

LETTER No 18

(Letter written by Bhaji)

*Rishikesh
25/2*

Sister, we are very happy to hear the news of your professorship and the felicitation which you received from Cambridge University. In the present age when worldly activities predominate one has to proceed on the spiritual path through them. This is an opportunity for your spiritual path to become smoother and we rejoice over it.

You wrote “you are very egoistic.” Mother has pride in Her children. Ma’s lap is shining, having a worthy daughter like you sitting on it. It is illogical that the intensity of your anger will subside by calling Ma ‘egoistic’. You said “Bhramar died” (mare gechhe). Hearing this Ma said “Perhaps flown away (eude gechhe). Once Bhramar has received the fragrance of dharma where can she go and why should she go. And even if she is tossed here and there by a gust of wind, she will surely return to the honeycomb. For this reason I am sitting unworried.”*

We are arranging for your japa mala. With respect and happiness accept Ma’s blessings upon your head. Always keep in mind the following words which I am writing - “Love of God is ever beyond the reach of self; but if the mind can be fully emptied of self, then Selfless love – and eternal supreme love – become an inward and abiding reality.”

Be very beautiful, be great, keep very well.

Well wisher Dada

* Here BG used the Bengali word “aapnaaraa” which mean all of you. This included Ma also.

The Analysis.

It seemed that Bhaji’s thoughtful, rational and compassionate counselling in his preceding letters had very little or almost no effect on BG. In her reply to Bhaji’s last letter BG told of her new appointment as professor (Note- Bhramar Ghosh was appointed as a professor in the department of History, in Ashutosh College of Calcutta). She also wrote about the felicitation she received from Cambridge University, UK.

The trend of global development and the beginning of the modern technology-based civilization got its momentum mainly from the early 19th century onwards. To make life easier people worked harder for their livelihood. Worldly activities in life unavoidably took precedence over

spiritual activities. People cannot afford to spare time for spirituality. A seeker had to make a compromise between these two opposing activities. The immediate objective goal seemed more certain than a distant and remote spiritual goal.

One wonders how BG's professional success could offer an opportunity to smoothen her spiritual path.

It appeared that BG wanted to make the most of her academic achievements. Her desires oscillated between alluring worldly success and her spiritual goal. The close association of a saint is always inspiring.

This dichotomy in BG's approach to life made her restless and as a result she manifested a dual personality. This was reflected in her correspondence with Ma and Bhaiji.

At the outset impulse plays a prominent role for one to take up a committed spiritual life, but to continue with this commitment is not so easy. At every step alluring desires for mundane pleasure become a great hindrance to spiritual practice. Not only that, even after embracing the ascetic life those desires continue to surface. To achieve a balance it is always better to experience the transient nature of worldly achievements and happiness, which finally lead to a state of sustained vairagya. Bhaiji perhaps wanted to convey to BG the message of his own life experience. He had also lived a worldly life, took up a responsible job and achieved name, fame and honour. He received the Imperial Service Order (ISO) from the British Government for his service. He met Ma while he was in Government service and his association with Her prompted him to leave worldly life to take up the life of a Rishi. (The sage of the olden days)

In her letter she used the word egoistic for both Bhaiji and Ma. Bhaiji said that BG was perhaps confusing pride and ego. It is natural for a mother to be proud of the achievement of her children. Ma was always praising BG and her worldly achievements. BG was a victim of a wavering mind which led her to express her unwarranted anger towards Ma. Bhaiji said that BG was illogical, calling Ma egoistic. Her frustration was so intense that she wanted to efface the memory of her association with Ma and thought of herself as dead to Ma. Hearing Ma's comment was significant and interesting. In Bengali a bumble-bee is called Bhramar. Ma said, **"Perhaps flown away. Once Bhramar has received the fragrance of dharma where can she go and why should she go. And even if she is tossed here and there by a gust of wind, she will surely return to the honeycomb."** A bee is always after nectar and hovers around flowers. A storm may at times drive it away from the flower but when the storm subsides it comes back again to the flower. Here Ma drew a simile between Dharma and nectar. Here Ma's role as the holder of dharma was implied, just as a flower contains nectar.

