

Ma's inscrutable relationship with a seeker

INTRODUCTION

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 with 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 in the heap of trash. Out of curiosity very carefully he tried to leaf through the fragile yellowing pages and noticed that some letters were pasted on each of the pages of this note book. To his utter astonishment he observed that all those letters (post cards and plain paper) were from Ma addressed to Ms Bhramar Ghosh, one of her earlier associates. Of course they were not in Ma's hand writing. The writers were Bhaiji, Didi Gurupriya, Dr Sharada and Sri Shishir Guha. These letters, dating back to the early 1930's, so far remained unnoticed. In the hope that these will open up important aspects of Ma's life, the present writer started examining the letters so that it would help future seekers towards a better understanding of Ma's life and 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 the 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 actually 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. Those writers' personal standing in the spiritual family of Ma could raise no doubt in anyone's mind so far as their honesty, sincerity and devotion towards Ma is concerned. They would never include personal input in the name of Ma while writing for Her. One could be assured of the authenticity of the handwriting from the available manuscripts of the books and articles written by them. Both Bhaiji and Gurupriyadidi are authors. They have 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 practice had been followed in writing letters on behalf of Ma also.

The letters sent as post cards have postal stamps and postal franks 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 Gurupriyadidi's diary which had been published as books in 19 volumes named **Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee**, that Bhramar Ghosh had preserved all the written correspondence she had with Ma. (**.... Quote from Vol 2)

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

The reason for discovering the said exercise book in Almora ashram is quite a mystery.

The words of address and signing off:

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 relationship. These days we witness deviations from these trends in the name of modernity/evolution in our thinking process which very often creates a mechanical formality. Communication is not only an expression for the fulfillment of a mundane requirement 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 relation with the addressee. It is not uncommon with ordinary people that a relationship undergoes changes with time and circumstance. Worldly relations are established more out of convenience rather than 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 subject of the letters.

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

Roy Bahadur Jogesh Chandra Ghosh was a very well know personality in the then Bengal. He was holding a 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), Ma's husband was employed as a caretaker of the garden where Ma was accompanying him in the quarters allotted to him.

Though initially skeptical, Sir Ghosh gradually came under Ma's spiritual influence, held Ma in the highest esteem and finally was initiated by Bholanath. The Ghosh's family in totality 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. BG, unlike Gurupriyadidi, could not join the regular ascetic order and so 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 establishment in the name of Ma. Even Gurupriyadidi, 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 the habit of writing letters frequently to know

Ma's whereabouts and get instruction during her spiritual practice at home. All these letters from Ma, Bhaiji, and Gurupriyadidi are the result of BG's queries on matters concerning spirituality or otherwise.

Now we shall try to take the letters one by one and take an analytical view of some of the salient aspects of their contents. This may open up some important leads for an ardent seeker to follow during his spiritual journey. While dealing with these letters we meet doubts and controversies which need proper solution and reconciliation to have a better understanding about Ma.

1st Letter

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

The analysis:

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

The placement of the letter on the very first leaf of the 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 constantly on the move from place to place in Northern India around September 1934. At that time except for Gurupriyadidi Ma had no female attendant.

The handwriting clearly suggests the writer to be female. She 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 handwriting. The first one was published in Matri Darshan (Mother as revealed to me) written by Bhaiji. 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 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 the authenticity, that these were written by Ma Herself, the handwriting does not apparently match. In both the letters there were similar spelling and grammatical mistakes.

Ma was never a regular writer and a fixed style could not be expected from her. Handwriting or calligraphy changes without regular practice. Of course, the style of writing of some of the alphabets is similar in all the three writings of Ma. However it needs further investigation to establish that this particular letter was written by Ma Herself.

It started with a header AUM and the addressing word as **Kalyaniyashu**. This is typical of the Bengali tradition 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 projected 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 an impersonal relationship with her followers. *But astonishingly here in all the letters She was communicating with BG in the first person.*

The letter ended with **Shubhakanski, Ma.** (Well wisher, Ma) This also is a Bengali trend in letter writing.

Ma wrote **I was happy**. If we have a review of Ma’s available and recorded life sketch and sayings we would find that except in this very letter nowhere else is there any record that Ma ever had expressed pleasure and pain to anyone either verbally or in writing. In the eyes of the world she spent her pre-marital 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 house maid without any expression of displeasure, ignoring the physically and mentally harsh conditions. She was always smiling. Her neighbours at times were astonished and felt pained as well at the ordeals she had to go through at that tender age. She also had happier moments. But changes in her situation would not modify 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 a rarity, if not unheard of from her lips, during her long mortal existence of eighty-seven years. 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 has its fruition in the future and is like a prediction. Of course, people felt blessed and loved in 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 predicted the future although She could very well see into it. She used to say, “Jo ho

jay.” i.e. Let it be what it will.

Bhramar Ghosh had 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 devote herself totally to her spiritual life.

Ma further wrote, “**I bless you that (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 so that other people can also take up spirituality to make life less unhappy. A seeker setting an example does good to society.

Equanimity is a special faculty in a person who has attained the highest spiritual pinnacle. It was not that the letter was written before Ma attained this height. It is certain that unlike other spiritual personalities Ma’s spiritual state had not evolved through sadhana. There was only the gradual unfolding of her uniqueness through the demands of the spiritual seekers gathered around her.

The question naturally comes to one’s mind, of all the millions of people who came in contact with Ma why should Bhramar Ghosh be singled out and alone enjoy the special favour of receiving her blessing?

In the letter Ma was very specific about the future course of Bhrama Ghosh’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 a common man this is clearly indicative of Ma’s wish, of course, if she had any, that Bhrama should devote her life totally in spiritual pursuits for the good of herself as well as for that of the world.

In the concluding sentence the word ‘**One**’ had been used twice. Are the two ‘One’s the 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 Bhramar Ghosh was a fact. Was it indicative of Ma’s identification of herself with God or was it an indication to Bhramar Ghosh to identify Ma with God?

The letter ended with the words “**Well-wisher Ma.**” Unlike other letters here Ma gave Bhramar Ghosh direct recognition as a daughter.

