

5th Letter

(Ma's letter in Bhaiji's handwriting)

*Dehradun
14.9.34*

I have received your letter. If the letter is not properly stamped it takes time to receive it. Moreover all the time I don't have the inner disposition to communicate, so you don't get the reply in time. Don't feel sorry for that.

Man cannot live without a safe haven. Those who don't have the attraction for 'bhogashram' (life of pleasure), need the help of 'yogashram' (a life of yoga). By focusing on the yog mandir constantly make your body fit for yogashram. From your studies so far, you could well understand, there are no such words as "I can't do it." Always stay very happy and call Him with all your heart. Then you will see how your inner and outer forms will change. "How are all the moments of your day and night spent?"

One of your distant relatives came here and said that you might come to Dehradun for your health.

The way that I live in this part of the country it is utterly impossible for you to stay with me in these conditions. First let the time come.

Well wisher

Ma

The analysis:

It seemed that BG's letter was not adequately or properly stamped. The Postal Department marks such letters 'Bearing Letter'. The postal service is very particular to deliver such letters (though late) as they can charge the addressee with an additional fee. BG might have deliberately done this to ensure the letter reached Ma.

In this letter the opening words of address are absent. One may wonder whether it was a deliberate omission by Ma or an inadvertent mistake on the part of the letter-writer. Bhaiji being the scribe, the second possibility can be rejected. Even a small omission or commission, implied or otherwise, on the part of Ma has an inner significance.

It seemed that the reply to BG's letter was delayed.

Unlike people in the world, whose actions are the outcome of wishes or desires, Ma had no wish of her own. Ma said, “**This body has no wish or no-wish.**” The sense of doership was absent in Ma.

All our voluntary actions have their root in some wish or desire and a human life is the sequence of such actions from birth to death. Ma’s life was no different.

One of Her sayings is as follows: “**Whatever speech, movements and actions are there in this body, it is for you only. Whenever and whatever is needed, you get it done through this body.**”

Sometimes Ma said, “**Jemon bajao**”, i.e. the way you play the instrument. The actions we perceive in Ma are simply the outcome of our wishes and desires reflected or echoed in Her.

At times Ma used a special expression **Kheyal** to express the root of her worldly actions. In Bengali and Hindi this word is used synonymously with 'wish or desire to act'. Ma’s use of the term was quite different. The exact meaning of the term used by Ma is beyond the grasp of ordinary human intelligence. The nearest equivalent is Divine Intuition or Divine Will. Here Her expression 'inner disposition' was an indication of that **Kheyal**.

For a beginner on the path of spirituality it is difficult, if not impossible, to tread alone. He should carry on his sadhana under the guidance of his preceptor with total commitment and unflinching faith in God . In her letter BG might have expressed her lack of interest in a householder’s life and her inclination towards spiritual life.

Ma termed the life of a householder **Bhogashram** i.e a life of worldly pleasure, and the life of an ascetic as **Yogashram** i.e. a life directed towards union with the God or the ultimate reality. Here the word **ashram** has a special significance. The word **ashram** as such means a place/location or organisation where an ascetic committed to spirituality stays and continues his practice under the guidance of his teacher. But in classical Indian spiritual tradition the average life an individual was calculated to be 100 years, divided into four stages or **ashrams**. That is to say one's life in its totality is a spiritual journey.

Stage 1: The Brahmacharya ashram. This is the initial or the formative stage of life where one is supposed to lead a life of restraint, celibacy and education in a spiritual environment at home, or at a Gurukul i.e. a place or residence of one's mentor or preceptor.

Stage 2: The Grihastha ashram. After the first stage a person can choose either to enter into the life of a householder and assume his worldly responsibilities looking after his family, or to take up the life of an ascetic.

Even in family life he should continue with those routine spiritual activities that are ordained for a householder.

Stage 3: The Vanaprastha ashram. After relinquishing his role as a householder and handing over his responsibilities to the next generation, he is supposed to retire to a solitary retreat and be totally occupied with spiritual pursuits and studying the scriptures.

