

### Call of the Mother

Om. A-sa-to ma sad gam-ma-ya. Ta-ma-so-ma jyo-tir gam-ma-ya. Mri-tyor ma a-mri-tam ga-ma-ya. Avir avir ma e-dhi. Rudra yat te dak-shi-nam mu-kham. Tena mam pahi nityam. Tena mam pahi nityam. Tena mam pahi nityam.

Lead us from the unreal to the Real. Lead us from darkness unto Light. Lead us from death to Immortality. Reveal to us Thy Resplendent Truth and evermore protect us, Oh Lord, by Thy Sweet and Compassionate Face, by Thy Sweet and Compassionate Face.

The title of my talk this morning is the Call of the Mother. Sri Ramakrishna as you know was the Mother's child. He began seeking God through an image of Divine Mother, Kali. One Western biographer of Sri Ramakrishna, Romain Rolland, mentions in his book that Sri Ramakrishna felt the call of the Mother even before he was born. And that was true. There is God's call from everywhere. So [since] Sri Ramakrishna who looked upon God as Mother, it was quite natural that he would hear Mother's call from his very birth. And, where was that Mother? He was hearing the call of the Mother in the deepest core of his heart. But he could not find the Mother. There was the image of Divine Mother Kali, so he had an unusual faith, like a little child has faith in its mother. For the little child, the mother is everything. So like a little child in relation to its mother, Sri Ramakrishna had great faith in that unseen Mother. So he began to call in his style, "Oh Mother, where are You? Where are You? Where are You? Are You in this image?" Like that.

He called and called, and cried and cried. It is a fascinating story we read: Sri Ramakrishna's search for the Mother. And at last the Mother revealed Herself to this child, revealed Herself as infinite consciousness, the formless consciousness pervading everything, entering into everything. Words cannot describe that experience of the Mother. And Sri Ramakrishna was... He used to narrate his first experience of the Mother, Mother as the indescribable formless consciousness pervading everything. That was in the depth of his experience and when he opened his eyes, he again was losing the vision of the Mother, so he continued his search. The Mother told him, "You have seen the Supreme Nature, My Supreme Nature, but you will have to see many other aspects of Me, just as a mother, our earthly mother, in her wardrobe, stores many costumes and she appears before the child, and the child wonders, "What is this? What is this?" "Yes, I am the same mother" and the child is assured.

Once the mother wants to go on a horseback [ride] and she has a horse riding costume and that was a new experience for the child. The child said, "Mommy?" "Why yes, I am Mommy." And the child is assured. Like that, the Divine Mother began to reveal Herself in many, many, many ways. As the Vedas declare, "Truth is one. Sages call it in many names and describe it in many forms." "Ekam sad vipra bahudha vadanti."<sup>1</sup> We have inscribed that in our retreat. At the retreat entrance of the retreat, we have inscribed that saying. So Sri Ramakrishna used to say that-- "Be a child before God. Call Mother... Call God as Mother, and your spiritual search will be easy and sweet – just as a child feels that he is in the presence of its mother. There may be many women in the company. The child looks at this and this and this

woman. At last in that crowd of one hundred women, he finds the mother and then he's happy-- runs to the mother. Like that.

All his life, Sri Ramakrishna had many experiences, but in all his experiences he would mention "Ma, Ma. It is Ma." Whatever he was teaching, he was speaking, he was doing, he said it is the Ma inside. People would listen to him and say, "how wonderful, inspiring your talks are. How many books you have read?" "Well I have not read a single book. From where do this wisdom comes? From the Mother, from Ma. Ma supplies me, constantly, constantly, constantly supplies me."

You see on the top of this altar there is a letter. In Sanskrit it is "Om." It is composed of two primary sounds, "ah," oo, "mm." The sound "mm" is the closing sound, consonant and it can be continued. This is not true of any other consonant. You can try [it] for yourself. "Mm"... "em" is the only consonant which closes the sound process, by closing the lips completely. So this sound, "Om," is represented as the word symbol of the totality of all words. All sounds have to come, begin from the throat - "ah." [The] primary sound [is] "ah." And the closing sound "mm" and the middle sound is "oo," Om, A-u-m. Now if you reverse... and so this Om is represented in Hinduism and also in Buddhism as the word symbol of the Divine, of the spiritual goal, and they prescribe repetition of this word, sacred word. Now if you reverse this word, try to reverse this sound, it will approximately be "Ma"... Omm... Ma. See? Ma means mother.

