

Some Musings on the Holy Mother

—SWAMI BALABHADRANANDA

Sri Ramakrishna says in the *Kathamrita* (*The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*): “Whenever anyone assumes a human form, he has to come to the domain of *Adyashakti*.” He further says, “With the help of *Adyashakti*, God sports as an Incarnation. God through his *Shakti* incarnates himself as man. Then alone does it become possible for the Incarnation to carry on his work. Everything is due to *Shakti* of the Divine Mother.” So when Swami Vivekananda places the Holy Mother on a higher pedestal than Sri Ramakrishna, it must not be taken as a mere emotional exuberance — it is correct from this point of view. Pure Brahman may be higher than *Adyashakti*, because *Adyashakti* is but Brahman's *Shakti*, but an *Avatara* or Divine Incarnation is not.

An *Avatara* is always subservient to *Adyashakti*, and remaining so only he fulfills his divine mission in the manner and magnitude it is needed for the world. This is the eternal law concerning an *Avatara* and his divine mission. That is why, perhaps, in most cases when God incarnated himself as *Avatara*, *Adyashakti* also preferred to make her advent as a human being. She perhaps felt that she could help the *Avatara* better in his divine mission if she experienced the same prevailing conditions of the earth along with the *Avatara*. That is why, perhaps, the world has witnessed divine couples such as Radha and Krishna, Sita and Rama, Vishnupriya and Chaitanya, Yashodhara and Buddha. We may need to use many a ‘perhaps’ in this essay, as we are aware that we are discussing *Adyashakti* or *Mahamaya* here whose

ways are inscrutable and that whatever we say about her can at best be a conjecture and not a conclusion.

This was true of all Incarnations in the past; also that their divine consorts provided them with the powers that were required for the fulfillment of their respective missions. But unlike the Holy Mother, in this Age, they played their roles from the background, quietly. Perhaps they themselves wished so, which is why their great silent roles defied the attention and comprehension of people at large.

The *Chandi* says, once as expressed by the sage Markandeya and again as what the gods themselves felt, that man can have *moksha*, liberation from bondage, only when the Divine Mother is pleased with him. The Mother herself declares in the *Chandi*, as excerpted from one of the Hindus’ fundamental scriptures, *Rigveda*, that if she wishes she can make of a man a *rishi*, a seer of the Supreme Truth or anything else.

The same *Adyashakti* has appeared now as Sarada Devi, in her first-ever role in a human body as a tangible, universal Mother — as the mother of the wicked as well as the mother of the virtuous. We had not experienced any goddess to be so motherly and any mother to be so godly, every day and at every moment. So far, only a handful of realized souls might have comprehended in the innermost recesses of their hearts the universal motherhood of the Divine Mother. But after studying the unique life of Sri Sarada Devi on this earth, everybody can comprehend that to a great extent. One can now believe more

easily that love and affection for humankind actually exists in the unseen hearts of the unseen goddesses—just as Sri Sarada Devi had. Goddesses Durga, Kali and others owe this comprehension to Sri Sarada Devi.

To enable the world to accept Sri Sarada Devi with due *shraddha*, the *Avatara* of this age himself came forward. Sometimes he would declare his consort's greatness straightaway, referring to her divinity as: *O ki je se? O amar Shakti* (Don't consider her as one of the common run of women. She is my Power). At other times he would only give hints to the effect, saying: "Have I married someone who lives on leaves and stems of gourds?" By this he meant that he could never have married an ordinary woman. The one whom God accepts as His consort, cannot but be an incarnation of the Goddess Herself. He once warned Hriday, who dared to behave rudely with the Holy Mother: "If the One residing in this (pointing to himself) becomes angry with you, you may still have chances to survive. But if the One residing in Her (meaning Sri Sarada Devi) is displeased with you, even Brahma, Vishnu or Maheshwara will not be able to protect you."

