

AMATU'L-BAHÁ VISITS INDIA



Violette Nakhjavani



Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánum



AMATU'L-BAHÁ VISITS INDIA

by
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DEDICATION

The third printing of this memorable book appears at a time when our beloved Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánum has taken her flight to the Realm of Glory. Now that she is released from the bondage of this world, her influence, like that of all great souls, will be much greater and her light radiating from on high much brighter. The shining example of Amatu'l-Bahá, who has blessed India through her several visits, remains before the beloved friends in that country. Her great love and high aspirations for the people of India are well known and are clearly shown in this book. It is only appropriate that the Indian friends should compensate for their feeling of great loss by exerting efforts to fulfil what she had cherished for them and to bring about the vision she held vividly in her mind about the great destiny of India and its people. We owe Rúhíyyih Khánum so much. Let us cause her radiant soul to rejoice in the Abhá Kingdom at our faithfulness to her loving heritage.

Hushmand Fatheazam

Haifa, 2000





AMATU'L-BAHÁ'S TRAVELS IN INDIA, SRI LANKA, NEPAL AND SIKKIM

Some of the 100 centres visited throughout the Indian subcontinent

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

Twenty years have passed since Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánum visited India. During these two decades the Bahá'ís of that blessed country who were greatly heartened and reassured by her memorable visit have augmented their services with fresh impetus and enthusiasm, and were enabled to achieve unprecedented victories for the Cause of God. Within this period the number of Spiritual Assemblies established through the untiring efforts of a handful of dedicated believers in India has increased from 1,064 to nearly 14,000, a fourteen-fold increase; the number of localities opened to the Faith rose by ten times its number, from 4,526 in 1964 to 43,604 in 1984 and the number of followers of Bahá'u'lláh by seven times to reach nearly 800,000.¹

The outstanding growth of the Faith had already made it possible, by 1964, for the Indian community to establish additional pillars of the Universal House of Justice by the formation of separate National Spiritual Assemblies in Burma, Pakistan, and Ceylon—now known as Sri Lanka. In the period of the past twenty years, still more pillars have been raised with the formation of a National Spiritual Assembly in Sikkim in 1967, and a National Spiritual Assembly in the Kingdom of Nepal in 1972. During the course of Rúhíyyih Khánum's trip recounted here, she visited the barren land in the village of Bahapur on the outskirts of New Delhi; now on this land has blossomed a beautiful lotus-shaped Temple of white marble which will be completed and inaugurated in the near future. Scores of Bahá'í schools are presently in operation in India, caring for hundreds of children, where previously there were only a few in the experimental stage.

Soon, under the aegis of the National Spiritual Assembly of India, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands will have their independent Spiritual Assembly, whose first Convention in April 1984 is to be blessed with the presence of Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánum, representing the Universal House of Justice on that historic occasion.

The events herein narrated by Mrs. Violette Nakhjavani, who accompanied Amatu'l-Bahá on this memorable trip, show how opportune these travels were in the context of the development of the Faith in India, as well as in other parts of the world. The process of teaching the masses was only a few years' old. The few unprepared old Bahá'ís suddenly were dazed by the response of the multitudes of new Bahá'ís knocking at their doors clamouring for more spiritual sustenance. There were demands from thousands of people in different villages for Bahá'í teachers to go to them. And who was there to meet so many needs? Like a torrential rain new believers poured into the Faith, creating for the moment confusion and difficulties but in reality bearing an untold blessing for the future. The glorious achievements were so sudden that they dazzled and confused a number of the believers; they did not know what course to follow and whether they should proceed on the same uncharted path. At this critical juncture Rúhíyyih Khánum went amongst the Indian believers, praised them for what they had done, and assured them of the correctness of their undertakings. Had it not been for the continuation of the efforts of the Indian believers in the field of mass teaching, how could we today have reaped such a harvest?

We are grateful to Mrs. Violette Nakhjavani for collecting so meticulously the talks Rúhíyyih Khánum gave not only to intellectuals but for the most part to the highly spiritual, pure-hearted, simple folk throughout India. In these talks she has developed simple parables and beautiful demonstrative examples to convey the great spiritual verities in simple language. This is the same pattern which the beloved Guardian directed us to follow when he advised us that the example of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's talks in the West was the way to teach the people. How beautiful is the way she has described the Faith in the example of the wheel, when she says humanity is the rim, the spokes different nations and religions—all equal and performing their functions—and the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh is the hub connecting all the spokes to the rim. And how expressive is her talk to the village of snake charmers, when she refers to the "self" as a vicious snake which, through the power of the Faith and of prayer can be charmed and become harmless. These discourses are full of wonderful descriptions which any Bahá'í teacher, particularly those dealing with the masses, can use, and as they are not limited to any specific time or place, the friends should welcome the reprint of this inspirational book.

India has a great destiny in the Faith. One of its sons was the only non-Persian among the eighteen Letters of the Living who had been awakened at the dawn of the new Age. Bahá'u'lláh Himself selected and despatched to India a number of outstanding believers. 'Abdu'l-Bahá sent the Hands of the Cause appointed by Bahá'u'lláh repeatedly to India for teaching, and expressed His longing to visit that country and raise the call of "Yá Bahá'u'l-Abhá" throughout its length and breadth. The beloved Guardian sent great teachers like Martha Root to India and expressed his wish that the God-fearing, God-loving masses of India would be able to recognize the Manifestation of God in this day and embrace His Teachings. Many Hands of the Cause have gone, at the instruction of the beloved Guardian, to that country to strength-en the Cause. It was the Hand of the Cause Dorothy Baker who, in 1953, described her vision of a stream of people coming to the door of the Faith from the thousands of villages in India. It was the Hand of the Cause Raḥmatu'lláh Muhájir who fulfilled this vision in February of 1961 by showing to the Indian believers for the first time the process of teaching the masses. And it

was through the supportive and loving care of the Hand of the Cause Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánum that this flame was kept alive and hopefully will set ablaze that country with the fire of the love of God. Once again she is visiting India at a time when that country is on the threshold of a new development, when the Bahá'ís are determined to put into practice in their daily lives those high principles which they have been learning all these years. I am confident that the beloved friends of God in India will show their traditional gratitude to her for her services in their country by dedicating themselves more than ever to the Cause of God. May they be blessed by Bahá'u'lláh to be able to place the pearls of victories at the threshold of the Blessed Beauty as they scatter petals of roses at the feet of their distinguished visitor.

Hushmand Fatheazam

Haifa, 1984

INTRODUCTION

Many words of thanks, and some of explanation, are due in presenting this story of a marvellous and never-to-be-forgotten journey, which lasted nine months and took me almost 55,000 miles.

When I learned that the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of India was determined to publish an account of my travels and activities in their country, I felt that the ideal person to write it was my friend and companion, Mrs. Violette Nakhjavani, who not only had been with me all the time, but had kept a careful diary of events, places visited, and memorable experiences. This arrangement had the added advantage that I could work with her on the manuscript and together we could recall the highlights of this unique sojourn.

It is my firm conviction that whatever good such a visit may have done, whatever effect it may have produced on the community of Bahá'u'lláh in that part of the world, the one who derived the greatest instruction from it was myself. I am the one who received most, who was most changed by it, the one most blessed by the privilege of meeting so many wonderful fellow believers. Truly, in seeking to teach this glorious Faith of Bahá'u'lláh the teacher is taught. Perhaps this is part of the mystery of why He has enjoined upon each and every one of His followers, as their primary duty, the teaching of His Cause—so that they themselves might learn. Struggling to convey a little of what He has brought to the world today, we ourselves, according to some great spiritual law we would do well to ponder, find new understanding and knowledge poured into us.

So many Bahá'ís showered their time, their love, their services upon me, that it would be impossible to mention in these pages all their names; that is why, in fairness to many, names have been avoided as much as possible. But this does not mean they are forgotten. Their faces rise before me, dear in memory, and my thanks go out to each and every one of them for all they did to make my work a success and my path easier.

It will be noted that in this account of what was primarily a visit to India, visits to Ceylon [now Sri Lanka], Nepal, and Sikkim have been included in some detail. The reason for this is that these countries have been, and still are, closely linked in their Bahá'í activities with the Indian community, which was responsible for establishing the Cause in each of them. They are her beloved children, now starting out on independent lives of their own, but still members, so to speak, of the same great family. In this spirit they are all equally dear to my heart.

My particular thanks and gratitude must be expressed to the members of the Indian National Spiritual Assembly, whose love, consideration, enthusiasm, and readiness to help on each and every occasion, sustained me throughout a long, arduous and often exhausting tour. Their united dedication to the task of teaching the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh to the multitudes in their vast native land aroused my deepest admiration and respect.

The entire Bahá'í world is watching the progress being made in India. Her teaching activities and the remarkable rate of increase in the number of believers during recent years (from 1959 to 1964) have won the envy and admiration of her sister communities. But I feel a word of advice is in order here. Often the active workers inside a community, who are bearing the full weight of teaching, administering, and supporting it, get the idea that they should slow down on “expansion” and “consolidate”. This is a dangerous idea—a very dangerous idea. It was our beloved Guardian, Shoghi Effendi, who first used these terms; we learned them from him; but he never separated the two things. To him expansion was constant teaching, according to the express command of Bahá'u'lláh, like an army that is marching to conquer, never losing an advantage, never ceasing to go on. Consolidation is what comes behind the army; the food supply, the education of the conquered people, the establishment of garrisons. It would be a sorry army indeed that sat down to enjoy the luxuries of inaction when it had the advantage! There are other armies on the march in these days, ominous, terrible, destructive armies, not only physical ones (perhaps the least dangerous of all) but ideological ones; materialism is on the march at a terrifying rate, godlessness is advancing with frightening swiftness, inadequate political ideologies, whether from the East or from the West, are seeking to conquer the minds of men. The Bahá'í army is one of light; its sole object is to conquer the hearts of men; its only battle is against the increasing spiritual darkness in the world. Nowhere in our teachings—neither from the pen of Bahá'u'lláh, ‘Abdu'l-Bahá, nor the Guardian—do we find mention of circumstances under which we should not teach this Faith actively all the time. Only when, by law, a government has forbidden us to teach actively do we bow our heads in obedience to government. There is never a point at which we have, temporarily, enough Bahá'ís. Bahá'u'lláh belongs to all the people of this world; He came to them; it is their right to hear of Him, to accept Him. To stand in the way of this process, to hold back the teaching work, is the deadliest of all sins.

It is not only new spiritual laws which Bahá'u'lláh has brought to the world in this day; it is a new social order, a divine policy. Shoghi Effendi used to say, “We Bahá'ís belong to no political party, we belong to God's party.” Let us ask ourselves how this World Order of our Faith is to be established, how its educational, social, economic,

as well as spiritual programmes are to be put into practice, unless the material—vast masses of human beings calling themselves Bahá'ís—is available? How can one do two entirely contradictory things at the same time: require of people that they be mature, understanding, well-informed Bahá'ís before letting them into the Faith, and, at the same time, have enough Bahá'ís inside it to put into effect this great, dynamic Order of Bahá'u'lláh? It is like asking that kindergarten children should first sit for entrance examinations to the university before they can begin their primary education!

Let the people come in. The law of averages decrees that everything has a scale of percentages. All milk has its percentage of cream; high or low, it is there. For every 100 new Bahá'ís there is invariably going to be a percentage of people of great capacity, both intellectually and spiritually; this group will take care of the increase in less mature and understanding, but no less sincere, souls who comprise the rest of the 100. In other words, you get your rank and file, your foot soldiers, as well as your officers, all together at the same time. Just teach. Trust more in the power of Bahá'u'lláh to work His own miracles if you but let Him, and march on to conquer—while there is still the opportunity to do so—the hearts of the people in that wonderfully promising part of the world.

When we older people look back on our lives, how often we realize that we just took it for granted that the golden days of our teens or early youth, the first joys of marriage, of parenthood, of travel, of study—whatever it was—would go on forever! Suddenly we realized they had gone, never to come back. Today there is an extraordinary receptivity in that part of the world (and indeed, in many other lands, maybe more than we realize) to the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh—like the soil waiting, dry and breathless with longing, for the monsoon, for the rains that will generate life and bring forth the new crop. This is our opportunity, our challenge, our terrible responsibility. For our own sakes, for the sake of suffering humanity, we cannot afford to fail in seizing this hour and exploiting it to the full.

There are more than half a billion people in India, not to mention those in neighbouring countries. Not hundreds, not thousands, but literally millions are ready to accept Bahá'u'lláh if you will only tell them He has come to them, for them, in this glorious new age in which we are living.

Rúhíyyih
Haifa, 1966

CHAPTER I

The extraordinary expansion of the Bahá'í Faith in India since 1961 has produced throughout the world-wide Bahá'í community an ever-increasing interest in the fortunes of a country which was one of the earliest to receive the dawning light of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation during the first years of His ministry. News of the progress being made there was eagerly received at the International Centre of the Faith in Haifa, and Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánum began to discover in herself an ever-stronger desire to see the faces of the new Indian believers, whose enrolment in our beloved Cause was bringing such joy to the hearts of their brothers and sisters in other, often less fortunate, countries. Members of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of India more than once expressed the hope that she would visit their country, and, in 1963, on the occasion of the first International Bahá'í Convention for the election of the Universal House of Justice, held in the Holy Land, the members of the National Assembly vigorously pursued their advantage of meeting her face to face and extracted a promise that she would come to India as soon as possible.

On February 3, 1964, Rúhíyyih Khánum left Haifa for India on an historic journey which lasted almost nine months and which included her official participation, as the Hand of the Faith representing the World Centre, in the first National Conventions of Malaysia and Thailand. On her way to these events she was able to attend the Ceylonese Convention. Her sojourn was interrupted for one month when she flew to Germany to dedicate the Mother Temple of the European continent near the city of Frankfurt on July the 4th.

When our plane touched down on Indian soil we had no idea that a journey was beginning which would lead us through 13 of the 16 States of India—to Ceylon [now Sri Lanka], Nepal, and Sikkim—to over 70 villages, many lying deep in the very heart of the vast Indian subcontinent. We did not know we were to travel almost 55,000 miles by plane, car, jeep, on foot, and even by boat. The bounties of God to be ours in meeting so many wonderful and interesting people still lay ahead. The all-pervading dust of the plains, the heat of mid-summer, the exhaustion to the very bone, the wonderful meetings, the thrilling sights, the new friendships to be formed—all these were still to come, never-to-be-forgotten experiences whose preciousness changed and widened our understanding of life itself.

The sorrows and suffering Rúhíyyih Khánum had borne since the passing of our beloved Guardian, followed by the tremendous burden of her share in carrying forward the Cause of God during those memorable and unique last six years of the Crusade, to which was added her participation, in 1963, in the preparations for, and direction of, the International Convention, the election of the Universal House of Justice, and the World Congress, had left her in poor health and deeply exhausted. For weeks before her departure she had not been well, and she thus arrived in India very tired and depleted.

In New Delhi, Rúhíyyih Khánum was met at the airport by the members of the National Spiritual Assembly, as well as by many friends who had come from different parts of India and even from Pakistan. Garlands of beautiful fresh flowers, roses, jasmine, and tuberose, were placed about her neck until her beautiful head could hardly stand erect. That night I counted twenty-four garlands that had been put round her neck! We were told that many of the friends were waiting to see Rúhíyyih Khánum at the Bahá'í Centre. Although she was extremely tired after twenty-four hours of constant travel, she went directly to the Ḥaẓíratu'l-Quds to be with the Bahá'ís so eagerly awaiting her there. This was but the first of many such occasions, when, very tired, or running a high temperature and quite ill, she would still not disappoint the friends and would attend their meetings. On that night she told the friends of her joy and happiness at being in India. She spoke to them on teaching and pioneering and stressed the great importance the beloved Guardian attached to the services of the friends in such fields. She related an incident regarding the beloved Guardian's small notebook, in which he kept a record of all the latest achievements of the friends during the Ten Year Crusade, names of various Knights of Bahá'u'lláh, the countries opened to the Faith, and so on. One night he received news that three of the goal countries had been vacated. He crossed out the names of two of these countries, but left the third. When the Guardian returned home from the Pilgrim House, Rúhíyyih Khánum asked him why he had not crossed out the third place, as there was now no one there. He answered, "I could not cross out all of them at once. In a few days I will take it off." So dear to his heart, Rúhíyyih Khánum observed, was every place that had been opened to the Faith. She ended her talk by pointing out that we read in the Teachings that God does not try us beyond our capacities. She said, "I will tell you how I solved this in my own mind: once, when I was very tired, disappointed and worn out by worries from all sides, I felt I had reached the end of my rope. I visualized the end of it in my hand. But, I realized I still had the rope in my hand, and I could climb back up it. I have never again reached that hopeless point of feeling that I was at the end."

The following morning, February 5th, the Delhi community met Rúhíyyih Khánum at the Temple site for prayers and a group photograph. This spot is a beautifully located plot on a hill overlooking the city of New Delhi. By a strange coincidence the name of the old village where the land is situated is BAHÁ-PUR, which means “the Settlement of Bahá”. But let me quote the description of dear Mr. Rai, the Secretary of the National Assembly, as he described this memorable occasion: “We had the prayer meeting. We had the photograph. The people—men, women, and children—from the surrounding villages had gathered there. She patted a child here, greeted a woman there, nodded to a man at a distance paying his respects with folded hands. All felt her as one of them and then she addressed them in her sweet, ringing voice towering above them all, in words at once so appealing, so captivating that we heard her with gaping mouth and open eyes, drinking the nectar which flowed from the lips of one who was the chosen one of the beloved Guardian.” She said:

‘Abdu’l-Bahá said the Temples are the silent teachers, but every heart should be made God’s temple wherein He may abide lastingly. Everyone should try to attain this end.

The villagers are like unto the roots of the great tree of the Cause in India that need to be nourished. We have to concentrate on them and give them the divine teachings.

There are no “made” teachers. We have to just go out and teach. The rest follows and a teacher emerges. Let him pray and step forward. Let him do his sacred duty. Just as we need these Bahá’í teachers, we need school teachers too, to teach the Bahá’í children. Both these kinds of teachers are needed. We must never think we have ample time. Time may still be there but the opportunity lost forever—there is not plenty of time to teach. We are already far behind the schedule and have lost 120 years. Hence we should make the best of the opportunity while there is one.

There is an old story in the West about the Wolf and the Lad. The child always raised a “false” alarm by shouting “Wolf, wolf, wolf”. But actually one day when the wolf did attack him and he called for help, there was no one to help him because no one believed in him any longer. Hence we should not behave in the same way and wait for the day when the wolf may eat us up, in other words, the day when the opportunity at hand may be lost forever. We must race against time. Now space has been conquered! Now the distance between the countries has been reduced! Now the world is so close! One can be in Israel in the morning and in India in the evening!

The so-called ignorant people, the unlettered ones, all are hungering for something new. They are hungering for growth. They will become attached to material movements if we do not give them the divine one.

It is said you cannot put new wine into old bottles, meaning that unless you empty out the old bottles of their former contents you cannot put new wine into them. The minds of most men need to be cleansed and made ready to receive the fresh divine outpourings, but the minds of the villagers are empty of attachments and ready right now to receive and accept the Teachings.

A very hungry man will readily accept anything he is offered to eat. If you give him unwholesome food he will eat it. If you give him good food, he will eat it. The hungry minds of men today should be given the food of this Divine Message, not the materialistic teachings of the world.

Then, O friends, go forth and give them the Sacred food and introduce them to the Divine Civilization given by God. The civilization the materialists give to the people is not a healthy civilization. We Bahá’ís must sow the seeds of Divine Civilization. This was the desire of the beloved Guardian. There are over 450,000,000 people in this land. We must go amongst them and show them our love and teach them and thus hasten the advent of that Divine Civilization the Faith will eventually establish. We have the strength of Bahá’u’lláh behind us.

Let us compete with one another in the service of the Cause of God. India is a fertile field. If you arise I am sure that God will bless you.

As Rúhíyyih Khánum got into the car to leave, Rajah Sahib Harvansh Singh, the first rajah to accept the Faith of Bahá’u’lláh, handed her a beautiful yellow rose. She smelled its fragrance and said, “How did you know it is my favourite rose!”

After returning from the Temple land, she met with the National Spiritual Assembly members at the National Office. The primary purpose of this meeting was to work out the details of her tour. She told the members of how practical the beloved Guardian was in every way, of how carefully he planned everything and worked according to his plans. She then spoke to them about Bahá’í consultation, and called their attention to the fact that when adopting a decision they should not base their decisions on hearsay, but as far as possible on the text of the written word; they must then draw their own conclusions and unhesitatingly carry them out. When asked: “We feel we have to stop teaching in order to consolidate. Is this right?”, she replied: “Teaching is a command of Bahá’u’lláh to every believer. Nowhere do we read that we should stop teaching. Consolidation is a natural process which follows teaching. As we teach we consolidate, and as we consolidate we teach.”

The next afternoon, at the Nineteen Day Feast, the National Spiritual Assembly as well as the Local Spiritual Assembly of New Delhi welcomed Rúhíyyih Khánúm in eloquent addresses, followed by the reading of a moving poem that one of the Bahá'ís had composed in honour of her visit to India. The following are extracts from her talk at that meeting:

It is a very great privilege for me to come to India. It is a great privilege for me to come as a human being, because I always wanted to come to this country from my childhood. I do not know why, but there was something about India that attracted me and fascinated me and I should like to say that nothing ever repelled me. We know there are many countries in the world that we like, and things in them which we do not like, and perhaps many people have come to India with these mixed feelings, but for some reason or other I never heard anything about India that I did not like and so I am very happy to be here as an individual. I am also, of course, very happy that Bahá'u'lláh, in His mercy, enabled me to come here and I hope to help a little bit in the very wonderful teaching activities that are going on in this great subcontinent at the present time. India is a very great country with a very great history and I know it is going to be very interesting for me to visit so many places in India. I had known a few Indians and Chinese in my own city who were students, but I had never come to these countries and it was an absolute revelation to me to find that there seem to be in this part of the world different qualities in the character and mind of the people from the qualities I am familiar with in the West, and also I might say, amongst the Persians and the Arabs, who are the people I know, at least superficially, fairly well.

The quality that I found in this part of the world was the quality of "peacefulness", which is not to be underestimated. Their spirit does not seem to be a quarrelsome spirit and I think this stems perhaps from your religious background. I do not know where it came from, but it is a fact that there is a great peacefulness and tolerance and a will to peaceful behaviour amongst the people of this part of the world, and it occurred to me when I was here last [referring to her visit to South East Asia in 1961] that it is this thing that is one of the main characteristics that the people of this part of the world have to give to the whole of humanity in this day.

We know that through the entry of the Bahá'ís of different races into the world-wide Bahá'í community, the characteristics of these different communities will be pooled. We will give our national and racial characteristics to the world Bahá'í community and out of this, in the course of centuries of evolution, will arise the new civilization and the new culture. So it is a wonderful thing that you now have this great expansion of teaching in India, because it means that into the community of the Most Great Name—as our beloved Guardian often referred to the Bahá'ís—into this community we are bringing a great number of people to add to the total number of Bahá'ís in the world, people who have this quality, this spirit of peace and tolerance; and I think we are going to see in the next few decades a tremendous contribution to Bahá'í history through the entry of these people into the Cause.

There is a step which must be taken in the near future in the progress of our beloved Faith but it depends on finances. We have not enough money; we must not be ashamed of the fact, but it is something we have to face.

This next step in the progress of our Faith—and it will be a very happy day when it comes about—is when we can send teachers from one continent to another; when we can have, we might say, inter-continental teachers. This will release great spiritual power. 'Abdu'l-Bahá told us that the visit of a stranger to our city has a stimulating effect upon the Bahá'ís in that place, and naturally the visit of a person from an entirely different race, a different culture, and a different continent is even more inspiring to the Bahá'ís, and I hope that it will not be in the too far distant future that we will be able to have some of the teachers of India go and visit communities in other continents. We may not be able to do this at present but we know that day will surely come and we know it will release great spiritual forces when it does come. Do you remember the wonderful messages we used to receive from our beloved Guardian, when he always so lovingly encouraged everybody? He used to say, "Black or white, young or old, whatever their background, whatever their condition, they should go out and teach." I hope that the youth of India will follow the behest of the beloved Guardian and go out into this wonderful mass-teaching area that you have, because you know the youth, and young people understand young people. There are many villagers that are young. They will understand the youth. When you go out take some of the teenagers with you. In fact, if you have place and you can manage it—I have not been to any village yet, so I do not know what problems may exist—take some of the children, because it is this intermingling, this love, this association, that makes us feel so strongly that we are one people.

I do not want to take up all of our meeting talking to you and I wonder whether perhaps some of you would like to ask me some questions. It often brings us much closer in heart. If you have any questions and I could perhaps answer them, I would be very happy to try.

QUESTION: "Should youth take up pioneering before they have finished their education?"

ANSWER: That, I know, is the eternal question of youth. Of course, ultimately the, only arbiter is one's conscience. Nobody can ever answer the main questions of life for anybody else, but I do know that when Shoghi Effendi was asked these questions in letters that young people wrote to him, because they became very disturbed when they saw that this wonderful work was taking place and he was constantly appealing for pioneers to go out and then perhaps, as you said, they had not finished their education, and they asked should they throw everything up and go out immediately? And invariably the Guardian encouraged them to finish their education, at least to such an extent that they would be able to earn their living in the future, and having embarked on study, to get through to the first point where they could stop and have something in hand, as you said, to go on with in life, and then consider going out and pioneering rather than breaking off in the middle.

Before we go on to another subject, I would like to say something and that is this: that one of the delegates at the International Convention for the election of the Universal House of Justice in Haifa said something that impressed me very, very profoundly. I thought it was one of the most intelligent Bahá'í remarks I have heard in a great many years. This man, a professor of medicine, a very brilliant man, said, "Why don't we Bahá'í parents, who have spent all these years bringing up our children to believe in Bahá'u'lláh, and we hope, to be devoted believers and serve the Cause of God, why don't we send them out when they graduate from university, or when their education has reached a point where they have finished with it, in other words when they are going to go out and start living their own life?" He said, "Why don't we send these young people out, we Bahá'í parents, for two years into the teaching field, particularly the most difficult areas of the teaching field? Because", he said, "when they are young and still unattached they have the possibility and the strength to render this kind of service. When they get older and get married and start their professional life or their business life, they are not going to be able to free themselves so easily for this kind of work; it is going to involve a great deal more sacrifice." He made this appeal to other delegates also. He was a middle-aged man. He said, "My wife and I have brought up our sons who are now just graduating from university and I want to send them out to places like Borneo—and I think he even mentioned India, I don't remember—so that they can render service to the Cause while they have the chance and I don't know why we Bahá'í parents do not sacrifice some of our money, some of our capital, and give this to the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh. What did we have these children for? Why did we bring them up? For what did we educate them?"

The French have an expression which means *Appetite comes with eating*. It is a very good expression. It is true, you know. You sit down and you have some soup and the next thing you know you have had all seven courses and you were not going to eat anything because you did not want any dinner! The point is that if you will send your children out into the teaching field, even young ones in their teens, they will develop a taste for teaching. It is very, very sweet to teach the Bahá'í Faith and it becomes fascinating. It gives great joy and they will find their joy in life in this direction and not in other directions that you might perhaps not wish and would not be so happy about.

QUESTION: "Should we carry on mass teaching or pay attention to consolidation?"

ANSWER: Now I would like to say what I feel about what you asked me regarding the question of mass conversion and consolidation: the value of stopping teaching to consolidate, or to go on with the teaching work. I do not see any reason why I should not say to the Bahá'ís—because we are, after all, all one, whether we are National Spiritual Assembly members, or Local Assembly members, or nothing official, we are all Bahá'ís together and it is our joint religion, we all love it—therefore, why shouldn't I say to you what I said to your National Assembly? I said I would not be a bit surprised if the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of India did not feel sometimes as if it had got hold of a crocodile by the tail, a big one, and did not quite know what to do with it. Now, this mass conversion or mass teaching that you have—and I don't like personally any of these terms; I like the term of "entering the Cause in troops" which is a term of the Master and is a wonderful, wonderful term—but this entering the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh in troops, which is now taking place in India, of course poses tremendous problems—anyone can understand that. You have people coming in, by the thousands who are not in a position, at the present time—with a few exceptions—to do anything directly for the Faith. You see what I mean: They do not support the Fund yet, because they either haven't learned to or they haven't got enough money to give anything. They don't go out and circulate because they are villagers; they are living in their own small communities. It is all very new to them. They want to hear more and understand more and learn more and that means somebody has to go and teach them, and they have not yet reached a point where they are beginning to give back great returns to your community. Many of the people in this room, I suppose, are business men with experience, merchants perhaps, or some kind of business men or maybe students of economics. Now you all know that when you invest something, I am not talking about something that is already a going concern, but when you want to develop something that is entirely new, like a gold mine, a diamond mine or an oil well, the capital expenditure is tremendous. You have to put in a great deal of capital before you get any dividends back, before you get any return on your investment, because you have to set up machinery, you have to send out people to exploit the situation, you have to get the thing out of the ground, you have to refine it and then you start to market it, then you get very heavy returns on your investment.

The speed with which the Cause is spreading here shows that the capacity of the villagers in India is your oil field. The people that are exploiting it at the present time, let us say, are the Indian Bahá'ís. All this honour goes to you. In time the immense riches from this spiritual investment will flow back into your community.

The destiny of the human race is to accept Bahá'u'lláh; we know that as Bahá'ís. Now, it has to start sometime and it is a little late in starting, because this Cause is over 120 years old and we are only beginning to get the entrance of people by troops into the Faith. We must not say that this is too soon, we must say this is too late. We are in a hurry. We have lost a hundred years of the Bahá'í cycle. We want it to go faster every day, no matter what kind of problems arise from its going faster. Everything in the world goes by its own time. This evidently is the time for a spiritual harvest in India. No one of you, no one in Haifa, no one on this planet can tell you how long this time is going to last. You see what I mean? It may last long enough for India's 450 million Indians to become Bahá'ís. It may stop tomorrow like that. [Rúhiyyih Khánúm snapped her fingers.] You don't know. You don't know whether we are going to find that the political development of India goes forward so fast that the people in villages become political minded and instead of being interested in the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, which we know are the solution to the world's problems, they are going to be interested in whatever the local politician says who comes and sits under a tree and talks to them. For one reason or another you have no way of knowing whether it is going on for one year, ten years, a hundred years, or a thousand years. All you now know here in India is that you have this extraordinary opportunity. You and Africa are leading the whole world, so far, in this field of teaching, but you don't know how long the opportunity will last. I know only one case in the whole Bahá'í teachings where it says you must not teach, and that is when it is forbidden by the government, because we must be loyal to our government; but if you can show me one single place in the Teachings where there is any other excuse for not teaching, I would like to know what it is. And Bahá'u'lláh certainly does not say anywhere that you must stop teaching in order to consolidate. You must do the two together. You cannot say that "the crocodile is getting too big and I am not going to do anything more about it." I think there is a story—I don't remember from which country it comes—that the dragon swallowed the world. Perhaps it is a nice dragon that you have by the tail that will go on getting bigger and bigger and bigger and swallow the world with the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. How do you know? You don't have to be afraid of it. All you have to do is to hang on to its tail. Let it pull you ahead, and have confidence in Bahá'u'lláh. If anything goes wrong with this system, then you say to Bahá'u'lláh: "Look, You are the One Who said to teach; all I did was to obey You."

The efforts of these first few meetings left Rúhiyyih Khánúm, already run-down, so exhausted that she developed a bad cold. When she was contemplating this long trip to India, she determined to combine, whenever possible, her Bahá'í tour with visits to the most famous and beautiful sights of a land which is known to be one of the treasure-houses of art and architecture of the entire world. Therefore a week was taken at this time for a rest and change before the strenuous programme of village visits started. We decided to go to Rajasthan. The friends of this area, however, having heard she would stop in Jaipur and Udaipur, flocked to her from far and near. From Kota waves of eager friends came to meet her, first in Jaipur, then Udaipur, and even, some weeks later, in Sholapur, a thousand miles away from their home. A young new Bahá'í from Kota travelled 26 hours by train, changing his train three times, and reached Udaipur exhausted, but in time for the meeting of the friends with beloved Amatu'l-Bahá. Another dear friend from Jodhpur travelled 12 hours all through the night.

The assembled friends at the airport in Jaipur—the capital of Rajasthan, where we went first—who had come to welcome and garland Rúhiyyih Khánúm, were invited by her to a meeting that evening at her hotel. Twenty-two, old and young, came to hear their beloved one, who was dressed for the first time in India in a sari—a beautiful old Rajasthani tie-and-dye, silk-satin sari which she had brought from Haifa with her and had owned for many years. She said she felt herself now "a true Indian lady"—a remark which drew enthusiastic applause from the believers. Both the hostess and the guests were excited and happy over this transformation, not the least dear Shirin Boman, who had come with us from Delhi to arrange this meeting, and who had helped Rúhiyyih Khánúm to drape her sari properly.

During the whole period of seven months in India and Ceylon, Rúhiyyih Khánúm wore saris all the time, to which she had completely lost her heart. She often explained to her audiences that long before she came to India she had envied the Indian ladies who were able to wear the most beautiful and graceful costume in the world and that she was determined not to lose this opportunity of wearing it herself. She wore her saris with such ease and charm that one would think she had been wearing this dress all her life. I am sure this enthusiastic adoption of India's national costume added to her glowing personality, charmed all those who came her way, and predisposed them to listen to her soul-inspiring talks with open hearts. It was here, on our way to visit Ambar Palace, that another of her childhood desires was fulfilled and she was able to ride on an elephant for the first time.

Rúhiyyih Khánúm encouraged the friends in these two cities, told them stories about the beloved Guardian, answered their questions about the functions of the Universal House of Justice and the World Centre in general,

and surrounded them with the deep love the Indian people had already aroused in her heart and which constantly poured out from her. A touching incident occurred in Udaipur. When we left the small meeting of friends and asked for a taxi to come and get us, the Bahá'ís turned to a huge empty bus standing before the door, and its owner said: "This is waiting to take you to your hotel." Rúhíyyih Khánúm was very thrilled at having an entire bus to herself, and we all rattled off to the landing stage of the hotel, which gleamed romantically in the middle of the lake. Udaipur is famous as the "Lake City of India" and is one of the most beautiful places we visited.

On February 15th we returned to New Delhi and the following day left for Agra, where dear Shirin Boman was waiting for us. Mrs. Boman is one of India's most indefatigable and self-sacrificing Bahá'í teachers. In almost all stages of Rúhíyyih Khánúm's trips throughout India, Nepal, and Sikkim, she was a wonderful companion and faithful interpreter.

