

HIMSELF

*THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A HINDU LADY*

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*The Autobiography of a Hindu Lady*

TRANSLATED AND ADAPTED  
BY KATHERINE VAN AKIN GATEL  
FROM A BOOK  
WRITTEN IN THE MARATHI LANGUAGE  
BY MRS. RAMABAI RANADE

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY  
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GATES  
HIMSELF

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RIGHT TO REPRODUCE THIS BOOK, OR  
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FIRST EDITION

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To  
my husband and his father  
through whom I was introduced to  
the India they loved

## KEY TO PRONUNCIATION OF MARATHI VOWELS

- ã as u in but
- â — ah, as in father
- ī as in Jim
- ī — ee — as in seen
- û as oo in took
- ũ as oo in poor
- ē as ay in lay
- V and W are pronounced alike  
in Marathi

## PREFACE

This is a true story of real people. They lived in Western India during the last quarter of the last century. The original story was first published in 1910 at Poona, India, by the Seva Sadan Society, with whose early days the author of the book, Mrs. Ramabai Ranade, was closely associated. Overwhelmed by grief at the death of her famous husband, Mrs. Ramabai<sup>1</sup> Ranade<sup>2</sup> found relief for her sorrow in telling friends of the happiness of their life together. One friend suggested to her that these reminiscences would interest other people and that the writing of them would solace the writer. Mrs. Ranade acknowledged this suggestion by dedicating her volume to her friend, Shrimati Soubhayavati Sakhutai Vidvas.

The choice of a title for this English version was not difficult. There is a custom in Western India in accordance with which, a wife, instead of referring to her husband by his given name, will use merely the third person plural form of the pronoun. Instead of this, Mrs. Ranade, in referring to her husband, has invariably used the Sanskrit reflexive pronoun. Consequently, 'Himself' seems the most important part of her story, as he was of her life.

The second part of the title is equally understandable to the Oriental mind. No Indian wife could

<sup>1</sup> Bai is the termination for every woman's name, and signifies Mrs. or Miss.

<sup>2</sup> Pronounced 'Rah-nah-day.'

write about herself without revealing how completely she is the reflection of her 'lord and guru,' and how dependent upon his attitude toward her is her happiness. No price is too great to pay for his continued favor. Therefore, the title of 'Himself: the Autobiography of a Hindu Lady' is both technically and psychologically correct.

The translation of this book was undertaken at the suggestion of Dr. Nicol Macnicol of Edinburgh, Scotland. A lifelong and sincere friend of India, he has written extensively, endeavoring to interpret the Oriental mind and character. He is a student of the philosophy and literature of the East and his volume called 'Psalms of the Maratha Saints' has won for him a high place in the esteem and affection of India. I am indebted to him for his encouragement in this venture and for his help in securing permission from the Seva Sadan Society to publish this volume.

I wish also to acknowledge my indebtedness to the Seva Sadan Society of Poona, which through its officers has so graciously granted me permission to translate and publish this story. They have been generous in their confidence in me, asking merely that I "do full justice to the memory of our illustrious lady" with whom the story deals.

I wish also to express my appreciation for the help given me by the Rev. J. F. Edwards of Poona, and Dr. Edward Fairbank formerly of Vadala, India. They have encouraged me and given help about problems which have been difficult to solve at this distance from India.

Terminations for Marathi names are confusing. The term *Bai* is added to any woman's name and signifies Mrs. or Miss ; while *Rao* or *Ji*, and *Pant*, meaning Mr. are used in the same way for men's names. In addition, practically every human relationship has its own designation which, in many cases, is used in place of the given name. For instance, *Sasu* means mother-in-law and in the case of Himself's step mother, they have used the additional name for older sister, making her name *Taisasubai*. In the case of Himself's sister, she is 'Durgi' to all the others but to the author she is always 'Wansa' or sister-in-law.

The original plan for the book involved the publication of a complete translation, and that work was completed first. Later circumstances have made it seem wiser to publish a condensed version, omitting geographical and historical references not easily understood outside of India.

Mrs. Ranade's own story is, therefore, taken from the slightly fuller account contained in the complete translation. A few sections which refer to others rather than to herself, have been deleted. The only liberty the adaption required was in arrangement of material, and in clarifying incidents for Western readers by the insertion of an occasional paragraph. This has been done by crediting to the original author, certain explanatory sentences which are not in the original text but which are entirely in character with it. Writing for Indian readers, Mrs. Ranade could assume their understanding of customs which the Occidental reader does not know. I trust that the desire to explain the



joint family system and other Hindu ideas to those unfamiliar with them, as is done at the opening of Chapter III, and Chapter VIII, justifies the means used.

The story, therefore, is based on a complete, literal translation and includes the incidents and attitudes gathered from it. It is given to the English speaking public with the hope that it may help the West sympathetically to study and understand the beauty of the ideals of the Hindu woman in her home, of her selflessness and tact, and of the sincerity of her attitude toward the one whom she has been taught to make the object of her worship.

The period covered by the story is the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

In Western India, during the years between 1870 and 1900, when the seeds of the nationalism now so well developed under Congress leadership were first germinating, there were several notable figures whose ability, integrity and statesmanship guided the forces which were molding history. They were the product of an English University system transplanted on foreign soil where it produced results which were startling to those who had supposed that the mentality of the Oriental was greatly inferior to that of the Occidental.

This period may well be called the Renaissance of India, marking the beginning, as it did, of great religious and social reforms, of awakened interest in the great languages and the fine arts of the Motherland. These movements came to life later in Maharashtra than in Bengal, perhaps, but were stamped by the same highmindedness and fervor as that displayed in other parts of India. The history of the period and the biographies of its leaders leave one with a keen appreciation of the fact that they were men of

culture and dignity, gentlemen of the same sort as the British statesmen by whose sides they worked.

Towering above the rank and file of these leaders, and acknowledged throughout India as scholar, judge, patriot and social reformer, Mr. Justice Madhavrao Govind Ranade was the forerunner and guide for such great patriots as G. K. Gokhale, and Sir Narayan Chandavakar. Gokhale called him his 'Guru,' would never sit down in his presence and held him in an almost religious reverence. The story of his amazing career is given us by James Kellock in his volume named 'Mahadev Govind Ranade.'

The story in this volume which Mrs. Ramabai Ranade has given us is unique in Marathi literature. It is one of the few books written by an Indian woman and its value is enhanced by the fact that she stood at the opening of a period and acted as a pioneer in the movement for the emancipation of women which has now reached an advanced stage.

After the death of her revered husband, Mrs. Ranade was prone to retire in accordance with the custom which demands that a Hindu widow, shorn of her ornaments and dedicated to service in the home, shall drag out her days in woe until she can secure release from this life. Friends who understood her and realized what she still had to give to Society, urged her to take an interest in the less fortunate women of her land. She began in a simple way working with the women in the jails, in whom she became interested and for whose service she soon secured the cooperation of some of her friends. The story of how, from this beginning, there grew up the organization of the Seva Sadan Society for the service of women, is not for this book to tell. To appreciate the value of that Society, founded by B. M. Malabari and developed under the leadership of Mrs. Ranade and Mr. G. K. Devadhar, one needs only visit the headquarters in Poona. There one finds splendid schools for girls, ranging from kindergarten through High School; a train-

ing school for teachers ; housework done under skilled supervision ; home surroundings for girls studying nursing and medicine in neighboring institutions ; and recently, in cooperation with the Bombay Presidency Infant Welfare Society, there has been opened a training school for district nurses, who are sent into the homes to spread the gospel of health.

The Seva Sadan has, therefore, pioneered in this field seeking the uplift of India by encouraging its women to serve in social, education and medical ways. Just how radical such activities seemed to the orthodox Hindu of those days is revealed by the story which Mrs. Ranade has so graphically told. In view of the present services for India being given by its educated woman, it is difficult to believe that the incidents recounted so vividly in this story happened less than fifty years ago.

#### HINDU WIDOWS

The aspects of the Hindu system which the story brings out, aside from the general atmosphere of the home, are three. To those who do not know India, the reference to 'widows' needs some clarification. According to the custom, a child must be married before the age of puberty. The actual wedding ceremony may occur at any time after the birth of the two children. But the bride does not usually go to the home of her husband until she is old enough to begin to take an interest in the housework. Meantime, if her husband dies before she is old enough to understand what a husband is, she becomes in very fact a widow and as a punishment for the sin which was responsible for the death of her husband, she must forever remain a widow. Those who lived in Mr. Ranade's home were indeed fortunate in having so kindly a head to their house ! The general picture of widowhood in India is not such a pleasant one.

## CHILDREN

The fact that Mrs. Ranade bore no children of her own, as she states in the final chapter, seems inconsistent with the story of the children she has with her on tour and in her own home. Under the joint family system, however, Himself's step-brothers, and their wives made part of the so-called 'Poona family.' Their children took the place for Mr. and Mrs. Ranade of the family which they did not have.

## PURIFICATION

The attitude of the Hindu toward things which are unclean is difficult for a foreigner to understand. Some ideas of this are revealed in the chapter about the Poona tea-party, where tea served by foreigners and probably prepared by low caste servants, roused such a long drawn-out dispute. The reference in Chapter XV to the meat market, is also illuminating, since a Hindu is necessarily a vegetarian and any contact with meat is revolting to the caste people. The purification ceremonies which are required of those who have in any way 'broken caste,' indicate what a difficult problem Hinduism faces as she tries to adjust to present-day conditions.

## BHAKTI

In the matter of Mr. Ranade's religious outlook, little can be said in this article. Anyone interested may find an interesting discussion of this in Mr. Kellock's *Life of Ranade*. At this point, one can only briefly say that the path of Bhakti is given as one of the ways for the Hindu to find release from the wheel of existence. This method is the one of worship and has produced during the centuries a splendid line of thinkers and poets who have enriched the teachings and the literature available for the

common people. Tukaram, Namdev, Kabir, Mirabai · only a few of the names of loved poets who have greatly influenced devotees in all lines of life. Some of these are now available in English translations. The two poems in this book are quoted in Mrs. Ranade's story, one at the opening and one at the end. They are published in English for the first time here.

HIMSELF

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A HINDU LADY

“Thy form in its beauty before me,  
My weakness upheld by Thy strength,  
My being enriched by the praises I sing,  
I shall grow holy.

“There is nothing in me, O my Lord,  
My offerings merit no gift,  
But with uplifted eyes, I cling to Thy feet,  
Believing in Thee.

“Thy devotees aid me with songs,  
Meditation keeps me near Thee ;  
My days slip away with Thee in my heart  
As I pray.

“Tuka says, ‘O Narayana,  
I will fill my mind with Thy name.’ ”  
— Tukaram



## CHAPTER I

Eleven years old and not married ! Shocking it truly was in India, and especially in such an orthodox and aristocratic a family as mine ! Probably our family pride was at the root of it, a conviction that there would always be someone who would be glad to have a daughter given him from our house. For we Kurlekar were proud of our vigorous and gifted ancestors. We loved best the stories about the professional soldiers in our family who had fought in campaigns in many parts of India, invariably bringing home, in recognition of their skill and prowess, rich trophies and deeds of land presented by victorious rulers. None of these adventurers seemed interested in these land grants, but settled down to lives of comfort in Satara, where they spent their days in meditation and in the study of the sacred Hindu scriptures. Each generation of the Kurlekar produced its devotee of Shankara, or Shiva, or Ganpati, and a reputation for integrity, intelligence and ability, coupled with a choleric temper and an autocratic spirit.

Among the stories we children learned was one of



my grandfather when he was a boy. One day in a fit of temper he had used some very bad language to his mother. Some hours later, in an equally violent mood of penitence, he went to a temple in our village where he cut off the end of his tongue and laid it on the altar of Shiva, saying, "Rather than make me use such words to my mother it would have been better had you struck me dumb."

An old priest, sitting near, was not quick enough to reach over and prevent the deed ; but he hurriedly lifted the piece of tongue, dipped it in the ashes on the altar and replaced it in the boy's mouth with the words,

"Don't ever do such a thing again ! Had I been closer I would have stopped you. Would that misfortune not have been like a curse on your mother ?" The boy's tongue was restored by the quick action of the old guru.<sup>1</sup>

Such religious devotion characterized all my father's family, and my father himself held a position of dignity and influence. He was hot tempered and domineering, but, withal, a generous man of quick sympathies and with a strong and unquestioning faith in God.

The girls of our family were carefully guarded from any modern ideas. No women of the house or girls over eight years were allowed to appear before the men, or even to come outside the house. We knew nothing of reading, and the word 'writing' had no meaning for us. I had one aunt, my father's sister, who was married to a strict Brahman. He himself taught

<sup>1</sup> A religious teacher.

her to read Sanskrit. Not long afterward her husband died, and his death was considered a punishment on her for having ventured to learn. As a result, in our family any sort of education for girls was considered unpropitious, and none of us ever had even a 'smell' of it!

As long as my father's mother was living she had ruled the home. Her grandchildren were never allowed to speak to their father in her presence. As she was *always* there the children grew up without knowing their father, and lived in terror of him. But Grandmother died the year before I was born, and so, for the first time, my father was free to follow his own desire. He made much of the baby daughter, playing with me and petting me until I was utterly spoiled. I dared take liberties and be familiar with him in a way that quite scandalized my older brothers and sisters. Yet there were definite limits to what even I dared.

My two sisters were married, one in her fifth year and the other in her seventh. After they went to their homes I had no one to play with. Although I had friends among our neighbors' girls, I couldn't play with them often. My father was very severe and didn't like his girls to go elsewhere to play; neither would he endure the loud talking, shouting and commotion we made when the other children came to see us. It was only on the days when he went out to the fields that we could have company. Sometimes, when I had nothing else to entertain me, I used to enjoy hearing my brother Daji read stories, and used to wonder how he did it.

My father travelled about a great deal on court business and on legal matters connected with family disputes. My brother used to read to my mother letters which came after father left. But I never paid any attention. One day my father was starting on a journey. I saw him alone out in the yard and joined him there. As he picked me up he asked, "Why have you come? You want something, of course!"

I replied, "Yes, if you go to Poona, bring me a doll, all dressed up with lots of jewelry, and a new sari.<sup>2</sup> Don't forget; bring it!" And I raced away. My plan was not to tell anyone about the doll until he brought it! And so I was delighted when I felt sure that no one had overheard us. That afternoon, when Annasaheb<sup>3</sup> had gone to Poona, my aunt asked each one, "What did you tell him to bring you?" They all replied except me. I avoided answering by running out to play. Seven or eight days later a letter came from Poona. At the end he sent his blessing and said, "Tell Rama I will surely bring her doll and sari; I'll not forget." When he read this, Daji said, "How's this, deceiver! You ran away when Auntie asked you, but I know what you asked Annasaheb to bring you!"

I replied, "You can't know! Are you a god? No one knows but my Ganpati (I used to pray every day to my idol!). But he is mine. He will not tell anyone!"

Daji, in great glee, answered, "Go on with your

<sup>2</sup> A woman's draped dress.

<sup>3</sup> Her father.

Ganpati! He doesn't know anything! I know — you asked for a big doll and a sari!"

I was dumbfounded to hear him say that! And I was completely mystified as to how he had found out! Presently, when I saw Daji go in to study, I followed him and asked ingratiatingly, "Daji, tell me how you knew!" And he said, "Oh, his letter came today and he wrote about it." The words conveyed no meaning to me, however, and I said, "Probably the letter did come, but how did you know what I had said?" He replied, "He wrote it!" "All right, he wrote it, but how did you know he did?" I persisted. I couldn't find the words to make him understand and he didn't realize my difficulty. And so I pestered him with my questions and would not stop my noise. Then when he could stand it no longer he gave me a good slap. I stopped bothering him with questions, but I really did not understand about it. However, like all children, I soon forgot the incident.

A year or two later that long-forgotten episode returned to me, when I read in the third lesson book the story of the talking chip. I realized that I was like the Bhil<sup>4</sup> servant who carried the chip bearing the message, but simply couldn't understand how the recipient heard what was written on it. I was very happy when I read this, for it solved that old puzzle about Daji.

Although my mother had borne twenty children, there were only seven of us who lived to grow up. I

<sup>4</sup> A race of hill people.

wish that I really could help you to see that little mother of mine, daughter of a well-known physician of Miraj! She was a very shy, gentle and patient mother, who was always busy. She never enjoyed sitting idle. If the work of the home were finished, she would become absorbed in some special task, such as mixing medicines or pills. She really knew a great deal about the business of a physician as prescribed by the *Shastras*.<sup>5</sup> She could even cure old diseases that had gone on for years. For this reason people from ten or twelve villages not far from ours used to come to her in implicit faith for the medicines she prepared at her own expense and with her own hand. Day or night, at whatever time the sick people came, she was never too weary to get up and give them medicine. If they were poor, she would keep them for six or eight days on the verandah, and would herself prepare their diet and medicines. If patients became violent or had become insane she would brand them.<sup>6</sup>

In all this work she had my father's approval and help, for he, too, enjoyed such benevolent work. "Spend what you need for such a purpose, for that is the truest religion," he would say, encouraging her. My father's disposition was extremely hot-tempered, but firm. No member of the family had the courage to breathe a syllable in his presence! In the early days of her married life my mother had had much to endure; but by her gentleness and her quiet, patient

<sup>5</sup> Scriptures.

<sup>6</sup> This was the method of treatment often adopted formerly wherever in India no medical help was available.

disposition she had won his continuous favor. For she understood that the god and guru of every wife is her husband.<sup>7</sup> And so she learned from her husband the *guru mantra*, and she determinedly repeated it.

In the year 1876-77 the great famine proved a terrible strain on my father, and for several years he had great difficulty in caring for so many dependents. At that time, as her children still remember, my mother carried on with a great and quiet courage, keeping trouble, whatever it might be, from the children and never complaining in our father's presence that anything was needed. She always treated us as friends, lovingly and frankly.

Every day when the *Purana*<sup>8</sup> was over she used to call all of us children into the open court-yard and tell us stories and legends from the *Puranas* about the gods. Our auntie used to tease her by saying, "Aha! Our sister, Uma, seems to think that her children are very clever! Of course they all understand these stories you tell from the *Puranas*! Why bother to tell them such long stories? Even grown men find it difficult to remember them!"

But my mother would reply, "What can I do when I don't know silly cat and dog stories? Say what you like, it still seems to me that one can only scatter good

<sup>7</sup> "The husband is the mirror through which to see God," is a tenet of the Hindu faith, found in the books of Manu. Her husband is her guru or spiritual teacher. As such he can teach her the mantra or religious motto which is to be her guide through life. Every Brahman boy receives such a mantra from his spiritual teacher.

<sup>8</sup> Sacred Scriptures used in worship.

seed. If the soil receives it, it will take root. At least there is virtue in merely repeating daily with one's own lips the stories of the gods."

The surprising part of it is that although at that time we children were only four, six, eight or ten years old, we remember clearly every story she told us as though we had just now heard it.

## CHAPTER II

Weddings are a topic of unfailing interest to women. My childish ideas expanded as I listened to frequent discussions of the wedding days of friends and family ; about gifts from the groom to the bride and her family ; about parties and dinners at 'his' home for her people, and at 'her' home for his people ; about elaborate processions with bands and flaring lights and, occasionally, with elephants. What child could grow up in such an atmosphere without dreaming of an equally brilliant setting for her own small person when the great day should dawn !

The auspicious time for my wedding was determined as the evening of the eleventh day of the new moon, the ninth month of 1795, of the Hindu calendar, or, as we say now, in December, 1873. The wedding ceremonies were carried out as prescribed by the Vedas. But the simple truth is that instead of arriving in a brilliant procession, we two, the bride and groom, went on foot to our home about ten-thirty that night, alone ! At the conclusion of the ceremony, Himself refused even to eat any food in my parents' home. Likewise, when we reached his home, he refused to talk or to eat, and instead he went at once to his room, closed the door and bolted it. For on that day his mind was in great distress. Exactly one month had passed since the death of his beloved wife, his friend and companion since childhood. That grief was very fresh and keen.

After her death, Himself had had only the desire



to be left alone with his sorrow. If he thought at all of the future he may have vaguely considered the time a good one for a long-dreamed-of trip to Europe. Certainly, any thought of marrying again for years to come was far from his mind. But without his being aware of it, he had become the victim of two opposing schools of thought, each of which centered its struggle on him.

Thoroughly Hindu in his outlook, any thought of bringing division into the family circle or of failing in filial loyalty was repugnant to Himself. And so, when his father, Bhausahab, appeared in Poona three days after the death of Sakhubai, his daughter-in-law, prepared to secure a second wife for his son, Himself was deeply distressed. Mamanji<sup>1</sup> had previously been troubled because of his son's interest in reforms in our Hindu social system, and he greatly feared lest, left to his own initiative, Himself might dishonor the family by actually marrying a widow or, at least, an educated adult woman. He was a determined man and vowed to leave no stone unturned in his effort to avert such disgrace from his family.

But the young man felt an equal pull from another direction. A group of younger men in Bombay and Poona for whose enthusiasm in social reform Himself had furnished active and welcome leadership, promptly saw in this personal situation a rare opportunity for proving his loyalty to the principles they had agreed to follow. They began to flood his mails with letters and telegrams urging him to realize that "Now is the

<sup>1</sup> The name Ramabai (Mrs. Ranade) always uses for her father-in-law.

time. Tell your father that you will not marry a little girl and that you intend to marry a widow."

At first these letters were delivered to Himself ; but as soon as Mamanji heard of them he secretly censored the post each day, keeping by him those he considered doubtful and sending the rest to his son.

At that very time it happened that my father had gone to Poona to look for a suitable match for his daughter. At Poona he met Mamanji. They had known each other before but had not seen one another for a long time and had much to talk about. Mamanji told of his son's recent loss and said,

"His wife, Sakhubai, was a fine woman, daughter of Moropant Dandekar, a gentleman living at Wai. She was married to my son twenty years ago, when he was twelve years old, and they have grown up together. They had no children, probably because she was not well. She had been with him part of his school days in Bombay and became tubercular, and eventually this illness caused her death."

He poured out his troubles to sympathetic ears, and explained how necessary it was that he immediately find a wife for this son who was rebelling against the orthodox ways of doing things.

"I dread lest he disgrace us by marrying a widow or an educated woman," he said, "and I must prevent such action at any cost."

Thoughtfully my father replied, "My little girl is of marriageable age. You know that it is our custom not to send the child to be looked over until the wedding agreement is made, and so I hope you will send

some man to our village to see her. If the girl satisfies him, then only can we send her here. It reflects on the respectability of the family if a little girl is sent out to be married and then is returned still unmarried. Therefore, unless you have first approved of the child I cannot bring her here."

Mamanji then sent with my father a Brahman friend of his family and ours. He had a reputation for learning and was scrupulously exact in the discharge of religious duties. A man of such high character, he was considered as one of ourselves, and Mamanji himself in every matter had confidence in him. As soon as he arrived with my father he saw me. He asked all the questions demanded by custom, and prolonged, no one knows why, the minute investigation of the rest of the household until evening. Then at bedtime he said to my father, "I approve of the child. Tomorrow or the day after bring her down. Then when the auspicious day for the wedding is settled you can call the rest of the family by telegram." This decision suited everyone, and the next day my father, Balabhataji and I travelled to Poona in the mail tonga.

Meantime, a continuous argument had been going on between Himself and his father. The younger man kept saying, "I have no desire to marry. I'm no longer a child; I'm thirty-two years old. What harm is there in waiting to think about it? Durgi<sup>2</sup> is younger than I and has been desolate<sup>3</sup> since she was twenty-one. You certainly do not love her less than you love me;

<sup>2</sup> His sister, later, Ramabai calls her, 'Wansa.'

<sup>3</sup> A familiar term describing the state of widowhood.

then why aren't you planning for her? Why are you so insistent only on my marriage? If you consider, perhaps, that she lives under a religious vow, as she should, then treat us both in the same way. If you are afraid lest I shall marry a widow if left alone, I give you my promise that I shall not. You need have no fear on that score."

But for all his pleading Mamanji would not yield. He only became more angry. Finally his son said, "Well, if you will not listen to me, I must needs obey you. However, please allow me six months more of freedom, during which time I can go to England and return."

Mamanji was adamant and would not agree even to this. Then Himself made one last appeal, saying, "Since you will not allow me any liberty and insist on arranging my wedding, I ask this one thing — that the girl you choose for me be not of our village but be of a different village. Let her ancestry be good and her family reputable. Reach your decision only after you are convinced that all the people of her relationship are good. I will not accept a girl of our own village. I will not accept a girl of ordinary stock merely because she is pretty and old enough to marry. If you pay more heed to the purity of her ancestry than to her appearance, the outcome will be happier."

It was only two or three days after this that we came to Poona. Mamanji came to see us at the place where we were stopping, and when he had signified his approval of me, he and my father sought out an auspicious day and the matter was settled. But Mamanji

gave strict injunctions to my father, saying, "You positively must come to our house this evening and hear what my son has to say. If he is agreeable, all right ; but if he objects, then tell him plainly that you are determined to give your daughter in this marriage." My father agreed to this, and that evening he went to the house and went upstairs for the interview with Himself.

My father's appearance was mature, impressive and confident, as befitted a member of a distinguished family of gentle folk. As soon as he appeared, Himself rose and stood while he inquired politely who he was and what his business. Then my father announced himself as Annasaheb Kurlekar, a Jahagirdar <sup>4</sup> of such-and-such a village, and told about us briefly, concluding by saying, "My daughter is marriageable and I have come with the purpose of giving her to you."

Himself replied, "What do you see in me that you should want to give her to me ? In the first place you are a Jahagirdar of an old family, while I am a modern, a member of a group which believes in widow remarriage. Then, too, though my body appears sound, yet my sight and hearing are defective. Still further, I am about to leave for England, and when I return I shall make no expiation.<sup>5</sup> Consider all these things and then decide."

My father replied, "Your father, Bhausahab, and I

<sup>4</sup> Possessor of an hereditary freehold conferred by Government or native ruler as a reward. It included a percentage of revenues for several villages.

<sup>5</sup> According to Hindu ideas, one who has crossed the ocean is unclean and must perform purification rites ; otherwise he is outcaste.

are friends of long standing. He has told me everything, and I have determined on giving my daughter."

Himself was silent for a time after hearing this, but then he said, "Even if you have reached this decision, please heed my request that instead of having a wedding, we become engaged and wait one year before the wedding."

But my father protested, "Don't do that! Think of the reputation of my family!" he pleaded.

Himself finally answered, "We must now get Bhausaheb's opinion in the matter and accept his decision." So my father went away.

Himself's only thought was that if he agreed to everything else his father suggested, he would surely be granted this one desire to have the wedding postponed for six months or a year. With this in mind he went to his father, told him about the visit of my father, Annasaheb Kurlekar, and of their conversation. His father said, "Well, tell me what has been decided."

His son replied, "What shall finally be done we have left to you. But why should you listen only to the arguments he gives and not to mine? Should you not at all agree with me, the one who says very little? The whole matter depends on you. However little you say, must he not consent to it? I have told him I will agree to everything and marry his daughter, but not right away. There must be an interval of six months or a year." With every sort of argument he tried quietly to change his father's determination, hoping also to influence the other members of the household who were listening.

'Mamanji sat silently for an hour or more, thinking his own thoughts and making no reply. Himself continued quietly talking, but he did not hold his father's attention. About two hours later, Mamanji began to speak, and he said to all the others who were standing around, "You may all go outside, and don't return for a half-hour or so." At this they all quickly withdrew. No one heard what was said save Durgi, who listened at the key hole, though she had no right to do so.

Mamanji said to his son, "I have given much thought to what you have been saying, but I do not see how I can heed it at this time. I have never distrusted you, and I do not now. But these are times when even thoughtful men who have determined on a course of action find themselves surrounded by a whirlpool of temptations — has this escaped your notice? If I listen to you and agree to leave you free for six months or a year, I truly fear that I will be ruining my chances for peace and real comfort during my declining years. And I will tell you why I feel so sure. During these last fifteen days I have intercepted and read all the letters and telegrams from your Bombay friends. Because of all their plans I feel strongly that I must not grant your request. The pull of these new ideas is strong, and the weight of your friends' influence is on that side; moreover, youth is favorable to such folly. In spite of all this, had you boys and girls of your own they would now help you to hold back a little; but you haven't even that to hold you. My fear is that, with this freedom on all sides, the pride of the new move-

ment will grip you without your realizing it and you will fall before the temptation.

“However, I am an old man. The burden and responsibility for the women of the family is coming to you soon, and you are worthy of it. So be it. If, as you request, I leave you free for six months or more, I would merely be heedlessly disregarding the comfort and safety of the family. I have outlined all sides of the problem. You are a thoughtful person ; now do what you think right. I add only one other fact, namely, that if you don't marry now, the girl cannot be sent back to her home because that would be an insult to Annasaheb's family and would bring dishonor to mine. If this is your decision, then from today you and I are nothing to each other and I will return to Karavir.<sup>6</sup> Thereafter, whatever Fate may bring, let it come !”

As he finished speaking, Mamanji heaved a deep sigh, rose and washed his hands and went to his evening meditation. His son went to his room upstairs. All these events that happened before our wedding I later learned from Durgi.

Thereafter, just as Mamanji had arranged and as I said before, the wedding took place at the auspicious time of the evening twilight in December, 1873. After the wedding ceremony there was no single one of the popular practices and customs carried out. The simplest Vedic ceremony<sup>7</sup> and the fire ceremony were punctiliously celebrated, and that was all.

<sup>6</sup> A village in Kolhapur State.

<sup>7</sup> Prescribed in the vedas, or religious literature.



Even on the day of the wedding, Himself did not take leave of absence from the Court. This kept Mamanji in anxiety until his son arrived ; for, in spite of his confidence in his son's promise, even when given unwillingly, Mamanji couldn't help fearing lest some of the Bombay group might purposely delay him long enough to miss the auspicious time for the marriage ceremony. Great was his relief when Himself appeared at the house after finishing his Court duty for the day. The wedding proceeded in the usual way, and when it was over, my father left me alone in Poona in my father-in-law's house and went back home to his village.

I must pause here to say that my father was the only one of my family who came with me to Poona when I was brought to meet Mamanji. The plan had been that he would send a telegram when the arrangements had been completed, summoning my mother, brother, brothers-in-law, sisters, cousins, both boys and girls, and all the rest of our relatives to the wedding ; but Mamanji decided on so early a date that there was no time to send for them. Besides, as the bridegroom had absolutely refused to have any celebration whatever except the minimum of the required Vedic ceremony, my father was not willing to invite all the women and children for an occasion so dull and uninteresting.



### CHAPTER III

“See the child! She’s very short, isn’t she? Even if she grows a few inches, she’ll probably be fat and dumpy after her babies come. I suppose Mamanji wanted one who looked healthy, hoping for a grandson, as he does! Your mother had lots of children, didn’t she? Are your sisters short like you? Have they had sons yet?”

The little eleven year old bride, separated from her mother for the first time in her life, found herself surrounded by a chattering, inquisitive group of women, all of them years older than herself. In her own home she had been pert and saucy, expert at dodging the hand raised to slap her for her impudence. As I look back to that wedding night, it seems incredible that that poor, frightened, homesick child was myself!

Gradually those women became individuals to me. Himself’s step-mother was an influential member of the family whenever she was there, and her two boys, who were about my own age, became my good friends and my champions in many a situation as the years

fled past. Durgi, my sister-in-law, whom I always called 'Wansa,' was almost twenty years my senior, and ever since her early widowhood, had been a permanent part of the family. Himself's old aunt made her home with him. There were widowed cousins and aunts who had been welcomed into the circles in the early days of their trouble and who stayed on year after year, because money was plentiful and the city life was pleasant.

Each woman knew to a nicety just how much authority and influence she could assert, and there was endless squabbling over rights and privileges. They gossiped gaily about the affairs of the men folk, but took great pains in the preparation of food for them, and were careful to see to it that their bickerings and intrigues did not reach the ears of the head of the house, to bring an outburst of wrath. Each one knew exactly how far she dared go, and well understood Himself's kindly, long-suffering nature.

My father understood the situation, of course, and before he left Poona to return to my mother's home he had a long talk with me. He preached a veritable sermon, saying, "You are going to live in the house of your in-laws, with your husband's step-mother and his other dependents. I expect my little daughter's conduct to add lustre to our family name. Whatever trouble comes, endure it silently, and don't talk back even to a servant. Remember to control yourself even if something seems utterly unendurable. Never repeat tales to your husband; malicious whisperings have destroyed kingdoms, not to mention families! If you learn to

endure, your value will greatly increase, and the purpose for which you were born into our family will be realized. I command you to hold your tongue, whatever happens. And listen carefully! If I hear that you have disobeyed either of these rules, I will see to it that never again shall you return to your mother's home!"

Realizing that my father was severe and relentlessly determined, I was convinced that I must never fail to do as he said. I determined there and then to do nothing to jeopardize my visits to my family. Already I was beginning to sense that the discipline in this new home would soon make my carefree life in my mother's home seem like heaven itself.

My worst trouble, you see, was due to Himself's unchanging purpose to educate me. After my father's departure, Himself returned from Court about six-thirty, and, calling me into the room, asked, "Has your father gone?" I replied, "Yes." He continued, "You know that you have been married to me; but do you know who I am, my name, and anything else about me?" Again I answered respectfully, "Yes." "Then say it. What is my name?"

And so, because he commanded, I repeated his whole name as I had heard it. Somehow or other I hadn't been made to realize that no wife would ever speak her husband's name under any circumstances! Hearing it so repeated, Himself's expression showed a surprised relief, as though he considered it a hopeful sign for our future.

After that he inquired about things in my home, and

I told him all I knew about it. He even asked if I could read or write ; but, of course, I couldn't. So that night he brought me a slate and pencil and taught me the first seven letters of our alphabet. Never having had any previous acquaintance with a slate or the letters, I took fully two hours to draw and memorize those seven letters ! From the second day onward, he arranged to give two hours each evening to teaching me the alphabet and the numerals, and on perhaps the fifteenth day he had me read the first lesson in the first book. He seemed much encouraged that day. As for me, the first reading I did was a revelation.

From that time my studies proceeded regularly according to the grades. Grammar, arithmetic, Modi and Balbodh writing,<sup>1</sup> reading, and so on, were undertaken. Realizing that he couldn't give two hours every night as he had at first, after two or three months he arranged for a Brahman teacher from the Female Training College to teach me during the day. Then lessons were fun ! Who was afraid of her ! When she came it took half an hour to find our slates and books. She was quite young, and she wasn't particularly impressive. If I asked her things about her school, we started talking and the lesson hour flew. Sometimes she would say determinedly, "Read first and then we'll talk," and we would commence reading. By the time we had finished a page or two, the hour would be gone and she would leave. That was the way things went for about six months.

<sup>1</sup> Balbodh is the Devanagari or block character in the Marathi language ; Modi is script.

Meantime, Himself had taken three months leave from Court and had gone to see Allahabad, Benares, Calcutta and Madras with a party of friends. I stayed in Poona. On the very day of his return home he asked about my letters and had me read to him. What a surprise ! He found that I knew only what he himself had previously taught me. I hadn't made any progress. When he met my teacher next day he said, "I left her education in your hands ; but it doesn't seem as though you had seriously tried as you should have." Only that. She angrily interrupted him with, "The child is a perfect dunce, doesn't understand anything, however hard one tries. Her whole interest is in playing. How can one possibly make over rustic children by teaching them ! Try teaching her yourself and you'll understand." Ending her tirade finally, she started quickly away, and without a word Himself picked up a book and quietly began to read.

