AMATU’L-BAHÁ

VISITS INDIA

by

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from the Holy Shrines on behalf of the Universal

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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 ex-*

*erting 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

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 re-

assured by her memorable visit have augmented their serv-

ices 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 be-

lievers 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 ad-

ditional pillars of the Universal House of Justice by the for-

mation of separate National Spiritual Assemblies in Burma,

Pakistan, and Ceylon—now known as Sri Lanka. In the pe-

riod 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 mar-

ble which will be completed and inaugurated in the near fu-

ture. 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.

1. The statistics given in this Preface are 1984 figures.

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 Jus-

tice 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 knock-

ing 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 lan-

guage. 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 peo-

ple. 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 per-

forming 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 harm-

less. 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 inspira-

tional book.

India has a great destiny in the Faith. One of its sons was

the only non-Persian among the eighteen Letters of the Liv-

ing who had been awakened at the dawn of the new Age.

Bahá’u’lláh Himself selected and despatched to India a num-

ber 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 Teach-

ings. Many Hands of the Cause have gone, at the instruction

of the beloved Guardian, to that country to strengthen 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 Rahmatu’lláh Muhájir who ful-

filled this vision in February of 1961 by showing to the In-

dian 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 dedicat-

ing 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 scat-

ter 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 mem-

orable experiences. This arrangement had the added advan-

tage 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 won-

derful fellow believers. Truly, in seeking to teach this glori-

ous 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 teach-

ing of His Cause—so that they themselves might learn. Strug-

gling 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 in-

dependent 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 multi-

tudes in their vast native land aroused my deepest admira-

tion 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 or-

der 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 “ex-

pansion” 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 con-

stant 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 ar-

mies, 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 in-

creasing spiritual darkness in the world. Nowhere in our teach-

ings—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 be-

long 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 them-

selves 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 per-

centage of cream; high or low, it is there. For every 100 new

Bahá’ís there is invariably going to be a percentage of peo-

ple of great capacity, both intellectually and spiritually; this

group will take care of the increase in less mature and un-

derstanding, 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 par-

enthood, 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 re-

sponsibility. For our own sakes, for the sake of suffering hu-

manity, 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

1 NEW DELHI, RAJASTHAN, UTTAR PRADESH

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 dawn-

ing light of Bahá’u’lláh’s Revelation during the first years of

His ministry. News of the progress being made there was ea-

gerly 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 Con-

vention for the election of the Universal House of Justice,

held in the Holy Land, the members of the National Assem-

bly 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 In-

dia 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 Ger-

many to dedicate the Mother Temple of the European conti-

nent 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 wonder-

ful 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 Con-

vention, 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 In-

dia and even from Pakistan. Garlands of beautiful fresh flow-

ers, 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 Hazíratu’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 tempera-

ture 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 va-

cated. 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 commu-

nity 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 coinci-

dence the name of the old village where the land is situated is

BAHA-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 re-

spects 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 teach-

ers 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 shout-

ing “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 hun-

gry 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 Civi-

lization 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 favour-

ite 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 de-

tails 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 fol-

lows teaching. As we teach we consolidate, and as we con-

solidate we teach.”

The next afternoon, at the Nineteen Day Feast, the Na-

tional Spiritual Assembly as well as the Local Spiritual

Assembly of New Delhi welcomed Rúhíyyih Khánum in elo-

quent 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 child-

hood. 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 rea-

son 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 differ-

ent 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 under-

estimated. 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 196] 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 dif-

ferent races into the world-wide Bahá’í community, the

characteristics of these different communities will be

pooled. We will give our national and racial characteris-

tics to the world Bahá’í community and out of this, in the

course of centuries of evolution, will arise the new civi-

lization and the new culture. So it is a wonderful thing

that you now have this great expansion of teaching in In-

dia, because it means that into the community of the

Most Great Name—as our beloved Guardian often re-

ferred to the Bahá’ís—into this community we are bring-

ing 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 fi-

nances. 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 cul-

ture, 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 conti-

nents. We may not be able to do this at present but we

know that day will surely come and we know it will re-

lease great spiritual forces when it does come. Do you re-

member the wonderful messages we used to receive from

our beloved Guardian, when he always so lovingly encour-

aged everybody? He used to say, “Black or white, young

or old, whatever their background, whatever their condi-

tion, 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 per-

haps 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 edu-

cation, and they asked should they throw everything up

and go out immediately? And invariably the Guardian en-

couraged 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 some-

thing 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 peo-

ple 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 del-

egates also. He was a middle-aged man. He said, “My wife

and I have brought up our sons who are now just graduat-

ing 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 fasci-

nating. 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 atten-

tion 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—be-

cause we are, after all, all one, whether we are National

Spiritual Assembly members, or Local Assembly mem-

bers, 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 As-

sembly? I said I would not be a bit surprised if the Na-

tional 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 villag-

ers; they are living in their own small communities. It is

all very new to them. They want to hear more and under-

stand 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 al-

ready a going concern, but when you want to develop

something that is entirely new, like a gold mine, a dia-

mond mine or an oil well, the capital expenditure is tre-

mendous. 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 re-

fine 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 invest-

ment 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 en-

trance 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. [Rúhíyyih Khánum 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 politi-

cal minded and instead of being interested in the Teach-

ings 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 un-

der 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 extraor-

dinary 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 any-

where 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 any-

thing more about it.” I think there is a story—I don’t re-

member 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 Rúhíyyih

Khánum, already run-down, so exhausted that she developed

a bad cold. When she was contemplating this long trip to In-

dia, 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 de-

cided 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 Jodh-

pur travelled 12 hours all through the night.

The assembled friends at the airport in Jaipur—the capi-

tal of Rajasthan, where we went first—who had come to wel-

come and garland Rúhíyyih Khánum, 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 Rúhíyyih

Khánum to drape her sari properly.

During the whole period of seven months in India and Cey-

lon, Rúhíyyih Khánum wore saris all the time, to which she

had completely lost her heart. She often explained to her au-

diences 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 deter-

mined 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.