In Agra, which was the capital of India in the days of the Moghul dynasty, stands the majestic Taj Mahal, one of the "seven wonders" of the world. This masterpiece of architecture and artistry, a tomb which was built as a symbol of a king's love for his beloved wife, creates through its perfect beauty an atmosphere of deep spirituality. No wonder that 'Abdu'l-Bahá praised this building and said it should serve as an inspiration for the design of future Bahá'í Temples. Just as our memories of the magnificent Taj Mahal will always be rich and vivid, so will be those of our experiences in Nayala, near Agra, the first village we visited in India. The meeting was at the end of a three-day marriage celebration for a young man whose father was a devoted Bahá'í from another near-by village. Nayala is about 30 miles from Agra. Half the road—which really was not a road at all—went through ploughed land and it seemed there was no end to the thick dust and the high bumps. At the entrance to the village a very colourful archway had been built, decorated with many saris, paper cuttings and fresh flowers. Numerous decorated rickshaws and ox-carts, which are the common means of transportation, were waiting to take back some of the guests, and added greatly to the charm of the scene that met our eyes.

On an embankment above the road, outside the entrance to the house of the bride's father, some chairs were placed for us under a very big tree. The men and children were the first to come, followed gradually by the ladies, who appeared on the roof tops, their faces and hair hidden modestly in their saris. About a thousand people gathered around us. It was evident this was a relatively prosperous and well-educated community.

Shirin briefly told them about the Faith and introduced Rúhíyyih Khánúm who, with simplicity and clarity, gave her first talk to an audience of simple farmers. She brought hope and joy to their hearts and inspired them with pride in their profession. She called their attention to the importance Bahá'u'lláh attaches to the station of the farmer, and her delight in having her first village meeting amongst farmers, especially on the joyous occasion of a wedding ceremony. In explaining the relationship of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh to past religions, she gave her attentive audience the example of the wheel, pointing to a large ox-cart opposite her—the oldest and most common vehicle in Indian village life—and said:

For generations you have built this powerful wheel, and you know where its strength lies. But if you ask someone who does not know anything about wheels, and never made one, where lies its strength, he may say it is in the rim. But you know that is not true. He may then say it is in the spokes. But you know that is also not true. The strength of the wheel lies in the hub. The wheel will be strong to the degree to which each spoke is fitted evenly and carefully into the hub. The spokes must all be the same length, all equal, and the rim must be strong, but the strength of the wheel lies in the hub. We might say that the rim of the wheel is like humanity, all of us; the spokes of the wheel are like the different nations and religions, all equal; the hub of the wheel is the Bahá'í Faith, what Bahá'u'lláh, the Founder of this Faith, has brought to the world today. Everything He teaches is to produce unity and brotherhood; into His system the nations and religions of the world can fit as equals, each finding its place, thus uniting the spokes and the rim to make the wheel; and with the provision of this Hub, the wheel can turn and pull the load forward, and so we will progress into the future, into the new kind of world that lies before us, and towards the fulfilment of mankind's great destiny.

Rúhíyyih Khánúm later told me that she had not known what to say to this first village audience, how to approach their minds, until her eyes fell on a huge ox-cart opposite her. As she studied it, the example of the wheel came to her mind. She used it many times in her talks, including those to elite audiences of non-Bahá'ís in the cities, as it so perfectly conveyed her points.

After Rúhíyyih Khánúm's talk the bridegroom's father, an upright, slender, dignified man, stood up and spoke to the people. He told them he was a Bahá'í and was prepared to answer any questions they had and even to remain longer in their village to do so. He also very touchingly offered publicly a sum of eleven rupees to Rúhíyyih Khánúm to be given to the Teaching Fund, expressing his deep gratitude for having the privilege of welcoming such an honoured guest at the wedding of his son. He then brought his son, the bridegroom, and introduced him to her. He was a young man of, perhaps, 16—very handsome, shy, and sweet.

We were then taken inside the house to join the women, where the bride and other ladies were gathered. The bride was seated on a stool in the centre of the room, dressed in a very beautiful gold brocade sari, with gold

ornaments covering her head, neck, and wrists. She was extremely shy, partly by nature and partly because the occasion demanded it, and at first would not show her face to the guests, who were complete strangers to her. Her sisters, cousins, and friends, all charming young girls who were dressed in their best for this festive occasion, circled around her and urged her to uncover her face. Gradually she unveiled her lovely young face and gave us a sweet, shy smile as a sign of her friendliness.

Typical village refreshments were served us: delicious tea, in unglazed pottery cups, tasting of clay, and a variety of sweets and nuts. The families of both the bride and the bridegroom were of the upper class, and this could be seen in the generous way of their entertainment. The ladies sang songs, the girls giggled, and the children pressed and pushed, until there was hardly any air to breathe or room to move. The nobility and gentleness reflected in the beautiful black eyes of these Indian villagers speak of the depth of that fathomless ocean of culture and spiritual civilization, so deeply embosomed in this strange and ancient land of many gods and many great sages.

Sitting in this room, surrounded by such a happy and loving people, took me thousands of miles away to the villages of Africa, and I felt that marvellous sensation of being completely free and at one with the gentle and friendly souls around us.

Promises of more visits by local Bahá'í friends were made. We said farewell and left this never-to-be-forgotten village. Three months of dry weather had left the land parched and dusty. Looking out into the fields I visualized Rúhíyyih Khánúm as a kind and loving farmer who had just planted precious seeds of divine knowledge in the soil of people's hearts. I was sure of an abundant harvest in the near future. Her very presence among these peasants was like a torrent of rain which prepared their hearts to receive the priceless seed of God's Message.



Her first arrival in New Delhi, receiving a floral lei



Friends gathered at the Temple land, BAHA-PUR, Delhi



At the Temple land, New Delhi



Villagers receiving Amatu'l-Bahá at the “puja” ceremony

To avoid the hard road we had come on, someone suggested a different road. This turned out to be worse than the first, and the car could not carry us. In the intense sunlight we had to walk for three-quarters of an hour, ankle deep in dust—the dust of India is fine and dry as talcum powder, and rises in clouds even from the footsteps of a chicken! With this gruelling experience Rúhíyyih Khánum’s first village teaching trip in India came to an end.

From ancient times the Indians have always been keen believers in astrology. Three or four times every year, over a period of several weeks, it is considered highly auspicious for marriages to take place. We arrived in India with a bridal party, and for the first three weeks of our travels, wherever we went we were confronted with marriage processions. India is wonderfully colourful, and these marriage festivities present a display of bright colours, glittering lights and grand pageantry. We will never forget the handsome young bridegroom we saw one night in Agra, dressed all in gold brocade with a gold turban crowned with snowy egret feathers, princely in feature and carriage, riding a magnificent white horse, escorted by his male relatives and friends, followed and preceded by dozens of blazing lamps. The procession would walk a little and then stop to dance to the tune of an accompanying band. He was on his way to the home of his bride.

CHAPTER II

On February 19th we left Agra by train for Gwalior. Shirin had gone ahead of us to her home there a few days before. The railway platform in Gwalior was packed with eager friends who had come to welcome their beloved Amatu'l-Bahá. Twenty-eight garlands of fresh flowers were placed around her neck. That night over 100 Bahá'ís gathered on the roof of the home of the Boman-Ulyai family. The chairman of the meeting, in his opening remarks said: "Oh our beloved Khánum, you are the Queen of the Bahá'í world. You are the faithful consort of our peerless Guardian. We were not worthy to meet that 'Sign of God' on earth in this physical life, but today we are honoured to welcome you with all our hearts . . ." These and many such beautiful sentiments were the cries of the hearts of all who were present that evening. Rúhíyyih Khánum began her heartwarming talk with a trembling voice and tearful eyes in such a spirit of humility and devotion to our beloved Guardian that our hearts and souls were stirred to their very depths. She recalled the immortal poem of Sa'dí, in its original Persian, and then rendered it freely in English:

In the bath today a sweet-scented mud
reached me from the hand of my beloved;
I said: "Oh mud, whence comes your sweetness?"
and it replied, "Verily I am naught but clay,
but for a time I lingered with a rose.
The fragrance of that union
has left its trace in me,
otherwise I am still that clay that I was."

She appealed to the friends to go out and teach and not to lose their opportunity. When she was asked again about deepening and its relationship to the teaching work, Rúhíyyih Khánum said: "Tell me where in the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh do we read that we should not teach? The only time we are told to stop teaching is when there is a government ban on it, otherwise our foremost duty in life is to teach and teach and never stop teaching. There are 880 years ahead of us which will mostly be spent on consolidation. Let us not lose this golden opportunity of the present, which is the age of man's receptivity to the Cause of God." It was at this meeting that we first heard that melodious song of "Bahá Bahá" sung by our dear friend Kamrudeen. His charming soft voice, the enchanting words and the plaintive tune rang in our ears for months, and the recorded song is a joy to our ears every time we listen to it. Many of the "nightingales" of the Indian Bahá'í community come from this area. No wonder that the legend says that if you kick a stone in the streets of Gwalior, as it rolls away it will sing! This is the home of India's greatest singer and musician—Tansen.

Madhya Pradesh, the vast central province of India, is the heart of a great deal of the mass teaching in this country. The pulsations of this throbbing heart are felt in every spot of this province and particularly in and around Gwalior. As there are over 500 villages, where more than 20,000 Bahá'ís live, it was a heartbreaking task for the Area Teaching Committee to select which places Rúhíyyih Khánum should visit in the seven-day period of her stay in Gwalior from February 19th to 26th. Because this part of the country is infested with dacoits—brigands who kidnap people and hold them for ransom—it was necessary to be off the country roads before dark, and this limited the number of village meetings that could be held in such a short visit. In each place selected there was a conference for the friends from many nearby villages. The first one was held in the village of Baghchini, a newly-opened area, where over 2,000 had gathered and the streets and roof-tops were swarming with people. I will quote from Shirin Boman's own description of this occasion: "As soon as the car approached the venue of the conference, a very large number of friends rushed forward to receive their distinguished guests and it became impossible for the car to move forward. Rúhíyyih Khánum had to get down from the car and walk a few furlongs to reach the platform, which was beautifully decorated according to the Indian village style. She was then greeted by six young girls with shining brass water-pots on their heads, anointing the heads of the respected guests with the water from the pots. This is according to their custom. The next item on this interesting programme was garlanding the guests by the Headmen of various villages, about 30 in number. This was a gesture of respect and love. A welcome speech in honour of Amatu'l-Bahá was read and was presented in a frame (manpatra) to her as a sign of their deep love and reverence. A few of these Headmen spoke on the Faith and expressed their joy and happiness that beloved Rúhíyyih Khánum was with them. Some of them spoke with great fervour and strength, and amongst them was a school teacher who had accepted the Faith only a day before this conference. He spoke with such confidence and enthusiasm that it was rather difficult to believe that a person could grasp and understand the Faith so well in such a short time.

Rúhíyyih Khánum, addressing the friends, said that she had travelled thousands of miles by air and train and car to come and meet the villagers of India. It was her long-cherished desire to visit India and at last it was being fulfilled.

The programme and all the arrangements of these meetings were organized by the local believers themselves. The chairman of the meeting would call out the names of every Local Spiritual Assembly participating in the conference, then a representative would come forward, and on behalf of his village and his Local Assembly, would garland Rúhíyyih Khánum. Many individuals, often children, did likewise. In Baghchini over 25 garlands were ceremoniously placed about her neck. In these village meetings usually the programme would begin with the children reciting prayers, narrating the history and enumerating the teachings of our Faith. Then the chairman would welcome the guests and call on Amatu'l-Bahá to speak. Afterwards, almost always a number from amongst the audience would come to the microphone and express their feelings of joy at having such an honoured guest in their village and their gratitude for having heard of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh and for having embraced it. In Baghchini we were particularly touched by the conviction and eloquence of two young men, Bachelors of Art and school teachers in the local government high school, who had embraced the Faith the night before. They expressed their joy at being Bahá'ís and offered to devote the period of their vacation to go on teaching trips.

In addition to the heavy day's programme, every night at the Boman-Ulyai home there was a dinner party at which some of the notables of the city were invited to meet and hear Amatu'l-Bahá. There were also many visiting Bahá'í friends from as far away as Pakistan and Arabia.

Two meetings were held in the Bhind area; the first in Lachura Kapura. This is a model village, entirely Bahá'í. In these villages usually a primary school is opened by Bahá'ís. We learned that the night before a terrible accident had occurred; a young mother and her baby had fallen into the village well and drowned. I will quote from Shirin Boman's words regarding this occasion: "We were surprised to see all the villagers waiting to receive the guests in spite of the tragedy that had taken place in their village. The children said prayers and then narrated the history of the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh, 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi; they also spoke about the Ten Year Plan and the establishment of the Universal House of Justice. Someone amongst the guests asked one of the children: "Who is Rúhíyyih Khánum?" The village boy immediately replied that of course he knew she was the wife of the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith, Shoghi Effendi. Rúhíyyih Khánum addressed these simple-hearted villagers, and in her speech she enquired from one of the students as to why they had accepted the Bahá'í Faith and of what benefit it was to them; and promptly came a reply from one of the students that the Bahá'í religion stands for Love and Unity and it is through this that we Bahá'ís want to bring peace in the whole world. Imagine a small boy of 10 or 12 years who had just started to read and write, talking about world unity and world peace in a remote village."

Another model village that we visited on that same day is called Nat Kapura. These people are all Naths (tribal snake charmers) and they had arranged a truly royal welcome for Rúhíyyih Khánum. As girls do not entertain outside their homes, men play the parts of women. A young man dressed in a sari, his long hair in a bun, his face heavily made up, danced to the accompaniment of a drum and a flute, as well as his own continuous and uninterrupted fluting on a reed and gourd pipe. He also danced with his cobra around his neck, standing on a pole, lifted on the shoulders of four young men. A special soft-earth pit had been dug and other men of the village performed feats of wrestling amidst the wild encouragement of the lively spectators. The children then recited various incidents in the history of the Faith; we were particularly touched by a boy—blinded from smallpox—who sang a poem he had composed himself.

Rúhíyyih Khánum's talk in this village was especially interesting. She began by telling them that they had been able to charm the vicious snake and make of him a harmless creature; this was wonderful, but there was another snake even more vicious and more harmful, which is the snake of self and passion, the snake of hatred and jealousy. We must endeavour to charm this terrible snake within ourselves, subdue it, and hence free ourselves from its dangers. This art we must also teach the people of the world, so that this world may turn into a paradise and its people may become heavenly. The spirit of love and unity in this village was so overpowering that the pen is unable to describe it. At the end of the meeting the ladies of the village surrounded Rúhíyyih Khánum, two of them put their arms around her waist (their heads hardly reached it!) and took her to the centre of the village with a love that could not be resisted. That night Rúhíyyih Khánum said that the spirit of warm affection in that village was so tremendous that they could have led her to the other end of the world and she would not have objected.

That evening we reached Gwalior hardly in time to get to the next appointment at Scindia School, one of India's most famous public schools for boys. It is situated on top of a high plateau-like hill where an old Moghul fort, and a still older Hindu Temple dominate the city and can be seen from the plains below for many miles. In the absence of the Principal, his assistant took us round the school and entertained us at tea. There was one Bahá'í here, a tribal boy on government scholarship, whom we were able to meet for a moment at the end of Rúhíyyih Khánum's address to the school. Next to an impressive statue of Mahatma Gandhi there was a large open-air

amphitheatre where every evening at sunset all the students gathered for a short period of meditation. Sometimes some special visitor was invited to give a brief talk, or the violin teacher softly played a tune, as the students faced the setting sun and overlooked the miles and miles of hilly woods and green valley stretching away into the distance—a magnificent sight. Standing outlined against the sunset, Rúhíyyih Khánum told the boys the message of Bahá'u'lláh and of its tremendous influence on the character and destiny of man. She told them that the youth are the future of India and of the world. If they grow to be upright and enlightened, broad and tolerant, and work for world unity, then the future would assuredly be glorious.

At the conference in the village of Ghatigam, over 500 people gathered. Some enemies of the Cause had been trying for some time to persuade the Bahá'ís to give up the Faith, slandering the believers and saying the Faith was only an offshoot of Islám. Rúhíyyih Khánum very lovingly explained to the friends how absolutely unjustified this accusation was. It was at the hands of the followers of Islám that 20,000 Bahá'ís had been martyred and that others were still suffering persecution. She spoke also of the need for perseverance and courage, and stressed how rapidly the Cause progresses wherever it is persecuted. In this same village the rite of “arti” was performed by a young and beautiful woman wearing a plain white sari, the sign of mourning. She was Bharati, whose husband, Shri Ram Dayal Sharma, one of the finest Bahá'í teachers in that area, had lost his life (with, alas, three other outstanding teachers, one of them Shirin Boman's own husband) exactly one year before. Although, according to Hindu religious customs, a widow is debarred from performing such a rite and attending such a happy gathering, this radiant young Bahá'í of 21—the mother of four small children—by this act not only showed tremendous courage, but demonstrated her devotion to the Cause of God and her complete acceptance of its liberalizing teachings.

The following day Amatu'l-Bahá was due to visit two villages of extremely poor communities. The countryside looked weird and arid, the only growing things being thorn bushes and almost leafless trees; there was no green vegetation anywhere. The villagers cut firewood in these jungles, transport it over eight miles to sell in the city, buy some meagre daily food supplies for their families, and return at night. Such extreme poverty wrings one's heart. When we arrived, the menfolk were away selling their wood; only women, children, and old men were about. The people belong to the lowest social caste, known as the “untouchables”. For thousands of years they have suffered deprivation of the social right entitling them to mix freely with other castes. Although the present Indian Constitution abolishes this system and grants equal rights to all, it is a social reform which does not always work out in practice. It is of great interest therefore to see that Bahá'ís are amongst the forerunners of those who are implementing this law of equality. The Bahá'í teachers in the schools are often from the highest caste, Brahmins, who accept to leave their own environment and mingle with these downtrodden people, teaching them their letters and exemplifying the love of Bahá'u'lláh for all people. This alone is one of the great miracles of Bahá'u'lláh in a land where caste prejudice still exists. In both villages even the very young Bahá'í children recited beautifully from the Hidden Words and the history of the Faith, a great credit to both their own intelligence and their teachers' devotion. In the first village we visited, the only male adult Bahá'í present at the meeting, in a very shy and touching way, came forward with a framed silver picture of Ganesha, Parvati, and Lord Siva—three Hindu deities—then added to this a small silver incense burner and offered these to Rúhíyyih Khánum as a token of deep love and appreciation of her visit. This beautiful, spontaneous act of a simple Bahá'í so deeply touched Amatu'l-Bahá that, after enquiring from members of the Area Teaching Committee what gift she could give the village in return, and learning that they had no adequate light to study by at night, she bought a pressure lamp for each Bahá'í school in that entire area which had none. Light in these schools is most essential as adult education classes are usually held at night.

That evening in Gwalior Rúhíyyih Khánum spoke to an audience of over 400 invited guests. Mr. Shukla, the Principal of Scindia School, acted as her chairman. She took particular pains to dispel any idea that this Faith is an off-shoot of Islám, proving its universal and independent nature, convincing even certain hitherto antagonistic elements who attended the lecture. One of the points that impressed her listeners greatly was her description of the great 1963 Bahá'í World Congress held in London, as a perfect expression of the blending of diverse sections of humanity which exist in the Bahá'í Faith. She told them how the 7,000 attendants at that Congress listened with admiration and astonishment to so-called “savages” from the islands of Mentawai, the jungles of Africa and Malaysia, to an Aborigine from Australia and Red Indians from the mountains of the Andes. Some of these men, she said, were covered with tribal tattoos and had left their native communities for the first time; but with complete self-assurance they stood up and addressed their awe-stricken fellow Bahá'ís. One of the most outstanding teaching talents of Rúhíyyih Khánum is her remarkable ability to adapt her mind to her audience. The flexibility with which she is able to adjust her thinking to her immediate environment is indeed marvellous. She would travel all day amongst simple, illiterate villagers; she would speak to them in utmost simplicity, using examples and stories to teach them of the message of Bahá'u'lláh; yet that same evening she would address a highly intellectual public audience using their own involved and philosophical language. With equal success she charmed and captured both types. This is indeed a great art.

During these rushed days, at the conference held in the large village of Utila, where almost 700 people gathered, we had an example of the impact this Faith makes on the intelligent and spiritually receptive people of India. The Sarpanch, Mr. Laxmi Nayaran, in welcoming Rúhíyyih Khánum, spoke so glowingly on what the Bahá'í Faith stands for that when she got up to speak she said he had already said everything she intended to say. She went on to state that throughout history spiritual guidance has invariably come from the East and shone on the West. Now, in this day, the West is bringing the benefits of material civilization to the East, but these material benefits are not enough; indeed, unless they are combined with spiritual values, they are dangerous for the soul of man. In the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh both elements have their proper place. She said she was convinced that in the future Bahá'í teachers, from India in particular, will go to the West and set the hearts of the people on fire through their faith and their eloquence. When Rúhíyyih Khánum had finished, a visitor, not known to the Bahá'ís, requested to be allowed to address the gathering. There was a little hesitation (as sometimes unfriendly elements seek to break up the meetings), but in the end he was invited to speak. He recapitulated what he had heard of the Bahá'í teachings (for the first time in his life) so brilliantly, with such thrilling delivery and fervour, that Rúhíyyih Khánum said that if she had not already been a Bahá'í she would have become one!

February 25th was a very special day for the believers in Gwalior area. The Bahá'ís had been in the process of purchasing the second Teaching Institute in India. After Rúhíyyih Khánum's arrival, the legal transfer of an impressive building with many acres of land outside the city of Gwalior took place. On this day, the new Teaching Institute was to be officially opened and dedicated by beloved Amatu'l-Bahá. Several hundred Bahá'ís from the surrounding villages came to attend this happy occasion. When one remembers that the only means of getting there, for the vast majority, was on foot, over long distances, it was an impressive number. The hall was beautifully decorated with coloured paper cuttings, runners and coloured balloons. The walls were adorned with attractive paintings illustrating some of the principles of Bahá'u'lláh. The road leading to the building was packed with excited and enthusiastic Bahá'ís. The cutting of a blue ribbon by Rúhíyyih Khánum signified the official opening of the Institute. The programme started with prayers and songs and very touching, spontaneous speeches made by the village Bahá'ís. Although we could not understand these talks given in Hindi, we could feel the deep enthusiasm and joy in what they said, which almost brought the roof down with the thunderous applause of the eager audience. One young Bahá'í pointed out that no one in this world should be deprived of the bounty of recognizing Bahá'u'lláh; we should teach with such love and devotion that all who come our way may be affected and enkindled by this fire; we should be even guiding and moulding through prayer the souls of our unborn children who are still in the wombs of their mothers. Our new friend, who had spoken so eloquently at Utila, a Brahman keeper of a village temple, we learned, had been discussing the Faith all night with one of the Bahá'í teachers and now spoke again, as a Bahá'í. He thrilled us all. As Rúhíyyih Khánum said, "He is like a flame-thrower." The things he said about this Faith and its teachings left us dumbfounded. I could not but remember those wonderful words of Bahá'u'lláh:

I know not, O my God, what the Fire is which Thou didst kindle in Thy land. Earth can never cloud its splendour, nor water quench its flame. All the peoples of the world are powerless to resist its force. Great is the blessedness of him that hath drawn nigh unto it, and heard its roaring.

Amatu'l-Bahá spoke on the importance of such institutes for the purpose of teaching and training the Bahá'ís. She then told them about Bahá'u'lláh, His life and His sufferings, and finally she drew their attention to the necessity of adorning one's words with the crown of good deeds.

The finishing touch to that wonderful week in Gwalior was a very enjoyable cultural evening at the Gwalior Medical College which dear Mrs. Boman and her family and friends had arranged. We heard fascinating music by distinguished performers and enjoyed the dancing of children from a cultured background whose families consider it a privilege to keep alive this great artistic expression of their past.

The following day, with deep reluctance, we parted from so many wonderful new friends, and left this immensely fertile spiritual field, so rich in promise for the future. The friends all gathered at the home of Shirin to bid their beloved guest farewell. One of the most active teachers, Mr. Lad, asked Rúhíyyih Khánum when she would come back to India. Rúhíyyih Khánum answered: "I will be back when you have your first million." Our enthusiastic friend immediately said, "That is a bargain; I will have a million very soon, then you will have to come back!"

CHAPTER III

The next programme was to begin on February 28th in Ujjain area. As we were relatively near Khajuraho, the centre of one of India's ancient cultures, famous for its temples, we passed that way, covering over 700 miles by jeep in three days. To our delight, the daughter of Shirin, Dr. Perin Ulyai, accompanied us, as it is almost impossible to travel outside the cities without someone who knows the language and the country. It was on this trip that we were able to visit Sanchi, the site of one of Buddhism's most beautiful and ancient stupas, the carving on whose gate-posts is unexcelled, and from whence almost 2,000 years ago the mighty King Ashoka, a convert to the Buddha's Faith, sent his son Mahindra to carry the message of enlightenment to Ceylon and spread the new religion there.

It was here at Sanchi that we had one of those revealing experiences that makes one understand why India is so intensely receptive to spiritual truth. The stupas of Sanchi are built on top of a small mountain. We went up in our jeep under the burning brilliant sun of midday. To our surprise we found a peasant coming up on foot, carrying a small child in his arms, with two other young children with him. Rúhíyyih Khánúm was very curious as to why he had come there. He informed us he was working as a labourer in a nearby village because of the harvest season, though he was from another part of Madhya Pradesh. Having heard that this was a holy place, he had come with his children to pay his respects and receive a blessing. The man was a Hindu, poor and illiterate; he probably knew nothing of Buddhism, but the deep religious feeling typical of his people had drawn him to the top of this mountain on a little pilgrimage of his own.

Indore and Ujjain are the cradle of mass teaching in India, and the village of Kwetiapani, which was visited by Rúhíyyih Khánúm on February 29th, was actually the first Bahá'í model village of India. This village is 45 miles from Indore through a wilderness of bone-dry jungle, carpeted in powdery dust. We arrived parched and suffocated after a long drive on tiring roads. One of the most famous tribes of India, the Bhils, live in this area, as well as the Bhilalas. Many of them have now embraced the Cause, and have added to the charm of the colourful and widely diversified Bahá'í community of India.

On a little hill, a beautiful canopy with decorated arches had been erected outside the village and a large crowd was waiting to receive their beloved guest. The horns of all the oxen of the village (sixteen in all) had been freshly painted green, red, and blue in her honour. Yoked in pairs, the oxen were tied to the best cart and Amatu'l-Bahá, after receiving the usual "arti", mounted the cart, seized the reins and was pulled to the Bahá'í Centre to the accompaniment of flutes and drums, while a cheerful Bhil tribesman, in green paint, skins and bells, danced all the way ahead of the procession. Rúhíyyih Khánúm was truly at that moment like a queen, the object of a profound love and devotion offered to her by a simple and pure-hearted people. The Bahá'í children here performed a very delightful play, each child representing one of the great religions of the world and claiming that his religion was the only true path and all others were in the wrong. The child representing the Bahá'í Faith then spoke of the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, explaining that all their religions were true, and invited them all to unite under the tabernacle of the precious Cause of God in this day.

Rúhíyyih Khánúm, in her inspiring talk that day, told the friends that they should be proud of their heritage as tribal peoples and should never feel ashamed of it. Addressing herself particularly to the Bhil tribesmen present, she told them how famous they were and that she had known of them even in her own country long ago. To their astonishment she said, "I also belong to a very old tribe from the Western World. My father belonged to three of the clans of Scotland. The members of each clan have their distinct patterns for the cloth they wear and are recognized by these patterns. I am proud of my past and feel so close to you because we are both tribal people." These encouraging words were truly like a fresh breeze of hope to these people who are considered even lower than the lowest caste in their country and looked upon as savages. She then explained that the very essence of the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh is unity in diversity, and is not unity in uniformity; that the beauty of the society of the future will be that each people will bring its own unique gifts to enrich the whole. After this meeting we drove 100 miles to Ujjain, arriving late at night. Rúhíyyih Khánúm had fever and was feeling very ill.

In spite of this, she insisted the next day on getting up and attending a large regional conference arranged at Shajapur, a long drive from Ujjain. To the full fanfare of a hired brass band, with garlands and flowers, shouts, and rifles shot off in her ear by enthusiastic villagers, she was ushered into the Bahá'í meeting hall. Present at this meeting was the Rajkumar of Sitamhow, who, with exemplary Indian courtesy, had accepted to act as her chairman at that night's large public meeting. He was a quiet and most agreeable man who had been at the United Nations with one of India's delegations. It was here that we had our first introduction to eating the Indian way; a few of us and the Rajkumar were invited into a Bahá'í home for dinner. When the individual metal trays were brought—and no spoons or forks—Rúhíyyih Khánúm looked desperately at the Rajkumar and whispered, "For

heaven's sake begin so I can watch you and learn how to do it!" After close observation we plunged into the new custom and from then on often ate with our Indian friends in their manner.

The visit of the Hand of the Cause Dorothy Baker, in 1953, is still remembered in this area, particularly in the village of Harsodan, the home of Mr. Dayaram Malvia, which we visited the next morning on our way back to Ujjain. It was here that in the beginning of this new period in India, when people are entering in "troops", many of the new teaching plans and techniques were formulated. During Rúhíyyih Khánum's meeting with the Bahá'ís there she asked the many children present, "Why are you Bahá'ís?" A little boy of about 10 to 12 answered shyly, "I saw my father become stronger after accepting Bahá'u'lláh. I thought, I also want to be strong like him. That is why I became a Bahá'í and now I feel stronger too."

That evening a reception was given by Mr. and Mrs. Vajdi on the roof of their home in honour of Amatu'l-Bahá. Some of their close friends and distinguished personalities of the town were invited. Rúhíyyih Khánum spoke to them on progressive revelation and the non-political character of the Bahá'í Faith. She praised the wonderful spirit of tolerance and peacefulness which seem to be two of the strongest aspects of the Hindu religion. She hoped that these two virtues would be the great contribution of the people of India to the common pool of humanity.

The Festival of Holi is one of the most exciting and colourful festivals in India. For five days people are in preparation. Every night bonfires are the centre of merrymaking and the bazaars are covered with coloured powder. On the fifth day, from early morning people are out in the streets. Everyone who dares to venture out is the target of buckets of coloured water and handfuls of coloured powder. One day a year India becomes casteless. The poor and the rich become equal. No one can raise any objection if he is attacked on all sides and painted like a rainbow! We were told that the origin of this was purely religious and meant to convey the idea that in the sight of God all are equal. As this was the only opportunity Rúhíyyih Khánum had of seeing some of Ujjain's famous temples (every other moment having been taken up with meetings or being ill in bed), she took her courage in both hands and sallied forth. She came back laughing, drenched to the skin, red powder even in her hair. We were then the guests at lunch of some Indian friends and had a full share of this merry and carefree festival.



Shirin Boman, Amatu'l-Bahá and Violette Nakhjavani in the village of Bagchini, Madhya Pradesh; over 2000 people attended this meeting



Amatu'l-Bahá embracing a widow in the village of Chatigoon, Madhya Pradesh



A Harijan (untouchables) Bahá'í village in Madhya Pradesh



Arrival at the first gathering of the friends in Bombay

On the afternoon of March 3rd, Rúḥíyyih Khánum had one of her most regal welcomes in this area in the village of Jahangirpur. As she walked through the narrow lanes of the village, with a brass band in front playing royal marches, beautiful women threw rose petals on her head from their window sills and the people shouted: “Dharm-Mata-Ki Jai ho!” (meaning, “Long live our spiritual mother!”). The whole procession was so majestic and filled with such love and devotion that our hearts were touched. Beloved Amatu’l-Bahá spoke to the friends at this meeting on the power of love, this tremendous force in our lives which is the basis of creation. The purpose of the lives of all the Divine Manifestations of God was to enkindle in the heart of man the fire of love. She told her spellbound audience that on the previous night she had dreamed of the beloved Guardian, radiantly happy and attired in a new hat. She interpreted her dream to mean that Shoghi Effendi was pleased and happy with her trip around India. This dream of Rúḥíyyih Khánum had a contagious effect on all the Bahá’is present. One could see the tremendous joy, love, and happiness in all faces. On her way back to Ujjain, when she found out that Bahá’is in Hingoria had been expecting her since the afternoon, she decided to stop and spend a little time with them. On the porch of one of the buildings, she sat down on the floor in the dark. The people had dispersed, having given up hope of seeing her, but the news of her arrival spread in the village like wild fire. While the Bahá’is were anxiously looking for a pressure lamp, Rúḥíyyih Khánum became the true spiritual light in that dark and forgotten village. Around her the multitudes of young and old gathered eagerly and drank in every word she uttered. Such acts of selflessness, devotion, and consideration towards all, and particularly towards the downtrodden, truly set an example to all those who in future will arise to follow in the footsteps of

one of the greatest teachers of this day. It was only late at night, when she reached her bedroom, that she allowed herself to think, and feel the deep fatigue and exhaustion of the full and arduous day. Never, if it were at all avoidable, did she allow friends to sacrifice a village meeting, arranged and eagerly anticipated by devoted and simple Bahá'ís, on account of her health, or for any other reason.

On March 4th—one month after our arrival in India—we left the town of Ujjain and returned to Indore. This is the hub of all teaching activities in this area. The Indore Teaching Institute is the first of its kind in India, and has a permanent resident teacher. Selected students are brought from all over to attend concentrated teaching and deepening courses. Many of the outstanding Bahá'í teachers of today were not long ago shy new believers who had come to this Institute to learn more about the beloved Cause they had just embraced. A special meeting was arranged where Rúhíyyih Khánum met with all the travelling teachers of the area, numbering over 40. A large number of Bahá'ís were also present. Rúhíyyih Khánum first spoke to all the assembled friends, then met with the Area Teaching Committee, and finally spoke to the body of the travelling teachers. She told them that a Bahá'í teacher should be so dedicated to the Cause that no obstacles could dishearten him, his heart must be overflowing with love for all humanity and he must be absolutely assured of Bahá'u'lláh's guidance and protection. She spoke of two of the greatest teachers of our time in the Western World: Miss Martha Root and Mrs. May Maxwell, her mother. She told the friends that Martha Root had a very beautiful expression; she often said: "Step aside and let Bahá'u'lláh do it." It was this spirit of humility and absolute faith in Bahá'u'lláh that made her the instrument in teaching the Faith to Queen Marie of Rumania, the first, and so far the only crowned monarch in the world to accept it. At the end of her life she herself won the greatest crown of all, the glowing praise of the beloved Guardian, who called her the "star-servant" of the Bahá'í Faith. Rúhíyyih Khánum said that 'Abdu'l-Bahá has told us that we should love all so selflessly that no one should ever be deprived of this spiritual nourishment. She said her mother, Mrs. Maxwell, who embraced the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh in the prime of her youth, and was with the first group of pilgrims from the West who went to see the Master, in the prison-city of 'Akká, had a tremendous capacity for love. 'Abdu'l-Bahá once told her: whoever you love, it is the love of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and so her heart became like a mirror which reflected the radiance of the love in the heart of the Master. Rúhíyyih Khánum said, "I can truly say that no one ever crossed my mother's path without receiving some sign of love from her. It was this capacity to love which made her a magnet that attracted many souls to the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh. The beloved Guardian called her 'Abdu'l-Bahá's distinguished disciple and said she had won a martyr's crown." The friends then sang many of their Bahá'í songs on the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh and His sufferings. The climax of this conference came in the evening when beloved Amatu'l-Bahá refused to go back to her hotel to take her meal and insisted on staying and eating the simple fare provided for the friends. Sitting cross-legged on the floor of the porch, eating Indian curry with her fingers from the leaf plate on the floor, laughing and joking with the village teachers who had stayed late for her special meeting with them, she obviously was enjoying herself immensely. She said this was one of her happiest occasions during her entire time in India.