So in Hinduism, the Upanishads say that Brahman and Shakti... Brahman is... is highest truth, is that infinite reality, indescribable, but if Brahman comes down then He has attributes. Then He ... He becomes She. He becomes the dynamic power at the back of this world cosmic movement of life. So it is in the Mother. So the mother concept and father concept are inseparable, like Sri Ramakrishna's illustration: fire and its burning power, water and its soothing power. He used to give many examples that Brahman and Shakti, the power - power does not mean electric power or the power of atom. That is only one aspect of power. Power or shakti is everywhere. This table is standing, accumulation of wood, polishing the wood. And now it is standing; it is manifesting the shakti of power, a power which performs, gives all the functions of this lectern. Everywhere there is the display of shakti, material power, and also... but Vedanta says eventually Shakti is the spiritual counterpart of Brahman. Brahman and Shakti: inseparable, like the great poet, Kalidasa says, "Like [a] word and its meaning, inseparable." So like this [the] world has its parents, father and mother - the father principle and mother principle. They are one. Like as I said, the sound, "Om" and "Ma."

So Sri Ramakrishna says that the mother experience begins from your very birth. As a baby you are accustomed to know the mother, and mother's call is so sweet, and to the mother, the child's response is so sweet. Imagine a story of a little girl, let us say her name was Ruby. And Ruby and her mother had once gone to a forest area, just for a little outside adventure. And this forest had many tracks, winding tracks, and this child somehow got away from its mother and is following one track. The child is running, running, jumping. She knows mother is there, but unconsciously, it was going out of the track, far away from track to track, track to track. And the mother suddenly realized that the child is out of sight, and the mother began to call, "Ruby, Ruby, Ruby" and at first there was a response "Mommy,

Mommy... coming, coming, coming.” But all the time the child was going farther, farther, away. The mother was calling, “Ruby, Ruby, Ruby.” First [a] faint response, then no response. The child was apparently lost and the mother began to cry and say, “Ruby, Ruby, Ruby... where is Ruby?” And she began to run, and eventually they met; the child was discovered.

Now we are like Ruby. There is Mother, the Great Mother. As Svetashavatara Upanishad says, “Maayam Tu Prakritim Vidyaanmaayinam Tu Maheshvaram.”<sup>2</sup> “This whole nature, internal and external is Maya, the Great Mother, and its Lord is Maheshvara, the Brahman.” So Mother is there. If we seek, if we earnestly call, we can find the Mother, as Sri Ramakrishna did. And like Sri Ramakrishna, all our life we can be with our Mother.

In deep meditation, we can reach that infinite consciousness as our Self, and coming back into this universe into this world, if we are able, like Sri Ramakrishna to see the play of Mother everywhere, in every person, in every things, in every action, it is the play of the Mother, then we become fearless, like a child in the lap of the Mother has no worry. The mother may be a poor woman, but the child knows, my mother has all power. My mother has everything. The mother feels that security. The mother... the child does not leave any... does not need any other person’s love. Many people, maybe with a beautiful child everybody likes to hug and kiss the child, but to the child, the mother’s touch is most welcome.