Rúhíyyih Khánum encouraged the friends in these two cit-

ies, 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 Khánum was very thrilled at having an en-

tire 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 fol-

lowing day left for Agra, where dear Shirin Boman was wait-

ing for us. Mrs. Boman is one of India’s most indefatigable

and self-sacrificing Bahá’í teachers. In almost all stages of

Rúhíyyih Khánum’s trips throughout India, Nepal, and

Sikkim, she was a wonderful companion and faithful inter-

preter.

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 architec-

ture 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 Khánum 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 Khánum 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 Khánum’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 pub-

licly a sum of eleven rupees to Rúhíyyih Khánum to be given

to the Teaching Fund, expressing his deep gratitude for hav-

ing the privilege of welcoming such an honoured guest at

the wedding of his son. He then brought his son, the bride-

groom, 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 cover-

ing 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 com-

plete 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 bride-

groom 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 fathom-

less ocean of culture and spiritual civilization, so deeply em-

bosomed in this strange and ancient land of many gods and

many great sages.

Sitting in this room, surrounded by such a happy and lov-

ing people, took me thousands of miles away to the villages

of Africa, and I felt that marvellous sensation of being com-

pletely 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

Khánum 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.

To avoid the hard road we had come on, someone sug-

gested 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 be-

lievers 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. In-

dia 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 bride-

groom 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.

II MADHYA PRADESH—GWALIOR TO UTILA

On February 19th we left Agra by train for Gwalior. Shirin

had gone ahead of us to her home there a few days be-

fore. 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 Khá-

num, you are the Queen of the Bahá’í world. You are the faith-

ful consort of our peerless Guardian. We were not worthy to

meet that ‘Sign of God’ on earth in this physical life, but to-

day 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 Khá-

num began her heart-warming 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 deep-

ening 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 en-

chanting 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 heart-breaking 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 ran-

som—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 distin-

guished 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 beau-

tifully 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 gar-

landing the guests by the Headmen of various villages, about

30 in number. This was a gesture of respect and love. A wel-

come 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 de-

sire to visit India and at last it was being fulfilled.

The programme and all the arrangements of these meet-

ings 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 Bagh-

chini 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 em-

braced the Faith the night before. They expressed their joy at

being Bahá’ís and offered to devote the period of their vaca-

tion 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 oc-

curred; a young mother and her baby had fallen into the vil-

lage 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 trag-

edy 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 chil-

dren: “Who is Rúhíyyih Khánum?” The village boy immedi-

ately replied that of course he knew she was the wife of the

Guardian of the Bahá’í Faith, Shoghi Effendi. Rúhíyyih Khá-

num 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 en-

couragement of the lively spectators. The children then re-

cited 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 in-

teresting. She began by telling them that they had been able

to charm the vicious snake and make of him a harmless crea-

ture; 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 en-

deavour 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 mag-

nificent 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 try-

ing for some time to persuade the Bahá’ís to give up the Faith,

slandering the believers and saying the Faith was only an off-

shoot 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 perse-

cution. She spoke also of the need for perseverance and cour-

age, 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 hus-

band) 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 vil-

lages of extremely poor communities. The country-side

looked weird and arid, the only growing things being thorn

bushes and almost leafless trees; there was no green vegeta-

tion anywhere. The villagers cut firewood in these jungles,

transport it over eight miles to sell in the city, buy some mea-

gre 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, chil-

dren, and old men were about. The people belong to the low-

est social caste, known as the “untouchables”. For thousands

of years they have suffered deprivation of the social right en-

titling 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 al-

ways 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 ex-

emplifying 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 vil-

lage 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, spon-

taneous 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 usu-

ally held at night.

That evening in Gwalior Rúhíyyih Khánum spoke to an

audience of over 400 invited guests. Mr. Shukla, the Princi-

pal of Scindia School, acted as her chairman. She took par-

ticular 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 lis-

teners 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 Mentawei, the jun-

gles 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 abil-

ity 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 suc-

cess 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 intel-

ligent 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 his-

tory 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 mate-

rial 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 meet-

ings), but in the end he was invited to speak. He recapitu-

lated 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 al-

ready 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 pur-

chasing the second Teaching Institute in India. After Rúhíyyih

Khánum’s arrival, the legal transfer of an impressive build-

ing with many acres of land outside the city of Gwalior took

place. On this day, the new Teaching Institute was to be offi-

cially opened and dedicated by beloved Amatu’l-Bahá. Sev-

eral 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, run-

ners and coloured balloons. The walls were adorned with at-

tractive 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 de-

prived 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 un-

born 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 teach-

ers 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 blessed-

ness of him that bath 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 Medi-

cal College which dear Mrs. Boman and her family and

friends had arranged. We heard fascinating music by distin-

guished 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 fer-

tile 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!”

III MAHADYA PRADESH—UJJAIN TO INDORE

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 tem-

ples, 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 an-

cient 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 Mahin-

dra 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 in-

tensely 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 Khánum 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 In-

dia, and the village of Kwetiapani, which was visited by

Rúhíyyih Khánum 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 com-

munity 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 Khánum 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 per-

formed a very delightful play, each child representing one of

the great religions of the world and claiming that his reli-

gion 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 Khánum, 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 her-

self 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 sav-

ages. She then explained that the very essence of the teach-

ings 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, ar-

riving late at night. Rúhíyyih Khánum had fever and was feel-

ing very ill.

In spite of this, she insisted the next day on getting up

and attending a large regional conference arranged at Shaja-

pur, 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 Raj-

kumar of Sitamhow, who, with exemplary Indian courtesy,

had accepted to act as her chairman at that night’s large pub-

lic meeting. He was a quiet and most agreeable man who

had been at the United Nations with one of India’s delega-

tions. 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 Khá-

num 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 vis-

ited the next morning on our way back to Ujjain. It was here

that in the beginning of this new period in India, when peo-

ple 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 wire invited. Rúhíyyih Khánum spoke to them on pro-

gressive 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 as-

pects 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 colour-

ful 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 In-

dia 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 oppor-

tunity Rúhíyyih Khánum had of seeing some of Ujjain’s fa-

mous 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.