The next day was the day of departure from this area. Over 80 per cent of the Bahá'ís of India reside in Madhya Pradesh, where Rúhíyyih Khánum spent sixteen happy and memorable days on her first visit. She was to end her tour in Gwalior, almost where she began it, eight months later. The thought of leaving was a sad one. A large number of villagers, mostly women, had walked over 15 miles to the airport to bid their beloved guest farewell. Every space in the waiting room at the airport was packed with eager, devoted Bahá'ís. When the loudspeaker announced that there would be one hour's delay in our departure, shouts of joy could be heard from everywhere. Rúhíyyih Khánum, smothered in garlands of fragrant fresh roses, was submerged in an ocean of love and affection. This was so visible that everyone at the airport came to see who this foreigner dressed in a common peasant sari was, who drew to herself such a crowd of admirers. A group of airport staff were so surprised and attracted by this whole scene that they left their offices and came to the lounge to learn more about this distinguished and unusual passenger. This one hour of waiting became an hour of intense teaching. Later, at the Gwalior Teaching Conference, we met the first fruit of that day's meeting, one of the officers in charge of the airport who was so attracted and touched by the Message given to him by Rúhíyyih Khánum that he followed it up and later became a Bahá'í. As she said goodbye, she told the friends that their love and kindness had been like a cork-screw that had pulled out her heart like a cork—she did not see how she was ever going to be able to leave India.

CHAPTER IV

On our way to Bombay we stopped two days in Aurangabad to visit the famous caves of Ajanta and Ellora. These were originally built by pious Buddhist monks as far back as the first century A.D. The carvings, and especially the wall paintings in these caves, are among some of the finest in the world.

On the morning of March 8th we arrived in Bombay, the capital of Maharashtra State, where the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh was first established in India and from whence have gone forth some of her finest teachers and pioneers. The airport seemed to be full of Bahá'ís anxiously awaiting the arrival of their guest. The most gorgeous garlands of pink rosebuds and tuberoses were offered to Amatu'l-Bahá. When her neck could receive no more, her arms were piled up with these heavenly flowers, and finally her arms could hold no more and someone else had to carry the rest. I am sure Bombay airport had seldom witnessed such a reception. Rúhíyyih Khánum, however, was beginning to feel the strain of her over-packed programme and was not feeling well at all.

The Bombay Spiritual Assembly seized the opportunity of Rúhíyyih Khánum's visit to proclaim the Faith to the elite of one of the most important cities of India. An "At Home" had been arranged on the roof-garden of the Ambassador Hotel, to which over 300 guests were invited to meet her, hear her speak, and partake of supper together. The guests, seated at long tables, and comprising Ministers, members of municipal corporations, principals of colleges and schools, industrialists and business men, constituted a very distinguished audience. Newspaper reporters and photographers were also present. Mr. S. K. Patil, M.P., former Minister of Food, had agreed to give the opening speech of welcome. He spoke so comprehensively and so flatteringly of the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, stating that if there was any religion in the world today which could truly be considered a world religion, it was certainly the Bahá'í Faith, that Rúhíyyih Khánum, on rising to address the gathering, remarked that there was little left for her to add! As she had a temperature of 102 degrees, we were very worried over her. In spite of this, she presented her thoughts in a way that created a warm feeling of fellowship amongst her listeners, calling upon India to fulfil her great part in the destiny of mankind, to never lose sight of her spiritual heritage and the values she possessed, values which were so greatly needed by all the nations, now being swept away by a materialism that alone could never answer the inner need of men.

The following day, still ill and feverish, Amatu'l-Bahá had tea at Government House with the Governor of Maharashtra, Mrs. Pandit, sister of the Prime Minister Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru who passed away a few months later. That night the Bahá'ís of Bombay were eagerly anticipating their meeting with Rúhíyyih Khánum. Though still running a temperature, she did not want to disappoint the friends. Her opening words conveyed her appreciation of the services of the believers in this city. She recalled the many years during which the Bahá'ís of Bombay had so effectively contributed to the development of the Cause in India. She also acknowledged with appreciation the part the Bombay friends played in supporting the work of many teachers and generously contributing to the financial stability of the entire Indian community. She had hardly spoken for fifteen minutes when she felt too ill to stand up; she excused herself and explained that she must go home, but before she could leave the hall she fainted. All hearts were heavy with grief and worry. We all knew that Rúhíyyih Khánum, through her love and consideration for the friends, had overtaxed her strength. When she finally regained consciousness she had to be carried bodily to her hotel bedroom; she was unable to stand or walk.

To her intense distress, she had to stay in bed almost a week. A very large conference had been arranged in a new and promising teaching area and the Bahá'ís were waiting for her in Dang and Devlali. To my intense distress, she insisted I should go, with Mrs. Boman, and represent her at those meetings, conveying messages of love from her and sharing news and greetings from the World Centre of the Faith in Haifa. In many of her meetings she called upon me, upon Shirin, upon her cousin Mrs. Chute, who joined us in the latter part of her tour, to address the friends. When I would remonstrate over this, to me, inappropriate inclusion of others when all the friends wanted was to hear her, she would advance a theory of teaching which was new to me but which she firmly believed follows a law. She claimed that in every audience, no matter who speaks or how well, there is mathematically bound to be a certain percentage of listeners who, for some reason or other, may not tune in to the mind and method of delivery of the speaker. If another Bahá'í gets up and speaks, he may reach these people and convey the message of Bahá'u'lláh to them. To miss any opportunity to give these life-giving teachings to humanity is wrong. Shirin and I had no choice but to go!

On March 15th, after an eight-hour train journey, we arrived at Sholapur where all the Bahá'ís were waiting to welcome us at the railway station. A happy, informal gathering was held that evening. I will quote from dear Shirin's description of what Rúhíyyih Khánum said that night: "One of the friends enquired from dear Khánum about her impression of mass conversion in India and whether this kind of teaching to the masses was according to the plan of our beloved Guardian. Our beloved Rúhíyyih Khánum explained to the friends what mass conversion meant to the beloved Guardian and said that the religion of God comes for all the people of the world

and hence it was our paramount duty to teach and take the name of Bahá'u'lláh to the waiting, thirsty masses. We are asked by Bahá'u'lláh, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and Shoghi Effendi to teach the Cause, but we never find orders in their writings to stop teaching and consolidate our achievements. She further remarked that we have 900 years more to consolidate but we do not know how many more years we will have to teach the Cause. We can only stop teaching the Faith when the government of the country asks us to stop because, according to Bahá'u'lláh's law, it is our Article of Faith to obey the government of the country in which we reside. I cannot understand, she said, why the friends show their concern and anxiety when simple-hearted people come into the Faith, who just say that they believe in Bahá'u'lláh, and who do not know much about the Faith. You want quality. But to get the quality, you need quantity. Suppose we have 100 Bahá'ís and we find only 5 good Bahá'ís; let us calculate further and say that if we have 1,000 Bahá'ís, we will again have 50 good Bahá'ís, and if we have 5,000 Bahá'ís, the number of good Bahá'ís will naturally increase. Go on multiplying the number of Bahá'ís and you will also get the quality Bahá'ís. Actually only God can measure the faith of a Bahá'í and no one has the measurement whether a person is a good Bahá'í or not. We have seen learned teachers, proud and self-conceited, thrown into the depths of unbelief and discarded, while many humble and lowly Bahá'ís were raised. Nobody knows what his future will be. So let us teach till the whole world becomes Bahá'í."

The following day in Mohal, a village 25 miles away, over 500 people attended a very wonderful public meeting. Mr. Vishwas Rao Fatty, a very prominent Headman, introduced Rúhíyyih Khánúm and commended the Bahá'í teachings to all his hearers. Rúhíyyih Khánúm, in her unique way, with simple examples and stories, illustrated the meaning and purpose of this Faith in the world today. The pioneer in this area was an elderly, simple, dedicated believer, a baker by profession, whose only desire was to spread the glad tidings of Bahá'u'lláh. Through his devoted services there were over 4,000 believers in that part of the country. This is the way he began his talk: "I only speak a broken Hindi, a few words of English and a very poor Persian. Combining all these languages, and adding to them the language of Love, I have come to tell you about a great Message and a Divine Messenger—Bahá'u'lláh." This was, to me, a true lesson in humility and an example of how Bahá'u'lláh will use every instrument that places itself confidently and willingly in His hands. Until the late hours of the evening the enraptured audience stayed on, asking questions and receiving answers. We heard beautiful, heart-lifting songs sung in what must be one of the sweetest languages in the whole world—Hindi.

The following day, March 17th, we reached the city of Poona. In the afternoon of that same day hundreds of the friends gathered to meet Rúhíyyih Khánúm. In the garden of the National Hotel, which has always been the centre of Bahá'í activities there, a splendid platform had been raised and around it a curtain of fresh strings of jasmine flowers had been hung. A large number of Bahá'í children from Panchgani New Era Bahá'í School were specially brought to meet Amatu'l-Bahá. In her talk to the friends that day she stressed the importance of teaching the Cause of God. She particularly drew their attention to the necessity of bringing up our Bahá'í children with the love of Bahá'u'lláh in their hearts and the desire to serve His Cause as their foremost ambition in life. She gave the example of the martyr Rúhu'lláh, who, at the age of 11, publicly professed his belief in Bahá'u'lláh and willingly gave his life in His path. "Was he not a Bahá'í because he wasn't yet 15 years of age?", she asked. "'Abdu'l-Bahá was only 8 years old", Rúhíyyih Khánúm told the friends, "when He used to go to the Siyáh-Chál of Tihrán to visit His Father. Was 'Abdu'l-Bahá not a Bahá'í yet? In our teachings we have prayers for the unborn child. What are we praying for? That the child may be a good Bahá'í from the moment of its birth!"

After the formal meeting was over and the friends dispersed, a few lingered on, like moths drawn by the light of the candle, and sat almost till midnight at the feet of one for whom they cherished in their hearts such profound reverence and love, and clung to every thought expressed and every word uttered by her. I looked and looked at her exhausted face. I could see that candle burning silently and joyously, never disappointing anyone, never depriving any eager soul who sought her company. Many were such informal gatherings, and every time this pattern was repeated.

The next day we went back to Bombay and that night the Bahá'ís for two hours listened in rapture to the talk that was so dramatically interrupted two weeks before.

As Rúhíyyih Khánúm's talks in Poona and Bombay were similar, excerpts from both have been combined here in order to better represent the thoughts she expressed to these communities, where many of India's oldest Bahá'ís were present:

Beloved Friends, this is the first time in my life that I gave a lecture, interrupted it half way through by fainting, went away to three other cities and came again to finish the lecture. Truly, there is something very strange about Bombay! I do not know what you have, but it does strange things to me and the Cause of God. I want to say that this time, if I faint, I will look nicer on the floor in a sari! (Rúhíyyih Khánúm wore a dress the previous time.)

I think you remember the other evening, when we were talking about this marvellous thing that is taking place in India and is making you the envy of the entire Bahá'í world, that I said it is this great wave of mass

teaching that has in recent years been sweeping your country.

You know, the beloved Guardian Shoghi Effendi had beautiful, beautiful eyes. They were sometimes hazel coloured and sometimes very grey, and they changed in the light, and some people thought they were blue, which they were not. These eyes, when he got excited about something, about the work of the Cause, he would open so wide that they looked like two suns rising above the horizon. The thing that brought him the greatest happiness, during the twenty years that I had the privilege of serving him, was news of the expansion of the Cause of God. You know of his sufferings and of the disloyalty and the enmity of his own family. The only thing that consoled him was this news of the opening of new countries, new territories, new Local Spiritual Assemblies, and the increase in the number of believers.

Shoghi Effendi started the Crusade and Shoghi Effendi won the Crusade. Although he passed away in the middle of it, we all know that it was our love for him, and the degree to which we took to heart all those marvellous messages and cablegrams that he kept sending out to the Bahá'í world that enabled us to win the victory.

The breath of life to the Guardian, the thing that kept him going during the last years of his life, was the progress of the Crusade, was the expansion of the Cause of God; fundamentally it was all Teaching.

Here in India, in Africa, in Bolivia, and in some other places, we are beginning to find that there are pockets of people who are receptive to the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh and who accept it almost immediately when they hear about it. If you will go back in your minds—and most of you in this room are Bahá'í-zadehs [born Bahá'ís], or have been Bahá'ís for many years—you will remember that everywhere in the teachings there is the same thing stated over and over again, that when the Manifestation of God comes to earth, He comes for all the people of the earth and it is their duty to accept Him. You remember that in the early days of the Bahá'í Faith, the process of recognizing the Manifestation of God was something practically instantaneous. Do you remember the words of Quddus when he saw the Báb going out of the door and leaving the room? He said: "Why seek you to hide Him from me? I can recognize Him by His gait."

There is nothing that should prevent a person from accepting the truth instantaneously. The fact that they do so only bears witness that their hearts are more receptive and their spirits purer and they see the light instantly.

Let me try to give you an idea of why it is that in some countries people enter the Faith in troops, and in others it is not seen. There is a time in this world for everything. Everything has its own hour. A time a flower blooms, a time a child is conceived, a time a fruit ripens, a moment when something happens. In some places in the world there is an immense receptivity to the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh. This receptivity is more amongst the people who are not so advanced in western standards of civilization, and I feel that this is because they have not yet found a substitute for spiritual standards. We know that the first teaching of the Prophet of God is about the heart of man. All the great religions, including our own religion, teach this great principle: that the heart is the throne of God, not the head. Christ said: "Except ye . . . become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." The standard of the heart is the perfect standard. The ancient Egyptians said: before a man can be accepted in heaven, his heart must be weighed against a feather to see how pure it is. Bahá'u'lláh said: "Thy heart is My home; sanctify it for My descent." "All that is in heaven and earth I have ordained for thee, except the human heart, which I have made the habitation of My beauty and glory . . ." I feel that it is this purity of heart in these places that have not yet been touched by the deathly wind of our western civilization that makes the people receptive. Where people are living a simple form of life, like villagers, the tempo of their lives is not so fast as the tempo of life in our cities. They do not have television, radio, etc. They live very close to Nature, in a very simple way. The problems of life, belief in God, life after death, are something they think about. But with civilized men it is something that has ceased to preoccupy them, consequently the villagers seem to have a greater understanding. They are, in other words, more spiritual and more religious by nature, and when you go to them with the principle of progressive revelation—that God never abandons us, that He leads us onwards and upwards, that we progress from one religion to another, and that the purpose of the Bahá'í revelation today is to bring about world unity—this does not surprise them; it seems to them logical, and they accept it instantly.

These trips that I am making around the Bahá'í world are a great blessing to me, because I can see things at first hand and see them more clearly. There are two things that have to operate at the same time in this world. When a Prophet of God appears, we know from the Bahá'í teachings that it is the right of every man to hear His name and the duty of every man to accept Him. If they don't hear His name it is the fault of the Bahá'ís, and if they don't accept Him it is the fault of the individual. This is the fundamental teaching of all religions. The Prophet comes and the people accept Him and then it is their duty to bring other people into His Cause, and the duty of everyone is to believe in God and His Messengers. This is the fundamental teaching of all religions, our religion included. Why does it matter so much to hear the name of Bahá'u'lláh

and accept Him? We believe that when this happens something organic takes place spiritually. In the heart of man, a spiritual conception takes place. Should we all be killed tonight, what is our heart's desire? It is our hope and prayer that in the great mercy of God we may all go to the Abhá Kingdom, to be with Bahá'u'lláh, the Báb, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Shoghi Effendi and all those wondrous and luminous souls. This is the spiritual and organic thing that ties man to his Creator: to know God, to believe in Him, love Him, and draw closer to Him, so that his soul may grow and progress in the worlds of God. In other words, in plain and simple English, we believe in the doctrine of Salvation.

All the time we Bahá'ís—I do not know about you here, I know about the Bahá'ís in other parts—all the time we are wondering why people do not take more interest in Bahá'u'lláh. But if they do accept, just like that [here Rúhiyyih Khánúm snapped her fingers], we do not like that either! How can we be sure, we wonder; perhaps they should ask more questions first? Our Guardian asked us to teach, to go out and bring in more people, and he kept cabling: How many have you now? And if he had a new figure, he sent a cable to the whole Bahá'í world announcing this joyous news. As soon as he heard of a new victory, he rushed to share it with the entire Bahá'í world. You remember Africa—where, in the Bahá'í world, we first witnessed what we call “mass teaching” and “mass conversion”—Shoghi Effendi could not wait to share this news and he sent cables to all the friends, his marvellous cables with which we are all so familiar. He thirsted for news of the people who were being enlisted under the banner of Bahá'u'lláh.

After his passing, I thought about these things a great deal. I said to myself: How could our Guardian, who was the Sign of God on earth, accept them if these people are not really Bahá'ís? There is something here that does not click. The Guardian encourages it, and yet some of our old Bahá'ís say: How can they bring in so many Bahá'ís? What kind of Bahá'ís are they? So I went myself to the villages in Africa. I travelled thousands of miles and I slept in the houses of the African villagers, in their mud houses, and I had meetings, and many times this happened: they would come, sit down, often ask questions, and then, after the meetings, they would come up and say they wanted to be Bahá'ís. And I looked at these people and I had to accept the fact that they had become Bahá'ís. They believed that Bahá'u'lláh was sent by God for this day and that His teachings are the remedy for humanity, which, if you get down to it, is the essence of what we are trying to teach, just what the Guardian said: the Báb is the Forerunner, Bahá'u'lláh is the Prophet, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá the Interpreter. You don't have to read all the books to accept this, that Bahá'u'lláh is the Prophet for this age! This is the first stage in being a Bahá'í. This is what is known as the doctrine of Salvation—that through belief in God and His Manifestation in this day, your soul is safe, because it has made the organic connection with its Creator.

For instance, let us take the martyrs of the Faith; did these people know anything at all of the Bahá'í teachings compared to what we know? They did not even know Bahá'u'lláh or that Bahá'u'lláh was going to be Bahá'u'lláh. They did not know anything about Him because He had not even declared Himself! They were the followers of the Báb, the Forerunner of the Faith. Do you think those illiterate Persian villagers had read the mighty Writings of the Báb? The brilliant 'Ulama priests studied and read His Writings and then accepted Him, but the poor people only knew that the Promised One is come, and that we love Him and we are not going to give Him up, and so they died by the thousands. And these are the people Shoghi Effendi said are our spiritual ancestors. He said that these people are the fountainhead of the Faith and a spiritual power to all of us, and I assure you that a great many of them knew less than these villagers of today, who hear about the Faith and its teachings and accept it. We have to realize that we are all growing. My mother always used to say to the people she was teaching: the Bahá'í Faith is a university which you enter, but you never graduate, because you never finish learning. And this is true of all of us, the new, the old, the youth, the adults. We are always going to study in this university of Bahá'u'lláh's religion and we will never finish.

I cannot read the Persian and Arabic volumes of our Scriptures. I have only read the wonderful English translations by our beloved Guardian, and even these I cannot all remember because I have such an awful memory; to really understand these one has to have perfect knowledge of the English language because the Guardian translated these works most accurately and with an absolute and perfect command of English. Then what of the Persian friends who cannot read a word of English and so are unable to read a word of Shoghi Effendi's great works; are they not Bahá'ís? Are they not just as good as I am and just as devoted? Knowledge and faith are two separate things and we must not mix them. Faith is what we all must have. What we add to that slowly is knowledge.

The first Bahá'ís in India were mainly Persians and Parsis, and I would like to tell you, as you are the people of that early community, that thank God, you have at last washed your faces! For over 100 years the Cause has been in India. India dates from the days of the Báb; its connection with the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh antedates the connection of the West. It was a very early bond with this religion of God that India had, and yet for over 100 years you all did nothing but make a few Bahá'ís who were deeply devoted to the Faith, who gave money to the Cause and lived in the cities, and nothing much happened. Then came the appeal of

the Guardian to the Indian community, and to all the other Bahá'í countries, to go out and create more centres and more Spiritual Assemblies, and thank God, many of you from Poona and Bombay heard this call and responded and went out. And, my friends, that was the second stage of the history of the Faith in India. Then came the third stage, when you responded to his plea to go out and bring the people in in troops. I think we owe a lot to our beloved Hand of the Cause Dr. Muhájir, who believes with all his soul that this is the time for seed-sowing and that if we don't do it we are committing a sin. Whatever it is, the Indian Bahá'í community has responded, and you are now leading the entire Bahá'í world in the number of believers that are being enrolled under the banner of Bahá'u'lláh.

What is happening in India has two aspects, as I see it. One is that if you wish to make cream, if you want to make one cupful of cream, you have to have an awful lot of milk. Of course, if you only want to make a few drops of cream then you need only a small quantity of milk, but if you want to get a whole lot of cream—or, better still, a lot of butter—you have to have a large quantity of milk, because there is but a small percentage of fat in the milk to begin with and that is going to become your cream. You must remember this, my dear friends, when you see these figures of 4,000 or 10,000 villagers who have become Bahá'ís, and you say, “What do they know of the Bahá'í teachings?” Remember that what they need is to hear about Bahá'u'lláh, and what we need is what we are getting, because in the 4,000 or 10,000 there is a percentage of cream, and believe me, your Indian cream is marvellous! You are getting such teachers here in India in the villages—I have seen them and heard and met them—that I defy you to produce more capable, more understanding Bahá'ís anywhere in the Bahá'í world! If some of them cannot read or write, what of it? Neither could Christ or Muḥammad. I have seen Bahá'ís on this trip who could go and teach at the summer schools in the West if they could speak English perfectly enough, who could be on National Assemblies and national committees, who could defend the Faith against its enemies, who could propagate the Faith anywhere in the world. Thank God that you and your ancestors came to India, that Bahá'u'lláh in His mercy allowed you people to have a hand in such a great thing. You should do everything in your power to foster it and help it grow.

Now I want to give you an idea of what you are doing in India and what it means abroad. You know there are Bahá'ís—it may seem hard for you to understand, but for heaven's sake go home tonight and think about what I am telling you—there are Bahá'ís who spend their entire lives in the Western World trying to find one human being who wants to hear the name of Bahá'u'lláh, trying to get anybody to accept the Manifestation of God for today! They are heartbroken, they are lonely, they are discouraged. They used to come to the Guardian as pilgrims; they were just crushed. They came from distant countries, from difficult places, places where people were like rocks, where nothing grows in their hearts—nothing! And they would say to the Guardian, Shoghi Effendi, “We are failures, we try and nothing happens, we teach and nobody listens. Shouldn't we go home; what are we doing there?” And he would say, “Persevere, be patient, some countries are worse than others, some places take longer than others. Keep the light of Bahá'u'lláh burning where you are and I will pray for you.” So he encouraged them. But you have people only waiting to hear of Bahá'u'lláh to accept Him! Please think of these miserable Bahá'ís who go to bed, many of them weeping at night because nobody will listen to the message of Bahá'u'lláh.

That is the spiritual side of religion, but there is another aspect—that it is the purpose of this Faith today to establish the Kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven. We Bahá'ís know that this is the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh which He has given us and which is for all human beings. It is different from the relationship of the individual soul to God. The two things are different. The Administrative Order, the Laws and Ordinances of Bahá'u'lláh, the things that the Guardian has been making clear to us for the thirty-six years of his Ministry, all of these we understand are the beginning of the Kingdom of God on earth and the foundation of the World Order. But in order to build anything, friends, you have to have bricks, and it has occurred to me during the last five or six years, since the passing of the Guardian—since his passing I have had to think, my friends, until I thought my brain would burst, and in the process of thinking about these things, I have come to understand many, many things, and I realize now that if we are going to bring into existence the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, we have to have the material to build with. If we have 200 in Bombay and 2,000 in New York—is that sufficient to build a World Order? We want people to say, “I believe in Bahá'u'lláh.” The Guardian, all the time in the last few years before he passed away, emphasized TEACH, TEACH, TEACH, bring the masses into the Faith of God. We must not be afraid. Sometimes the friends say: “These people come into the Cause very easily and will go out very easily.” But if they go out, so what? The Cause is growing all the time. That is not the way to look at it, and anyway, how can you say who will stay and who will go? We must not look at the negative aspect of a thing; we must always look at the positive aspect.

Order is when everything is in its proper place. We have to be patient with ourselves and with other Bahá'ís. Do the best we can from day to day and try to understand more about the Teachings and live them better and place first things first. ‘Abdu'l-Bahá says that the important must always give way to the most important. There are teachings in the Bahá'í Faith that are meant for the future, for the next 1,000 years. We have 900 years to consolidate, and yet we try and have it all in five or ten years—which is childish and impossible!



Bahá'ís of Poona with Amatu'l-Bahá in the garden of the National Hotel



A group of Bahá'í students from New Era School who came to Poona and met with Amatu'l-Bahá



Amatu'l-Bahá surrounded by the friends in front of the Bahá'í Bhawan, Mysore



Being transported by an elephant, in Mysore. Left to right: Shirin Boman, Violette Nakhjavani and Amatu'l-Bahá

It is our duty to teach the Faith. Whether we are children or adults, old or new believers, it is our primary duty. People gather grain against famine and water against drought. Does it ever occur to the Bahá'ís that now is the time to gather against a future famine and drought? That now is the time to make new Bahá'ís, while the people are still receptive, and have them strong and ready against lean times and trouble, when it may be much more difficult, if not impossible, to teach the Faith? The only time we are permitted, or should I say, the only time we are obliged to stop our teaching activities is when the government forbids us. We are obliged to stop because in the Bahá'í Faith we are obedient to government; but nothing else must stop us.

We are all Bahá'ís, whether old or new, it is all the same thing; ultimately it is the sense of being one Family on hearing the Message of Bahá'u'lláh. Wonderful as it is, and true as it is, if it did not create this solid Bahá'í Love and Unity in the world, it still would not be great enough for the world today. When we meet, it makes us feel that we belong to one big family, and this evening I speak to you from my heart because you are my Bahá'í family. We don't want a Persian Bahá'í religion or an American Bahá'í religion or an Indian Bahá'í religion. The greatness of the Bahá'í Faith is not yet understood by anybody.

The marvellous thing about being privileged to be with the Guardian—and I always felt this—was that only Shoghi Effendi in the whole world really understood what the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh is, and in a way, when he died, the only real Bahá'í passed away. The mind of Shoghi Effendi was like a camera; when you adjust the lens, everything comes into focus. It was he who taught us that we are not all supposed to be the same in this world, that unity in diversity is the principle of this Faith, and it is a very marvellous thought. If you have noticed it, people, in the West particularly, are trying to make everyone alike, as if produced in an assembly line: Japanese, Americans, etc., everywhere, everyone, all alike. It is not the ideal of the Bahá'í Faith. The ideal of the Bahá'í Faith is that we should all be one in essentials, but like different flowers living in one garden. The Guardian used to write to the National Assemblies of the world: "You do not have to copy another Assembly. You have to think for yourself." But essentially, they are all the same. Everything that we have in the Bahá'í world today, the Guardian created and made us understand. I know how much the hearts of the believers, and my own heart, grieve that we do not have the wonderful Institution of the beloved Guardian.

I am continually astonished at how Shoghi Effendi has given us guidance that will carry us through so many aspects of life, and administrative problems that arise. The House of Justice will be able to carry on with the greatest ease and the greatest power. When the Universal House of Justice was elected and I saw the people who were on it, I said: God in His mercy, in addition to giving us a House of Justice, has given us a House of Justice that is fire and flame for teaching the Cause of God!

The greatest source of joy towards the end of the Guardian's life was the progress of the Cause and the increase in the number of Bahá'ís. This religion of God is supposed to make us happy, and I sometimes feel we do not feel this joy enough. We get too worried about it. We should not be like that. As Martha Root said: "Stand aside and let Bahá'u'lláh do it." We should thank God and go forward with much more confidence than we do.

Friends, it is getting late and I am a little bit tired, and I have, as you know, a very long trip ahead of me in India and South East Asia, but I have not had the pleasure of meeting the Bahá'ís. I was prevented last time. Will those I have not had the pleasure of meeting come forward one by one and be introduced to me before I leave Bombay?

The very fortunate community to celebrate the New Year's Feast of Naw-Rúz with Rúhíyyih Khánum was the community of Hyderabad and Secunderabad. In her two days' stay there she went out with some of the friends in two different areas with the intention of starting the process of mass teaching for the Bahá'ís to follow up later. In one of these villages she spoke to a group of intelligent young men in the Public Reading Room. May the harvest of the seeds she sowed be abundant in the days to come.

CHAPTER V

On March 24th we arrived in the attractive city of Bangalore, in the south of India. Bangalore and Mysore will always remain in our memories as two beautiful cities whose natural beauty was complemented by the spiritual beauty which is in the souls of their receptive inhabitants. The Bahá'í friends in these two cities are all on fire to teach the Faith, and consequently, wherever they teach, they produce the same quality of devotion and enthusiasm in the new believers as they themselves possess. That night in the village of Karampalyao there was great jubilation. We all waited in the home of one of the devoted Bahá'í pioneer families until the sound of drums and music signified the moment for the historic ceremony of laying the foundation stone of the first Bahá'í Bhawan (Centre) in this village. Amatu'l-Bahá, decorated with garlands of fresh flowers, escorted by the village band and accompanied by many friends, arrived at the scene. The foundation stone was laid by her amidst much joy and pride. She then walked to the centre of the village where a large gathering was awaiting her. As on almost all other occasions in Indian villages, the ceremony of "arti" was performed. With regional variations, this consists of one or more ladies of the community, specially chosen, coming forward with a polished brass tray on which may be some rice grains, sweets, a coconut, a lighted candle, incense water, and sandalwood paste or red powder with which a mark is made on the forehead of the guest of honour, accompanied by chanting or words of blessing and greeting. As Rúhíyyih Khánúm is much taller than the average Indian woman, she would lean forward to receive this mark with a meekness, a respect and willingness to honour their customs which created much happiness in the hearts of the people everywhere. The spirit of love and unity was so overwhelming in that meeting that when Rúhíyyih Khánúm spoke of the life of Bahá'u'lláh we could truly feel the presence of the Blessed Perfection in our midst. The melodious music they played for us seemed like the accompaniment of angels of the heavenly kingdom. This was just a sample of what took place during those five days in Bangalore. Rúhíyyih Khánúm went every day to the villages. In Dodda Gobbi another foundation stone was laid by her. Several hundred believers met with her in four villages around Bangalore where the wave of mass teaching is rapidly gathering momentum. The devoted Bahá'í teachers in this city regularly, almost every evening after their day's work is done, go out into the country, opening new villages and consolidating old ones. The climax of these five unforgettable days in Bangalore was reached one night when Rúhíyyih Khánúm was to "open" a new village. It is the kindly practice of the teachers in this area, when some traveller visits them, to choose a place where the people have never heard of Bahá'u'lláh and give the guests the priceless privilege of carrying His Message to them. We had been at another cornerstone-laying ceremony in a village two miles away, as the crow flies, from what was to become Rúhíyyih Khánúm's own village and which went by the simple name of "Jungle Village", or Kadagrahara, a hamlet of about twenty families, most of whom earned their living as laundry men and were almost entirely illiterate. As we waited for our jeep to come back from taking some friends to their homes after the meeting, Rúhíyyih Khánúm began to get uneasy. It was well after dark, a full moon was flooding the night, people were returning to their homes and she was afraid her village would go to sleep before she got there. It was decided that most of us would go on foot the two miles over the fields and through the woods to "Jungle Village". In her peasant sari of red and blue checks, Rúhíyyih Khánúm walked rapidly ahead of us; beside her strode the very tall Professor of cinematography at the University of Bangalore, who is one of the most active of our Bahá'í teachers. Rúhíyyih Khánúm told him she would be happy to say a few words, but that she had never "opened" a village in her life and did not know what to say or do. "Oh, no!", said the Professor, "this is your village and you are the one who is going to do it." Rúhíyyih Khánúm used to often tell the friends this story and say, jokingly, she felt thoroughly intimidated, and so she obeyed. As Rúhíyyih Khánúm wrote down afterwards some of her impressions of this memorable occasion, I have asked her permission to quote them here.

"We arrived in the dark village to the sound of furiously barking dogs. Here and there a candle-lighted doorway showed the people in their humble homes. A mud-plastered, stone house, the whitewash peeling off and leaving soft reddish mottlings on the cream-coloured walls, had a door flanked by two huge stone slabs, like refectory tables, and at the ends of these were two tall thin slabs standing upright. I was told to sit on this bench, and curled up, cross-legged, against the wall. Our kerosene pressure lamp was hung up on one of the stone poles. Before us were two immense palm trees framing the clear, almost full moon. Gradually the villagers gathered, bringing clean straw mats for people to sit on, men, women and children, mothers with babies in their arms. It was a village of what used to be 'untouchables', labourers of the lowest caste. One must remember that this kind of teaching is entirely new to me. I told them that I had heard in India that the sacred water of the Ganges is carried away to be shared by all who desire to drink of it, that in this spirit we had come to them to share the message of this day, and so on. They listened intently; one man's face held my eyes as he concentrated on every word. After me others spoke, including the son of the Headman of another village in which I had laid the cornerstone. He is a truly beautiful boy, getting his Master's degree in physics, though his father is almost illiterate. A fellow student, taking the same degree and also a Bahá'í, was with us. The village-teacher (meaning the National Assembly appointed teacher for this area) also spoke. His fine dark face and chiselled features, his

grey hair, the gestures of his long, sensitive hands were a sight to watch in the moonlight. He lacked all his front teeth. But the dignity, a certain selflessness, the deep conviction, the wonderful oratorical powers of these people are so great that blemishes are scarcely noted.