So, we can, like Sri Ramakrishna has showed us how to live with God, and for him, God was Mother. And that Mother, was that Mother, can be seen, can be heard, can be touched, because the Mother’s presence [is there]. Normally when we are in the plane of ignorance our senses, our life, our mind is filled with desires. At that time, we... Mother is far away. We are lost in the wilderness. But when we become interested in Mother, when we become interested in spiritual search, then the Mother responds. The Mother responds in many ways, so we read in the Upanishads how God reveals Himself through every fragment of nature, every fragment of prakriti, it is God, that power, that shakti, that Saguna Brahman is coming to us. We have to see; we have to hear; we have to touch; we have to smell. We can direct all our senses to God, and God will be with us, so says the Katha Upanishad. “Yena Roopam Rasam Gandham Shabdaan Sparshaamshcha Maithunaan; Etenaiva Vijaanaati Kimatra Parishishyate.”<sup>3</sup> “By that power, that Shakti, you are able to see; you are able to hear; you are able to think; you are able to enjoy.” There is the shakti of the Mother, working through our senses, working through our mind.

In the Vedas, there is a sacred prayer called Gayatri. Now in the Upanishads later on the different meditations are prescribed as Gayatri as the Mother, as Universal Mother. It says this earth --this all this that we see-- everything is Gayatri. This great earth on which we function – all the living beings function on this prakriti—it is Gayatri. This body in which we are alive-- it is Gayatri. Feeling the presence of the Mother. What is the presence of the Mother? The love. The protection. The security. The affection. The care.

Now this whole earth we call it Mother Earth. Is not the Mother Earth giving us everything – our food, our existence, our shelter? Everything is coming from the Mother Earth. So why should we not be able to call this Mother Earth as Mother,

“Ma”? This Mother Earth. Why should not this body be called our mother? This body is giving us shelter. The ultimate shelter till we die. It is in this body that we live. So hug this body, and call this body, “Ma.” [He laughs.] This meditation, the Gayatri, this body is the Gayatri. And finally, within this body, the heart within, that is Gayatri, because the heart is the depository of our emotions, of our mind, of our feelings, which are most important to us. See? If our heart becomes dead, then there is no joy in life. It is the Mother working there in the heart.

So in nature first we... let us not look upon nature as a material universe. India’s spiritual wisdom, the Vedas, declare that this universe in which we are functioning is not a material universe. It is the projection of God. It is a projection of the Mother. Know this for certain; have faith in this and then seek, then call the Mother and you will see the Mother is responding from the sky, from the space, from the air, from the waters, from the earth. From the forests, from the rivers, the Mother’s... we can see the Mother, we can sense the mother, we can feel the Mother, we can touch the Mother. A man of God, a spiritually minded person who has been awakened, all his sense functions are associated with God. He looks at the sky and he experiences the Mother’s call, as if the sky is speaking, the space is speaking to him, to that person. Even sound is not necessary. Look at the sky and through your eyes you will receive the Mother.

It is the Mother who is present as the vast space. If there was no space, where could you be? So space is so kind; just as a mother holds a child, so this vast space is holding the stars, holding the planets, holding everything. Whatever is happening is happening in space – the Mother. And it is happening as Akasha. So why should we not salute the Mother, Mother Akasha. Listen to the breeze, a breeze, is going. Without the breeze, without the air how can we live? So the Katha Upanishad says, “Yaa Praanena Sambhavati Aditirdevataamayee; Guham Pravisya Tishthanteem, Yaa Bhootebhirvyajaayata.”<sup>4</sup> “That Brahman, that God, is Aditi, the Mother of All the Gods, and she is present as prana, as the cosmic life, living and functioning in every living being, the life principle in every living being.” It may be an ant; it may be a moth; it may be a microbe. It may be a man, it may be a god, it may be an elephant but the same maha prana. And the Katha Upanishad says: it is Aditidevataamayee. It is that power; that shakti of God is manifest as prana in all living bodies.

So salute, think of that prana. Normally we do not do that. Normally we are conscious of the little prana abiding here in one single body. No! In a moment of meditation-- meditation means you have to widen your vision-- see the Mother is calling from everywhere. We have to respond to that call in many ways. In order to find the Mother if we take this prana, this life principle, we see flowers; we see all kinds of living creatures. And we can wonder, “Oh it is the Mother; it is God.” It is that great power, that great shakti who is manifest as prana. Then we salute that Mother, feel the presence of the Mother.