On the afternoon of March 3rd, Rúhíyyih 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 de-

votion 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 crea-

tion. The purpose of the lives of all the Divine Manifesta-

tions 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 Rúhíyyih Khánum had a con-

tagious effect on all the Bahá’ís 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’ís 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’ís were anxiously looking for a pressure

lamp, Rúhíyyih 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 considera-

tion 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 Teach-

ing Institute is the first of its kind in India, and has a perma-

nent 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 obsta-

cles 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 be-

loved 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 ‘Akka, 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 dis-

tinguished 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 obvi-

ously 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 memora-

ble 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 eve-

rywhere. Rúhíyyih Khánum, smothered in garlands of fra-

grant 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 teach-

ing. 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 Mes-

sage 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.

IV MAHARASHTRA, ANDHADRA PRADESH

n our way to Bombay we stopped two days in Auranga

bad 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 Khá-

num, 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 distin-

guished 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 teach-

ings 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 In-

dia to fulfil her great part in the destiny of mankind, to never

lose sight of her spiritual heritage and the values she pos-

sessed, values which were so greatly needed by all the na-

tions, 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 sup-

porting the work of many teachers and generously contribut-

ing 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 in-

sisted 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 oth-

ers 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 math-

ematically 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 mes-

sage 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 ar-

rived at Sholapur where all the Bahá’ís were waiting to

welcome us at the railway station. A happy, informal gath-

ering was held that evening. I will quote from dear Shir-

in’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 ex-

plained 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 para-

mount 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 Khánum and commended the Bahá’í teachings to

all his hearers. Rúhíyyih Khánum, in her unique way, with

simple examples and stories, illustrated the meaning and pur-

pose of this Faith in the world today. The pioneer in this area

was an elderly, simple, dedicated believer, a baker by pro-

fession, 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 lan-

guages, and adding to them the language of Love, I have

come to tell you about a great Message and a Divine Messen-

ger—Bahá’u’lláh.” This was, to me, a true lesson in humil-

ity and an example of how Bahá’u’lláh will use every instru-

ment 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 Khánum. 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 be-

lief 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

Khánum told the friends, “when He used to go to the Síyáh-

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 dis-

persed, 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 gather-

ings, 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 Khánum’s talks in Poona and Bombay were

similar, excerpts from both have been combined here in or-

der 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 lec-

ture. Truly, there is something very strange about Bom-

bay! 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 Khánum 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 col-

oured 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 some-

thing, 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 en-

mity of his own family. The only thing that consoled him

was this news of the opening of new countries, new terri-

tories, 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 prog-

ress 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 every-

where 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 instan-

taneous. 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 rec-

ognize 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 peo-

ple 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 prob-

lems 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 vil-

lagers 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 progres-

sive 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 ac-

cept 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 teach-

ings 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 fun-

damental 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 funda-

mental 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 hap-

pens 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

Rúhíyyih Khánum 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 announc-

ing this joyous news. As soon as he heard of a new vic-

tory, 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 ban-

ner 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, af-

ter 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 be-

lieved 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 Fore-

runner, 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 fol-

lowers of the Bab, the Forerunner of the Faith. Do you

think those illiterate Persian villagers had read the mighty

Writings of the Bab? 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 gradu-

ate, 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 trans-

lations 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 per-

fect 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 de-

voted? 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 connec-

tion with the Faith of Bahá’u’lláh antedates the connec-

tion 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 de-

voted 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 get-

ting, because in the 4,000 or 10,000 there is a percentage

of cream, and believe me, your Indian cream is marvel-

lous! 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

Muhammad. 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 propa-

gate 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 any-

body 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 dif-

ficult 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 lis-

ten to the message of Bahá’u’lláh.

That is the spiritual side of religion, but there is anoth-

er aspect—that it is the purpose of this Faith today to es-

tablish 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 hu-

man 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 ma-

terial 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 under-

stand more about the Teachings and live them better and

place first things first. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá says that the impor-

tant 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!

It is our duty to teach the Faith. Whether we are chil-

dren 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 diffi-

cult, 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 gov-

ernment 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 Fam-

ily 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, eve-

rything 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, Amer-

icans, 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. Every-

thing that we have in the Bahá’í world today, the Guard-

ian 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 as-

pects 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 in-

crease 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 commu-

nity 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 teach-

ing 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.

V MYSORE, TAMIL NADU, KERALA

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 pro-

duce the same quality of devotion and enthusiasm in the new

believers as they themselves possess. That night in the vil-

lage of Karampalyao there was great jubilation. We all

waited in the home of one of the devoted Bahá’í pioneer fam-

ilies until the sound of drums and music signified the mo-

ment 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 vil-

lage 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 wa-

ter, 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

Khánum 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 cre-

ated much happiness in the hearts of the people everywhere.

The spirit of love and unity was so overwhelming in that

meeting that when Rúhíyyih Khánum 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 Khánum 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 teach-

ing is rapidly gathering momentum. The devoted Bahá’í teach-

ers 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 unfor-

gettable days in Bangalore was reached one night when

Rúhíyyih Khánum 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 Khánum’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 meet-

ing, Rúhíyyih Khánum began to get uneasy. It was well after

dark, a full moon was flooding the night, people were return-

ing 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 Khánum walked rapidly ahead of us; beside her

strode the very tall Professor of cinematography at the Uni-

versity of Bangalore, who is one of the most active of our

Bahá’í teachers. Rúhíyyih Khánum 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 Khánum used to often

tell the friends this story and say, jokingly, she felt thoroughly

intimidated, and so she obeyed. As Rúhíyyih Khánum 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 red-

dish 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 vil-

lagers 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 Na-

tional 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 ora-

torical 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 pro-

duce one Bahá’í in the West, the books they had to read, the

interview with the Local Assembly, etc., I was simply flabber-

gasted 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, particu-

larly 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 mem-

orable 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 Khánum’s powers of seemingly

endless endurance. The following day, on our way to the vil-

lage of Lakshmisagar, miles before reaching the village we

saw a poster on a specially made arch welcoming Rúhíyyih

Khánum. 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 de-

veloped 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 cloth-

ing. 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 Khánum 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 inter-

preter. 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 nourish-

ment for our deprived and longing hearts, has been brought

to us by this beloved mother. We should not hesitate to ac-

cept it. As a sign of our gratitude we should spread it through-

out our area.” After him a number of the Bahá’í teachers also

spoke. Over 200 accepted. They were members of three dif-

ferent 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 dif-

ferent 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 in-

dependent, 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 ex-

actly 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 noth-

ing of it. All over India we witnessed this; the choice in spir-

itual 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 be-

loved Master said He longed to go on foot, travelling to all

parts of the world to carry the message of His Blessed Fa-

ther 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 Tibet-

ans, 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.