“Analyzing what happened, it amounts to this: we told them that all religions expect the Promised One, quoting Krishna particularly (the Hindu Bahá’í teacher did this); gave them a brief history of the Faith, pointed out the needs and dangers of the world today; gave them the principles and more of the teachings (we must have spoken an hour and a half); told them something of the Faith abroad; demonstrated the answer it holds for the future of a peaceful, united world; and asked them if they did not wish to become Bahá’ís. Twenty-one, including two women, said they did. I found that the man who had listened so intently was their Headman; he also became a Bahá’í . . . All of these were enrolled and then we left them, with warm feelings on both sides, and drove off, in the over-crowded jeep, over impossible dirt tracks, in the moonlight.

“Remembering the years of intellectual argument to produce one Bahá’í in the West, the books they had to read, the interview with the Local Assembly, etc., I was simply flabbergasted and astounded. I knew they did this here and in other ‘mass teaching’ areas, but it still stunned me. I try to think why it is a real thing and not a sham, which, intellectually, it seems to be, but to all one’s deeper instincts it is not. This is my deduction: The Bahá’í Faith is the Truth; Truth is a living reality, not a figment of the imagination. Supposing one went to people who still believe the world is a flat plane and the sky a dome fitted above it. One could, presumably, in one really good lesson, present the evidence for its being a sphere in space by citing its curvature, the rising of the sun and stars and other simple phenomena. If the listeners were intelligent they would have no real reason for not accepting the truth as presented to them. Why should they argue against it, particularly as a sound mind senses the truth of an argument. Very much the same simple logic and instinctive reaction takes place in these uncorrupted people’s minds.

“There is another example which occurs to me. If the fruit on a tree is really ripe it falls to the ground after a slight shake; it is all ready to fall. Shaking it fifty times has no more effect than shaking it once, because all the factors are there for it to fall. If the fruit is green, or had died on the bough and hence stuck to the tree by dead wood, shaking it has no result. The fruit here is ripe, a blessing and mystery to do with God and not us, and it just falls at a touch. The proof of the reality of this spiritual acceptance of the Faith is the extraordinarily fine Bahá’ís and teachers that are the very cream of this kind of conversion.”

On March 29th, we arrived in Mysore. The one week of our visit in that city and Mercara was indeed a very memorable one, packed with wonderful teaching experiences. The first night in the village of Maligere about 1,000 people gathered and listened with rapture to the wondrous tale, the tale that men have listened to since the dawn of history, the story of God’s love for man and how He sends His chosen Messengers to nourish our hearts, reform our lives, redeem our souls, and lead us on. On paper it all seems so easy, but who can describe the hours of night-driving over dangerous, almost impossible roads; the arrival dead tired, in the early hours of the morning, back at our hotel, emptied of every drop of reserve strength. Yet this was a pattern repeated over and over again.

I marvelled at Rúhíyyih Khánúm’s powers of seemingly endless endurance. The following day, on our way to the village of Lakshmisagar, miles before reaching the village we saw a poster on a specially made arch welcoming Rúhíyyih Khánúm. In the centre of the village a tent had been erected, decorated with photographs of all the Prophets and holy saints of divers religions. The musical entertainment was truly fabulous.

The next gathering was most wonderful. This was over 70 miles away, deep in the heart of a jungle in a tribal area. These jungles are the strangest I have ever seen, interspersed with immense tufts of thick, almost dry bamboo trees. We were told wild elephants and tigers abounded in this area. Matakere, the name of the settlement we visited, had been recently developed by the government for the purpose of educating and civilizing these primitive tribal people. Over 1,000 small, shy, but eager persons were gathered in a large field outside the village, amongst whom we could easily forget that we were in India, so different were they in their appearance and in their ways. Chairs for the guests had been placed under an awning of branches erected on saplings to protect us from the sun. The audience gathered in front, sitting on the ground, the women, and some men and children deftly stitching large leaves they had gathered into plates and bowls, held together with fine pins of splinters, so they could receive the food later to be shared with all and provided by the Bahá’ís. The men had long, thick hair and wore large earrings and little clothing. Many of the women were beautiful. A young man, who was the Government Welfare Officer for the district, with the help of a few other officials and some of the Bahá’ís, was largely responsible for the excellent arrangements for this meeting. Six shy little girls had been taught a prayer by one dear Bahá’í teacher only the day before the meeting. They recited it perfectly by memory. After a brief introduction, Rúhíyyih Khánúm spoke to them about Bahá’u’lláh. The story of His life, presented by her in very simple language, left this receptive and strange audience completely spellbound. The jungle people sat in absolute silence, their shining black eyes only moving from the face of the speaker to that of the interpreter. When Amatu’l-Bahá told them that Bahá’u’lláh had come for them just as much as He had come for others, and that He

loved them even more than He loved many of the others because their hearts were purer and ready to receive Him, one could feel the joy and excitement vibrant in their midst. An old man with long, matted, grey hair stood up and with a trembling voice said, "Friends, for many generations we lived in the jungle like animals. No one cared for us. No one loved us. In the course of the last year our Government has come to seek us. They have built us houses and have taught us how to grow our food. They have opened a school for our children. Tonight our joy is complete. The doors of heaven have opened. This message of love, which is a true nourishment for our deprived and longing hearts, has been brought to us by this beloved mother. We should not hesitate to accept it. As a sign of our gratitude we should spread it throughout our area." After him a number of the Bahá'í teachers also spoke. Over 200 accepted. They were members of three different clans: the honey-gatherers, the basket-weavers, and the wood-cutters; although basically they are all from the same root, they each have their distinct customs and taboos. Such tribal people are outside the caste system, belonging to a different and even lower order of society than any within the vast caste system itself. A group of Rajasthan settlers, living in the village, greeted us warmly, but proudly refused to join the meeting and sit with the tribesmen. As night fell, a group of men, in the circle of the kerosene pressure lamp, danced one of their tribal dances for us. When at last the formal part of the meeting had ended, one of the local Bahá'í teachers quite simply asked if any of them, believing what they had heard to be the truth for this day, wished to join us. The young Government Welfare Officer said he did. This is not an unusual occurrence; the people of India are intensely independent, evidently believing firmly that a man's religious convictions are his own business and responsibility. It is not only the ignorant and uneducated who are enkindled, like dry tinder, at the touch of the flame of truth incarnate in the teachings of this Faith. He then, with one of the local school teachers who expressed the view that she felt this was exactly what was good for these people, and also accepted it for herself, together with some of our Bahá'í teachers, passed among the throng of visitors, taking down the names of those who desired to become Bahá'ís. As many of the tribesmen had to return on foot over 10 miles to their homes in the dense jungle, a simple dinner of boiled rice, lentil sauce with chili and curry, and some sweet broth made of sugar and water had been prepared. The people sat in long rows on the ground, the leaf plates and bowls they had made before them. It was astonishing to see that the bowls, filled with the hot, sweet drink, did not leak at all, so perfectly were they made. In the middle of one of the long lines sat Rúhíyyih Khánum, cross-legged in her sari, a borrowed leaf plate before her. Although she could not exchange a word with the pretty tribal women beside her, she was obviously blissfully happy. She told me afterwards that she was most interested to see how some of the women, with no reference to the opinions of their men folks (who were seated elsewhere), said their names should be inscribed, while others, obviously close friends sitting next to them, put their noses up in the air and would have nothing of it. All over India we witnessed this; the choice in spiritual matters seems to be purely individual. Each man's soul for himself.

The valley in which we sat for our meeting and our meals was vibrating with the spirit of love and oneness. Coming out of such areas, where the roads were terrible and all but impassable, where every few yards it seemed the jeep must turn over and facilities for comfort were non-existent, we would be physically exhausted, but spiritually rejuvenated, our hearts filled with deep ecstasy. This must be why the beloved Master said He longed to go on foot, travelling to all parts of the world to carry the message of His Blessed Father to its peoples. To me it seemed as if the beloved wife of His precious grandson had now fulfilled this deep longing on His part.

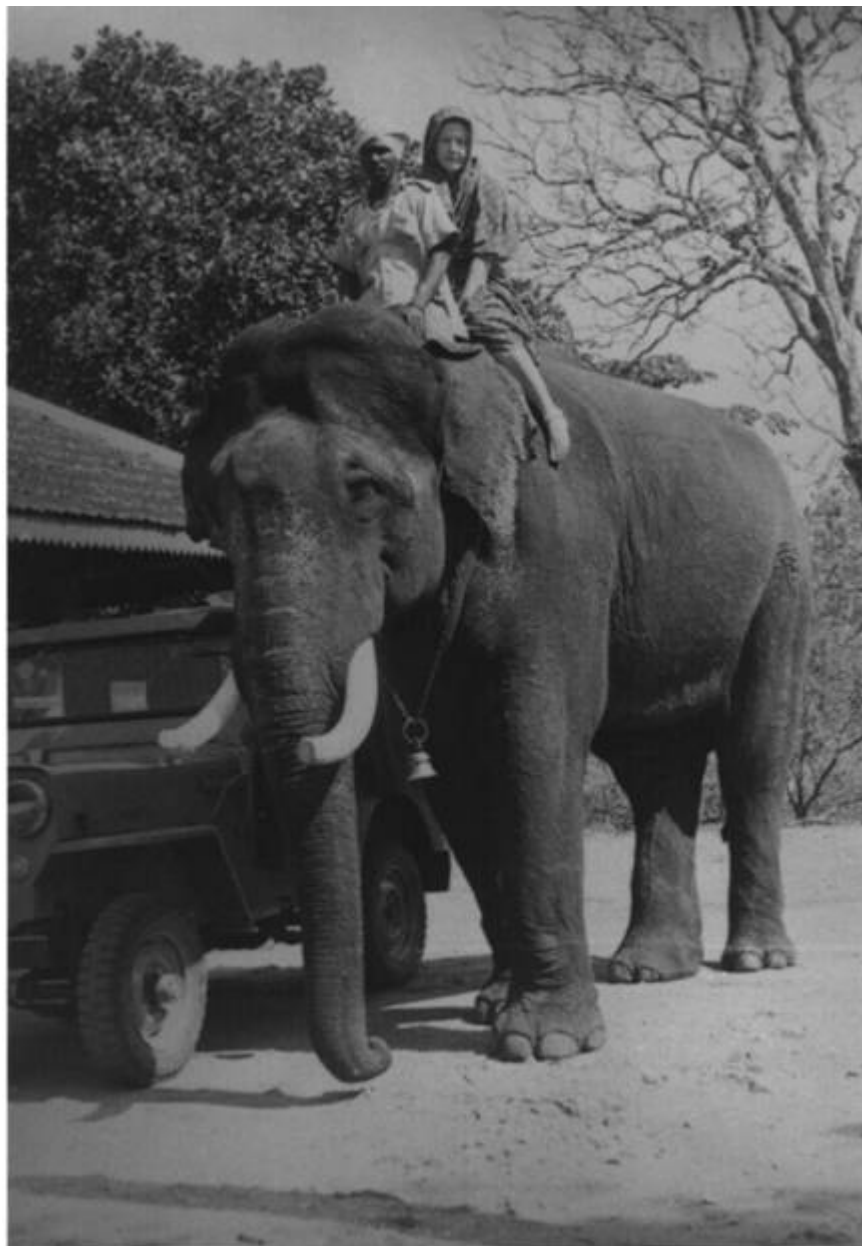
In the village of Kammayakhalli, though the first rains of the season had kept the people very busy all day, over 300 people gathered to receive the precious Word of God. The next day on our way to the town of Mercara, the capital of Coorg, we stopped at one of the Tibetan colonies in India. Over 35,000 of these refugees have been given a haven in India and accepted by its generous Government. The Tibetans, inhabitants of the roof of the world, are a religious and proud people; many have fled from their beloved mountains to neighbouring lands and are seeking to start life over again. The camps in this area, situated on the hot plains of south India, have been a trying if hospitable home for them. Many died in the beginning from the heat and their incapacity to become acclimatized.



A Bahá'í wedding in Mysore



Taking a rest, Mysore area



RIDING BAREBACK IN A SARI

Amatu'l-Bahá sits behind a mahout on a work elephant in the jungles of Mysore



Village meeting in Chatigoon, Madhya Pradesh, Shirin Boman translating Amatu'-Baha's talk to the villages

Some of the Bahá'í teachers who were accompanying us to Mercara had tried to establish a friendly contact with these exiles, except the Lama (priest) who they knew was away. We went to meet another one, a refined, intelligent, obviously highly-educated man. He welcomed us to his shack and served us tea most courteously. Two snow-white pigeons and two snow-white rabbits wandered freely about the earth floor. A few obviously personal treasures, statues, photographs of the Dalai Lama and others, as well as representations of the Lord Buddha, were in this humble room. Rúhiyyih Khánúm was only able to speak to him through two interpreters—English to Hindi, Hindi to Tibetan. He asked why we had come to see him and Rúhiyyih Khánúm replied, with tears in her eyes, “Just to express our friendship and deep sympathy because you are exiles from your native land.” The language barrier made it very difficult to convey any idea of what we Bahá'ís really believe, but the warm human contact was there. A stillness hung over the settlement, in spite of the welcoming smiles on the faces of the women and children, still dressed in their Tibetan fashion. Around the places where they gather for worship, a forest of tall poles stood from which fluttered thousands of prayers printed on paper; they believe that as the wind stirs the prayer flags, the prayers are “prayed”, so to speak. Devoutness and superstition, exile and sorrow—it was all very touching and depressing. Rúhiyyih Khánúm suggested that the Bahá'ís of Mysore hold a World Religion Day meeting, inviting representatives of all Faiths to join and give speeches on their respective religions, including representatives of these Tibetans. The Bahá'í teachings on the essential oneness of all religions could also be presented by a capable Bahá'í speaker. The Mysore Bahá'ís promised to do this.

The Coorgi people, a distinct community in India, consider themselves racially different from other Indians. This is easy to believe when one notes their paler skins, lighter hair, often green or hazel eyes and entirely different way of wearing their saris. They are an educated, progressive, well-to-do community. They have always lived a secluded life in their picturesque highlands, not intermarrying with others, and have their own language. The Bahá'í Faith had not yet reached them. Recently a young man from Coorg, studying in Mysore University, had accepted the Faith, and through him this meeting, the first of its kind held in Mercara, had been arranged. A very receptive audience of over 200 welcomed Amatu'l-Bahá. She started her talk with a fascinating old fairy tale, which later became one of the favourite stories of many of the teachers when seeking to give a vivid picture of what the Bahá'í Faith stands for in the world. There was a fickle young Prince who would not settle down and marry. His mother, the Queen, was very worried, for it was high time he chose a bride and thought about the future of the kingdom; so she went to his Fairy Godmother and asked her what she should do. Don't worry, said the Fairy Godmother, I will attend to everything. The next day, when the Prince went to walk in the palace gardens, he found, one after another, twelve beautiful Princesses; each one had a special trait of character that

was so distinct he could name them by it, so one he called Truth, and one he called Beauty, and one he called Virtue, and one he called Wisdom, and so on. He was so enchanted by each one that for the life of him he could not make up his mind which he should marry. The Queen was very upset by this and she went again to the Fairy Godmother and said: Everything is much worse, now he is in love with twelve girls and will never marry! Next morning when the Prince went out into the gardens, he found a strange new Princess; all the twelve were gone. Gradually he began to notice that this one girl had the characteristics of all the others, and he fell in love with her and she became his bride. The Fairy Godmother had taken the lovely Princess from the neighbouring kingdom and made a Princess out of each of her virtues; when the Prince's heart was completely ensnared, she rolled them all back into one, and they lived happily ever after. Rúḥíyyih Khánum, with a smile, then told the gathering that this was very much like the Story of Man, symbolized in the person of the undecided Prince; the religions of the past were the twelve charming Princesses, and the Bahá'í Faith, as the essence of the reality of all the other religions, was the one for this day. Mankind has now grown up; it is time for us to think of the future and settle down and marry. The audience was so deeply touched and attracted by her talk—a great deal of which was of a more sophisticated nature—that they did not want to part from their delightful speaker. She was invited to the home of one of Coorg's most distinguished representatives, General Cariapa, where she continued talking about the Faith with other friends of his. Many people spoke of their respect for and admiration of the Faith and requested the Bahá'ís of Mysore to follow up this meeting. I am certain that when more Coorgis accept these teachings they will bring special gifts and capacities of their own to enrich the Indian Bahá'í community.

The happy ending to our Mysore week was on the last day of our stay, when Rúḥíyyih Khánum conducted the marriage ceremony of two of the devoted pioneers of Mysore and Devlali. A large and happy group of guests were present, including the devoted pioneers to Mahé, Knights of Bahá'u'lláh Mr. and Mrs. K. H. Mojgani, who have remained for over 10 years in this difficult and very backward territory.

After the wedding, on the evening of April 5th, we drove to Ootacamund, commonly called Ooty, in the Nilgiri Hills, the queen of the hill stations of the South. Over 7,000 feet above sea level, glittering like a pearl in the midst of green mountains and many waterfalls, it was like an oasis after the hot plains. A devoted Persian family had pioneered to Ooty some years before and had brought into the Faith a number of tribesmen—the Nilgiri district is primarily a tribal area. With the very tight schedule ahead of us we had only one full day there. That day was spent visiting three different tribal villages, the most outstanding of which was a small settlement of the strange, ancient and almost extinct Toda tribe, of which only about 500 adults remain. The true origin of the Todas is still unknown to anthropologists. Some people say they are a vestige of Alexander the Great's Greek soldiers who have lived for centuries, comparatively isolated from the rest of the world, on their undulating plateau high above the plains. They live in beautifully made beehive-like houses, which, alas, the Government is now encouraging them to exchange for modern houses in the town. In their isolation they were a happy people and lived in a paradise of their own until recently, when they were contaminated by a terrible disease, introduced to them by people from the plains, which almost wiped out the entire tribe. The Indian Government came to their rescue with special medical care and has stopped the horrifying death rate. Now for the first time in years, children are again being born. The Toda men are over six feet tall with attractive athletic bodies, long curly hair and beards. Their women are also tall and very handsome, with long black hair divided into dozens of tube-like curls hanging over their shoulders like a Victorian belle's.

When on that afternoon Rúḥíyyih Khánum spoke to them about the Faith, it was the first time the name of Bahá'u'lláh had been mentioned to them. Half-a-dozen serious-looking men squatted on one side, and about the same number of women on the other, and listened intently, but no sign of any reaction could be seen on their faces. These people are naturally afraid of strangers and do not trust any outsider easily. They have preserved an ancient and distinctive set of customs, a language, music, and religion of their own. Rúḥíyyih Khánum asked them if they knew what a famous tribe they were, and told them that years ago, as a young girl in her own country, she had known of them and wanted to meet them but never dreamed that day would come. She urged them to be proud of themselves, their past, and their traditions, and then, very simply, tried to convey to them something of what Bahá'u'lláh's Message of Oneness, of unity in diversity, not unity in sameness, means to us all in this new, shrinking world we are living in. She said she was sure they had their special gifts to bring to the Bahá'í family of nations. When the short talk was ended (the problem of translation being no small one as the interpreter only knew a few words of their language), they obligingly danced, and sang their extraordinarily strange and ancient songs, and then left with the promise of more such gatherings. The Toda who had arranged the meeting invited us into his home (the door of these houses is one yard high and one has to crawl in on all fours), and offered us coffee. When leaving, Rúḥíyyih Khánum told him how important it was for him and his people to accept the Truth for this day and that his station would be unique, and he would go down in history as the first Toda Bahá'í, the first of his tribe, and generally explained the importance of being the first in anything; he did not show any sign of emotion at all. As Rúḥíyyih Khánum said afterwards, it was like talking to a wall. The next morning, before our departure from Ooty, this man came and sat quietly while other contacts asked questions. When everyone left, he went to our dear Bahá'í pioneer and said, "You have a card where you record

the names of people when they become Bahá'ís. Write my name down now; I want to be a Bahá'í." There is a revealing and interesting sequel to this event—an historic one, as it added a new name, and a distinguished one, to the roll call of tribes enlisted under the banner of Bahá'u'lláh. Many months later, at our last meeting in Gwalior, a letter dictated by this same Toda Bahá'í was handed to Rúhíyyih Khánum; in it he expressed his regret that he could not come and see her before she left India and asked her not to forget him.

In the 36 hours of her stay in Ooty, beloved Amatu'l-Bahá was instrumental in bringing into the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh not only a member of the Toda tribe, but also one of another tribe, the Kota, and in conveying the Message to hundreds of people.

From Ooty to Coimbatore, where we spent the next night, is a distance of only 54 miles. As the altitude drops 7,000 feet, one drives through constantly changing, most picturesque scenery. The following day we flew to Cochin, the famous port in south India, in the beautiful State of Kerala, reminiscent, with its coconut palms, of a Pacific Island paradise. Rúhíyyih Khánum twice met with the friends of Cochin and Ernakulam, encouraging them to teach. She also stressed the supreme importance and power of unity and love amongst the believers.

On April 9th, the friends hired a large ferry boat for Rúhíyyih Khánum; with everyone in the happiest mood, we sailed to one of the nearby islands for a public meeting. There are over sixteen islands around Cochin, in most of which there are Bahá'ís. As our boat approached an island, the local Bahá'ís, standing on the wharf, would wave and motion us to stop. Pretty girls in their colourful saris, young men and shy children, all would join us in the boat. Two and a half hours of this pleasant and happy trip were spent in singing and laughing, while a serious group in a corner was busy teaching the Faith. The clear blue sea, patched here and there with emerald green islands of coconut palms and colourful and flowering shrubs gave one a feeling of being transported to a dream world. Eventually we reached our destination, the island of Nayar Ambalam. We walked for half-an-hour, going through the palm plantations, crossing slippery old bridges, until we reached the schoolhouse where the meeting took place. The moment Rúhíyyih Khánum approached, a group of pretty young girls formed two rows, and as she walked through the line, they carpeted the ground under her feet and showered her head with fresh flowers and rose petals. Over 1,000 people were present at this meeting and they listened eagerly to Rúhíyyih Khánum expounding the teachings of the Faith. The chairman of this meeting was a very well-educated man, the Headmaster of the high school in a neighbouring island. In his opening remarks he very apologetically said that he neither knew what the Bahá'í Faith was nor who the distinguished guest was whom he was to introduce nor where she came from. He thought the only reason he had been asked to chair this meeting was because he spoke English well! This same man, after listening to Rúhíyyih Khánum's talk, was so transformed and completely won over by what he heard that he would not leave the friends until he was accepted then and there as a Bahá'í. It was a wonderful example to us of the brilliance and dedication with which Indian Bahá'í teachers spread the message of Bahá'u'lláh as we watched the star-teacher of the South, deep in animated conversation with the Headmaster, oblivious of the intense heat in the over-crowded hall. Over 50 people accepted the Cause that night. The Bahá'í youth of one of the islands were in charge of the entertainment and acted in a delightful modern Indian comedy. No one evinced any desire to go home and the meeting lasted until almost midnight. We were invited to spend the night in the modest home of a non-Bahá'í fisherman, whose wife graciously received us, fed us, and gave us their best bedroom and their best beds.



Over 1,000 attendants at a meeting on Nayar Amblem Island, Ernakulam District, Kerala, South India, 9 April 1964



Nayar Amblem Island, Ernakulam District. Left to right: Shirin Boman, Amatu'l-Bahá and Violette Nakhjavani



Amatu'l-Bahá giving a lecture in the Mascot Hotel, Trivandrum



Sight-seeing in South India

The following day we flew to Trivandrum and met with some of the Bahá'ís there and with students and others at a reception. Rúhíyyih Khánúm encouraged them to teach and serve more actively in Kerala State, one of the most progressive in India. She had accepted the invitation of Dr. Kanyar, in Mangadnedu, to spend the night in their home—one of two Bahá'í homes in India to be thus honoured—and had a lovely visit with this devoted family of believers. The next day, however, instead of continuing our journey, we were obliged to cancel our programme and stay a week in Trivandrum because Rúhíyyih Khánúm was ill in bed and too exhausted to travel anywhere.

On April 19th, the Bahá'ís of Madras had the privilege of hearing Rúhíyyih Khánúm; she was to fly from there to the Ceylonese Bahá'í Convention. A number of the Bahá'ís from Karikal came to meet her and requested her to make a trip to Karikal, which she promised to do later on.

CHAPTER VI

From April 20th to May 7th, Amatu'l-Bahá was away from what she now called her "beloved India", attending first the Convention in Ceylon [now Sri Lanka] and then going on to participate in the first Conventions of Malaysia and Thailand as the official representative of the World Centre. In Ceylon, in addition to attending the Convention in Colombo, she and a whole bus load of Bahá'ís went to a village meeting 50 miles outside that city. Rúhíyyih Khánum considered this one of the great events of her life—first because it was her first Buddhist village in Ceylon and second because, in walking over one mile to get there through a pouring wet jungle, she (and we) got a number of leeches on us, which had to be dislodged with salt so that the vicious sucking mouths would not remain in the flesh and fester. Carelessness in this respect leaves long, itching sores. She told the Bahá'ís that all her life she had wanted to go through a leech-infested jungle and now, at last, she had! She also gave a lecture to a selected public audience, invited by the Bahá'ís, and addressed an informal gathering at a reception for her in the home of one of Ceylon's outstanding women, Lady Evelyn de Soysa. As we were still packing at 5 o'clock in the morning to catch our plane for Malaysia a few hours later, it seemed utterly impossible that we had been there only three days.

From April 23rd to April 28th we were in the capital of the Malaysian Federation, Kuala Lumpur. The first Convention of this vast region of diverse inhabitants was a source of great inspiration and happiness to all. The rulers of this newly-formed Federation are often at a loss in face of the gigantic problem of uniting the widely diversified Malaysians, Chinese, Tamils, Ibans, and Malayan Aborigines, the Senoi, as well as the Dyaks, into one nation. Yet here in the Bahá'í Convention we saw representatives from all these communities, setting an example to the whole country, demonstrating that true unity is possible only if a common love, as great as our love for Bahá'u'lláh, prevails in our hearts. The participation of Amatu'l-Bahá was a blessing to all the friends. Her encouraging talks created a greater determination in their hearts to serve the Cause they love so dearly.

In Bangkok, Thailand, she addressed a selected audience at a banquet in her honour and attended a reception for her at the Israeli Ambassador and Madame Ilzar's home; most of the diplomatic corps were present. In Bangkok the presence of the Hand of the Cause of God Dr. R. Muhájir not only added to the joy and success of the Convention but was providential. Amatu'l-Bahá had been taken violently ill just as we were to catch our plane for Bangkok; I was afraid I would not be able to get her there at all. Because of this, she had to stay in bed and miss the first day of the Convention, but due to the fortunate presence of Dr. Muhájir, she was able to hand over to him the message from the Universal House of Justice announcing the goals of the Nine Year Plan, which he read to the friends.

On May 7th, we left beautiful Bangkok and its dear friends and returned to India, this time to Calcutta to arrange our trip to Nepal and Sikkim. May 12th we arrived in Kathmandu, the capital of the kingdom of Nepal, which lies embosomed in the Himalayas. The city is full of beautiful temples and buildings with exquisitely carved wood and glittering pagodas, belonging to both Hindus and Buddhists. The Bahá'í Faith entered Nepal at the beginning of the Ten Year Crusade and was warmly received. Because the original pioneer had to return to Sikkim, direct contact with the friends had been lost. With great joy, through the efforts of our dear Shirin Boman, who was with us, we were able to find them. Rúhíyyih Khánum, through the tremendous warmth of her love and encouragement, revived their enthusiasm and fired them with renewed determination. We were greatly impressed by the calibre of this community—almost all young, well-educated men, deeply informed in the Faith and attached to it. We had permission for only one week in Nepal and could only see the friends in one other town. Promises of more literature and more visiting teachers were given. The fact that one of the goals of the new Nine Year Plan was an independent National Spiritual Assembly for Nepal infused them with great enthusiasm, hope, and determination. During our stay we had tea and a pleasant visit with Mr. and Mrs. Eldor, the Israeli *Chargé d'affaires* there.

On May 18th we returned to Calcutta to prepare for our trip to Sikkim. Sikkim is an independent Kingdom, with a Maharaja as its constitutional ruler; it is closely linked to India by treaty. Movement in and out of Sikkim is very tightly controlled. It was by special intervention of the Indian Government, and a series of minor miracles that propel the Bahá'ís forward, that we eventually were able to enter Sikkim on May 20th.

From the plains of India to the foothills of the Himalayas, where Gangtok, the small capital of Sikkim, is situated, is a drive of 70 miles with never more than 200 yards of straight road at a time. This road goes through one of the loveliest scenic regions in this part of the world. Our journey became even more interesting and exhausting when, at its very beginning, our jeep broke down and a friendly military police officer stopped an eight-ton truck and installed us, bag and baggage, in its cab. We were grateful for our saris, a costume that lends itself to modesty on all occasions. We were also highly amused to discover that we were transporting 85 live sheep with us in the rear.

Kedarnath Pradhan, the back-bone of the Bahá'í work in Sikkim, is of Nepalese origin, his ancestors having settled in Sikkim several generations ago. At the beginning of the Ten Year Crusade he pioneered to Nepal and established the Cause there. At present he is back in Sikkim, fathering this wonderful young community which is situated in a location that, in years to come, may make it instrumental in establishing the Faith in Tibet. The Tibetans are close kin to the people of Sikkim. A very outstanding feature of the Sikkim-ese is their women folk, who are unusually outspoken, courageous, independent, and influential. The chairman of the Local Spiritual Assembly of Gangtok was a charming young lady; a remarkable number of the believers are women, many of whom accepted the Faith independently of their husbands. In several meetings in Gangtok with the friends and their close contacts, Rúhíyyih Khánúm emphasized the universality of the Cause, encouraging them to teach more actively and hasten the day when Sikkim might have its own National Spiritual Assembly, and thus play a greater part in the World Community of our Faith.

On the morning of May 22nd, Amatu'l-Bahá, accompanied by Mrs. Boman and myself, had a very pleasant, informal audience with the Maharaja and the Maharani of Sikkim. Mr. Pradhan informed us that it is the custom of the Sikkimese to present as a mark of respect a special kind of white scarf, called khadas, to an important person, particularly, of course, to the ruler. We were able to purchase some of these in the bazaar; the older they are the more highly prized. Ours were of soft silk brocade. When we were ushered into the presence of the Maharaja, in the garden, he came forward most courteously and informally to receive Rúhíyyih Khánúm; we duly offered him and the Maharani our scarves, which he took from us and immediately returned. This is a mark of great esteem; if he does not return them, the honour to the guest is less. One wonders how many western guests pay him the delicate compliment of following the custom of his country. He gave the impression of being surprised that we should have known of it. In the course of this visit, in answering their Royal Highness's questions, Rúhíyyih Khánúm gave a brief explanation of the basic principles of the Faith. The Maharani of Sikkim, who is a lovely and intelligent young American, told us that she had heard of the Bahá'í Faith in the States through a Bahá'í friend, and they both recalled the gift of Bahá'í books given to them by Mr. Pradhan, which she said she had read. It was indeed a very significant milestone in the history of the Cause that Rúhíyyih Khánúm was received so graciously by the sovereign Head of this State. The State religion is Buddhism, but there are also many Hindus, mostly in the capital. There is an attitude on the part of both rulers and people of real religious tolerance.

In the afternoon of this same day we went to Pakyong, a small village 12 miles away from Gangtok, the centre of most of the teaching activities in Sikkim. The wildness, as well as the beauty of our road was indescribable, the jeep crawling over narrow suspension bridges, through boulder-strewn mountain streams, up and down precipitate muddy tracks. A large number of believers from all the neighbouring localities were anxiously waiting for their most loved guest at the home of Mr. Pradhan. They welcomed her with garlands of fresh flowers and the traditional white scarves, which they placed about her neck. In the meeting which followed, they listened to her heartwarming words of love and encouragement. Some of the friends seemed to have stayed awake all night long, as every now and then, in the big hospitable wooden house, we could hear whispering and hushed laughter. In the morning we learned that several keen inquirers had stayed on and listened with interest to the Bahá'í teachers until the early hours of the morning. That morning of May 23rd, the anniversary of the Declaration of the Báb, a spirit of festivity and joy prevailed in the whole house. The spacious sitting-room of the Pradhan family was continuously filled all day with crowds of happy and excited visitors. It started at 7:00 A.M. and eventually ended at midnight. The first group of visitors came from the mountain village of Panche Basti, about 4 miles away. This is an all-Bahá'í village where the villagers themselves have erected a school and engaged a Bahá'í teacher to teach their children. On the previous night a delegation of men had been sent to Pakyong to invite Rúhíyyih Khánúm to their village. They were told that as her time and strength were both very limited, and all the Bahá'ís were coming to meet her in Pakyong the next day, it would be better if they could also come to the Pakyong meeting. The ladies of Panche Basti, not at all satisfied with this decision, arrived in the morning to further urge the beloved guest to come to their village. It was certainly most interesting to see how these simple village women put forward, with determination and three hours of vigorous arguments, the reasons why Rúhíyyih Khánúm should go to their village. When Amatu'l-Bahá, fully conscious of the impossibility of this trip on that day, promised to allocate, on a subsequent trip, more time to Sikkim when she would definitely go to their village, they answered: "Oh, but we have many old folk who may not live long enough and may not see you again." When she said: "But you can all come here today and see me", they answered: "Oh, but we have erected beautiful arches that we cannot bring here." When she said: "I am not well and cannot climb up these high hills and mountains and return in one day", they said, with touching love and affection: "Oh, but we will carry you all the way up in our arms, and you can sleep with us." Eventually Rúhíyyih Khánúm won this loving battle, and immediately a young boy was sent to inform all the others to come and attend the meeting in Pakyong. This was an all-day celebration with several talks by Rúhíyyih Khánúm, music and dancing, and many lovely songs sung by the ladies.

In the course of her talks she spoke of several visions experienced by her mother, Mrs. May Maxwell. In one vision she saw an old man with a white beard, flowing hair, and long robe, standing near the seashore. As a magnet she was drawn to Him and felt the holiness of His Presence. When she came face to face with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, on her first pilgrimage to ‘Akká, she instantly recognized the face of the Man of her vision, Who was none other but the beloved Master; she fell at His feet and lost consciousness. In her girlhood she had a dream in which she seemed to be out in space, looking down on the face of the earth, and she saw great seals covering the earth which suddenly broke one after the other, and a word written on the world, of which she could make out only two letters—B and H. Years later she knew this must have been “Bahá”, standing for Bahá’u’lláh’s Name. In yet another dream, as a very young child, the light from the sun grew more and more dazzling until no one could stand it; all the family were forced to go indoors and close the shutters, but still the blinding sunlight increased. They hid under their bed covers, but still the light grew until no one could bear it. When her mother came into her room and opened the curtains, little May cried out in pain. The light in her dream had been so real that her eyes were affected and she had to remain in a dark room all day. These strange dreams and visions prepared Mrs. Maxwell to accept this great Faith. From them she was convinced of the return of Christ in this day. This was why she instantly accepted this Faith from the moment she heard of it.