By his behaviour with Sri Sarada Devi also, Sri Ramakrishna sometimes clearly indicated her greatness. One day he mistook her for his niece, Lakshmi, who he thought had brought him his meal for the night and without looking at her, he said, "*Jabar samay darjata bandha kore diye jas* (close the doors when you leave the room)" Now, the word '*jas*' corresponds to the English word 'go' but the form in which Sri Ramakrishna used the word was only proper for addressing juniors who need not be shown much respect. The appropriate word in this case should have been '*jeo*' instead of '*jas*'. The

Holy Mother gave a single-word reply in the affirmative. Hearing her voice, Sri Ramakrishna immediately realized his mistake and said apologetically: "Oh, it is you! I took you for Lakshmi. Please do not mind!" But still, he could not sleep the entire night. At day-break, he immediately went to her and said, "Look, I couldn't sleep the whole night. I felt very bad for addressing you so disrespectfully."

Why was Sri Ramakrishna so concerned that he inadvertently expressed even the slightest disrespect to Sri Sarada Devi? Why did he repeatedly try to draw our attention to Sri Sarada Devi's greatness? Because knowing her as the Divine Mother or at least as divinely powerful was necessary for both the spiritual and material well-being of the people of the world. Time and again, Sri Ramakrishna pointed out that *Maya*, who casts her intriguing knowledge-covering shroud on everyone in the universe, not sparing even Brahma, Vishnu, and Maheshwara from her sway, makes an exception only in one case: If anyone addresses her as 'mother', she does not bewitch him or her. It is as if she feels ashamed to do so. So the only way to win over *Maya* is to treat her as one's mother. It is, therefore, a great blessing for the entire mankind that the ever-enchanting *Maya*, on Her own, has appeared in this Age as a natural motherly personality, in the form of Sri Sarada Devi. Because of her advent, people of the world can now look upon the *Maya-incarnate*, Sri Sarada Devi, spontaneously as their own mother and get enabled thus, even ignorantly, to go beyond *Maya* and reach the supreme. That is why Sri Ramakrishna repeatedly draws our attention to Sri Sarada Devi's greatness, because if we fail to recognize her as *Mahamaya* or the Divine Mother, it

will be a great spiritual loss to us. We will not be able to pierce through the veil of *Maya* to see our resplendent Self, which we are in a position now to do more easily by our prayers and submission to the Holy Mother. That is why we find Sri Ramakrishna apologetic and repentant in the incident narrated above, although his mistake was totally unintentional. He wanted to drive home through the incident, as a lesson for mankind, that the great power that has descended in our midst in the form of Sri Sarada Devi, cannot be shown the slightest disrespect even unknowingly.

We know that Sri Ramakrishna always considered himself as a child of the Divine Mother. One day at Dakshineswar while he was going to the Kali Temple to pay his daily respects to the Mother, he found the stairs slippery due to rain on previous few days. He went down on all fours, like a child, to climb the stairs, with these words on his lips, "Mother, see that I do not fall." Again, when Totapuri offered to teach him Advaita Vedanta, he said, "I do not know anything about it. My Mother only knows whether or not I should learn this from you." Totapuri said, "Then go and ask your mother." Totapuri was under the impression that Sri Ramakrishna was referring to his biological mother. But Sri Ramakrishna actually went to Mother Kali in the temple to seek permission and returning from the temple reported to Totapuri that he had received her permission. So we find that from the simplest daily act to an issue of supreme spiritual importance — he would be ever dependent on the Divine Mother. He would try to instill this total dependence on the Mother into the hearts of his young disciples also. Once Swami Shivananda,

then Taraknath Ghosal, complained to him that he could not concentrate his mind well while he attempted to meditate. Sri Ramakrishna's solution was as simple as this: "*Ore Ma-kebal, Ma-kebal* (My boy, report it to the Mother)". By this he perhaps meant that the Mother, who rules the universe, rules our minds also. Therefore, if she wills, she can send our mind into meditation in no time. Mother *can* do everything and *is* doing everything.