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. Rúhíyyih Khánum 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 Rúhíyyih Khánum 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 still-

ness 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. Rúhíyyih Khánum sug-

gested 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 representa-

tives 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, con-

sider 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 wear-

ing 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 meet-

ing, 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 at-

tend 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 many. 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 king-

dom 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. Rúhíyyih

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 many. 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 com-

munity.

The happy ending to our Mysore week was on the last day

of our stay, when Rúhíyyih Khánum conducted the marriage

ceremony of two of the devoted pioneers of Mysore and

Devlali. A large and happy group of guests were present, in-

cluding 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 settle-

ment 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 ex-

change for modern houses in the town. In their isolation they

were a happy people and lived in a paradise of their own un-

til recently, when they were contaminated by a terrible dis-

ease, 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 hang-

ing over their shoulders like a Victorian belle’s.

When on that afternoon Rúhíyyih 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 nat-

urally afraid of strangers and do not trust any outsider easily.

They have preserved an ancient and distinctive set of cus-

toms, a language, music, and religion of their own. Rúhíyyih

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 lan-

guage), they obligingly danced, and sang their extraordinar-

ily 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 of-

fered us coffee. When leaving, Rúhíyyih 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 Rúhíyyih 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 ques-

tions. When everyone left, he went to our dear Bahá’í pio-

neer 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 inter-

esting sequel to this event—an historic one, as it added a new

name, and a distinguished one, to the roll call of tribes en-

listed 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 ex-

pressed 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 pictur-

esque scenery. The following day we flew to Cochin, the fa-

mous port in south India, in the beautiful State of Kerala,

reminiscent, with its coconut palms, of a Pacific Island para-

dise. 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 sing-

ing 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 NayarAmbalam. 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 dis-

tinguished 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 com-

edy. 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.

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 Khánum encouraged them to teach and

serve more actively in Kerala State, one of the most progres-

sive 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 Tri-

vandrum because Rúhíyyih Khánum was ill in bed and too

exhausted to travel anywhere.

On April 19th, the Bahá’ís of Madras had the privilege of

hearing Rúhíyyih Khánum; 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.

VI SRI LANKA, MALAYSIA, THAILAND, NEPAL, SIKKIM

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 Thai-

land 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 meet-

ing 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. Careless-

ness 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 morn-

ing 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 Conven-

tion of this vast region of divers 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 Malay-

sians, 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 deter-

mination 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 Ilsar’s home; most

of the diplomatic corps were present. In Bangkok the pres-

ence 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 Kath-

mandu, 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 glit-

tering 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 pio-

neer 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 lit-

erature and more visiting teachers were given. The fact that

one of the goals of the new Nine Year Plan was an independ-

ent 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 In-

dia by treaty. Movement in and out of Sikkim is very tightly

controlled. It was by special intervention of the Indian Gov-

ernment, 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 begin-

ning, our jeep broke down and a friendly military police of-

ficer 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 estab-

lishing 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, cou-

rageous, 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 Khánum emphasized the universal-

ity 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, accompa-

nied by Mrs. Boman and myself, had a very pleasant, infor-

mal audience with the Maharaja and the Maharani of Sikkim.

Mr. Pradhan informed us that it is the custom of the Sikkim-

ese 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 Khá-

num; 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 Khá-

num gave a brief explanation of the basic principles of the

Faith. The Maharani of Sikkim, who is a lovely and intel-

ligent 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 Khánum was received so graciously by the sover-

eign 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 reli-

gious 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 locali-

ties 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 heart-warming words of love and encourage-

ment. 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 laugh-

ter. 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 spa-

cious 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 Basty, about 4 miles away. This is an all-Bahá’í vil-

lage 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 Khánum 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 Basty, not at all satisfied with

this decision, arrived in the morning to further urge the be-

loved guest to come to their village. It was certainly most

interesting to see how these simple village women put for-

ward, with determination and three hours of vigorous argu-

ments, the reasons why Rúhíyyih Khánum should go to their

village. When Amatu’l-Bahá, fully conscious of the impossi-

bility of this trip on that day, promised to allocate, on a sub-

sequent 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 affec-

tion: “Oh, but we will carry you all the way up in our arms,

and you can sleep with us.” Eventually Rúhíyyih Khánum

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 Khánum, music and dancing, and many lovely

songs sung by the ladies.

In the course of her talks she spoke of several visions ex-

perienced 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 pil-

grimage to ‘Akka, she instantly recognized the face of the

Man of her vision, Who was none other but the beloved Mas-

ter; she fell at His feet and lost consciousness. In her girl-

hood 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 cur-

tains, little May cried out in pain. The light in her dream had

been so real that her eyes were affected and she had to re-

main in a dark room all day. These strange dreams and vi-

sions 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 mo-

ment she heard of it.

That afternoon Amatu’l-Bahá, barefooted and happy, ac-

companied the Bahá’ís part of the way up the steep hills lead-

ing to their village of Panche Basty. 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 pre-

cious 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.

VII ORISSA, MADHYA PRADESH, ANDHRA PRADESH

The sad death of India’s outstanding Prime Minister, Mr.