That afternoon Amatu’l-Bahá, barefooted and happy, accompanied the Bahá’ís part of the way up the steep hills leading to their village of Panche Busty. Reluctantly we bade them goodbye, Rúhíyyih Khánum singing “Alláh-u-Abhá” as the African friends do, and these new friends joining in. Their melodious voices could be heard singing their farewells a long time after we lost sight of them, their song rippling over the twilight-filled valleys and green mountains. Sikkim is one of the beautiful spots on this planet; its people are like precious gems, radiant and joyous. The next morning, amidst the tears and sighs of our hostess and her mother, who could not bear to separate from their beloved guest, we left Pakyong and returned to Gangtok. This was the second Bahá’í home Rúhíyyih Khánum stayed in during our entire trip—not for want of invitations but because she could rest better at night in the privacy of a hotel room, after the exhausting effort of each day. That evening, several of the high officials of the Government, who happened to know of the Faith, were brought to meet Rúhíyyih Khánum, and an informal and informative discussion took place. Thus our very happy five-day visit to Sikkim came to an end and we returned to Calcutta on May 26th.

CHAPTER VII

The sad death of India's outstanding Prime Minister, Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru, interrupted Rúhíyyih Khánum's public programme, which had to be cancelled because of national mourning. A special meeting with the National Spiritual Assembly had been arranged to coincide with the Calcutta visit and at this Rúhíyyih Khánum was able to give a report of her trip to date and suggestions for following up various projects of particular promise.

Amatu'l-Bahá's health at this time was not too satisfactory. When not engaged in meetings, she remained in bed. It was only the prospective joy of seeing the eager friends in the villages which really gave her enough strength to move on. When, on June 2nd, we left for the State of Orissa, she was very weak and not well at all. In spite of her ill health, she gave so much of her wonderful spirit of devotion that one could visibly feel the regeneration of the souls in this vast area. Some teaching activities had been recently started in this State, particularly in the south, but it was almost an untouched field. In the course of her two weeks' visit, many times Rúhíyyih Khánum commented on the extraordinary receptivity of the people there. She developed so much love and admiration for them that she referred several times to Orissa as her own baby. In Puri district she visited three different villages where many Bahá'ís and their friends from neighbouring villages had gathered. In one of them, Taraboi, a special Sandiyana (like a pavilion) had been erected and decorated with leaves and flags. As these were still the special days of mourning for the late Prime Minister, Rúhíyyih Khánum paid homage to him, saying that he had not only been loved and admired in India, but throughout the entire world because of his constant efforts to promote peace. In speaking to them about the role of the Bahá'í Faith in this day, she recounted one of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's beautiful teaching stories which she often used to illustrate her point. There was once a king who had three sons and when they grew of age, he sent them out into the world to seek fame and fortune, telling them to return to him when they had made a place for themselves in the world. One went east and one went west and one went north. After many years had passed, each of these gifted sons had become a king of a distant land and each, without the knowledge of the other, decided it was time to go home and show his father what he had become. So each one gathered an impressive army about him and set off for the old king's palace. The three young kings arrived at the same time, each coming from a different direction. When one saw the other's armies approaching the king's palace he was afraid for his father's safety and immediately advanced with his soldiers to do battle. Each son reacted in the same way and a mighty fight was started. The old king, who had recognized his three sons at the heads of their armies, cried out to them saying, "Do you not recognize each other? You are brothers, you are all my sons, stop fighting each other!" When they heard the words of their father and paused to look at each other, each recognized his own brothers and they were united and happy and went before the king, their father. The moral of this story is, 'Abdu'l-Bahá said, that God is the King and the sons were like the different religions of the world, all brothers, all really the same. Today Bahá'u'lláh, the Prophet for this age, is telling the peoples of all religions that they are one, even though they have come from different directions, and now is the time of their reunion in His Faith; united they will help to establish world peace.

When we arrived in the small, dry, and ragingly hot village of Naraindapur, with no government bungalow available, and bringing no food with us because we had counted on a Rest House, the doors of the only school there were hospitably opened to us. The Headmaster, Mr. R.M. Misra, with that kindness and courtesy so miraculous and unfailing in India, offered all he had for our comfort, even putting his and his wife's bed in an empty classroom for our use. Rúhíyyih Khánum's dinner that night consisted of four soda crackers and a glass of water with salt added, which was all she could eat as the virus infection which had made her ill in Bombay had never really left her.

It was typical of our trip that no hour was ever wasted; that evening the Headmaster and other new friends arranged a meeting at short notice in the home of the President of the Women's Development Committee. Rúhíyyih Khánum told them, among other things, that we firmly believe in the unity of religions, that all religions spring from the same source and have the same purpose of causing the human race to progress, that in our Bahá'í Temples we read from all the Sacred Scriptures of other Faiths. The audience was not only a highly receptive one, but consisted of those in the forefront of educational and social activities in the village. Next day, before we left, one of them became a Bahá'í.

Among other things, Orissa is famous for its temples, and in between visits to the Bahá'ís in various villages, we were able to see some of them, in spite of the heat, which was often 108° in the daytime. Konarak, the impressive temple built to the glory of the Sun God, in the form of a gigantic chariot, was one of them and is truly a unique masterpiece with its fine statues and massive carved stone wheels.

Meetings were held both in Niyali and Barhana. In the latter, under an immense tree, a very animated meeting took place. Many young men asked pertinent questions; one I remember quite well: "Why should we accept a religion that comes from Iran originally? We have our own religion anyway, and don't need another." To this

Rúhíyyih Khánum replied that few people would challenge the great role of religion itself and how it spiritualizes man and guides him on his way in this world. But today we live in a new world, science has brought us not only close to each other through trains, airplanes, radio, and so on, but we are dangerously close to each other. If we do not find a force strong enough to unite us all, now that we live, so to speak, in a small world, we are in danger of being killed by an even more terrible war than past ones. "If the Hindus", she said, "go to America and try to convert people there to Hinduism, they will no more accept than the Hindus in India will accept to be converted to Christianity or Islám. The hatred between the old religions, made by the foolish little minds of men and not by the great Founders of these religions, is too great. The Bahá'í Faith is a new World Religion; when you become a Bahá'í you do not give up anything, you add to it; the Hindu adds faith in Christ, Muḥammad, Buddha, and the other great Prophets to his faith in Krishna. The same is true of the Christian or the Muslim when he becomes a Bahá'í; he has to accept Buddha and Krishna. It is like the hub of the wheel." She gave the example of the wheel. She then said that once a famous American doctor had asked her the same question: "Why should you accept a religion that came from Iran?" She asked him: "Doctor, if they find a cure for cancer in Iran, will you refuse to accept it because it was not developed in America?" This answer had silenced the doctor and it silenced this audience too. There was great enthusiasm at this meeting.

Bhubaneswar, the new capital of Orissa, was a place where there were no Bahá'í contacts. We had gone there for a few days to see some of the most beautiful temples in this part of India. Dear Shirin Boman, with her indefatigable zeal, searched out friends of friends and appeared at the Rest House with two charming sisters of the Mahanty family, one an aviatrix and lawyer, the other a doctor. These young women were so interested in what they heard of our Faith that they asked to take Rúhíyyih Khánum to meet the Chief Minister of the State of Orissa, Mr. Biren Mitra. The next morning we called on him, and he became interested in this new kind of visitor to India who wore a sari, came in the broiling summer sun to see the famous temples in his State and, as he was told, was on a lecture tour of his country. He thought for a moment, then turned to his extremely nice and capable young Home Secretary, Mr. Venkataraman, and asked him to arrange for a public lecture the following night. Accordingly, the Government Publicity Department's loudspeaker van toured the city, broadcasting details; a hall, chairs, everything was arranged, and a large meeting was held on June 13th, attended by college professors, military officers, government officials, and the elite of the city, chaired by a Dr. Kaul who—strange coincidence—had visited the Bahá'í Temple in Chicago. One of the university professors, Dr. Kanuga, kindly translated Rúhíyyih Khánum's talk into the Oriya language. Speaking on the relationship of Bahá'u'lláh's teachings to the condition of moral turpitude in the world today, she quoted Bahá'u'lláh's words: "The vitality of men's belief in God is dying out in every land." Many heads nodded their agreement. In the course of her talk Rúhíyyih Khánum said:

The theme about which the Bahá'í teachings are built is a simple but mighty one: man on this planet is on a voyage; he came from God, because God created him; and his soul will return to God, drawing ever closer to that Infinite Essence. Like a loving parent, God never leaves His children without guidance; all mankind goes to the School of the Prophets. The Prophets, Who are sent by God, are the Divine Educators Who teach us spiritual, moral, and eternal truths we need to progress. Just as a child passes from one grade to another, always going forward as he gets older, so the religions of the world are like the classes man has been attending. Supposing that the teacher is a very learned man, he is a professor with many degrees; he is able to teach the little children in first grade, and he is also able to teach university students studying for their higher degrees. No one could say that because he taught simple things to the little children, the knowledge was not in his head to teach complicated things to the grown-up students. The teacher has all knowledge, but he teaches each class according to its needs. The Bahá'ís believe that this is the example of the Prophet. Each Prophet has all knowledge in Himself, but He gives out to the people, in the age in which He appears, what they need to know then. This is the sign of His perfection as a teacher. There is really only one religion, taught by different Prophets, at different times, to meet the needs of humanity which is progressing and growing up.

The audience was not only extremely attentive and responsive, but interesting questions were asked at the end, one being: "What do the Bahá'ís believe about the love of God?" Rúhíyyih Khánum replied: "We believe it is the beginning and the end, the most important thing in all creation, pervading everything." She told me afterwards that as she said this she could see a physical tremor pass through the audience, so deeply and passionately does this spiritual nation believe in and respond to spiritual truth. Over and over she would say that in this country you can begin speaking where you end in the West. In other words, the belief in the soul, in life after death, in mysticism and spiritual values, is so deep that it is not necessary to prove these things—they are already convictions; you start at once with Who Bahá'u'lláh is in this day and what His Faith has brought into the world. Because of this receptivity, the Faith is accepted readily. I am sure that the fertile land of Orissa, God willing, will yield a rich harvest in the near future.

Thinking of Orissa, I cannot but remember the generosity, kindness, and courtesy of a non-Bahá'í friend who offered his car, his driver, and full support to make Rúhíyyih Khánum's visit a success. Indeed, without his help it was difficult to see how she could have visited this State in the limited time available. Mr. K.L. Modi is not only a great friend of the Faith and a very sincere admirer of beloved Amatu'l-Bahá, but she in turn has become his great friend and admirer.

Earlier in our journey in India, Mr. Khodadad Vajdi had spoken to Rúhíyyih Khánum about a very exciting area called Bastar, deep in the southern jungles of Madhya Pradesh where some of the primitive aborigines of India live, a few of whom had already become Bahá'ís. She was determined to go there, and Mr. Vajdi and his wife, Tahirih, had driven halfway across India in their jeep to take us there. A week—from June 15th to 22nd—had, with great difficulty, been squeezed out of an already-planned and over-crowded itinerary and allotted to this area. This was indeed one of the most unique experiences of our tour. At our first stop we met with the Bahá'ís of Narainpur. This small town was the seat of government administration, as well as a large trading centre. From it a road is being built straight into the heart of the jungle to facilitate the transport of valuable teak lumber. But so far there was only a shadow of a road ahead, which had become even worse, as the monsoon had already begun. The jeep crawled forward yard by yard, skidded in the mud, and climbed up and down the almost vertical banks of deep streams until we thought we would never get there.

In the village of Dodhai, in the jungle, we met our tribal friends who looked very handsome and strange. The colour of their skin is deep rich brown; men and women alike have long hair which is made into a big bun at the back of their heads. They wear numerous kinds of ornaments. They had very little clothing on and they still hunt small game with bows and arrows. Their jungles are tiger-infested; a few days before our arrival a hunter from outside had at last killed an old tigress that had eaten 126 people. In our first meeting, in Solenga, a village 3 miles farther away in the jungle, we were told that the reason we did not have a better audience was because the night before, the first rain of the season had fallen; this had caused jubilation and the friends had gone into the interior to hunt jungle rats for a real feast of meat! A sad problem for these people is their addiction to alcohol, which is partly taken as nourishment to supplement their poor and meagre diet, and this constitutes about a third of their food value. They entertained us with unique dances and singing that night. These Abhujmards are such an untouched, primitive people that a recent anthropological expedition from the West had spent a year studying their tribal life and customs.



Photograph taken by Amatu'l-Baha on arrival in Bastar. Left to right: Violette Nakhjavani, Shirin Boman, Khodad Vajdi, and in the car, Tahirih Vajdi



Lady Evelyn de Soysa, President of the Y.W.C.A. of Sri Lanka receives Amatu'l-Bahá at a reception in her honour in Lady de Soysa's home



Amatu'l-Bahá crossing a bridge with some Bahá'í in Sri Lanka, near the village of Kurwita



In Colombo, Sri Lanka

The next day there was a weekly market in Dodhai and people were informed of a distinguished visitor who was anxious to meet them. In the afternoon people came to the Dak (government bungalow) where we lived and sat about on the porch of the house. So very isolated from the rest of India are these people that intellectually they seem to live in a different world. It is difficult to reach them, and still more difficult to convey any religious concept to them. Rúhíyyih Khánum used a very interesting method of arousing their interest. She asked them: "You know they are building a road from the town to your village?" They said, "Yes". Then she asked whether they liked the road, and they said, "Yes". She said: "You know the road is bringing that great world outside here to you; when you go among the people of the town do you feel at a disadvantage, inferior to them?" They hesitated, said "Yes", and then, in a burst of confidence, "We are afraid of them too." "Well", said Rúhíyyih Khánum, "there is nothing unusual in that; all people are afraid of something. If some of the city people from my country were suddenly put down in your jungle, with its man-eating tigers, and saw you wandering around with your bows and arrows, they would be terrified. We are all afraid of things that are different from what we are used to, but feeling at a disadvantage and inferior is something else. This is why we have come to tell you about Bahá'u'lláh, because if each one of you is a Bahá'í, and understands what Bahá'u'lláh teaches, you will not only be equal to the people of the city but superior to them. I will give you an example of what I mean. Say one of you is a Bahá'í and he goes to the city and begins to talk to a city man. He says, 'Where are you from?' And you say, 'Bastar', and he looks at you with contempt because you are an uneducated tribal man from the jungle. You say, 'I am sorry I do not speak your language; what we need is an extra language we can all learn so all the people of the world can speak to each other direct and understand each other.' The city man looks at you and is very surprised to hear such words. He says, 'Where did you get such an idea?' And you say, 'I am a Bahá'í and my religion teaches that all men are brothers and this is the day when we must all work together to bring peace to the world. We believe all the peoples and nations are equal, that all religions are from the same root, that men and women are equal, like the two wings of a bird.' The city man cannot believe his ears! He says to himself, 'I thought this man was an ignorant savage but his ideas are more advanced than mine; he is more tolerant than we are and his mind broader than ours.' Then he becomes friendly and asks you questions and you can tell him the wonderful teachings of Bahá'u'lláh." She pointed out to them that this was their only defence against the great world outside their jungles and their only hope of surviving as a people; that in this big family of the Bahá'í Faith they were welcome and would bring their qualities and gifts to enrich it. She was fortunate in having an excellent translator, a friend of the Bahá'ís who lived among these people and loved them. One could see a change on the faces of these shy people. It seemed as if they found hope and courage to face men to whom they felt inferior and who they well knew looked down upon them.

The days we spent in this remote village in the heart of the jungle were some of the happiest days of our Indian trip. Civilization, with its science and technology, seemed thousands of years away from us. Mr. Vajdi, our gallant companion, hunted rabbits for our food, which was prepared, with queer-looking jungle greens we bought from the local market, on a wood fire, by dear Shirin and Tahirih. The taste was exotic, but we enjoyed everything, most of all the hard, bare life; we shall never forget these precious days of freedom, service to our beloved Faith, and comradeship. Contact with such people moved one's heart profoundly; one does not know how to describe it. They look like beautiful tropical trees about to be transplanted to another soil in different surroundings. One feels frightened lest the new environment is not properly suited to their needs. One can look around the world and see how people with such a background have, through the neglect of their gardeners, perished morally and spiritually and lost their beauty and identity.

On June 23rd, we left the lovely jungles of Bastar and their wonderful people, and, after two days of tedious driving by jeep, we reached the city of Nagpur, where we parted from our dear friends and companions for a period of six weeks.

On June 29th, after a few days' stop in New Delhi, we left India for Germany, where Amatu'l-Bahá dedicated for public worship the Mother Temple of Europe, the last of the three Temples called for by our beloved Guardian in his Ten Year Crusade. She was so ill and run down that for a month she was obliged to go to a sanatorium in Germany for medical care. On August 10th, Rúhíyyih Khánum, once again energetic and eager, arrived back in our beloved land of India, which had now become so dear to our hearts. By now Delhi seemed a second home.

CHAPTER VIII

Rúhíyyih Khánum had, when she attended the Convention in Ceylon in April, promised to return. Her maternal cousin and her husband, Jeanne and Challoner Chute, were settled there as pioneers, and she was most anxious to be with them, as well as to visit as many of the Ceylonese Bahá'ís as possible. This trip, though only three weeks long, was extremely valuable to the friends and caused an upsurge of activity and enthusiasm. One week was spent in Colombo, the capital, where Rúhíyyih Khánum met with the Bahá'ís and encouraged them to go out and teach in Ceylon as the friends were teaching in India. She told them many of our fascinating experiences there. In another meeting in the small town of Pandura, 20 miles outside Colombo, Rúhíyyih Khánum spoke to a very keen and interested audience, all young factory workers, and mostly non-Bahá'ís. In the course of her talk she recalled a very interesting dream of one of the early believers in the United States. In her dream this believer saw a terrible flood engulfing the whole world and drowning the helpless people. In her anxiety and fear she looked everywhere for 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and at last found Him on top of a hill, calm and serene, bending over a machine He was working on. She called out to Him to come and save the people, but He paid no attention to her; finally she pulled His robe, begging Him to come and save drowning humanity. He said: "'Abdu'l-Bahá is working on a machine to make the flood go down.'" Rúhíyyih Khánum then explained that this was a very meaningful dream. The machine is like the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh and it will solve all the problems and remove the difficulties.

In Colombo Rúhíyyih Khánum met with the National Spiritual Assembly and the National Teaching Committee and planned with them the programme for her trip. Ceylon is known as the "Pearl of the East" and the "Emerald Island". With its many flaming exotic flowers, its unbelievably lush vegetation and its marvellous palms, it truly looks like a precious gem, glistening in the Indian Ocean. For centuries it has been subjected to invasions by nations from both East and West; its culture is therefore rich in many backgrounds. We were able to drive up to Kandy, the ancient capital, specially to watch the famous Perahera, its whirling Kandy dancers, its torch-bearers and bands. The parading of a precious relic of Lord Buddha, carried on the biggest and most handsome temple elephant, is the reason for this annual festival. On a later visit Amatu'l-Bahá went there for her Bahá'í engagements.

Our tour of the South started in the small town of Dehiovita where Rúhíyyih Khánum spoke to a very interested audience, a number of them being new Bahá'ís. The local Buddhist high priest was present at this meeting and showed a very deep interest; he asked Rúhíyyih Khánum to arrange, on her next visit to Ceylon, to speak to his congregation about this wonderful message. The next morning, as we proceeded on our way, our road wound through picturesque coconut palm and tea plantations. The scenery was truly dazzling and beautiful. In the afternoon we reached the old coastal city of Galle, where Portuguese, Dutch, and British occupations have left special and picturesque imprints. A small meeting was held that evening, attended by a number of students of the Faith who listened most attentively and asked pertinent questions. Most of the Bahá'í communities are outside the town on tea and rubber plantations and naturally consist largely of labourers. These people were originally low caste conscript labour brought by the British from India. They are deeply religious by nature and responsive to the Words of Bahá'u'lláh as plants to the life-giving rain. Although, through the work of labour unions and other agencies, their living conditions have improved considerably, a long history of oppression has left its mark. We felt both their great receptivity and their great need to hear this Faith. Wherever the Bahá'ís have taught them they have achieved remarkable success, and devoted communities have sprung up. As these estates are private property, permission of the owners must be obtained before teaching is carried on; however, this is seldom refused, as a little enquiry soon proves that when a person becomes a Bahá'í he not only does his job more conscientiously but will take no part in politics. The awakening hope, the appreciation and keenness reflected in the beautiful eyes of these dear souls when Rúhíyyih Khánum spoke to them, touched all our hearts. Coming face to face with such people made me feel the weight of our responsibility as Bahá'ís more than ever before. How shall we face Bahá'u'lláh in the next world if we do not pay heed to the great spiritual needs of these humble souls? Too often we Bahá'ís are inclined to take this precious Cause for granted; it is only when we go out and serve the Faith that we realize the true worth of what God has bestowed upon us.

In the town of Matara, the Abbot of a Buddhist religious college most kindly placed a hall at the disposal of the Bahá'ís. Rúhíyyih Khánum spoke to a very sympathetic, highly intellectual audience of the elite of the town. The subject of her talk was "Unity Is Possible". This was indeed a very interesting title and her masterly explanation was most convincing. A very animated question period followed which created a most friendly feeling of fellowship. The local people requested the Bahá'ís to repeat such evenings more often.

The word "God" in English, associated with the picture painted in the Bible of an anthropomorphic deity, is much disliked in Buddhist circles as the concept it conveys is quite alien to the present Buddhist understanding. When told of this word-obstacle, Rúhíyyih Khánum said she did not see any difficulty, as in our teachings we

have the term “Infinite Essence” as a synonym for God and it is perhaps much more descriptive and closer to modern scientific concepts. She therefore used this term, allying it to the Buddhist concepts of the progress of the soul.

On August 27th, we started the second part of our trip in Ceylon. Returning to Kandy, we left the next day for a settlement of Veddás. These are the aborigines of Ceylon who for generations lived in the jungle completely isolated from the rest of the country, with their own customs and religious beliefs and habits. When Rúhíyyih Khánúm first met with the National Spiritual Assembly and the Teaching Committee, she said that she wanted, even though her time in Ceylon was so short, to go to see the Vedda people and the Rodiyas, the true “untouchables” of Ceylon, as she felt sure this would be what the beloved Guardian would have wanted her to do. As they are mentioned in that part of the Nine Year Plan which is Ceylon’s share to execute, she also hoped this would hasten the fulfilment of these two specific goals.

Recently the Government has started special welfare projects for the Veddás, building villages for them and trying to change these stone-age jungle hunters into farmers. Having obtained an official guide and translator, we were able to drive to one jungle settlement in our jeep, accompanied by the Government Welfare Officer; without his friendly cooperation it would have been almost impossible to meet these people. The majority of the tribe had gone into the jungle to hunt for food and we were able to see only a few men. As we looked into the eyes of these men, suddenly thrust into our modern world through encroaching civilization and shrinking jungles, we could see a dark glaze of hopelessness, as if they were staring at death and had accepted it. We realized that unless the breeze of this all-encompassing Revelation blows over them, unless the love of the Bahá’ís brings to them the life-giving love of Bahá’u’lláh, they are indeed doomed to extinction. Cement housing and schooling cannot kindle life in such people. Only hope can, the knowledge that they are respected and *respectable*, that someone needs them and believes in them. A little of this Rúhíyyih Khánúm tried most lovingly to convey to them. It was very difficult as the interpreter was much more interested in talking to us than in translating! The village chief, an elderly man both shrewd and philosophical, when asked, in the end, if we could photograph them, pointed to the camera and said: “What you have taken there will survive long after my people are all dead.” It was heart-breaking.

Mr. Keith de Folo, Secretary of the National Spiritual Assembly, was with us and established a cordial relationship with the intelligent, sincere, and truly compassionate Government Welfare Officer responsible for this particular group of Veddás. We hope this link will enable the Bahá’ís to carry to these people the only remedy in the world for their condition—respect for themselves, pride in their past, belief in this Faith.

After a public meeting in Kandy and a very happy meeting with the National Spiritual Assembly, Rúhíyyih Khánúm and I left with her cousin, Mr. Chute and other Bahá’í friends to go to the Rodiya village of Wadorassa. This is a community of the lowest caste in Ceylon. For generations they have been shunned, to the extent of not being allowed even to enter the villages or homes of others. Like many oppressed people, they have developed a remarkable sweetness of character and are very gifted in music, dancing, and singing. In her talk Rúhíyyih Khánúm spoke to them about the cardinal Bahá’í principle of abolition of all kinds of prejudice, praised their talent and showered love upon them until their faces glowed with radiance and hope. Many of the Bahá’ís were with us at this large meeting and promised to visit them often. They are extremely receptive to the teachings of Bahá’u’lláh and their entrance into the Faith would greatly enrich the Ceylon Bahá’í community. On our way to Jaffna we stopped for the night in the ancient town of Anuradhapura, capital of Ceylon for a thousand years. During its Golden Age, in the fifth and sixth centuries A.D., it is known to have sheltered over 50,000 Buddhist monks. The ruins of the massive monasteries and numerous dagobas (stupas) speak eloquently of a great past. The most sacred of all these sights is the Bo tree, which is supposed to be the original tree brought by Prince Mahendra from India and cut from that tree under which the Lord Buddha sat and received His enlightenment. Mahendra himself is buried here, and as we gazed upon his memorial stupa we remembered far away Sanchi in India, from whence this king’s son set forth on his journey of enlightenment to Ceylon.

September 2nd to 8th was allocated to Jaffna and its surrounding areas. Jaffna, in the north of Ceylon, is primarily inhabited by Tamil-speaking southern Indians. The Bahá’ís had recently concentrated on this area and very marvellous teaching results had been achieved. The receptivity of these people seems to have started a wave of mass teaching. With perseverance and continuous visits, no doubt, not only the north but the whole of Ceylon could be set ablaze. Soon after Rúhíyyih Khánúm’s arrival a delegation from the “Divine Life Society” came to welcome her. This is a very open-minded movement in this part of the world which believes in and propagates the fundamental ideals of the unity of religion and the oneness of mankind. In both Jaffna and Kandy there had been a most friendly relationship between this society and the Bahá’ís. It was this society which sponsored the large public meeting for Rúhíyyih Khánúm which took place on the following day, September 3rd. A group of newspaper reporters also called on Amatu’l-Bahá and inquired about the purpose of her visit. The title of her talk at this meeting was “Prescription for Living”—the title of her book. This wonderful book is much in demand both in India and Ceylon, and many contacts of the Faith are familiar with its contents. During her lecture Rúhíyyih

Khánum explained the reason for writing this book. She said that after World War II she was deeply sorry for the generation of young people of her country, returning hopeless, disillusioned and bitter. She wanted to help them, to give them hope for the future, to share with them the healing medicine of Bahá'u'lláh's teachings. She wrote this book primarily for them, but was delighted to see it had been of help to other people as well. In the course of her talk she enumerated the principles of Bahá'u'lláh and mentioned the great teaching that we should see the good in others and overlook their imperfections, quoting 'Abdu'l-Bahá when He said: If a man has nine faults and only one virtue, mention that virtue and be silent about the faults, and if he has nine virtues and one fault, still be silent about the fault and mention only the virtues. She said that they would forgive her for saying so, but she could not help thinking what the application of this one Bahá'í teaching would mean in Ceylon, where there is such a bitter spirit of recrimination between different communities, so many accusations, so much backbiting! The chairman of the meeting, Mr. C. Thanabalasingam, a retired judge, in his summing up of Rúhíyyih Khánum's speech, picked this one teaching, elaborated on it most brilliantly, and pointed out the psychological benefits we can derive from the power of positive thoughts and the opposite results we obtain from negative thoughts. He said that if the audience left the meeting with only this one teaching in mind, and put it into practice, Ceylon would be a far better place to live in.

In a small township near Jaffna, known as Nainatibo, a very successful public meeting was arranged. Over 300 people attended, and after Rúhíyyih Khánum's talk on the purpose and principles of the Bahá'í Faith, many expressed their hope to see this wonderful religion grow from strength to strength in Ceylon and bring about the long-desired unity which is so badly needed in their country. This is largely a communist area and Rúhíyyih Khánum was asked to explain the difference between this religion and some political ideologies. This question was very ably answered. Rúhíyyih Khánum, after stating that the Bahá'ís have nothing to do with politics of any kind, said that the present political doctrines in the world are all man-made, and as man is imperfect, his creation is also imperfect; but there is now another system introduced into the world by Bahá'u'lláh, and this system, being God-given, is perfect and higher than the various invariably faulty systems made by man.

In the village of Culipuran at an open-air meeting, Rúhíyyih Khánum spoke to the underprivileged untouchables; they were so overcome by the kindness showered upon them and the cogent proofs of the truth of this Faith that no doubt many of them will feel moved to embrace it. Members of the higher caste, who would not sit in the same meeting with the lower caste, stood outside the gathering and listened to her heartwarming talk; they were so impressed that at the end they approached the Bahá'ís and asked them to arrange another meeting in their section of the village so that their people could also hear about this wonderful message.

On September 6th, Rúhíyyih Khánum addressed four audiences in four different villages, the fourth one being late at night, in the reading room of Neervely R.D.S., where a number of intelligent young men were present and showed deep interest. The organizer of this meeting was a young lady, a welfare officer of the village, who is keenly interested in the Cause. Both in Ceylon and India we were much impressed by the role women were playing in every field of progress—within the home women have long enjoyed a deep spiritual partnership; this is now coming out into the social and economic life of the people.

The next day Rúhíyyih Khánum spoke to an audience of teachers and students in a girls' school in the village of Kodikaman. In the afternoon of the same day, she spoke in another village to a very enthusiastic group of Bahá'ís and their friends, who eagerly listened and asked for more talks, more visitors, and more help in their teaching work. These six days in Jaffna were packed with wonderful public meetings as well as many enjoyable, informal receptions given in her honour. On our last day in Jaffna Rúhíyyih Khánum spoke to a large audience in a girls' college on "Science and Religion", stressing particularly the role of women in this day and their obligation, as mothers of the next generation, to take the lead in social and spiritual advancement. Her audience caught fire from her own enthusiasm. Such contacts create a reservoir of friends and admirers of the Bahá'ís and their work.

CHAPTER IX

On September 9th, we left Ceylon by boat and at Dhanushkodi re-entered India. To Rúhíyyih Khánum's great joy her cousin, Mrs. Jeanne Chute, accompanied us on the remaining six weeks of our Indian tour. Amatu'l-Bahá's next engagement was in Karikal, on September 14th. The few days between these dates were spent in visiting the famous Hindu centres of pilgrimage, Rameswaram and Madurai, as well as other towns of artistic interest. The gigantic temples in these towns, with their intricate carvings and brilliant colours, are some of the most fascinating sights in India. The three of us, on our own with no helpful Bahá'ís to translate or make contacts, were deeply impressed by the fact that if we had had time to stay anywhere and start meetings, all doors would have opened. So great is the broad-mindedness and spiritual receptivity of the people that the teaching possibilities are absolutely unlimited. Everywhere people begged us to stay and teach them this wonderful message.

Aziz Jamshed, the dear pioneer in Mysore, who had come all the way by jeep to Karikal to help with the programme of Rúhíyyih Khánum's visit, met us at the railway station and drove us 100 miles to Karikal, one of the goals of the Ten Year Crusade. This territory was opened by two ladies, Mrs. Shirin Noorani and Mrs. Saliseh Kermani, who both won the title of "Knight of Bahá'u'lláh". Saliseh Kermani was regretfully obliged to leave Karikal a few years ago, but Shirin Noorani has remained steadfastly in her goal post and has established the Cause firmly in Karikal with nineteen Local Spiritual Assemblies and numerous centres. Our dear Shirin Boman was waiting for us there, to our great joy, and we were joined by another old friend, Mr. Vital from Bangalore, whose mother tongue is Tamil; he had come to translate for us and assist in the teaching work in this Tamil-speaking, former French colony. On the evening of our arrival Rúhíyyih Khánum spoke to the eager Bahá'ís gathered in the Bahá'í Centre, praised their services and encouraged them to exert themselves more than ever before. The following day, in the village of Tirunallar, Rúhíyyih Khánum was received and welcomed by the Mayor of the village and then entertained by the children in a local orphanage established by a singularly selfless lady. She is of Indian origin, but her family have lived in Singapore for some generations. Five years before, she had come to South India on a pilgrimage, and when she visited Karikal and saw the sad condition of the poverty-stricken inhabitants of this territory, a deep sympathy was roused in her tender heart and led her to stay and help them. She started her small orphanage, which mainly comprised her five little girls, and now she has over sixty. She is very keen to bring up these children in the Bahá'í Faith. The little girls danced and sang beautifully and Rúhíyyih Khánum gave a loving talk, inspiring hope and confidence in these sweet and deprived children and begging their adopted mother to persevere in the noble work she had started. It is interesting to note that through the Bahá'ís these children had been taken on an excursion to Bangalore, several hundred miles away, stimulating in the older ones some interest in the Faith.

That evening a very successful public meeting was held, in the Bahá'í Centre, with a large audience from the notables of the town and some of the Bahá'ís from neighbouring villages. Many interesting questions were asked and a sense of the world-wide nature of the Faith conveyed. As Karikal is very inaccessible, the small Bahá'í community was delighted to be able to prove to the local people that, after all, it is not just words; we have Bahá'ís all over the world, and now you see the proof yourselves!

Early one morning we went to the small village of Subrayapuram and met with some of the Bahá'ís and their friends. Sitting on the floor, on the porch of an old and dilapidated temple, Rúhíyyih Khánum spoke to the people about Bahá'u'lláh and His blessed life. The people of Karikal are unimaginably destitute. The overwhelming majority are small tenant farmers, with hardly enough to keep them from starvation. In another such village, Terkuvalipep, largely of Bahá'ís, despite their extreme poverty the friends offered to collect from amongst themselves 200 rupees towards the building of their local Bahá'í Centre if some help could be given them by the National Spiritual Assembly. The measure of this devotion cannot be comprehended by people who have not seen with their own eyes the circumstances in which such villagers live.