So the Mother’s presence, God’s presence can be felt in space and time. One very familiar concept of the Mother in Hinduism, is Mother as time, the flow of time. It is a play of the Mother. Time is flowing; everything is devoured by that shakti. The Mother, the Great Power, creates, sustains, and also destroys. For us destruction means terrible. No. All three [are] together. Things come; things stay;

things disappear. And new things come; new things play. In this way the play is going on. In Vedantic language we say, srishthi, sthiti, and laya.<sup>5</sup> So this is our Mother's play and that is why sometimes we are not afraid of the terrible, we are not afraid of the Mother. If sometimes the mother shows a little angry face, the child is a little afraid but yet the child knows, "It is mother." So Mother can have a terrible aspect, [it] doesn't matter. Otherwise this whole process, it is in conformity with the world movement.

There has to be appearance; there has to be sustenance; there has to be disappearance. And this happens to us everyday. In the morning we wake up and see this world, this sunshine and work through all the day. Then we go to sleep, we fall asleep and then everything is forgotten. Everything is oblivion. That is Mother's play. Without that sleep we cannot function in waking. Sleep is necessary. So laya, dissolution is a part of life. You see when one body is born, works and functions through fifty years, sixty years, seventy years, ninety years. Then it goes. That is not an evil. That is a part of this cosmic play. It happens to every body, every living body. [It] happens to man, happens to the ant, happens to a flower, happens to a tree. These processes, all these three, are the play of the Mother. So when we have this Mother vision, the Mother consciousness, then we are really secure. We can really enjoy life. We can really know what is the purpose of life.

The purpose of life is to discover this Mother. And, this devotee of God, the Mother's child knows that he or she will never be separated from the Mother. There are two possibilities. One possibility is the union with the eternal and the other possibility is playing with the Mother from life to life. The Gita says a devotee of God if he likes, if he wants to be always with God, he is born again. He assumes another body and another [life's] duties and responsibilities but God is with that, with him. Mother is with him. So a devotee, a child of Mother knows that I would never be separated from the Mother. In life there is Mother. In death there is Mother. And if there is an afterlife, there is Mother.

Now we live from day to day. Is not each day a life in itself? What happened yesterday, you remember? Many things happened. But those things, what happened, are gone. Now today new things are happening. See? And this will go to the memory. It will be devoured by time. Mother will devour that. Mother projects and Mother sustains and Mother again swallows everything. So each day of our life is a life by itself. And a person who has that Mother consciousness lives from day to day. He has that dependence on the Mother. Whatever the Mother will bring, I am up to it. That becomes the attitude of a person who has experienced the Mother, the Mother consciousness. And Sri Ramakrishna is an example that it can happen. It can happen in any life that seeks God. And Sri Ramakrishna said that seeking God becomes easy and sweet if you can develop that attitude that God is the Mother and I am [Her] child. There is no sense of vanity or egoism. Great things can be done but the devotee knows, "It is the Mother's power. It is the Mother's light, outside and inside." Just as the Chandogya Upanishad [3:13:7] says, "The light that is illuminating this whole universe, including the physical universe, is [the] same light that is illuminating your own mind and thoughts and heart." One light. So in this, in the evolution of our spiritual life we experience these things. We experience the manifold but the manifold in unity, and that unity is the Mother. So Sri

Ramakrishna is a living example [of] how God can be experienced as the transcendental, “avan-manasa-gochara”<sup>6</sup> beyond the reach of our mind and speech, and again God can be experienced in many ways, in every moment of this life we can never miss God.

We can never miss the Mother-- just as a child never wants to miss the Mother. It goes and runs and jumps but again it comes back and back to the mother. So like that our spiritual life more and more becomes deep and more and more we can experience the presence of God in nature as also in all living beings, as also [in] every part of my existence: the Mother’s presence. So, as I quoted the Chandogya Upanishad, that Gayatri... this body is the Gayatri. Meditate on this body as the Gayatri.