Jawaharlal Nehru, interrupted Rúhíyyih Khánum’s pub-

lic programme, which had to be cancelled because of national

mourning. A special meeting with the National Spiritual As-

sembly 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 satisfac-

tory. 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 dif-

ferent villages where many Bahá’ís and their friends from

neighbouring villages had gathered. In one of them, Taraboi,

a special Sandyana (like a pavilion) had been erected and

decorated with leaves and flags. As these were still the spe-

cial 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 recog-

nized 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 direc-

tions, 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 vil-

lage of Naraindapur, with no government bungalow avail-

able, and bringing no food with us because we had counted

on a Rest House, the doors of the only school there were hos-

pitably opened to us. The Headmaster, Mr. R. M. Misra, with

that kindness and courtesy so miraculous and unfailing in In-

dia, 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 of-

ten 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 re-

member quite well: “Why should we accept a religion that

comes from Iran originally? We have our own religion any-

way, and don’t need another.” To this Rúhíyyih Khánum

replied that few people would challenge the great role of re-

ligion itself and how it spiritualizes man and guides him on

his way in this world. But today we live in a new world, sci-

ence 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, Muhammad, 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 au-

dience 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 sum-

mer 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 Chi-

cago. 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 quot-

ed Bahá’u’lláh’s words: “The vitality of men’s belief in God

is dying out in every land.” Many heads nodded their agree-

ment. 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 Es-

sence. Like a loving parent, God never leaves His chil-

dren 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 eter-

nal 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 respon-

sive, but interesting questions were asked at the end, one be-

ing: “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, per-

vading everything.” She told me afterwards that as she said

this she could see a physical tremor pass through the audi-

ence, 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 al-

ready 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 generos-

ity, kindness, and courtesy of a non-Bahá’í friend who of-

fered his car, his driver, and full support to make Rúhíyyih

Khánum’s visit a success. Indeed, without his help it was dif-

ficult to see how she could have visited this State in the lim-

ited 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 ad-

mirer.

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 Na-

rainpur. This small town was the seat of government admin-

istration, 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 prob-

lem 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, primi-

tive people that a recent anthropological expedition from the

West had spent a year studying their tribal life and customs.

The next day there was a weekly market in Dodhai and

people were informed of a distinguished visitor who was anx-

ious 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 differ-

ent 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 wander-

ing around with your bows and arrows, they would be terri-

fied. 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 un-

derstands 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 reli-

gion 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 reli-

gions 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 thou-

sands of years away from us. Mr. Vajdi, our gallant com-

panion, hunted rabbits for our food, which was prepared, with

queer-looking jungle greens we bought from the local mar-

ket, 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 sur-

roundings. 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 medi-

cal care. On August 10th, Rúhíyyih Khánum, once again en-

ergetic 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.

VIII SRI LANKA (CEYLON)

Rúhíyyih Khánum had, when she attended the Conven-

tion in Ceylon in April, promised to return. Her mater-

nal 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 Khá-

num 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 every-

where for ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, and at last found Him on top of a

hill, calm and serene, bending over a machine He was work-

ing 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 Or-

der of Bahá’u’lláh and it will solve all the problems and re-

move the difficulties.

In Colombo Rúhíyyih Khánum met with the National Spir-

itual 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 pre-

cious 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, spe-

cially to watch the famous Perahera, its whirling Kandy danc-

ers, its torch-bearers and bands. The parading of a precious

relic of Lord Buddha, carried on the biggest and most hand-

some temple elephant, is the reason for this annual festival.

On a later visit Amatu’l-Bahá went there for her Bahá’í en-

gagements.

Our tour of the South started in the small town of Dehio-

vita where Rúhíyyih Khánum spoke to a very interested au-

dience, a number of them being new Bahá’ís. The local Bud-

dhist 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 re-

ceptivity 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 con-

scientiously but will take no part in politics. The awakening

hope, the appreciation and keenness reflected in the beauti-

ful 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 in-

tellectual audience of the elite of the town. The subject of

her talk was “Unity Is Possible”. This was indeed a very inter-

esting 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 set-

tlement of Veddas. 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 Khánum first met with

the National Spiritual Assembly and the Teaching Commit-

tee, 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 has-

ten the fulfilment of these two specific goals.

Recently the Government has started special welfare proj-

ects for the Veddas, 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 ex-

tinction. Cement housing and schooling cannot kindle life in

such people. Only hope can, the knowledge that they are re-

spected and respectable, that someone needs them and be-

lieves in them. A little of this Rúhíyyih Khánum tried most

lovingly to convey to them. It was very difficult as the inter-

preter was much more interested in talking to us than in trans-

lating! 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 As-

sembly, was with us and established a cordial relationship

with the intelligent, sincere, and truly compassionate Govern-

ment Welfare Officer responsible for this particular group of

Veddas. We hope this link will enable the Bahá’ís to carry to

these people the only remedy in the world for their con-

dition—respect for themselves, pride in their past, belief in

this Faith.

After a public meeting in Kandy and a very happy meet-

ing with the National Spiritual Assembly, Rúhíyyih Khánum

and I left with her cousin, Mr. Chute and other Bahá’í friends

to go to the Rodiya village of Wadorassa. This is a commu-

nity of the lowest caste in Ceylon. For generations they have

been shunned, to the extent of not being allowed even to en-

ter the villages or homes of others. Like many oppressed peo-

ple, they have developed a remarkable sweetness of character

and are very gifted in music, dancing, and singing. In her talk

Rúhíyyih Khánum 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 Bud-

dhist monks. The ruins of the massive monasteries and nu-

merous dagobas (stupas) speak eloquently of a great past. The

most sacred of all these sights is the Bo tree, which is sup-

posed 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 bur-

ied here, and as we gazed upon his memorial stupa we re-

membered 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 sur-

rounding 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 af-

ter Rúhíyyih Khánum’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 reli-

gion and the oneness of mankind. In both Jaffna and Kandy

there had been a most friendly relationship between this so-

ciety and the Bahá’ís. It was this society which sponsored

the large public meeting for Rúhíyyih Khánum which took

place on the following day, September 3rd. A group of news-

paper 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. Thanabala-

singam, a retired judge, in his summing up of Rúhíyyih Khá-

num’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 peo-

ple attended, and after Rúhíyyih Khánum’s talk on the pur-

pose 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 ideol-

ogies. This question was very ably answered. Rúhíyyih Khá-

num, 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 in-

variably faulty systems made by man.

