

SOME REVELATIONS OF THE DIVINITY OF THE HOLY MOTHER

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BEING SIMPLE seems to be a natural trait in the spiritually advanced souls. Rather,— as Christ said, 'Unless ye be as children, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven,' — this child-likeness is an incumbent precursor to the vision of God, realization of Truth. For Truth is simple and unless one becomes simple one cannot see It. But this simplicity, this guilelessness baffles people. For they are often after the grand and dazzling things, which are complex and more complex. A simple village life is thrown off for the more complex and involved life in the cities, for the varieties of entertainments it provides, the attractions and enticements it holds forth. In a similar way the life of the world with its sweet and subtle changes, overtakes man quite unawares and slowly but surely captivates him and draws him into its fold and then smothers him there. For the sake of variety and change man runs after novelty and forgets the Simple, the Truth, and fails even to recognize the harbingers of peace and realizers of Truth. They go unnoticed.

For a long time people of Calcutta used to consider Sri Ramakrishna as a mad man, because he never recognized the value of anything except in and through God; because he, for a long time, was completely oblivious of his surroundings in His contemplation, in short, because he did not follow the norms of the mundane world. Even the so-called enlightened who used to visit him used to say that he was dull and had no faculty for organization. Today we see how misled these wiseacres have been. Their names and all they boasted of are forgotten whereas Sri Ramakrishna has come to live in the hearts of millions for ever. But such is the delusion that this complexity of the world spreads over us, that we take what is transitory as eternal.

Sri Sarada Devi, the consort of Sri Ramakrishna, better known among the devotees of Sri Ramakrishna as the Holy Mother, was likewise unknown as a Teacher of mankind in her own right, for a considerably long time. Even some of the disciples of Sri Ramakrishna could not know about her high spiritual stature till after a few years of the Master's passing away. They in the beginning respected her as the consort of their Guru. But soon they came to know that she was no ordinary mortal.

Sri Ramakrishna paid her the highest respect by worshipping her as the embodiment of the Divine Mother one day at Dakshineswar, as a culmination of his spiritual practices. He showed great deference to her

wishes and held her in great reverence. The Master alone knew who she was. We shall narrate here some instances to show how he regarded her. Hriday, who was the Master's attendant for several years, in his last days with the Master was becoming selfish and money-minded. When his wishes were thwarted by Sri Ramakrishna's refusal to be a tool in his hands for his earthly ends, he got annoyed, became abusive and ill-treating. Seeing this growing tendency in Hriday Sri Ramakrishna warned him, 'You may be saved if the person residing here (showing his own body) is angered, but beware if she (the Holy Mother) gets annoyed. Not even, Brahma, Vishnu or Maheswara can save you then from her wrath.' On other occasions Sri Ramakrishna referred to her as the Goddess of learning, Sarada, come to impart knowledge. But in spite of repeated assertions to this effect, coming from good authorities, man often forgets to recognize divine personages. This is what Bhagavan Sri Krishna too opines in the *Gita*: 'The ignorant disregard Me, who am embodied in a human form, not knowing My higher nature as the Great Lord of beings.'¹ How few recognized him as the Lord! Even Arjuna his closest associate was unaware of this fact until Sri Krishna himself revealed this secret to him.

Why does this happen? The Lord when He embodies behaves like any other human being. He has hunger and thirst, His body has disease and decay. How then can any one distinguish Him unless one has penetrative and divine eyes (*divya caksus*). Yet, simple and unsophisticated people recognize Him more easily than others. For instance, in the Krishnavatara, the simple cowherds and cowherdesses of Vrindavana were blessed with that wonderful insight to probe into the mysteries of the divine. What a wonderful prayer it is with which the Gopis address the Lord — the Gopigita of the *Bhagavata*! The garland-weaver of Mathura and Kubja, the maid-servant of the palace of Kamsa, could discover Him because they were simple and had faith. In the Ramavatara Shabari, the forest-woman, could find Him out.

That is the secret of divine personalities. They come. Yet, very few can find them out unless they reveal by themselves their true nature. In Sri Ramakrishna, people according to their evolution in spiritual life, saw a good man, an unspoilt child of nature, a great saint or an Incarnation. People came in contact with him often, witnessed his ecstasies and so it was easy for them to come to any one of the above conclusions. But the Holy Mother was almost a recluse. She was so modest that she never stirred out of the Nahabat, where she stayed while at Dakshineswar, when anyone was about, so much so that it is said that when some one asked an officer of the temple whether the Mother lived there, he seems to have replied, 'Yes, we have heard that she lives here, but have never seen her'; so unknown did she live. Her prayers, her practices were all in secret. Her ecstasies and *samadh*is were unknown to others except a few

¹ Gita, IX, 11.

of her close women devotees. How then could anyone know of her true nature?