As for me, that was the first time that I really felt ashamed of myself, and I began to cry. Not wanting him to know, I surreptitiously wiped my eyes and went downstairs. I suspect that that day probably marked my farewell to careless childhood. Very soon he engaged another teacher, named Sagunabai Deva, of the Female Training College, to instruct me. She was quiet and even-tempered. Before the end of the year 1875 she had taken me through all the lessons up to the fifth grade.

Now it happened that the men of my new household approved of a certain amount of education for girls, and Mamanji himself had taught his wife and daughter

enough so that they could read and write and keep household accounts. They both felt puffed up and conceited about it. It wasn't only that the menfolk admired educated women and Sasubai<sup>2</sup> and Durgi<sup>3</sup> knew it; but also they had both enjoyed a certain prestige because they could read. In spite of this, however, when my time for studying came they not only didn't sympathize, but they were angry and scornful. They acted as if they belonged to the old school of thought, like our old Auntie, and had no interest in education. At the time, there were living in our house some eight or nine women, more or less closely related; but not a one was of my age. And so they made themselves, as it were, into a separate group.

Every night when I went upstairs they would listen to me as I read aloud. I was working just then on the Dakshina Prize Committee's book and on the Marathi, second reader, and if it was prose, the reading would pass off easily; but if it was poetry, I found it very difficult, because there were different metrical forms in the poetry and the only way to master them was to recite them very loudly. If I didn't read them loudly, but spoke softly because I was timid, then the women became angry; but if I recited quite loudly, then some one of the women I have mentioned would take her stand near the stairway or door. The next day as we all worked in the kitchen, she would begin to drawl out what she recalled of the couplet or poem I had recited the night before, imitating me in the

<sup>2</sup> Mother-in-law.

<sup>3</sup> Sister-in-law.

craziest way, teasing and shaming me before all the older women, and they would laugh hilariously. But whatever they said I never answered back. Whether their comments were true or false, I had to accept and endure them in silence.

Sometimes, however, one of them, with a pretense of sympathy, would come and sit by me and say, "How well you take what these older women say about your reading and writing! I feel badly, but what can I do? Since it pleases the menfolk, you might read sometimes; but doesn't this persistent study reflect unpleasantly on these older women in the house? How should men understand these things? You have to spend all your time among the women. What connection have you with the men? Your husband will order you to study, and then perhaps will repeat his command ten times; but if you do not listen he will give up in disgust. So you see, the matter rests finally with yourself, doesn't it?"

So she went on, finding words to argue with me endlessly. It was because I knew that such arguments were backed by all the women that I replied neither pleasantly nor rudely. Whatever had to be done, I did it uncomplainingly.



## CHAPTER IV

Now that the reader knows that Himself was good to me, I want to go back and help clear up any misunderstanding about his reluctance to marry me and why he eventually yielded to his father's insistence. He was bitterly criticized by his friends in Bombay, of course, for they felt that in yielding he had been disloyal to them and to his own convictions. After many years there are some who still indignantly charge him with weakness and cowardice at that crisis in his life.

At the time I knew nothing about the affair, but I have come to feel utterly in sympathy with his decision. Certainly, the doing of a difficult task does not indicate weakness, and cowardice is not the word to describe the unselfishness that made him antagonize friends of long standing whose convictions were his own. He had not changed his mind in the least. But when it came to a conflict between his loyalty to his new friends and ideas and loyalty to his father and family, he felt that he had no choice. Bitter as it was, he had to submit to his orthodox father. For Himself there was no alternative. There surely could be no finer example of his selflessness and generosity, or of his devotion to the ideals of the Hindu home.

It is not surprising that our wedding was a difficult experience for him, since he was still sincerely grieving for Sakhubai, and he was aware that his friends were really hurt and he felt that in a way he had been disloyal. But he never regretted his decision, and con-

tinued to carry on as though nothing had happened to estrange him from them.

In March, 1875, Himself's brother, Babu, had his thread ceremony,<sup>1</sup> and Mamanji and his whole family was visiting us from Kolhapur. Some time previously a family friend named Vishnushastri Pandit had married a widow, and word came one morning that he was stopping in Poona en route to Mahableshtar. Himself was extremely busy at Court at the time, and so, without stopping to think that his father might disapprove, invited Vishnushastri to our house for dinner at night. At noon as he was eating, he told his sister, "I have invited Vishnushastri Pandit and some friends for dinner tonight, so arrange it nicely."

On the days that he went to Court, Himself and his father could not have their breakfast together, for Mamanji did not get started for his bath until eleven o'clock or after. Then he was occupied until twelve o'clock with meditation, study of the Vedas, repeating mantras and passages of the scriptures. And so at ten-thirty, Himself and the boys used to have their breakfasts together and leave for their work before the others ate. On that particular morning, Mamanji and his wife and other relatives, who had come for Babu's thread ceremony and were still in Poona, were seated for their food, when it chanced that Durgi mentioned to Mamanji what his son had told her during breakfast. When Mamanji heard that Vishnushastri Pan-

<sup>1</sup> A ceremony by which a son of a Brahman is initiated as 'twice-born.' Every Brahman boy must have this investiture by the age of twelve, and as a sign he wears forever after the sacred thread, to which often he ties his keys.

dit was invited to the house for the evening, he became angry, but said nothing at the time. About four or five o'clock when it was time to go to the temple, he called his wife and said, "Don't help with serving dinner to the guest tonight; the child will attend to it. You get your own dinner."

It was the custom in our family for the women to serve both meals, for we did not like to have the Brahman<sup>2</sup> or servant woman serve. "It will be late before I return. You have your dinner without waiting for me," he said, and he went out and did not return until eleven o'clock. When he did come, he called Balabhataji and said, "Tomorrow we must return to Karavir without fail; so get up early and arrange for the carts." And he retired without dining or eating anything at all.

His sister informed Himself of this episode, and, knowing his father's irritable disposition, Himself felt very badly to think that unintentionally so trivial an incident had brought on a spell of stubbornness. All night he was restless and unhappy. In the morning, before he had started his morning worship, Mamanji sat down out on the verandah, and his son came and silently took his stand near one of the pillars. Mamanji saw him, but pretended to be unaware of him and said nothing. All the rest of the family were gathered near the door of the family idol room, watching through the screen and waiting to see what would happen, for we feared Mamanji would stick to his plan of going to Karavir. A whole hour went by. Neither

<sup>2</sup> A servant, in this case.

of these two spoke nor glanced at each other, for each wanted the other to speak first. Finally, Mamanji looked up, and, speaking his son's name, told him to be seated. He always called his son by his full name — Madhavrao. After a long time he again told him to sit down.

Then his son said, "When you say you have altered your plan of going to Karavir, then I will sit down. If you all go to Karavir, what have I here? I'll go with you. I had no idea you would be so angry about yesterday's episode; had I suspected it I would never have upset things so." With gentle words he tried to soothe his father and help him to be reasonable. But Mamanji made no reply.

Nine o'clock came. No one had even begun his morning worship, and it was not a holiday at Court, and yet Mamanji kept silent. Presently, Balabhataji came in and reported to Mamanji, "The carts you told me to get are arranged for and will soon be coming." When he heard this and realized that his father had made no reply to all his pleading, Himself felt much distressed, and, glancing at Balabhataji, he said, "The going has finally been settled, has it? The family is going to desert me! Truly, on the day my mother died, I became an orphan!" As he said this, his voice broke and he turned and went quickly upstairs.

After a time he summoned Balabhataji and sent a message to Mamanji, saying, "If you don't cancel your plan of leaving for Kolhapur, I will send in my resignation to the Court." This message Balabhataji reported to Mamanji.

Meantime, ever since his son had gone upstairs, the father's mind had been disturbed, and so when he heard this message he felt very much grieved and at once replied, "Go tell him I am not going to Karavir. The plan is cancelled ; so now, get up and bathe for it is time for Court."

When Himself heard this, though he had been distressed for so long, yet he felt easier in his mind and somewhat happier, and he proceeded with the routine preparation for the day. He saw to it that no such episode occurred again.

In June of 1875, after most of the members of Mamanji's family had gone to Karavir, we bought the house in Poona which we are now occupying, and Mamanji was delighted. Although during his years of employment he had worked up to a salary of 250 rupees per month, yet he was naturally extravagant and spent more than his income until he had a debt of several thousand rupees. For this reason it was impossible for him to buy a house from his regular income.

This debt of Mamanji's had not been acquired to secure comfort and ease and amusement, but because he was a generous and sympathetic person to whom his own three brothers, as well as the dependents of his cousins, all turned for help at weddings and thread ceremonies and for their children's education. If anyone at all in the family was in financial difficulties and approached Mamanji with a plea for help, he could never say "no ;" instead, if he didn't have the money he would borrow it and give the help. As a reward for this and for religious devotion, Himself was born with

the same generous heart. Himself paid his father's debts and displayed a perfect filial piety until the end.

Realizing that his father's pension, when he received it, would not be enough for his expenses, he sent him regularly each month from Poona 150 rupees for spending money. Very naturally, Mamanji was thrilled, because not only had Himself kept both households going, in Kolhapur and Poona, and cared for the needs of his kinsfolk, but, by the grace of God, he had now also bought this house.

Before the purchase, Mamanji made a rough draft of the deed and sent it up to his son. Himself read it carefully, and then wrote on it in pencil, "I want you to put your name in the place where mine is ; otherwise, there need be no change." When he received the paper again, Mamanji read it and sat on in silence. Then telling the registrar, who had come, "We will register the sales deed tomorrow," he went about his business. But that evening after dinner, Mamanji went upstairs, and summoning his son, said, "The reason why in so large a family as ours there has never been any quarrelling and dissension is because all of our men have been level-headed. Another reason, however, is that no one recently has acquired property. Now, through the favor of God, we have purchased a house. It should stand in your name instead of mine, because the boys are only your step-brothers after all, and are still minors ; and so if the deed of purchase is in your name there will be no complications."

Himself heard him through and replied, "I have given thought to that side of the problem. However,

I will be prouder and happier if this first home we have purchased stands in your name ; and so, don't refuse." This concluded the conversation, and Mamanji went downstairs. Next day, as Himself requested, he completed the purchase in his own name.

After this, as I mentioned before, Mamanji went to Karavir. Some months later he began to suffer from an abscess on his back. He had diabetes, and every year or two he suffered with boils, until he was on the point of death. This time he began to take medicine from the Civil Surgeon in Karavir, as well as from his regular physician, Dr. Sinclair.

At the end of a fortnight, word came to Poona that Mamanji's illness continued unabated; and so Himself secured leave of absence for a month and went to Kolhapur. There he kept his vigil and saw to it that his father had his medicine regularly night and day. However, as the illness seemed to increase, he went to see Dr. Sinclair about it. The doctor was not encouraging and suggested that he ask additional leave, for since another boil had appeared on Mamanji's side and the trouble was spreading, the illness was likely to be a lengthy one. Dr. Sinclair came daily to cleanse and dress the wound and Himself kept supervision of the medicine and bandages, but nothing had any effect. In this way the second month's leave passed.

Now Himself knew that unless he was at his post in Poona when presenting his request for further extension of leave, it would not be approved. Notwithstanding this fact, because of the daily increase of his father's suffering, he was afraid to leave him to go to

Poona. Besides, when Mamanji heard that his son would have to go to Poona to secure an extension of his leave, he cried like a child and pleaded, "Oh, don't leave me!" And so it went until there were only two or three days of his vacation left. In those days before the Railway was built, it required thirty-six hours to go to Poona in the mail tonga, a two-wheeled carriage.

Realizing that he simply must start within three days, Himself called Dr. Sinclair, and explaining the difficulty, said, "My father is not willing for me to leave his side. He will not allow me to go, and yet, if I don't go I cannot get more leave. If you are convinced that it is safe to leave him, please explain it and encourage him to let me go."

Dr. Sinclair answered, "It will make no difference. If you go and return inside of four or five days it will not matter. I am not too hopeful of his recovery, but his illness will be protracted, and, as to enduring the pain, he has considerable strength. Therefore, go to Poona and get leave for another month." Then he went into the sick room and said encouragingly to Mamanji, "Your condition isn't so desperate! Let your son go to Poona; he will come back in a few days. Meantime, I'll come to see you twice or even three times a day if you like. You needn't be so anxious." And finally Mamanji agreed that his son should go to Poona.

Two days later, when everything was ready for his departure, Mamanji called him and, taking his hand, sighed deeply and wept as he said, "Madhavrao, Dr.



Saheb encouraged me, but still I do not feel very confident. If you return quickly it will be all right — if not, we shall not meet again, I am sure. I have no other cause for anxiety. I am confident that you will attend to all arrangements; but you realize, do you not, that every responsibility which has rested on me will fall on your shoulders?"

Himself instantly replied, "Please don't have the slightest anxiety about that. I will never neglect my filial duty."

As he listened Mamanji was overcome with emotion. Claspng him in close embrace he gave him permission to travel to Poona. So Himself bade him a respectful farewell and also took leave of the family. As he was getting into the *tonga*, he called his sister and his mother's brother aside and said very impressively, "We all realize that father is getting worse; but I am very anxious also about his wife. Her children are still small. Watch over her carefully. Take every possible precaution lest she do herself some injury, and pay close attention to her." When he finished this advice he got into the *tonga* and started away.

Arriving in Poona, he had to wait six days before the extension of his leave was approved. He had arranged that the doctor should inform him daily by telegram how his father was, and this was done. Just after his leave was sanctioned, a telegram came saying that Mamanji was worse, and so Himself arranged to start at once for Kolhapur, and had all his luggage in the *tonga* when a second telegram came. This one brought the sad news of his father's death, which overwhelmed

him with grief, and he cancelled his plan of going to Kolhapur.

A couple of days later, Keropant Nana Chatre and Vishnushastri Chiplunkar and others came to make inquiries. They said, "Why did you stay here when you should have gone to Kolhapur?" His reply was, "Already my older sister and Durgi, Balabhataji, Marumama and his mother are there. They will make all the arrangements. The sort of thing that will happen next I could not bear to witness.<sup>3</sup> And yet, if I did go, it could not be avoided ; and so it was better not to go. Instead of just going to inquire, my plan is to break up the home there and bring the whole family here. That will make everything much simpler."

All the business was arranged by letter, and eventually Mamanji's home in Karavir was broken up and the family and servants joined us in our home in Poona. From the day when his step-mother reached our home, Himself made it his regular practice in the evening before having dinner, of going to her room to sit for an hour and to inquire minutely about the boys. He kept up this practice to the very end, hoping to give her some little comfort in her great grief. Except when he was absent in some other village he never failed in this attention. And so from the time Sasubai, my step-mother-in-law, brought the two boys, Aba and Babu, to Poona, he began giving time and attention to their education as well as mine.

<sup>3</sup> He was a sensitive person, and could not bring himself to face the horrors of the actual funeral pyre, as he, in the capacity of an only son, would be required to do.



## CHAPTER V

It was a happy day for me when Himself's two young step-brothers came with their mother to live with us ! They were only a year or two older than I, and because Himself kept very close watch over us, we three lived very happily and affectionately together without quarrelling much. It didn't matter what the older people said, we paid no attention and didn't allow it to break up our combination.

Himself's sympathetic and filial attitude toward Mamanji's widow established her at once as the real head of the women in the house. Eventually her mother and other widowed relatives came to visit, and gradually became absorbed into the established family group. Of course, the presence of these additional women added to my troubles in a way.

At that time I was in the fifth grade of the Marathi School and could both read and write and do arithmetic. The boys were in their second year of High School and were learning English. That stirred my envy and ambition and I became eager to study English too. One day I approached Himself shyly about it.

He was surprised and pleased that I had conceived the idea of studying English, and replied, "I certainly intend that you shall learn English. It has been in my mind for a long time ; but you must finish your Marathi first, mustn't you ?"

Consequently I worked hard, and after a few months, when I finished my Marathi lessons, Himself began to teach me English. Nevertheless, it soon proved that studying with him just mornings and evenings was not enough. I found that an hour or more in the daytime was required to memorize the words, and because it was too noisy downstairs where the women were gossiping, I used to sit upstairs to study. This angered the older women terrifically, for they imagined me as lazily resting or laying plots against them, and one day they bitterly burst out with, "Do whatever you like up there ; but we cannot and will not endure these insults you are heaping upon us."

They had chanced upon a special reason for saying this. One afternoon after dinner they were all sitting out on the rear verandah. I was sweeping out the living room. I had finished about half of it when I discovered a piece of an English newspaper among the debris. Like the little child I was, I evidently thought that what I had begun was already mastered ! So I snatched it up, dropping the broom, and stood there reading the paper. Of course, I had not much more than begun studying English ! Nevertheless, I enjoyed picking out the letters. I didn't even remember that I was downstairs.

Just then my mother-in-law's mother chanced to

glance my way, and she made a sign to the other women near her. Instantly, two or three of them came to the door ; but I had no inkling of it. Seeing me so absorbed, my sister-in-law lost her temper and shouted, "Your office is upstairs ! Read there and dance there if you will ; but mind you don't insult us ! My brother's first wife lived here, didn't she ? Dada taught her, too, all about reading and writing. She was my own age, too, yet she never read a single word in front of us. He was always worrying her about learning English, too ; but the good woman paid no attention. If he told her to do ten things, she had perforce to do one or two of them ; but she never was insolent like this !"

This sort of abuse went on day after day. Sometimes for hours I would be on the point of crying, and wondered why I had ever begun learning English. And when I couldn't help it I would go aside to weep. But I never mentioned any of this to Himself ; I didn't dare, because I remembered my father's threat, and I did so long to go to my mother's home sometime.

I had to take every precaution to prevent Himself's seeing my tear-stained and pitiful face. Even so, he used to notice it sometimes. When a person is greatly teased and tormented, he never gets relief until he shares his trouble with someone, and because I had no opportunity for such an unburdening during the day, my mind was ready to burst with its troubles by the time Himself came home. The marvelous thing was that, as I climbed the stairs to our rooms in the evening, all my worries were almost instantly forgotten.

It was just as though there had been no trouble at all during the day!

“Has anything happened to you at any time today? Has anyone said anything? You look as though you had been crying.”

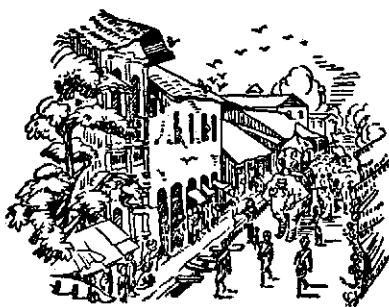
But to such questions I would answer that I had been thinking of my mother or little brothers, just to put him off. If I said even a little, so that he would cleverly extract the whole story bit by bit; or if I revealed something unintentionally, I knew that it would be a breaking of my vow. Besides, I realized that all our truly happy and peaceful hours would then be spent on such matters, and our contentment would be spoiled without any gain. However, he really was aware of the sort of women we had in the family and knew what was actually happening, and I found comfort and encouragement in knowing this. It took only a few minutes for his quiet and affectionate words so to affect my mind that the troubles of the day vanished and there was no one happier than I — a state of mind which lasted until morning.

But when it was time to go downstairs again, then terror would grip me. I would have to call back my courage by repeating what he often said to me, “Learn to stand things without talking back — that’s all, for I never scold you, do I? If anyone says anything, don’t you cry!” With such encouragement I managed to get through the day fairly peacefully.

And so, although I had to endure much from the women of the house, I never gave up my studying. If my two brothers-in-law chanced to be around when

I was being teased, they would take my part and encourage me not to be afraid. This support, together with Himself's sweet and loving way of talking with me, helped me from the beginning to endure everything else. Had it not been for them, no little girl of my age and immaturity could possibly have borne such trouble ; or, at least, there could not have been there the peace and happiness which belong to a home. For their continual hectoring kept me in a state of sadness. However contented I might appear to be on the surface, or however much I refrained from telling my troubles, yet people who truly care for each other can easily and completely understand things in each other's minds which no one else by any device whatever could recognize. Accordingly, Himself, too, became anxious about the situation, and had it continued much longer my powers of endurance might have failed. By good fortune this calamity did not occur, for we were transferred to Nasik. What that transfer would mean to him and his friends in Poona, whether he was sad or glad about it, I hadn't the faintest idea. I only knew that I was happy in the new plan. I spent a week or two in happily planning and imagining, "I will do this and that, when we go there."

Presently, we two and Ababhauji, my step-brother-in-law, went to Nasik. Himself purposely took no one of the older women ! Therefore, my studying went on apace, as Himself had intended. He was happy in my progress, and we both enjoyed the days as they passed.



## CHAPTER VI

Troubles never come singly, we know. Certainly it was true for Himself at this time. In addition to the lack of harmony in our home, of which he rarely spoke but of which he was constantly aware, his connection with the radical thinkers in the political world made him a suspect in the eyes of Government. It was extremely awkward. Himself was in the employ of Government in responsible posts, for his career was marked by steady advancement from the post of sub-judge in a District Court until he was a Justice of the High Court in Bombay, where he served for many years. He was very sensitive in the matter of loyalty, and his high sense of honor would never have allowed him to hold his appointment while carrying on subversive propaganda.

Yet among his friends were many who were not so devoted and scrupulous, and some who were far less clever. Once they became involved with a stranger who came to town and set up a pleasant establishment where he entertained rather lavishly. The men who belonged to our moderate group in the matter of Gov-



ernment reforms were easily led to associate freely with this friendly gentleman, who talked well and seemed entirely disconnected from Government affairs. This group foregathered at the stranger's home every afternoon, where they enjoyed the variety of cigarettes, cheroots, tobacco and pansupari<sup>1</sup> which were served generously. They could also enjoy cards and chess, music or argument, as they chose.

Himself's right hand man, Sitaram Hari Chiplunākar, was so carried away by the pleasure of this new friend that he became irregular in his work and was not to be found when needed. He was Secretary of our Society and should have been daily at the house working on the quarterly report. Noticing this slackness in his work, Himself called him on the carpet rather irritably and asked, "What sort of dubious business have you become involved in that has changed you so?"

Then Sitarampant told briefly the story of the stranger. But Himself was not satisfied. He continued to question him and said, "Don't discuss with that man any of the affairs of our general Sabha<sup>2</sup> or anything else without consulting me. If you do, you are courting trouble. My guess is that the man is a spy, and I may be right in it."

One day some of our friends came to our house and began to tell about the foreigner. They said, "This is certainly a very delightful, happy, charming and learned gentleman who has come to our town." Then Him-

<sup>1</sup> The leaf of the betel nut, in which betel nut, lime and spices are rolled. This is a popular delicacy to chew and is always offered to guests.

<sup>2</sup> Society.

self asked, "What are his credentials? Where is his home? At present, what is his business? How much education has he had? Do you know these things?"

They replied, "He is a very retiring gentleman. He never mentions any of these things or speaks of his education. If anyone inquires, he laughs and says, 'I'm an insignificant man! What do my credentials or affairs matter to you?' and he gets us to laughing but does not tell us anything. This is merely because he is modest and does not enjoy talking about his own attainments. He has every appearance, however, of being a person of good family and an educated man."

Himself listened to everything and then said, "You may be correct in considering him an excellent and learned man; but I am asking you to gather definite information, and to do something else, too: as soon as you get up tomorrow morning, investigate his mail. Find out the postmark on the letters he receives and see the address to which he sends mail. Look into this minutely for a day or two and then tell me."

The company agreed and went away. Three days later, Sitarampant Chiplunākar came and reported, "Yesterday and the day before I looked into the matter of his mail. It is not brought by a postman. He himself gets up early and goes out, starting by one road and winding in and out until he reaches the General Post Office, where he gets his own mail, and the outgoing mail he puts into the box with his own hands. Yesterday I followed him at a great distance, and on the way back I chanced to find a torn envelope on the road. The postmark on it was Simla. This confirms

what a friend of mine in the General Post Office said just now, that apparently the man is corresponding with the Secretary to Government in Calcutta and Simla, because many letters are going out to those addresses. Everything considered, I begin to think there is a reason for your suspicions."

After that, this information was quietly spread around among our group, and day by day the numbers of Poona men who assembled at his house dwindled. Inferring from this sudden falling away that the people had seen through him and perhaps would make trouble, the gentleman shortly cancelled his house rent, quietly packed up and, during the night, three days later, without letting anyone know, slipped out of town.

This and other things worried Himself. There was a case of poisoning which Government was prosecuting and which had been appealed from the lower courts. About this time, a telegram was sent from Poona to the defendant. It urged him to carry on, and offered a large sum to help with the defense. Because this telegram aroused their suspicions, Government was tracing it, and during the process of investigation was led to realize the tremendous influence which Himself, through his writing and lecturing, was exercising on the thought of large numbers in Poona. For this reason it was decided to remove him from this center, and to carry out this plan they resorted to the extreme measure of passing new regulations under the terms of which he could be transferred. It distressed Himself to feel that he was under suspicion, and so our

transfer to Nasik was not unadulterated joy to him as it was to me !

Our menfolk have interesting times every day. They go to their offices and meet people and discuss what is going on in the world, while we women keep busy at home, cooking and cleaning, taking cloth to the tailor to be made into garments for one or other of the family and preparing flowers and offerings for the household gods to be used by our men in the daily *puja*.<sup>3</sup> Our imaginations and tongues were as busy as our fingers. Someone might repeat a chance remark heard at meal time, and this would be discussed and developed until no one could possibly recognize its harmless origin !

You can readily imagine how, in this atmosphere of routine and trivial small talk, any episode bringing in new interests was most welcome and was magnified out of all proportion to its real importance. A friendly rivalry obtained between neighbors and friends as to the quality and variety of food offered to mendicants on festival days, and as to the numbers of such holy men entertained at dinner. Each family — and in fact almost each member of it — was jealous of its reputation for some particular sweetmeat or delicacy, and great ingenuity was exercised in concocting new flavors and combinations of spices. The height of self satisfaction was reached when one heard that one's curry or cakes were being discussed by a wide circle of one's friends, each of whom wanted to discover just how it had been made.

<sup>3</sup> Worship service.

Naturally, our men were all perfect in our eyes, and we had scant sympathy for any Government or group who disagreed with them or dared a criticism. Of course, Himself was the center and core of our home, and the women vied with each other to stand well with him, though they were not too scrupulous in their methods. Fortunately, Himself had spent his boyhood among just such a group of women, and he invariably saw through their intrigues and read aright their efforts to save their own skins by surreptitiously blaming others for some deed which had not yet reached his ears. Himself was easy going, and in most cases kept the household on an even keel by listening to this one and that, and then refusing to make an issue of the incident.

Outside the home, he was not only suspected by Government but was looked upon as a radical by the orthodox Brahman crowd, and his leadership made him the envy of men of lesser calibre. These were the ones responsible for an experience that created a mild disturbance in our household. Himself belonged to a recently organized religious group which called itself the Prarthana Samaj.<sup>4</sup> It had been founded a few years previously in Poona as a return to the ancient purity of Hinduism, stressing especially the removal of such corruptions as idol-worship, caste distinctions and the law forbidding the re-marriage of widows.

Himself welcomed every opportunity to bring such matters before the public, and so, when he knew that the famous Swami Dayananda Sarasvati, founder of

<sup>4</sup> A reform society within Hinduism, stressing worship.

the Arya Samaj,<sup>5</sup> was coming to Poona to lecture, he joined forces with that group and cooperated with them, not because he agreed entirely with them, but because he knew that our people would accept teaching from a Sannyasi<sup>6</sup> which they would scorn from a civilian. Himself and the Swami had much in common, and such a series of lectures was sure to stimulate discussion and increase interest in all quarters.

At the end of the series, Himself and his friends planned to honor Swamiji with a procession in which he was to ride on an elephant. It was intended to be very dignified and impressive.

Early that morning a great commotion in the street drew us all to the doors and windows. How we shouted with laughter as we saw what it was! A crowd of twenty-five or thirty hooligans, with a band and much blowing of horns, were escorting a sad-looking donkey, gorgeously decked out. We women thought it a huge joke, and laughed and chattered gaily over this excitement until someone explained that there was nothing funny about it. It was a burlesque put on to ridicule the procession planned in honor of Swamiji and was an insult to him and us. Feeling ran high, and someone, fearing trouble, suggested that we ask for a police escort.

At any rate our party reported the affair to the Police, and were advised to ignore the trouble-makers as far as possible and to control our desire to fight back. It was hard to carry the affair through under the cir-

<sup>5</sup> A reactionary organization in Hinduism.

<sup>6</sup> Brahman ascetic.

cumstances. The silly donkey parade kept moving through the streets all day long, with the crowd shouting, "Hurrah for Ramananda Swami ! Hurrah ! Hurrah !"

In the late afternoon, our group gathered with its usual dignity at Bhide's house for the lecture. Swami Dyanadaji was an eloquent speaker. His voice was deep and his delivery was very impressive, so that he held his audience absorbed as they listened. At this farewell meeting, he made no effort to be profound or to hold the wandering attention of the men. He addressed them in friendly fashion, thanking them for their kindness to him and begging leave to go. So they presented the usual garlands and passed around *pansupari*, and then everyone went downstairs. In the road stood an elephant, on which they seated Swamiji, placing the sacred book in the palanquin. Then the procession started.

The opposing party was ready, too, and they had their leaders posted at strategic places to direct the fun. Their bands and shouting caused tremendous confusion, and when the excitement was at its height they began to throw things. It had been raining that day, and those who had nothing else picked up handfuls of mud and threw that. Can you imagine the consternation of the mischief-makers when the men in our procession paid not the slightest heed to all this ! When they were hit, even, they didn't look back or in any way recognize what was happening, but proceeded steadily on their way with the utmost dignity and self-control. The rabble was exasperated beyond endur-

ance and became more violent, bruising four or five of the party, until the police interfered and drove them away from our men.

We women were in a state of anxiety at home, imagining all sorts of disasters, and the mud spattered on Himself's clothing when he returned home confirmed our fears. We demanded why the police hadn't protected him, to which query he laughingly replied, "Why indeed! If I take part in such an affair I must take what comes. Such is the fate of those who espouse a cause! One merely moves on through thick and thin, impervious to praise or blame! That is the only way to accomplish anything!"



## CHAPTER VII

And so we went to Nasik. It was a wonderful thing to think that I was leaving behind in Poona all the trouble-makers and the critics who had made my days so difficult. Never to hear a word of criticism or abuse! To be free to study and to do without fear the things that Himself would like! — that would be such a pleasant way to live! I was only sixteen years old and it was easy to forget the hard days that were over and to revel in the fun ahead. Himself, his step-brother Aba, the priest, the coachman, and a boy,<sup>1</sup> made up the party which travelled from Poona. We planned to find a cook woman there, and I felt fully qualified to run the house.

But trouble in another form awaited me! We simply could not find any cook woman, and it fell on me, in all my inexperience, to do the cooking. In Poona that work was done, of course, by the older women; but seeing such things done and doing them one's self are two entirely different things. I struggled on as best I could, but fear of making mistakes kept my mind in a turmoil, and one day I served the dinner without any salt in it! I knew nothing of this until, having served the men and having cleared away their things, I sat down for my own food. Imagine my horror when I realized what dreadful food I had given them!

<sup>1</sup> General servant.

The next day, fearful lest I repeat that mistake, I put salt in twice, and again did not know it until they had finished and I sat down to eat! Himself never once complained or even mentioned such things except when the food was especially well prepared, and then he would jest a bit with Aba. Sometimes he said,

“How about it, Aba? You are eating your vegetable now, while this noon, when there were two kinds, you didn't eat any. Was there something wrong, perchance?”

Aba replied, “What vegetable at noon? They were bitterly salty, one was tasteless and the other was sour. Why should I eat them, pray tell!”

Himself laughingly replied, “Well, a student's attention should be elsewhere than on salts and peppers. Whatever one receives one should eat in silence. Do you ever hear me complain? No, for I take what is given me!”

Once I screwed up courage to say, “If I had known at the time how dreadful the food was, I could have added salt; but I didn't know until I sat down to eat, and then I was terribly ashamed!”

His reply was characteristic, as he said, “What is the use of that? Understanding that is acquired by experience is better than any amount of talking, for it puts one on guard and one's attention is fastened to the problem. However, in order to help you, I have today brought you a cook-book. I want you to look through it and to try your hand each day at one new dish. If it doesn't come out well the first time, don't be discouraged. If you give your undivided attention

to it, without confusion, you will accomplish anything you try."

His advice seemed good and I faithfully tried new recipes, though they often failed. It was a real relief when a cook woman was finally secured and I could return to my lessons, which I liked better than cooking. Himself had more leisure at this time to devote to teaching me, and in the hours spent near him I learned much that was not in the books. He helped me work out a schedule for the hours of the day, for he did not approve of my leaving all the housework to the servants. We women were busy with kitchen work, preparing chutney, vegetables, kosambiri<sup>2</sup> and curds from dawn until time for the men to eat their breakfast about ten o'clock. One way in which we differed from ordinary families was that Himself insisted on my eating when he did, and so after the first course was served I sat down and we talked as we ate, leaving the cook woman to serve the next courses. It was a novel innovation, which I came to enjoy. But how scandalized the women in Poona would have been had they known!

After the men left for their offices, we women busied ourselves preparing the mid-day lunch to be sent them at Court. When the four or five articles of food were ready and packed in the container for the Brahman to take, I could settle down for some uninterrupted study. Himself was strict in the matter of spelling and in the interpretation of the words which I read, and wouldn't allow me to read to him from the news-

<sup>2</sup> Coriander seeds.

paper until I had mastered the routine of the lessons. And if it was not done well he would be angry. His anger was not like that of most men who shout a lot and swear a few oaths, and then, forgetting their temper, soon begin laughing. His anger was a different sort! He would sit in silence and look grieved. Small things didn't arouse his anger; but when something did stir it, it lasted a long time. Consequently, I feared it and tried not to give him cause for anger.

In due time I finished the second English reader, read 'Aesop's Fables' and learned to tell simple stories and to write sentences. Then he started me to reading in the New Testament. Between studying and supervising the housekeeping, I felt very busy and important, and when Himself finally took the account keeping for the house from the Brahman and turned it over to me, I swelled with pride! At the beginning he helped with the accounts and straightened them out every night, and then told me he wouldn't look at them but once a month. I made a mess of them, often, and spent all my time on them so that my lessons suffered. He noticed it and helped kindly until I had mastered the method.

The climax came one day. Himself said, "Hereafter I shall turn over to you at the beginning of each month 100 rupees, which is about what we have been spending on food. You can use it as you see fit, and keep the accounts."

"But what will I ever do with so much? Shall I pay the servants, too, or give alms from this sum?"

He only smiled as he replied, "Use it only for food,

and see to it that we have the same sort we are used to. Anything that is left you may have for your sewing. But don't run into debt — and always pay cash !”

It seemed a fabulous sum to me, and I bought gaily for our daily needs, planning how I would use the surplus at the end of the month. Everything went well for twenty days ; then I eyed the shrinking pile of coins with apprehension, and worried myself ill in an effort to make it last through the remaining days. I tried to hide my anxiety, but he saw what was the trouble as I pondered what to do. I could not seem to reduce the daily expense, and I dared not spend more without permission, and to ask permission was more than I could bear !

Finally, Himself asked, “Now why have you so suddenly lost your cheerfulness, and why do you look so ill ? Has something happened ?” Indignantly denied that anything was wrong ; but when the last penny was gone, I could no longer keep back the tears. So he comforted me as I blurted out the words, “All the money is gone,” by saying,

“Always get whatever money you need. All of our money is yours, isn't it ? If you haven't enough, say so frankly, and don't let it distress you. It isn't as though you had to keep expenses within a specified limit, you see. My desire is that you should become increasingly careful and alert about household matters which you supervise, as any economical and shrewd housewife should. Use whatever you need and keep the accounts, and stop worrying.”

