

Ma and her inscrutable relation with a seeker

The present writer after taking up the responsibility of looking after the Almora ashram noticed that the library was in utter disarray. The books there remained uncared for for years and were infested by white ants and book worms. To save the rest of the books from destruction he took up the task of saving and sorting out the intact ones and started rearranging the library. Accidentally one very old note book came to his notice from the heap of trash. Out of curiosity very carefully he tried to leaf through the yellow fragile pages and noticed that some letters were pasted on each of the leaves of this note book. To his utter astonishment he observed that all those letters (on postcards and plain paper) were from Ma addressed to Ms Bhramar Ghosh, one of her earlier associates - of course, not in Ma's hand writing. The writers were Bhaiji, Gurupriya Didi, Dr Sharada and Sri Shishir Guha. These letters, dating back to the early 1930's, so far remained unnoticed. With the hope that these will open up some of the very important aspects of Ma's life, the present writer started examining the letters. This may help future seekers towards a better understanding on Ma's life and her ways. The present writer was appointed by Ma on the very first day of joining the ascetic order as her personal letter writer. Every day scores of letters from various corners of the world would come to Ma. The letter-writer had to read these before Ma. Most of time Ma would ask him to reply on Her behalf putting her words in quotes. But here we notice that most of the letters were written in Ma's name.

Authenticity of the letters:

All these letters are in their original form. Although the letters were in the handwriting of the persons mentioned above nevertheless, that each and every word came out of Ma's divine lips, is unquestionable. All the amanuensis's personal standing in the spiritual family of Ma could give no room for doubt in anyone's mind, so far their honesty, sincerity and devotion towards Ma are concerned. They would never insert personal input in the name of Ma while taking dictation from Her. One could be confident of the authenticity of the handwriting from the available manuscripts of the books and articles written by them. Both Bhaiji and Gurupriya Didi are authors. They have had so many books on Ma published during Her physical presence. It was observed that prior to publishing anything on Ma these authors used to read the manuscripts before Ma for Her approval. It would be natural to conclude that the same trend had been followed in writing letters on behalf of Ma also.

The letters in the form of postcards have postal stamps and postal seals on them with dates. Except the letter written by Dr. Sharada(Sevaji), which was in English, all others were in Bengali. We came to know from Gurupriya Didi's diary, which had been published in 19 volumes named **Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee**, that Bhramar Ghosh had preserved all the written correspondence she had with Ma. See Vol 2 pp 190/191- available on this site - where there is more.

Quote: "*Srimati Bhramara Ghosh (Rai Bahadur's grand-daughter) had set out for Uttarkashi but was somehow not able to go. She had been seeing Ma since childhood and was strongly religiously inclined. Recently she had been corresponding regularly with Ma and received replies laden with advice from Ma, which she collected and preserved.*"

She might have pasted the letters from Ma on the leaves of an exercise book as the method of preservation.

How this exercise book had come to be found in Almora ashram is quite a mystery.

(1)

Om

2 September (?)

Kalyaniashu (a term of endearment made to a junior deserving affection),

I was happy to receive your letter. Your worldly education has almost been completed. I bless you (that) by progressing in your spiritual education you will do good to yourself and to the world.

I cannot say anything definitely when I would be able to go back there.

By depending on the will of the One, all of you should know that you have the blessings of the One.

Well wisher

Ma

ANALYSIS

Words of address and concluding words: In any classical tradition all over the world ethics play a very important role in communication; this may be vocal or otherwise. Communication strengthens a relation. These days we witness deviations from these trends in the cause of modernity/evolution in thinking processes which very often represent mechanical formalities. Communication is not only expression for the fulfillment of mundane demands but it also carries the expression of the heart. Letters are the expression of the heart in alphabets. The header as well as footer of a letter and the initial words of address clearly depict the mind of the writer as well as his relationship with the addressee. It is not uncommon with ordinary people that a relationship undergoes change according to temporal and circumstantial coordinates. Worldly relations are established more out of convenience than from conviction. But in the life of a saint these changes are totally absent. Their relation even with anything worldly is free from mundane tarnish and is called **Brahma Sambhandha** (The bondage of the Ultimate reality).