In the village of Culipuran at an open-air meeting,

Rúhíyyih Khánum spoke to the underprivileged untouch-

ables; 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. Mem-

bers of the higher caste, who would not sit in the same meet-

ing with the lower caste, stood outside the gathering and

listened to her heart-warming 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 mes-

sage.

On September 6th, Rúhíyyih Khánum addressed four audi-

ences in four different villages, the fourth one being late at

night, in the reading room of Neervely R.D.S., where a num-

ber 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 eco-

nomic 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 Kodi-

kaman. In the afternoon of the same day, she spoke in an-

other 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”, stress-

ing particularly the role of women in this day and their obli-

gation, 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.

IX TAMIL NADU, PONDICHERRY

n September 9th, we left Ceylon by boat and at Dhanush-

kodi re-entered India. To Rúhíyyih Khánum’s great joy

her cousin, Mrs. Jeanne Chute, accompanied us on the re-

maining 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 con-

tacts, 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 regret-

fully 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 Khá-

num spoke to the eager Bahá’ís gathered in the Bahá’í Cen-

tre, 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 singu-

larly 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 per-

severe 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 nota-

bles 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 de-

lighted 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 Subra-

yapuram 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 un-

imaginably destitute. The overwhelming majority are small

tenant farmers, with hardly enough to keep them from starva-

tion. 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 devo-

tion cannot be comprehended by people who have not seen

with their own eyes the circumstances in which such villag-

ers 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 mes-

sage of love and brotherhood. The Headman of the village,

deeply impressed by what he had heard for the first time, ex-

pressed his desire to know more about this and asked the

Bahá’ís to come again and teach them about Bahá’u’lláh, as-

suring 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.

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-reach-

ing, wise plans of the Indian Government to better the condi-

tion 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 previ-

ously French colonies; and many of the newly-elected mem-

bers of this parliament, together with various Government

Ministers and their wives, attended. Before we left, His Ex-

cellency 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 Gover-

nor and Mrs. Silam during our two-day stay with them can-

not be described, and enlarged our precious store of memories

of India and her noble people.

X WEST BENGAL, UTTAR PRADESH, MADHYA PRADESH

he 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 Sep-

tember 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 infor-

mation, 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 In-

dian 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 represen-

tations 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; car-

rying 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 re-

spectful homage of a courtyard full of people—the Maharaja

went forth, like some figure from a seventeenth century In-

dian miniature, and every inch a king. We got in our taxi and

followed to the scene of the play. This annual pageant, de-

picting 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 how-

dah, 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 care-

fully following, even after dark with a small flashlight. Sur-

rounding 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 inspira-

tion 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 him-

self 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 im-

mediately 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 show-

ing 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 Khánum 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. Natu-

rally Mr. Maxwell did not know anything about this man when

he accepted the money.

The next morning we left Satna for Shandol. Rúhíyyih

Khánum was really too ill to travel but she would not dis-

appoint 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 Khá-

num 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 ex-

pressed their desire to hear more.

Five days of high temperature and illness left Rúhíyyih

Khánum 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 wheth-

er the Bahá’ís seek to make converts like the Christians and

Muslims, she answered most convincingly by first explain-

ing the true meaning of the word “conversion” in the Eng-

lish 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 natu-

ral 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 con-

version, 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 Khánum 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 Khánum 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

Khánum 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 un-

fair circumstances of our lives, we have a great deal of con-

trol over what we choose to make of our characters.

On October 7th, we travelled over 180 miles by jeep, reach-

ing 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 welcom-

ing her to the city! It seemed the Bahá’ís 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 Singhania. 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 Singhania family and, as Sir

Padampat was away on business in Bombay, Rúhíyyih Khá-

num 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’ís 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 ac-

cept 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 fol-

lowing these meetings went on till midnight. Rúhíyyih Khá-

num, still weak after her recent illness, answered questions,

told stories, and showered her interest and love upon all, un-

til she could barely stay erect in her chair. We were all to be

the guests of the Raja overnight. This was the third home

Ruhfyyih 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 dis-

tinction 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 im-

merse me. Make me as dust in the pathway of Thy loved

ones … [Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá p. 320]

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 fi-

nally 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. Dur-

ing the three days she was in bed, her cousin carried on her

programme while I stayed and nursed her. Mrs. Chute ad-

dressed an elite audience at the medical college on the fun-

damental 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.

XI MADHYA PRADESH

On October 15th, we reached the railway station of

Gwalior; almost exactly eight months before we had ar-

rived 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 pre-

cious Amatu’l-Bahá was coming to an end. She had returned

to the heart of India to crown her tour with an all-India Teach-

ing Conference, arranged by the National Spiritual Assem-

bly. 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 Jus-

tice 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 hon-

our 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 vil-

lages, 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 com-

pletely 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 occa-

sion 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 teach-

ing work, have an opportunity to come together in one

place, even for a few hours. I have noticed that mass teach-

ing 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 sub-

ject, 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 Mes-

sage 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 fol-

low 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 fa-

miliar 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 rela-

tion 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 Di-

vine 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 peo-

ple, 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 Muhammads, 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 chil-

dren 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 chil-

dren. 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 teach-

ings, and on top of that He has given us an entirely new

World Order, a World Civilization. Let us take an exam-

ple that is very easy because it is before our eyes. Let us

take the design on this very beautiful tent. This is a par-

ticularly 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 hold-

ing it up. It has different colours and it has different pat-

terns. 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 Spir-

itual 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 peo-

ple of the world think that we Bahá’ís have an organiza-

tion 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 con-

veying 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, ac-

cording to the teachings of Bahá’u’lláh, have reached

manhood. We have grown up. Manhood has responsibili-

ties. 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 in-

telligent 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 per-

fect 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 Iike

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. Some-

body 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 every-

thing we do. The merchant lies to the customer, the cus-

tomer 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 so-

ciety, from little tiny people in their own homes up to the

nations.