That same afternoon an entirely new village was to be opened to the Faith by Rúhíyyih Khánum. This was Araya Trapu, whose inhabitants are largely fisherman. Over 300 people, young and old, gathered at the local school to meet their important, unknown visitor. Entirely on their own they had sent someone into the town, miles away over the rice paddy fields, to buy a garland with which to honour their guest. When receiving such a gift—from a village where there was real hunger at the time—one wonders what gift a king could ever offer? Rúhíyyih Khánum's talk to them was a message of love and brotherhood. The Headman of the village, deeply impressed by what he had heard for the first time, expressed his desire to know more about this and asked the Bahá'ís to come again and teach them about Bahá'u'lláh, assuring us that if they found it good, they would accept it. On our last night in Karikal a farewell party was held and over 80 people from many villages around came to listen once again to Rúhíyyih Khánum's life-giving words of love and wisdom. Parting from these dear new friends was

indeed sad, but we were happy because we could sense a new spirit of determination and re-dedication to the service of our beloved Cause. Rúhíyyih Khánum's visit, like a refreshing spring shower, softened the soil of their hearts and reinvigorated the precious plants sown with so much sacrifice and heartache.



In a village in South India, waiting for her audience to arrive



Quenching her thirst with a fresh coconut



Typical scene of Rūḥīyyih Khánum's arrival in a village



On September 18th, we arrived in Pondy, the capital of Pondicherry. This is the seat of a special administration, set up for an interim period to administer all previously French colonies in India, pending their future incorporation into the neighbouring Indian States. It is an example of the far-reaching, wise plans of the Indian Government to better the condition of particularly backward and disabled groups. According to previous arrangements, we went directly to Government House where Amatu'l-Bahá, her cousin, and I were to be the personal guests of His Excellency the Lieutenant Governor, and Mrs. S.L. Silam. The Governor had learned of Rúhíyyih Khánum's visit to his area through one of his friends, a Bahá'í of Bombay, and had expressed his wish to act as her host. He had arranged a grand reception in her honour on the eve of the opening of the local parliament representing these previously French colonies; and many of the newly-elected members of this parliament, together with various Government Ministers and their wives, attended. Before we left, His Excellency expressed his intention of helping any future Bahá'í pioneer who might settle in Pondicherry. The courtesy, the warmth and informal hospitality shown to us by the Governor and Mrs. Silam during our two-day stay with them cannot be described, and enlarged our precious store of memories of India and her noble people.

CHAPTER X

The next day we left Pondicherry for Calcutta. The first night of our arrival Rúhíyyih Khánum met with the Bahá'ís of the city and neighbouring communities. On September 22nd, she had a very successful press conference, and the following evening a reception was given by the Local Spiritual Assembly of Calcutta in her honour, with many of the notables of the city present. Amatu'l-Bahá gave a brief talk on the fundamental verities of the Cause, which delighted the audience. The Calcutta Bahá'ís busily circulated amongst their distinguished guests, dispensing hospitality and information, and taking advantage of the happy and friendly spirit created by Rúhíyyih Khánum's talk. Immediately after this reception Rúhíyyih Khánum, Mrs. Chute, and I left on the night train for Benares (Varanasi).

Benares, the holiest city of India and its greatest centre of pilgrimage, is unique in the world. Millions of pious hearts turn to it and to Mother Ganga (Ganges River) who leaves its innumerable ghats with her sacred waters, pouring down from the Himalayas. If a Hindu is cremated here, so the story goes, he escapes the wheel of reincarnation and ascends to Nirvana. It was inconceivable to Rúhíyyih Khánum to visit India and not spend a few days, as a private tourist, in this famous place. Indeed, by the end of our tour, we had visited almost every place of Hindu pilgrimage in India.

There is neither time nor place to recount all that we saw and did in Benares. Suffice it to say that the whole experience deeply affected us, particularly Rúhíyyih Khánum, who watched the cremations on the burning ghats with profound respect and understanding and said she felt closer to the Indian people, because of this, than ever before. We also made a special point of visiting Sarnath, another holy city, 7 miles from Benares, where the Lord Buddha revealed Himself to His first handful of disciples. Some of the earliest representations of Buddha are in the museum there, clearly showing His Mongolian background.

The head of the Government Tourist Office in Benares, upon discovering who Rúhíyyih Khánum was, said that the Maharaja of Benares (who bears this title but has no function in relation to the city, and lives on the opposite side of the river) was a man deeply interested in religion and, he thought, would like to receive us. An invitation to tea, and then to a very interesting religious pageant duly came through from the Maharaja's palace for Rúhíyyih Khánum and her companions. During tea, at which only we and the Maharaja were present, he asked several questions about the Bahá'í Faith and showed considerable interest. He is a Hindu and a very pious man. After tea we watched His Highness leave for the pageant; carrying a short sword, clad in an emerald silk undergarment with a nebulous white shirt over it and a white dhoti, with a gold and white turban on his head and slippers with turned up toes, to the trill of bugles—pausing a moment to receive the respectful homage of a courtyard full of people—the Maharaja went forth, like some figure from a seventeenth century Indian miniature, and every inch a king. We got in our taxi and followed to the scene of the play. This annual pageant, depicting every night a separate part of the life of Rama, goes on for a month. It is similar to the passion plays of Europe, where the entire community provides the cast and staging. His Highness has revived this custom locally and is responsible for financing it, offering it as a solemn religious festival which anyone may attend. Some people, like ourselves, were invited as his special guests and had box seats, so to speak, on one of the seven or eight elephants in his retinue. We shared our elephant with two officials attached to his court. For four hours, first by daylight and then at night, we watched the play and listened to the solemn chanting of the text of the great epic. His Highness, seated cross-legged in a beautiful howdah, on the biggest elephant we had ever seen, with a canopy over his head and a dignified elderly courtier seated behind him in attendance, made an unforgettable picture. Before him was the text of the Ramayana which he was obviously carefully following, even after dark with a small flashlight. Surrounding the group of elephants (and, indeed, on some of them as the Maharaja's particular guests) were the largest number of sadhus (holy men) we had ever seen; there must have been over 500 of them, almost naked, their thin bodies and faces painted with ashes and sandalwood powder, their long hair twisted in buns or falling on their shoulders, watching the play devoutly, drinking in its wonderful words and scenes. At the end of that night's performance there must have been well over 10,000 people gathered.

On September 29th, we left Benares, and that evening reached the town of Satna. Mrs. Boman and Mr. Vajdi were waiting for us. That night, at the Bahá'í Centre of Satna, Rúhíyyih Khánum, despite a high fever, gave a masterly talk on the importance of living a Bahá'í life and adorning our teaching with the ornament of deeds. She said that we should look at the lives of the Master and the Guardian for inspiration and guidance. 'Abdu'l-Bahá taught us to be honest and have integrity; this means neither to cheat nor to be cheated. She told a story she had heard from Shoghi Effendi who himself had been present with 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Egypt when this occurred. The Master was taking an important Pasha as His guest back to lunch in a carriage; when they got there the driver asked for a great deal more than was his right. 'Abdu'l-Bahá refused to pay it; the driver, a big rough bully, seized Him by His sash and jerked Him back and forth, shouting that he would be paid what he asked. 'Abdu'l-Bahá

continued to refuse. Finally the man let go of Him; the Master paid him what He owed him and told him if he had acted honestly he would have received a good tip, but as he had not done so, he would now get nothing but his fare, and walked off. Shoghi Effendi said he was terribly embarrassed during this scene before the Pasha, but that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was not at all upset, just determined not to give way to being cheated! Speaking of the spotless integrity of Shoghi Effendi, she recounted an example of it: One year when the beloved Guardian returned to Haifa, Mr. Maxwell, who had been left in charge of affairs that summer, reported to him that Mr. so-and-so, a Bahá’í in one of the neighbouring countries, had offered a sum of 54,000 pounds Sterling, which Mr. Maxwell had placed in the bank. On hearing the name of this man, the beloved Guardian was very indignant and instructed that the money be returned immediately to the donor. “I am very displeased with this man”, he said, “and he knows it. Does he think he can buy my good pleasure? If I accept his money I cannot very well go on showing anger towards him and not forgiving him, and as he has not changed and does not deserve to be forgiven, I certainly cannot take his money.” Rúhíyyih Khánúm commented that this was a great deal of money in those days and the incident taught her a great lesson in what Bahá’í integrity means. Naturally Mr. Maxwell did not know anything about this man when he accepted the money.

The next morning we left Satna for Shahdol. Rúhíyyih Khánúm was really too ill to travel but she would not disappoint the friends. Unfortunately her condition worsened and she was forced to stay in bed for four days, but she would not hear of cancelling any part of her programme and asked Mrs. Chute and me to go in her place, accompanied by Mr. Vajdi and Mr. Gupta, and meet with the friends. Shirin remained to take care of her. Leaving behind our beloved Rúhíyyih Khánúm in such condition took all the pleasure out of this trip. We could not help feeling sad and disheartened. Seventy miles of mountain road took us to the town of Amarkantak. During our two days’ stay, we had several successful meetings in and around this small town. A very good meeting was held in the Teachers’ Training College and keen interest was shown by staff and students alike. At a weekly market in the village of Bajri the tribal people, who had come a long way from the interior of the jungle, heard about this great Faith and expressed their desire to hear more.

Five days of high temperature and illness left Rúhíyyih Khánúm very weak and frail. The 100-mile trip by jeep to Rewa, in the dust and the heat and the draughts, did not help her recuperation. Rewa is a central point of mass teaching in this area and has a very active community. The first night of her arrival she addressed the local Rotary Club. Asked whether the Bahá’ís seek to make converts like the Christians and Muslims, she answered most convincingly by first explaining the true meaning of the word “conversion” in the English language. “I have been converted to the sari”, she said, smilingly; “I love it and I have adopted it, without being forced to do so. To be converted to something is a very natural process. It does not necessarily imply denunciation of one’s past. In fact, conversion to the Bahá’í Faith requires firm belief in all the religions of the past. The word conversion, unfortunately, has been misused by the two great religions of Christianity and Islám, which demand from their converts repudiation of their past beliefs.”

The next day Rúhíyyih Khánúm spoke to the Bahá’ís and some of their close contacts. In the course of her speech she pointed out that the purpose of religion is the healing of the ills of man. If it does not serve this purpose, it is of no avail. She then told a story related by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Once there was a sick man who sent for a doctor. When the patient asked him whether he was a good doctor, he said yes, he was a very good doctor, and to demonstrate his skill he flew around the room. This, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá pointed out, was very interesting but did not cure the patient! What good does the doctor’s flying around the room do the sick man? All he needed was the right medicine. Rúhíyyih Khánúm then explained that Bahá’u’lláh, the Divine Physician for this age, has the healing medicine in His hand; man should not deprive himself of it.

In an address given at a school for orphan boys Rúhíyyih Khánúm gave them the key to individual endeavour by citing an example used by the Master: Our lives are like the threads of a loom; the warp is heredity, what we receive from our ancestors; maybe we are like wool, maybe we are like silk, maybe we are like cotton, we may even be a poor material. The woof is environment, the circumstances surrounding us. We have no control over either of these. But the pattern we weave in our cloth is our own choice. We can make our cloth of exquisite pattern—if we want to and try to—whatever the quality of our thread may be. We can, however, spoil the cloth by an ugly pattern, even though the thread be of purest silk. Thus even though we have no control over the seemingly unfair circumstances of our lives, we have a great deal of control over what we choose to make of our characters.



Arrival in Kanpur



Visiting a well-known Temple in Kanpur



A village meeting, Amatu'l-Bahá being greeted in a traditional way



Amatu'l-Bahá with her much-loved animals

On October 7th, we travelled over 180 miles by jeep, reaching the city of Kanpur late in the afternoon. Kanpur is one of India's important industrial centres and also the hub of the mass teaching in that area. We were surprised to see a large banner in one of the biggest public squares, announcing Rúhíyyih Khánum's visit, stating who she was, and welcoming her to the city! It seemed the Bahá'is had arranged a number of these banners. A large crowd of the friends waiting for her at the Centre garlanded their beloved guest and swept her inside amidst shouts of greeting and cheers. Later, as she was very tired from driving all day, she said goodbye and asked to go to her hotel. She was informed that arrangements had been made for all three of us to stay at Kamla Retreat, the private guest house of Sir Padampat Singhanian. At first she rebelled against receiving such hospitality from a perfect stranger, but as she was expected and all arrangements had been made, she at last consented. This beautiful guest house, situated in the loveliest garden in Kanpur, has housed many famous visitors, including the late Prime Minister, Pandit Nehru, framed pictures of whose visit are on the walls. It is not near the residence of the Singhanian family and, as Sir Padampat was away on business in Bombay, Rúhíyyih Khánum did not meet him until he called on her, the last day of her stay. So wise, so devout in faith, and so kindly was this famous industrial tycoon that he made this act of friendliness to complete strangers seem the most natural thing in the world. We had learned yet another lesson from Mother India and her people.

The press conference held next day at the Kamla Retreat was attended by over 30 reporters who asked many shrewd questions and were deeply impressed by the answers Rúhíyyih Khánum gave them. Several of them stayed on much later than was expected. Many good articles on the Faith and her visit were published in Kanpur newspapers. That evening Amatu'l-Bahá spoke to a large and very friendly audience at the Rotary Club, introducing the fundamental principles of our religion. The next day we left Kanpur for Malhausi, the home of Raja Sahib Harvanash Singh, where—thanks to his efforts and those of his Bahá'í teacher, Dr. Munje—there is a big and active Bahá'í community. The Raja and the National Spiritual Assembly have together been responsible for erecting on his land a very attractive Bahá'í Centre.

Upon our arrival, Rúhíyyih Khánum, with all the pomp and ceremony attached to such occasions, officially opened the new Centre by cutting a blue silk ribbon with a pair of silver scissors. The spacious hall of the Centre was packed to capacity with Bahá'is and their friends. Amatu'l-Bahá, in her opening remarks, said that anything which is first has a special significance, such as the first child, the first home, the first fruits, etc. In this village there were several "firsts" that they should be very proud of: the first Raja of India to accept Bahá'u'lláh, the first Bahá'í Centre in this whole area, the first Bahá'í Centre she had opened in India! We then went to the home of the Raja, who courteously insisted on driving his guest there even though a short cut on foot was available, and

Rúhíyyih Khánum was able to meet his beautiful wife and his stately and noble mother, both of whom are devoted Bahá'ís.

In the afternoon of this same day another large gathering was held; over 600 men sat inside and outside the Centre. The ladies, who do not mix publicly with the men in this area, had their separate meeting on the roof of the Raja's house. Rúhíyyih Khánum first spoke to the men about Bahá'u'lláh and His life-giving message. She then addressed the ladies on the role of women in society. The informal gathering following these meetings went on till midnight. Rúhíyyih Khánum, still weak after her recent illness, answered questions, told stories, and showered her interest and love upon all, until she could barely stay erect in her chair. We were all to be the guests of the Raja overnight. This was the third home Rúhíyyih Khánum stayed in during her tour. Our hospitable young host showered a tender attention on Rúhíyyih Khánum that touched all our hearts. This Raja is truly an example of devotion and humanity to all. In a society where class distinction is so rigid, where only members of the lowest caste undertake humble jobs, such as sweeping and cleaning the bathroom, where a member of the ruling class is always served by others, this wonderful soul, with utmost courtesy and love, himself watched over his beloved guest, carried water to her room, stood at her door to answer any call, served her at the table with great humility and reverence. This was indeed a lesson to all of us and increased our love and respect for such a man who practises in his everyday life those words of the Master:

. . . Help me to be selfless at the heavenly entrance of Thy gate, and aid me to be detached from all things within Thy holy precincts. Lord! Give me to drink from the chalice of selflessness; with its robe clothe me, and in its ocean immerse me. Make me as dust in the pathway of Thy loved ones . . .

The next morning, at Tirwa, Rúhíyyih Khánum laid the foundation stone for the building of another Bahá'í Centre. The long, dusty journeys by jeep were very bad for her; she had not fully recovered from her last severe flu. When we finally returned to Kanpur, she came down with fever again. Despite this, she attended a meeting and reception held in her honour by Mrs. Mahendrajit Singh, who had invited many women leaders to her hospitable home. Rúhíyyih Khánum spoke vividly of the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh and His life and aroused very deep interest in her audience. When this meeting ended she was so ill she could barely stand up. She requested Mrs. Jeanne Chute to give her public lecture that night to a large gathering of people of the lowest caste. During the three days she was in bed, her cousin carried on her programme while I stayed and nursed her. Mrs. Chute addressed an elite audience at the medical college on the fundamental principles of the Faith; in the village of Ranjit Purwa she spoke to over 1,000 appreciative villagers, after a most tiring drive to reach them. At the end of three days Mrs. Chute was exhausted, but Rúhíyyih Khánum had been doing this for almost eight months! Before leaving Kanpur on October 13th Rúhíyyih Khánum was finally well enough for the doctor to let her address the members of the Lion's Club at a reception and meeting they had arranged for her.

CHAPTER XI

On October 15th, we reached the railway station of Gwalior; almost exactly eight months before we had arrived at this station, new to this fascinating land, strangers to its people, unaware of the pleasures and joys that were in store for us. Now this historic, wonderful journey of our precious Amatu'l-Bahá was coming to an end. She had returned to the heart of India to crown her tour with an all-India Teaching Conference, arranged by the National Spiritual Assembly. The purpose of this great Conference was to release a new wave of energy that would carry the entire community forward to win those goals which were India's share of the new Nine Year Plan given by the Universal House of Justice to the Bahá'í world at Ridván 1964. All the individual Bahá'ís present, all the members of the National Spiritual Assembly and the National Teaching Committee who were there—one and all—showered upon her their love, a love deeply rooted in their great love for their beloved Shoghi Effendi, and which was now reflected upon his widow, who had come to India to assist them in carrying out the work he, in his long years of Guardianship, had started.

ALL-INDIA TEACHING CONFERENCE—FIRST DAY

The Gwalior Teaching Institute was transformed into a fairyland. Colourful and magnificent canopies were raised on a forest of poles over the vast terrace in front of the building to accommodate over 500 believers who had come from all corners of India. Young village men formed a guard of honour for Rúhíyyih Khánum. Upon her entrance at the gate of the grounds, the sound of gun-fire greeted her, followed by showers of flowers thrown at her feet. The distance from the gate to the terrace was lined with hundreds of excited and jubilant believers who offered over fifty garlands of fresh flowers to her and threw petals before her feet at every step. The melodious song of “Yá Bahá'u'l-Abhá” was raised to the heavens, no doubt “to the accompaniment”, as our beloved Guardian once wrote, “of hosannas from the invisible angels in the Abhá Kingdom.”

Many of these dear friends already knew Rúhíyyih Khánum personally. They had welcomed her in their homes and villages, and their love for her was now a personal and intimate one. They knew that their precious guest, in the course of her travels throughout the land they loved so dearly, had completely fallen in love with it. They were proud of her, looking so much at home in the sari, their national costume, whether it was the coarse cotton sari of the village folk—which she loved best—or the gorgeous silk, satin, gold, or silver sari of the city people. She was one of them. They could feel that she felt herself one of them. In her opening address to the friends she said:

It is a great joy to be here. When I look at your faces it makes me feel that I am seeing the faces of all the Bahá'ís in India. As I have been ill—in the last two weeks I have had two attacks of influenza and been in bed for eight days—I have to be a little careful that I don't get it back again.

I would like to say that the preciousness of this occasion that we have here is far beyond our powers to describe. We must appreciate it. You see it is very seldom that so many devoted Bahá'ís, many of them active in the teaching work, have an opportunity to come together in one place, even for a few hours. I have noticed that mass teaching is the subject that I have been asked to speak on, but I must be excused and speak from my heart what I feel is most important, because mass teaching is the subject of this entire Conference. It is your subject as well as my subject, but now I must at first speak just from my heart.

When our beloved Shoghi Effendi died in 1957, I said that the only Bahá'í we had in the world had died. This Cause of Bahá'u'lláh is so great. It is for at least 1,000 years. Who understands it? Some of us who are here were born Bahá'ís, some have ancestors who were Bahá'ís, some of you became Bahá'ís maybe yesterday or this morning. This is not the point. We are all Bahá'ís. I feel very strongly that if we Bahá'ís want to teach the Message of Bahá'u'lláh to the people of India, the better we have in our minds the concept of how great this Message is, the easier it will be to teach it. I want you to make a little trip with me. Come with me on a little trip and follow my thought. It is night time and we are looking up at the sky—and in India the sky is very clear—and we see this great white river across the sky, which in English we call the Milky Way. City people and village people are familiar with this great river of light, but do all of us know that this river of light is composed of millions and billions of stars just like our sun? How many of us know that we little human beings looking up at the sky, that we on this earth belong to the stars in that river? So great is this river. Now our sun is our centre, and around the centre of this sun which belongs to us are grouped all the planets, and we on this earth are just one of the planets that go around our sun. So, now we get down to this earth. We know where we are out there in space, we know where we are in relation to this sun which is setting, and now let us begin to talk about this planet on which we human beings live.

We Bahá'ís are taught by Bahá'u'lláh that in this world there is a process which is taking place—something which had a beginning and which has an end. Bahá'u'lláh said that thousands and thousands of years ago, long before Krishna came into the world, long before Rama came into the world, long before Buddha came

into the world, we had already Prophets Who came to educate human beings. He tells us that all knowledge comes from these great Divine Prophets Who come to this world to illumine the souls and the minds of human beings. He said that He has come at the top of a cycle that began thousands of years ago and His Revelation will have a direct effect on the world for 500,000 years. The reason that I tell you this is because you are Bahá'ís. You must know what it is you believe, and I don't think any of us realize what it is to be a Bahá'í. If we have enemies in the future, if the people say that these Bahá'ís are wrong and they are taking people out of the true path of Hinduism or of Islám or of Christianity, and they attack us, we must know what it is we believe in, so that we can tell them the truth and so that we will stand firm in our faith. Far from being afraid that we should ever have enemies, we should pray God that a day will come when we will be tested, because when the storm comes the big trees' roots go deeper into the ground and big trees grow taller.

Now, what is it that we believe Bahá'u'lláh has come into this world to do? Is it just to teach us to be good people, to say nice things to each other, to say our prayers and to believe in a life after death? It is much more than that. Bahá'u'lláh said to the people of the world: You are all children and we were all very patient with you, we Fathers, we Prophets, we Krishnas, we Ramas, we Buddhas, we Christs, we Muḥammads, we were all very patient with you; we were your Fathers and you were children, but this is a different kind of day. You know with your own children that you try to get them to behave themselves and to act like adult human beings and to assume responsibility; but they do not do it much of the time, and then you say: Well, after all, they are children. Now, what does Bahá'u'lláh say to us? He says: Finished! You are no longer children. This is the day of your maturity. You human beings are now grown up. Now I am going to talk to you like a son who is 21 years old.

Bahá'u'lláh has given us spiritual teachings, He has given us economic teachings, He has given us social teachings, and on top of that He has given us an entirely new World Order, a World Civilization. Let us take an example that is very easy because it is before our eyes. Let us take the design on this very beautiful tent. This is a particularly beautiful tent and I am very glad that somebody put it over my head so that I can use it as an example. It has different compartments and it has different pillars holding it up. It has different colours and it has different patterns. But it has a plan. Over and over again the same thing is repeated. The motif is the same, these rosettes are the same, these big medallions are the same, these flowers are the same. We Bahá'ís are very much like this. We are the flowers, we are the leaves. Those medallions are the Spiritual Assemblies, these big compartments are the National Assemblies, the whole tent is the Bahá'í world. Now let us sit here for a moment and imagine if we had a tent that was made without any plan. Suppose that instead of these designs you had all the petticoats and all the saris and all the dhotis of all the people and they were hung up. What kind of tent would you have? It would not have been this kind of tent; it would have been a mess! Some of the people of the world think that we Bahá'ís have an organization that is like the petticoat, choli, sari, dhoti, turban organization. They do not know that we have this kind of tent, which is the Bahá'í world. We all know, as Bahá'í teachers, that when we talk to the people and we try and tell them what a wonderful thing the Bahá'í religion is, they do not get it clear in their own minds and they say: "Well, my wife's petticoat is just as good as her husband's dhoti! So why should I become a Bahá'í? I will stay a Hindu and let them be Bahá'ís." When the people say that to us, the trouble is with us. We have not succeeded in conveying to them the greatness of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh and what it stands for in the world today, and this is what we must learn to do if we want to convert the people of India to the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh.

That is why we must always think big; that is why I believe it helps us to first of all think about the world, and then think about history, and then think about the universe, and then think about Bahá'u'lláh and why He is here and what He intends to do. It says in the Bible—I may not be quoting it absolutely correctly—that when I was a child, I thought as a child, I spoke as a child; but now I am grown to manhood, I have put away childish things. Now, when you come to manhood what is required of you? You have to become a full citizen of the place that you live in, you have to assume a citizen's responsibilities. You pay your taxes, you can vote, you marry, start a home and a family of your own, you finish your studies and enter business or enter a profession or you grow up and you go out and become a farmer in your own right. That is what has happened to the human race today. All human beings, according to the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, have reached manhood. We have grown up. Manhood has responsibilities. What are the responsibilities Bahá'u'lláh has given us? There are some things that we must get straight in our minds and I will quote to you from Bahá'u'lláh's Writings so you will know what they are. Bahá'u'lláh says: "... say not that which thou doest not", "nor promise that which [thou] doth not fulfil." These are tremendously important statements. They are not just nice little words. He adds to this something else. He says: "... he whose words exceed his deeds, know verily his death is better than his life." What does this imply? Let us ask ourselves. We are all intelligent Bahá'ís in this place. Let us ask ourselves what these statements of Bahá'u'lláh imply. What do they mean? They mean that a Bahá'í has a character that is like a perfect block of stone that can be

used in a building and that will not shake, that will remain firm, and you can build the whole building if you have stones of this quality. Let us take the first statement of Bahá'u'lláh and apply it to the world: "Say not that which thou doest not." Let us take it and apply it to the United Nations, to the relationships of one country to another. Do they treat each other like this or do they constantly say things to each other which they have no intention of fulfilling, and do not even try and fulfil, and everybody knows it? "Nor promise that which [thou] doth not fulfil"—the nations make promises to each other, just as we individuals make promises to each other: "Oh yes, yes, I would be glad to help you when the time comes", or "When your son goes into business you can count on me." Where is he when your son goes into business? Finished. I don't think we realize that Bahá'u'lláh teaches that the worst characteristic, and the one which will poison the entire nature of human beings, is to tell lies. We lie to each other all the time. I am not talking about Bahá'ís. I am talking about the human race. Somebody telephones and they want to speak with me and I say: "Tell them that I am out." I am not out, I am right there. What is this except a lie? We say things about people which we do not mean, we flatter them, we say: "Oh my, such a beautiful sari you are wearing; what a lovely shade of green." And in our hearts we are saying: My God, my God, with a yellow skin like that why in heaven's name does she wear a green sari! Without our realizing it, lying has become so common in the world that it is a part of everything we do. The merchant lies to the customer, the customer lies to the merchant; the father lies to the child, the child lies to the father; the teacher lies to the pupil, the pupil lies to the teacher, and so on. It is true of human society, from little tiny people in their own homes up to the nations.

We are dishonest in big ways and in small ways; although we might hesitate to steal something because we have a conscience—we won't actually put our hand on it and steal it—yet in other ways we find nice little small methods of stealing which are acceptable in modern society. We take and give bribes, we charge more than is right in order to make more profit for ourselves. This is a very subtle way of stealing. I remember once the Guardian received a cable stating that something he wanted to have done had been accomplished. And he was pleased, in a way, that this had been done but he said: "You know, I am afraid to hear the details because I do not know what they did in order to accomplish it. I hope it was all right." None of you being stupid, you know perfectly well what I am trying to convey. Somebody says I am a Bahá'í and I believe in this, this, this, and this. What difference is there between this man and any other person in the world? No difference. Then what use is this Bahá'í to the world and what use is he to Bahá'u'lláh? He cannot build His edifice with a stone as weak and rotten as that. We do not want people just to say: "That man's religion is Bahá'í and his Prophet is Bahá'u'lláh." We want people to say: "Oh yes, you mean that merchant who is in such and such a place in the bazaar? You know, he is a Bahá'í." We want people to say: "You know that village over there, those people who are so honest and so enterprising and so fine in every way? Yes, those are Bahá'ís. That village is a Bahá'í village." 'Abdu'l-Bahá said that a day will come—He said this when He was in America—He said a day will come when people will stop you in the streets and look into your face and say, "Tell me, what is it you believe? What is it you have?" It is hard to be a good and honourable human being in the world today. I know that. Politics are dirty, business is dirty, there are all kinds of personal pulling and pushing, even in institutes of learning and in the school systems and in the village systems. The world today is in a very, very weak moral condition. We know that.

The point is that we have many things that help us to become better. One of the greatest of these is prayer. We must pray Bahá'u'lláh to help us to become better and to forgive our own weaknesses. Muḥammad said, "Prayer is a ladder by which everyone can ascend to heaven." If we lack something we must ask Bahá'u'lláh every single day to please give it to us. If we lack something in our characters—let us say that we are pious and we are God-fearing, we are good people, but we are very, very stingy—we should pray that God will give us the great characteristic of generosity. If we lack patience with our children or with our clients or with other human beings, we must pray Bahá'u'lláh every night when we go to bed, "Please, Bahá'u'lláh, help me to have patience; increase my patience." This is one way we can change our characters. Another way we can change our characters is just exactly the way we take exercise. The other day I was in Benares and we went on the river and I saw some of the Yogis doing their morning exercises and they were stretching their lungs. All right, their lungs will become stronger because they are exercising. We must exercise those qualities that we don't have. We must practise having them. Not many Bahá'ís realize that one of the teachings of their religion is this: that God never asks of us something that He will not give us the strength to do. He has asked the people of the world to change their characters, to change their thinking, to change their way of life, and He has given them, and will give them, the strength to do it.

Friends, it is very difficult to listen to a talk in two languages. It is hard enough to listen to a long talk in one language, but in two languages it makes it even more difficult, and I will not talk to the point where everybody gets exhausted and wishes that I would stop talking. I have not had the opportunity to consult with the members of the National Spiritual Assembly or with the people who have arranged this programme and therefore I am not in a position to change what they wish done today, but I feel that one of the most

important things in this Conference is to have free discussion about how to carry on the Nine Year Plan given by the House of Justice; we must have suggestions from the people present about the teaching work. With the exception of a few foreigners who are here, from outside India, this is your country; this is your part of the Nine Year Plan; this is your religion and it is your responsibility. Therefore, surely, it must be you who discuss and think about ways and means of doing it. I would be happy to answer questions and I will have the same right as anyone else to make suggestions. (Some written questions were handed to Rúhíyyih Khánum.)

Someone has asked a question—as a matter of fact there are three questions—which I will answer very briefly. Someone has said, “How can a man be certain if his acts are good or bad? Is there any list of good things and bad things?”

Every religion in the world has told us what is good and what is bad, and also we have something in here (pointing to her heart) called conscience, which more or less warns us against what is bad. I think probably the person who asked this question could also get up and answer his own question if he thought about it, about what is good and what is bad. Lying is bad, stealing is bad, adultery is bad. It is very clear; dishonesty, cheating is bad, cruelty is bad. All of these things are so obviously bad that you don’t need anyone to tell you what the list is. Hatred is bad. Turning your face away from people in pride and anger is bad. And I will tell you something that I think is bad, though I can’t think at the moment of anywhere I can quote it from the Bahá’í teachings. Many of us like to give, but we don’t like to receive, and I think that is bad. I would like to add three things that occur to me, which Bahá’u’lláh says are very bad. One is drinking, which is strictly forbidden; the second is the use of drugs, which is absolutely forbidden in the Bahá’í Faith; and the third thing, which Bahá’u’lláh considers one of the worst things in the whole world, is backbiting. He says, “the tongue is a smouldering fire, and excess of speech is a deadly poison.” This is a common disease of humanity, to speak evil of other people and to listen to evil of other people.

He says that we kill people with the sword quickly but the tongue destroys the reputation of a man for a century. I would like to give the Bahá’ís a piece of advice about gossip: remember, it is forbidden in the teachings of Bahá’u’lláh; and if someone comes to you to speak evil of another person, don’t let them first tell you and then say, “You should not say these things”; say, “I don’t want to hear these things. This is forbidden in this religion.”

Another person has asked a question to this effect: “When there is so much inequality in the world, when we are so different from each other, how is it possible to love each other?” Fortunately, I once heard our beloved Guardian speak on this subject to a Bahá’í pilgrim in a most marvellous language. I wish that I could convey a hundredth part of what he said and the spirit with which he said it. This man said that he was not very happy in the Bahá’í community that he was now living in, but that in the Bahá’í community where at first he accepted the Faith he had been very happy. He said: “I don’t love them and I don’t see that I have hardly anything at all in common with them.” Shoghi Effendi said: “That is quite natural. We are very different from each other. How can we love each other? All of us can’t love everybody else all the time; this is quite natural.” He said: “There is a way to do this and that is through the love of God.” He said: “Children, if they love their fathers—though often the brothers and sisters don’t agree, they are very different in temperament and they don’t like each other and they clash—because of their love for their father, and the fact that they know their father loves each one of them, for this love of the father they will love their brothers and sisters. For the sake of Bahá’u’lláh we can love each other and with a real love; it is dependent upon how much we love Bahá’u’lláh.”

I am a simple person and I can sometimes better explain things through things that have happened to me, and I would like to tell you of an experience that I have had since I came to India. It has been a lesson for me and it is on this subject. I love Bahá’u’lláh; I am not worthy to, but I do and I can sincerely say that I love my fellow Bahá’ís. But, at one point in this trip I found that through the attitude of one of the Bahá’ís in one of the places that I went to—and remember I have been to hundreds of places, so none of you know which place it is—that through the attitude of one Bahá’í in one place I really was ready to burst. And I went to my room that night and said, “Really I can’t stand that Bahá’í. He is awful.” And I might add that I had a pretty good reason for feeling that way, and I had one of the hardest battles with myself that I have had in a great many years. All the time, just like any other human being, I remembered what this person had said and I remembered what he had done, and this turned around in my heart and I was angry. I said to myself, “This is not good enough. In the first place, this is a good Bahá’í, he loves the Cause, he serves the Cause, never mind how he has treated you or this person or that person or what he has said and what he has done. He is a good Bahá’í and he loves Bahá’u’lláh.” And I said to myself: “The whole purpose of the teachings of Bahá’u’lláh is to bring about love and unity and if you cannot open your heart enough to take this fellow Bahá’í into it and love him because Bahá’u’lláh loves him and he is your fellow Bahá’í, then where is the peace in the Bahá’í community, where is our unity?” And I was angry and I rolled around in my bed and I

said: "I don't want him in my heart." But this was not good enough. "Please, Bahá'u'lláh, help me, please, please, please. Now I really need help; please take this feeling of anger out of my heart. Please make me love my fellow Bahá'í as I should. Please make me love all the members of this community, because otherwise this Bahá'í unity is a joke, it is a mockery, we will never create it in the world." And thank God, Bahá'u'lláh helped me and I won that battle with myself. But, friends, it was one of the hardest battles I have had to fight for a great many years, and I know that I am a better Bahá'í now than I was before that happened and that I have more strength for the next time I have a test and have to battle with myself. But the thing that enabled me to do it was two things—love of Bahá'u'lláh and praying to Him to please help me to be a good Bahá'í.

