



STATEMENT DH125

Death of a Guru The Personal Testimony of Rabi Maharaj

No matter how fulfilling life becomes, there are always certain regrets when one looks back. My deepest sense of loss involves my father. So much has happened since his death. I often wonder what it would be like to share it all with him, and what his reaction would be.

We never shared anything in our lives. Because of vows he had taken before I was born, not once did he ever speak to me or pay me the slightest heed. Just two words from him would have made me unspeakably happy. How I wanted to hear him say, “Rabi. Son.” Just once. But he never did.

For eight long years he uttered not a word. The trancelike condition he had achieved is called in the East a state of higher consciousness and can be attained only through deep meditation.

“Why is Father that way?” I would ask my mother, still too young to understand.

“He is someone very special — the greatest man you could have for a father,” she would reply. “He is seeking the true Self that lies within us all, the One Being, of which there is no other. And that’s what you are too, Rabi.”

Father had set an example, achieved wide acclaim, and earned the worship of many, and it was inevitable that upon his death his mantle would fall upon me, I had never imagined, however, that I would still be so young when this fateful day arrived.

When father died I felt I had lost everything. Though I had scarcely known him as my father, he had been my inspiration — *a god* — and now he was dead.

At his funeral, my father’s stiff body was placed on a great pile of firewood. The thought of his body being sacrificed to Agni, the god of fire, added a new dimension of mystery to the bewilderment and deep sense of loss that already overwhelmed me.

As the flames engulfed him, it was impossible to suppress the anguish I felt.

“Mommy!” I screamed. “Mommy!” If she heard me above the roar of sparks and fire, she made no indication. A true Hindu, she 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 my father.

After my father’s funeral, I became a favorite subject for the palm-readers and astrologers who frequented our house. Our family would hardly make an important decision without consulting an astrologer, so it was vital that my future be confirmed in the same way. It was encouraging to learn that the lines on my palms and the planets and stars, according to those who interpreted them, all agreed I would become a great Hindu leader. I was obviously a chosen vessel, destined for early success in the search for union with Brahman (the One). The forces that had guided my father were now guiding me.

I was only eleven and already many people were bowing before me, laying gifts of money, cotton cloth, and other treasures at my feet and hanging garlands of flowers around my neck at religious ceremonies.

How I loved religious ceremonies —especially private ones in our own home or those of others, where friends and relatives would crowd in. There I would be the center of attention, admired by all. I loved to move through the

CRI, P.O. Box 8500, Charlotte, NC 28271
Phone (704) 887-8200 and Fax (704) 887-8299

audience, sprinkling holy water on worshipers or marking foreheads with the sacred white sandalwood paste. I also loved how the worshipers, after the ceremony, bowed low before me to leave their offerings at my feet.

While vacationing at an Aunt's ranch, I had my first real encounter with Jesus. I was walking along enjoying nature one day and was startled by a rustling sound in the underbrush behind me. I turned quickly and, to my horror, saw a large snake coming directly toward me — its beady eyes staring intently into mine. I felt paralyzed, wanting desperately to run but unable to move.

In that moment of frozen terror, out of the past came my mother's voice, repeating words I had long forgotten: "Rabi, if ever you're in real danger and nothing else seems to work, there's another god you can pray to. His name is Jesus."

"Jesus! Help me!" I tried to yell, but the desperate cry was choked and hardly audible.

To my astonishment, the snake turned around and quickly wriggled off into the underbrush. Breathless and still trembling, I was filled with wondering gratitude to this amazing god, Jesus. Why had my mother not taught me more about him?

During my third year in high school experienced an increasingly deep inner conflict. My growing awareness of God as the Creator, separate and distinct from the universe He had made, contradicted the Hindu concept that God was everything, that the Creator and the Creation were one and the same. 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, life an absurdity. It was not easy to maintain both one's sanity and the view that good and evil, love and hate, life and death were One Reality.

One day a friend of my cousin Shanti, whose name was Molli, came by to visit. She asked me about whether I found Hinduism fulfilling. Trying to hide my emptiness, I lied and told her I was very happy and that my religion was the Truth. She listened patiently to my pompous and sometimes arrogant pronouncements. Without arguing, she exposed my emptiness gently with politely phrased questions.

She told me that Jesus had brought her close to God. She also said that God is a God of love and that He desires us to be close to Him. As appealing as this sounded to me, I stubbornly resisted, not willing to surrender my Hindu roots.

Still, I found myself asking, "What makes you so happy? You must have been doing a lot of meditation."