At that time, Himself's income was 800 rupees

(\$266 $\frac{2}{3}$ ) per month. He used to turn the entire sum over to my care, never carrying a key to any lock, so what need had he of the sacred thread!<sup>3</sup> I never spent money without consulting him; but he left the entire responsibility of it to me. I tried never to disregard his wishes or to deceive him, and so there arose between us no occasion for anger or unhappiness.

He had one habit which was very trying to me in my younger days. Himself required very little sleep, and he would wake about four-thirty each morning and begin to waken me from my deepest sleep. It was truly agony for me to wake up! But he persisted, and finally I would arouse and share with him his reading of some of the lovely devotional hymns of Tukaram.<sup>4</sup> He had no ear for music, and I used sometimes to laugh at his attempt to sing these hymns. He didn't mind the teasing, though he always solemnly assured me that God understood the words and the spirit and would not be critical, as I was! All of our lives together, these morning hours made the deepest impression on me.

Himself would lose all awareness of surroundings as he worshipped his God, and when some particularly moving strain would come out in his reading, the tears would fill his eyes and he would be wrapped in worship. At such times, I truly felt God's presence in him, and could worship at the feet of my lord and guru! To the end of his life, his intense devotion and simple humility in worship were the secrets of his

<sup>3</sup> Note, p. 27.

<sup>4</sup> A much loved writer of devotional poetry.

power over people and the essence of the influence he wielded, especially in public services which he conducted at the Prarthana Samaj.<sup>5</sup>

While we were in Nasik, we bought a garden where both vegetables and flowers were grown. When the housework was well organized and I could be spared, he used to insist on my going to the garden each morning at five o'clock while he spent a couple of hours with Aba on his lessons. I always took an old servant along and he walked just behind me, humming to himself. One day, needing company, I said, "Sakharam, please say your abhangs<sup>6</sup> out loud so that I can enjoy them too."

"Ram Ram,"<sup>7</sup> was his mode of addressing me as he replied, "Most people do not care to hear us old people ramble on ; but if you insist, I can only do my best."

At my urging he finally began, and truly rambled on most amusingly. He belonged to a very devout group of illiterates who knew many stories of Holy men of the Warkaris.<sup>8</sup> But he had learned them by hearing them and had often learned the words incorrectly, so that, as he repeated them, they had absolutely no meaning. But he never knew the difference, and was very ingenious in explaining the utterly unrelated words he said, and they meant a great deal to his simple mind. I never tried to straighten him out, but listened attentively, and then would regale Himself with the absurdities as we sat at breakfast !

<sup>5</sup> See note, p. 46.

<sup>6</sup> Religious poetry in a special metrical form.

<sup>7</sup> The name for God used by Brahmans in salutation, or in prayer.

<sup>8</sup> A devout sect of Vaisnavites who worship Vithoba at Pandharpur.

The garden provided more vegetables than we needed, and we sold the rest and the flowers, too, in the bazaar. Once or twice each week everything from the garden was brought to our house so that we could send flowers and vegetables to our friends, a thing which gave Himself much pleasure. He had many friends in Nasik, and it was during this year that he founded there the Prarthana Samaj for the people, with the help of Deshmukh, Ketkar and others.

Rao Bahadur Gopalrao Hari Deshmukh was sub-judge at Nasik that year. He had six daughters-in-law living with him, all of whom were well educated for those days. His wife, Lakshmibai, belonged to the older school of thought ; but she, too, could read and write. She loved hearing the Puranas, and kept herself occupied with religious ceremonial duties. With the Puranas as an excuse, she often invited all the village ladies for a "halad-kunku"<sup>9</sup> party. I was included, and gradually became intimate with the family. Rao Bahadur Deshmukh and Himself presently conceived the idea of inviting all the women of our community for such a party, and then of telling the stories of the great Sadhvis, or women saints, such as Sita and Savitri. They urged us, also, to take an interest in the girls' schools and to attend the distribution of prizes.

It was here in Nasik that my social contacts were stretched to include English women as well. An English judge had come from Thana to hold Sessions

<sup>9</sup> A pleasant custom which allows a hostess at a ladies' party to apply a dot of red powder (kunku) to the forehead of each guest.



Court, and his wife and her sister were with him, both of them young and active. They were eager to become acquainted with Hindu ladies, and they promptly came to call. We returned the call, and because we were all about the same age, it didn't take us long to feel friendly. We fell into the habit of walking together to the various gardens and of visiting back and forth in our homes.

Another friend whom I enjoyed was a much older woman, the wife of the headmaster of the High School. She taught me to knit and sew, and we used to chat and laugh together like girls of the same age. Himself's young cousin, Sakhubai Thosar, was visiting me about that time, and we two and my older friend used to get together daily for work and fun. The English ladies soon joined our circle and added much to our enjoyment.

One day an educational Inspector came to town to examine the schools. Himself and the headmaster felt that the annual prize giving at these schools would be an excellent opportunity to arouse the interest of the women of the community and to instruct them in what they could do to help. So they planned to have a large group of women invited. Knowing from experience that a written invitation was of less value than an invitation delivered in person, they divided the list and assigned a given number of houses to each of us ladies. We were to call and personally invite them to the prize giving.

The result was that on the day of the entertainment there was an attendance of fifty or sixty, which was

large for those days. So far as I know, that was the first time in Nasik when men and women of Brahman families attended a function together! Not many men had been invited; but some ten or twelve of those who supported the movement for girls' education were present.

According to the program, as soon as the group had assembled, the girls recited original poems full of expressions of welcome and gratitude. The Deputy read the past year's report. Then when Mrs. Cogan, the English lady, had distributed the prizes and they had thanked her, Himself asked me to read a brief, well-prepared statement for encouraging and stimulating the women. It was my first attempt to do anything in public and I was terrified. But I could not disobey Himself, and so I read the paper and thanked Mrs. Cogan and the ladies present, and sat down. It was all right, so far. But I had no more than taken my seat when the Deputy Inspector placed a tray of flower garlands before me. There seemed no way out but to present a garland to Mrs. Cogan, one to her mother and one to her sister. Still there was one left, and so I set it down before the Inspector. Imagine my anger when he whispered, "Put it on Cogan Saheb!" I absolutely refused, of course. The very idea of being so bold as to approach any man, let alone an Englishman, was repugnant to me!

Seeing my predicament, Raosaheb Deshmukh lifted the garland from the tray and gave it to the Judge with a smile, adding the bouquet and the perfumery which went with it. Then his two daughters and his daugh-

ters-in-law passed pansupari, flowers and attar of roses to all the women, thus ending the function.

At bedtime that night, Himself said to me jestingly, "Well, your party went off nicely, didn't it! Doubtless, it wasn't you who deserved the credit, because the men made all the preparations and all that you women had to do was to attend. Of course, you read the speech prepared for you, and you garlanded the three ladies; but why did you refuse to garland the gentleman!"

I replied, "If I weren't a Hindu, perhaps I wouldn't have minded. The thing that astounded me and made me angry was that the Deputy, who also is a Hindu and a grown man, should even have suggested that I present a garland to a man!"

"But Deshmukh took your side and helped you out, didn't he?"

"Why mention him? We weren't discussing his kindness! He wasn't a detestable Inspector!"

"You are foolishly angry with the Inspector. He didn't intend to insult you. He was just thoughtless. Everyone makes such mistakes and later realizes how unsuitable an action is which at the moment seemed quite all right." This was the way he had of training me to be tolerant and to see the other person's point of view.

Next day, Lakshmibai came to visit awhile. She spoke of the incident, saying, "Yesterday's affair went off well, didn't it! But I was happy when you instantly saw through the Deputy's crafty plan. It worried me until I realized that you knew what to do!"

The pleasant friendships of those days were destined not to continue for long. The English ladies were with us only eight days, and not long after they left we went to Poona for vacation, and from there were transferred to Dhulia. Lakshmibai was the only one who remained in Nasik, and we never met again, for she died just a year later.

## CHAPTER VIII

Dipvali Holidays ! It is a great day for the women of the household. It is our festival of Lights, and we have lights everywhere inside and outside the house, so that the housekeeper must be sure that there is no dirt and that everything shines resplendent. I always love the reflection of the many tiny lights in the gleaming brass and copper of our pots and pans ! It requires literally weeks of preparation to have as many of the small earthen oil holders and wicks as are needed to outline every window and doorway, inside and out. Because the Dipvali festival is now recognized by Government as a holiday season, families gather from far and wide, and there is much eating and being merry, with laughter and chatter for days and often weeks.

The men enter into all the fun with the rest of the world. It is their New Year's day, and the merchants close their yearly accounts, sweep and tidy their shops and offices. The observances of the day always begin with a bath after they anoint themselves with oil. Then, collecting their account books and a pile of silver coins, they paint them with tumeric and worship them together with Lakshmi, the giver of wealth. The holidays continue for two weeks. All schools are closed, and it is a great time for family and friends to get together.

Himself's friends had the habit, however, of making less of the Dipvali Holidays and using the hot weather holidays instead for their recreation and work together

on their programs. We used to assemble in Poona, where our house became headquarters for all those who were interested in reforms or in religious questions or in any of the many debatable subjects which such alert people could think up. They had tacitly appointed Himself as their leader and guide in every activity, and he was very wise in the way in which he guided them between the extremes of anti-Government and anti-Hindu points of view. He was frank and powerful in his criticism of wrongs he saw, but only when he had some constructive suggestion of a way in which to deal with it. All of his followers trusted him implicitly, and he was tireless in his efforts to build new public opinion. Their clubs and sabhas were continually sponsoring debates and lectures on cultural subjects as well as on economic and political problems. It seemed to me that he scarcely slept at all during our months in Poona.

It was for this happy sort of holiday that we had come to Poona for the month of May, 1879. Unfortunately for us, the hot-heads in the national struggle took that period for some of their wildest schemes. All sorts of rumors were abroad as to depredations and robberies, and word came to us that certain respectable gentlemen were being threatened, both secretly and openly. One night at about two o'clock, it was the evil fate of the people of Poona that a palace called Budhwar Wada, a memorial to the Peshwas<sup>1</sup> and an ornament to the city, together with the Vishram Bag. palace, were found to be on fire, and by morning both

<sup>1</sup> Prime Ministers under the Maratha Kingdom.

were reduced to ashes. The fire worried us greatly. Slanderous letters appeared in the Bombay Gazette, calling Himself "Wada, or palace-burning Ranade," and coupling our name with that of others who were suspected, and in this way trying to poison the mind of Government.

If that was their aim, they succeeded only too well. About a week later, an order came telling Himself to proceed to Dhulia without completing his holidays. His friends tried to urge him to ask for consideration, since the heat was terrific and they feared lest moving to a lower altitude at such a time might affect his eyes badly; but he refused to consider it.

"As long as I am in the Government service," he said, "I shall give no cause for complaint. When the time comes for me to ask favors or to make excuses, I will resign."

We were all disturbed, of course; but I couldn't help being really thankful to get away from the women in Poona, who had renewed their abuse of me. After we reached Dhulia, Himself had many letters from friends urging him to ask for a transfer, and, presently, we noticed that his mail was being tampered with. I was slow to understand, and used to scold the servant daily because he returned so late.

"Do you start late? Or do you sit and gossip somewhere, eating pansupari with your friends?" I asked.

He always replied that he went on time and hurried back as soon as the postman gave him the mail. But he insisted that our mail was the last to be handed out, for some reason.

Himself overheard me scolding, and called out, "There is no use scolding the servant, for the trouble is higher up." He then explained to me that among his letters were occasional ones implying secret knowledge on his part of seditious efforts which were being devised, and he took to sending these at once to the police.

Eventually, the whole matter was cleared up one day when the Collector, or District Officer, came and had a long talk with Himself. He explained that he had been compelled by the difficulties of Government to inspect all of the incoming and outgoing mail over a period, in order to discover Himself's connection, if any, with the trouble makers. Now that the investigation was completed and Himself exonerated, this English gentleman was glad to explain and to apologize for the suspicions which had been in the mind of Government. The whole affair had kept us very anxious, and it was a great relief to have it ended so well.

Here at Dhulia I continued my studies during the day, just as I had done at Nasik. But in the evening, Himself and his brother and I used to enjoy driving out to the gardens for exercise and to search for a breath of cool air. Himself often reminded me that there was a new chance here to get acquainted and to make friends.

"Why not invite the women for *halad-kunku*?" he urged. "Making friends among women of fine families is a good way to learn how they do things. It will broaden you and teach you many things about how others live and how to get along with people." As a



result, I had my "at Home" afternoons twice a week, very much as the English ladies did, and became experienced in entertaining.

Our nearest neighbors had been a family of lovely people from Khandesh. It was a large family, including the man and his wife, his brother, his sons, their wives, and his daughters. They were simple, friendly folk, and I was just beginning really to enjoy them when official orders took them all away. I missed them, and was very glad when I heard that a new family was moving in. But they were so quarrelsome that, although for one reason or another the women spent a good deal of time at our house, I never felt really at ease with them. Before they left I learned that they were involved in some very shady business. It gave me a real shock and frightened me so that I was thankful when they suddenly moved away. Soon after, we, too, were transferred to Bombay.

Our three months in Bombay brought several new and interesting things into my life. One was the friendship of Shantabai Bhandarkar, who lived near by with her family. Dr. Bhandarkar, her father, was a wonderful person, and an intimate friend of Himself's. From this family I learned that if the mistress of a house is an affectionate, devout and actively busy person, all the members of the family will be happy, upright and useful, and their days will be so pleasant that they will think their home is Heaven on earth, as indeed it is! We discovered this sort of happiness in the Bhandarkar family, and I doubt not that Dr. Bhandarkar was the real cause of this state. Yet his wife

completed his efforts by having the same attitude toward her daughters-in-law that she had for her own daughters. She showed absolutely no favoritism. As this happy situation became clearer to me, my devotion to Soubhagyavati <sup>2</sup> Annapurnabai Bhandarkar increased until I looked on her as my mother. My conduct revealed my affection for her, and she, on her part, displayed hers for me by telling me helpful things.

Their daughter, Shantabai, and I became fast friends, and this friendship, so pure and strong, remained one of the finest things in our lives until her death. In our twenty-four years of friendship we never had even one misunderstanding. She was a most devoted, truthful and helpful person. But in 1904, to the deep distress of her young children, her aged and dependent father, her worthy husband and of us, her friends, she forsook this transitory existence and departed to enjoy eternal happiness.

It was in Bombay, too, that I met another friend, Pandita Ramabai. She had established something new in India — a *Sabha* or club for women. This group used to meet every Saturday, and the purpose of it was to give us women a chance to study together and to practice speaking publicly. Several men who were interested in such training used to come, encouraging us to write an article or some poetry or to copy something from a book for reading aloud. When we failed to find courage to say even one word extemporaneously, they would suggest simple sentences for us to repeat.

After we moved to Poona in 1881, where Himself

<sup>2</sup> Title of respect.

took over as Chief second-class-judge of the Civil Court, I missed the Sabha meetings and began to feel that we should have something of the sort in Poona. My idea was to copy what we had had in Bombay — an appointed place and time when the educated women could gather to discuss simple subjects under the direction of some respectable gentlemen of experience. The result was the organization of such a group to meet in the drawing room of the Female Training College in Abhyankar's compound.

At first, the society was composed of eight or ten women and five or six men. Of these, one regular attendant was Keropantnana Chatre. He never failed to be the first arrival. It was his custom on one day to draw on the blackboard pictures of all kinds, geographical or astronomical, and ask their meaning. One day the subject would be eclipses and how they happened; another day, planets, stars and constellations would be considered. Simple explanations would be given as to how one can tell the time of night by the position of the constellations, and to test our memory of what was taught, we were given our choice of an extemporaneous recitation at the time or of an essay containing all that we had understood, to be read at the next meeting. Even if we had understood, we all thought it best to write the lesson, for none of us had the courage to stand up and speak! We would return with our productions the following Saturday, and Nana would praise and encourage us. But sometimes, failing to understand his lecture, we would write out just anything. Then he would laugh heartily and

banteringly show us our mistakes. He would then again endeavor to make the subject clear, and would tell us to try once more. Sometimes I was wearied with writing these topics ; but if I failed to do so, Himself would disapprove, and so I had to keep writing.

About this time Nana conceived the idea that I should learn Sanskrit. He spoke of it several times within a few days. But Himself decided against it ; for he well knew that if the women of our house, so solidly opposed to any kind of education, once heard that I was studying Sanskrit, they would be disrespectful and rude to anyone who came as a teacher, and that Nana, high-spirited and hot-tempered, would never be able to stand it. That this fear was well founded, we came to know during the following four months ! It will gradually appear.

Of the ten or twelve women attending our *Sabha*, some were teachers studying at the Training College. Naturally, they were more accustomed to study and were better educated. Annasaheb Bhide's daughters were also quite learned, and as they lived in their mother's home they were quite unhampered in their studies and other activities. All the other women were fairly well educated. I was the least trained of all the members and knew much less of city ways. And yet Nana was especially interested in me. If he had any questions to ask, it was always first to me that he spoke. If I made an error, he would angrily threaten to call me a foolish child right before Himself, and would say, "Don't you make that mistake again !"

Experience taught me about how a *Sabha* should be

conducted. But had it not been for the publicity given to this Sabha, the women in our home might have had no inkling as to where I went each Saturday, and would merely have supposed that I went to call on certain friends who occasionally came to see me. As it was, they tormented me about the Society and laughed scornfully whenever they found me sitting down to read.

These things I had to endure silently, and it was very hard. Even when Himself heard rumors of such incidents, he was quite helpless to deal with them.

## CHAPTER IX

“Until Himself comes back, whatever shall I do?” Whether I spoke this aloud or merely thought it, I do not know. I only know that I burst into tears which I could not control for a long time.

It was four months after our return to Poona, and Himself had been appointed as an Assistant Special Judge. Consequently, he had to take his office staff and travel through the District for eight months. He planned not to take me along. “It’s impossible to make women comfortable,” he said, “when I don’t know about camps. I will try it for one year and get experience and take you next time.”

It was this suggestion which had upset me and driven me to tears. My hope of being with Himself even while he was on tour was crushed. My one thought was, “How can I fill my days! My English lessons will cease! Study hours will stop and there will be no peace!”

Many times, as I slowly regained a measure of control, he tried to console me, saying, “Just take a few days to get steady. You will not need to stop your English. Tomorrow, I will attend to finding a woman to teach you. Your mornings and evenings will be occupied with housework and there will be only the afternoon to fill up. Well, you can use an hour or an hour and a half with her, and another hour or more preparing the lesson for the next day. If some word or sentence puzzles you, you can ask Aba or Babu. Of

course, the women will torment you, as always ; there is no help for that, so you will have to endure it. 'Some days are the mother-in-law's and some are the daughter-in-law's !' Don't lose control and treat them rudely or disrespectfully. If they say anything to you, obey them without discussion, quietly. Never talk back to them !"

A few days later, he arranged for a Miss Hurford from the Sisters at the Zanana Mission to give me a lesson from two to three-thirty each day. Of course, the women of the house were utterly disgusted by this, and were so angry that they told everyone not to speak a word more to me than the exigencies of the housework demanded. "This small child must not be spoken to." Ignoring them is one way we have of disciplining children.

About eight days after Miss Hurford began coming for lessons, Himself departed with his retinue to travel in the Satara District. Then the feud among the women which had been smoldering for eight or ten days, burst into flame. At first they said,

"We can't stand it that you should be contaminated by your 'madam' and then without bathing, merely changing your clothes, that you should boldly touch us ! Unless you take a ceremonial bath, you can just stay in your own room and we will send up your plate of food. Now that you are learning English, you should become a 'madam,' and it is fitting that you should have the dignity of a person of importance like a 'madam' or the wife of a priest ! Downstairs, to do the hard work of the house, we slaves have taken our

place!" Many such taunts were made use of in their talk, and to make sure that I heard them, they sent special messages to me.

As I had already heard everything they had said, when these messages were delivered to me I made no reply to the woman who brought them. The next day, as soon as Madam left, I rose and went for the bath; but because I was unclean and could not touch the tank, I bathed in the open well. Since we had had a tank built in the house and had faucets, we had not used the open well very much, and so the water was dirty. It was late in the afternoon during the fall, and I couldn't stand the bathing in such very cold water. After twenty days or so, I began to have a temperature. A few days later, Aba felt anxious and wrote his brother that "Wahini<sup>1</sup> has been bathing in cold water and has a fever. Dr. Vishram's medicine has not yet broken the fever or brought on a perspiration."

At this point I must stop to say that although the older women were tormenting me in this way, yet my two brothers-in-law were very good to me. They would entertain me with amusing episodes of affairs at school and funny things that the boys did. Not only that, but if some of the women downstairs were slandering me, or the chief ladies talked against me, they would take my part against them. It was a real comfort to me to have them back me up in this way.

A day or two after their letter went to the District, Himself came to Poona. During the following days I gradually improved in health, and when the fever had

<sup>1</sup> Older brother's wife.



left me, Miss Hurford started the lessons again. Then Himself said to me, "There is no need to take a bath because of touching Miss Hurford. Change your clothing; that is enough. After you have done that, if they continue to be angry, don't go near their purified things, but do your work at one side. Just remember that you have begun to study and that you must not give it up except for something inevitable. Don't ruin your health by bathing in very cold water or by any other act merely because you are troubled by their anger or their slanderous remarks. From now on they will not bother you about the bathing. And when I return in another month, I want to see that you have been studying hard and with a quiet heart."

That afternoon, after Miss Hurford had ended the lesson and had gone away, I sat for ten or fifteen minutes pondering as to whether to bathe or what to do. Just then a message came from Wansa, my sister-in-law, saying, "Tell her not to go and bathe and make more trouble for us. We have enough to do as it is without taking time to attend to her illnesses. Let her dance as she pleases. After all, what happens to one person doesn't matter much!"

This message was a sort of comfort to me. Himself had told me not to bathe, and though I had spent time pondering the matter, here it was settled without effort. And so, for a full month, I studied well. There was peace in the house on all sides, and so I, too, was at peace.

## CHAPTER X

“Pandita Ramabai, a Konkani<sup>1</sup> woman, a Sanskrit scholar and very learned, who has memorized the Shrimata Bhagavata, who has routed in debate the greatest pandits and shastris<sup>2</sup> at Benares — this erudite woman is coming to Poona.” The news came to us about this time, and I was thrilled, for I had met her in Bombay and was eager to see her again.

On Saturday of that week I went as usual to our Sabha and found that the one subject of conversation was Panditabai. Like me, all were eager to see her. “What is she like? Where will she stay? Will we meet her or not? If she stops near by, it will be fine; if far away, what shall we do?” We kept up this sort of chatter for a long time before I went over to where Mr. Modak and Mr. Bhide were sitting to ask for accurate news of Panditabai.

They said, “Panditabai is no foreigner, is she? She is one of our own Konkani women. We have ourselves invited her here. We think she should stay in this very building. She is a sad and unhappy person and you must come to welcome her.”

We were delighted to hear that she would be staying near by, and on her arrival all of us women went to see her. With her came a poor Bengali whom she regarded as her brother, and her little daughter, Manorama, fifteen months old. Himself had only just re-

<sup>1</sup> A coastal section of India, south of Bombay.

<sup>2</sup> Learned men.

turned to Poona from his tour, and Panditabai's first recital of the *Purana* was held at our house. From that time, she read the *Purana* at a different house each week, and we two attended regularly.

The women in our house were very angry because of this visit of Pandita Ramabai's. We had so many women in our household that they made a practice of making such an endless number of different kinds of lamp wicks during the early afternoons, that the house might almost be described as a factory. Consequently, neighbor women used to come just to sit with them, or else brought cotton to make up, and they had a wonderful time together, telling and hearing all the gossip, true and false, of the neighborhood. At this time, the arrival of Panditabai furnished a novel topic for discussion. Slanderous stories soon reached our house and came to the very doors of this group of women. What more could they ask! There was no limit to their malicious chatter and scandal about her. And since Himself and I were interested in her, our women considered that no such heaven-sent opportunity had ever come to them unsought to hurt us by slandering her. The denunciation of her grew day after day. They told us with venom that if she came to our house they would say, "She is a defiled woman; if you touch her, don't touch our things. What a creature! Her father duly married her to Sri Krishna at Dwarka<sup>3</sup> yet she must go and marry a Bengali Babu<sup>4</sup> and become defiled. Does she then keep at

<sup>3</sup> A form of religious dedication.

<sup>4</sup> Fellow.

home? Not she! Now she comes here intent on spreading her unholy influence over the whole world," and so on, endlessly.

In accordance with Himself's desire, I used to visit Panditabai every day or so. As we talked one day, she chanced to say, "I have been studying in Howard's second book; but since coming here I haven't had a chance to study."

I replied, "I've been studying too. Until recently, Himself taught me; but now he is on tour, and since he had to be travelling, he has arranged for a lady from Wanouri Zanana Mission to teach me. In order that I should lose no time, she comes to our house for lessons. Why don't you, too, arrange to study with her?"

She agreed to this, and after a few days began coming to our house for lessons. Previously, scorn for Panditabai had filled our house; but now she herself was coming daily! To have her laughing and talking and showing her affectionate friendship for me only added fuel to the fire.

About this time, Panditabai took our Sabha and founded, with it as a basis, a Sabha which she called the "Arya Mahila Samaj." Our little Sabha had had only ten or twelve members and no name at all, and was scarcely known, which just suited us. Now, because so many men and women enjoyed it, a huge audience gathered every Saturday. The chief attractions were Panditabai's lectures on various subjects. She had an interesting way of speaking and it was a pleasure to hear her prove her arguments. As she spoke, she

held the absorbed attention of the audience with amazing skill. This was the reason why all the learned people of the old as well as of the new school of thought were enjoying Panditabai and treated her with respect and urged the women and girls from their homes to attend each week's program.

This whirl of activity furnished more scandal for our women and their friends who came in. "Pandita Ramabai has founded a Sabha. She has her eye on the men. She says, 'Why should women submit to men? They treat their women like slaves, and consider that they should be drudges twenty-four hours a day, carrying in water for their baths, serving their food promptly and massaging the bodies of their men, forgetful of their own weariness. If any mistake is made they should be soundly slapped! Free yourselves from the control of such oppressors.'"

This parody of Panditabai's talks was brought home by my mother-in-law and even by Wansa. They both knew the value of education; and yet for some reason were passionately, bitterly and ruthlessly opposed to it.

Many a time my mother-in-law and Wansa took me aside and affectionately tried to persuade me to their way of thinking. They urged me not to go to the Sabha; and if Panditabai should come to our house that I should not touch her even to please Himself. When they reminded me that the women in my father's house were not educated, I would be almost persuaded that I might drop my studies; but when the time came to act on this idea, I knew that I had to do the things Himself approved, whatever happened, for

I was determined that there should be no rift in the place where my peace and comfort were. 'Eight months of heat and one day of rain,' so did I feel about the attitudes of Himself and of others ! His approval was the one thing I dared not sacrifice. Consequently, I clung to my determination and added fury to the women's anger because I endured their bitter remarks and reproaches in silence. They claimed that I was wilfully bent on having my own way, regardless of their advice.

At the end of the touring season, I was thrilled to hear Himself remark, "We will have to stay in Poona during the rains, and so we will just arrange an office upstairs and I shall not have to go out at all." He arranged for it upstairs in his own apartment, and established a *shirastedar*, or court officer, and a *karkun*, or clerk, until their work was finished. Then only a *nayak*, or watchman, stayed on guard. It was comforting to know that he was settled at home again and that I could myself serve him the fresh fruit, almonds and pistachio nuts that he liked after his dinner.

On Saturdays, he would begin at two o'clock and keep reminding me, "You remember that today is Saturday, don't you, and that you must go to the *Sabha*? Don't be late. If you make excuses of having forgotten, or of having work given you to do downstairs, that won't do ! Don't ever stop short of the thing you set out to do, but endure whatever trouble may be necessary in the doing of it."

Accordingly, I used to go downstairs to start on time, and taking my courage in both hands would say,

"I'll come back soon" and rush out without waiting for Wansa's assent. As I walked to the building where the *Sabha* met, my mind would be absorbed and sad as I anticipated all the trouble that would be waiting for me when I returned in the evening. But all of this was forgotten the moment I joined the other women and was drawn into their laughter and chatter and began to do my assigned share of the work.

When I returned home later, losing all the joy and courage I had found at the *Sabha*, I would stand at the entrance of the house paralyzed with terror, because, in the evening, Taisasubai, Himself's step-mother, and Wansa always sat on the verandah and they used to see me first. At that time of day all the menfolk were away, and these two felt utterly free to say what they would. In Himself's hearing, they would merely issue strict injunctions to me, "You have been to the *Sabha* and come back. Don't think that you can merely change your garment and then help with the cooking and serving the food! Don't even touch the chutney or curry! It isn't fitting that ladies who attend *Sabh*as should do such humble tasks! Go on upstairs and sit in your husband's apartment in idleness. Then you will look well."

This was the sort of comment I had to listen to, morning, noon and night. Besides the other relatives in the family, there were five or six women who were family connections. They curried favor by aiding and abetting the older women, either publicly or privately, in persecuting me. All I could do when it went too

far while I was down with them, was to let a few tears fall silently to ease the burden on my heart.

For three or four days after each Saturday evening, therefore, we women would not talk to each other. By Wednesday, when Wansa would begin to tell me to cut the vegetables, make the curds, get out the dishes, serve the food, I would be happy again and I would quickly and gaily do what she said, just as anyone put out of a game rejoices to be included again. And so for a year the happy and gloomy days continued in alternating contention and contentment. As soon as I was able to speak a few English sentences to Miss Hurford, it was decided to let her have a holiday.

On one occasion a mass meeting of men and women was held at Hira Bag, a public garden in Poona, to promote interest in a High School for girls and to present a request for a High School in the Camp to the Governor, Sir James Fergusson. And the task of reading an address in English before that audience was assigned to me ! Since it was my first effort at reading an address in English before such an audience, Himself prepared a very simple speech with short, easy sentences, fearful lest I become frightened at the time and fail to read it well. He had me read it aloud several times in the preceding days.

But, of course, when the time came, the expected happened ! As I stood up to read, my hands and legs trembled, I lost my breath and my head and body seemed on fire. It was as though a stream of hot blood was submerging me ! I stood there for a time help-



lessly, and then I heard Annapurnabai Bhandarkar, who was sitting behind me, say, "Ramabai, don't be terrified! Pull yourself together and read slowly. Everyone is looking at you — see!" This brought me to my senses, and somehow or other I got control of myself and began to read, and continued to the end. Then, however, I was much more terrified than I had been at first!

I wasted no time in freeing myself from the intense feelings which had overcome me, by starting for home. Curiosity had led the women of the family, old and young, to attend the meeting. And on their return they began recounting the affair with unkind and exaggerated comment in wearisome repetition.

In our family the most important woman was Taisasubai, second wife of my father-in-law. This had come about because, for two or three years after his father's death, Himself had been sorry for her and had treated her with great consideration until she took the place his own mother might have had in the home. He was averse to anyone's scolding her, using abusive language or talking rudely to her. More than that, he allowed her to scold *him*, and he would listen quietly and not answer back! When she was angry, he allowed her to rage on unchecked until she was exhausted. But her mind couldn't retain her anger long at a time and the affair would soon be forgotten, whereupon she would begin to converse with the object of her wrath as though nothing had happened.

After a time, the story of my address at the meeting reached the ears of Taisasubai. Wansa said to her,

“Tai, surely these things which are happening are not good! You are the guardian of my brother’s honor. Did our mother long to appear before strange men? One day in the fields on Panhala Fort, a clerk came into our court yard to drink water. The only mistake we made was that we stood there instead of going inside the house. But just for that, my brother wasted four days arguing with Mother. She was responsible then, and who is now? It is well that someone should see to it!”

Having started the conflagration in this way, Wansa went inside and left Taisasubai working herself into a heated fury which raged until nine-thirty that night. When Himself returned, Taisasubai continued her angry argument right in his presence, though not so excitedly as at first. She said, “Day by day, men are growing more careless of their good name. Formerly, women would not even stand in the presence of a man. Then how should they speak to them! It’s only at the time of *punyahar<sup>a</sup>chan* <sup>5</sup> that wives may sit near their husbands in the presence of a few people, and even then only with bent head and without courage to lift their faces! Weren’t such wives appreciated? Was there no love between such wives and their husbands? Nowadays, love means for a woman boldly to wrap her garment about her and be near her husband, to sit on a chair, to read and write like a man — to such a state have we come! Until today, we have kept this state of affairs within the house; but today’s affair is beyond that! Aren’t you ashamed to have her read

<sup>5</sup> Part of the wedding ceremony.

an English speech in front of such a great crowd? Did your turban remain on your head, then? <sup>6</sup> In olden days, one's reputation was scrupulously guarded; but that is all gone now! On the contrary, notoriety is what is enjoyed! Is it not true that when a woman is educated she becomes rude, and has no sense of shame? When one becomes unconventional in any respect, the result is always the same; so it is with learning English. And so I say, give up English. Today, when girls are given an inch, they take an ell. See this woman! Here in the house she never says a word; even when angrily spoken to she doesn't speak a syllable. How humble she appears; but, outside, just see! Where does the boldness come from? Ever since I heard of that affair, I've been lost in amazement!"

As she rattled on, she convinced herself that in learning English I had defied Himself and was beyond his control, and that he sat in silence because there was no help for it. Two or three times he had interrupted her flow of words with a laugh; but he didn't say anything, just silently took it all in. Realizing all this, I cried so hard that I couldn't go to dinner.

"He didn't contradict Taisasubai at all," I marvelled. "Consequently she will remain convinced, and from now on will increase her tormenting of me." If Himself had said merely, "She didn't read it of her own accord; I told her to, and so she read it," that would have been enough for me. But he had not said it!

After dinner, as usual, I went upstairs. A long time

<sup>6</sup> Weren't you ashamed?

passed before he said, laughingly, "What! Was today's an unusually monstrous attack? It's true that she was going strong this time! And you are anticipating many days of trouble, aren't you? All right; your business is to be prepared for it. You must make up your mind that you will endure it all with the utmost patience and sweetness. You must avoid anything that will give cause for increased anger or pain. I realize how difficult it is to listen silently as she says what she likes; but the lessons of patient endurance which you learn today will have value throughout your whole life. Hereafter, when anyone criticizes you, because of this habit you will not be greatly troubled. Tai and Akka<sup>7</sup> both have<sup>3</sup> harsh dispositions. There is no help for that. It is better not to argue with such people. You must have seen that I, too, let them scold, haven't you? Now it is true, of course, that they are harder on you than on me; but remember that you have me with you. Then why be fearful. Learn to behave courageously; it will be hard but it will only be for a little while; it can't be forever!" With such words he tried to comfort me.

Thereafter, the older women were continually finding reasons for scolding; but I bore it all without complaint and continued to do the things Himself wanted me to do. Once or twice I failed and had to ask his pardon; but I learned my lesson well.

<sup>7</sup> Name for older sister.