That is why Sri Ramakrishna's *sadhana* began with Mother-worship and proceeding through diverse spiritual paths within and outside Hinduism, it ended again in Mother-worship, with the difference that the Mother was worshipped in the last case not in any image but in the human form of his own consort, and as Goddess Shodashi. After this, he had an effortless vision of Christ, followed by innumerable visions of gods, goddesses, and incarnations throughout the rest of his life, for which he did not need to undertake any new *sadhana*. His *sadhanas* actually ended with the Shodashi Puja.

Sri Ramakrishna had performed this Shodashi Puja in his own room on the night of Phalaharini Kali Puja and when the worship was over, he surrendered himself, his rosary, and the fruit of his life-long *sadhana* at the feet of the living image, Sri Sarada Devi. It may seem from it that without any self-effort, Sri Sarada Devi thus became the overnight inheritor of the immeasurable spiritual treasures of Sri Ramakrishna. As if, Sri Ramakrishna was the giver and Sri Sarada Devi, the receiver. But actually it was not so. It was not a case of transmission of Sri Ramakrishna's spiritual powers to Sri Sarada Devi. The Shodashi Puja was but a process by which the Divine Powers, which were ever Sri

Sarada Devi's, were invoked. Without this invocation, the Divine Mission of the *avatara* of the Age could not be initiated, and also it was true that this invocation could not be effected by anybody other than the *Avatara* himself.

Once the Holy Mother's dormant powers were awakened, Sri Ramakrishna's mission as an *avatara* also started because her powers were the powers with which Sri Ramakrishna was to accomplish his Divine Mission. He was now found to be preaching among Keshab Sen and other Brahma leaders of Calcutta, who, impressed by his spiritual talks and his frequent communion with God, began to publish about him in the Brahma journals. This was instrumental in drawing sincere young men to Dakshineswar at his feet, the foremost among whom was Narendranath, the future Swami Vivekananda.

We will now look at the Shodashi worship by the Master from the

Tantric perspective. Tantra in India is said to have two systems or streams. The system prevalent in the eastern region, especially in Bengal, is called *Kali-kula* while the one practised in the South is called *Shri-kula*. The presiding deity of the *Kali-kula* is obviously Goddess Kali, while the presiding deity of the other school is Goddess Shodashi, also known as *Shrividyā*. It is said that without attaining

fulfillment in the spiritual practices enjoined by the *Kali-kula*, one is not entitled to practice in the mode of the *Shri-kula*. We find that, as though by the will of the Divine Mother, Sri Ramakrishna first plunged into spiritual practices following the *Kali-kula* tradition, and after attaining perfection in that mode only, he had switched to the *sadhana* of *Shri-kula* mode.

Incidentally, the *sannyasins* of the Ramakrishna Order belong to the Puri sect, one of the ten sects introduced by Shankaracharya, as Sri Ramakrishna was initiated into *sannyasa* by Totapuri who belonged to this sect. Now, the presiding deity of this Puri sect is Kamakshi who is also known as Shodashi, *Shrividyā*, Tripurasundari, Lalita and Rajarajeshwari. These are all different names of the one and the same supreme *Para-shakti* or Primordial Mother. In Kanchipuram in South India, there is a temple of Goddess Kamakshi, in which the idol of



Bhavatarini at Dakshineswar

Shodashi as well as the *Shri Yantra* (the mystical diagram) were set up by none other than Sri Shankaracharya. We have seen that the Master first attained perfection in the disciplines prescribed by the *Kali-kula* stream of Tantra, and only after that, Totapuri gave him *sannyasa*. In other words, before he became a Puripanthi monk, he became eligible to undertake *sadhana* as per the *Shri-kula*

system. And having come to the *Shri-kula* through his *sannyasa*, he now prepared himself to worship the presiding deity of this tradition, Goddess Shodashi. How did he perform this worship? He did this worship neither in an image of the Goddess Shodashi, nor in the *Shri Yantra*, but in the living image of Sri Sarada Devi herself.

