

CELEBRATING THE LIFE OF HIS HOLINESS BABAJI

At every period in history, God raises up an individual with a special insight into the height and depth of God's love, to teach us by personal example how to walk with God. Those who knew His Holiness, Babaji, saw in him a very deep devotion to God, such as could only be possible by the Spirit of God working in him as one chosen and appointed by God to teach us how to walk with God and how to be truly human. Babaji showed us practical ways of building a community, a world of unity and fellowship of all God's people. As Africans going to meet Babaji for the first time, my wife and I did not know what to expect, or what he would say, but in his presence we found genuineness, no pretence whatsoever, but a wonderful comforting smile. We found him to be a gracious man. We found that in Babaji's presence each individual's humanity was fully embraced with tenderness and love. His Holiness loved each and every individual with the love of God for in each person he saw God. Babaji embodied in himself the love of God for all humanity regardless of status, gender, class, or race. We thank God for his servant and celebrate Babaji's wonderful life.

Meeting Babaji for the first time as a Christian, a theologian and a philosopher, I quickly noticed that Babaji was not concerned at all with matters of doctrine, the essentials of religious teachings, or correctness of faith, but with the core, the essence of what it means to be fully human, which according to Babaji, was communion, or at oneness with God and service. Babaji talked about the essence and urgency of the need for a life of prayer and meditation, work, and service. For Babaji it was not prayer and meditation alone, or work and service alone, but all four that make one a servant of God. His life of dedication to God and God's people, is one of the great lessons that my wife and I emulate in our work for orphans and the elderly in Malawi. Babaji knew and saw photographs of our work for which we asked him to pray for, that God would bless us to be able to feed thousands through our irrigation farm, to cloth, house, and educate orphans. We had hoped and we had talked with Babaji about coming to Malawi for the dedication ceremony of the college for orphans. We know he will be there and that he will continue to pray for us and raise his hands to let the blessings of God be upon us to accomplish the ministry that His Holiness modeled for us. We must confess though, that Babaji modeled a very tough lesson for my wife and I: namely, not spare anything, not a penny nor energy in serving God's people.

His holiness, Babaji, had a very comprehensive understanding of the nature and love of God. Many religious leaders teach that people should love each other, but when it comes to other people's religion, that love finds an impenetrable barrier. While indeed many religious leaders teach respect of other people's religion, they do not embrace it. It was not so with His Holiness. Babaji's God was too big to be confined to a specific religion. He understood that God has not left himself without a witness in every culture and in every place. Babaji understood that God has always revealed himself in various ways and therefore every religion has to be embraced as it reveals the majesty of God. Nowhere else do I know, that Guru Nanak, Moses, Jesus, and Mohammed, are gloried and praised everyday. No place is the Muslim call to prayer and Muslim prayers, said five times a day in Mosque and the Lord's Prayer said with the image of Jesus adored with flowers, 2000 candles lit for Jesus every six o'clock every day of the year. Only a deep intimacy with God could allow one to rise so high above everyone else as to embrace the teachings of Moses, Guru Nanak, and African religions without being a little uncomfortable, or inwardly prejudiced, to say the least. Babaji reached that level of deep intimacy with God and through personal practice, he challenged each and everyone of us to rise

with him to know that whoever calls on the One Living God, in whatever faith, whatever manner, whatever culture or race, we should fully embrace their faith. Those who loved, admired, or were devoted to Babaji must carry forward this legacy to the honor of Babaji and to the glory of God whose name is praised in every tongue and every nation from the rising of the sun to its setting down.

Babaji will always be remembered by many beyond the Gobind Sadan community. Personally, I will celebrate His holiness as long as the cords of memory continue to function. As a scholar, I have immortalized him in my two forthcoming books: *The Gospel According to the Marginalised* to be published in New York and *Introduction to Religious Studies* to be published in Malawi. That Babaji touched my intellectual life too, is seen in the fact his work graces a few pages of *The Gospel According to the Marginalised*, a text book on Christian theology around the world. Students in Africa will know about Babaji in *Introduction to Religious Studies*. His memory will live on.

His Holiness, Babaji, was a spiritual father and a model in holiness. In February 2005, His Holiness taught about holiness in these words: “One becomes one’s ultimate reality that to which one devotes one’s life. A person of faith becomes holy and everything else around him or her becomes holy. One’s own shadow becomes holy, the shadow of the tree under which one stands becomes holy too, and even the tree itself becomes holy. Why? Because one’s life is transformed by the ultimate reality to which one is directed”. May God transform our lives so that we may live the life of holiness as Babaji himself. Babaji’s belief is echoed in the *nam* which we now hear him sing before God, and in which we shall for ever join him in praising God: “*Ek Onkar Sat Nam Siri Wahe Guru. Ek Onkar Sat Nam Siri Wahe Guru. Wahe Guru, Wahe Guru, Wahe Guru.*”

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