## CHAPTER XI

It has been our family custom for many years to have in our home four or five boys who were being educated at our expense. Himself was intensely interested in developing religious thinking among them, and he strongly emphasized religious training. The students who stayed with us, after finishing their lessons, used to do various kinds of work, such as bringing vegetables, keeping accounts, summoning cloth and grain merchants or bringing supplies from their shops. The cleverest of them usually were assigned to writing up the accounts and checking the bills. Also, occasionally, Himself instructed them as to balancing the accounts. He made it a rule never to buy on credit. His instructions were that if one or two hundred rupees' worth of things had been bought, that it must be checked within fifteen days, or at least the receipted bill, paid in full, must be on hand by the end of the month.

At one time a Konkani lad whose name was Hari Bhat, was one of these students. He was clever at writing and his Modi characters were especially good, and so he was entrusted with the records. Wansa made it her custom to pay the servants and all outstanding bills in the shops by the tenth of the month. Sometimes during those days she used to send the money to the shopkeepers by this boy so that she could complete the payments in one day. When this had been going on for some time, this lad conceived the

idea of falsifying. Because he had in his hands both the payment of the bills and the writing of the accounts, he had the finest opportunity for deception. And so for about two months he took the money from the house for the bills and entered it on the records ; but he failed to give it to the people to whom it belonged. Instead, he used it for his own evil purposes.

The way in which this came to light was this : One day Wansa ordered a quarter measure of Kashew nuts from the merchant. He himself came to bring them, and she casually remarked, "With the exception of these nuts, then, our accounts are square, aren't they ? This is our only debt to you."

As he heard this he answered in surprise, "What ? Have you sent me your money ? How's that ? I haven't had anything on account for two months past !"

Wansa was startled, and exclaimed in astonishment, "Do you mean to say that you have sat still for two months without inquiring, when you know that we never let our bills remain unpaid ? You go and investigate all the men in your shop and inquire into this."

Just as the merchant left, the student came into the house, and Wansa said to him, "You didn't fail to give the merchant his money, did you ?" And without any signs of dismay he replied promptly, "I have settled everyone's bills."

Wansa, without startling him further, told him to go to his lessons, and then secretly dispatched a messenger to the grain and cloth merchants to inquire whether or not they had received their money. When

he returned with the news that no single one of them had received their money, she stationed him at the porch entrance with orders not to allow Hari to go out for any reason whatsoever.

That day was the Dasara<sup>1</sup> festival, and Wansa's plan was to summon the merchant as soon as dinner was over and bring the affair then to Himself's attention. But Hari became suspicious and attempted to leave by the front door on the pretext of bringing a book from some friend's house, only to have the guard refuse to let him go. So he escaped by jumping over the wall into a private garden and running away.

One of the other students reported this to Wansa, and when she said nothing, he came and told me. When I heard that a man who had misused 400 or 500 rupees had leaped over a wall in broad daylight and run away, I was so filled with anger that I completely forgot that it was a festival day, and that if Himself heard of this trouble before his dinner he wouldn't eat well. I rushed to him and told him the bad news. Later, I was properly punished by others for my rashness.

Himself didn't say anything at the time. He merely listened in silence to what I had to say. But that he was seriously troubled was very apparent, for he stopped the writing that he was doing, and when the servant came to announce dinner and to wrap up the record books, he said,

"Have you realized that while you were the guard on duty at the door, one of the boys who was a thief

<sup>1</sup> A day connected with an incident in the life of Rama.

ran away? Go after him wherever he may have gone and bring him back here; but don't beat him on the way!" He then picked up a book lying near him and began to read. I went downstairs to the kitchen.

The guard started off, excitedly bragging as he left the house, "I'll bring him back all right!" Taisasubai and Wansa, in the room of the household gods, heard him talking and called him back to ask, "Tell us. Whoever told this news upstairs?" He replied, "How should I know? Wahinibai was up there; perhaps she told, for all I know."

When they heard that, the fat was in the fire! Wansa said, "See, Tai? I've kept still all this time, knowing that such a message should not reach him before dinner on a festival day. Is the boy a relative or an accomplice of ours that this news had to be relayed upstairs so speedily?"

Taisasubai was overcome with fury as she listened, and sputtered out, "Oh, second wives are always traducers! This defamer has continually curried favor by talking, talking! But up to today she has not done anything so vicious as this! Instead, I had actually given her credit for being blameless and different from other second wives. Now, how speedily has my good opinion of her been overturned! First, she goes to club meetings! Then she studies English! There are three or four old women in the house; at any time now, she may say that we are to be driven out! Then she will be free! Then the Saheb and Madame can sit upon chairs with books in their hands! Then behold! Day by day she becomes more and more con-



vinced that she is the head of the house ! “The servants are under my control’ she thinks ! ‘If there be profit or loss of any sort, it is mine !’ But she must be told not to be so boastful. As long as we are alive, we will not let her have her way ! What man can hold his own against a tale bearer ? This Hari who has stolen the money has ruined us, hasn’t he ? Is it her father that will make up the loss ? If ever again she starts anything like this, let her watch us !” In such fashion did she shriek aloud in her passion, as she came from the idol room into the main room of the house.

It chanced that Himself came down from upstairs just as she was talking, and he overheard the last few sentences. Greatly troubled, and unable to endure her entirely groundless abuse of me, he said, “If it’s true, then you are at fault for not informing me of that which I should have been told. Why do you take the side of the thief and torment people so ? If she had not told me, whom could she have told ?”

On hearing this, she became utterly mad with anger, and said, “Of course, if you are going to stand up for her, there is nothing more to say ! If she is so beloved and delicate a lady, let her sit in your presence ! Or place her on a pedestal and call her a goddess and worship her, if you like ! You seem to think that by studying English she has become very wise ; but that isn’t true. If you have become tired of us, don’t disgrace us by standing up for your wife. Instead of that, just drive us out of your home.”

Angered as he had never been before by her varied

false accusations and subtle reflections, he burst out, "Has anyone told you not to go?" As the words fell from his lips he realized on the instant what a mistake he had made, and in an effort to atone for his fault, he gently took Taisasubai aside and pled with her.

Ending his long appeal, he said, "You are the oldest member of our family, and if it pleases you to be angry with your daughter-in-law, she must listen to you in silence. You have the authority to take even me by the ear when I make any mistake! So say what you will, only please try to find out what really is true. And now, I ask you to forgive me for the words I just said." In this way, by his frank, sincere apology, he gradually pacified Taisasubai's anger.

It has always been the rule, both of Himself and his father, that everyone should respect the senior women and uncomplainingly take whatever any of them might say without answering rudely. Consequently, our older people had never become accustomed to disrespectful language. They were so firmly convinced that never for any reason whatsoever would he say anything to cause grief to them, nor would he ever express in any way anything about his wife, that it wasn't surprising, was it, that Taisasubai should think it fearfully disrespectful for him to side with his wife against her? However, after he had begged her pardon, as I said, she began to be more calm, and eventually her anger disappeared. But Himself couldn't forget it. Whenever the thought of the affair came to mind, he puzzled as to why such words happened to fall from his lips.

He became very penitent. At the time of Taisasubai's death, he mentioned this episode with great contrition in the letters he wrote to Ababhau and to Wansa in Poona. For our Taisasubai died of plague in the year 1897.



## CHAPTER XII

“Himself is again going on tour after Dasara festival, and I am going with him !”

This was the refrain that was singing itself through my head all the time as we made our preparations. I could guess that a different refrain was in the minds of the older women, recalling vividly, as I did, what had happened the other time when he had left me behind. He felt that he was experienced now in touring and could make me comfortable. And I think, too, that he had learned to depend on me for companionship.

This was in 1882, and I was still young. Aside from the relief of getting away from the women, I enjoyed the excitement and adventure of a trip with our large retinue. There were as many as thirty-five or forty people in our company, including five or six policemen, several women, an extra Brahman servant, my own personal maid, a couple of boys as helpers, and the hostlers. Moreover, there were bullock carts, two tents and one carriage drawn by horses ; that completed the outfit.

The tour itself was great fun. The variety of places, the wonderful air, fresh water and lovely scenery added to our pleasure and contentment. More than any-

thing else, we rejoiced in and were comforted by the fact that Himself's health — and especially his eyes — were much better out in the District than they were in Poona.

Although we were on tour, there could be no difference in the carefulness and orderliness of the work. Everything had to move on like clock work! Whenever an encampment had been decided upon for a certain day, it was necessary that the camp be established there by 8 or 9 o'clock of that morning. Our custom was to ride in the carriage with a police attendant and the coachman. A cart filled with necessities, such as quilts and cushions, containers filled with food and water bottles accompanied us.

As soon as we reached the appointed place, the policeman had to select a spot near trees which would provide dense shade, and there to arrange the cushions and rugs. Himself spent this time busied with his morning ablutions and ceremonies, and only when he saw that on all sides the place was swept clean and dry and that fresh drinking water was available, did he go there and begin his work.

The bullock carts preceded us or arrived soon after we did. My business on alighting from the carriage was to set the women to sweeping and sprinkling the place where the cooking would be done, get the dishes and baskets of utensils from the bullock carts and, when the pots and pans were all ready for use, to take some grain and a bit of something tempting to Himself where he was already seated.

Nowadays, everyone drinks tea in the morning; but

up to that time no one in our family, either among the men or women, had taken up that custom. And so on those days of tour, when the cooking was delayed in any way, it was customary just to have a bit of spiced grain or sweetened bread or some fresh fruit. If the food which was ready was especially good and he was really hungry, Himself would eat four or five mouthfuls, never more than that, and then only after he had assured himself that his clerks had been supplied by me beforehand. If, when questioned, I replied that I had not served them, he usually reminded me to do so before serving him.

After his breakfast, Himself used habitually to become absorbed in his work and to sit for long periods writing steadily, with bent head. Occasionally, he would raise his head for a brief respite of three or four minutes, and his attention would rather solemnly fasten itself on some nearby mountain or river or tree or something else in the vicinity; so for a few moments. Then, suddenly, his face would light up and he would begin to repeat quietly a couplet from some sacred poem. This respite brought peace, and again he would turn to his work.

Two hours after establishing camp, Himself used always to go for his ceremonial bath. After that and his breakfast were finished, he used to sit on his chair and question each one about his work. I had to report on my lessons and read the letters received in the morning's post.

"While I'm resting, you can answer all these and then show them to me when I get up." With some

such direction he would lie down for his siesta behind the curtain where his bed was prepared. While he rested, I sat quietly writing letters, which he had to approve before I could seal and send them by the servant to post. When he awoke, I usually read a couple of new verses from Raghuvansh and had Himself explain them so that I could better prepare them for the next day's lesson.

Our camp was always near the village, and so the place where Himself held court was never far away. After I had sent fruit and supari to him there, I had nothing to do until supper time. I could lie down on the bed with a Marathi newspaper to read, or sit chatting with any of the women of the village who had come, or go with them, perhaps, to see something in the village that was of interest.

In the afternoons, after his three or four hours of Court work were over, the district officers, revenue officers, and village masters used to come to meet Himself. Then it was his custom to lay aside his pen and record books and to sit visiting with his guests. If he had not walked enough in the morning, he would often take these callers with him for more exercise. He was a rapid, steady walker and some of them could keep up with him ; but those men who since coming to the village had lost the habit of taking vigorous exercise, could not possibly keep up the pace Himself set. And to avoid such a test on the following day, they postponed their call until seven o'clock in the evening !

There was usually a big crowd waiting to see him

after the Judge and the Mamlatdar <sup>1</sup> had left. As he talked with them, Himself tried to gather many kinds of information. He asked what was the rate of taxation and how the people stood up to it ; which crops yielded the best harvest in the area ; how heavy the crop was likely to be ; what use the villagers made of their leisure time ; what their best trade was and how it prospered ; what was the chief god of the village and whether he, the god, received any permanent endowment ; what kind of lectures were given ; what sort of important religious celebrations they had ; whether the tradesmen, merchants, farmers, hereditary village officers and the villagers, wearied with the day's work, ever gathered in the evenings to relax and enjoy music together ; how the village schools were progressing and whether the villagers were really interested in them.

This was his casual method of obtaining information day by day. Then each evening, after the guests had gone away, he insisted on my telling him more or less completely everything I had read in the Marathi newspapers. In the same way, he inquired minutely as to whether anything unusual had happened at camp, or asked what women had come to call and what had been discussed by us. I would laughingly reply,

“What conversation might there have been fit to talk about? Just something of this and that — nothing more !”

After a time of jesting and light conversation, he had some one of the clerks come to read the English news-

<sup>1</sup> Administrative officer of the village.



papers for an hour before he retired. That was when I used to massage his feet with clarified butter. Since his eyes hurt him so badly, this daily foot massage seemed the only way to make him sleepy. Sometimes when there was no paper to read, we two played chess, while one of the servants massaged his feet. Ten or eleven o'clock was bedtime for us. Himself was a light sleeper, and if he had four or four and a half hours of sleep he thought it was enough. In this respect I was his exact opposite. When he awakened at three or three-thirty he began to waken me from my deep sleep. Sometimes, distressed with the effort to waken me, a deep anger would well up in me, and sometimes my painful effort would bring me to the point of tears ; but I never allowed this to appear nor spoke of it. Yet he understood, I doubt not. He merely pretended he didn't see any of it ; but kept up his method of rousing me until I rose and began the daily routine.

I lighted the lamp and picked up the book before he told me what to read. Our reading was really nothing but the recitation or singing of favorite poems, whose meaning required concentration. He easily lost himself in meditation, and kept me repeating over and over some lovely poem of Namdev's<sup>2</sup> while he, with closed eyes, swayed to the rhythm, utterly lost in its beauty. At such moments, in that lovely light of the earliest dawn when I saw his countenance filled with worship, my own heart overflowed with tenderness and my love for him, and my worship of him increased involuntarily.

<sup>2</sup> A Bhakti poet.

When I was alone, my mind would be filled with thoughts of him in our human relations. But in those morning hours I was conscious, though for a moment, at a time only, of a kind of spiritual power in him, and I saw him as an almost superhuman being. Once, deciding to question him about this and to tell him how I felt, I lifted my eyes at the very moment that he turned his to mine, and in that mutual experience all my thoughts were wiped out as a house of sand tumbles down !

Realizing that I had been about to say something, Himself said, "You had it in mind to make some comment, hadn't you ? All right, let's have it ! But why question anything ? We are simple, artless folk. I'll sing you a serenade. You are an English educated woman, and a song will please you a bit !" When I heard this I got up in confusion and hurried away.

Our predecessors had not always had the habit of going personally to examine the records, as is the duty of such officials. But in our case, Himself put duty before our comfort. Occasionally, for one or two days, we would be unable to get milk, either cow's or buffalo's. Vegetables were unknown. It was impossible to find sufficient grazing for several extra bullocks and two horses. When a village had only one well, there was real difficulty in getting water enough for our additional thirty or forty people and the animals. Overhearing the clerks discussing the methods of former officials, I said to Himself, "If it is customary merely to send for the records, why do you start taking so much trouble ?"

He replied, "The Government which has appointed us does not give us special travelling allowance merely for our comfort. If I asked for reports from the *taluka*,<sup>3</sup> shrewd and clever men could come forward and draw any picture they pleased to put before the officer. So one would not get a true understanding of the villagers' condition. Government's main purpose is to gather information in order to help the villagers in their difficulties. Some officials do not understand this and are needlessly careless. On the other hand, if I personally visit each village and meet each property owner and intelligent man, it is easy to discuss matters as I wish and really get to the bottom of affairs. This being the case, we are going to continue visiting each village. Do you think I take all this trouble just for the fun of it?"

<sup>3</sup> District.

## CHAPTER XIII

District schools were a trial to me, especially at first. The school master invariably came to invite us to visit the girls' school. After inviting me he usually added, "Such programs are work for you women. If you will invite the mothers, they will come." So he consulted with me as to the time for the function. In the evening at dinner, Himself said, "Well, who came today to see you?" And I replied, "No one. The wives of the mamlatdar and munsiphi came. And in the evening, the master of the girls' school came to invite us there."

On hearing this, he asked, "What time was agreed upon? You'd better prepare a lecture! A while ago in the bustle of our work, I thought I heard something, but I didn't notice it especially. Some people going along the road were talking, and I overheard them saying that some fine, influential woman had come to town who would be speaking at the girls' school tomorrow, and such like things they were saying. I was busy with my work; how could I attend to them? But by and large, what I heard must have been about you, now I think about it?"

All this was said so solemnly that a stranger would surely have thought it all true! During his leisure time he had the habit of teasing and jesting. I merely replied, "Out of those words only 'fine, influential' could possibly apply to me! The rest was all in your

imagination." The next day, after my return from the school, the same teasing continued.

If in some village, because of difficulty or from laziness, I failed to visit the school, he pretended to be angry and scolded me, saying, "If the man doesn't come to invite you, can't you take any responsibility? So far as you know, the master may have very little free time for calling! You should voluntarily go to gather information. What does our talking amount to! We merely talk nonsense to amuse ourselves. So don't take seriously what is said in jest." So, half jesting and half bullying, he urged me to do my duty, and our days of touring passed in the utmost comfort and happiness.

Once as we were having an especially successful tour, we arrived at the *taluka* village of Tasagaon. This time, we were camping at the resthouse of the Shri Ganpati temple. We had just finished our dinner after arriving, when the Deputy Educational Inspector came to see Himself, and said,

"We have just now completed our school examinations and at this very moment you come into camp here! Had we petitioned for it, it could not have happened so perfectly! If you will carry on your business long enough to allow us to arrange the closing functions of the boys' as well as of the girls' schools, you can both distribute prizes with your own hands."

Himself accepted the Deputy's invitation for us both. That evening he told me, "This afternoon, the Deputy of the school came here. Day after tomorrow the girls' school will have its exercises. The thought

## HIMSELF

is that you will give out the prizes, and it will be necessary for you to be ready to say something then. They aren't inviting you just to sit on a chair! I'm not saying this in jest; neither are you to turn it into a joke. There will be only women there, and no men at all; but there will be crowds of women. I'm telling you ahead of time so that you will not be upset. If you think you cannot speak extemporaneously, then write out beforehand what you want to say."

"Impossible!" I said. "I have no such habit! Already my hands and feet are shaking! Then how will they be day after tomorrow? I am absolutely terrified. I haven't the faintest idea what to write or what to say. If you will tell me, I will write it down now."

To which he determinedly replied, "I shall not tell you a thing! Is my work so light that I can do someone else's? If you think that you are merely going to write down my words and read them there, you are wrong. That doesn't please me. Whatever crazy, silly things occur to you, write them down. You will be able to make them into some sort of remarks; or, better still, make up some few sentences to speak when you get to the affair. What is there to that sort of a speech! What is there to be afraid of? If there are only women present, there will be continued commotion, and all you need do is to speak clearly and logically your few sentences."

The day following passed in preparation and anxiety. I couldn't decide what to say. The place arranged for the prize giving was in the audience hall of Taisaheb Tasagaonkar. At the appointed hour I went there.

The fifty or seventy-five women present appeared as a thousand! After the girls had recited some poetry and the master had read his report, the time came for me to give my little speech. I rose and stood there, but my breathing was hurried and my feet and hands shook. This kept up for a few seconds. But after I began to speak, no one knows how, I spoke some twenty-five or more sentences without pausing and with no difficulty. It was absolutely the first time that I had stood before an audience and taken the leading part.

The entire affair seemed to delight the women, for during the remaining two days of our camp there, many women cordially invited me to their homes for *halad kunku* parties, and many others came to our camp to visit me. Once, Himself needed to come in for something, but had to turn back because of the crowd of women seated there. He had a new way of teasing me after that, saying, "I'm very much alarmed lest we have lady disciples following after us! It sometimes happens so!"

After I reached home on the day of the prize giving, he asked me several times as to how it went. But I didn't tell him anything. Finally, I said, "Women's affairs are for women, aren't they? Why should men be interested! You prophesied that I would be disgraced and, of course, that is what happened. If you send a crazy man, uninstructed and untaught, into a crowd, that is what must happen!"

He heard this, but was not satisfied. It was evident that he felt anxious: but he didn't say anything more

until bedtime, when he could no longer refrain, and again several times searchingly questioned me, "Tell me what you said. Until a man hears, he's bound to be anxious. All I want to know is whether you really rose to the occasion responsibly. This isn't just teasing."

As I heard this, I replied at once and told him all that I could recall. Among other things, I had used the story of the plantain<sup>1</sup> tree. I mentioned that those among our people who opposed girls' education always maintain that educated women become bold, careless, unrestrained. "Therefore, girls," I had said, "you who are educated must give no reason for such criticism to these objectors. Being rude to folk can never be the result of education. The fruit of true education and training must be sincere humility. Consider the example of the plantain tree. The glory of the tree is to produce a stem of plantains. When this is obtained, the tree does not swell up with pride! Instead, it droops its leaves in great humility, and because of that becomes very beautiful. In the same way it is well for us to learn to be sincerely humble and to treat our husbands and older men with respect and obedience, however much learning, wealth or power we may have attained as our glory." He listened to it quietly and seemed content; but he said nothing more.

On that tour we went to Wai, and from there to Mahableshwar<sup>2</sup> and back. We stayed eight days at Mahableshwar to see the views from the various Points,

<sup>1</sup> Banana tree.

<sup>2</sup> A beautiful resort in the mountains southwest of Poona.



and we even went to Pratapgad, where we saw the temple and the Fort, the place where Shivaji <sup>3</sup> killed Afzulkhan.

One year, we were touring in the Satara district, and it had been decided that we should set up camp at Koregaon. The bullock carts had gone ahead during the night. We ourselves arose as usual in the morning, and taking our seats in the carriage, started on our journey. When there chanced to be no water near our night's camping place, it was our custom to stop for our morning devotions at some river or nice brook by the roadside. This side of Koregaon, we found a spot near the river Vasana, and we all alighted there for our preparations for the day. We were rather late that morning, and so we both took some fruit and gave the remainder in the container to the police and coachman, with orders to eat and then bring back the dish after cleaning it.

Presently, Himself remarked, "We are late, and I've had no exercise this morning, so I shall walk on ahead. When the men come, have them harness the team. You can overtake me quickly." After his departure, just for fun, I picked up a horse whip and went over to a low mango tree near by to knock off some fruit with a blow or two. Not satisfied with the bunch of green ones that first fell, I again grasped the whip; but this time the lash caught on my gold bracelet and it broke off and flew up and away before I realized what had happened, and where it fell I could not see. The police and I searched the place all about beneath

<sup>3</sup> The warrior who established the Maratha Kingdom.

the tree ; but whether it had stuck in the branches of the tree or had been trampled in the sand as we searched, who knows ! Anyhow, our much searching did not find my valuable bracelet !

The carriage was ready to start, and so I got in and we went on our journey. "What shall I tell Himself ? How will he feel about the lost bracelet ? I didn't do well to covet those mangoes." So my guilty conscience bothered me and filled me with fears. Presently, one mile was completed and still we had not overtaken him. Then I became terrified and distressed, because, due to my foolishness and frivolous desire, Himself had been forced to walk so far in the great heat.

In the second mile we overtook him and he entered the carriage. As soon as we started on, I at once said, "Today I have done a very bad thing," and proceeded to confess the tale of the bracelet.

He listened in silence, and then, after a long time, said quietly, "It was wrong of you to break off other people's mangoes without asking. Doubtless your lost bracelet is a punishment and a reminder that you shouldn't do so again. I shall not search for the bracelet nor buy you another. This will make you remember."

He spoke in his usual tone ; but the expression of his face showed so clearly that the incident had displeased him that it had all the effect of a punishment on me. In order not to anger him further, I went about my appointed tasks ; but my mind was not at peace. That evening as we sat down for supper, he called out to the

Brahman servant, "Bajaba, bring on those seventy-five rupee mango pickles made this morning !"

What to say ! I stood helpless with downcast face. Who had made any pickles ? Those mangoes had lain all day where they fell in the morning. All day, even the thought of mangoes had made me wince as from a punishment. So when Himself saw that no one said anything and no pickles were forthcoming, he said, "There are some things one should not forget ; but certainly the loss of a bracelet is no reason for such distress. I also have lost something today. Somewhere or other this afternoon my snuff box fell out and disappeared ; so I've lost something and you have lost something. You think that yours was more valuable than mine was ! But think of the usefulness of mine, for without it there is no relief for me. Losing things indicates that one is not bright ; therefore, it is better to be on guard. Aside from that, why fill a day with mental distress ! If one laughs and plays, it makes other people feel better."

## CHAPTER XIV

Troubles awaited me in Poona when our happy year ended and we returned home. The women had missed me, of course, for they had had no one to berate when I was away! Not long after our arrival this time, a Sanskrit trained lady named Anasuyabai, who interpreted the *Puranas*, came to Poona. Her husband and her very old father travelled with her. Like Pandita Ramabai, she read the *Shribhagata*, and crowds thronged the temples to hear her recite the abridged *Puranas* and explain them as a professional would. She read them in our home and in many other places, and one day it was decided that she should read at the Women's temple to Vishnu.

The orthodox women who used to attend *Purana* readings when held in a temple agreed on a plan to ridicule the unorthodox among us. "Let's not arrange any place today for the educated women to sit," they said. "We will ourselves fill up all the space in the audience room <sup>1</sup> and leave only the platform <sup>2</sup> so that those women will have to sit up there along with the men! They go to meetings where they sit on chairs just like the men; so why do they need a separate space here?"

A friend of mine told me about this plan. I always attempted to keep in touch with the conservative as

<sup>1</sup> A kind of portico in front of the idol room where people assemble to hear the *Puranas* read.

<sup>2</sup> Raised platform behind which is the idol room.

well as the modern minded women, and had many friends and acquaintances in both camps. I was later than usual in going to the temple that day, and when I arrived, the outer court was so crowded that there was no room for me. I reluctantly went up to the platform and took a seat near Pandita Ramabai and a few others of our club women who didn't mind sitting in a public place. But I was distressed and could find no peace of mind. The idea of getting up and going home kept turning over in my mind. They had seated Anasuyabai, the speaker, in the center with the men on one side of her and these few women on the other side.

Some fifteen or twenty minutes after the reading had begun, I turned to Pandita Ramabai and whispered, "I'm not feeling well today ; I'm dizzy and so I'm going home," and I slipped away. At the time I felt sure that this was a very good thing to do and was an indication of my courage. At home, I found Taisasubai sitting on the verandah outside, and told her the whole story of how the women had schemed to fill all the inner court of the temple and force us women to sit with the men, and explained how I had been so angry that I came home. I was very complacent over the anticipated approval of everyone, as I realized that Taisasubai certainly approved.

With a congratulatory air she said, "See, you must use that kind of logic and it will improve your reputation and folk will not call you names. These new women don't understand what they are doing. They say it's all right to do as you please. Even if they anger the men of the family by clinging to established cus-

toms, such anger will disappear in a day or so. Why worry about their uproar? It is man's nature to be tempestuous. And all the wrath of the household must needs fall on its women anyway." With many such expressions and stories she took my side and spoke pleasantly to encourage me, and I listened happily to it all.

But this happiness was short lived, and never again was I to have the courage to make such a mistake!

For that evening, when Himself returned, I went as usual to get his clothing out, and as soon as he saw me he asked, "What was wrong with you today?" Thoughtlessly I replied, "Nothing."

As soon as I had spoken, I remembered how I had on a pretext come away from the temple, and I wondered in a panic what I should say if he now should ask why I, on my own initiative, had come home! It was fortunate for me that he asked nothing further at the moment, and, indeed, that he made no other comment. I stood before him as usual to take his clothing, but instead of handing things to me, he rose and hung them on a peg. When I stooped to remove his shoes, he quietly brushed aside my hand and took them off, himself. I continued to stand there for ten or fifteen minutes, but he did not talk or ask any questions.

Realizing what was happening, I was filled with dismay and an overpowering emotion, until it seemed unendurable. This was so contrary to his usual way of chatting with me for ten or fifteen minutes whenever he came in. Always when he returned, whether people were waiting to see him, or even when some press-

ing business awaited him, he would postpone everything for a chat with me. But today, without any reason, why was he so different? Later on, when I went to him to serve his food, he did not speak to refuse it, but merely signed me away with his hand. No one else noticed anything, but I did and I was most unhappy! I kept thinking, "if he doesn't like something I've done, why doesn't he scold me angrily in front of them all?" Then it would have been finished; but this 'locking the lips is like a blow with a fist.'

That evening I went upstairs, and as usual began to read the advance lesson in the Dakshina Prize Committee book, taking it up at the point where we had left off the day before. He habitually stopped me in my reading to explain some obscure sentence or strange word. But not that day. As I read, I purposely made a mistake or two, thinking to catch his attention. When I had read long enough, he merely turned his face away and pulled the covers over him. I removed the lamp and put the book back in its place. When the servant came to rub his feet with oil, I said, "You needn't do it today, you may go," and I myself began to rub his feet with oil. In my mind was the thought that he would have to say something if only to tell me to stop! Usually after a half hour he would turn over and say, "That's enough," and stretch out the other foot to be rubbed; but that day he said never a word! He merely turned over and pretended to be sound asleep.

Up to that time, as I rubbed on the oil, I had been

drooping with sleep. But when I realized that he was pretending to sleep and that the time for talking was passed, I was thoroughly wide awake and overcome with grief. I wept for quite a while. I kept wondering whether I should ask, "Why are you thus refusing to talk when you never have done so before," or should I frankly say, "If I have made some mistake, forgive me this once"; but I couldn't say a word.

My spirit was greatly humbled; but to make such an apology comes very hard to a person proud spirited from childhood. Although at times like this I might plan a thousand things to say, I was unable to make a sound. I sternly determined to say something; but as soon as Himself moved in his feigned sleep, my mind stopped working. In this way the whole night passed. Neither one of us slept at all. At the first crack of dawn, Himself arose and went out. Then I lost all hope and wept bitterly, because a punishment more unendurable than any I had ever known had come upon me. Finally, washing my eyes with cold water, I wiped away my tears and went downstairs to work. But I found no comfort.

All sorts of ideas were milling about in my mind. "Why haven't I asked to be forgiven? Is it good to endure such acute suffering merely for one's pride?" In desperation, I determined to speak my mind frankly before breakfast so that I might feel better, and I went as usual to bathe and then prepared chutney, Kosambiri and curds. Then I realized that I was ceremonially purified and dressed for serving, and I wondered how I could meet Himself without becoming impure



and on what pretext I should do that. Because, from the time I began to prepare and serve the food, Wansa and my mother-in-law had been willing to be served by me, but only on the condition that from the time of my bathing until the older women had finished eating, I should not go into any part of the house except the living room, kitchen or idol room. If I went to the well or to the back door or upstairs, I could not carry on in the kitchen without again performing a bath of ceremonial purity. That was the reason for my quandary. As the time approached for Himself to complete his bathing and come down, I realized that there was no alternative but to find some excuse to leave the room ; so I suddenly decided, and called out to the other women who were there, "I'm not feeling very well and I'll be late coming down. Let some one else serve the food until I return after bathing again."

Wansa became angry at that, and said, "Ha ! That will be after all the work is done ! Then our Baisaheb will slowly descend and put on the finishing touches with her regal stamp of approval."

All the other women laughed ; but Taisasubai said, "What's that you say ? Doesn't she do the serving every day ? She's not proud and you have no right to pretend she is. All this morning she has looked pale and drawn."

Because my attention was fixed on what was ahead of me, I merely realized that the women were all talking together and not noticing me, and I took the opportunity to leave the room and go upstairs. It was time for Himself to dress and he was just putting on

his dhotar.<sup>3</sup> I went close to him and said, "I have made a mistake ; but I will never do it again. I haven't had a moment's peace of mind since last evening."

A few moments passed before he replied, "When you act foolishly sometimes, it causes trouble not only for you but for me, too. Who is going to like to have his own people act contrary to his accepted way of doing things ? Once you really understand the trend of conduct which pleases your own folk, you will cling to it with tenacity so that no one need be troubled. Therefore, do not repeat your foolishness of yesterday." After talking in this way for a time, he went down for his bath.

I went down by the other stairway, and with my own hands drew the bath water for Himself. Then I, too, bathed again and began to serve the food, and the distressing incident was closed.

After serving him I joined the older women and ate with them ; nevertheless, the entire day was a sad one for me. I realized that there is no punishment quite so unbearable as being firmly but silently barred from a friendly companionship to which one is accustomed, and I determined never to allow such a thing to occur again, and it never did.

Not long after this, the Education Commission held a mass meeting in Hirabag.<sup>4</sup> The Commission elected Pandita Ramabai and me to speak about women's education. Pandita Ramabai had had much experience in addressing meetings, so that her part went off well ;

<sup>3</sup> Draped trousers.

<sup>4</sup> A public garden.

but I was utterly confused at the time. I managed some ten or twelve sentences and abruptly ended my speech. Nevertheless, from comments which I overheard from time to time, I understood that it was an immense improvement over my earlier attempt to speak at the same garden !

These meetings held in Hirabag were a revelation to me. I saw how many women of the city, both young and old, gathered there and how pleasantly friendly they were with each other. So I suggested to Himself that if such occasions were arranged frequently, the women would become more friendly and united, and that their reserve might diminish and their appreciation of education naturally increase.

“We ourselves,” I suggested, “might assume the expense of three or four affairs annually which should be like a *halad-kunku* — or a sort of party.” He approved of this plan.

Accordingly, some few months later, three or four of us friends gave a party for Lady Ray, the wife of the governor. It was the first party of this sort ever given for the women in Poona. The refreshments for the Hindu women were arranged in a separate room from the others. They served only fruit and sweets for them, and the Hindu women were delighted and no one was unhappy. It pleased them, too, to learn that only fruit and sweets prepared in the Hindu way were served to the Europeans and other caste women. The only difference was that the Hindu women, chatting in groups, were inclined, instead of eating the food, to wrap bits of it in their handkerchiefs to take home

to the children, because on that day the children had not been invited. After the refreshments, according to the Hindu custom, *pansupari* and *halad-kunku* were presented, and all of our women approved because it did not seem like a foreign party.

After this, Himself was promoted to be a Judge in the Small Causes Court. Still later, he was appointed a member of the Finance Committee of India, and we had the privilege of going to Simla. We left Poona in March, 1886, and started for Simla.

## CHAPTER XV

On leaving Poona, our first stop was at the home of Himself's friend, Prof. Abasaheb Kathvate in Ahmedabad. At that time a very devoted friendship existed between Himself and Rao Bahadur Shankar Pandurang Pandit, who was temporarily unemployed. Himself, accordingly, urged him to accompany us to Simla. A mutual friend of theirs, another wealthy and influential urbanite named Hariprasad Santukaram Desai, had come to Ahmedabad from Bhavnagar with his family, whom he planned to take for a trip to Simla. We all joined forces for the journey.

Our party, therefore, consisted of our own Wansa, Bababhauji, three servants and Himself's friend, Rao Bahadur Pandit. In the Desai party were his wife, two daughters and their women attendants, Bhaisaheb himself, his four sons and one family physician, as well as some near relatives and the servants for them all.

From Ahmedabad, we went direct to Jaipur, where we stayed long enough to see the very famous Museum. There we saw student workmen doing all sorts of carving in marble — very delicate images of the gods, pictures of birds and animals, boxes, large and small, square, octagonal, almond shaped and round; shoes, dishes — in fact every sort of manufactured article. Those that were completed were kept in cupboards. There was one tiny but especially graceful image of Lakshmi Narayana<sup>1</sup> which delighted Wansa, and we bought that for her.

<sup>1</sup> Goddess of wealth and prosperity.

On the way to the station we had hurried glimpses of the palace and gardens and other parts of the city before taking the night train for Ambala.