According to Ma BG was passing through a mental storm of worldly desires which made her unstable and deflected from the spiritual path. With time the storm will subside. BG had already tasted the nectar of dharma directly from Ma and she **had** to come back to the path of spirituality. Ma said that She was least worried over BG's mental disturbance.

In this letter Bhaiji reminded BG about the mala, or rosary, for practicing her japa. It seemed that in spite of repeated reminders BG could not procure the rosary as instructed by Ma. That means BG did not take Ma's advice seriously - whereas Ma was always serious about her spiritual practice and so was arranging for the mala for BG.

Ma's blessing in the form of her kheyal was always pouring on BG. In this letter we found a glimpse of Bhaiji's compassionate care as an older spiritual brother for an unruly person like BG. He took it as his responsibility to guide and share his experience with BG, a spiritual novice. He wrote, "Love of God is ever beyond the reach of the self (here self means the empirical egoistic self); but if the mind can be fully emptied of self (ego) then selfless Love and eternal supreme love become an inward and abiding reality." Emptying the self, or in other words effacing the individual ego, is the prerequisite for treading the path of spirituality.

It is true that egotism stands in the way of spirituality. All scriptural texts, irrespective of religion, recommend eliminating the ego and prescribe methods for achieving that.

We enter that state at least once every day i.e. during deep sleep, when the ego becomes dormant, but at the same time one becomes oblivious of the world. Do we want that state of unconsciousness? On awakening the ego returns to its normal state. Ego is our very existence. It is one of the four limbs (mind, intelligence, memory and ego) of our subtle body. Unlike gangrenous limbs of the body, inner limbs cannot be amputated. Interaction with the world outside adds to our intelligence and subsequently helps to inflate the ego. This process continues until the end of our life. This process of the elimination of the ego (if there is one) does, of course, need a doer. As long as there is doer-ship elimination is impossible. However, if the removal of the ego is impracticable, is there any method which might reduce it to almost nothing? If the existence of ego is something like that of a physical limb, cutting off might be a possibility. A seeker must free himself from the disturbances created by the ego.

Now let us try to have a look on the ego; of course, this is also an action of ego. Ego shows itself only during the conscious state of interactions (both gross and mental) with an object. It is the manifestation of the CHIT principle of the individual. Any conscious interaction without ego is an impossibility and it is not that all our conscious actions are disturbing us.

In Advait Vedanta (non-dualistic monism) one of the four mahavakyas is “Aham brahmasmi” i.e. I am the absolute Reality. This is the declaration of the greatest all-pervading ego. Here the seeker starts with his individual ego and ends up with highest of inflated egoistic states. The subject-object differentiation merges into oneness. The individual consciousness dissolves into all pervading consciousness.

Ego itself is not the problem but it creates disturbance by the way it manifests. In the process of manifestation the ego tries to dominate other egos, claiming superiority. This is how disturbance comes, through conflict and confrontation.

In the path of devotion a seeker practices offering his ego to his Ista (the most beloved name and form of the personal God) who is the embodiment of all the attributes one can think of. Whatever qualifications one may have oneself, they are as nothing before the Ista.

The mind cannot be emptied in the objective conscious state by effort. The phenomenal world and the sanskars always surface unexpectedly within the mind. But the mind can be trained to have the state of right mindfulness by deliberately engaging it with the most beloved object and its attributes.

Then the ego cannot raise its head up before the ultimate Reality. The ego realising its limitations, then has the tendency to submit to the all-pervading ego i.e. God. The seeker should constantly remember the name and attributes of God that he loves most, thereby intensifying his love for God.

Bhaiji ended his letter by wishing BG to be beautiful, great and to keep well.

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