Sri Ramakrishna described Sri Sarada Devi as Saraswati. Swami Vivekananda called her the living Durga. Swamiji also referred to her as Devi Bagala. And Sarada Devi herself confided to Shibu Dada (Shivaram, her nephew) that she was Kali. From the above statements it could mean that all deities are the same. However, they are *not exactly* the same.

I beg the opportunity here to narrate an incident on a personal note. When we joined the Ramakrishna Math to become monks, revered Swami Nirvanananda Maharaj was the senior-most Vice-President. He was held in very high esteem in the Order because he was a disciple as well as *sevak* (attendant) of Swami Brahmananda, who had blessed him saying that he would attain the knowledge of Brahman in this very life. Swami Shivananda, another disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, predicted the same thing. When I was a *brahmachari* at the Training Centre at Belur, I had the opportunity of serving him a little. At that time I asked him once: "Maharaj, Holy Mother herself is the Goddess Durga, isn't she?" He listened but said, "There is some difference." His answer could not satisfy me, because Swami Vivekananda himself said that Sri Sarada Devi was the "Living Durga". I thought he was perhaps in a different mood now; that was why he said so. So later, one day, I got another opportunity to ask him the same question,

but that time also I got the same reply—"There is a difference."

Much later I came across the interpretation of Sri Ramakrishna's Shodashi puja, which I have explained earlier, and in an article by Swami Hiranmayananda in *Shatarupe Sarada*. Then only I realized that a knower of Brahman, such as, Swami Nirvanananda was not speculating—Holy Mother's true nature had been revealed to him. What Ramakrishna said about her, that she was Saraswati, is true. That she was Goddess Durga or Bagala, as Vivekananda said of her, is also true, and also true is what Sri Sarada Devi herself said of herself, that she was the Goddess Kali. All these statements were true in the sense that Durga, Saraswati, Jagaddhatri, Lakshmi, and all others are but partial manifestations of the perennial Cosmic Power (*Adyashakti*) or the Divine Mother, while Shodashi is that Power in its entirety. Therefore, as the incarnation of Goddess Shodashi, Sri Sarada Devi is the concentrated and highest manifestation of *Adyashakti*; Saraswati, Durga, Kali and others are her constituent parts and aspects.

There is a *mantra* in the Tantra called the *Trikuta Mantra* which has three parts. One part is called—*vak-bhava-kuta* comprising these five letters: *ka e ii la hreem*. This part of the *mantra* stands for knowledge or *jnana* and Saraswati is its presiding deity. Another part of the *mantra* is *kama-raj-kuta* comprising the letters *ha, sa, ka, ha, la, hreem*. This part of the *Trikuta Mantra* represents *iccha*, the desire or will, and its presiding deity is Kali. The third and last part of the *Mantra* is called *Shakti kuta* having the four letters *sa, ka, la* and *hreem* in it. It represents *kriya*, activity and energy. Durga is its presiding deity.

What about Goddess Shodashi or Shri Vidya? She is the presiding deity of the *Trikuta Mantra* as a whole, representing the entire gamut of Divine Power expressed through *jnana*, *iccha* and *kriya*. That is to say, she is the quintessence of this *mantra* in which there are Goddesses Saraswati, Durga, Kali and all others. Thus it is clear that the power that descended as Ma Sarada on the earth in this Age was the *Adyashakti* or Primordial Power herself.

Before the Shodashi puja, Holy Mother's power lay dormant. However, borrowing from that power itself, Sri Ramakrishna performed all his *sadhanas*. Sri Sarada Devi was not aware of her own power at that point and the time was also not ripe for that. One may recall in this context one incident concerning them both. When the Holy Mother was about fourteen years old, Sri Ramakrishna went to Kamarpukur and spent a few days. In the evening, local women would come to the Master to listen to his holy words. Mother also came there from Jayrambati and would join the other women to hear his words. But she would fall asleep in no time, as she would be very tired after doing the day's household chores. Other women would try to awaken her. But Sri Ramakrishna would tell them, "Don't rouse her now. If she listens to all these talks on God, would she remain here (on this earth) anymore? She would run back hastily."