The railway ended at Ambala, and alighting, we proceeded by tonga to Kalka, where we stopped to see a large garden which was reported as worth seeing. We arrived about noon, to find the garden as delightful as the one described in the novel, *Kadambari*. After three days of hot, dusty journeying, we entered the garden at the hottest part of the day. Its flowers and blossoms seemed exceedingly lovely. The cool air beneath the dense shade of the trees, the wells filled with clear water and the breezes moving overhead were all very welcome.

It was especially enjoyable to see the varied colors, shapes and sizes of the birds, some as small as sparrows, with their sweet notes and high, shrill whistling. Soothed by their clamor and singing, all the weariness of the journey was forgotten and we felt rested. A great number of trees in the garden were pear trees. This fruit is green, but becomes red on one side and elongated like a mango. Like the mango tree, it has dense foliage and is dome shaped and low. This was the fruit season, and so the trees were bent down with the weight of the fruit. One could reach it while standing on the ground. We gathered in a circle near the well and made garlands of the many hued, sweet scented flowers. Altogether, we agreed that it was truly a marvelous garden.

The bungalow which we had engaged in Simla was plenty large enough for the thirty or forty people of

our family. It was two-storied, and so there was room for the Desais as well as for us. In the basement lived the manager of the estate.

The air in Simla is wonderful, and the water, too, is very sweet; but it is very scarce and it is difficult to secure enough for bathing properly. That is the reason one sees the hill people bathing in tubs and then washing their clothing in the same water. The women there wear cotton trousers, a shirt and a head scarf about two yards long. They wear various kinds of silver, brass and head ornaments on arms and feet, neck and head. They braid their hair and let it hang down their backs. When the snows come, these people live close to a flaming open fire. The men wear a loin cloth, a shirt, and a four or five yard turban wrapped around their heads. They are a strong, well built folk, but are pale and fair colored. Their chief work is trading or acting as servants. Among them they have a custom of having one wife for four or five or even more brothers. When they are prosperous they can have a second wife. Their conduct and ethics are not so religiously controlled as are ours.

All about our bungalows many coolies had their houses. In the afternoon their women used to come and sit in our compound. Chatting with them, I discovered that they knew nothing at all about us people in Southern India and very little even about the European people.

In the evenings all the people of our bungalows used to go walking. The members of four or five families,

together with a few servants and some jinrickshaws, made up the party. The rickshaws were drawn by some twenty or more coolies, for there are four for each rickshaw. Altogether, it made quite a procession ! At that time the roads around Simla were narrow, very winding and hilly. Consequently, when our huge party came out, the road was completely filled for a good distance, so that when we met any Europeans they would ask their attendants, "What rajah<sup>2</sup> is this ?" It was very amusing.

We stayed at Simla for four months, and were never tired of it. Mornings and afternoons were occupied with work. And about five in the evening, the women and men together went walking, sometimes up 'Jakka Mt.' from which the ranges of mountains in the Himalayas covered with snow looked like silver poured out ; at other times up Kusumati Hill.

Rao Bahadur Pandit was a real addition to our family. He was full of fun and a great tease. He was a good reader and, after our evening's walk he read aloud the English newspapers until he was too tired to go on. Himself enjoyed Pandit's humorous comments, and the younger man set himself to entertain us like a small boy. But nothing he did concealed from us the fact that he was secretly brooding over the unfair treatment he had received at the hands of Government.

It had happened this way : He was one of the promoters of the Female High School in Poona and was

<sup>2</sup> Ruler of a native state.



present at the opening function in his capacity as Committee member. It was an imposing occasion, graced by no less a personage than the Gaikwar of Baroda<sup>3</sup> and Mr. Lee Warner.<sup>4</sup> After the program was started, they learned that His Highness<sup>3</sup> had another appointment and must leave before the last number, which was "God Save the King." So, in order to shorten the program to meet the emergency, Pandit cancelled that last number. Mr. Warner was incensed, first, by the fact that His Highness had to leave, and, later, by the curtailing of the program, and proceeded to make a mountain out of a mole hill. His report to Government was so severe that within a few days Pandit was suspended.

It was a severe ordeal for him and his friends. He was a proud, high-spirited person, and this unjust insult almost killed him. He thought about it constantly, and lost all interest in his food until he looked very ill. This worried Himself, and he kept close tab on Pandit's food, urging him to eat more. The nonsense which went on at meal times was camouflage, — an effort to keep us from noticing how little he was eating. Himself tried to keep him occupied by assigning work to be done, and whenever he could, he dropped into Pandit's room to see whether or not he was brooding and to carry to him some amusing incident of the day's work.

At meal time, the younger man usually sat playing with his food and pretending to eat. I remember that

<sup>3</sup> The title of the ruler of Baroda State.

<sup>4</sup> A Government representative.

one day, when Himself urged his friend to take some milk at least, Pandit heaved a sigh, and said,

“You’ve spoiled it all ! Here I’ve sat all this time just trying to save *Wahinibai*’s <sup>o</sup> face by keeping silent. But since you must know, I can’t eat because nothing is fit to eat !”

I retorted, “Will it be a waste of time for you to tell me what is wrong ? I dare you to ! Why haven’t you eaten ?”

He didn’t hesitate a second. “All right,” he said. “I’m telling you because you ordered me to, and if anyone gets angry, I can’t be blamed ! The *Kosambiri* is sour ; the vegetables have no flavor ; the little cakes are better, but so soaked in grease that I dare not eat them. The curry has too little onion in it ; the bread is full of lumps ; the preserves are too thick and the mangoes too ripe ! So why should I eat ?”

Himself picked it up at this point, adding, “How did you happen to forget to mention that the salt has no savor and the peppers have no heat ? However, even you can’t blame the cook about the milk, so have some of that, at least.” And so he drank some milk. It was all good fun and we enjoyed having him, even while we worried about his condition.

The cleverest thing Himself devised to help his friend at this juncture was to arouse his pride in studying. They were having a discussion one day and Himself referred to the remarkable memory and devotion to science shown by a certain *Madhavrao Kunthe*, who had apparently taken up his studies at an ad-

<sup>o</sup> See note, p. 73.

vanced age. Himself described it at length and then asked,

“Don’t you think Kunthe’s character was remarkable?”

Pandit heatedly replied, “Why so remarkable? Any man can do anything he sets his mind to. If you should today decide to study some new subject, couldn’t you do it?”

“I have plenty to do at present,” was the answer, “so leave me out of it. But wouldn’t you like to study French? If so, there is a teacher ready to hand. To be sure, it is a lady, and you would have to go daily to her bungalow. She couldn’t come to yours. She lives on Kusumati Hill. There! How is that for a suggestion?”

Dinner was announced just then and the matter was dropped. But over the morning tea next day, Pandit said, “Is it true that there is a French teacher here?”

“Ah! So you thought I was just teasing you, did you? Well, I wasn’t, and I can prove it, for I have her address here on a card in my pocket.”

The result was that Pandit acquired a new interest and began to improve in spirits. He was fortunate enough, also, to meet Lord Dufferin, the Viceroy in Simla, and some of the misunderstanding about the Poona affair was cleared up, so that he felt much better about it all.

Altogether, there is no doubt that our four months at Simla were good for us all, and especially for Himself and Pandit.

Our next move was to be to Madras, and we planned

to go via Poona, taking a three weeks' holiday and doing some sight-seeing on the way. It was all very exciting and full of interest, but tiresome at times because of the heat and long hours. On the road from Simla to Haridwar we were delayed, and finally paused after dark to find a place to eat. The tongas halted near a house beside the road, while some of the attendants went to reconnoitre. By the light of candles we found some benches on the house verandah, where we three sat down to wait.

The attendants were so slow in returning that I had the baskets of food brought to the verandah, and started to get something to eat. The men were chatting idly and became involved in an argument about food arrangements while travelling. Before they knew it they were discussing the difficulties for those who travel abroad.

"There should be no difficulty," Himself maintained. "It is only a problem to those who believe that a touch can pollute. All of us broadminded ones need only to arrange beforehand to have milk and rice. All this idea of variety is nonsense. Even if milk can't be had, one can live on rice."

Just at this point the servants carried the light on the verandah to see to having it swept clean for our eating, and suddenly Pandit burst out laughing as his glance fell on a particular article of furniture.

"Look! This isn't a verandah! It's a meat market!"

"How do you know?" Himself was startled into asking.

“Just see here! This block proclaims its business aloud!” and Pandit pointed at a butcher’s block. He shouted with laughter as Himself hurriedly left the place, calling out, “Don’t take out any of the food in such a place!”

We finally sat down to eat, but Pandit couldn’t lose the chance to tease and kept chuckling as we ate, and remarked, “Just hearing the words, ‘meat market’ was like a bolt of lightning in its effect! Why did you rise and depart so hurriedly?”

The heat of the plains during June and July is at its worst, and after the coolness of Simla it dampened our enthusiasm for sight-seeing. Haridwar furnished only flimsy sheds for pilgrims, and we didn’t stay as long as we had expected. The heat and the problem of food occupied Pandit and me, but Himself soon was lost in meditation, as he sat where he could dip his hands in the water of the Ganges. Joy and rapture played over his expressive face, and I gazed in worship, marvelling at his absorption.

The irrepressible Pandit, however, couldn’t refrain from teasing even in such a sacred spot. Himself turned and told me to prepare the food for the others, who were impatient and couldn’t wait. He added, “As for me, I’m not hungry.”

Pandit picked that sentence up and went on, “*Wahinibai*, why should he be hungry? Have you observed that since arriving here, his soul has become one with the Ganges? I expect he will be staying on here at Haridwar. Perhaps the fact that he has the god’s

name has produced this complete absorption in the actual presence of Mahadeva !”<sup>6</sup>

“That is where you are mistaken and the joke is on you !” Himself broke in. “My name is not Mahadeva but Madhava,<sup>7</sup> an entirely different word, you see !”

“Never mind,” Pandit persisted, “he may become so absorbed in meditation that you can’t get him away. And then what will happen to you, Wahinibai ?”

Realizing that he was half serious, I said, “It wouldn’t be so hard for me as for you, after all. Wherever he stays I shall be near by, never fear. But if we stay here your work will be heavy. You will have to go to Poona to see about all the books and papers to be forwarded, to settle and report private quarrels and give advice here and there. The Poona friends will be distracted like men who try to break off the opium habit, and you will have the task of quieting them.”

“Well, we needn’t worry yet. He loves Poona altogether too much to be contented anywhere else for long, name or no name. He may stay awhile wrapped in meditation ; but some of his thoughts will be about Poona, so firmly does that city hold his affection.”

Himself had been listening to all this silently. Finally he laughingly broke in, “Much of what you say is nonsense, of course, but there is some truth in it, nevertheless.”

We went sight-seeing in the late afternoon, visiting

<sup>6</sup> ‘The great deity,’ a name of Shiva.

<sup>7</sup> A name of Vishnu.

the Golden Temple and the source of the Ganges. Several priests and other important people came to see us, and that night we took the train for Lahore.

Wherever we went, the people urged Himself to lecture and were most cordial and friendly. The women took me to see the sights of the city and entertained me in their homes, while the men provided *pansupari* parties for Himself. It was interesting to see them actually making silver dishes with pictures in gold inlay, many kinds of silken embroidery and toys, for which Lahore is famous.

Amritsar was our next stop, and the heat there was intolerable. The porters on the train and on the road were carrying heavy loads, but they kept a fan going in one hand. Our friends had arranged for us at a caravansary, where we found couches and chairs ready, fruit and milk set out and even three or four coolies standing ready with fans. They had hung a curtain to make a sort of room for me, and one of our friends sent her own maid to fan me. I didn't like having a strange woman watch me, and so I dismissed her with a gift of four *annas*.<sup>8</sup>

I felt better after she had gone. I had all the luggage to arrange and had to get out the supplies for cooking, since the woman's chief duty is to attend to the food. How can a Hindu woman enjoy sitting and being fanned, leaving her work before the food is ready for her menfolk! So while the men, refreshed by a glass of milk and some fruit, rested on their couches, with books and a coolie to fan them, I went down and

<sup>8</sup> About eight cents.

gave out the things to be cooked and stayed there until it was prepared. But I had to bathe in cold water four times while I waited !

The lodging house where we were stopping was quite a huge place. Just inside the entrance there was a tank some fifteen or twenty feet long. On three sides of the tank were long, shed-like buildings, two stories high, where travellers could make any arrangements they liked. On each side of the entrance, which was like a city gateway, were shops displaying great jars of curds, betel nut leaves, flowers, fans, sherbet and fruit. Each person who entered might buy a silver coin's worth of curds and, going to the tank, rub the curds on his body and then bathe. A steady stream of bathers kept the place busy from morning till night.

In one corner of the tank there had been built a high, lime-washed wall with just one small, crooked gate in it. This was the women's bathing pool. The women, like the men, brought curds they had bought. They were strictly veiled, and came to the bathing house swathed in their *bourkas* which covered them from head to foot. Inside the bath house, however, they disrobed entirely. I took one bath in their bath house. They didn't like it because I took my bath with my *lugade*<sup>9</sup> draped around me. Some of them laughed ; but when they saw that I paid no attention, one or two of the older women said, "You aren't under the impression, are you, that you can get clean when you bathe with your clothes on ? None of us here are

<sup>9</sup> Indian woman's dress.



men, are we? Why should women feel shame before women? Is it the custom in your land to do it so?"

I answered, "Yes, we have no such custom as yours for bathing," and I went away. All the women who bathed there were used to it and so thought nothing of it, but I had never before seen that way of bathing and I was embarrassed.

After dinner was over, some Sikh <sup>10</sup> friends came to see me, and I went with them to see the so-called Golden Temple of Amritsar. There really was nothing special to see except that the interior of the temple was decorated with vines and creepers made of golden ink. A great crowd of old women and men had gathered to hear readings. It differed from other temples in that there were no gods or stones or idols or pictures. But in the central court was one lovely square pillar on which, well covered, was placed their sacred book, 'Grunth Saheb.' "That is our god and that our sacred book," so the women told me.

At their insistence, I went with them for a brief time to their homes. According to their custom, they brought me a Hookah pipe, sherbet, pansupari and other special refreshments for guests. With us in South India, women aren't in the habit of having even betel nut every day, and we know nothing about these other things! Even among our men, the Hookah is scarcely known, — in fact, one might say that it is unknown. And so I refused what they offered. They then followed their custom of having the leading lady among them prepare a betel nut roll and present to me,

<sup>10</sup> A Hindu religious sect.

which I accepted and, after comparing their customs and ours in friendly conversation, I returned to my lodgings. That night we left Amritsar, and the next day we arrived at Delhi.

Here, also, we went to a huge lodging house. There we found on the ground floor a tremendous crowd of Bengali pilgrims, totalling more women than men. There were all sorts of women and girls, fat and thin, young and old, and some children. The astonishing thing was that they were all dressed exactly alike, wearing *dhotars* some five yards long. They wore no blouses, had no *kunku* marks on their foreheads, and not one of them had hair! Each had an end of her garment over her head so that she appeared like our best caste women. All these signs indicated that they were widows, so far as I could see, and I felt sorry for them and watched them closely until I decided that I must be mistaken, for they were laughing and jolly, teasing each other and jesting. Surely they did not all belong to that wretched class of women! Yet otherwise, why didn't their clothing, all exactly alike, indicate the blessed state of wifhood! I had the impulse to ask them frankly, but there was the language difficulty. I didn't know a word of Bengali and they knew no English nor Marathi. Besides, there was no time to sit down and talk quietly, because we had to see the famous buildings and places and minarets in Delhi before leaving for Agra.

In Agra, we went to see the chief building, The Taj Mahal. Surrounded by a curve of the very black Jumna River, we saw this lovely marble tomb. Its

every column has tracery of vines, trees, flowers and birds, set with every conceivable color of stone in the loveliest way. One cannot but be amazed at the wealth of the one who built such a building and still more astonished at the skill of the architect.

We saw some other places in Agra and then went to Muttra. The next day we went by boat to see Gokul, Krishna's village, and the Tulsā tree. There was nothing to see at the village of Gokul, but at the Tulsā tree they had built a large and very lovely temple. The temple court was very large, and as it was the time of the festival of *Gokulashtmi*, there were some hundred or two Gujerati and Bengali Brahmans, each reading his own collection of the *Shrimata Bhagavata*. The whole expense of the week, including the food and drink of the Brahmans, fell on the pilgrims, and consequently, all the important visitors were approached by the pilgrims for some little help.

Leaving Muttra, we travelled to Ajmir, and while there I went with Janikibai and a priest to *Pushkara*, a holy place famous in the *Puranas*. The lotus grows luxuriantly there, and the people use its large leaves for serving dinner as we use plantain tree leaves. Alighting from our *tonga*, we found a dense crowd of pilgrims there for bathing. Among them were the Bengali women we had seen at Delhi. I knew them by sight, of course, and, because I was curious to know more about them, I went into the water to bathe right next to one of the older women. As we bathed, I asked her in Hindustani, "Please tell me about these women, — how many are unmarried, how many married, how

many widowed? Why have you all dressed exactly alike? Don't you have the custom of wearing *choli*,<sup>11</sup> bracelets, *kunku* marks, and such things? Don't be angry, please, but tell me by what marks you distinguish unmarried, married and widowed women! I come from a different part of the country and am asking for information."

The woman was old and very understanding. She listened to me and then gave me the following information: "The iron bracelet is our badge of marriage. A child under ten who wears a bordered *dhotar* and has *kunku* at the parting of her hair but has no iron bracelet on her arm, is unmarried; one who wears a bordered *dhotar* and has an iron bracelet, is married. Widows wear *dhotars* without borders, no *kunku* and no iron bracelet. We are not accustomed to wearing *cholis*, glass bracelets or necklaces."

Again I asked, "But why do none of you have any hair?"

She replied, "If any pilgrim goes to a holy place and returns without shaving, we all dishonor him." She explained things and then turned the tables by asking me about our customs, and she said, "Do you really enjoy rudely appearing before men with no head covering? Is it your custom to expose the upper part of the head? Do you not use any veil?" In this way she kept asking me questions until, finishing my bath, I donned dry garments and went to the temple of Brahmadeva.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> A blouse.

<sup>12</sup> The god Brahma, the first of the Hindu Triad.

I had heard that there was in no other place in all India such a temple as this one of Brahmadeva, nor such worship as in this sacred place. There is also a very large temple to Savitri,<sup>13</sup> but I did not go to see it because I felt that I must hurry back to Himself.

From Ajmir, we went to Sidhapur. A temple for Shrikapilamahamuni is there on the banks of the Sarasvati River. It was at this spot that Kapilamahamuni took advice from Brahma and saved his mother Devahuti. We visited other famous spots which we Hindu folk reverence highly. Our friends at Bhavnagar had urgently invited us to visit them, but on account of Himself's illness, we had to cancel that plan and go direct to Poona. On our arrival we were met with the sad news of the death of my father. Coupled with Himself's increased illness, I spent fifteen sad and anxious days. Gradually my grief subsided, and after another two weeks Himself was so much better that we were able to travel by train to Madras.

<sup>13</sup> The wife of Brahma.

## CHAPTER XVI

A stranger in a strange land ! This was the feeling that kept me unhappy that year in Madras and Calcutta. Himself had his routine work with interesting people and thoroughly enjoyed the novelty of new places ; but I was still very sad over the death of my father, and found it difficult to occupy myself happily in anything.

We only stayed a few weeks in Madras, and then had ten happy days in Poona before starting off for Calcutta. It was the first opportunity we had had to see Benares, and we cut short our stops at other interesting places in order to have more time there. Himself had decided against offering a sacrifice at Benares on this journey, but we were eager to worship Parvati<sup>1</sup> and Shiva here in this sacred place.

Early in the morning we rose and bathed in the Ganges, and spent many hours engrossed in worship and meditation. In the afternoon we hired a boat and had a long ride, looking at the temples and burning ghats which line the river for miles. None of us will ever forget the beauty of the stars that night, nor the loveliness of the surrounding scenery, nor the inspiration that flooded our hearts as we worshipped with faith in this holy spot.

A bungalow had been engaged for us in Calcutta, but I was distressed when I saw it. A more desolate, discouraging place I have rarely seen. Almost imme-

<sup>1</sup> The name of the wife of Shiva.

diately after our arrival, Himself left for his committee work and I puttered about all day, getting more and more disconsolate with every hour, so that when he returned and asked,

“Well! What have you done today?” I burst forth, “This is a strange place and I know no one. This bungalow which you have rented is disgraceful. There isn’t a sign of a garden, and the house is a habitation for jackals! There is scarcely a utensil in it that is fit to use. The whole place is more like one that has been loaned free of charge than a rented one!”

He listened to this outburst quietly and then said, “You surprise me. I thought you knew better how to control your mind than this indicates! Why didn’t you go for a ride? Or, better still, why didn’t you get busy and make a garden? Or find some books to while away the hours? Or meditate on the beauties which God provides for all of us, and on His kindness to us? We have our minds to keep content and many ways of doing it. I realize that you are still grieving for your father, however, and I understand. My suggestion is that tomorrow you should get busy and make a garden.”

“It takes more to make a garden than just to decide on one,” I said.

“Yes, it does,” he replied, “so send for some men and put your mind into it. It will occupy you and interest you. Soon, we will have a garden to enjoy.”

Just a few days later, really, it seemed as though a miracle had been wrought. We had green things al-

ready showing in the plots we had made, and we arranged our chairs out near them as in a real garden. While we were sitting there, a man came in to sell us a Bengali newspaper. I signed to him that we had no need of one; but he waited for Himself to speak. Finally he did, and what he said surprised me.

"You may leave the one you have, but don't bring any more till Monday. After that, bring it each day."

After the man went, Himself said, "We should be ashamed to stay so long in a different language area and not learn to read and speak it. I want you to spend some time learning Bengali."

I knew that he himself knew only a few characters, and so to protect myself, I said,

"No one but yourself shall teach me! I couldn't endure a strange teacher over here, and so I won't have to learn for you don't know it yourself."

He made no reply but left me to feel chagrined and uncomfortable, thinking that he was angry at my impertinence. The next day, he was late in returning from his walk, and when he did arrive he was accompanied by a coolie carrying a heavy basket of books. They were Bengali-English books! I helped Himself change his clothes and was starting to get some milk for him, when he told me to count the books and then pay the coolie the amount of the bill.

My mind was in a ferment! I had never before known Himself to go to the bazaar and buy anything at all. He always sent for things he wanted and never carried any money with him. This afternoon as we sat down for tea, he told a servant to hurry into the



bazaar and bring him a slate and pencil. It was all very puzzling. All his leisure time was spent with the books and slate.

During the drive that evening, we chatted about many things, but neither of us mentioned the books, except that he once casually remarked that he had done none of his regular work that day because he was so engrossed with Bengali.

By that time I was consumed with remorse. I had only said what I did because I thought it would remove the necessity for my studying Bengali. It was true that all my studying had been under his direction, practically, and that I had had no experience with other men teachers. But now my thoughtlessness had compelled him to set himself the difficult task of mastering another language, along with all the rest he had to do. With real contrition, I tried that night to explain all this to him, and he was very pleasant and understanding, of course.

Nevertheless, before he left for the office next day, he set me a lesson on the slate and told me to have it ready when he returned. I quickly became interested, just as he was, and we both worked steadily. One evening, while he was being shaved, he read aloud to the barber, asking him to pronounce some words and explain the meaning of others. I overheard voices and, thinking someone had come to call, I looked in and saw the strange scene. I ran away to laugh over it heartily.

Later, after the man left, I entered the room and said, "What a splendid Master you found! If anyone

asks me to make a list of our gurus, as Shridatu did, I shall have to top the list with this barber ! Usually, the disciple serves the guru ! But this poor fellow has to serve and teach at the same time !”

We had a good laugh over it all. Nevertheless, it was surprising that a man as old as Himself, carrying such heavy responsibilities as he was, should bother to learn Bengali in order to teach me, and so I worked hard. The result was that within six weeks I could read any newspaper. Incidentally, it had taken my mind off of my loneliness. And our garden had grown so lovely that we hated to leave the place when our term there was ended. We even carried home some Bengali books to read later.

## CHAPTER XVII

Travelling is nice, but it is even nicer to return to one's own familiar place. Himself had been made a permanent Judge by this time, and his jurisdiction was extended over so many districts that we spent eight months of each year on tour. Sakhu<sup>1</sup> was just a baby and I had her with me, so that my time was well filled with her care and with my reading. I made it an invariable rule to prepare my English lesson so that Himself could listen to it when he returned from his morning walk. If I failed to be ready, it meant that there would be no lesson until the next day!

One of the most terrible experiences of my life happened the year we were touring at Karmala. It was the year for the Census, and Himself was hurrying through his work so as to have two days leave in Poona before beginning the work in Sholapur. Practically everything was ready for the move and we were expecting to leave early the next morning for Poona.

He was late that day in returning to me where I waited with notebook and pencil ready for him, and I greeted him with the remark,

"Did you take a longer walk than usual? There can't be much work to do in this district for it is harvest time, and the officer must needs close his office by 2 P.M. Otherwise, he couldn't accept all the invitations which come to him to eat parched corn in

<sup>1</sup> A baby belonging in the joint family — perhaps Aba's child.

the fields ! Therefore, there won't be many books to inspect !”

He laughed, as he said, “Don't waste time talking, for it's late enough already. Start your reading. But first, go out and bring me some ginger sugar. Why do you women have to bother your heads about a man's business !”

I was in a frivolous mood and answered, “Why do we bother, indeed ! What is there in it for us ! I'll tell you, it's just that we women do as much work in the district as do the village officers, so there !”

Laughingly, he retorted, “Why have you got your knife into him so much today ? Each one does his work as he thinks best, and it seems important to him, at least.”

“I am the last to minimize its importance, but I really think Government would get better service if, instead of paying a stated salary to these village men, they would put it on a commission basis and pay according to the quality of the work done ! But here I stay chattering instead of getting you the ginger !”

The reading began as soon as I gave him what he wanted. We were reading in *Tara*<sup>2</sup> by Meadows Taylor, and had reached the part where Tara's widowhood had brought great distress to her parents. It was very touching and I was soon reduced to tears. We stopped reading and had a talk about the sad and pathetic conditions of widows generally. We concluded that some of our customs are pitiless and deadly, their results, increasing from their inception, being

<sup>2</sup> An historical novel.

very detrimental to our society. We thought we saw signs that the need for changing some of these was being felt more strongly in our community, and we were happy about it.

Himself interrupted our solemn conversation to say, "As I was returning to the camp I felt unwell, and have been having pains in my stomach."

This startled me. "Didn't you sleep well last night? I slept so soundly that I didn't know a thing that happened all night!"

"Why should you?" he answered. "Sakhu slept and you didn't need to attend to her, and you needed the rest. There is an epidemic around here, but we use only boiled water and there is no need for anxiety. Yet it's a fact that I don't feel well now."

I hurried out to mix some medicine and returned to help him get to bed. He seemed sicker each time I came in, and I sent for the doctor. We filled bottles with hot water and tried to get him warm, and the doctor did all he could. All the office staff gathered round and took camp matters out of my hands, so as to free me to stay beside the sick man, whose trouble steadily increased. I was terrified, and sent a telegram to Poona summoning our Dr. Vishramji and Wansa.

The doctor stayed all through the heat of the day and told me what to do while he was away. He said that he could not return that night, as he had to help the Mamlatdar with the Census. I sent a message to the Mamlatdar offering to send two of our writers if only he would allow the doctor to stay, and he graciously agreed.

By this time, Himself was in a pitiable state. He was wet with perspiration and his nails and palms were turning black. The doctor sat beside him, serving him with simple dignity, doing what he could. But Himself grew steadily worse, and his breathing was scarcely noticeable. All the symptoms of cholera were clear, and I was helpless before my fears.

“Where is the God to whom I have pinned my faith? Why does He not stay by me at this critical time? Does He not know that I need His help and mercy now?” Such were the thoughts whirling through my mind as I wept. Finally, in despair, I said,

“I am going out for a while,” and I went over to the little temple of Mahadeva near by. It was three o’clock in the morning. No one was there except one old guru, a woman — and I asked her to go outside. I wanted to extinguish the tiny lamp, but realized that even the thought of it was inauspicious, and sat in shame. As I wept, I prayed in a kind of exasperation, saying,

“We are poor creatures, lying overwhelmed at your door. Help us as you think best to do. You call yourself the Allmerciful, — then have pity on me! If you don’t, then I am sure that the well that is full of water will receive me to its bosom!” It was all incoherent and senseless. But presently, the storm of tears subsided and I dozed off from exhaustion.

It was then that I had a dream. I dreamed that I had gone to some high mountain where there was a temple. Beneath the temple flowed the Krishna River. On its banks here and there were sacred fig

trees to which strong bridges were fastened, and there were mountains near by. Near one of these high mountains I was standing on a bridge, both hands touching a fig tree, as I looked down at the fun. It chanced to be a day of some special festival, and so there were a thousand or more men and women bathing in the Krishna. I was standing with both hands clinging to the tall, wide-spreading fig tree, when it suddenly began to bend over and the rocks began to go to pieces. I was terrified at the sight, but clung to the tree as I shrieked to the Brahmans down below, "Oh look! This tree is falling down. Put your hands on it down there and hold it up. If it falls a thousand people will be killed."

As I shouted, I pulled on the tree with all my strength. I was drenched with perspiration, but my mouth was dry as I saw the thousand people, wet as they were, come running, and they pushed from below against the tree. Thus for a minute or two, and then, behold! The tree was not bending, but was standing firmly as before! As we realized that the tree was not going to fall, the people relaxed their hold and my happiness returned. Just as I released my hold on the tree, our *shirastedar* came and called me.

Terrified, I rose and hurried to the bedside of the sick man, whispering, "What has happened? Why was I called?"

The doctor motioned me to lean down, for Himself seemed to want to say something. He whispered, "Help me to sit up. I feel nauseated."

We all helped him, and when he had vomited, we

laid him very gently down. His fever had left him, but he still was shaken with chills and his pulse was erratic. He himself was quite hopeless, and spoke pantingly of me as "alone; but don't be frightened, you have God!"

Pretending a courage I did not feel, I gave him some broth, and said,

"The doctor says you are better than last night, so don't give up hope. I have sent a wire and Dr. Vishramji and Wansa will soon be here."

A carriage had been sent to the station thirteen miles away, and as we waited I felt sure that it would not return in time. I was almost frantic and was on the point of shrieking aloud, when the doctor made a sign, and whispered,

"Don't make a sound. He is sleeping, and it will save him. See! His body is getting warm!"

It was true! He slept soundly for an hour and his heavy breathing comforted me greatly. About seven o'clock the carriage came and Vishramji entered. Utterly forgetting that he was neither a relative nor a guru, I approached and took the dust of his feet,<sup>3</sup> touching them with my forehead as I said,

"The doctor here has graciously cared for Himself until now, and hands him over to you. In you, I feel that God himself has come to me!"

The two doctors had a consultation, and later, when Himself opened his eyes and saw Wansa, he fainted.

<sup>3</sup> A mode of expressing humility, gratitude, or supplication. A Hindu woman would use it only in case of men in her immediate family.



Dr. Vishramji brought him to and then gave him some medicine to take. The patient lifted the glass to his lips but as soon as he smelled it, he hastily put it down. Then Dr. Vishramji said,

“Never mind! You can’t be particular out here where drugs are hard to come by. In Poona, I will get something else for you, but you will have to take brandy now to stimulate circulation.”

And so, repeating “Ram Ram,” he drank the medicine. From that time his improvement was steady, and that evening we placed him in a bullock cart, and we three walked by its side all the way to the Station, where we took the train for home. Our hearts were thankful and humble before the goodness of God to us.

## CHAPTER XVIII

St. Mary's Convent was having a school prize giving. The missionaries had invited some fifty or seventy-five important men of the city and some of us women also. Altogether, we had a company of perhaps one hundred. Some of the students read papers and some made speeches. At the conclusion of the program, the Zanana Mission Sisters served tea with their own dainty hands. Some of the guests, rather than be disrespectful to the ladies, accepted the cups as they presented them and then put them down somewhere, while others accepted the cups and drank the tea. There were only some ten or twelve of us women, and when they offered us tea, we all declined.

After the party we all went to our homes. Two or three days later, a certain Gopal Vinayak Joshi printed in his newspaper, over his signature, the whole tale of the convent affair and, as often in the papers, in addition to its inaccuracy, many vile insinuations were added. "How can our Poona Sanatana Society and Brahman assembly endure this business of having their Raosahebs<sup>1</sup> and Rao Bahadurs<sup>1</sup> not only accept tea actually prepared by Mahars<sup>2</sup> and received from the dainty hands of white women, but smack their lips and belch as they walk to their homes! These Raosahebs and Rao Bahadurs are great officials, so how can the mendicant priests challenge the action of those

<sup>1</sup> Honorary titles bestowed by Government.

<sup>2</sup> Outcastes.

from whom many times a year they receive sumptuous dinners and generous contributions! They must sit unprotesting! If some poor chap like Gopal Joshi returns from visiting America and England, they begin to persecute him. It's a sin even to sit with him at dinner. It's impossible! They are not willing to allow him to be purified by penance. If anyone gives him a drink of water even at long distance, or speaks to him, the mendicant priests pronounce it irreligious. But that same group of priests so fawn upon and flatter these reformers that they have become arrogant in these days." Much more of the same sort of thing was printed.

About that time, we had a dinner party at our house, and some forty or fifty guests were there. They were mostly Brahmans; in fact, there were only three non-Brahmans, but Gopalrao Joshi was among the guests. The next day, in his 'Poona News' he published the story of our dinner party, and gave a graphic picture of how people sat in rows, naming the ones in each row. Gopalrao was this sort of person: He was always busy about something, and if there were no legitimate business to attend to, he quickly looked about to find something else. He was very clever about it. There seemed no point to the kind of things he did, save that he felt a certain comfort and pleasure in doing them. Aside from that, he scarcely knew the difference between what was cultural and what was religious, because, though he was a caste Hindu, he had become a Mussulman.

Following his publication, there was a great commo-

tion among the Poona orthodox party and the gentlemen of the city. A famous citizen, Shri Balawant Ramchandra Natu, took the lead and sent a complaint to Shri Shankaracharya.<sup>3</sup> The 'Poona News' mentioned this briefly, and when the tea drinkers made no denial of the charge, the Society and influential members called a meeting and decided to outcaste them all. Expecting some sort of protest to be forthcoming from us, they waited two weeks ; then, because no attention was paid to them, they scattered hand bills, stating that "all the fifty-two people who drank tea at the Panch Haud Mission party ought to be outcasted." On the appointed day they actually took this action against some forty-two of those mentioned. The other ten had written secretly to the Society saying that though they had taken the cups in their hands, they had not drunk the tea, and expressed their penitence and were forgiven.

Some time later, Shri Shankaracharya, having considered the matter carefully, arranged with one of his leaders to come to Poona to judge of the situation. As soon as he arrived, he sent a notice to the accused asking us to let him know our position.

Accordingly, our group began to make an investigation of the case, and retained two lawyers for the affair. The accusers engaged for their side a famous but arrogant Poona lawyer. And so the case of the tea drinkers was begun ! Two factions, the innocent and the offending, were created in the city. Consequently, greater than between the factions was the commotion

<sup>3</sup> The High Priest of Hinduism.

among the women in my father's home and in my own home.

One day, Wansa said to her brother, "Why don't you write as those other ten did? You took the tea in your hand and then put it down. Just yesterday, Yamuna said she herself saw that you did not raise the tea to your lips. So why not tell the truth? Why be blamed and scorned by those who didn't do anything?"