Stage 4: The Sanyas ashram. This last stage is a life of renunciation. In it one is supposed to lead the life of a mendicant without any belongings, sustaining oneself on alms and constantly contemplating the ultimate reality. Ma termed the life of a dedicated ascetic **Yogashram.**

Sometimes through over-enthusiasm and a strong inner urge one is tempted to take up the life of an ascetic without first acquiring the necessary preliminary qualifications. As a result this impulse would not be maintained as a life-long commitment. Ma asked BG first to try to acquire those qualities by focussing her attention on the Yogmandir. That means she should try to engage herself in worshipping the Lingam in her temple, doing Japa and dhyana. Ma also asked BG to keep her body fit. Mind and body co-exist, and one affects the other. There is a saying in Sanskrit, “**Shariram adyam khalu dharma sadhanam.**” i.e. verily the body is the primary means for spiritual practice. Spiritual practice is not only intellectual acrobatics. One should keep his body fit for doing sadhana. Here the fitness of the body also includes purity. The so-called hindrances to spiritual practice viz. lust, anger, greed, jealousy, - though primarily mental dispositions - react on the body and make it impure. For Yogashram the body should also be trained not to react to these mental dispositions. Even in spite of a strong and sincere mental motivation to continue with sadhana the body does not always cooperate. This is really frustrating for a seeker.

BG did very well all throughout her formal studies.

This became possible because of her tenacity, sincerity, focussed attention, commitment and total involvement. If all these are applied in action nothing remains impossible. Ma asked her to apply the same traits in her spiritual life also.

In the next sentence Ma gave a very important clue to successful sadhana. Ma told BG to always stay happy. Apparently this seems to be something impossible. People generally take up the spiritual path after realising the fact that the happiness in worldly life is transient. Life oscillates between pleasure and pain. The inner craving of each individual is to enjoy perpetual happiness throughout life. But this inner urge does correspond to desires on the surface of the mind. He seeks happiness from attaining objects external to himself. His mind drifts from one object to another. Here both the subject

and the object change with time. These two variables make Constancy impossible to achieve. That is why even the attainment of the desired object does not bring perpetuation in happiness. The object which was once the most loveable may become valueless with the passage of time. The subject cannot check his own changing. The way out is to try to select an object of love which does not have any temporal and spatial coordinates. That means it should be permanent or quasi-permanent. So one should select an object of desire which is not subject to change with time.

Thought of God is one such. Ma asked BG to remember Him with all her heart. That means with all love. With constant remembrance she will feel a strong attraction for God and in time the inner urge and the apparent mundane objective craving will merge together.

In the next sentence Ma wanted to know how BG was spending her time or Ma wanted to know about BG's daily routine. A seeker in spite of having a strong inclination for spiritual life, cannot devote the required time for spiritual practice due to day-to-day preoccupations, commitments and responsibilities. At that time BG joined a school in Calcutta (Deshbandhu Valika Vidyalay) as the Head Mistress. Naturally lack of time might have hindered her spiritual practice.

A true preceptor is supposed to take account of all the activities of a seeker and prescribe guidelines necessary in his life.

It seems that BG was not keeping good health at that time and she wanted to come to Dehradun, it being a good place to recover one's health, and stay with Ma. But Ma immediately discouraged BG's proposal to stay with Her, first because the duration of Ma's stay at a particular place was unpredictable and secondly because of Ma's way of life. BG was from a well-to-do rich family in Calcutta enjoying all the amenities and conveniences of life, whereas Ma's way of living was that of a roaming mendicant. Besides, BG needed special care to recover her health.

Though BG was eagerly intent on taking up the monastic way of life and was ready to go through all the hardships Ma asked her to wait for the right time to come.

Adaptation to a change of life style should preferably be gradual; it takes time. Any such sudden change may not always prove to be beneficial, and it can have an adverse effect on both body and the mind.

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