Now I have one more question here which I think is a very, very interesting question. Someone has asked: "Can we pray to God? Should we pray to God or should we pray to Bahá'u'lláh?" I heard our beloved Guardian answer this question also, and he said, "You may pray to God, to Bahá'u'lláh, to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, to me, to anybody, but the most important thing is that when you say that prayer, you must know exactly what you are doing." He said that if you pray to God, then you must realize that you are praying to the Infinite Essence, to the Creator, to the Power behind the entire universe, and you must understand the Bahá'í teaching that this Infinite Essence beyond the whole of creation can only be reached by us through His Manifestation. Many, many, many of our Bahá'í prayers, in fact all of them, say "O my God", "O my Lord". When we call upon God with these prayers we must remember the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh that God is revealed to us through the Prophets and that we have no direct way of knowing Him because we are intrinsically different. When we pray to Bahá'u'lláh, we can address our prayers to Him and say: "O Bahá'u'lláh", and open our hearts and say anything we want to Him, but then we must remember that He is the Supreme Manifestation of God for this day, that now He is the Door to Divine Knowledge that has been opened in this world. In other words, we must remember the teachings and Who Bahá'u'lláh is when we pray to Him. The same thing is true about 'Abdu'l-Bahá. We can pray to 'Abdu'l-Bahá and ask Him to help us, or say anything that we wish to say, but then we must remember that 'Abdu'l-Bahá is not the Prophet of God, but that He is the Mystery of God, that He is the perfect man, that He is the Centre of the Covenant and as what He is, we must pray to Him. Then we can pray to the Guardian. We can pray to him and say, "O Shoghi Effendi, help us, you who are the Guardian, the Sign of God on earth, the Interpreter of the teachings, our guide, our protector, our Guardian." We must know who he is according to the teachings and then pray to him in that station. This is true throughout everything. For instance, sometimes I pray to my mother. After all, my mother's soul exists, and I call on her and say, "O mother, help me! You who lived a good life and passed away, who have been accepted by God in His mercy, help your child." Sometimes I pray to Martha Root, and then I pray to the mother of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. You are free to pray to anybody you want to, but you must have the correct concept, otherwise you are praying only to your imagination. These teachings of Bahá'u'lláh are so perfect and so illuminating that we never get tired of hearing about them and studying them.

There is just one question that seems to have been asked by the same person who asked a question about right and wrong, a list of good and bad things. He says: "I am not certain whether meat-eating is bad or good?" Meat-eating is an entirely individual matter. We must remember that just as you Hindus have not eaten meat for thousands of years and this is your custom and your religious belief, there are people in other parts of the world who have been forced to eat meat because it was the only food available in cold countries. They did not have vegetarian food that you have, and they have eaten meat for thousands of years and they never saw anything wrong in it. There are no food prohibitions in the Bahá'í Faith. There are no indications how we should kill or not kill animals or what we should eat or not eat. We are absolutely free. But 'Abdu'l-Bahá has said things which make us believe that gradually the whole world will become vegetarian. There are many western vegetarians, some because they think it is better for their health and others because they think it is wrong to kill anything. But we have many vegetarian Bahá'ís in the West and they are free. They don't want to eat meat. Why should they? They are just as free as you Hindus not to eat meat in your country.

Now a question is: "If circumstances demand that we should tell a lie to save a situation, what should we do?" I can give you only one example of when you are allowed to lie: that is a doctor to his patient. 'Abdu'l-Bahá says this, that a doctor is not forced to tell the truth to his patient. The patient says to the doctor, "Doctor, I feel very, very ill. Am I going to die?" And maybe the doctor knows he may die in two minutes, but he should not say to the patient, "Yes, you are going to die." He has a right to say, "No, don't worry. Why should you die? Why do you think you are going to die? You are going to be all right." Sometimes people ask me things that I don't want to tell them and I certainly will not lie. So I say, "I am sorry, I don't want to answer that question", or I say, "I am sorry, that is none of your business"; but I don't lie and we must not lie. It is not necessary, and if we are going to be the judge as to when we should lie, then we go right back where we are today, where everybody is lying all the time.

Someone has asked me: “We are supposed to love everybody. Then what does it mean in the Tablet of Ahmad where it says, ‘Be thou as a flame of fire to My enemies and a river of life eternal to My loved ones’?” The Bible states: All sins will be forgiven you except the sin against the Holy Ghost, the Holy Spirit. The sin against the Holy Ghost is turning your back on the Prophet, turning your back on the one appointed by the Prophet. It is the sin of not obeying God. Our enemies—people who do not understand, people who are the ill-wishers of the Bahá’í Faith—we should have no feeling of hatred towards because they do it in great ignorance. But the enemy here is the one who waxes proud towards God and who turns his back on God and knows that he is doing it, and these are like serpents in the breast of man. These are the things that are dangerous, that we hate, that we have nothing to do with. This is spiritual death.

Friends, I am not going to answer any more questions, and I think that the advantage of my having answered these was that there has been an exchange between all of us here. We have shared in questions and answers together, but tomorrow we must talk about the teaching work in India.

It is impossible to record here all that was said during this memorable Conference, either by Rúhíyyih Khánum herself or by many other speakers. I have therefore quoted only some of the salient points she made during her address to the attendants, the points which she felt most keenly might be of help to them in their teaching work.

ALL-INDIA TEACHING CONFERENCE—SECOND DAY

On October 16th, when we arrived for the second day of the Conference, Rúhíyyih Khánum was again greeted with innumerable garlands and the shining, happy faces of the believers. As soon as the meeting had been opened, she asked that a roll call be taken to show from what States the friends had gathered. Almost all India was represented, some places such as Bombay having a very large number present. Of course the majority were from Madhya Pradesh and the neighbourhood of Gwalior. Many Bahá’í pioneers and Bahá’í teachers were also present. After remarking on this and that, Amatu’l-Bahá said:

I want to tell you why I am wearing this sari. This is the most precious dress that I own in the whole world. When I went to Bangalore the Bahá’í teachers there told me one evening, very unexpectedly: “You are going to open a new Bahá’í village tonight”, and I said, “I have never opened a village in my life and I don’t know what to do. I will speak; you open the village.” You must all know Mr. Lakshmi Narayan from Bangalore. He is a very big man. I am pretty big as a woman but he is up here. (Rúhíyyih Khánum held her hand over her head.) So he looked down at me and he said, “No, you are going to open the village.” And I was intimidated, so I said “All right”. And we were supposed to go from one village to this other one that is called “Jungle Village”, deep in the forest. Our Bahá’í jeep had gone away and not come back—which seems to be an inherent quality of the Bahá’í jeeps. So I got worried; it got later and later, and one of the Bahá’í teachers said, “We will walk ahead so that the villagers will be awake and there will be some possibility of a meeting.” So I said, “How far is it?” They said, “It is 2 miles. Let’s all go on foot together.” And we started off over the wilderness with the bright moonlight shining, and I was wearing this sari. Finally we came to this village in the darkness. Most of the people had gone to their homes, and we hung up our bright lamp and gradually the villagers came and surrounded us. In front of where we were sitting were two beautiful big palm trees, and in the middle was the moon hanging. I tell you this because this is one of the great experiences of my life and it has something to do with mass teaching. There is an art in the Western World—I don’t know whether you have it in India—in the form of either swords or sticks, called fencing, where each person has a weapon in his hand and then you parry the blows with each other, and whoever makes the thrust wins.

In the West, when we wish to teach the Faith of Bahá’u’lláh, all too often it ends up in an intellectual fencing match. I am more or less used to this kind of teaching because this is the teaching that so far we have in the western part of the world. We build up a mountain of proofs, very much like these brick piles before they fire them, one brick after the other, and then very, very timidly, right on the top, we come and whisper: “You know, Bahá’u’lláh is the Prophet for this age, we think.” The reason we have to teach this way is because people are either not at all spiritual and have no real belief in God or it is buried so deep in them that it is almost impossible to find still that spiritual spark. So you can see how I felt—a strange person, with a strange language, in a strange country, practically in the middle of the night, going to be asked to tell a new village exactly what the Bahá’í Faith is so that the people will become Bahá’ís in this place. And I thought, and I prayed. I said, “God will help me”, and then, in simple words that you use here in India, which I have learned to use here in India, I explained to them that this is what Krishna promised, that He would come again and again when there was darkness, and now there is darkness and now Bahá’u’lláh has come, and I gave some examples. And then the local Bahá’í village teacher spoke wonderfully. I could tell he was speaking wonderfully from the faces of the people and the way he was addressing them, and then, after the meeting was over, after about one and a half hours, someone said, “Now, would some of you people like to become Bahá’ís?”, and one of the first people to say “Yes, I wish to become a Bahá’í” was evidently the

Headman. I noticed he had been watching my face very intently. All the time I was speaking, even though I was speaking in English, he watched and he listened, and he was the first one. I think 21 people became Bahá'ís that night. And the teacher who was taking the names asked me, "Wouldn't you like to sign also?" I said, "Yes, if I can put my thumb print, because I am not enrolled anywhere in the Bahá'í world and I would like to be enrolled somewhere. This is my village, this is a good time for me to put my thumb impression too."

So, now I am a Bahá'í, I hope in good standing, of the Bangalore area in the Jungle Village. You may have been surprised when I said that I had never been registered anywhere. This has come into the Bahá'í Faith since we began to have so many thousands of Bahá'ís. When I was a child there were so few Bahá'ís in my country that everybody knew who was a Bahá'í and this was not necessary.

If people ever ask you, "Why must we sign our name?" you must tell them that this is because in becoming a Bahá'í you have certain rights and privileges. You become a voter in our Bahá'í system of administration, you can vote for your Local Spiritual Assembly; if you are a delegate you can vote for your National Assembly; if you are on your National Assembly and there is an election of the Universal House of Justice, you can vote for the Universal House of Justice. You have a voting right when you join the Bahá'í Faith. Also you become eligible for all Bahá'í bodies yourself within a proper field. And you receive your Bahá'í news bulletin from your National Assembly. So the reason you sign the card is so that your name will be registered and your privileges as a Bahá'í will be protected. I think particularly the Bahá'í villagers and the village teachers must make this absolutely clear when they teach the Faith, because sometimes the people, I hear, are afraid to sign. No one would be afraid to sign if he knew why he was signing. We must always remember that the place that you are a Bahá'í is in here (Rúhíyyih Khánum laid her hand on her heart); it has nothing to do with the signature. Bahá'u'lláh says, "Thy heart is My home; sanctify it for My descent." This is where we become Bahá'ís—in here—but signing is very important because then we have an outer proof of it.

Rúhíyyih Khánum then explained her reaction to this experience. (As this is reproduced from her own notes in the part of this story that tells of our trip to Bangalore, I will omit it here.) Continuing her talk she said:

Friends, you have before you a Nine Year new Plan, but the most important thing in the whole world is not to lose what you have already gained. You have here one of the greatest and most fertile fields of teaching on this planet. This is the Mercy of God to your country. You have won the battle and you must not go back one inch. Now I think two things should come always before your minds and you must always have two principles in this Faith in front of your eyes. One of them is that we have an Administrative Order which is democratic in nature and it functions wonderfully, and this is the way we carry on our Bahá'í work. You have Local Spiritual Assemblies and committees, National Spiritual Assemblies and committees, you have a National Teaching Committee. Everything in the world benefits from organization, we all know that. We cannot live without it for a moment. But there is another principle in our Faith and that is that this religion of Bahá'u'lláh is for whoever accepts it, that each one of us is privileged to teach it and encouraged by Bahá'u'lláh Himself to teach it. We have no priests in our Faith, therefore each individual Bahá'í has a greater burden to bear. This means that ultimately the work of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh in India is in the hands of the rank and file of the believers. You must work with your Local Assemblies, local Teaching Committees, your National Teaching Committee, your National Assembly, but no one can remove from you individually the command of Bahá'u'lláh that this is your religion, you must teach it and you must serve it. This is something that is very well understood in India. I do not have to make an effort to convey what this means to the minds of the Indian people.

The freedom to serve religion is perhaps one of your most precious freedoms in India. You have people that leave their families and go to the Himalayas and pray and meditate and they become swamis and they become sadhus and many devote their whole lives to what they feel is the best way of serving religion. Our beloved Guardian, Shoghi Effendi, in his communications to the Bahá'ís of the world, always said the same thing. He appealed to them to get up and serve. He said: "whether young or old, whether rich or poor, whether ignorant or learned, whether black or white"; and often in his remarks he used to say, "whether ill or well". Sometimes, as I look back on the ten years of the Crusade, I see that those of whom the Guardian was most proud were the ones who were in ill health and served. This now is a time when I think we could have a little discussion on the needs, we could have suggestions from the teachers in different areas about what they feel is a better way of teaching and how they have to be helped, and then we could have our break for our lunch and come back in the afternoon for our meeting.

There followed some discussion and suggestions on the teaching work, mostly at the local level. When this showed signs of lagging, Rúhíyyih Khánum rose and said:

There is a question that I would like to ask if anybody can answer. I don't care who it is, a National Assembly member or a villager. I am just interested in asking why it is that in India, where you have villages where there are many Bahá'ís, they don't build their own Bahá'í Bhawans (Centres) at their own expense? Will somebody answer me that question? Before somebody gets up and answers me I will explain why I ask the question. When I was at the Malaysian Bahá'í Convention we had delegates from the deep interior of the rubber jungle; these people are aborigines and they are amongst the most primitive people in the whole world. Their name is Senoi, and they are naked and they still hunt with bows and arrows. These people had 12 Spiritual Assemblies formed during the last year and they sent delegates from their 12 Spiritual Assemblies to the Convention. At one of the places an entire village was Bahá'í. They wanted a Bahá'í Bhawan and the Bahá'ís of Malaysia told them: "If you want one, you have to build it because we have got no money to build it for you"; and they built one 60 feet long and they did it all themselves, and every single man and woman of the village gave one day a week until it was finished. Now, do you think this was a good thing? This was theirs, it belonged to them, they could be proud of this. And it is a great mystery to me why, when we have so many Bahá'í villages and so many villages where there are so many Bahá'ís, why is it we have so few village Bhawans?

Just let me tell you one other thing, because it is in my mind and it is on this subject. Is it because it is a disgrace for people to work with their hands? Is it because Bahá'ís are too proud to build their Centre? The country of Palestine, where 'Abdu'l-Bahá passed away and Bahá'u'lláh passed away, is the same climate as Gwalior. And 'Abdu'l-Bahá used to come on foot 2 miles in the heat carrying flowerpots to the Tomb of Bahá'u'lláh from one of the gardens in order to plant them near the Tomb of His Father. There was a pump on the side of the wall of the Tomb of Bahá'u'lláh in the old days, one of those hand pumps that you have to handle. I heard that 'Abdu'l-Bahá used to stand, as an old man, and pump water until, from standing against the wall and working, He was so stiff He could not walk away from it. Once they had to come and lift Him away from the wall and rub His legs until the circulation came back. And they said, "Why do you tire yourself so, 'Abdu'l-Bahá?" He said, "What can I do for Bahá'u'lláh?" Shoghi Effendi built the Tomb of the Báb, the superstructure—you have seen photographs of it—and in order to do this he had to dig back into the mountain about 20 feet into the solid rock behind the Shrine because it is built on the side of the mountain. They had to dig and dig out a huge part of the rock in order to increase the size of the Shrine. And Shoghi Effendi supervised all this work himself, and he used to go and stand on his feet, sometimes eight hours, with no lunch, and tell the labourers—not the foreman, the labourers—do it this way, do it that way, put it here, take it from there. When he used to come back he had mud on his trousers to the knees and he would say to me, "Can't you brush off a little of this before you give it to the maid to clean? What will she think?" The reason I tell you this, friends, is because we are like the dust under the feet of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi; we are nothing in front of them and the things they did with their own hands, with their own strength, because they set us an example of service.

In Germany, after the war, in Frankfurt, they wanted to build a Ḥaẓíratu'l-Quds, a National Bahá'í Headquarters. Of course the Bahá'ís could not build it in a big city. It is impossible there for people to go with their own hands and build a building. But there was an old building on the place they had to build, and the Bahá'í youth went, and one whole summer during their vacation the Bahá'í youth, with no payment, cleared the ground for this place.

Now, will somebody get up and tell me why you do not have Bahá'í Bhawans in your villages where you have Bahá'ís?

Although I am quoting from Amatu'l-Bahá's talks at length—in order to convey her advice on the teaching work to the friends—it must not be forgotten that throughout the entire Conference there were many talks and much animated discussion. Indeed, she herself felt that the most important part of this Conference was the views, the offers of service, the enthusiasm expressed by so many of the believers.

A discussion followed as a result of her question, which brought out many aspects of the problem: that unless the whole village was Bahá'í the people would not arise to build a Bhawan as the Senoi had in their village in Maya; that often all property inside a village belongs to well-to-do villagers who may refuse to part with a piece for a Bahá'í Centre; that in some districts, no matter how willing the Bahá'ís may be, there is no local building material such as wood or bricks and that to buy it from afar is often too much for the friends to afford.

One of the friends said: "My room in the village is itself a Bahá'í Bhawan. I live in a rented house and there is a sign at my place saying that this is the Bahá'í Centre—there should always be an indication that this is a Bahá'í Centre." Another friend stated the same thing—he was a doctor and over his dispensary he had put a sign saying it was a Bahá'í Centre. He had also applied to the government and received a Bahá'í burial-ground.

Everyone was particularly touched, and Rúhíyyih Khánúm was particularly thrilled, when a young man got up and said, “You may not recognize me, but I am your spiritual child.” He was one of those officials who, many months before, had joined the Bahá’ís in the waiting room of the Indore airport when the plane was late! At first he said he thought she was a tourist, but he became so interested in the Bahá’í meeting that he looked up the Bahá’ís and was now one himself. He said: “Pitch up a tent and use it as a Bahá’í Bhawan. Put in chairs and a table and the Bahá’í Bhawan is ready!”

A friend from the very active Diamond Harbour community stated that when the believers knew Rúhíyyih Khánúm was coming to a meeting there they had raised some money for it—Rs.314/-. Then, because of illness she had had to cancel her visit to them, and they decided to use this money to build their local Bahá’í Bhawan. Although there are only 14 believers there, one of them contributed a piece of land and they are determined to build their Centre by 1967. He added a most beautiful thought: when they planned their meeting for Rúhíyyih Khánúm they needed money for it, but they did not like to ask the National Assembly for it because “the parents have raised you and now you have to serve the parents” (i.e. the National Spiritual Assembly).

One of our dear friends from Baghchini—where at the very beginning of our trip we attended our first village conference—said we should sacrifice and give to others, not gather for ourselves! “When Amatu’l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánúm came to us in February we promised we would have a Bahá’í Bhawan. The land has been secured and the material is ready. It will be constructed soon.”

One of the friends said a Bahá’í Bhawan Fund should be established, and another called attention to the fact that we are still only at the beginning of the Nine Year Plan, we can keep construction of these Centres for the last year.

But Rúhíyyih Khánúm had her own ideas on this subject. She said:

Friends, I think that we must not try and win all the goals of the Plan in the first year or the ninth year. Everything is good when it is done in the middle of the way, reasonably and intelligently, and the same thing is true of your Bahá’í Bhawans; build them where you can, when you can, the sooner the better, but you don’t have to get them all done the first year, as this young man said. But don’t confuse the city Bhawan and the village Bhawan. The people in cities are too busy to ever properly do anything. That is why they don’t become Bahá’ís in the city. The village Bahá’í Bhawan is so important that it can be, you might say, the foundation stone of the whole system of Bahá’u’lláh gradually being introduced into that village. Bahá’ís teach in it, they have their Feasts in it, they have their meetings in it, they have study classes in it, they can have a Bahá’í reading room in it. The Spiritual Assembly can hold its meetings in it. You should have a Bahá’í children’s class in it. And another thing you can do with it: if the village is in need of a place for other kinds of meetings, i.e. not political, but for social work or village industries, instruction to women, or whatever it is, you can say, we have this Bahá’í Centre but we also want the people of the village to benefit from it; now we will allow you to use it on Tuesday night, or whatever it is.

Now I have been asked a question which I don’t want to remain for another session: “When we go for mass teaching to villages, should we take signatures of those who want to become Bahá’ís at the first meeting or after the second or third meetings?” I don’t know who asked me this question but I would like to ask him or her a question: “If you are driving in the middle of the street and you meet a cow on the road, should you pass on the left or on the right side?” You will use your mind about the cow. You will say this cow I should better pass on the right; I can enrol her tonight. This other cow, you look at it and say I am not at all sure, she has a very, very funny look in her eyes. I better enrol her in the second meeting! There are no rules to teaching except one, and that is to take the Faith of Bahá’u’lláh to the people and accept them as quickly as you can.

The morning session then ended, and was closed with a prayer.

When everyone sat down to lunch, long rows of people seated cross-legged on the floor, a leaf plate in front of each, a glass for water, and some of the friends passing the simple fare out to the friends, Rúhíyyih Khánúm joined them, sitting at ease and eating with her fingers as they did, completely unself-conscious. The handsome, weather-beaten faces of the village friends glowed with joy and pride. I was secretly amused to see some of our Iranian visitors, who had never eaten in this way in their lives, stand and observe her in amazement, then wander off to find a place on the floor for themselves and seek to follow her example.

After lunch the friends were re-assembled to the sound of music. Harmonium, drum, and the beautiful religious songs of India surrounded Rúhíyyih Khánúm as she sat on the platform, waiting for the next session to begin.

After prayers and introductory remarks, Rúhíyyih Khánúm was invited to again address the Conference:

My heart has ached as I travelled over India because there were such tremendous possibilities and nobody to do the work. As you know, I have spent almost seven months travelling in India, with dear Shirin Khánúm

with me, and I have gone from one place where there were Bahá'ís to another place. But when I came from Ceylon with Mrs. Nakhjavani and my cousin, we decided to go and see the temples of southern India, and we were alone and this was a great eye-opener to me. If we had had any idea before that it was because somebody could speak the Indian language and knew how to reach the hearts of the people, that this was why they found the people to teach, this idea was removed from us in the two weeks we were alone. The receptivity of the people to the Bahá'í Faith is so great that it is almost terrifying. Everywhere we went people wanted to know what we were and who we were, and when we said we were Bahá'ís and gave them a little idea of what this Faith stands for, they were so hungry that we could have stayed there and started a Bahá'í group, a Bahá'í Assembly, spoken in colleges, spoken in schools, spoken in temples even, if we had had the time. It is heart-breaking to see this great possibility and not be able to do anything about it! The whole of the south of India is waiting for teachers, particularly teachers that can speak the Tamil language. Where are these people? Who is going to teach in the south? One of the things that impressed me very much is that when we went to Bhubaneswar, where we went only to see the temples—because I vowed I was going to try to see something of Indian art—we found people there so receptive to the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh that they were just begging for it. Every time somebody says, “Oh, it is only the villagers that are receptive to the Bahá'í Faith, I find a whole mass of intellectuals and highly instructed people who are just as ready for the Bahá'í Faith. Any time they tell me, “You know, it is really only the intellectuals that understand the Bahá'í teachings”, then I see a group of villagers that have a mastery and understanding of the Faith that professors might envy.

Anyone who has tasted the sweetness of giving these Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh to other people and seeing how happy it makes them, and that they accept it, will never give it up for anything in the world. I have, as you know, practically no relatives in this world. Mrs. Nakhjavani has a husband who is a young man and two young children, but since this trip in India we both feel exactly the same. We cannot picture life without being able to travel and teach. There is a Bahá'í lady here from Ujjain area. You must have seen her. Her eye is bothering her. She, I understand, is responsible for bringing in hundreds of people into this religion of Bahá'u'lláh. She has suffered a great deal because of her love of the Faith. If you ask her if she is going to give this up, she can't. This is too sweet in her mouth. She can never give it up. If it is a question of hardship, I want to ask you when you look back on life what are the things that for some strange reason you remember best and with the most pleasure? You remember your hardships. I don't know why this is a law of God but it is the law of God. One day 'Abdu'l-Bahá was driving in Washington from one appointment to another. His name was in all the newspapers, He was meeting all the famous people of the United States. He had been an exile and a prisoner from the time He was 9 years old until He had a long white beard, and now, as He was being driven, this old man, around Washington from one appointment to another, He said: “Oh, Bahá'u'lláh, what have You done, what have You done? Oh, Bahá'u'lláh, what have You done?” He remembered all the sufferings of the past. He remembered the mark of the iron collar that Bahá'u'lláh, His Father, had worn in the Sýáh-Chál, in the dungeon of Tihrán, and that mark never left His neck until He died; it was bitten into His flesh. He remembered when Bahá'u'lláh had only one shirt and He had to stay in His room until it was washed and dried, and somebody could give it back and He could put it on and come out of His room. I have no doubt He remembered, when He sat down to the banquets of the Americans, the dried dates and dried bread that He ate in Baghdad. And 'Abdu'l-Bahá used to say, “Nothing is ever going to taste as sweet as that dried crust of bread and the dried dates of Baghdad.” What do you farmers say to your young sons when they farm nowadays with better oxen and better ploughs and better methods than you had when you were young men? Do not all of you remember when the rain did not come and the cattle died and you pulled the plough with your own shoulders? Did you have such experiences? Aren't these the experiences in life that you look back at? This is the thing that you tell your sons. You say, “I have suffered, I know what it is to have hardships. I am the one who made this farm, I am the one who built this house.” You remember the hardships of your life with pleasure when they are passed. What I am getting at is this: some of you will go out and serve because you want to and it is a joy for you, but others I want to persuade to go out and serve because it is a hardship and a sacrifice for you.

Your National Assembly is going to meet here on the 18th (October 1964) specially so that they will be available to any of the Bahá'ís who have attended this Conference who wish to come and discuss with them how they can go out as teachers into the field at this time. The highest sacrifice, of course, is to turn your back on everything and go. That is first-class sacrifice. But there are many other ways that we can sacrifice. Those who are government employees and those who are school teachers can, instead of staying home with their families and taking care of their own affairs and having a nice vacation on their holidays, they can give that holiday to the teaching work in India. Supposing that you have 1,000 teachers and civil servants who volunteer to give their summer vacations, their longest vacations or say one month, or some vacation in the year, to teaching work; that would make 1,000 months available for teaching in India. Think what that means! Let the young people who are university students give their vacations to the Bahá'í Faith. This will teach them more than all the degrees they can get from any university.

I think a special appeal should be made to the villagers in India because the villagers are excellent Bahá'í teachers. They understand other villagers, and I hope they will go out from their homes and give one month, two months, three months, one year, if they can, in the teaching field; let them leave their house with a brother or a nephew or a son or a capable wife and go and render this service to Bahá'u'lláh.

After Shoghi Effendi passed away I did not know any way that I could say to the Bahá'ís, "Please go out and do his work and fulfil his hopes and obey his commands." So I said the best thing is I will go myself. Maybe this is the loudest voice with which one can speak. I would like to say to the Bahá'í ladies present, many of them are my age, that if I can do it, you can do it. And please do not say that because I am Rúhíyyih Khánúm everything is easy for me and I get special treatment on the part of Almighty God. I may get a little more pity from Him for my sorrows in life and my sufferings, but it is a much harder trip for me than it would ever be for any of you.

Now, friends, I have said all I am going to, and I think the meeting should be again, like this morning, thrown open to discussion and I will ask you the way I did this morning, one question. The question is: WHO IS GOING FIRST?

This remark opened the flood-gates and one person after another arose, came up to the platform and offered to go personally as a pioneer, a resident teacher, a travelling teacher, or for the short period he or she had available during the year as vacation, leave, or school holidays. Before the Conference was over, more than 100 offers were received.

Particularly impressive was an old villager, a short, swarthy man who came up to the microphone and stated that he was ready to stay at home and attend to all the affairs of the house and farm so that his two sons could go out at once and teach. This seemed such a stupendous decision for anyone to make in a five-minute period that Rúhíyyih Khánúm, through an interpreter, asked him where his two sons were. "Right down there", he said, indicating the floor half-way down the terrace. Rúhíyyih Khánúm said: "You had better call them up here." Two very tall men, apparently in their early thirties, came and stood behind their father. "Are you really ready to go out and teach now?", she asked them. "Oh, yes", they were quite ready!

The spirit of the Conference attendants, as witnessed in many acts such as this, reminded me of the early days of our Faith in Persia when the people arose—not to go and teach but to go and be martyred! Here was that same spirit, but not death was required, but life; to give one's life in the teaching work. And these villagers were ready to do just that, as our Persian Bahá'í villagers had been ready to die.

At the end of this general and thrilling participation of the attendants, Rúhíyyih Khánúm said:

Friends, we will close our evening session because we have something that we hope will make you all happy, the pictures of the International Convention in Haifa, coloured slides of the election of the Universal House of Justice, of the Holy Places in Haifa and 'Akká, and pictures of the great World Congress. Mrs. Nakhjavani is going to show you these slides and it has been suggested that you see them now because later the buses will come and those who are going to sleep in the city must return early. I will not stay because from love and excitement and from pride and from hope I am absolutely exhausted.

It is about eight months since I began my tour of the villages and towns in India here in Gwalior. I was going to spend about four months in India and the rest of the time in Sarawak and Malaysia. It was my plan but it was not in God's plan. There was a war in Sarawak and I could not go because I could not get into the interior to see the Bahá'ís. The result was that I have spent many, many months in all parts of India. I have been almost everywhere in India, with the exception of three States. Few of you Indian Bahá'ís know your country the way I know it now.

The last time I was in Gwalior Mr. Lad came to me the day I was driving out from here. He said, "When will you come back? Give me a fixed promise, when will you come back?" And I said, jokingly, "Well, when you have a lot of Bahá'ís." He said, "How many?" I said, "Oh, one million." He said, "All right, you must promise when we get our million, you will come back." He went his way and I went my way, and something very bad happened to me. I am now willing to settle for less! I come of a long line of Scottish merchants. So I won't tell you my price. But it is considerably lower. No matter when you get your first million, I can't wait that long. I will be back before then. (This remark received a storm of applause.)

ALL-INDIA TEACHING CONFERENCE—THIRD DAY

The morning session on October 17th was opened with prayers, reading of many loving messages from different parts of the world, announcement of a special concentrated teaching course for those who could remain for the 18th, 19th, and 20th, and a speech on behalf of the National Teaching Committee by its English secretary. When Rúhíyyih Khánúm arose to address the gathering she said:

Friends, it is a very wonderful Faith that we belong to. This young man in the dhoti was a British Officer in Malaya. If you know anything, if you remember anything about the British régime in this part of the world—look what Bahá'u'lláh does. I think if his Commanding Officer could see him now he would want to shoot him. He would say, “What are you doing in that costume? Have you gone native?” And of course the answer is, “Yes, I have gone native, I am a native Bahá'í now of India and I don't really care what you think about it!”

When I was going to Bombay from Aurangabad, the night before I left I was talking with a young Parsi non-Bahá'í girl we had met in the hotel about which sari I was going to wear the next day. And she said, “Are you going to arrive in Bombay in a sari?” And I said, “Why not? Can you give me any reason why I should not?” She was a little embarrassed, and then she said, “No, but they may think that you are married to an Indian.” I said, “Do you think I would be ashamed of being married to an Indian? What on earth are you thinking about? I am not thinking this way at all. I am proud of wearing a sari, whether I am married to an Indian or not, and that is what I am going to arrive in Bombay in.” And when this young lady saw the Bahá'ís of Bombay come and practically knock me on the ground with garlands and put about 40 pounds of weight of flowers around my neck, I think she changed her mind entirely about a sari and about people's prejudices and about this costume and whether we should be snobs or not!

Friends, there are some things that should be said and I am afraid that I might forget to say them in my excitement this afternoon when the hour of parting draws nearer, so I wish to say them now. I want to thank the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of India for their love, for their unfailing cooperation, for everything that they have done for me in India and during my travels in this part of the world. I am sure I have been many times a sore trial to them, especially to poor dear Professor Rai. I have not let him know where I was, I have changed my plans and forgotten that perhaps the National Assembly might like to know what the change was. I have gotten ill and worried him, and yet I have received one loving letter after another from him! With the exception of the Bombay members who are tied down and far from Delhi, I have had the chance of working more or less closely with all the other members of the National Assembly at different times. And I think that they have shown the most wonderful spirit in their teaching work with me.

I think your teaching work in India comes under roughly three headings. You have places where the teaching work has gone far ahead, to an extent where you have tens of thousands of Bahá'ís in a relatively small area. One of those areas is right here in Gwalior and the other is the Ujjain-Indore area. Now, in theory—and you are all sensible, practical people—in theory, when you have a relatively small geographic area with tens of thousands of Bahá'ís, you should be able to find enough Bahá'ís in your own area to do your circuit teaching and get the people in the Faith to supervise the elections of the Local Spiritual Assemblies next April. Remember that mathematically everything has a certain ratio or percentage. I mean by that that all milk that a cow gives has a certain percentage of butter in it; the fat is a certain percentage of the milk. To me the percentage of fat in the milk is the percentage of Bahá'í teachers, and you might say Bahá'í leaders, in the sense of those who inspire their fellow Bahá'ís and keep them firm in the Cause. This quality, this calibre of Bahá'ís is what I call the percentage of butter in the milk. Now, let us say that there is 10 per cent of this kind of Bahá'ís for every 100 Bahá'ís. This means that if you have 1,000 Bahá'ís you should get 100 outstanding Bahá'ís as an average of your butter in that milk. This is not a theory, this is a law, and you must look around and be sure you are getting your full 10 per cent, and that that 10 per cent is fulfilling its capacity of helping serve in your area. When you have an area where there are so many Bahá'ís, you don't have to have so many people serving that area because one outstanding Bahá'í can go and teach in a village of 1,000 Bahá'ís. You see my point. In theory you people in this area, Madhya Pradesh and Ujjain area, should have quite enough capacity in your own area to fulfil your own teaching needs and expansion needs. You must have confidence in yourselves. You don't always have to have somebody from outside come and do the work for you. I am a Bahá'í and you are a Bahá'í and he is a Bahá'í and she is a Bahá'í. Each one of us has his own capacity to serve the Faith. Bahá'u'lláh will help anyone who arises to serve.

Now the second category, the second classification in my mind of the teaching work in India is this. You have places where you are in between two things. The Faith has been introduced in that area but you have not yet got thousands of Bahá'ís nor have you yet developed your experienced Bahá'ís. These places desperately need help at this time. It is like a man who lights a fire and he cannot control it. He needs more men to be sure that the fire spreads in the direction he wants it to. I would like to call out by name some of these areas because it may inspire some of you to go and help there. We must always remember that no matter how devoted we are, each one of us still has only 24 hours in one day.