He replied, "You are crazy! How could I do that? Although I am one of a group, yet I am only one, and if I didn't do the thing they all did, I as good as did it. I can't see that there is sin or merit in drinking or not drinking tea; but the affair in which my personal friends are involved cannot be solved by my deserting them, and I have no intention of doing so. What has happened, has happened, and why make such a to-do about it?"

Wansa's reply was, "It may not make any trouble for you, to be sure; but we women have difficulty every hour of the day. For instance, tomorrow is *Shrad-dhapaksha* <sup>4</sup> and we shan't be able to get any Brahmins to come. What shall we do about that?"

Her brother answered by saying, "Don't worry about that. No man is going to embark on a course of action without considering it on all sides. By and large, your trouble is that you can't get priests to come for food, isn't it? Don't worry. We can arrange for as many to feed as you care to plan for. So what is there to

<sup>4</sup> A funeral ceremony.

complain of? The only trouble will be the great expense, but that can't be avoided."

Wansa listened in silence, leaving her brother perplexed over the immediate situation. He could not himself be happy if any of the family, even among the older women, were distressed about anything. When the members of the family were unhappy, it indicated that the head of the house had somehow failed, he felt, and he was in the habit of taking the reproach on himself.

At that time, our house had four permanent Brahman members to regulate our religious ceremonies and read the Puranas. In addition, we had two Brahmans well versed in the Vedas who came regularly and to whom we paid annually the sum of 100 Rupees. The purpose of this was that no one, not only in our immediate family but also in the circle of our friends, need ever have any difficulty about the services of the professional priests, even though involved in a village disagreement. These priests were at liberty to go to anyone's home to celebrate purification ceremonies, and to perform any regular or unusual thread ceremony that was needed. No one was to be left uncared for in these matters.

In this way, for two years, this group of religious mendicants supported in our house had been of great service. And because we were thus provided for, even in this emergency, the older women of the household had no real cause for complaint.

Later on, some of the outcasted men made this

public statement : "This dissension has not been especially troublesome to us, but it has caused real unhappiness to our women folk. During the first year and a half they had enough courage to carry on without complaint, but recently they have shown their distress. They maintain that the ones who drank the tea are going free, while their children suffer for it. Whenever there is a festival they are unhappy and cannot keep from crying. For two years, our daughters who are married and away in their villages have not once returned to their mothers' homes. They send messages which cause our women to feel very badly when they receive them. Now that this state of affairs has come to our attention, we feel that something should be done, but cannot decide what it shall be."

Such stories kept in circulation, and Himself was perforce thinking about them. It happened in the month of April-May, 1892, that a friend of ours from a different village came to our house in Poona for his May holiday. Since he had with him his wife, an uncle, an aunt, four or five brothers with their wives, sisters and all their children as well as his own, it made quite a retinue. This gentleman had been one of the tea drinkers, and he had not received purification.

It chanced that during April-May there were to be one or two weddings in his family. His father, who was the head of the house and directed the family affairs, was a kindly person who, though his eldest son and his youngest brother violently disagreed, managed usually to keep peace between them. At this particular time, the father found it utterly impossible to go

and stay in his beloved son's home until the son had repented and received purification. He made various suggestions to his son, urging him, in view of the household matters that needed to be done, not to await Shankaracharya's decision, but to go and perform the expiatory penance required. But the son and his wife, the eldest daughter-in-law, could not agree. They said, "The thing we have done is not a sinful one, as we see it, and it isn't honest for us to perform expiation ceremonies merely for the sake of restoring happiness to the family or of bringing in enjoyment for the four days of the wedding." Reaching this decision, the man and his wife came to consult Himself about the matter.

Himself made this suggestion : "There is one way out of this difficulty for you two. It is this — Bring your family and join us in Lonavla for the whole vacation. Since you can't go to your father's home, we welcome you to ours."

Acting on this advice, the man informed his family, and then with his wife and children went with us to stay at Lonavla. Even though it was due to their trouble, nevertheless, their coming meant only happiness to me. For this man's wife and I were old friends and, although we usually met two or three times a year, I was very eager that we should have a really good visit together, staying at the same place for some time. Eventually this plan worked out, and we lived together in one house for a month or six weeks.

However, this visit of theirs grieved his old father deeply. Was it not the custom for the oldest son and



his family to spend the holidays at home? He couldn't happily endure the thought that his son and his wife and the three grandchildren should go anywhere else. Every few days a letter would come from him, saying, "Have your purification ceremony and come home to make happy my last days."

Although his son was broad-minded and convinced that his position was sound, yet he had a kindly and loving disposition and these letters upset him badly. After ten or fifteen days, looking pale and wan, he showed his father's letters to Himself, who was distressed by his appearance. After considering the situation for a time, he said, "If I were in your situation, I would make my father happy at whatever cost to myself in disgrace and misunderstanding."

He answered, "Well, there are many of us who are involved in this same difficulty, and it will be much easier for me if we all agree to accept purification together."

Not long after this, some ten or fifteen of these men who were in disgrace came from Poona. They discussed pro and con the question of accepting purification, and finally Nagarkar, in behalf of them all, reported, "Our decision is that we all should be purified to escape from our difficult situation."

Himself listened and then said, "All right. If that is your decision, I, too, will abide by it. I will raise no objection. When you go to Poona, decide on a definite date and let me know. I will come to Poona for the day."

The visiting group were satisfied with this and re-

turned to Poona. Some four or five days later, a letter came from Nagarkar saying, "On such and such a day our purification ceremony will be held, so please come on the early morning train." Accordingly, on the appointed day, Himself and his friend left for Poona on the train at five o'clock in the morning.

Himself's going caused me great distress. It wasn't as though I felt badly as one would when letting someone go to be punished deservedly for some crime he had committed. But the disgrace of it hurt so that I cried. It was still very early, and so, lying in bed, I gave way to my feelings for ten or fifteen minutes. When the first paroxysm of tears had subsided, I tried to think the matter through. But however I tried, I could find no comfort. It was all right for those who were in the difficulty to accept purification, if they wished, but why did they have to drag us into it? Why did they refuse purification without us? And why did his friends take advantage in this way of Himself's kindly disposition to please everyone? On the other hand, why did he have to listen to them in this matter? From the first, he had been in the habit of being ready to do whatever they wished for the sake of this group and to let people call him names. All sorts of such disturbing and troublesome thoughts were churning around in my mind all day, and consequently it was a sad and dreary day for me. My mind was so disturbed that I could not settle down to any work nor to any conversation.

When Himself returned on the evening train, I did not go to meet him, for I felt sure that he would be

feeling terribly about the day's episode, and seeing me would only make him feel worse, and I simply couldn't face him. Anything seemed better than going into his presence. Thinking such thoughts, I stayed inside as though very much occupied with some work. Yet two or three times I poked out my head and listened to what was going on outside until I realized that Himself looked at peace, just as usual, opening his mail and reading the paper and carrying on, one by one, his daily occupations quietly. There was no indication that his mind was disturbed or troubled in any way. I was thoroughly amazed to see this.

Supper time came, and all the family gathered for it. All through supper, just as usual, he talked and laughed contentedly. For an hour afterward he sat there talking and asking questions before he went upstairs to bed.

As I thought about the whole affair, I became more and more amazed. How could it be like this? Could it be true that the morning's experience had not troubled him? It must be; otherwise, how could he with apparent ease keep it all covered up and not let it appear on the outside, but keep his manner quiet and controlled and not even let it upset his usual routine? It was a great riddle to me!

After his return, my plan to ask him certain things and to talk everything out with him, gradually weakened. All I said was, "Was everything well in Poona?" nothing more than that. I wanted to talk, but the words simply would not come. He didn't tell me to, but, as usual, I summoned the servant to rub oil on

his feet, and, choosing a Marathi book, I sat reading. Even then, he didn't say 'Yes' or 'No.' He listened attentively and quietly until he became sleepy. When I saw that he was drowsy from listening, I closed the book and moved the light far away and, dismissing the servant with "Enough. Go now!" I lay down on the bed and, after a long time, fell asleep. We wakened, as usual, next morning, but we didn't mention the affair to each other. As always, he repeated poetry and began to sing a *bhajan*, and at its conclusion he got up and followed his routine.

My mind was finally made up that I would, on my own initiative, inquire about the affair of yesterday, but this thought whirling through my mind got no further. Later, about eight or nine o'clock, two or three friends who, like us, had come to Lonavla to spend the holidays, came to call, and they became greatly excited about the affair of the day before. But even then Himself's expression did not change. Instead, he spoke quietly and tried to explain matters; but they were too incensed to agree. On the third day, a letter appeared in "The Times" over the signatures of two of our friends, blaming us severely for our share in the purification ceremony. Himself read it from beginning to end, but he didn't appear grieved and didn't utter a syllable.

Two days passed. As I watched his calm manner, I marvelled more and more. But gradually my own distress and anger disappeared and I, too, became cool and collected. Then one day, I said, "Why did you accept purification? See all the trouble that has re-

sulted on all sides. When one's mind is prepared one does not feel too badly however many names one's opponents call one ; but day before yesterday, in the morning, as I listened to the excited comments of our old and so-called friends, I felt terribly. From their commotion and the sound of their talking, I felt as though, jealous of another's prestige, they had been eagerly alert inside as they waited for just such an opportunity as this."

To this he replied, "Why do you so misunderstand ? Each one must be himself. If someone has said that what we did was for our own sakes, isn't it partly true ? If one knows the truth in one's heart, that is enough. What if one does suffer at the hands of people for the sake of those whom he calls his own friends and to whom he should be loyal ? Is there anything hard about that ?"

I answered, "One knows what is one's own true reason ; but how make the others understand ? Without an excuse, misunderstanding stays smeared in the minds of people, doesn't it ? Yesterday morning, they were talking so angrily and hatefully that it sounded as though we had done this thing for our own selfish ends ! Why do you count as your friends those who, even after years of intimacy, do not yet understand your real nature ! Friendship demands that each must know the worth and value of the other. Until that state is reached, it remains merely a word."

His answer was, "That is just their nature. What matters it if they did say something ? They thought they were right. When a person has once acquired

an attitude of pride, he speaks always from that point of view ; that is human nature. At such times, he has no thought of another point of view. If these people ever do any serious thinking, quietly, they will never again hurt anyone as severely as they have us, today. You call them names ; but, up to yesterday, weren't you equally unyielding in your opinions ? Didn't you, more than they, need help to understand the matter ? It wasn't a sacred thread or wedding ceremony for our boys and girls that was being delayed, and nothing connected with our family was being hindered for lack of Brahmans. Has anything in your house been upset because of the quarrel ? No ; everything that should be done has proceeded in orderly fashion as previously. Since this is so, you feel that I am at fault for accepting purification. Weren't you equally prejudiced ? I am well aware of the fact that there are those who will think this for a long time and will say so frankly. You must hold to the conviction that I do what I have to do thoughtfully, and do nothing heedlessly or hurriedly. If I am not sure whether or not certain things should be done, I think them through carefully. Therefore, out of past experience in such matters, you should quiet your mind. What value is there in such useless worrying ?”

As I listened, I was oppressed with the knowledge that I had spoken out and blamed him without knowing all sides of the question and without giving it much thought. So again I felt terribly, and bitterly repented my hasty speech.

I have mentioned before that for the May holidays,

this friend and his wife and three children had come to stay with us in Lonavla. After the purification, when he arrived in Lonavla, Himself was sitting on the verandah in an arm chair reading the Bhavaji newspaper attentively. He noticed this gentleman approaching the steps and laughingly asked, "Well, how goes it?"

His reply came promptly, "I have proof that what you said is true. I have had an experience of the real happiness that comes from a true love of one's parents. As I arose from the purification ceremony, the Brahman told me to go to my father and perform a *namaskar*,<sup>5</sup> and so I went and bent down to do *namaskar* to Dada.<sup>6</sup> Then Dada took me close in his arms and kissed me, and with real emotion said, 'Today you have made me blessed among many men,' and as he spoke tears were in his eyes, and they came to my eyes, also, as I looked at him. Previously, I had never once seen Dada express his emotion by crying. Right up to the moment of taking the purification, I had felt that I should not do it; but after seeing what it meant to my father, I feel that it was right to do what I did."

<sup>5</sup> Profound obeisance.

<sup>6</sup> An affectionate name for 'father,' or 'brother.'

## CHAPTER XIX

I liked touring, but not when it brought illness, as it did in Sholapur in 1893. We stopped at several places on the way, and everywhere we went, people urged Himself to give lectures. He usually agreed, and in Sholapur city lectured on several successive days, and each lecture was followed by long discussions, until he was worn out.

On the night after the third lecture, he wakened from the first sleep with a severe stomachache. I filled the hot water bottle for him and rubbed him and gave what medicines I knew about, but it did not ease the pain. It continued to keep him in great distress until five o'clock in the morning, when I sent for Dr. Kirloskar. After he had done what was required, the pain eased up somewhat, but didn't entirely stop, and his body and spirit seemed utterly exhausted by the unendurable pain during the night from one till five o'clock.

His weariness ended in a great languor. It seemed to make him sleepy, and so I gave him a little something to eat with his medicine and sat down by his pillow, gently rubbing him. As the doctor left he said, "Let him get all the sleep he can, because he greatly needs rest. Keep everything as quiet as possible. I have given him a sleeping medicine, too; so don't be alarmed if he sleeps soundly. Just let him sleep." Consequently, the entire day was a quiet one.



Medicine had to be given every two or three hours.

The following night, also, he slept well. The low fever that he had had all day left him in the middle of the night, so that at daybreak he felt quite himself, though he hadn't the strength to get up and go outside. He cleaned his face and mouth out behind a curtain near by, and then returned and sat on the bed. I gave him a little sago and his medicine, and then he spoke to a servant standing near, saying, "Call the *shirastedar* and ask for yesterday's papers to sign."

Accordingly, the *shirastedar* and the other clerks came in with papers. He signed each one in his usual careful way, and then, opening 'The Times,' he read the telegrams. Although he had felt pretty well early in the morning, yet he was not equal all at once to undertake the usual routine of work from five o'clock until nine. His back began to ache. He began having cramps in his legs and to have chills, so that he was compelled to wrap up and lie down again. The chills continued for two hours and ended in a high fever of  $105.6^{\circ}$ , which continued unbroken up to seven o'clock in the evening.

Meantime, about two o'clock an official letter arrived from the governor of Bombay announcing Himself's appointment to a seat as a judge of the High Court of Bombay. The *shirastedar* opened this and read it to me, and two or three times he came and looked in to inquire if he might tell Himself the news; but I signed to him not to do so. I was fearful lest, in such a high temperature, even joyful news might possibly have an ill effect. Consequently, I told them

to keep the official notice as it was. That night, about eleven o'clock, the fever broke and he slept well.

The next morning, he felt so well that I told the *shirastedar* to bring the message to him. At first sight it did not appear to mean anything very special to him. He merely looked at the *shirastedar* quietly and said, "It looks as though we should have to wind things up here quickly and go to Poona."

The *shirastedar* went out, but still Himself did not mention the matter to me, which surprised me greatly, and I began to laugh over my anxiety of the previous day. How foolish I had been! After being with him years and years I could still be afraid of any test for his quiet disposition and all the good qualities of his character! I knew well that he had the capacity not to be overwhelmed when a mountain of trouble fell, or to be unduly excited over some great good fortune. Rather, in case of sorrow or joy, he examined it very much in detail and explained it to those who were concerned, but said nothing to others who were merely looking on. Knowing this habit of his, I cannot explain why at that time I had foolishly given way to my fears.

Two days later we were to leave Sholapur for Poona. But the next morning, a deputation of Sholapur friends came and said,

"Since the news of your appointment came to you in Sholapur, it is fitting that the first *pansupari* party to celebrate it should be held here. We can't possibly give you leave to go until we have had a *pansupari* for you."

Because of his illness, they gave this message to me, and said, "Find out for us what time he thinks will be convenient." I reported this to Himself, and he replied,

"I can't sit up, and I have no strength for talking, and so a *pansupari* is not to be thought of."

When they heard this message they became obstinate and said, "We won't make him talk. When we come to escort him to the station, at the time the train is about to start, we will at that moment present him a garland at least, and be content with that." And they did just that.

Still another group also came to the station. They brought baskets filled with garlands, betel nut and flowers. Himself knew nothing of it. He was resting quietly in a second class carriage. Two minutes before the train was to start, several of the leading citizens entered the compartment and placed the *pansupari* in front of him and put garlands on him. Then they remarked that they were leaving, since the train was about to start, and they proceeded to go out just as the whistle blew. The crowd on the platform threw flowers into the compartment and shouted three hurrahs for Himself as the train pulled out of the station.

For eight or ten days after reaching Poona, he was too weak to do anything other than stay in the house. He didn't attempt to go outside at all. Yet throngs of his friends were with him morning and evening, and they kept discussing quietly with each other so that Himself should not hear, plans for celebrating his ap-

pointment. These Poona people were so happy about it that each one seemed to think that he himself had received recognition and honor. It only proved how firm and united they were in their devotion to Himself.

When he began to feel better, one morning a deputation of friends came and said, "For the coming week, we want your permission to arrange for pansuparis and other things, and to feel that you will allow whatever we do. You will have nothing to do except to assent to what we do. This is our request."

Himself listened and then said, "Let me hear what you have planned for the next eight days, and then I'll see."

"But we have agreed among ourselves not to tell you or to ask you about it," they replied. "We have come to inform you that we are going to carry on without telling you beforehand."

"All right, don't tell me," he answered, "I'm not pleading for it. Only I am a bit fearful of you Poona friends, because whatever you undertake you carry to extremes and do not stay within reasonable bounds. This is true whether the thing is good or bad. If you say you are going to do a thing, you do it thoroughly. I don't relish this. Consequently, in this instance, I'm asking that whatever is to be done, you do it after careful thought and planning!" They listened and agreed and went away laughing.

And so next day, the pansuparis and banquets began. Of them all, the only one Himself entirely disapproved was the big affair at Hirabag gardens, where they incurred great expense and spent a great deal on fire-

works. Because he felt that they had been extravagant in this affair, and that as long as we stayed there they would keep adding one thing and another, he decided to start for Bombay as soon as possible. And we actually got away on the night train on Monday.

According to the program arranged by our friends, Wednesday had been agreed upon as the day for our departure. They had planned that day to spread a pathway of flowers to the station and on the platform, to assemble a great crowd of people of all castes from the city and camp, and to have a band so as to send us off with great pomp. These rumors had come to Himself's ears, and consequently he suddenly decided to leave without warning on Monday.

In the evening as he went out, he said to me, "Pack up whatever you can take in one or two bags and get ready to leave tonight on the eleven o'clock train. Don't make any commotion about it. When I return from the dinner at the club, we will go. Someone can bring the rest of our things tomorrow."

We made ready, accordingly, and that night at eleven o'clock went to the station. In spite of our secrecy, some thirty or forty people came to the station and hurriedly brought flowers and garlands as well as they were able. Our office force had come to help us away, although they had been greatly distressed by our sudden change of plan. This made it extra hard for us. The whole story of the things that happened at that time were written up in the newspaper.

It should perhaps here be mentioned that when we went to Bombay, Himself left a charity fund of 25,000

Rupees to help the organizations in Poona and other places where work was established, and he chose Raghopant Nagarkar and Abasaheb Sathe to manage the fund.



## CHAPTER XX

Arriving in Bombay, we spent an entire month in meeting old and new friends and in arranging the house we had rented. Years of touring and travelling made this Bombay home in which we settled down, a delightful experience. The Poona home still housed most of the family, but Wansa was with us in Bombay. Travelling with us, as she had, she had become milder, and as I grew older she and I had been drawn together by the anxiety we shared about Himself during his illnesses. My position in the home was well established by this time, and we all had very pleasant times together, talking over days long past and repeating stories that we all enjoyed hearing.

"Tell us about the night ride, Vithukaka,"<sup>1</sup> said Wansa, as we sat sewing one day. "I wonder if Wahini has ever heard it."

"No," I replied, "I don't believe I have. What ride was that?" So Vithukaka said,

"The night was very dark and the cart seemed to have the road to itself, as the bullocks jogged along at

\* <sup>1</sup> Kaka means 'uncle.'

their two mile an hour pace. Nothing could be seen of the occupants of the springless two-wheeled cart save the mounds of blankets in which they were wrapped. The young mother had her tiny new daughter close in her arms within the robe which covered them both completely. The small boy of two and one-half years lay close beside her, bundled in his own blanket. All were sound asleep. The sepoy,<sup>2</sup> who had come to escort them, walked beside the conveyance until a cold wind drove him to seek warmth and ease beside the driver, where he, too, was soon lulled to sleep by the swaying and bumping of the cart.

“Presently, the bullocks reached the head of a sudden, sharp decline in the road and lurched forward at a run. The lurching dislodged the bundle which was the small boy, and it fell from the cart to the roadside. There was some little excitement, but the commotion subsided quickly, and none of the older folk realized what had happened as the cart continued on its way minus one of its occupants.

“I had agreed to accompany the party on this trip to their new home, and I was following the cart on horseback. As I rode along, I was startled to hear my name called out in a childish voice which I recognized. Dismounting, I found the child unhurt and picked him up, carrying him in my arms until we overtook the bullock cart. Holding him close, I rode near the cart and called out, ‘Gopikabai! Are you awake? Are the children well wrapped up?’

“Sleepily she replied, ‘Yes, they are all right.’ But

<sup>2</sup> A police guard.



again I shouted, 'You are still asleep. Are both children with you? Look carefully.'

"Something in my tone startled her wide awake, and she began feeling about her in the cart. When she realized that there was no one there except herself and the baby, she was terrified and began to cry. Then I lifted the little lad, all bundled up as he was, and gave him to his mother with the comment, 'See what a blessing God has bestowed on us this day!'

"That little boy was Himself," and Vithukaka ended the story with real emotion.

"I recall the next morning," Taisasubai took up the thread of the story, "the bullock cart brought them to the door of the house in Kolhapur where Himself's father was established on the ground floor of a two-family house. Upstairs lived a family named Kirtane, with lots of children, while we had plenty of adults but only the two children. The two families shared so much of their common life that the children scarcely knew where one family ended and the other began. I remember how we had to have the menfolk settle our disputes about who should prepare feasts. The women of each family insisted on taking the responsibility, until finally it was agreed that each household should manage its own particular festivals; but that the two houses should take turns when the general religious festivals came around. The plan worked well, too."

Vithukaka asked her if she remembered the time when he had had to repeat part of his devotions for Himself. They both laughed as he told us about it.

“He had a habit, on returning from school each day,” he said, “of eating his bread and butter and playing a game with Durgi before taking his ceremonial bath. He would take the vessel and, pouring water over his head, begin to repeat the *Purushasukta*. If anyone spoke to him and made him pause, the whole thing was spoiled! Once I interrupted his daily prayer and asked some question about it. The lad answered me, and then stubbornly said, ‘I shall not begin again at the beginning. You say it up to the place I had reached, and then I’ll continue from there.’ He wouldn’t yield a bit, and sat on for a long time, refusing either to finish his prayer or to go away. Finally, I repeated half the selection, and then said, ‘Now you continue from that point, for that is where I stopped you.’ And so the boy finished the prayer and went away.”

Even Wansa remembered how anxious her mother used to be about Himself. “He always seemed so much slower than the Kirtane children,” she said. “He was keen to learn, and would make his letters in the dust of the court with his fingers; but he never was excited over school examinations as the others were. They would hurry home and shout, ‘we have passed! The examiner said we did well,’ and much more boasting chatter would follow. But Madhava never did. The others would tell us that he had passed, and Tai would say, ‘How now, Madhava? Why didn’t you tell us you had passed? Aren’t you happy about it? Look at Venayaka! How clever he is!’ Then Madhava would say as he quietly turned

away, 'What is there to tell? If we go to school regularly and study, we are bound to pass. What more is there to it than that?'

These conversations were entertaining and gave me a clear picture of Himself's boyhood. His mother had been quite concerned about him, for he seemed slow to develop and never showed the alert quickness that marked his sister and the other children. He was methodical and persistent, very honest and direct, but with no artifices to attract attention. He found his pleasure in his studies and never wasted his time. Altogether, he was so different from the rest that they thought him utterly crazy, and wondered whether he would always be a veritable blockhead, as compared with Wansa and the other children.

"His mother pleaded with him on festival days," Taisasubai said, "to let her dress him up with bracelets, anklets and a ring or two ; but as soon as she had done so, he would pull his *dhotar* down over the anklets, push the bracelets inside his shirt sleeves and close his hand over the ring, for he hadn't the slightest interest in such things. One day, I angrily remonstrated, and said, 'What's the matter with you, Madhava? Your mother gives you nice jewelry and you won't let her put it on nicely. You try to hide it. I'm ashamed of you!' What do you think that boy said? Actually he replied, 'Madhukari<sup>3</sup> come to our house every day, but they have no jewels!' What a strange thing that was for a boy to say!"

<sup>3</sup> Brahman students charitably helped to get their education by families who provided meals on successive days.

“Mother told me once,” said Tai, “that at the festival of Kojagari it was the custom for us and the Kirtanes to invite many Brahmans and other friends to our houses and to serve them with milk. That night all the school children were allowed to stay up until two o’clock, and all the children of our two families used to play draughts together. The year before our mother died, Madhava was in his tenth year. When Kojagari came that year, the Kirtanes for some reason or other had gone to Rajuri, and so there were no children left at home. Durgi was there, but she went to sleep before nine o’clock. Although there was no one with whom to play, Madhava came to me after the evening dinner and asked for the dice. ‘Durgi is asleep and there is no one to play with,’ I exclaimed. But he replied, ‘I’ll play with some one all right ; you just give them to me !’ So I gave him the dice.

“He went out on the verandah, and sitting in front of one of the pillars, he began to throw the dice. One hand played for himself, and the other for the pillar, and the pillar won the throw twice. I began to tease him, saying, ‘Well, well ! What a disgrace for a man ! Are you going to let a wooden pillar beat you ?’ His reply was very deliberate as he said, ‘What’s the harm in that ? What is right is right ! If the pillar has a good number at the dice, of course it is ahead. And if I don’t throw well, I’m not ahead. What is the disgrace in that ? He called the right hand the pillar’s hand, and because he was used to playing with his right hand, he threw the dice well with it ; but his

left hand was awkward and he played badly with that. Consequently, how could he have success for himself? Had it been any other lad, would he have allowed the pillar to win? No, indeed! But Madhava's disposition from earliest childhood had been direct and honest.

"Once Mother gave him a piece of sweets for himself, and in his other hand placed a smaller piece, saying, 'You eat this and give the other boy that!' Madhava put the smaller piece in his mouth and gave the larger piece to the servant's boy. When Mother saw the boy holding the large piece, she remonstrated with Madhava, saying, 'Why did you take the small piece and give away the larger one?' He replied, 'But you said to give it to him when you put it in my hand, and so I did!' Then she realized that she had made the mistake of speaking just as she put the second piece in his hand."

Taisasubai was one of the few who recalled Himself's school days. She would talk endlessly of Himself when he was growing up. His mother died when he was eleven years old, and that year he was sent, together with the Kirtane boys, to the English school at Kolhapur. Toward the end of that time his father married again, and not long afterward he arranged a marriage for his son with Sakhubai, the daughter of a man of good family living at Wai.

For two solid years, Himself had begged to be sent to Bombay to school; but it was not his father he troubled with his request. Although his father had never been severe or in any way harsh with him, yet

from childhood the lad had never approached him personally with questions or requests. Whenever it could be arranged so, he would send a message to his father ; but if he had to address him face to face, the boy would speak briefly and respectfully. Consequently, although completely obsessed by a wish to study in Bombay, he tried to get permission to do so by pestering Abasaheb Kirtane. Day after day, as soon as he arose in the morning, he used to take his stand by Abasaheb's door. The moment the latter appeared, Himself would plead,

“Abasaheb, when will you send us to Bombay? Please ask my father and then send us all to Bombay to study!”

At last the two fathers discussed the matter. In the end, shortly after Himself's marriage,<sup>4</sup> the decision was made to send the five boys to Bombay. From then on for ten years, Himself mounted from one honor to another. He always headed the list of all the students in every examination. He won a scholarship, then a Fellowship, and in addition to his studies carried on a good deal of activity. For a time during his later college years, he was English editor on a newspaper called the Induprakash and taught classes in High School. In 1862, when he received his Bachelor of Arts degree, he won special recognition by the brilliance of his work in History and Ethics.

It is not surprising that in 1864 he paid the penalty of so much study and overwork by the temporary loss

<sup>4</sup> His wife, of course, stayed with her parents and did not join him until some years later in Bombay.

of the use of his eyes. For six months he was obliged to keep his eyes bandaged with a green cloth, and was forbidden by his doctor to attempt opening them. Every morning some friend would come to read to him, and so wonderful was his memory that when he took his LL.B examination, he won honors and was again first in his class. More or less all his life, however, he had trouble with his eyes. In spite of this handicap, Himself passed his LL.B examinations brilliantly, and in 1866 secured an appointment at Poona in the department of education. Brief experiences as business agent at Akalkot<sup>5</sup> and as a judge in Kolhapur were followed by three years in Bombay as professor of English at Elphinstone College. Then in 1871, a term at the High Court and a brilliant record in the examination for advocate, marked the beginning of his distinguished legal career. He soon received permanent appointment as second class judge in a Civil Court, with a stipend of 800 Rupees a month.

One story often told in the family is very revealing of his fairness and the honesty of his professional attitude. Himself served as judge in Kolhapur, where his father, as head of a large family, was well known and influential. Although Himself had now come to Kolhapur in a position of importance, he maintained the respectful and modest attitude of his childhood toward his father. Mamanji had a real talent for establishing friendly contacts even with strangers, and naturally had a very large circle of friends. Yet he understood his son's professional habit of avoiding any

<sup>5</sup> A native state.

personal contacts that might sway him from being utterly fair and impartial. Mamanji, therefore, always flatly refused his friends when they asked him to use his influence with his son.

On one occasion only did he make the mistake of yielding to entreaty! A man who was the defendant in a case before the Court, was a member of an old, influential family and a great friend of Mamanji. One day this friend came to him and said,

“Won’t you please speak to Madhava for me? I realize that you dislike to do it and I regret asking you to do what seems difficult; but I ask merely that in his leisure time he will read my correspondence through just once and listen quietly to my account of the affair. I ask only that he hear it all once, and render judgment according to the truth as he sees it.”

So insistent was the man’s plea, that Mamanji finally agreed, and escorted his friend to the verandah where his son was sitting. As soon as they appeared, Himself rose and remained standing until both the others were seated. Then he, too, sat down. His father began the interview.

“This gentleman,” he said, “has something to say which I want you to hear.” Himself said nothing, and finally, somewhat embarrassed by his silence, the defendant began to speak.

“I have brought no papers today. If you have any leisure I will send for them.”

Himself replied, “I am very busy today with my writing. When I have some leisure, I will send you word.”

“I will come at any time you say,” replied the man.



“Meanwhile, I ask your permission to leave.” After a brief silence, he rose, bowed low and departed.

But when Mamanji rose to go downstairs, Himself also rose and spoke to him, respectfully but clearly : “I have come here to work. All Kolhapur is yours, and everyone is sure to try to get help for his cause. It would be well if this were not so. But since it is, to avoid trouble for you, it may be necessary for me to ask for an exchange to some other post. It is against my principles to investigate any case at home or hear it discussed privately. You must help me with this.”

After that, during his three months of work in Kolhapur, he had no more trouble of that kind.

## CHAPTER XXI

No one can blame a woman for being interested in such stories of her husband's childhood and youth. Nevertheless, these leisure times were only incidental to the day's work in the home, and we were all much more interested in the news from Poona. It was in March, following our move to Bombay when word came of the birth in our Poona family of little Nanu.<sup>1</sup> Later, he became a great pet of ours, and was with us so constantly that he seemed like our very own.

It was late in January that Himself's old and very dear friend, Rao Bahadur Shankar Pandurang Pandit, fell ill and came to Bombay for treatment, bringing all his family with him from Porbandar. When the doctors examined him, they said, "You must secure a five or six months' leave and stay here for treatment." So Pandit decided to stay in Bombay, and he began to search for a bungalow where he could live for the time being. But nothing suited him.

One morning, after going out to see one or two bungalows, he came to our house and said, "Last week I looked at many bungalows, but I haven't found one suitable which is near to you, and so I'm disgusted. I haven't any desire to be in Bombay and yet far away from you. If we can find a place close enough so that we can get together once or twice a day, I'll take it; otherwise, I'll bring my entire family to live here. This bungalow is really very large."

<sup>1</sup> Another child born to one of the stepbrothers.

As soon as he heard this, Himself said, "Well, if that's how you feel, it's splendid. I've often thought of suggesting this to you; but I thought, 'they are not accustomed to our careless ways or to crowded living conditions. They are in the habit of having everything orderly from start to finish and always right on time. Up to now, they have been utterly independent, and if I should say, 'Come and live at our house,' they would doubtless say 'yes' deferentially; but who knows how his family would feel about it.' These thoughts have been in my mind, and yet I have said nothing until now."

Pandit listened, and replied, "You are wrong about all that. My family is a large one and I have been searching for another house to avoid giving trouble to you; but now it is settled. Tomorrow I shall come here to live." So saying, he went away, and after a few days he, with his children and his wife, came to live with us.

As soon as they became established in our house, it became evident that Pandit was very happy because Himself could find time morning and evening to visit with him; but this happiness was purely mental. The germ of the disease in his body kept steadily on with its work. How long then could happiness continue? As the pains became more acute, his weakness increased and his state of mind became increasingly uneasy. When he was alone he suffered greatly and was restless; but as soon as Himself came to sit with him, he was instantly happy. It seemed to those of us who were watching that while talking with his friend, Pandit

was scarcely aware of any pain or any memory of it !

On the other hand, Himself's condition was the opposite. When talking with Pandit he spoke with great courage ; but as he left him and came into the hall, his anxiety over his friend's health became evident. While doing his Government work at home or while eating, we could hear him heave an occasional sigh and very sadly say "Ram Ram." How often at night we talked long about him ! Sometimes Himself would interrupt our conversations by rising and going to Pandit's room to see if he were sleeping or not and quietly to observe what was the state of his friend's health. Occasionally, disturbed by it all, he himself had no sleep all night long.

In this way the days slipped by, until, on the 28th of March, 1894, about six o'clock in the morning, death claimed Pandit. Such a mountain of sorrow falling on poor Ushabai, his wife, left no boundary to her grief. But for Himself, also, this separation from Pandit brought such sorrow as would the death of an own son or a brother. Often he expressed his thought that it is very difficult to find men so fine, so brilliant, clever and active as Pandit was. On his side, Pandit had felt such extravagant love for Himself that when they met after long separation, he always treated him most intimately and affectionately like a spoiled child. Whether the separation were long or brief, the two of them had to spend hours talking over everything, big or little, that had happened in the interim. If my work took me into the room where they were sitting, Pandit would not pause.

Once, in speaking of their friendship to Himself, I asked, "How is it that this friendship has grown between you when people say that unless people are alike, there will be no real friendship? You two are as different as fire and water. He is always saying, 'I would sooner break than bend,' while your philosophy is exactly opposite to his."

He replied, "You who compare and draw conclusions must conclude what you will. As for us two, 'The heart of Shiva is the heart of Vishnu.' That has been true for us all of our lives."