The addressee of all these letter was a lady named Bhramar Ghosh. (Here on we will call her as BG)

Roy Bahadur Jogesh Chandra Ghosh was a very well know personality in the then Bengal. He was holding very high position in the Estate of the Nawab of Dhaka, the second most important city of Bengal during the British rule in India. Sir Jogesh Ghosh was the Officer-in-charge of Shahbag (The princely Garden of the Nawab of Dhaka. Sri Ramani Mohan Chakravorty (known as Bholanath) was Ma's husband and was posted as a caretaker of the garden where Ma was staying with him in the quarters allotted to him.

Though initially skeptic, Sir Ghosh gradually came under Ma's spiritual influence, viewed Ma with the highest esteem and finally was initiated by Bholanath. The Ghosh family all became ardent followers of Ma. Sir Ghosh had two sons and a daughter. Bhramar was the daughter of the elder son Sri Atul Chandra Ghosh. The Ghosh's had their place in Calcutta where BG had her schooling. BG was close to Ma from her childhood days and had a very strong spiritual inclination. Unlike Gurupriya Didi though BG could not join the regular ascetic order, and made use of her holidays in serving and accompanying Ma as a part of Her entourage. Of course, in those days there were no ashrams or spiritual establishments in the name of Ma. Even Gurupriya Didi, though following the rules, discipline and restraints of an ascetic, stayed at home with her father Dr Shashanka Mohan Bandopadhyay.

As BG could not be in the physical presence of Ma because of her schooling schedule and other preoccupations she was in habit of writing letters frequently to know Ma's whereabouts and get instruction for her spiritual practice at home. All these letters from Ma, Bhajj, and Gurupriya Didi are the result of BG's queries on matters concerning spirituality or other matters. Now we shall try to take up the letters one by one and analyse some of their salient aspects. This may open up some of the most important facets of an ardent seeker's spiritual journey. While dealing with these letters we are faced with some doubts and controversies which need proper solution and reconciliation to have a better understanding about Ma.

The letter that had been pasted on the first leaf of the exercise book was written on September 2 without mentioning the place and the year. It has the header **Aum**. This is typical of Bengali letter-writing formalities.

The placement of the letter on the very first leaf of note book suggests the importance of the letter for the addressee. All other letters were written during 1934, '35 and '36. It can be assumed that the first letter had been written when Ma was frequently moving from place to place in the Northern part of India around September 1934. At that time, except for Gurupriya Didi, Ma had no other female attendant.

The handwriting clearly points to the writer being female. The writer had very scanty or almost no knowledge of Bengali grammar and spelling. Naturally one is tempted to imagine that the writer was Ma Herself. So far we have in our possession only two specimens of Ma's hand writing. The first one was published as Matri Darshan (Mother as Revealed to Me) written by Bhajji, and the second one was written to Sir Pran Gopal Mukhopadhyay who after retirement from the post of Deputy Post Master General of India left Dhaka to spend the rest of his life in the ashram of his Guru Srimat Balananda Brahmachari of Deoghar, Bihar. The photocopy of the letter was incorporated in the article on Ma in the book **Mahajan Sanvad** written by Dr. Govinda Gopal Mukhopadhyay, the son of Sir Pran Gopal Mukhopadhyay. Although there is no doubt about their authenticity, that these were written by Ma Herself, the two hand writings do not seem to match. In both the letters there were similar spelling and grammatical mistakes.

Ma was never a regular writer. Naturally, any fixed style of Ma's handwriting could not be expected. Whether it is handwriting or calligraphy, a person's writing may change and deteriorate without regular practice. It is true that the way of writing of some of the alphabets is similar in all these three sample writings of Ma. However it needs further investigation to establish that this particular letter was written by Ma Herself.

It started with the header AUM and the word of address **Kalyaniyashu**. This is typical of the traditional Bengali format of letter writing. Generally when a senior member of a family or a parent writes to the younger ones this word of address is used.