Surely no one there could understand the significance of these words of Sri Ramakrishna's. Unlike others, Sri Sarada Devi did not require any further spiritual elevation for which Sri Ramakrishna's words are ever sought after. Rather, she was the giver of *bhakti* and *mukti* and everything spiritual, being the Divine Mother incarnate. Sri Sarada Devi,

therefore, neither needed to hear the ambrosial words of Sri Ramakrishna nor was it good for mankind that she heard them at that point of time. Was it not true that till then Radhu (Holy Mother's niece) was not as yet born and the future disciples had not started coming? Till then, there was nothing around her to bind her pure mind with the world. Any reference to God or spiritual matters could have reminded her of her real Self and she would have gone back to her divine realm without even initiating the destined role she was to play as Sri Ramakrishna's divine consort. And without her, Sri Ramakrishna's Divine Mission also would not have commenced.

In the famous article in Bengali entitled *Hindu dharma O Sri Ramakrishna*, Vivekananda describes Sri Ramakrishna as the most perfect among all the Incarnations who has come in the previous Ages. He is endowed with all spiritual ideals possible. By his advent as the incarnation of this Age, he has nourished all the branches of learning. He is, in fact, the renewed manifestation of the earlier founders of religions. Elsewhere Swamiji describes Sri Ramakrishna as *avatara varishtha*, the greatest among the incarnations. Taking our cue from what Swamiji has said in the aforementioned article on Sri Ramakrishna and Hinduism, we can say that by referring to him as the 'greatest' he meant that God revealed his divine qualities and powers to the greatest extent possible hitherto, in the personality of Sri Ramakrishna.

The need of this age was great for such a manifestation. And the main criterion of the greatness of the Incarnation of the present Age lies not in the supersession but in the acceptance of the greatness of all the previous incarnations and their teachings. But he is the greatest, in the

sense just described, only because the *Adyashakti* or Primordial Energy appeared this time with her greatest power. She as Shodashi Sarada, our Holy Mother, provided all power and support to Sri

Ramakrishna's divine mission and enabled him to be *avatara varishtha*. One, therefore, cannot but marvel at the depth and expanse of the Ramakrishna-Sarada Incarnation.*



On a Stormy Night Came She

–DEVANJALEE SEN

*On a stormy night came She,
 And asked for a corner of my house to rest;
 "I only need a corner to rest" - pleaded She
 Seeing Her plight, joyfully I offered
 A corner in my tiny altar.
 Before I could know,
 Quietly She stretched Her legs
 And intruded my territory.
 And stealthily, She broke into my shrine
 and coloured it with Her love,
 Making me Her bond servant forever thus!*

Master Teaches Mother: Secular strictures with Spiritual Significance

SUMITA ROY

I

However much is spoken or written about the unique relationship of the Great Master, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and his divine consort the Holy Mother, Sri Sarada Devi, still something remains unsaid, un-thought about.

When his family was at its wit's end to find a bride for Gadai, in order to curtail his divine "madness", it was this God-intoxicated young man who pointed out the child bride from Jayrambati specially ordained for him. And when after marriage he met this pure little girl bride intermittently during his visits to his native village, the thought came to his mind that she was completely dependent on him for her growth and development. He took this responsibility very seriously, and joyously, thus beginning to mould his first disciple and one of the greatest supports for his future spiritual mission.

Long before it became evident that a silent revolution of positive and inclusive spirituality was being incubated in the womb of time, began the fashioning of the lady who would steer its course in the most unobtrusive yet illuminating way, and grow into the *sangha janani* of the Order which would come into existence decades later.