## CHAPTER XXII

Meantime, I was having my own troubles with so large a household. One day our cook served the rice not well cooked, and I lost my temper and scolded him for his carelessness. Himself heard me but waited until the close of the meal, when, to tease me, he jestingly said,

“Why scold the cook so severely over a mere matter of underdone rice or bread? Will we men who have eaten and digested grain just as it grew, be harmed if we eat rice or bread that is not thoroughly done? We are a fighting race. We have lived for months eating just the green corn; then why the importance of a little undercooked rice and bread? I almost said this when you were talking to the cook; but you had already become angry! You were talking like the master of ceremonies at a wedding, and I didn't like to speak then and take the wind out of your sails. Furthermore, instead of blaming the cook for poorly prepared food, I would put more blame on the one whose business it is to oversee all the food arrangements. A servant's work is only part of it. The one

in charge must pay more attention to everything."

As soon as he said, "Corn kept us fighting men alive for days," I said,

"If you have even one more morsel than usual, you always lay it aside. How can you, who measure your food, boast of fighting? Your battles can only be fought with a pen! If a war really breaks out, what a state of mind you will be in! If your chest pains and one rubs on mustard or turpentine, the place becomes red and blistered; then how can you claim that such a sensitive body endured the wounds of battle!"

He replied, "How endure! Signs of his wounds are everywhere. See the scars on the shoulders! The chest has so many scars that it looks like a map of Hindustan. I'm not being silly. Look for yourself whether it's true or not!" and he raised his garment so that I could see his chest.

Laughing heartily, I approached with the idea of teasing him. But when I looked closely I discovered truly that on the left side of his chest there were scratched scars that exactly reproduced the map of Hindustan.<sup>1</sup> Never before had I had my attention called to this! But instead of being scars left somehow by old wounds, they were mere faint tracings over that part of his body, like water lines on a clean, glossy paper. Although I put it all down then to his joking, yet it is true that it made a deep impression on my mind. Though I cannot now explain in words what that was, yet the episode left me puzzled as to its cause and meaning.

<sup>1</sup> Name for India.

The Prarthana Samaj held his intense loyalty and he attended regularly, though I did not. But when it was his turn to lead devotions there, Himself felt strongly that I should be with him. This was so true that I was in the habit of attending even though I had some special work on hand. Sometimes one of my friends teased me, saying,

“Although there is service every Sunday, some difficulty always arises and you have no leisure ; but today, when Himself is speaking, it happens to be a day on which no guests come and there is no special work to be done ! How does it happen ?” Such teasing I ignored, of course.

On our return trip in the carriage after the service, Himself used to ask me to tell him what I had understood. If I succeeded in giving a good account of the service, he would say, “Then today’s meeting was all right, I think.”

On the other hand, sometimes the subject had a difficult line of thought and I was unable to explain what the meeting was about. Then he would say, “Apparently today’s meeting was not a success. I have established one rule by which to evaluate a meeting. If you understand it, then it is good ; but if you fail to understand it, then it is not good ; it is too difficult, I feel.”

Whatever may have been in his mind, I am not sure. Yet it is true that his meetings were so full of meaning, so devout and so solemn that the listeners felt a benediction. They lost all sense of their bodies, and they became so absorbed that each felt himself



speaking directly with God and that God was hearing his prayer. Sometimes his attitude was one of such peace and absorption in worship that there seemed to be a sort of glow to his countenance, so that I felt unable to turn my eyes away; but was forced by that glow to gaze fixedly at that beautiful expression, and I used to sit like a foolish person staring at him for minutes together. Even if, suddenly conscious of what others sitting near by might think, I lowered my eyes, yet quickly they would lift themselves again and continue gazing. Even now, in times of the utmost discouragement, his face appears before me, so that the sadness that possesses me is forgotten and it is as though that former experience were again with me. I have a moment's utter joy, and for a time I sit quietly meditating and re-living that vision. When someone interrupts the dream, my mind is restless all the day as though something were eluding it.

Each evening when dinner was over, the boys of the household who were studying must needs have their lessons tested, and the older members must converse for an hour or so before we could go upstairs and begin our reading. The sound of the reading would make us sleepy. We believed that sleep did not come of itself. If we went to sleep by 10:30 or 11:00, then by 3:00 or 3:30 we had had enough. At first on waking, lying quietly on our beds, we would meditate about God. Then sitting on our beds, from four to five o'clock, Himself would recite Tukaram's<sup>2</sup> poems, clapping his hands or snapping his fingers as he

<sup>2</sup> A favorite Bhakti poet.

chanted the *bhajan*. Among them he loved to chant over and over the *abhangs* of Namdev<sup>3</sup> that he knew by heart, full of intense worship and love toward God. Sometimes as he was singing his throat would constrict, and he would be overcome. At such times he would fall silent, with the tears rolling down his face.

Often, absorbed in his own chanting, he didn't notice whether he were keeping the rhyme accurately or not. First, he would use a line from one poem and then a line from another. They were not chanted from memorized collections, but were stray phrases which came to mind in harmony with his mood. He didn't notice whether or not they rhymed. Sometimes I would burst out laughing and say, "You had better take all these new poems and put them into a collection. It will be well if I undertake to write down all these rhymes, like the disciple Kalyan."

His reply usually was, "I'm a simple soul. I don't know tunes or meters and I don't feel the need of knowing; but the One for whom I'm singing knows all about it. He's not going to notice all these other things."

In this way, with *abhangs* and *bhajans* the time passed until five o'clock, and then followed Sanskrit verses and psalms until five-thirty; then he arose, and his early morning ablutions occupied the half hour until six o'clock, when he sat down on the couch in the dining room and began his day's work. First, he read the daily telegrams, and then investigated his mail, and after that, at 9:30, he went for his bath. After bath-

<sup>3</sup> Another Bhakti poet.

ing and eating, he sat chatting for fifteen minutes or so, and then went and dressed, and at ten-thirty left in the carriage for the High Court. There his work occupied him from eleven to five, except for the luncheon recess, when he ate the fruit and the hot meal which Bajaba the Brahman used to carry to him, travelling by train. After eating and drinking a little, he relaxed a bit in his easy chair and then resumed his work.

At five o'clock, his work finished, he had the carriage follow him as he walked two or three miles for exercise. Reaching home at six, he sat talking for a half hour before beginning the work of answering the day's mail. That finished, he read a while. His definite habit was to reply to all letters on the day they were received.

On holidays and occasionally in the afternoons, crowds of friends came to see him. He used to discuss with them the matters about which they came to consult him, or gather from them information about things with which they could help him. Important people of orthodox groups, Brahman, Māratha, Gujerati, Bhat, and other castes came to consult him, and he treated each one according to the manners of his caste. I was often amused and highly entertained by his way of extolling something of universal value which they had done, by giving them great credit for it and using appreciative phrases that both pleased and encouraged them. As he talked, he found out if there was in their village or caste any need for organized activity. If so, he planted in their minds the idea of

founding such a group, made up of high-minded men like themselves for the benefit of their community, and filled them with enthusiasm for it.

After such a group left, quietly happy as he thought over some new angle in human nature, he returned to his work. I used to content myself by going to the dining room later and innocently asking,

“What task has today’s company laid upon you? They are past masters in conferring tasks on others. The marvel is that the people whose business it is do not worry about these things, but instead, consider that you have some special flair for them.”

Occasionally, we had to persuade him to leave Bombay for a brief rest, and our favorite place for such vacations was Mahableshwar. In June, 1895, we were returning from Mahableshwar and were driving to Wathar over the mountains in a rented conveyance. Himself’s invariable rule at the end of every twenty-four miles, was to rest the horses or bullocks by getting out of the carriage and walking up the nearest mountain, directing the coachman to proceed very, very slowly and carefully. Our darlings, Sakhu and Nanu, were then children of seven and two years respectively. Leaving the two in the carriage with a servant to watch them, I warned the coachman to proceed cautiously, and I, too, alighted and joined Himself for the walk.

The two children began to beg to join us, and set up a commotion about it, although I had already spent ten minutes explaining things to them. Himself had started forward as soon as he left the carriage, and had gone so fast that we couldn’t see him anywhere.

I went forward as fast as I could, even running occasionally when there was no one in sight. The reason for haste was that I was frightened, since it was dusk and he couldn't see very far, and I feared that when he was alone some cart might appear suddenly and might hit him, or some other accident happen.

Having overtaken him, however, I was able to proceed quietly with him. He was tall and took long steps, and try as I would, a short person like myself found it difficult to keep pace with him. Consequently, when I tried, I was always a little way behind him. At this particular time, as usual, I was some ten or twelve steps behind him. As soon as he realized that I was joining him, he ordinarily waited for me and then proceeded more slowly; but that day he acted differently. It was evening. The sun had just set and dusk was falling, and he was gazing steadfastly at the lovely views spread out on all sides of the mountain. At this solemn time he was so utterly absorbed in chanting over and over this *abhang* :

“When shall my soul be satisfied?

When shall I see the whole world as the image and likeness of God?”

that he didn't even notice me approaching.

I walked along behind him until we came to the top of the hill. There, near a culvert, were two scorpions about four inches long and one and one-half inches wide, and with their tails curled over their backs they were as thick as one's finger. They were so dark as to be almost the color of dark red syrup. They were

moving along very independently, one behind the other.

My eyes were fastened on Himself's feet, and so I saw those scorpions. I was so frightened lest his second or third footstep should fall upon them that I may have cried aloud. I don't know just what I intended to do. Apparently I started to run with the idea of overtaking him and throwing the scorpions aside by hand before his foot should touch them. But before I could reach him, his feet had already gone past the scorpions safely and were beyond them.

The writing of this episode has occupied five or ten minutes, although the episode itself was all ended in that many seconds. I cannot tell whether, as I ran I shrieked or called out to him that there were scorpions on the road and that his feet might hit them. At least this is true, that at the thought that his foot might fall on those scorpions, my very being was congealed and I breathed with difficulty. Involuntarily, my eyes closed for the fraction of a second. On opening them and seeing him actually walking along beyond the scorpions, I was utterly relieved, and I thanked God that we had been spared a great misfortune. It is impossible to tell how long this had taken. I approached Himself and said, "Did anything strike your foot?"

My question seemed surprising to him, and he stopped at once and asked, "What? What do you say? What has happened? Why are you so breathless? Where is the carriage?" His questions followed each other rapidly.

Realizing that his questions meant that he was thinking that some accident had happened to the carriage or that the horses had run away, I promptly replied, "Nothing at all. The carriage is coming along safely. I have been walking pretty fast and it's uphill and so it has taken my breath away. Let's sit down awhile until the carriage comes up. We've reached the top of the hill, so why shouldn't we get back into the carriage?"

All this time he continued standing. So I begged him, saying, "Won't you sit down a bit? See how tired you are."

Then he replied, "Who is tired? I? Not the very least! I come of a race of men who do heavy and fatiguing work. Then how should walking weary me? We are men who tramp over hill and valley. You are tired and begging for mercy! Then say so plainly and I will gladly sit down for your sake!"

So I said, "All right, I truly am weary. For my sake let it be, but sit down!" So we both sat down on the white border stones that line the roadside. The carriage was coming very slowly, and as we waited I told him of the two scorpions. He listened and then said, "I was startled at your shouting and the anxious expression of your face, and became anxious about the carriage."

"What a misfortune we have escaped today," I said. "Had your foot touched those scorpions they would have stung you; then what a journey it would have been! Where would we have found medicine at this time of night on a lonely road across a wilderness?"

Who would have been able to help us!" Talking thus idly I heaved a sigh, and even began to cry a little.

He remained silent for a time, and then said to me, "Well, the misfortune didn't befall us, did it? Is there anything now to fear? This episode teaches that God is always near and guards our footsteps. How did it happen that my foot did not fall on the scorpions, but went over them, as you think, unless He planned it? There is no doubt of that. When He plans protection, no harm can come from any source. All we have to do is to believe that. Isn't that worth learning? How very true is that *abhang* of Tukaram's which says, 'Wherever I go, if you go with me, I walk holding Thy hand!' Blessed was that poet and marvellous his faith. When we experience it, then we talk about it. For us weaker men, our greatest power and our safety, too, depend upon our laying hold of a firm faith like his."

As he finished speaking the carriage arrived. We had to get the eight o'clock train at Wathar for Poona, so we took our places in the carriage and drove on toward the station.



## CHAPTER XXIII

Shudders run through me when I recall our first experience of Plague! It was in 1896 that this awful disease first came to Bombay. Until that time no one had ever heard of it, and all were entirely unprepared for the horror of it. There were stories current in very ancient literature of a disease which turned its victims blue, but we took them for myths.

The first suggestion of trouble that I heard was a report from the servants that very large rats were coming out of the drains in the court and bathhouse. Their actions were so strange as to attract attention. They came out into any open space and sat still, breathing quickly until they fell over dead.

I thought nothing of it and merely said, "It's fine to have the rats die of their own accord! There seems to be a curse of rats at the moment, for I have heard that the committee is putting poison in the gutters in order to clear them out. Probably these rats have had a taste of it and are dying as a result."

Seven or eight days later, one day an article in "The Times" caught Himself's attention and he read it to me. It told how the first sign of Plague was dying rats, and explained that where this happened, the residents must evacuate the house at once. My heart sank as I realized that the sign had long since come to this house and we were still living here! But I said nothing, even when Himself said, "Be sure and take this to heart. We never know when we ourselves may have to move."

Later, I re-read the article and realized the seriousness of our situation. That evening, therefore, I told Himself about it, and we set out at once to find another place. It was soon apparent that this would be a difficult thing to do. Plague was so prevalent that every available house near Bombay had already been taken. The terror of it was so general that professional men had appealed to the Courts to lessen their work by having Court convene later and less often.

This had been granted, and the decree was that Court should meet only on four days each week, and that its sessions should hold from 12:30 to 2:00 P.M. only. This made it possible for judges and lawyers to live in neighboring towns and commute.

We were still living in our own home and hunting for a bungalow, when one morning as I came into the courtyard I saw the son of our cook limping in a peculiar fashion. He was a sixteen-year-old boy but not very bright, and he used to play with our small boys a good deal.

"How now, Keshav? Have you become lame?" I asked.

"No, Bai. I haven't any fever or any pain, either," he said, with a frightened look in his eyes.

His manner made me suspicious, and I sent the two children upstairs with another servant, telling him to keep them out of the way. Then I called for a thermometer, which I gave to Keshav. He was terrified, but I insisted, and asked, "Where is your pain? Have you any swellings anywhere?"

His answer was evasive, and he tried to convince me

that there were no buboes by pressing here and there on his joints. But my suspicions only increased, and I pondered some scheme for forcing him to confess. The thermometer confirmed my fears by showing a temperature of 102 degrees, and I sat silently looking at it. Keshav was thoroughly frightened by this time, and said, "What is it? There isn't any fever in the pipe, is there?"

I looked straight at him, and said, "You are a silly boy, Keshav, trying to deceive me like that! Not only have you a fever, foolish child, but the pipe shows plainly that you have buboes. Yet you tell me that you have none!"

With that he broke down completely, and said through his tears, "It is true that there is a small swelling like a supari nut; but it doesn't hurt much. And how did I know that you would see it in the pipe?"

It was a relief to know the worst, yet I realized that it meant that we must move before nightfall. I had our breakfast served in the large dining room which we seldom used, and waited until Himself had finished before I told him that we must leave at once. But I did not speak of Keshav. We discussed the matter briefly, and then Himself said, "Today, Court closes for three days. We can take the afternoon train for Lonavla. You get together the things we must take and meet me at the Railroad Station at three o'clock."

It was a busy day for me. We sent the sick boy and his mother to the Hospital, and arranged for the Reader and four or five students to stay in a neighbor's stable. They went across with their necessary possessions, and

I left orders that no one was to enter our compound. As I left, I said to the guard and policeman, "Just see to it that no one goes inside the gate, not even you yourselves. You can sleep outside here and guard everything."

Himself was waiting for us at the Station and we had a pleasant journey to Lonavla, arriving late that night. Two days later, word reached us that the very night we left, the guard and a brother of the policeman whom we had left in charge, had been stricken with plague. My nephew had come with us, and I sent him and one of the servants down to do what they could.

"As soon as you arrive, send the sick men to the Hospital. Give this note to the Magistrate and he will send some pensioner to watch the bungalow. Above everything, take care of yourselves, and stay over at the stables where the students are."

The hardest part of all this for me was that I dared not consult Himself about it, as I usually did about everything. In cases of illness, he never had any peace of mind until he had himself investigated and seen to the arrangements.

For instance, had he known about the cook woman's son before we left Bombay, he would never have left him. Instead, when she pled with us not to send the boy to Hospital, he would probably have taken her side. And if once he had said, "Don't send her beloved child to Hospital; keep him at home," I would have had no choice but to agree.

This was the reason why I dared not risk letting him

attend to the stricken men, for he would never stay away just to protect himself. Consequently, I made as careful plans as possible, keeping in mind always that things should be done unobtrusively and without excitement, so that our routine should proceed normally.

Taking matters into my own hand, as I had, let me in for a bad scolding two days later when a telegram came from Bombay saying that the boy, Keshav, had died. I was certain beforehand that Himself would be angry; but knowing his attitude as well as I did, I felt that I had done right, and I didn't let his scolding worry me much. I told him, however, about having sent the two boys to Bombay, and he was greatly depressed. Several times I heard him murmur to himself, "It would have been much better if we had been in Bombay at such a time."

Meantime, my nephew and the servant had gone to Bombay on their anxious errand. Later, I learned how, on the way, Durga had said to Wasudeva, "My hip is hurting me some and I feel cold." It seemed likely that the boy were merely frightened by the situation and was imagining himself ill, so Wasudeva teased him and didn't let him see that he really was worried too. They reached their destination, summoned a carriage to take the sick men to the Hospital and returned to stay with the students.

In the middle of the night, however, Durga had a chill and high fever, and by morning there was no doubt that the lumps on his cheeks were the dreaded sign of Plague. This message came to us three days

later. As soon as he heard of it, Himself said, "I'm going to Bombay today by the afternoon train, and I shall stay until everything there is arranged."

"What can you do there?" I inquired.

"Why do you talk so foolishly? Don't you understand what a serious situation this is? I simply must go and find some other place to which the students and servants can go and be safe." His mental distress was very obvious.

In spite of his state of mind, I could scarcely keep from laughing. Fortunately, I was serving at the moment and so could run out into the kitchen until my impulse to laughter was under control. My amusement was stirred by his feeling that he was equal to the situation.

The fact of the matter was that he had had no experience at searching for bungalows and all the details connected with moving. We had kept such things out of his hands always.

We dropped the subject temporarily, and he finished his dinner. When I sat down to eat, he stayed near, and while I ate I raised the question by asking, "Well, what is decided about Bombay?"

He sat in thought for a time, and I finally continued the conversation by saying, "If you say so I will go on ahead today. I will attend to all those matters which you have mentioned, arrange a release on our contract, find a new rent somewhere, move the students and the others and return tonight. If that isn't possible I will send you a telegram. I'll leave the children with you. They would only be a hindrance to me, and it

would not be right to endanger them. There are houses at Kalyan and Bhandup. I'll look in both places and choose the one which you would approve. You needn't be anxious. You have never had these things to arrange and you may as well leave them to me, as usual."

After some consideration, he agreed, although he felt uneasy to have me attempt so much alone. It worried him, too, to have the children left without me.

I eased his mind by assuring him that the children were never so happy as when left with him, and reminded him that he had many friends in both towns to which I was going, all of whom would be glad to help me. I really persuaded even myself that I was quite equal to the task!

There was much to be done before I took the train, and the most important item was to explain to the children. I flattered them and asked them what they wanted me to bring them, promising not to return empty-handed. They held dire threats over my head, saying, "If you are not back by tomorrow noon, we will not eat our dinner, and we won't talk with you when you do come, and we will not ever again let you go anywhere!"

Kalyan did not prove to have any houses that I could consider, and, anyway, rumor had it that Plague had occurred in one or two sections there. So I went to Bhandup, where I knew of a vacant bungalow. It wasn't such an impressive bungalow, as a matter of fact, but the compound was large and the garden was lovely. The caretaker felt sure that he could have the

house freshly whitewashed and thoroughly cleaned by night, and so I agreed to take it.

I promptly sent a note to Kashinath, saying, "I have rented Garud's bungalow in Bhandup. Tomorrow, send the servants with the household things, and in the evening when you return from Court, bring your books and papers here. If you find everything clean and in order, send us a wire and we will come down on Monday morning."

Late that night I returned to Lonavla and found Himself waiting for the news. He didn't say much, but I gathered that he was content with the arrangements I had made. Sunday evening word came that all was in readiness, and we had a pleasant trip down on Monday, carefree because we had no bundles to see to. The servants had taken everything with them.

Our head boy met us at the Station, and on reaching the house Himself at once called for Kashinath to come and read to him. We were both greatly surprised to hear that he had returned to Bombay. I was angry to think that he should desert his master when he knew he would be wanted. But Himself only said as he prepared to go to Court, "Never mind. Let him go. I only hope he keeps his health."

About two o'clock that afternoon, a note came to the Court clerk, signed by Kashinath. He read it but said nothing to Himself. He gave the note to me that evening, and I was overwhelmed as I read, "I went to Bhandup on Sunday, but early Monday I had a temperature and felt a bubo. Without telling anyone I limped over to the Station and came by train to By-



culla and the Hindu Hospital. Tell Wahinibai that Dr. Desai is giving me good medicine. I would have sent this note to Himself, but he would be unduly anxious and my condition does not warrant it. I'll be all right in a few days."

Now Kashinath was a distant relative of my own. He was a clever lad, but terribly conceited and autocratic. He often tried my temper, and was not a favorite with the rest of the family. But he was devoted to Himself, and between them was some sort of understanding, apparently. Himself always took the boy's part and begged us not to be impatient with him.

I knew only too well what would happen if he heard that Kashinath was ill with Plague in Bombay, and determined not to tell him that night. Fortunately, Himself was very tired and had lost much sleep since the servants were taken ill, and he did not again ask for the boy to come to read, but went early to bed. He admitted that he ached with weariness, and begged me to rub him with oil until he became sleepy.

Much to my relief, he fell asleep about ten o'clock. As for me, I did not sleep at all, I lay there planning the next move. About four o'clock, I rose and began giving orders for the day. When the supplies had been given out, I roused the children, telling them to play nicely and I would not be away long. By that time early tea was ready, and I served Himself and had some before I slipped away with a servant and went by train to the Hospital.

We found Kashinath in a dreadful state. The doctor said that he was so violent that they had to tie him

firmly to his cot. I spoke to him, and he replied rationally at first, but almost at once began talking very arrogantly in English, and tried hard to get out of bed. The doctor said, "He is out of control, but still conscious. He must not sit up, for his heart is likely to fail. Since he would not listen to reason, we had to tie him firmly."

It was distressing to see him and to realize that he did not know me, and so I turned away. Dr. Desai took me with him to another Hospital to see the two servants. Both were unconscious, and Durga, though conscious, was very weak. They reported that he refused to eat, and so I spoke to him, saying, "How now, Durga! They say that you will not eat. Do you know who I am?"

He answered in the affirmative and opened his eyes in an effort to see me. His eyelids were red and stiff. I continued talking. "The doctor is fine and is not giving you any bad medicine. See! I'm here now. Take some milk now. By tomorrow the doctor will be sending you to the bungalow."

He took a few swallows of milk before I left. There seemed nothing that I could do, and so I returned home in time to see Himself before he left for Court. He had almost finished his breakfast when I arrived, and promptly asked, "Where have you been?"

All the way home I had been wondering how to break the news of Kashinath's condition to him, and it was a relief when the children interrupted at this moment. I pacified them and kept busy with them until he was finished with his food. Then I said,

"I went in this morning to the Jain Hospital where Durga and the others are. The doctor does not think their condition is hopeful."

He made no reply, and I kept on talking for a few minutes. Then I added, "Last night, Bajaba brought me word that Kashinath, also, was ill in the Hindu Hospital. That was my chief reason for rising and going so early to town this morning. Dr. Desai had arranged for him ; but he has a temperature of 105 degrees and has a very large bubo. He is only half conscious and is very restless. No one can control him, and so they have bound him to his cot."

At the mention of Kashinath's name, his hand paused midway to his mouth, and he listened motionless to the tale. As I ended, he heaved a great sigh, and with tears in his eyes said, "If we had left that bungalow fifteen days sooner, none of these things would have happened. The lad is such an industrious, ambitious boy, and so promising." He felt very badly, as I had known he would.

As he and his servant started for the train, he said, "We will stop and see Kashinath." The servant reminded him that there would not be time if he were to arrive promptly for Court. So he said as they departed, "Well, anyway, don't let me forget to stop on the way home."

Before Court adjourned that afternoon, however, a note was brought to Himself. It was from Dr. Desai, and said, "Of your five servants who are ill, three have died. Will you arrange for their funerals, or what do you advise?"

Himself sent this message to me with a note directing me to send some money. We were to arrange for Kashinath ; but the others were to be given to their caste people to attend to.

As though all this had not been bad enough, it was that very night that word came that Himself's good friend, Chintamanrao Bhat, had died. This was the last straw. Himself could neither eat nor sleep, and I became very anxious. All my efforts to think up and prepare tempting dishes were useless. He would nibble a bit or take some curds ; but that was all. He had always liked very peppery food and plenty of vegetables, and it was a pleasure to cook for him.

He finally noticed how anxious I was, and said, "It is plain to be seen that you feel badly because you make all these things that I do not eat. But what can I do when nothing tastes good to me ? I really have tried ; but things taste like ashes in my mouth. If I tell you to stop cooking, you will be even more unhappy, for you love to cook. So what are we to do ?"

Things went on like this for six weeks. Then word came that because of the Plague, Court would have an extra month added to the annual holiday, making three months in all. I promptly hit upon the plan for having a vacation at Mahableshtar, a lovely hill Station where the air is wonderful. Much to my relief, Himself agreed. I had begun to fear that he would become tubercular if we didn't do something to change his condition.

Moving so far and for such a long time required careful planning and much work. But things passed

off smoothly. We found a nice bungalow, and sent servants ahead to get it ready for us. Uncle Vithu went with us from Poona to escape the Plague there, and we all had to pass an inspection before we were allowed to enter Mahableswar. Uncle Vithu was a great devotee and yet rather a quarrelsome fellow. The inspector held out the thermometer for Vithukaka, only to have him rebel.

"What? Am I to take the pipe?" he said. "What do you think you will see in the pipe? Will it tell you how old I am? You are a servant of the body, and want to know only whether the body has fever. Well then, see!" and he grasped the man by his wrist. The doctor was a Mussulman and very polite. He looked at Kaka and laughingly said, "Release me, Fellow! You haven't any fever. You are stronger than I." Kaka at once let him go, and our carriage started on.

Several weeks passed before Himself improved. I had begun to be hopeless and anxious, when one evening he surprised me by saying, "This is the first time that I have enjoyed my food in many a long day. Who did this cooking?"

"Who should do the cooking?" I replied, thinking that he was just teasing. "What is the use of trying when you will not make any effort to enjoy things I make."

"Truly, I'm not teasing now," he said. "I really think that my appetite is returning. Today, everything tastes fine."

I could scarcely believe it, but it proved to be true.

He soon was sleeping and eating normally and enjoying the walks he and his friends took on the hills around about. I could only silently thank God for the blessing that He had granted to us in giving good health to us once more.



## CHAPTER XXIV

Strawberries in May! Only Mahableshwar can provide this tempting fruit for us in Western India, and we always revel in them during the short season there. Before they are quite gone, mangoes are brought to the markets, and everyone is delighted by this additional delicious variety to our diet. Bombay people consider that there is nothing God has made which is quite so perfect as our own Bombay mangoes!

Keeping house, therefore, in this lovely spot where the air is so soft and pleasant and the views on every side so entrancing, is a pleasure. The trees meet over every road, forming a tunnel of loveliness and luring one on into ever lengthening walks to look down from the high points over the low-lying valleys veiled in mists and heat, across forty miles to the sea. Every evening throngs of people gather to watch the sun sink in the West, beyond the borders of the Ocean.

The only trouble I had that year concerned Himself. Before leaving Bombay he had been persuaded to undertake two important pieces of work, and he had ordered a huge box of books sent up from the Royal

Asiatic Society. In his eagerness to get at this work, he outlined a schedule of work two hours each morning and evening. But his interest was so great that he became careless of his rest and food and exercise.

One day I ventured to remonstrate, "See how late it is," I said. "It was ten o'clock before you returned from your walk ; then why did you sit down and begin to work ? You knew it was time for breakfast. When you are late the food is not good. And besides, the children get very hungry while waiting."

He finished what he was writing before he replied, "All right, woman ! Come on ! You would think that when all I have to do is to sit idly waiting for food to be prepared and then to eat it, I might be on time, wouldn't you ! I suppose you think I never worry because the women get indigestion, waiting for me to begin !"

On another occasion he quite scandalized us all by saying, "Look here ! I'm a busy man, and when I become absorbed in some effort, I can't afford to stop until I finish. Why do you always have to wait for your food until I have eaten ! Why don't you, some day, eat your food without waiting for me ? If you haven't that much liberty, then you can't be much of a Queen in your own household !"

Of course, we paid no attention to his teasing, and continued to await his pleasure about the meals, though it was hard on the children. Life continued to be pleasant until one day when he returned very late from his long morning walk. I was worried until a message came from a friend that Himself had



stopped at their bungalow to rest and to cool off before coming home.

As soon as he arrived I realized that something was wrong. His face was flushed, and as I helped him change his clothing I found his garments soaked with perspiration. I hurriedly closed all the windows to avoid a draft, and I rubbed him briskly with a clean, soft towel and helped him put on dry clothing. As I worked, I scolded him for being so careless as to walk so far in the hot sun without even opening his umbrella, as I was sure he had failed to do.

His replies seemed vague and aimless, and I soon noticed a vacant expression in his face and eyes, as though he was not taking in anything that was said. He looked as though there were no intelligent person behind those eyes!

I was terrified, but, concealing my fear, I sent for hot milk and began rubbing his feet. Presently, he called for his clerk to bring the mail and read it. Bhavaji sat down and began to read as usual; but was interrupted by Himself asking, "What are you doing, Bhava? Can't you read clearly? I haven't heard a thing you have read, yet."

We were astonished, of course. Bhavaji started again on a letter from Wansa telling of the death of Rama by Plague, and I waved my hand to him to stop it. But again Himself said, "What has happened today? I have never known you to read like that, — in a way that I cannot understand!"

This convinced me that something had happened, perhaps a sunstroke. I spoke sharply to Bhavaji.

“What kind of reading is this? Can't you read even one sentence without stumbling? Take the letter over there and learn to read it correctly. Go on out!”

The massaging soon had its effect, and he dozed off for a few minutes. Later, he seemed quite rational when he awakened, and so I suggested that he get up for his breakfast. He agreed, and started for his bath. I protested that he shouldn't bathe that day, and even offered to give him a sponge bath. But he objected, “No! No! The heat has made me perspire freely, and a bath is absolutely necessary.”

I protested no further, for I knew that the bath water was ready, and he knew enough to bathe quickly to avoid a chill. Nevertheless, as he sat down for breakfast, he was taken with a severe chill, and quickly washing his hands at the basin the boy brought, he left and went to bed. As he slept, I kept watch. His body did not feel feverish, but his head was terribly hot and his face flushed. It worried me, and I summoned Dr. Pathankar.

After examining him he told me that I had guessed correctly, and that it was a sunstroke. The treatment included much Bromide, but as we did not want Himself to know this, the doctor told him that it was malaria and that he would send a diaphoretic. He explained how to give the Bromide in the other medicine, and said to his patient, “This is only malaria. I'll send a diaphoretic for you and you will soon feel better. Just stay in bed a few days and be careful to avoid drafts.”

Large quantities of Bromide, administered for a few

days, helped him to feel better ; but it was more than two weeks before he regained his usual strength. Meantime, he tried to dictate answers to his mail, but would become so confused that a letter begun to one person would be ended with a message to another. I kept track of them all and tried, with the help of the clerks, to straighten them out for him. It was very distressing.

My own rest and sleep had been much broken by these days and nights of anxiety and care for him until I was unable to keep my eyes open. One evening he was resting quietly, and I slipped away to lie down and was soon fast asleep. Suddenly I was startled to hear a loud burst of laughter. I roused, but was still half asleep as I staggered across to him, wondering what had happened. He continued to laugh, as he said, "Don't be alarmed ! I'm awake and sane ; but bring a lamp and see what your clever servant is doing !"

I knew the boy was rubbing tup on his feet, and I said, "What is he doing ? Why all this fuss ? He's only rubbing oil on your feet."

"Just bring a lamp and look for yourself ! Then you'll know why I'm laughing."

I brought a lamp from the table, and sure enough, the servant was sitting with his Master's foot on his lap and was rubbing on oil, while his head rested on the foot itself. But the joke was that he had failed to remove his Master's shoe ! He was rubbing oil on that !

But although he recovered from this particular attack, I noticed from little things about his habits that

his health was not good. He didn't tease or tell funny stories so much as usual. He lost interest in gossipy items in the newspapers about royalty and other people. He kept up his work, but often could be seen, pen in hand, gazing into space, lost in meditation. It was all very depressing. I tried endlessly to think up tempting things for his meals.

None of this escaped his attention, but he ignored it until I forced him to say something by asking, "Isn't it good? If so, why don't you eat it?"

"Tell me who made it! If you made it, then I'll say that it is perfect!"

"I don't want you to say that it is good just because I made it. You have hidden it behind the other things on your plate, and so I realize that it isn't very good."

All the time this good natured give and take was going on I had been observing him, and finally I realized that he was definitely rationing his food. I tried to figure it out, but was finally forced to discuss it with Himself before I understood.

He explained his point of view this way. "I might easily eat more," he said. "But this morning I looked at my tongue. It reminded me of this story. When I was a student in Bombay, a house near by was occupied by a certain Mahadeva and his mother. They had at one time been very wealthy, but had had reverses, until at the time I knew them, the lad was supporting the entire family on some twenty-five or thirty rupees a month.

"His mother had been used to extravagant living and could not adjust to their altered circumstances, and

she complained bitterly. When he came home bringing no vegetables for their dinner, she would shout right in front of me, "This tongue is a delicately nurtured one. It is used to several kinds of vegetables, spices and a variety of sweets for each meal. I tell it over and over again that those days are gone, not to return. But what good does that do? It only continues to be unhappy unless it can have what it is used to. Perhaps your tongue can get along with less ; but this one cannot.'

"The moral of this tale," he concluded, "is that we should so train ourselves that we can manage with what is reasonable. We must decide what we need to keep ourselves fit, and then refuse to over-do this eating business. Our intelligence should help us to control our physical needs, so that we can bend all our energies on developing our spiritual powers."

"That is a small rule to produce such a long speech," I interjected at this point !

"I'm not through yet, either," he continued. "You women have special seasons for different activities and make a great commotion if anything upsets your schedule. You take great satisfaction in doing certain things at certain seasons, and boast about how hard you had to work to get it done on time. What difference does it make ! If something needs doing, get it done whether the time is correct on the calendar or not !

"It's all right at bedtime to think over the day's deeds and recognize any good thing that has been done ; but why talk endlessly about housework ? One should bend his mind on increasing the number of

good deeds, and should ask God's help in keeping away from bad ones. If we believe that we are really members of God's family, should we not expect that His characteristics will develop in us, day by day?"

It wasn't often that Himself talked so long and seriously with me, and I was very happy to hear him. I returned to the original question, however, saying, "Hearing all this has made me feel better, of course; but you have wandered away from the original problem. I refuse to be distracted from that!"