We are dishonest in big ways and in small ways; al-

though 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 soci-

ety. 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 re-

ceived 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 try-

ing 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 differ-

ence. 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 ba-

zaar? 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 peo-

ple 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. Muhammad 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 charac-

ters—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 lan-

guages. It is hard enough to listen to a long talk in one

language, but in two languages it makes it even more dif-

ficult, 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 posi-

tion 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 sugges-

tions from the people present about the teaching work. With

the exception of a few foreigners who are here, from out-

side India, this is your country; this is your part of the Nine

Year Plan; this is your religion and it is your responsibil-

ity. 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 (point-

ing 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. Turn-

ing 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 1 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 Guard-

ian speak on this subject to a Bahá’í pilgrim in a most mar-

vellous 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 ex-

plain 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 atti-

tude 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 atti-

tude 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 hu-

man 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 pur-

pose 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 com-

munity, 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 an-

swer 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 pray-

ing 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 Mani-

festation. 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 teach-

ings 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 teach-

ings 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 Mys-

tery 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, other-

wise you are praying only to your imagination. These teach-

ings 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 west-

ern 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 pa-

tient. 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.” Some-

times 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 eve-

rybody. 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 un-

derstand, people who are the ill-wishers of the Bahá’í

Faith—we should have no feeling of hatred towards be-

cause 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 to-

morrow 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 at-

tendants, 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 “Jun-

gle 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. Fi-

nally 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 who-

ever 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 be-

cause this is the teaching that so far we have in the west-

ern 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 spir-

itual and have no real belief in God or it is buried so deep

in them that it is almost impossible to find still that spir-

itual 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 Head-

man. 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 any-

where. This has come into the Bahá’í Faith since we be-

gan to have so many thousands of Bahá’ís. When I was a

child there were so few Bahá’ís in my country that every-

body 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 del-

egate 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 Univer-

sal 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 re-

ceive your Bahá’í news bulletin from your National As-

sembly. 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; sanc-

tify 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 ex-

perience. (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 won-

derfully, and this is the way we carry on our Bahá’í work.

You have Local Spiritual Assemblies and committees, Na-

tional 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 princi-

ple 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 indi-

vidual 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 indi-

vidually the command of Bahá’u’lláh that this is your re-

ligion, 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 dis-

cussion 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 mem-

ber 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 (Cen-

tres) 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 Malay-

sian 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 Pales-

tine, 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 Fa-

ther. 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 stand-

ing 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 superstruc-

ture—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 him-

self, 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 noth-

ing in front of them and the things they did with their own

hands, with their own strength, because they set us an ex-

ample of service.

In Germany, after the war, in Frankfurt, they wanted to

build a Hazíratu’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 of-

ten all property inside a village belongs to well-to-do villag-

ers 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 Khánum

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 commu-

nity stated that when the believers knew Rúhíyyih Khánum

was coming to a meeting there they had raised some money

for it—Rs. 314/-. Then, because of illness she had had to can-

cel 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 Khánum they needed money for it, but they did

not like to ask the National Assembly for it because “the par-

ents 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 confer-

ence—said we should sacrifice and give to others, not gather

for ourselves! “When Amatu’l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánum came

to us in February we promised we would have a Bahá’í Bha-

wan. 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 Khánum 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 meet-

ings 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, instruc-

tion 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 Tues-

day 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 teach-

ing 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 ques-

tion 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 bet-

ter 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 Khánum 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 amaze-

ment, then wander off to find a place on the floor for them-

selves 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 Khánum as she sat on the plat-

form, waiting for the next session to begin.

After prayers and introductory remarks, Rúhíyyih Khánum

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 trav-

elling in India, with dear Shirin Khánum with me, and I

have gone from one place where there were Bahá’ís to an-

other place. But when I came from Ceylon with Mrs. Nakh-

javani 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 re-

moved from us in the two weeks we were alone. The recep-

tivity 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 Assem-

bly, spoken in colleges, spoken in schools, spoken in tem-

ples 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 lan-

guage. 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 vil-

lagers 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 under-

stand, 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 hard-

ship, 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 hard-

ships. 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 Wash-

ington 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 re-

membered all the sufferings of the past. He remembered

the mark of the iron collar that Bahá’u’lláh, His Father,

had worn in the Síyáh-Chál, in the dungeon of Tihran, 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 ex-

periences? 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 avail-

able to any of the Bahá’ís who have attended this Confer-

ence who wish to come and discuss with them how they

can go out as teachers into the field at this time. The high-

est 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 govern-

ment 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 teach-

ers. 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 Khánum 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 per-

sonally 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 Khánum, through an

interpreter, asked him where his two sons were. “Right down

there”, he said, indicating the floor half-way down the ter-

race. Rúhíyyih Khánum 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 Khánum said:

Friends, we will close our evening session because we have

something that we hope will make you all happy, the pic-

tures of the International Convention in Haifa, coloured

slides of the election of the Universal House of Justice, of

the Holy Places in Haifa and ‘Akka, 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 mil-

lion, 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 consid-

erably lower. No matter when you get your first million, I

can’t wait that long. I will be back before then. (This re-

mark 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 teach-

ing course for those who could remain for the 18th, 19th, and

20th, and a speech on behalf of the National Teaching Com-

mittee by its English secretary. When Rúhíyyih Khánum 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 lit-

tle 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 1 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 flow-