"I used to," Molli responded, "but not any more. Jesus has given me a peace and joy that I never knew before." Then she said, "Rabi, you don't seem very happy. Are you?"

I lowered my voice: "I'm not happy. I wish I had your joy." Was I saying this?

"My joy is because my sins are forgiven," said Molli. "Peace and joy come from Christ, through really knowing Him."

We continued talking for half a day, unaware of how the time had passed. I wanted her peace and joy, but I was *absolutely resolved* that I wasn't going to give up any part of my religion.

As she was leaving, she said: "Before you go to bed tonight, Rabi, please get on your knees and ask God to show you the Truth — and I'll be praying for you." With a wave of her hand she was gone.

Pride demanded that I reject everything Molli had said, but I was too desperate to save face any longer. I fell to my knees, conscious that I was giving in to her request.

"God, the true God and Creator, please show me the truth!" Something inside me snapped. For the first time in my life, I felt I had really prayed and gotten through — not to some impersonal Force, but to the true God who loves and cares. Too tired to think any longer, I crawled into bed and fell asleep almost instantly.

Soon after, my cousin Krishna invited me to a Christian meeting. I again surprised myself by responding: “Why not?”

On our way there, Krishna and I were joined by Ramkair, a new acquaintance of his. “Do you know anything about this meeting?” I asked him, anxious to get some advance information.

“A little,” he replied. “I became a Christian recently.”

“Tell me,” I said eagerly. “Did Jesus really change your life?”

Ramkair smiled broadly. “He sure did! Everything is different.”

“It’s really true, Rab!” added Krishna enthusiastically. “I’ve become a Christian too — just a few days ago.”

The preacher’s sermon was based on Psalm 23, and the words, “The Lord is my shepherd,” made my heart leap. After expounding the Psalm, the preacher said: “Jesus wants to be your Shepherd. Have you heard His voice speaking to your heart? Why not open your heart to Him now? Don’t wait until tomorrow — that may be too late!” The preacher seemed to be speaking directly to me. I could delay no longer.

I quickly knelt in front of him. He smiled and asked if anyone else wanted to receive Jesus. No one stirred. Then he asked the Christians to come forward and pray with me. Several did, kneeling beside me. For years Hindus had bowed before me — and now I was kneeling before a Christian.

Aloud I repeated after him a prayer inviting Jesus into my heart. When the preacher said, “Amen,” he suggested I pray in my own words. Quietly, choking with emotion, I began: “Lord Jesus, I’ve never studied the Bible, but I’ve heard that you died for my sins at Calvary so I could be forgiven and reconciled to God. Please forgive me all my sins. Come into my heart!”

Before I finished, I knew that Jesus wasn’t just another one of several million gods. He was the God for whom I had hungered. He Himself was the Creator. Yet, He loved me enough to become a man and die for my sins. With that realization, tons of darkness seemed to lift and a brilliant light flooded my soul.

After arriving home, Krishna and I found the entire family waiting up for us, apparently having heard what had happened. “I asked Jesus into my life tonight!” I exclaimed happily, as I looked from one to another of those startled faces. “It’s glorious. I can’t tell you how much He means to me already.”

Some in my family seemed wounded and bewildered; others seemed happy for me. But before it was all over with, thirteen of us had ended up giving our hearts to Jesus! It was incredible.

The following day I walked resolutely into the prayer room with Krishna. Together we carried everything out into the yard: idols, Hindu scriptures, and religious paraphernalia. We wanted to rid ourselves of every tie with the past and with the powers of darkness that had blinded and enslaved us for so long.

When everything had been piled on the rubbish heap, we set it on fire and watched the flames consume our past. The tiny figures we once feared as gods were turning to ashes. We hugged one another and offered thanks to the Son of God who had died to set us free.

I found my thoughts going back to my father’s cremation nearly eight years before. In contrast to our new found joy, that scene had aroused inconsolable grief. My father’s body had been offered to the very same false gods who now lay in smoldering fragments before me. It seemed unbelievable that I should be participating with great joy in the utter destruction of that which represented all I had once believed in so fanatically.

In a sense this was my cremation ceremony — the end of the person I had once been...the death of a guru. The old Rabi Maharaj had died in Christ. And out of that grave a new Rabi had risen in whom Christ was now living. Praise the Lord!

*(Editor’s Note: If you would be interested in a detailed account of Rabi’s conversion, read his book *Death of a Guru*. Rabi is presently based in Southern California and is involved in evangelism all over the world. He invites you to write: East/West Gospel Ministries, P.O. Box 2191, La Habra, CA 90632.)*