Many hints and pointers to the kind of training the Master gave to young Sarada are scattered in the literature available to us today. He made spirituality simple with live examples: pointing to the moon, he told her that just like the moon is everyone's uncle (in Bengal the popular

appellation is '*chand mama*'), so also is God the nearest and dearest of every individual whoever is genuinely seeking this realization. He was strict where necessary: when he found young Sarada and her companion, his niece Lakshmi in bed at the time of meditation during the auspicious hour of dawn, he did not hesitate to pour water on their bed to teach them a lesson. He tested Sarada at various times: after she arrived in Dakshineswar for the first time, Sri Ramakrishna asked her whether she wanted a worldly union implying that this would drag his mind to a lower plane; Sarada passed the test with flying colours when she replied that she had come only to assist him in his chosen path and not to be an impediment. Awakening her divinity by the worship he offered to her during the Shodashi Puja, the Great Master established the primacy of the motherhood of God and gave an exceptional interpretation to our ancient traditions.

In addition to this obvious spiritual dimension, the Mother's training included many so-called mundane, householders' tasks or secular tenets. We are told that cooking was one of them—the amount of salt to be put in a preparation reveals much about the person's inner qualities; she learnt how to prepare betel rolls with the right amount of *chun/chunna* (calcium carbonate) and how to roll it so that it would not come undone even when tossed around; she was told how to trim the wick of a lamp; another lesson was on proper etiquette for interpersonal contexts, that

is, how to make people one's own by being non-judgemental and adaptable. She later described how Sri Ramakrishna had taught her the art of massaging by doing this practically on her own body. She learnt the rules of travel—how to get into a boat first and get off last, how to care for the luggage, how not to put her arm out of a train window when she had a precious amulet on her arms.

Thus we read about an entire course in education which seems to far exceed in excellence the modern day hi-tech education. To go into the deeper significance of some of these would be the thrust of the present discussion.

II

To begin with, trimming the wick of a lamp may seem such a marginal task today when light is got from sources other than the lamp.

But it has such subtle and far-ranging nuances that we can learn much about inwardness from this brief description of what the Master communicated to the Mother. In a village of the 19th century, the lamp was an important part of everyday existence as electricity was something unheard of. To get the maximum light from a lamp, the wick has to be of proper length, right thickness, etc.; it needs to be cleaned everyday so that the black soot sticking

to it does not make the flame smoke.

All this teaches attention to detail. The soot can be metaphoric of the worldly blackness that collects on the surface of the mind which unless scrapped every day makes the mind sluggish and unfit for higher realization. A well-trimmed wick is easy to light while an untrimmed wick requires much wasted effort to kindle.



Sri Sarada Devi

Also the Master compared a flickering flame to a disturbed mind and a steady flame to a mind capable of realization. Unless the wick is placed correctly, smeared with oil and kept away from direct breeze, a steady flame cannot be obtained. Every aspect of caring for the lamp including its daily polishing for shine are metaphors which the Master has used to guide an aspirant on the spiritual path. Therefore, the

mention of the Master teaching the Mother how to trim the wick of a lamp is not just a casual observation—it is an entire course in spirituality.

III

Cooking/preparing betel rolls was another of the lessons for the Mother which leaves a lasting message for posterity. A person who is able to judge

the right amount of ingredients in a recipe has to exercise various skills of mind and body. The Master often said that it was due to the cooking of the Holy Mother that his body was preserved in good health for such a long time. The Mother on her part could undergo any number of hardships only to ensure that the Master got the nourishment he needed—going so far as to boil the milk to thicken it so that he would not object to being overfed, in spite of the discomfort to herself of working tirelessly over a hot flame.

The Mother's behaviour and attitude here teach us how to do such an apparently insignificant job as cooking. The person who is cooking has to do the job with wholehearted concentration. We often find in these days of "take-aways" that people are reluctant to cook and if anyone does it, there is most often no pleasure in the task. It seems like a reluctant drudgery. One can cite the example of the Mother cooking day and night for the numerous devotees who came to her life-long. The Master's and Mother's covert message here is that food cooked with a negative mind is like poison and one which is cooked with joy is like *amrita*.