ers 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 Spir-

itual 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 for-

gotten 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 thou-

sands 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, prac-

tical 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 per-

centage of fat in the milk is the percentage of Bahá’í teach-

ers, 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 out-

standing 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 teach-

ing 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 thou-

sands of Bahá’ís nor have you yet developed your experi-

enced Bahá’ís. These places desperately need help at this

time. It is like a man who lights a fire and he cannot con-

trol 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 colo-

nies 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 to-

wards 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 spe-

cial 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 com-

munism. We have nothing to do with politics, but we know

that a political philosophy is not going to solve the prob-

lems 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 pre-

viously 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 bed-

room of their own. Where can they meet and where can

they teach the Faith? They need to have a Bahá’í head-

quarters, they need a strong pioneer to go there and estab-

lish 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 res-

taurant. 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 wonder-

ful 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 can-

not 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 any-

where you want to do tribal teaching, a very slow propo-

sition 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 tribes-

man 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 primi-

tive 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 disadvan-

tage with them?” They said, “Oh, yes, and what is more,

we feel very afraid of them.” “Well,” I said, “you must re-

member 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 natu-

ral 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, univer-

sal language, education for all, universal suffrage …” and

all our other Bahá’í teachings, then that man would be hon-

oured 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 your-

self, 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 sug-

gestions should now come from all of you, the way it did yes-

terday. 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 va-

cations, 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 an-

other 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 com-

munities, the born Bahá’í and the Bahá’í of yesterday, offers

of service poured in. The variety of offers alone was a revela-

tion of the spirit of the friends. One believer with a beautiful

voice, offered to sing the praises of Bahá’u’lláh in any gather-

ing 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 en-

rol 500 more Bahá’ís—another 10,000! How marvellous to

realize that in India both of these promises can really be ful-

filled! 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 Khá-

num 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 gath-

ered 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 medi-

cal 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 thou-

sand 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 peo-

ple 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 under-

stands 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 re-

ceive 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 Spir-

itual 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 As-

sembly 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 any-

where 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 As-

sembly, 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 com-

munity of integrity, of selflessness, of devotion, of humil-

ity. They are the servants of the servants of God.

Remember that the title ‘Abdu’l-Bahá chose for Him-

self 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 re-

member 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. Sup-

posing 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 vil-

lage 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 ap-

plies 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 par-

ticular matter just in order to show how we protect the peo-

ple in this world. Friends, I ask you, particularly the young

people who are, in their studies and in their work, in con-

tact 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 prob-

lems 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 inte-

rior 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 every-

body that was fighting and all discussion on political mat-

ters. 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 peo-

ple that have caused the Government no trouble whatso-

ever are these people who have recently become Bahá’ís,

and because of their teaching of non-interference in po-

litical matters they have obeyed the Government; they have

been no trouble to us and I wish to report this to the Gov-

ernment.”

Friends, we must go back to the same spirit of our meet-

ing that we had this morning, of the people who are here

expressing their desires and their thoughts and their will-

ingness 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 dis-

covered 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 con-

quer 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 home-

work done, the sooner you can get out of doors. So I sug-

gest that you go on making your suggestions about the

teaching work, stating your needs in your area and mak-

ing your offers to go and help.

Again many offers were received and recorded of people

planning to teach full time or spare time. Rúhíyyih Khánum

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 be-

come Bahá’ís. Some of these were from the special police

guard on duty who had been able to hear the entire proceed-

ings. Incidentally, to and from Gwalior, on the lonely coun-

try road, Rúhíyyih Khánum’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 Khánum 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, be-

cause I think the answer to this question is very impor-

tant: “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 Mes-

sage. 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 vil-

lage 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. Teach-

ers 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 Khánum then said:

Friends, nothing is better than Bahá’í consultation. The

whole Order of Bahá’u’lláh is founded on Bahá’í consul-

tation. I was so happy that so many people expressed their

opinions on the subject of teaching in villages and teach-

ing 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 impor-

tant, 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 opportu-

nity 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 teach-

ers 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 stu-

dents. 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 Adminis-

tration, 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, pass-

ing among them. After this break there were more talks, and

following these, more offers of service from the friends, anx-

ious, as the wonderful Conference drew to its end, to con-

tribute their share to this historic occasion.

After the many thousands of miles we had travelled to-

gether, it was most befitting that Shirin Boman should gar-

land Rúhíyyih Khánum on behalf of the National Assembly

and all the believers. I will quote from her own words.

“Rúhíyyih Khánum 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. Rahmatu’lláh Muhá-

jir truly said that it was only Rúhíyyih Khánum who had ac-

tually understood the meaning of mass teaching. I could not

comprehend its meaning till I had the opportunity of accom-

panying 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 spir-

itual power we cannot achieve in the world. Our words can-

not 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 Rahmatu’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 In-

dian 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 hear-

ing 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 teach-

ers 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 prom-

ises you made to Bahá’u’lláh.

When I go back to the Holy Shrines, and I shall be pray-

ing 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 Con-

course, 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 memo-

ries 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 testi-

mony 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 never-

theless 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. Be-

fore 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 peo-

ple, which this attitude reflected, had equipped them to con-

tribute, 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!”

XII NEW DELHI

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 sub-

stance 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. Radhakrish-

nan, 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’ís to their Government, as well as the deep grati-

tude of the Bahá’ís of the world to the Indian Government

for its helpful and tolerant attitude towards the Bahá’ís 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 Febru-

ary 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, plac-

ing at the feet of the gods their gifts of flowers, so must we

place our service before the Throne of God. Whether the flow-

ers 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 re-

membered 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 al-

most 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.

APPENDIX

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OTHER MAJOR VISITS

Photographs of Amatu’l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánum

on her visits to India in 1967, 1974, 1977, 1984,

and 1986. Many other visits were made as “stop-overs” on her way to the Far East.

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[Photograph]

Arriving in India on one of her many trips

[Photograph]

Arriving in Bombay, 1967

[Photograph]

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

[Photograph]

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

[Photograph]

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

1967

[Photograph]

Arrival in Trivandrum, South India, 1967

[Photograph]

Trivandrum, South India, 1967

[Photograph]

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

[Photograph]

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

[Photograph]

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

[Photograph]

On the day of the Dedication of the Mother Temple of the Indian

subcontinent, 24 December 1986

[Photograph]

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

[Photograph]

After the Dedication of the House of Worship, 1986

[Photograph]

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

[Photograph]

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

[Photograph]

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 Hazíratu’l-Quds in Delhi, 1986

[Photograph]

In the garden of the House of Worship, 1987

[Photograph]

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.

—Rúhíyyih

Delhi, December 24, 1986