We have seen that in the later years during verbal or written communications Ma referred to Herself both in active and passive voice i.e. both in first person as **'I'** and third person as **'this body'**. We find that at times Ma had both a personal and generalised relationship with her followers. *But astonishingly here in all the letters She was communicating with BG in the first person.*

The letter ended with the footer **Shubhakanskini, Ma**. (Well wisher, Ma) This also is a Bengali letter-writing convention.

Ma wrote **I was happy**. If we have a bird's eye view of the available record of Ma's life and sayings we would find that only in this letter and nowhere else is there any record that Ma had ever expressed pleasure or pain to any one - either verbally or in writing. In the eyes of the world she spent her premarital life in a poverty-stricken family. After marriage in her early teens she had to work hard in her in-law's family like a housemaid, never expressing displeasure and ignoring Her physically and mentally harrowing situation. Without pretending to, she always had a smiling face. Her neighbours at times were astonished and felt pained to see the ordeals she had to go through at such a tender age. There were also happier moments in life and neither these nor the ordeals would change her natural and blissful composure. She was given a name Khushir Ma (Mother of happiness) by one of her sympathetic neighbours.

Ma wrote, **"I bless you."** Such an expression from Ma is rare, if not unheard of, during the 87 years of Her mortal existence. People would die to hear such words from her. Any word from the lips of a great saint is expected to come true. A blessing always comes to fruition in the future and is as good as a prediction. Of course, people felt blessed and loved at the very presence of Ma. Whenever someone prayed for Ma's blessings She would redirect the prayer towards God and would say, "All your prayers should be to Him." In the letter Ma was very specific about the future course of Bhrama Ghosh's life. Except for some very rare cases Ma never made predictions - although She could very well see into the future. She used to say, "Jo ho jay." i.e. Let it be what it will.

Bhramar Ghosh had got her Master's degree and a Gold medal in ancient history from the University of Calcutta. One of her dissertations was highly acclaimed and she received a felicitation from Cambridge University in the UK.

Generally formal schooling ends after getting a Master's degree. But that is not the end of education.

Ma wrote, **“Your worldly education has almost been completed.”**

This statement is clearly indicative of Ma's Kheyal that BG should totally devote herself to spiritual pursuits.

Ma further wrote, **“ I bless you (that) by progressing in your spiritual education you will do good to yourself and to the world”.**

One takes up the ascetic life to enjoy perpetual bliss, peace and freedom from so called mundane desires and sets an example to the people so that they also can take up the spirituality to make their life less unhappy.

A seeker in setting an example does good to society.

An attitude of equanimity is a special faculty in the life of a person at the highest spiritual pinnacle. It was not that the letter was written before Ma attained spiritual heights. All are agreed it is certain that, unlike other spiritual personalities, Ma's spiritual state did not evolve through sadhana. There was a gradual and unique unfolding as the demands of the spiritual seekers gathered around her developed.

The question naturally comes to one's mind: of all the millions of people who came in contact with Ma how was it that Bhramar Ghosh was singled out and she alone enjoyed the special favour of receiving Her blessing?

In the letter Ma was very specific about the future course of BG's life. Ma wrote, **“I bless you (that) by progressing in your spiritual education you will do good to yourself and to the world.”**

To the common man this is clearly indicative of Ma's wish (of course if she had any), that BG should devote her life totally to spiritual pursuits for the good of herself as well as for that of the world. One takes to the ascetic life to enjoy perpetual bliss, peace and freedom from so-called mundane desires.

In the concluding sentence the word **‘one’** had been used twice. Are the two one's same or different? Apparently the first **one** refers to the ultimate will (the will of God) whereas the second **one** relates to blessings. That Ma blessed BG was a fact. Was it indicative of Ma's identification of Herself as one with God, or was it an indication to BG to see Ma as God?

The letter ended with the words **‘Well-wisher Ma.’** Unlike other letters here Ma gave BG direct recognition as a daughter.

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