The first revelation of her lofty spiritual disposition comes to us from the eye-witness Yogin-Ma, a woman disciple of the Master.

Though the Mother used to have her moods of rapt absorption, perhaps she was not aware of them herself. So one day she asked Yogin-Ma, 'Dear Yogin, please speak to the Master that through his grace I may experience samadhi. On account of the constant presence of devotees, I hardly get any opportunity to speak to him about it myself.'

Yogin-Ma reports, 'I thought it was quite right and I should carry out her request. So next morning when Sri Ramakrishna was alone in his room I went to his room and after saluting him in the usual way communicated the Mother's prayer to him. He listened and suddenly became grave.' When the Master was in that mood none dared utter a word, so after sitting for a while the devotee left the room. When she returned to the Nahabat she found the Mother seated for her daily worship. She opened the door a little and found her in a strange mood, now weeping, now silently laughing. Yogin-Ma says, 'Tears were rolling down her cheeks in an unceasing stream. Gradually she became very much absorbed into herself. I knew she was in *samadhi*. So I closed the door and came away.' This was, however, not a solitary instance; like the Master she would naturally go into an exalted mood at any incident that happened to be of some spiritual significance. After the Master's passing away these moods were more frequent in her. In Vrindavana she had the experience of the highest state of *samadhi* as well.

We have seen already that the Holy Mother had the highest spiritual realizations and was times without number absorbed in divine moods. But that does not preclude us, from inquiring if she was aware of her Divinity. Instances there are in her life which show that in spite of all her efforts to hide herself, sometimes, unknown to herself some words escaped from her lips that intimated that she was perfectly aware of her Divinity. At such moments 'she would compare herself to Lakshmi, the divine consort of Narayana, speak of herself as the Mother of all beings or admit her capacity to confer liberation on any one.' But often the very next moment, perhaps thinking that she was giving out a secret which people did not understand, she would change the topic to make the utterance appear as a casual remark of no consequence. It was left for the discerning disciple about her to take proper cognizance of the words. The disciples were given the chance to know what her real nature was. And if they had the good fortune to possess enough acumen they would know her, in spite of her later protestations to the contrary.

Here, we shall give some instances from the Mother's life in illustration of this: Once a woman disciple of the Mother went to her Calcutta residence. She was resting after lunch. The disciple sat by her and began to fan her. Suddenly she heard the Mother speaking, addressing no one in particular, 'Well, you all have come here. But where

is Sri Ramakrishna?' The disciple in her memoirs writes, 'I replied, "We could not meet him in this life. Who knows in which future birth we shall be able to see him? But this is our greatest good fortune, that we have been able to touch your feet." "That is true, indeed," was the brief remark of the Mother.' This was a rare revelation by the Mother, who liked to pass herself off as an ordinary mortal.

But whenever earnest devotees wanted to know who she was, she would ungrudgingly own to them her Divinity. "Once a devotee worshipped her feet and kept them on his head. Mother remonstrated with him and said, 'the Master himself stays in the head, God Himself sits on the thousand-petalled lotus there.' The disciple at once asked, 'Mother, if the Master is God Himself, who are you then?' Without hesitation the Mother replied. 'Who else should I be? I, too, am the Divine Mother.'"

On another occasion she installed and worshipped her own portrait along with that of the Master at the Ashrama, at Koalpara, a place not far from Jayarambati.

To another devout disciple, who had heard of her being spoken of as the Primal Energy, as the Universal Mother and so on, and was eager to know it from her own lips, she did not withhold the secret. 'Yes, it is so', was her answer.