Wherever you feel a sense of protection, it is the Mother. We are all sitting in this hall. For the time being this hall is our mother. It is protecting us from the sun. This hall is protecting from the rain, from the storm. We are safe; we feel secure unless an airplane collides with [it]. For the time being we are... this hall is our mother. Just as this body, when this body is healthy-- no troubles-- this body is a good friend – the greatest friend, this body, this body. So this body is like a mother. When after the day’s hard work, of the hard days all labor and tiredness, you fall in the bed, that bed is your mother. When you lie down on your bed, call the bed, “Mother I have come to you. Keep me safe. Let me see tomorrow’s daylight. See that I may be able to see tomorrow’s daylight.” Pray to that bed. The bed is not material.

Nothing is material in this universe. Nothing is... it depends upon the attitude. If we can feel that presence of consciousness, that consciousness responds to us. Stand before a blooming rose bush. Try to see that it is a living entity, just as a human, living human body is a living entity. So the rose bush is a living entity. Try to talk to that rosebush. Touch gently on the branches; be careful not touch the thorns. [Audience laughs.] And you see, the response will come, “Yes I am the Ma. I am the Mother.” So this experience can be projected everywhere: through our eyes, through our ears, through our speech, we project Mother, we call on the Mother, and the Mother responds. And that is the spiritual experience which Sri Ramakrishna used to have all the time. Call to the Mother, and the Mother responds to the child. By Her, compassion works in the human, [and] that human being is like a god. Compassion, shraddha, faith. See... latha, [?] humility and all the best qualities of woman, it is the Mother. It is the personification of the Divine Mother. So inside our mind we should also try to feel the presence of this shakti, this Mother. Kindness, compassion, faith, even great strength, courage. For the devotee these are nothing but the display, [the] manifestation of the Divine Mother, Mother Power, shakti.

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*[Transcriber’s note: Unable to locate transliteration of this hymn and Bengali or Sanskrit lines are definitely a guess.]* Instead of the usual closing chant, I’ll sing a few lines from a Mother song – not the whole song, but the beginning and the end. [Amar Kemoni Ma Ta Kemoni Kore Boltai Gopari] How can I say who is my Mother? And what is [are] Her characteristics I cannot say, I cannot describe. [Ma Na sarupa Na karupa Na purusha Nari Boltai Gopari] My Mother is neither beautiful nor ugly,

neither man nor woman. How can I say who is my mother? Then towards the end, two lines: [Jalaskalai akashatai jadikatai jai]. In whatever direction I look, either on the earth, either towards the waters, either towards the sky [Sharikanaima darietai dekhtya nipari]. I feel that mother has spread herself in all these regions, in the earth, in the waters, and in the sky and [Avarana Maanai muhti daya maya chin darupai maya mari boltai gopari] and the same mother I find within myself as the qualities of kindness, of compassion, and even with every thought, I feel it is the Mother. So I will sing this song, with a very low voice because I am old now and I am also efficient. Amar Kemoni Ma....

May Mother's peace, peace be with us. May Mother bless us all.

1. Rig Veda Samhita 1.164.46 – according to <http://www.religiousforums.com/forum/religious-books-scriptures/83895-rig-veda-quote-truth-one.html> accessed 10/1/12.
2. Svetashavatara Upanishad 4:10 In: Nine Principal Upanishads from the teachings of Swami Satyananda Saraswati Munger, Bihar: Yoga Publications Trust, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. , c. 2004, p. 188.
3. Katha Upanishad 2:1:3 In: Nine Principal Upanishads from the teachings of Swami Satyananda Saraswati Munger, Bihar: Yoga Publications Trust, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. , c. 2004, p 128.
4. Katha Upanishad 2:1:7 In: In: Nine Principal Upanishads from the teachings of Swami Satyananda Saraswati Munger, Bihar: Yoga Publications Trust, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. , c. 2004 p. 129.
5. Spelling of Sanskrit words taken from Glossary of Sanskrit Terms -- <http://www.selfdiscoveryportal.com/cmSanskrit.htm> accessed 10/21/12.
6. as cited on <http://www.tirumala.org/pr7.html> 8/9/12 and other Internet sites with variant spellings. As spoken by Swami Shraddhananda it sounded like "Avan-manaso-gocharam."