

the Religious ONE

by Guru Mani H

I'm old and grey, and for me religion has been, and still is, the foundation to my life.

Many things have changed over the years; people have come and gone, I've lived here and lived there, been in good health and now not so good; but through all of that, religion has been the constant, the unchanging, the secure. It's given me a *routine* to my day, a *ritual* to my life, and a *rhythm* to my soul. It hasn't touched every part of me [I'm NOT one of those religious nuts], but it's been more like an ornament or old piece of furniture that's just always been around and which I'd never consider throwing out. I have friends in this same religion, though my best friend is not. I bought up my children in this same religion, though most have now rejected it. I have lived in a culture that's rooted in this same religion, though it's slowly moving away from it. So, all in all, my religion makes me feel a sense of belonging, security, stability; though I do have to confess to a secret which I've never told a living soul...sometimes I doubt, question, wonder if it's all true; but I quickly push all those thoughts deep down, partly because I feel ashamed and guilty that I'm thinking them, and partly because I couldn't face even the smallest possibility that somehow, I got it wrong; that my religion is fake, not real. If that was the case, then I'd have wasted my life, and be unsure of the after-life [another secret: despite being life-long religious I'm *still* unsure about the after-life] BUT PUSH THAT THOUGHT DOWN. **I'm old and grey, and for me religion has been, and still is, the foundation to my life.**

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I'm in my late teens; nineteen to be exact. I've been brought up in religion from as young as I can remember, and it's no secret to anyone that knows me; I'm sick of it. It makes me vomit. I want to throw up [and throw away] all that I've been brought up in, brainwashed to believe, had forced on me without a choice and with no respect for my rights as an individual; the black and white of: "Our way is the right way, we

have the truth and fuck everyone else". They don't say it like that, they make it sound more 'holy', but it's what they mean. I know the religious stories, all of them. I know the religious words, again, all of them. However, when I ask questions, to myself and others, things just don't seem to add up. There are massive gaps between the *theoretical* definition, and how that works out in *practice*; in my life, in my parents' lives, fuck, in anyone's life. The religious stories and words, which as a child bought comfort and stability, now just seem empty and irrelevant; historical, maybe, but not for today, and certainly not relevant to me; no connection at all to my life as a young adult with the world at my feet. I'm ready to explore all the shades of spirituality grey-ness [note: NOT black and white], to experience all that life has to offer, and I don't need or want any religious system [note: 'any', not just the one I was brought up in] telling me what I can and can't do, or judging who I am and what I believe, which even *I* don't know yet. Whilst I'm on a roll, I want to throw this word into the mix: *hypocrisy*, playing the game; massive gap between beliefs and actions, the private real life not matching the public religious one. I've seen it in my parents for years, not at first of course, but as I grew older [and I like to think wiser] the perfect religious bubble of their lives began to burst and the gap between what they were like *there*, and what they're like *here*, seemed to get bigger and bigger. This isn't so much true in my dad; he's more what I call 'spiritual'. He goes along with my mum but is more chilled, sees the bigger picture, has more heart, is definitely the colour grey. My mum, well, she's fully into her religion, at least there, though here, it's a different story, and one that's too painful for me to share, except to say that I'll probably need therapy before I myself become a parent. **I'm in my late teens; nineteen to be exact. I've been brought up in religion from as young as I can remember, and it's no secret to anyone that knows me; I'm sick of it. It makes me vomit. I want to throw up [and throw away] all that I've been brought up in...**

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I'm half a century old, and my conclusion is this: Religion doesn't satisfy. It screws you, and leaves you feeling empty and used; no stronger - abused. However, I'm rushing ahead, so let me rewind a bit...I was brought up in religion, just the weekly

kind that didn't affect too much else, certainly not as a child, teenager, or young adult. I found the whole thing to be boring, irrelevant, for old people. I asked the questions, but the answers didn't satisfy me. This seemed to be a form of religion that was dead, lifeless, old and stale. Then I was introduced to something lively, relevant, new and fresh. The people talked like they actually believed; it really seemed to affect their lives daily, not just weekly or occasionally. I asked questions and got answers, ones that seemed to make sense. So, I made a decision [my decision, not forced on me] and I dived in head-first. All in. For several years all was good; I joined in, shared the faith with others [I was quite the evangelist in my own way] and gave much time and energy to help build this vibrant faith community. Then slowly [at first slowly, later speeding up] the layers got peeled away and I saw underneath and inside. The once fresh air turned stale. The *promise of freedom* revealed itself as the *lie of bondage*. The once welcoming people judged and rejected one such as me who didn't want to conform; and the light dawned on me, that I had simply gone from one form of religion to another. Same old religion dressed up in different clothes, and so now, I'm not part of *that* religious group any more; or *any* religious group for that matter. I'm on a journey of self-discovery and spiritual exploration which makes me even more judged and rejected by those who once accepted me as one of their own. **I'm half a century old, and my conclusion is this: Religion doesn't satisfy. It screws you, and leaves you feeling empty and used; no stronger - abused.**

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I'm in my early thirties; thirty-three to be exact, and religion is quite literally about to kill me; unjustly, violently, brutally. I'm a carpenter by trade, using hand tools and crafting in the traditional style, and in the quietness of that vocation, religion left me alone. It observed and commented on me, especially after my somewhat unusual birth, but basically let me be. I'm an apprentice in the family business, but I'll let you into a secret which may shock or surprise you, especially if you know me, and which I fairly much guarantee you won't believe, or, at the least will find confusing. Are you ready for it? I HATE RELIGION; absolutely, categorically, and in all its forms. This is kind of weird, seeing as religions have been *started in my name*, religions have *fought wars over*

me, and religions have *used me to further their causes*. However, just to be sure you've got it, I'll say it again: I HATE RELIGION, and this attitude, which I don't apologise for, hasn't gone down too well, as over the last couple of years I've been quite vocal, some might say radical [or someone with a death wish]. I've clashed with the [self] *righteous religious leaders*, confronted the *ridiculous religious rules*, and challenged the *redundant religious rituals*. As an alternative, I've offered anyone, everyone, the chance at a real relationship with God; intimate, personal, free - at which they cry out "BLASPHEMY", which is why, **I'm in my early thirties; thirty-three to be exact, and religion is quite literally about to kill me; unjustly, violently, brutally.**