I was immensely impressed and immensely touched by my visit to Karikal. Karikal is a very backward place in India. I won't go into that subject, but the French colonies seem to have been left, at the end of their custody—or whatever the word is—in a very bad condition. They are beyond, I mean below the standard of other places in India. The Government of India, being wise and loving towards its subjects, has recognized

this and it has taken all the previously French colonies and set them up under one special administration so that they can get help and special care until they are strong enough to be incorporated into the State to which they would normally belong. The people of Karikal are absolutely ready for the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. They are very poor and some of them were actually hungry. My impression, which of course may be entirely wrong—it is only one individual's—is that Karikal is either going to get Bahá'u'lláh or it is going to get communism. We have nothing to do with politics, but we know that a political philosophy is not going to solve the problems of this world. Only the Divine Remedy can solve them. It would be much better for your country—India—if these teachings of Bahá'u'lláh are spread in Karikal, and it is, as I say, waiting. All it needs is more Bahá'í teachers. It needs young people, people who are strong enough to go on foot to the villages over the rice paddy walks, people who are devoted and consecrated, and you will have hundreds of Assemblies in Karikal. Two Bahá'í women, all alone, have established the Faith in that place and now the harvest is beginning to ripen, but they must be helped. They need more teachers and they need young people, and I beg of some of you to arise and go to Karikal.

Pondy (Pondicherry) is the capital of all of these previously French States and there is a wonderful group of Bahá'í young people there, but they desperately need to have a Bahá'í headquarters. They have absolutely no place to meet. You know in India what the problem is: young people living in their parents' homes barely have a bedroom of their own. Where can they meet and where can they teach the Faith? They need to have a Bahá'í headquarters, they need a strong pioneer to go there and establish himself in business, or one of our friends may retire from Bombay and go and be happy in Pondy. There are two things: the need for young, active teachers—or old teachers if they are willing to walk—for Karikal, and the need for a settler who can provide a headquarters in Pondy itself.

The other place that I want to mention, because I think it has a significance—it is in the heart of a tribal area—is Ooty. The Bahá'í pioneer from Ooty is here. He has a restaurant. He has gone and established himself there. He has a devoted wife. They have some young children. The whole of the mountain area of Ooty is just like a vineyard covered with grapes, hanging on the vines, and nobody to go out and pick them, because he can seldom get away from his shop in order to go out. How can he leave the shop with nobody, practically, to take care of it and go out day after day into the hills to teach? He needs help.

These are places where the possibilities are infinite. The new Bahá'ís have not yet developed their cream, their 10 per cent of teachers who can devote time locally to the work, and the pioneers there have too much on their own hands. As I have said, there are only 24 hours in a day for each of us.

Then there is Rewa area. Mr. Gupta has done wonderful work there and the Cause again has reached that point where it is spreading like wild fire, but it hasn't enough teachers to supply the needs. Our dear Mr. Lad has been transferred to that area and these two Bahá'í brothers are working day and night, but Mr. Lad's job ties him down a great deal. We need some young people to go there who are free to travel around and help in teaching.

There is another area that needs help, perhaps not as much as these that I have mentioned, but I felt that there was a great need there and my conscience tells me that I have to mention its name, and that is the Mysore area. Mysore is a place where we are beginning again to reach the tens of thousands but it is going so fast that the fine crop of Bahá'í teachers they have already developed cannot keep up with it. It is like a tide coming in. They can't run fast enough to get ahead of it. Karikal, the city of Pondy, and Rewa, in my estimation, need settlers, but I think that Mysore could benefit greatly from volunteers who would say, "I will go and give you a month or six weeks; you arrange a teaching circuit for me and I will be at your disposal." Especially if they have their own jeeps.

I believe that you must consider your jungle teaching, like the Bastar area and deep up in the Rewa area and anywhere you want to do tribal teaching, a very slow proposition where you have to have a very sympathetic and devoted teacher who will just go and stay on there until the people know him well and are ready to listen to him. It is a different kind of teaching from villages; it is the third category.

You must forgive me, friends, for talking so long, but you must be patient with me. I have given you six months of my life and now I am going away. I don't know how soon I will be back and I really must say these things. I want to appeal to your pity, as human beings, for the tribal people. I don't think you know what it means to be a tribesman in the jungle and suddenly find that the whole world of modern civilization is coming towards you. When I met the Bastar people who, except for the Senoi and Vedas in Ceylon and the Australian Aborigines, are the most primitive people I have met in my life—when I met the Bastar people, we had a little conversation, and I would like to repeat it to you. I said to them: "Are you pleased that the road is coming to your village?" And they said, "Yes". I said: "When you meet the people from out there, from towns and other parts of India, do you feel at a disadvantage with them?" They said, "Oh, yes, and what is more, we feel very afraid of them." "Well," I said, "you must remember that if my people should suddenly

arrive in this jungle, full of tigers, and you people running around with bows and arrows, they would be terrified too. Fear is a natural thing.” Now I can’t repeat everything that I said to them but the gist of it is this, that if these primitive tribesmen can come in contact with the civilized people of India and as Bahá’ís meet them, then they have a weapon in their hands to defend themselves against civilization. If one of these half-naked, ignorant people should come in contact with a man, say in Delhi, and he could tell him, “You know what I believe? Oneness of God, oneness of the Prophets, oneness of mankind, equality of men and women, universal language, education for all, universal suffrage . . .” and all our other Bahá’í teachings, then that man would be honoured and the city man would look at him as if he were from some other planet and say, “Where did this creature from the jungle come from? I thought of them as savages from the jungle, but he is speaking in a more civilized way than I am.” Have pity on the tribes. Don’t reproach yourself, ten or fifteen years from now, when these tribes may have been eaten up by our civilization and disappeared from the face of the world because we Bahá’ís didn’t go and put our arms around them. Now, friends, these are some of my thoughts and I think that concrete offers and concrete suggestions should now come from all of you, the way it did yesterday. We had a very memorable and wonderful meeting.

In response to this appeal a great many friends made both concrete offers and valuable suggestions. One mother said that she could not leave her home and children, but if anyone would go in her place, she would pay all the expenses for one month. The friends volunteered their lives, their summer vacations, their week-ends, some hours every day, to teach. Many were eager to go to the jungle areas, others to open new territories, others to settle in the holiest city of India—Benares—and teach the Faith there. As one believer after another stood up and spoke, it became clear that all Rúhíyyih Khánum’s dearest projects would be taken care of and that she could leave India with her mind at rest. From members of the National Assembly, from the oldest and newest communities, the born Bahá’í and the Bahá’í of yesterday, offers of service poured in. The variety of offers alone was a revelation of the spirit of the friends. One believer with a beautiful voice, offered to sing the praises of Bahá’u’lláh in any gathering in the world as his way of teaching (he is successful at it). Another stated that from now on his hobby was going to be teaching the Cause of God, that he had vowed never again to hear or repeat scandal or backbiting. One promised to enrol 500 more Bahá’ís—another 10,000! How marvellous to realize that in India both of these promises can really be fulfilled! One vowed he would “conquer 324” more villages. The eagerness of these friends not only to serve but to help each other was truly an example to the entire Bahá’í world. A Tamil-speaking teacher volunteered to go to Karikal; Rúhíyyih Khánum was concerned, as we had seen what he was doing in his own area. She said, “If you go, who will carry on with your work? At least two people must go to take your place . . .” Immediately two quiet, dignified villagers got up and said: “We will go and do his work so he is free to go to the Tamil-speaking places. We know the language of his area.” The editor of the Bahá’í magazine offered to go and teach where his language was needed, but who would do his work? Another friend, a capable young Bahá’í we knew, got up and said he would do it and free the older man for his service. It is impossible to describe the feeling of oneness, of unity of purpose, that held us all in its spell.

After a joyous recess for lunch, when once again Amatu’l-Bahá sat with the friends on the floor, the Conference gathered for the last session. I will quote from the highlights of Rúhíyyih Khánum’s talk that afternoon:

Shoghi Effendi said to the Bahá’ís over and over again that the Bahá’í Fund was the life blood of the Bahá’í world. We must look upon ourselves as a great spiritual army. We are on the march to conquer the world for our King—Bahá’u’lláh. Our armour is the love of God, our weapons are the Word of God. But no army can function without any transportation and any food. We are the only religion that I have ever heard of that will accept no money from people that are not members of our Faith. We Bahá’ís feel that this Message of Bahá’u’lláh that has come to our knowledge is our great gift to our fellow men and that we must give it freely. Nobody can buy it from us; it is our free gift. Public audiences ask me why don’t you build a Bahá’í Temple here, why don’t you open a Bahá’í medical clinic here, why don’t you start a Bahá’í Centre here and so on. The Bahá’ís want to do this, and some day we will do it, but as we never force Bahá’ís to give to this religion and we will take no money from non-Bahá’ís, we have to spend money as we have it. We can only do what lies in our power to do. One kind of giving is to suddenly fix your mind on some particular thing and say, “Very well, I will build the Bahá’í Centre, I will supply the Bahá’í jeep, I will pay the expenses of some teacher to go in my place because I cannot go myself.” This kind of help we always need and we Bahá’ís deeply appreciate it. But this is very much like the kind of help we get when we say we need rain and someone takes a bucket of water and throws it out of the window into the garden. This will not make the crops grow. The thing that will make the crops grow is one little drop after another. It is these little drops that the Bahá’ís have been encouraged by Shoghi Effendi to give. If each one of us gives one rupee a month, that would be a great deal. If we cannot give one rupee and if we give 10 naye paise, that will also be of great help. If we cannot give 10, if we can give only 5, that will also be of great help. We must never be ashamed of what we offer God.

I remember a story about ‘Abdu’l-Bahá when He was in London and some travellers came from Russia; they had seen the Bahá’ís in Russia, some Bahá’í villagers, and they wanted to send ‘Abdu’l-Bahá a present, but they had nothing except the bread they were eating. So they took a piece of this bread and they wrapped it up very politely and very carefully and they gave it to these Bahá’ís. They said, “When you see ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, offer Him this; this is all we have.” And ‘Abdu’l-Bahá opened this parcel and with tears in His eyes He shared this bread with the Bahá’ís who were present that day at lunch with Him. Two thousand years ago a poor widow came into the presence of Jesus Christ and she offered Him a tiny, tiny thing; I do not even remember what it was. But for two thousand years, to the Christian people this offering has been known as the “widow’s mite”, the little thing of the widow. When people give something that is in small quantity, we say it is a widow’s mite. For two thousand years that gift has been remembered. It is the smallest gift mentioned in the Bible. Therefore, as I said, we must never be ashamed of how little we offer God, because He is our God and He understands and He will take whatever we give Him in the spirit in which we give it to Him.

The Bahá’ís give to their National Fund and they receive in their names a receipt from the Treasurer. They give to their Local Spiritual Assembly and the Treasurer of the Local Spiritual Assembly gives them a receipt for the sum. But we found in the city where I lived in Canada that some of the Bahá’ís were so poor that it was difficult for them to come and ask for a receipt for such a small sum as, say, 5 naye paise. As you know, we have nineteen Bahá’í months in our Bahá’í year, and each month we come together and we have a Nineteen Day Feast. We have prayers, we have readings from the Holy Writings, then we have a talk with our Spiritual Assembly, they tell us what they are doing and we ask questions and make suggestions, and then we all have refreshments. This should be the happiest day for every Bahá’í in the whole month, the day when we come together and see each other’s faces. Now in our city we used to put—the Treasurer of our Spiritual Assembly would put—on the table a jar and any Bahá’í who wished to give some money for the work of the Spiritual Assembly in that city was free to put money in it. Nobody could see how much it was. When the meeting was over, the Treasurer would count the money and make a record for the Spiritual Assembly that at such and such Nineteen Day Feast we collected, say, 19 rupees or 20 rupees or whatever it was. So you see, there are many ways that we can give to the Cause. We give our lives, we give our time, we teach, and we must also try and support it. However little it may be, we should try and give it regularly so that our Local Assembly and our National Assembly can function properly.

There are two things in our Bahá’í Administration that I wanted to call to your attention. You have a custom here in India which is new to me. You call what we say is the Chairman of the Spiritual Assembly, the President of the Spiritual Assembly. Perhaps this is a habit that does not mean anything but it is a thing that I have never heard anywhere else. I hope that the mentality will never grow up amongst the Bahá’ís of believing that it is more important to be the Chairman of the Assembly than just a member of the Assembly, or more important to be the Secretary than just another member of the Assembly. The Spiritual Assembly, as you know, is elected by the Bahá’ís by secret ballot and then it is responsible to Bahá’u’lláh, not to the people who elect it, but to Bahá’u’lláh for conducting the affairs in that community in a proper way according to His Teachings. The purpose of a Spiritual Assembly is to serve the Bahá’ís of that community. They are the servants of all the members of the community that have elected them. Therefore, they must be the greatest examples to the community of integrity, of selflessness, of devotion, of humility. They are the servants of the servants of God.

Remember that the title ‘Abdu’l-Bahá chose for Himself was “the Servant of the servants of God”.

There is another principle which alone—if we could bring it to the attention of the people of the world—is enough to make them take the teachings of Bahá’u’lláh very seriously. This is the teaching that we must protect the rights of the minority. The habit of the people of the world is for the majority to put a foot on the neck of the minority and step hard. Shoghi Effendi told us—and I remember when this teaching was given to us in the English language and I read it in America, what a great revelation it was to us, this thing that he told us—he said that when you have your elections by secret ballot for your Spiritual Assembly and you have a tie, which occurs sometimes, two people have exactly the same number of votes, you must find out whether one of these people represents a minority in that Bahá’í community, and if he does, you do not have to re-vote. Automatically the vote goes to the minority. Supposing that you are a village of Brahmins and you have a very small group of untouchables in that village. It will be the untouchable that is the minority and automatically he will get the vote. If he is equal in devotion to the Cause of God, if he is as good as this man or that man, then the minority will get the vote. Supposing that you are a village of Bahá’í wood-cutters and you have one Brahmin and he is tied on the vote; you give the Brahmin the vote automatically because he is then in the minority. This applies to everything. If you were all Muslims and it was the Hindu that was in the minority; if you were all Hindus, then it was the Muslim who was in the minority; whoever the minority is, they must be given preference in this particular matter just in order to show how we protect the people in this world. Friends, I ask you, particularly the young people who are, in their studies and in their

work, in contact with many people of various political minds, to think about this one teaching of Bahá'u'lláh and weigh it in your minds and consider its implications for reforming the whole society of this planet.

I was happy to hear what one of your friends said about politics, that previously he had been interested in politics and helping politicians, but since he had become a Bahá'í he knew that only Bahá'u'lláh's plan would solve the problems of the world, and he had nothing more to do with politics. This was a very important thing that he said, and you should know that recently, during the last year in this fighting in Sarawak between the forces of Indonesia and the forces of Malaysia, something has happened that was a great honour to the Bahá'í Faith. There are about 12,000 Bahá'ís, all of them tribesmen, fighting tribes, in the interior of Sarawak and these people were in the zone where they had developed warfare, and these Bahá'ís had been taught to have nothing to do with politics whatsoever. So they took no part in the fighting. They had avoided everybody that was fighting and all discussion on political matters. And the District Governor where these Bahá'ís live wrote to the Governor of Sarawak, to the Government of Sarawak, and said, "I want you to know that the only people that have caused the Government no trouble whatsoever are these people who have recently become Bahá'ís, and because of their teaching of non-interference in political matters they have obeyed the Government; they have been no trouble to us and I wish to report this to the Government."

Friends, we must go back to the same spirit of our meeting that we had this morning, of the people who are here expressing their desires and their thoughts and their willingness to serve. What I was thinking was that we are about 500 people, and you realize the offer of service that we have had the last two days from these 500 people, that is, not even 500 people, in this room. Supposing that this had been a gathering of 5,000 of the Indian Bahá'ís; I do not imagine their spirit is any different from your spirit. Think what pledges we should have had! Let us go beyond that—because in our religion we are told to be very courageous—and say supposing there had been 50,000 Bahá'ís in this meeting; what would we have been able to promise and plan for! I tell you, friends, and I mean it: from the spirit that I have seen here you can conquer India. I have discovered that the Indian people are not only people of words but of acts. Go and conquer India for Bahá'u'lláh, or at least conquer most of it, and then come out and help conquer the world for Bahá'u'lláh. Already 'Abdu'l-Bahá has promised China to India. He has said that the destiny of India is to take the Faith into the heart of China. I am sure that during the next ten or twenty years we will be having Indian Bahá'í teachers in the Western World, stirring the masses with their golden tongues and their fiery faith in Bahá'u'lláh. Like all of us, the sooner you get your homework done, the sooner you can get out of doors. So I suggest that you go on making your suggestions about the teaching work, stating your needs in your area and making your offers to go and help.

Again many offers were received and recorded of people planning to teach full time or spare time. Rúhíyyih Khánúm called the attention of the friends to the loneliness of some of the pioneers in out-of-the-way places—such as Mahé—and pleaded for some of the friends to at least go to visit them sometimes, write to them, shower love and encouragement on them.

The audience was very thrilled by an announcement that during the three days of the Conference 25 people had become Bahá'ís. Some of these were from the special police guard on duty who had been able to hear the entire proceedings. Incidentally, to and from Gwalior, on the lonely country road, Rúhíyyih Khánúm's car was always escorted by a police jeep in case any trouble should arise in this area where there are so many dacoits.

Rúhíyyih Khánúm then said:

I want to ask a question of the teachers who are here, and of the teachers more in the villages than in the towns, because I think the answer to this question is very important: "Do you believe that it is better to have a Bahá'í teacher come and stay a week or two in your village and have teaching classes for new Bahá'ís and also for old Bahá'ís, or do you think it is more valuable if the people go into one of these Institutes such as coming to Gwalior or to Indore? Which way do you think you get the most results? What kind of teaching will get the greatest results in India?"

Some of the suggestions made were these:

- Groups of five or six villages should be made, and the teacher should go and teach the people in that group.
- People should be sent to the Institutes because at their own places they would not give much thought to it, but when they go to a central place, they have only one objective.
- We should go to villages and give the Message, contact the Headman and give him the Message, then ask him to invite the villagers when the teacher will give the Message. They should be given the broad points of the Faith.

- We cannot tell the people in detail in villages, not until and unless they come to a central place.
- It is better to go to villages. The people get curious and ask where have you come from? And they gather. About 100 people gather, and when they are given the Message they can go home and tell their family members that such and such man has come and he has given this Message. In this way this Message reaches from one house to another, from one village to another, and so many people hear about it. Then they invite Bahá'í teachers to visit their village again and offer to bear their expenses to come to their village and give the Message.
- It was suggested that it is better that villagers should go to the Institutes. This also affords an opportunity for the psychological study of the people.
- The people cannot leave their villages and go out, cannot bear their expenses, are busy in their fields and have no time to go out. Teachers should go to villages to give the Message. They can hear our teachers only in the evenings when they have some leisure. It will also create in them a habit of giving some contribution.
- We should find out to which caste the people of the village belong. Then we should give the Message to the Patel (Headman), which will help them to come to the fold. If they do not listen to the Patel, they listen to the Sarpanch. So we should find out these officials among them. It goes a very long way to secure enrolments. We should go to the villages to give the Message.
- Patels and Sarpanch have to bow to the population. Teachers should go to the villages in the evening and give the Message. Teaching should start from the village.
- We cannot be successful if we go to villages. They go away under one pretext or the other. If we go at night, they say they are tired and do not come. They should be called to the Institutes and be given the Message.

Rúhíyyih Khánúm then said:

Friends, nothing is better than Bahá'í consultation. The whole Order of Bahá'u'lláh is founded on Bahá'í consultation. I was so happy that so many people expressed their opinions on the subject of teaching in villages and teaching in the Institutes. I am sure all must realize that there was no disagreement between the opinions expressed. They were all parts of one whole. The Institutes are very important, and if we can bring the people here they will pay more concentrated attention to the course than in the village. The Institute must be a training school for the very active and very devoted Bahá'ís. It is very important to go back and encourage the villagers to take advantage of the opportunity that their National Assembly is giving them to come in and study at these wonderful Bahá'í Institutes. It is also very important to teach in the villages. We all agree that the villagers are the fertile soil of India; probably the best of India is in the villages, and the more often we go from village to village, the better. I believe that your National Assembly and those responsible for the Institutes should gradually see that you get some of your best Bahá'í teachers in India to come here and stay two weeks at a time, or three weeks at a time, and give a special course to the students. You have many young Bahá'í school teachers and school masters. These friends can study some particular subject, the way we do in the West, like Bahá'í Administration, like progress of the soul after death, like the Bahá'í system of consultation or economics, and then come and give a specialized course to the students on that subject.

The meeting was adjourned for tea and sweets, which Amatu'l-Bahá had asked to provide for the friends herself, and which she gave to each person with her own hands, passing among them. After this break there were more talks, and following these, more offers of service from the friends, anxious, as the wonderful Conference drew to its end, to contribute their share to this historic occasion.

After the many thousands of miles we had travelled together, it was most befitting that Shirin Boman should garland Rúhíyyih Khánúm on behalf of the National Assembly and all the believers. I will quote from her own words.

“Rúhíyyih Khánúm went to places where it was extremely difficult to go and gave the Message to the people. It was an eye-opener to us. Our mass teaching in India compared to her efforts in giving the Message is little. Dr. Raḥmatu'lláh Muhájir truly said that it was only Rúhíyyih Khánúm who had actually understood the meaning of mass teaching. I could not comprehend its meaning till I had the opportunity of accompanying her to various places. She has met most of the high-ups and Ministers in various States and given the Message. At Delhi she will be meeting the President, Dr. Radhakrishnan, and the Prime Minister of India and will give the Message. The people bowed their heads to her looking to the way she sat among

the adivasis. It was only her spiritual power that enabled her to command this respect from others. That spiritual power we cannot achieve in the world. Our words cannot adequately express our gratitude and thanks to her. We thank the Hands of the Cause for sending Rúhíyyih Khánum to us in India. We request the Universal House of Justice and pray to God that she could soon come to India again.”

In response to speeches made by the National Assembly members Amatu'l-Bahá said:

Beloved friends, the French people are very intelligent. They have two ways to say good-bye. One is *adieu* and it means definitely good-bye, and one is *au revoir*—till I see you again. I would like to say good-bye as *au revoir*. (big applause)

There are many people who wish that they could have been here today and I am going to mention two that love this country very much. One is Hushmand Fatheazam and the other is Raḥmatu'lláh Muhájir, the Hand of the Cause. One is a member of the House of Justice, one is a Hand. They love you so much and what wouldn't they have given to be present here with us all? I don't think that you Indian Bahá'ís have the slightest idea how much the Bahá'ís of the world love you and how much they think about you. You are literally the envy of the entire Bahá'í world, you Bahá'ís of Bombay, of Sholapur, of Calcutta, of Delhi, of this village and that village and from Bastar area, Devlali area. You are thinking only that you live in India, you have followed Bahá'u'lláh and you are going to be a good Bahá'í; but there are Bahá'ís all over the world who, when they get a Bahá'í newsletter, or when someone comes from the Holy Land, one of their first questions is: “What is the news of India? Is the Cause still spreading so fast?” When I was in Germany there were about 1,300 European Bahá'ís gathered for the dedication of the Mother Temple and also for a big teaching conference like this one, and I talked to them about you and I talked to them about the Cause in India, and I wish you could have seen the faces of those Bahá'ís. They looked like a very poor child who is hearing all about the presents that a very rich child has received. There is not one of them that would not like to change places with you because they are all devoted Bahá'í teachers and they go out and throw the seed on the ground and the ground is like stone, nothing comes up; but when they hear about your paddy, and what comes up in the hearts of the Indian people when you sow the seed of Bahá'u'lláh, they die of envy. You have made promises here and I know you have made them out of the fullness and sincerity of your heart, but I want you to know that I consider them as promises that have nothing to do with me. Those promises you made to Bahá'u'lláh.

When I go back to the Holy Shrines, and I shall be praying there in five or six days from now, I will especially pray for all of you that God may give you strength to fulfil your promises and to do His work. As Graham said, take back from here the spirit, the determination, the love, the optimism, to the Bahá'ís who were not present and let this Teaching Conference be the one that sets India on fire.

The words Professor Rai quoted for you and mentioned by him are, “Mount your steeds, O heroes of God” This was the cry of one of the greatest heroes of our religion. Let it be our cry. Let us go out and win the battle of Bahá'u'lláh. Bahá'u'lláh has promised that the Supreme Concourse, which is the Body of Holy Souls that have passed away and are in the next life, will help all those who arise to serve this Faith. We are the visible army in this world and over our heads comes a great Invisible Army to win with us. We cannot lose, we can only win. How soon we win depends on our efforts. And I will come back and help as soon as I can.

Thus ended this glorious Teaching Conference. The hearts of all present on that occasion are treasuries of rich memories that will feed their spiritual needs for a long time to come. Rúhíyyih Khánum's ever-pouring love and words of genuine praise and encouragement had brought forth a response no one had ever witnessed in India before. Such was the testimony of the older believers.

The hour of return to our home at the World Centre of the Faith was now fast approaching. Uplifted from so much love, joy, enthusiasm, and devotion, Rúhíyyih Khánum was nevertheless heavy at heart at the prospect of leaving not only Gwalior but India itself. That night a large reception for some of the non-Bahá'ís was held. Many of these seemed now old friends, as we had met them on our first visit to Gwalior. Before the buffet dinner was served in the garden, Rúhíyyih Khánum briefly addressed this select gathering, reminding them that, strangely enough, they were the first and now the last public audience she would speak to in India. She told them some of the impressions she had gained of their country since last she saw them; how she felt that the profound respect for LIFE, for living things, reflected in India in the vegetarianism of so much of the population, the reluctance to kill anything, has given rise to certain unique qualities in the Indians. She said it was a revelation to her to come to a country where animals and birds are not afraid of man—because man will not raise his hand to kill them. She believed that the quality of profound peacefulness in the minds and souls of the people, which this attitude reflected, had equipped them to contribute, in the councils of the nations, the true concept of peace, because inside themselves this quality had already been developed. She spoke with such love for India that it

moved all her hearers deeply. Wistfully she said: "I was too old to fall in love again; it was not kind of you to steal my heart!"

CHAPTER XII

Long after midnight we took the train for New Delhi. At sunrise, as we crept into Agra, there was a glimpse of the Taj Mahal, like a vast white pearl materialized out of the substance of the milky sky. Was the fabulous trip itself all some marvellous dream, as the Taj Mahal seemed the substance of a dream floating in the dawn before our eyes?

The last four days of Amatu'l-Bahá's stay in New Delhi were very fruitful and of great importance to the Faith. She was officially received by both the Prime Minister of India, Mr. Shastri, at his office, and the President, Mr. Radhakrishnan, at the Presidential Palace. In her audience with each of these leaders, at which Professor Rai and I were also present, Rúhíyyih Khánum assured them of the loyalty and obedience of the Bahá'is to their Government, as well as the deep gratitude of the Bahá'is of the world to the Indian Government for its helpful and tolerant attitude towards the Bahá'is in India. These interviews were followed by a very friendly and animated press conference at which she explained many of the fundamental teachings of the Faith and which resulted in much favourable publicity.

During her farewell meeting with the National Spiritual Assembly of India, she assured them of her love, her keen interest in their work, and her hope for future visits to India.

Once more the New and Old Delhi communities gathered in the National Headquarters, with the National Assembly members and other friends, for a final meeting. We seemed like one big family, all happy to be together again. There were the garlands, the gifts, the speeches, taking us back to the warm reception we had received in this very room on February 4th. In her address to the friends Rúhíyyih Khánum said it was not for us to evaluate our work for this Cause—it is our privilege to serve it. As the people go to the temples, placing at the feet of the gods their gifts of flowers, so must we place our service before the Throne of God. Whether the flowers are accepted by God, the worshipper does not know. It is his part to offer them.

On October 23rd, late at night, we parted from our friends. Here was Mrs. Chute, leaving for Ceylon some hours later, tall, blond, graceful in her sari, her eyes fixed on the face of her beloved cousin, sadly and lovingly, to the last moment. There was Shirin Boman, our constant and dear companion on so many thousands of miles of travel—for it must be remembered that no Bahá'í in the history of our Faith in India has covered as much ground as Rúhíyyih Khánum did on this trip—trying not to show her grief at parting from Amatu'l-Bahá. There were the dear friends, so many of them, and almost all the National Assembly members, come to garland, to shower the last fragrance of their love on their beloved guest.

As our plane winged its way up into the dark night and bore us from our beloved India we had much to remember. Our hearts were full.

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Arriving in India on one of her many trips



Arriving in Bombay, 1967



A loving welcome by the friends on her arrival in Bombay, 1967



With the Governor of the State of Orissa, Bhubaneswar, 1967



Taking tea with the Governor of the State of Orissa, during her courtesy call, 1967



Arrival in Trivandrum, South India, 1967



Trivandrum, South India, 1967



Amatu'l-Bahá in an audience with the President of India, Varahagari Venkata Giri, New Delhi, 1974



Amatu'l-Bahá with the Lt. Governor of Delhi, Mr. D.R. Kohli (left) and the Law Minister of India, Mr. Shanti Bhushan (right), 1977



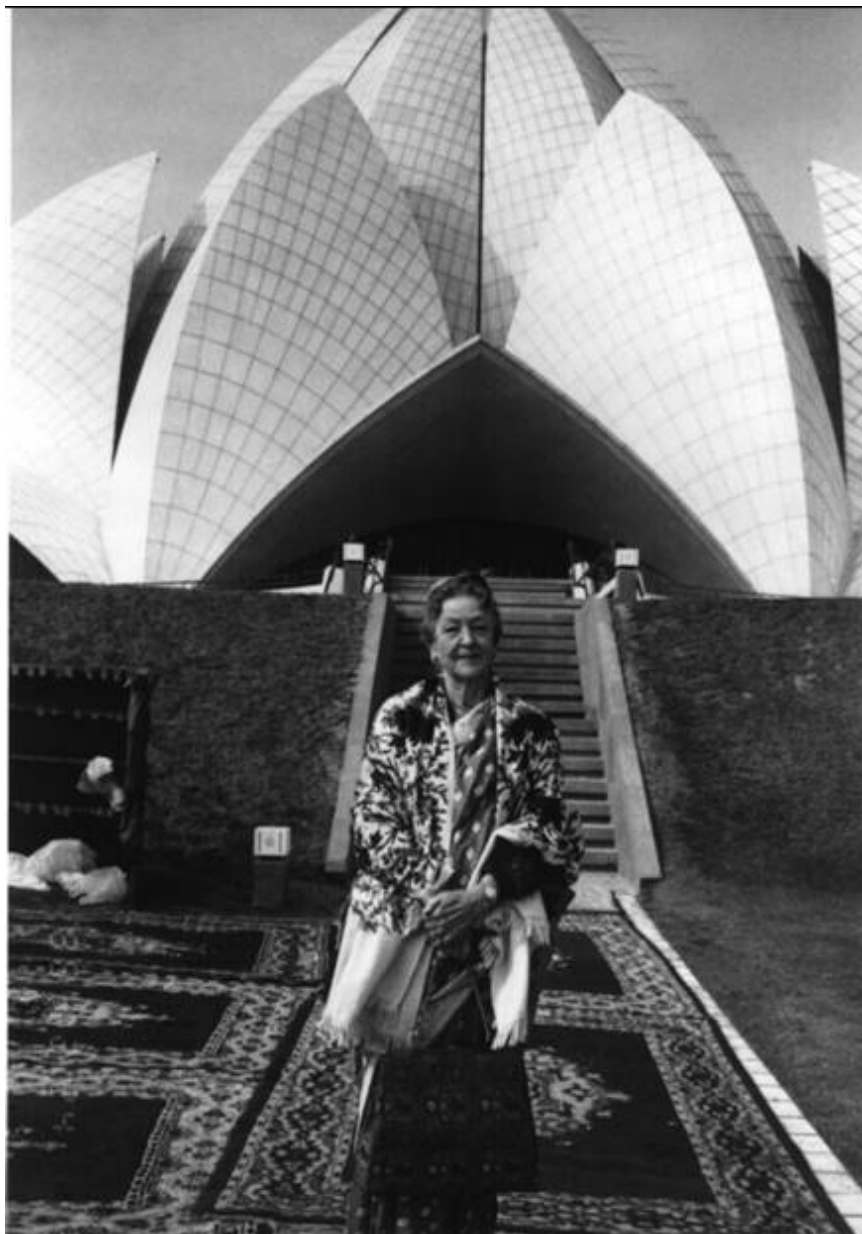
Amatu'l-Bahá's last visit with the Prime Minister of India, Indira Gandhi, 20 October 1984, 13 days before her assassination



On the day of the Dedication of the Mother Temple of the Indian subcontinent, 24 December 1986



In deep contemplation in the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, 1986



After the dedication of the House of Worship, 1986



The day before the Dedication, Amatu'l-Bahá proceeding to the ceremony for the placing of the sacred dust from the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh and the Shrine of the Báb inside the House of Worship, 1986



On December 23rd Amatu'l-Bahá placed sacred dust from the Holy Shrines on behalf of the Universal House of Justice inside the crown of the Prayer Hall of the Temple, facing 'Akká. The Hands of the Cause of God Collis Featherstone and William Sears are to her left and right, respectively



Gathering of the friends at the memorial meeting for the Hand of the Cause of God Dr. Rahmatu'lláh Muhájir in the beautiful tent in the garden of the Bahá'í House, the National Ḥazíratu'l-Quds in Delhi, 1986



In the garden of the House of Worship, 1987



Outside the Temple after attending a devotional service, 1987

THE LOTUS

Oh lotus in the heart!
Growing up from the soil
Of Mother India,
Drawing deep springs
Up from the depths of Asia,
Rising a mighty fountain
Of mystic power unseen
Felt, almost heard
As it overflows
From petals clasped in prayer
To carry the voices
Of the singers praising God
To be scattered far and wide
By the scattering angels—
Armfuls of prayer that carry
Like panniers of invisible flowers
Scattering the Words of God
Scattering His glorious Words
Up to the snow-clad Himalayas
Down to the lapping edge of the seas
A rain of perfume
A rain of blessing
It seeps into every crevice
Showers every jungle
Spatters the deserts' sands
Passes above every meadow
Blows into every cave!
The scattering angels
Rank on rank, file on file
Deploying in the promise
Of their Lord the Almighty.

— Rúḥíyyih

Delhi, December 24, 1986

¹ The statistics given in this Preface are 1984 figures.

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