and a new peace. Life became wonderful for the first time.

The peace I experienced in Hinduism was a simulated one. I saw that clearly right away. Because a new peace flowed into me and stayed. I didn't have to go back and have trances to get this peace again. It was always there in spite of problems – the oppositions of the Hindus who were throwing stones and spitting at me. But that peace and that love, that joy was there. For me the greatest experience in turning to Christ is that Christ who forgave me my sins, Christ who died for me, who rose again from the dead, came to live in me. He lives in me to enable me to live the Christians life - and to keep me going until he comes back.

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A Choice for You

For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures (1 Corinthians 15:3-4)

Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord... (Acts 3:19)

That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. (Romans 10:9-10)

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