There is an interesting episode in the Mother's life which happened after the Master's passing away. The Mother was once going to Jayarambati from Kamarpukur. Her little nephew, Shivaram, was following her with a bundle of clothes. When they were in sight of the village of Jayarambati some thought crossed this young boy's mind. He fell back. The Mother did not appear to notice it and went on. But as she missed his footfalls she looked back and saw him standing motionless at a distance. With surprise in her tone she asked, 'What's the matter Shivu? Come along?' Shivu didn't budge; instead he called out, 'If you would tell me who you are, I shall come.' Mother wanted to put him off, so she said, 'Who should I be? I am your aunt.' Unsatisfied, he replied, 'Then go, there you are near your house. I won't proceed further.' It was evening, Mother was worried as to what to do with the boy. There was no time for the boy to reach Kamarpukur before nightfall, neither will he go to her house. In this predicament she could not leave him alone. Still, she said, 'Look at that. Who, indeed, can I be, my dear? I am a woman, your aunt.' Shivaram, however, was insistent, 'Well, you can go then,' said he. At last the Mother had to yield. She said, 'People say I am Kali'. 'Is it true', asked Shivaram. 'Yes,' replied the Mother. Delighted at that Shivaram said, 'Now let us go.' Then only did he follow her into the village.

Another time a devotee was taking leave of the Mother at her house at Jayarambati. As she was bidding him good-bye she remarked, 'Call on me,' but the next moment she said, 'Call on the Master. He is all.' Lakshmi Devi, the Master's niece, who was present on the occasion said to her, 'Mother, why should you confuse them thus?' Mother replied, 'Why? What have I done?' Lakshmi Devi said, 'Well, Mother, did you not

say, "Call on Me" and then bewilder him by saying, "Call on the Master"? 'Why?' argued the Mother, 'Calling on the Master is calling on all.' Lakshmi Devi, however, was not distracted. She impressed on the devotee 'that what he had heard from the Mother was very valuable; that it was a declaration, as well as a direction by the Mother herself, that he should call on her.'

An incident which happened at Rameswar when the Mother visited the temple of Shiva at that place may be recalled here. When the Mother saw the uncovered emblem of Shiva at the temple she said to herself, 'Ah, It is just as I had left It.' Devotees, who were around her, inquired, 'What did you say, Mother?' Mother at once, as it were, drew into her shell, 'Oh, a meaningless something escaped out of my lips.' A revelation was made to the devotees and they believe that one who came as Sita, the faithful consort of Sri Ramachandra, and worshipped the emblem of Shiva on the coast of Rameswara, had again descended as the Holy Mother.

Girish Chandra Ghosh, a house-holder disciple of the Master and a first-rate genius, had a unique mystic experience about the Mother. He was one of those of the Master's disciples who did not at first think highly of the Mother's spiritual greatness; so it will all the more compel our attention.

Some years after the Master's passing away Girish, along with some of the monastic disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, went to Jayarambati. That was the first time that Girish was taken to Holy Mother's presence. Girish prostrated before her, stood up and looked at her once and immediately left the room. He sat in the outhouse musing and serious. Others who were with him were astounded at his behaviour. Then one of them, Swami Niranjanananda, asked him the reason for such a change. He requested the Swami to inquire of the Mother if she was not the person who had appeared to him in a dream in his nineteenth year. Mother sent him word that she was. Then Girish narrated his experience: how he was seriously ill in his nineteenth year; how he was given up for lost by the attending physicians; how one night in that condition he dreamt that the whole firmament was lit with a divine light; how it proceeded towards him and took the form of a Goddess; and how the Goddess put something in his mouth, resembling the consecrated food of the Lord of Puri, uttering soothing words and vanished. He remembered the Goddess again as soon as he had seen the Holy Mother, he said.

It is necessary to point out here that the Mother was most unassuming all throughout her life though she came to know who she really was. There was not a trace of egoism in her, nor was there in her any tendency to carve out a position in society. Therefore, she had no patience with people who were not convinced of her divinity, but out of mere plagiarism would call her the Divine Mother. She would silence such of them effectively and pointing to the picture of the Master say, 'He is everything. He kindly gave me shelter at his feet.' Only the deserved got

an opportunity to have a peep into her personality. To others she behaved like an ordinary mortal ever busy with the household chores — dressing vegetables, scouring vessels, cooking and the like. Sri Ramakrishna referring to this modest trait in her used to say, 'She is like a cat covered with ashes, hiding its true colour.'

Until the centenary of her birth, in 1953, very few people outside the pale of the devotees of Sri Ramakrishna knew about the Holy Mother. She became known to the world during the celebrations. Today people from distant parts of the world go on pilgrimage to the place of her birth, Jayarambati, and thinking about her feel blessed. A nunnery to provide shelter for women who are in earnest to pursue the life of renunciation has been started in her name on the centennial day of her birth not far from Dakshineswar, near Calcutta. Shrines dedicated to her are being built now. Slowly, the Mother is revealing herself more and more.