Serving food is the first step to spirituality as it has been famously noted that no spiritual progress is possible on an empty stomach. We recall the Mother's assurance that she would take the responsibility of the spiritual progress of the Master's "sons" when she was asked not to give them too much food which would hinder their spiritual austerities.

Another important point to remember is that our traditions lay great emphasis on the kind of food one eats and the *gunas* that ensue as a result. Food not only converts to physical energy and

mental felicity but has a huge role to play in the path of spiritual evolution. In which case food and cooking and serving move out of the mundane ambit and acquire transformative meaning.

Similarly, rolling betel leaves with proper ingredients and folding them neatly are not indicative of efficiency in action alone. It has various other implications. One of them is evident in the Mother's reply to a devotee who asked her whether she was preparing special *paan* for the Master and ordinary ones for the others. To this the Mother said that the Master was already her own, so she need not make an effort to make special ones for him. But those guests who came to visit for the first time had to be endeared so the special effort of making *paan* with various special ingredients.

And the point about preparing rolls that could be tossed around without spoiling the shape is a subtle hint that a spiritual person has to be dextrous in all matters; spiritual elevation is no excuse for slipshod ways of performing any task however unimportant it may seem. In other words, real spirituality implies efficiency in all aspects of life—a message that is oft repeated in the *Gita*.

IV

Travel and family are two important pointers in this training which the Mother was acquiring from her beloved Master. Boat rides were a part of her repeated journeys from her village to Dakshineswar. In spiritual terms the journey of life is often compared to a boat-ride and the world as an endless expanse of water which the individual has to traverse in order to reach the shore of liberation.

The Master told the Mother that she should get into the boat first, meaning that with each new passenger entering the boat it would rock and she would be the steadying influence to keep the balance of "the boat". One is reminded in this context that before leaving his mortal frame, the Master entreated the Holy Mother to continue the spiritual work which he had started and she had at first seemed hesitant. But later she became that shore where hundreds found spiritual succour and in the promise to leave the boat last, after everyone has disembarked, the Holy Mother gives hope to posterity that as long as there is even a single person who needs her help she is not going to abandon "the boat".

Next is the interpersonal relationships within the large families that were a norm in those times. The Master taught Holy Mother how to adapt to circumstances and how to be self-effacing in order to win the regard of other members of the family. We read how the little Sarada would eat spicy food prepared by the Master's guru Bhairavi Brahmani and praise it although tears came out of her eyes and no other women in the house could even touch that hot and spicy dish. Later in life her inclusion of her nieces in the decision making processes and telling everyone to make "the world your own" shows that the Mother became adept at human interaction. She refused to find fault with anyone or say hurtful truths because she knew that this would disturb the harmony of the household and take away peace of mind.

Mental peace is an essential prerequisite for inward progress and therefore a spiritual aspirant's first goal. Again and again in numerous places both the Master and the Mother have spoken about the mind and its control. And the best way to ensure inner discipline and exhibit a controlled mind is to practice these lessons in the family.

Innumerable such instances lead us to conclude that the Master was teaching the entire humanity through the Mother and the Mother being a model learner was passing on these invaluable lessons to the world.

V

In what has come to be considered as typically the style of the Great Master, in this training which he so carefully imparted to the Holy Mother we find an inclusive aspect which does not categorize anything as good or bad, secular or sacred, important or unimportant. Every aspect of life is central if it is coloured with the thought that every path leads to the chosen ideal and every task is a service of dedication.

So we march ahead keeping in mind that life itself is a lesson; nothing happens without the will of the Divine; the Cosmic Controller has a blueprint for our progress which we are actualizing, whether consciously or otherwise does not matter; because the final end of the teaching and testing is going to be a report card which is ensured by the loving Mother and the affectionate Master. ❀