"Answer me a question, first," he replied. "Do we men question you women about how long you sit idle, what you eat, what you drink, how long you sleep, who comes to call and what you talk about? Well, then, if not, why do you cross examine us so? Why are you so curious about what we eat, how much tea we drink, what we discuss at our clubs, whether we sleep at night when we are lying in bed meditating? In the old days, women were trained to let men alone to do what they pleased; but you have changed all that. You sit like little secret police, watching every act!"

Our conversation ended just then, and we each went about our work. But I noticed from then on that he was in the habit of taking exactly thirty-two mouthfuls of food at each meal, no more and no less. It distressed me greatly.

The following year in Bombay, work went on as usual, but Himself had only moderately good health. Our next vacation was a shorter one and we spent it at Lonavla. During that time he had a severe chill

and developed kidney trouble, and it continued to be one of his disabilities as long as he lived.

One Sunday, in the damp heat that comes to Bombay in June, he worked very hard over a Court case. He asked me to see that he was undisturbed until he finished some writing he had on hand. I left a guard near by to answer any call from him, and took the children further away where they could not bother him.

At tea time, I slipped quietly into his room with some fruit and grapes, and asked, "Shall I bring you some tea?"

He was writing assiduously, and said, without raising his eyes, "Don't say a word to me now for I'm busy. When I have finished, I'll call you."

I turned quietly away and another hour passed before he called, "Now bring on your fruit, tea, water or anything you have."

He washed his face and hands and feet, and began to dress for going out. As I brought the tea and fruit, who should arrive but an orderly from the Prarthana Samaj with word from the Secretary that Himself should take the meeting that day! It was time to start at once if we were to get there on time. I was angry. "Instead of saying you were 'sent to tell,' why not say you were sent 'to order' Himself to appear! Didn't the Secretary take the trouble even to send a note? A verbal message so late as this isn't enough!"

The servant looked dismayed by my anger, and Himself said, "Why scold him? He's only the messenger.

What can one say to him except 'Shivaram, you may go and tell them I am coming!'

At his request, I brought him the hymn book; but I continued to protest, "I might have known that if anything were going to happen, it would be at tea time. You spend the day absorbed in Court work and, without eating, start off for religious service. While you dress, the tea is getting cold and you don't even notice that."

He paused in his dressing long enough to drink the tea and eat a little something. He insisted on my accompanying him to the meeting, and promised to tell me about the important Court work as we drove. I hurriedly dressed the children and left them in care of a servant before I joined him in the carriage for the drive.

Himself spent a few minutes looking up hymns to use in the service, and then said, "You were asking about that work. It is an important case in which six Brahmans are being tried for murder. We Judges have been arguing about it for days and have not as yet been able to reach a unanimous decision. Tomorrow, a decision must be rendered, and last evening a colleague sent me a note asking me to write one out. That is why it is important and required my undisturbed attention."

Just then we reached the meeting place and went in for the service. In spite of the hard work he had been doing, that service was one that I shall always remember. It was simple but very inspiring.



On the drive home he said that he wasn't feeling very well, and before the evening was over he was burning with fever. We worked with him all night with ice bags and hot water, and none of us had any more sleep than he did. Next day, I reproved him for being so careless of his health.

"No Court decision is worth so much trouble as this, and it is unreasonable to expect yourself to take services after such a long day's work. Court held yesterday, and will meet again tomorrow and next day. Why not be reasonable in what you demand of your body? The mind can do what it wishes, for it is submissive; but the poor body gets battered about and worn out."

He listened to my tirade so quietly and smilingly that I felt ashamed of myself, and during the ensuing silence he sat thinking. Presently he said, "Look here! Give me an answer to this question."

"No! I will not!" I replied. "You are very clever at confusing people by some leading question, and I do not want you to ask me anything."

He laughed as he said, "Don't be silly. Listen! If it chanced that by a little effort you could save a life, wouldn't you be ready to endure even a lot of trouble for that purpose?"

I made some retort and he continued, "Your recent anger shows that you have given little thought to the matter. You know that I would not purposely make myself ill; but this case concerned the fate of certain men. Some of my colleagues felt that they should be hanged, but I disagreed. Therefore, I needed to work

steadily until I had completed the statement, lest my thought become disorganized and illogical. So don't blame me so severely."

In spite of the night's fever, he attended Court as usual, and reported that evening, "Well, two men's lives were spared today. They gave them life sentences to the Andaman Islands instead of hanging."

All the following month he kept having spells of stomach trouble, and finally, so severe an attack that he was compelled to ask leave of the Court. When the order came through, we arranged to spend a month at Bandra, near the sea shore, where the doctors could watch his condition.

It was here that the trouble that finally caused his death first appeared. Every night about ten or ten-thirty, his hands and feet became numb, he had difficulty in breathing and had hiccoughs. Strong smelling salts helped, and made him yawn or raise wind from his stomach, and that always brought relief.

Himself was distressed by this continued ill health, and suggested that the doctors get together and see if they could diagnose the trouble. But their verdict was not helpful. They merely called it a nervous disorder. Although he improved and was able to carry on his work all that year, he gradually grew more depressed and irritable, losing his keen interest in the affairs of the children and their education and in the ordinary matters of the family.

## CHAPTER XXV

The children were our chief consolation that year. Every evening, the entire family foregathered in the drawing room, where we persuaded Himself to stretch out while we entertained him. Wansa and I sat beside him, massaging his feet and arms, while he teased the children and laughed at their pranks. Of them all, the smallest one was Shanta, Aba's little girl. She was very playful and a veritable chatterbox. Her voice was gentle and sweet and it added to her winsomeness. She loved everyone and they all adored her.

There seemed to be an especial bond between her and Himself, her uncle. They played together constantly, and at his suggestion she would mimic everyone in the house, from the servants to her grandmother! It was quite perfectly done, and reduced us all to gales of laughter.

After they tired and were sent to bed, Wansa used to sing for him. She had a sweet voice and, although she had never learned any of the newer songs, she knew the old, simple, lovely ones her mother had taught her, and those pleased her brother best. We all tried to keep him interested until after the fatal ten or ten-thirty hour had passed, hoping each time that the spasm might not come. But it never once failed to keep the appointed hour!

From the beginning I determined that this story should not be about myself; that I would write only of

him ! But the surprising thing is that a wife is like a shadow. You may tell it to leave you, but it can't ! Consequently, I can't very well tell about Himself and his state of mind in regard to me, without mentioning myself. So this is my story !

For several years I had had a complaint which seemed not to be acute. My anxiety about Himself's health and my constant care of him kept me from regular rest at night and kept me on my feet a good deal. All of this probably made my own trouble worse.

One day, I bent over to rub him with oil, and was taken with such an acute attack that I had to sit on the floor. I was paralyzed with pain. The doctor had warned me only the day before that medicine would not help and had recommended an operation.

We neither of us felt that we could face an operation, and told her so. She insisted that it was necessary, and warned me to avoid stairs and not to be very active. I soon felt better, and one day when I went in to massage Himself, he said,

"No. You are not to do that any more. If you do, you will suffer and I will worry. You sit still and take care of yourself."

This made me feel very badly, for Himself was far from well. Why did I have to be ill at the very time he needed me most ? This trouble of mine was not a new one. I had had it, off and on, for eighteen years ; but it had never hindered me from my duty till now ! The question was, would an operation cure me ? The only real reason for my living was that, being well, I might serve Himself with my own hands

and care for him when he was suffering. If I couldn't do that, wouldn't death be better?

As these thoughts came to me, I felt quite heartsick and could get no relief. Finally, I called Wansa and talked it over with her.

"Why should we take this so seriously?" I asked. "I am in fairly good health and can stand an operation, so why do we worry about it? I shall be utterly ashamed to sit around groaning with pain. The Hospitals are full of people who have had operations and lived through them. But just because Himself is so worried, we let the matter be settled."

"If there is nothing to fear it should be done, of course; but how can we tell? As long as Dada is worried and does not give his consent, what can we do? Until he recovers his own health, why give him anything else to worry about?"

The next morning, Himself went to the High Court as usual. I ate upstairs, and at about twelve o'clock Miss Benson, the doctor, made her regular call. While she was examining me, something happened, for suddenly I became very ill, my arms and legs stiffened and began to swell. In fifteen minutes my bracelets were so tight that they had to be broken off. I remained conscious but could not tell what was happening. Like the stone image in the Arabian Nights' tale, from my feet to my hips I was very stiff, and so numb that I had no sensation at all. My tongue felt queer, too. Miss Benson was frightened by all this, and she sent a note to the High Court to say,

"Mrs. Ranade's condition has suddenly grown worse,

and you must come quickly." Himself came at once on reading the note, bringing a doctor or two with him.

It was about 4 P.M. when they came. About an hour before that I had become somewhat easier, so that Miss Benson had felt encouraged enough to go home. The doctors who accompanied Himself came in, felt my pulse, listened to all the symptoms, and then told him the best thing to do was to operate. If left to run its course, there was a possibility of Tetanus.

Himself was greatly alarmed, and sent word to Miss Benson to "come next morning for a consultation with Dr. Dimak and two other experienced physicians, so that a decision on the case may be reached."

Having dispatched his note, he came in and sat by my bed until dinner time without reading or trying to answer letters as he usually did at that time of day. But it disturbed me to have him just sitting holding my hand, lost in anxious thoughts, so I tried hard to think of things to talk about, for I felt sure that in talking of other things he might forget his trouble. But no; he would answer merely "yes" or "no" — nothing more. I saw Sakhu, Nanu, Tara and Shanta playing in the living room, and I called Shanta in, thinking her chatter would help Himself to pass the time. But when I began to talk to her, he said,

"You are not to make the effort to talk today. If you talk I will send her out. If you still persist in talking, I will leave you, too. I've been sitting here all this time and I haven't said anything, have I? You have no business talking. Be quiet and get the rest

you need. That is why I have purposely sat here in silence."

About eight or eight-thirty, Bajaba came in to say that dinner was ready. Himself said to him,

"Tell the girls to bring my wife's dinner first. After she has eaten, I will come." So I ate and then he went down ; but he soon returned and sat down by my bed.

It finally dawned on me that he had decided to sit by me until I went to sleep. So I lay quietly, without moving. After a half hour, convinced that I was sleeping, he slowly and quietly rose and went into the living room.

That night, he did no reading nor did he have anyone rub him with oil. Until his usual bedtime, he sat on a couch in the living room, just thinking. In the room where I was sleeping there was a wooden screen, and his bed was behind it. Consequently, I could hear every move he made. He retired at his usual time ; but that night he hadn't a wink of sleep. Each time he turned from one side to the other, I heard him repeat his "Ram Ram"<sup>1</sup> as usual. Then, too, he came four or five times near my bed and stealthily listened to my breathing. When he first came, I was on the point of saying,

"Why have you come? Why haven't you been sleeping?" but I caught myself just in time. Had I said it, he would probably have realized that I hadn't been sleeping at all, and he would have come and sat by me all the rest of the night. So I kept perfectly quiet and didn't move. He stooped over to listen to

<sup>1</sup> Prayer.

my breathing and then noiselessly went away, and we both spent a sleepless night.

In the morning when he got up, he came at once to me and asked,

“Did you sleep? You aren’t tired or anything, are you?” “Of course not! I had a fine sleep,” I replied. So he said he would go out to get the household started, and ordered me to lie quietly there and not talk to anyone.

About nine o’clock, Miss Benson and the two doctors who had been summoned, arrived. They came in and examined me and then went out to discuss the case.

I have never known all they talked about out there that morning; but I do know they decided to operate the following day. Himself’s face showed this clearly; it looked so worried and distraught and sad. Yet, since it was Court day, he bathed and went to his work. As soon as Court adjourned that day, he omitted the usual walk he took for exercise and came directly home in the carriage. On arriving, he came at once upstairs and sat down by my bedside, not even pausing in his room to change his clothes.

Later, he changed his clothing and continued sitting beside me, asking how I felt and remaining quiet for a long time before he burst forth with,

“Shall they operate, think you? Doctor speaks ambiguously and not with conviction. Consequently, I am fearful and haven’t the courage to give permission lest it be a needless thing to do.”

As he spoke thus, I realized how deeply he was



questioning the whole matter. And from the sighs accompanying what he said, I was convinced that I must make him believe that I was not afraid and that I must encourage him. So laughing, I said very cheerfully,

“Well, what of that? Why are you so fearful? They will give chloroform and then operate, and I shall know nothing about the pain. You don’t have to see it. All you need do is to wait in the living room and not worry. No one is to come into the operating room with me. Miss Benson this morning promised me that only the lady doctors would be there. There is nothing to fear in operating, and you mustn’t worry foolishly. If I have done the usual work, I will have justified my existence. I’d rather die than live like a lame woman occupied with sitting in a rich man’s house, beautifully clothed and jewelled and waited on by many servants!”

He interrupted, saying, “Why bother yourself babbling such silly things? Why be so stubborn? Think a bit about what may be in others’ minds. Isn’t it better to delay the operation a day or two by lying still or sitting down at least? Even if you can’t move about the house to work, you can at least arrange it and see that it is properly done. Besides, you enjoy reading and writing. You could be carried downstairs, sitting on a chair, and could even go out to drive. That seems better to me. If you think this over, you will agree with me. Why persist in taking your life in your hand?”

As I listened and watched his face as he talked, the

things in his mind were so clearly reflected in his face that it touched my heart and the tears came to my eyes. I wanted to speak, but was unable to at the moment. Just then, the servant came to say, "Miss Benson has come and wants to see you."

"Tell her to come up. I'll be outside," he said to me, rising to leave, and added, "I'll return presently. Meantime, consider what I have said."

He and Miss Benson talked for a long time. They called Wansa upstairs to ask her something; but they didn't tell me anything except that they had agreed on the operation. The doctor came in and gave me medicine to take, directing me not to eat anything that night except perhaps a little milk, and in the morning to take nothing, not even milk or tea. I agreed, and took the medicine, whereupon the doctor left.

Soon after, Himself returned and sat beside me, but neither of us said one word. When dinner was announced, he realized that I was not to have any, and, sighing deeply, he arose and went down for his dinner. Afterward, he sat holding my hand and thinking as he looked off into space. Neither of us knew how the time was slipping by until he said, hearing a clock strike, "What time is that?" They told him it was eleven o'clock, whereupon he remarked in surprise, "The clock must be fast! Where is my usual ten-thirty spasm?"

We were all intensely surprised, and as a result were convinced that the doctors were correct in diagnosing his trouble as 'nervousness' and not 'organic.' It

was a great relief to me to know that when his attention was otherwise occupied, he didn't have a return of that trouble. A little later, Himself went to bed.

As on the previous night, we neither of us had any sleep this night. He turned from side to side, and each time, sadly and audibly, he repeated "Ram Ram." As I listened, it came over me forcibly what a state of mind he had been in for the past few days. And I couldn't keep from weeping.

"Tomorrow, if anything goes wrong, how terribly he will feel. He will be utterly prostrated with grief. Until now, I have seen to it that the things I could remember he might need were done for him, and he has not had to think of his own needs. If he should need anything in the night when I am gone, whom can he call? If any of the household are anxious or in need, they never tell him unless he asks about it. What a lot of trouble will develop for such a reserved person! More than that, he has never been willing that anyone except me should tend to his food, his medicine or massage his body or head. So now what will happen? He has recently been very ill. If I go, how will he be cared for? Having completed so happy and fortunate a life, they will call me blessed. Haven't I been praying for this for years? Children are the only lack to make our life perfect. Nevertheless, we have both learned to be happy as we are. We have never been bereaved nor in deep sorrow. On the other hand, we have filled up this deficiency by having others' children in our home. Have I not believed and hoped, right up to this day, that, without chang-

ing our condition of life, God would let me die first? Because, even in my high-born family there was no one like Himself in form, color, character or learning, and it was through the goodness of God himself that I had married him and my life had been blessed so richly. This marriage is for eternity, I firmly believe." These thoughts were with me all that day.

And as I lay thinking, I recalled his suggestion of the evening before, "Think a bit about what others are feeling." He had spoken gently, yet his voice was so sad and his face so distressed that, as I compared his sincere affection with these selfish thoughts of mine, I was surprised and disgusted with myself. When I realized what his state of mind was likely to be, my mind was utterly changed, and I felt that if God willed that one of us should endure pain, that his tender heart ought not to be the one to suffer because of me. A wife's truest obligation is to protect her beloved husband from suffering of any kind at any time. This is her desire throughout her life, and to this she bends every effort in things great or small. This is her blessed privilege and her religious duty. If she understands her husband's real feelings, and realizes the value of his great love, how can she take any comfort in selfish thoughts of her own death! With such meditations, I finally rested quietly, content with the will of God.

Himself arose from his bed early and came to ask if I had slept well, and I replied that I surely had. He sat beside me for a half hour. Apparently, he had decided not to mention the operation or anything

else, and not to seem too disheartened. Fearing perhaps that he couldn't keep his control very long, he suddenly got up and went out of the room. I was glad of it, for though I had determined to remain very peaceful, yet as he sat beside me, my will began to break and my emotions were deeply stirred. After he left, I covered my face and tried for twenty minutes to regain my control. Steadfastness comes when one's mind is freed from any desire. It was difficult to understand how the operation, which from the beginning had disturbed Himself but upon which I had insisted, should at this hour be distressing me!

He went out to prepare himself for the day, and then returned to sit by me. He had his tea there, though we scarcely looked at one another, or spoke. He seemed about to mention something that was on his mind, but he didn't. Just then the peon announced that Raghopant Nagarkar had come from Poona, and Himself went out quietly to meet him. Raghopant had arrived in response to a note from Wansa calling him to Bombay, because we felt that, at the time of the operation, there should be some of Himself's friends sitting with him and distracting his mind. About ten or ten-thirty, two people arrived to get things ready for the operation. They reported that Miss Benson and two other women doctors would come at twelve o'clock.

The message was received and Himself went down to bathe and eat dinner quickly. They were in the midst of the meal when Miss Benson and the others arrived. So I said to her, "Before they can finish their

meal, please give me the chloroform and operate.”

She hesitated. “How can I begin without his permission? He might be angry.”

But I said, “At such a time he will understand why you didn’t ask and will not be angry. So do as I say, please, as quickly as possible. When they come upstairs we will all lose our courage, and there will be useless confusion and delay. So begin at once. If Himself says anything, tell him that I begged for it and use my name; then there will be no argument.”

Consequently, she ordered preparations forward. Two women had come along to give the anaesthetic. As soon as they reported that they were ready, Miss Benson told me to get up on the table. And so, silently in the depths of my heart, reverently, I worshipped God and my guru and lay down on the table, and the two women gave me chloroform. Dr. Krishnabai Verlavakar, who was still a student at the time, was there to help Dr. Benson. Before I lost consciousness, the thought came to me that if things went wrong, I should never forget that I had gotten onto the table without asking or notifying Himself! Thinking how surely he would understand and forgive me, I became unconscious, and I didn’t begin to come to myself until some two hours later when the operation was completed and the doctors were lifting me from the table to my bed. Then I called for Himself.

He came at once and sat down, encouraging me, “Don’t be afraid; the operation is over; I’m sitting here and I will not leave you.” I was holding both his hands fast in mine; but I was only half conscious and

couldn't talk. A few hours later, I came really to myself, and felt so much better that I drank some milk. Then only did Himself leave me for a while. I was not allowed off my bed for the next three weeks, because Miss Benson had forbade me to sit up even in bed.

The astounding thing to record at this time is that the spasms, which Himself had suffered every night at bedtime since July, didn't bother once from the day of my operation until the end of three weeks, and we were all very happy about it. But our relief didn't last through another week. It was the time of the Dipvali holidays, and Himself had decided that he would take me to Matheran.<sup>2</sup> He sent the luggage and some servants on ahead, and next day said to Miss Benson,

"From tomorrow, I have three weeks of holidays. I have decided to take her with me to Matheran. Write out prescriptions for the medicines she needs and tell her everything she must do while we are away."

She replied, "Truly, she cannot be taken anywhere at all for another fifteen days. The treatment she has had must continue for some days yet."

This was very upsetting to Himself and I felt badly; but I could see nothing to do but obey. I pleaded with him,

"Since the luggage and the servants have gone on and it would be foolish to call them back, you go on and I will come in another ten or twelve days. You

\* A hill station near Bombay.

have been worn out by the wakefulness and anxiety of the last fifteen days, and in that air you will be refreshed and feel better. So you go now, and I'll come as soon as I can." He agreed finally, and the next day, taking Bhavaji along, he went to Matheran.

Some eight or ten days passed, and each day we exchanged letters. Then came a letter saying that his former complaint had returned, and every night regularly at the usual time, the spasms came and troubled him for some twenty minutes. We were greatly upset by all this, and when Miss Benson came I told her about it, and insisted that as quickly as possible I must go and take Sakhu and Nanu, because without the children he couldn't be happy.

"Himself is not well," I said. "The disease which had left him for a month has returned to him up there, and so I cannot stay here. It doesn't matter if I am a bit weak still. I really must take the children and go. Give me some pills or powders for emergencies and the medicines I have to take, or nothing at all. I am afraid to stay longer and must go tomorrow."

Accordingly, planning the trip with Wansa and my mother-in-law, we went the next day, with the children, to Matheran. We found Himself still suffering from the spasms; but the children brought him even more enjoyment than I had anticipated. Nanu, the pet, was only five or six years old and Sakhu had finished her eleventh year. She was studying in the 3rd English standard of the Alexandra High School. She had a Master at home who taught her Marathi. Him-



self was entirely devoted to her, and he was always praising her brilliant mind, her cleverness, beauty and kindness. He always stood up for her against her own humility. If I scolded her a bit he would take her part and scold me for her.

Little Nanu was an impetuous, stubborn, hot-tempered child, very self-willed and impudent ; but he had a very agile mind and began to read and write when he was only four. He was good at poetry, too. More than all the others, he loved to hear and to tell stories. Once he heard a tale, he could repeat it without a mistake. From his baby days, he was sure that everything of ours was better than that of other people. Even when other children's things really were better and newer and ours were truly old, it didn't bother him ; instead, he would maintain that ours were fine and theirs were bad, and would tease them by laughing loudly. His disposition was very entertaining to Himself.

Every day, for an hour or two after dinner, he used to have the children sit with him. He listened to Sakhu's English and Marathi lessons, asking questions and urging her to sing. And he also teased Nanu to recite poetry and tell stories. It occupied much of his leisure time. Sakhu liked to prepare and serve the afternoon tea and fruit. When he found how nicely she did it, he patted her on the back in approval. He remarked to me,

“She's going to be a grand woman when she's big ; you can talk to her now the entire day ; but tomorrow she will be your teacher.”

He certainly enjoyed the children and spent much time with them. The rest of his time, Bhavaji read to him from books brought from Bombay, until the vacation ended and we returned to our home.

## CHAPTER XXVI

"One thing has been settled in my own mind while we have been idling at Matheran," Himself remarked as we sat in the train on the way home. "If the doctors will not tell me what my trouble is, I will find out for myself. It is stupid to let this run on without knowing what it is and what to do about it."

Soon after, many books were sent to him and he began to study them. One evening he told me a story of a man who had dropped dead, and I asked,

"Why have you told me this story? What connection has it with your illness?"

"You must not jump at conclusions so," he answered. ~~There~~ is no connection. I merely told a story which came to my mind. You are becoming so apprehensive that there is no point in talking with you at all."

"That isn't true, and you know it. You have never had a disease that has bothered you as this one has. And although it has increased a little during the past two years, it isn't serious yet. How can I help feeling blue when you appear so sad and hopeless? Don't you realize what an effect that attitude in itself will have on your condition? You were far more ill at the time of the Plague, and I was really frightened then. Yet we went to Mahableshtar, and just one week of that climate cured you. This present illness is not so bad as that. Yet what can I do when you

have your mind so fixed that you cannot believe the doctors?"

He listened quietly enough to this, but answered,

"How can you say that my mind is fixed? It isn't. I read that story this afternoon and repeated it for you, and that's all there is to it. I haven't read the paper this morning. Go read it, and tell me what is in it at breakfast."

I realized his purpose, and feeling that no good would come from arguing about his state of mind, I picked up the paper and went away.

A few days later, he challenged the doctor to tell him his trouble. When he evaded a direct answer, Himself said,

"Well, if you won't tell me, I'll tell you. Isn't my real trouble Angina Pectoris? For several days I have been going through some medical books and, without any question, the symptoms under that heading are like mine. I am convinced that that is my trouble."

Dr. Rao sat in consternation for a few moments, though he let none of his thoughts show in his face, as he replied,

"You are correct in reading the symptoms of Angina Pectoris; but you are incorrect in thinking that you have it. Your complaint is only a semblance of the real thing and is called 'pseudo Angina.' There are many diseases which, though not real, have the effect of a real one on the patient. These are all called 'pseudo.'"

Himself's retort was,

“Doubtless something is ‘pseudo’ in this. Either the illness is ‘pseudo’ or your efforts to improve my condition are ‘pseudo!’”

Much excitement about the proposed trip to Congress<sup>1</sup> in Lahore soon put such things out of all our minds. Himself had not missed a single meeting in the eighteen years of the existence of Congress, and it never occurred to any of us that he should consider staying at home.

In spite of his illness, his work continued according to schedule, and he drove himself tirelessly through the reading of reports of the Social Conference. He spent endless hours in boiling down material to be used in his own address and in preparing a paper on Vasisht<sup>2</sup> and Vishvamitra<sup>2</sup> which he was to deliver.

My mind was made up that, unless he himself suggested it, I should myself offer to go with him that year, for I couldn't bear to think of his going alone. I was a happy woman one day when he voluntarily said, “You had better accompany me this year!”

With this matter settled, I cheerfully made preparations for the trip and arranged for the children to be cared for while we were away. Most of the Poona family had come down to see us before we started, and it was pleasant to have them all there. Sasubai and Wansa and all the others were by this time adjusted to my education, and the old bickering and criticism belonged largely to the past. They were on hand and could keep the household in order while I was away,

<sup>1</sup> ‘Congress’ has since then become the political party of Nationalism, working for independence.

<sup>2</sup> Hindu saints.

and none of them offered a protest at the idea of my accompanying Himself. Times certainly had changed !

The night before we were to leave, Himself startled me by saying,

“Is everything ready ? I’m thinking of taking Sakhu along. Pack her things for her, and be sure to take plenty of warm clothes ; it will be cold in Lahore.”

“Do you think it will look well to take her and leave Nanu ? If you take one, you should take both,” I answered.

“Don’t argue about it, but do as I say,” he replied. “I would gladly take Nanu ; but it will be cold there, and he is small and would need an extra servant just to care for him. We are taking only two servants, and I do not want you to be tied down to a child. You will have plenty to do in arranging things for us and caring for me when I have a spasm. Sakhu will be a help, not a hindrance. So get her things packed.”

It meant early rising the next morning to get her preparations under way. I didn’t mind that as much as I minded the idea of leaving Nanu behind. So I called him and gave him a bag with several rupees in it, and told him to keep it carefully and to buy himself some pictures and sweets while I was away. He was delighted, and it gave him something to think of when the time should come for our start.

The morning train brought the Congress contingent from Poona to join our party for the trip. Himself had had a particularly severe spasm the night before. His breathing was difficult and he could not even lie

down in bed. He scarcely slept a wink all night and was quite exhausted the next morning.

However, he arose as usual and bathed before joining his friends, who greeted him with expressions of sympathy and solicitous inquiry as to his condition. He impatiently said,

“Nonsense! Last night’s episode was quite as usual. Why take it seriously? It is some sort of disease and it acts that way occasionally.”

The arrival of the doctor put the affair on a different plane. They discussed it with Gokhale and, finally, on the doctor’s advice, it was decided that Himself should not try to go to Lahore. It was a bitter pill for him to swallow, and the tears were in his eyes as he prepared a telegram announcing this to the Committee. His voice trembled as he said,

“This is the first time in eighteen years that there has been a break in my attendance.”

Gokhale was ready to carry the report which was prepared, and as soon as they left, the rest of us went up to Lonavla for a change and rest. The Poona family urged Himself to come there to consult the doctors, but he refused, and we returned to Bombay in time to greet the delegation when it came back from Lahore. Their report was inspiring, and Himself felt relieved when he realized what able and devoted men were ready to take over his responsibilities.

By this time, none of us could fail to see that his trouble was getting a firmer hold upon Himself. He seemed sad and troubled. He was fidgety, and kept telling me or Wansa to reduce the expenses, or to have

the garden dug up, or to wind up affairs in Bombay. It finally came out that he was planning to ask for six months' leave, after which he would retire and leave Bombay. He tried to speak casually about all this as though it indicated merely a long journey; but I was not deceived, and with difficulty concealed my concern and suffering.

Later, when the leave was granted, he talked over our impending reduced income, and discussed ways and means of making ends meet. I assured him that it could be done, adding,

"It would be easier if we could purchase a house, for the rents here in Bombay are almost prohibitive, as you know. Why do we not break up the Poona establishment and all live somewhere together?"

But he would not consider this, saying, "Let them stay in their familiar places and among their own Puranas and modes of worship. I shall have to live on in Bombay, and I am asking you whether you can, with your reduced income, keep up both places."

I insisted that we could manage by eliminating things that were not necessary. It would mean that everyone must be careful and learn to be content with what he had. Nevertheless, I continued to urge him to purchase a place. He agreed to this, provided we found one suitable and not too old.

The first serious consequence of the granted vacation was that the two Court servants, who had been with Himself for so long and were so attached to him, had to be dismissed. They were overcome with emotion and begged to remain.



"Officers even on leave keep their attendants," they said. "Please ask him to write a note to headquarters about it."

"That may be some people's custom," I said, "but it is not ours. Just do as he said, and if we need you later we will ask for you."

With great sadness, they fell at my feet. Then they went into the other room and, one by one, prostrated themselves, touching his feet with their foreheads, and then departed with the tears running down their faces. It was all very touching, and I was overcome with emotion so that I left the room quickly. Later, washing my face in cold water, I found the children and took them into the room to cheer up Himself.

He looked very solemn as we entered, and he drew Shanta to him, motioning me to sit on the couch. Chatting with the children, he glanced at me as he said,

"Now that we have sent away the Court attendants, you must find another for yourself and the children. You can get one for a small sum, perhaps."

"What do we want of an attendant?" I replied. "We have boys and a cook and a coachman, a night guard and others."

"It isn't a question of 'wanting,'" he answered. "From your childhood you have been used to an attendant whenever you went out. The children, too, are accustomed to having one."

His voice sounded labored and slow, and I answered quickly, "What! You have no need of an at-

tendant and let him go, because you can manage without one, and then insist on one for us ! How foolish ! We, also, can manage without one. Riding in the carriage, we do not need one anyway, and it will only be six months before these Court attendants will be with us again."

We both began teasing the children and trying to conceal from each other what was on our minds. But I think we both realized that we knew each other too well to be deceived.

At dinner that evening, Wansa began to urge her brother to change his physicians. She had never been reconciled to his dependence upon western medicine, and urged him to call a *vaidya* who knew Indian medical practices. But he only laughed it off and distracted her by ordering us to send all of the household possessions we could spare, and all the animals, to Poona.

Next day, he notified our landlord that we would be leaving at the end of the month, and we women were indignant when the man installed a "To let" sign out in front ! Since we were paying rent until the end of the month, it seemed premature for him to put up the notice. At dinner, we were complaining, but Himself said,

"Don't you realize that he needs to find someone to take it over as soon as we leave ? You must not be unreasonable."

Our Wansa was persistent, and said that he should not have given notice so soon, especially as we would want the house again at the end of six months. She

never knew when to stop talking ! Finally, Himself, in a burst of irritation, said,

“Why do you pester me so ? Why seem so stupid ? You both understand perfectly well that I am really ill and probably will not return to my work ever again !”

“What an idea !” I protested. “You have been a much sicker man several times before and have always recovered splendidly. I wish that you would put this idea out of your head and try to believe the doctor.”

Wansa and I sat on talking. We believed the doctor, who assured us that these spasms were just nerves ; but we saw no way of making Himself believe it. His anxiety only made the attacks worse. He seemed well in every other way. He had no cough, no temperature and had a good appetite. I admitted to her that, so far, I had found courage to be cheerful and optimistic before Himself, but that at other times I was obsessed with fears and anxiety.

Before I went upstairs to give him his medicine, Wansa said something I have never forgotten,

“Whatever the doctors say, the trouble seems pretty serious. But God cares for everyone and He will watch over us. He is the true vaidya and the true doctor. We worship Durga. Put your trust in her and keep your mind quiet. We are all watching you and depending on you to keep hopeful and courageous. The household Lakshmi<sup>3</sup> should not weep at any time !”

About this time I noticed a change in his habits.

<sup>3</sup> Goddess of prosperity.

For several months he had been interested in finding out what his trouble was, and used to discuss it a great deal. Latterly, he had very little to say about it. He kept up his work and, not seeming to mind interruptions, often kept on writing while he talked with one and another. If anyone asked how he felt, he said, "Oh, it's about the same, sometimes better, sometimes worse. One's body is always a nuisance! I'm keeping on with the medicines and will be better presently."

He made it a point not to waste any time and, keeping occupied, concealed his suffering and displayed a mind at peace with itself. I knew that he suffered greatly with pains in his legs and back; but he rarely mentioned them except when they were very bad, and then he asked me to massage them. Yet when night came and he went to bed, he was restless, turning from side to side and asking me to rub first one spot and then another. His nights were wakeful, and he often pretended to sleep so as to free me to lie down and get the rest I needed.

Each morning, however, found him up and following his routine of bathing and worship, from which he turned to his writing. After the noon meal, we fell into the habit of sitting about chatting lazily. Each of us came to feel that every word that fell from his lips was somehow sacred and very serious. In the presence of pain he always spoke of courage and fearlessness, not of anxiety and hopelessness. His chatter with the children was as light and inconsequential and amusing as ever. I felt that it was an effort and one that was staged for our benefit.

A new symptom appeared one morning, when I found his feet badly swollen. I asked the doctors about that when they came, and they assured me that it was nothing to worry about, just poor circulation which would improve quickly. Nevertheless, that was an anxious day.

In the evening after dinner, he read for a time, and then the family gathered about to entertain him. The children sang and Wansa repeated some devotional poems by Kabir <sup>4</sup> and Mirabai.<sup>5</sup> His spasm was a longer one that night, and we all worked frantically with fans and applications to bring on the relieving yawn. Then we knew that another day had been given to us! And I thanked God for it.

There was no doubt that Himself felt that this was to be his last sickness. But I couldn't reconcile myself to such an idea. My heart was full of dread. Why shouldn't this be one of the times we hear about, when the gods take pleasure in rewarding a devotee with release from pain and restoration to health? Will God be more negligent now than He was at Karmala? I clung desperately to the hope that He would not allow this dreadful calamity to fall upon me, and that Himself would recover.

That night he got no sleep until three or three-thirty; but then he fell asleep. I was considering whether or not to lie down for an hour, when Wansa appeared and said,

<sup>4</sup> A Bhakti poet.

<sup>5</sup> A Bhakti poetess.

“How’s this? Haven’t you been asleep? Has he been worse tonight?”

I answered, “Not very much; but his usual spasm was more severe than usual and lasted longer. He was quite worn out. He didn’t get any sleep until three or three-thirty. We have kept the big *punka*<sup>6</sup> going, and those men have had no sleep. But Himself fell asleep about half an hour ago.”

“Don’t you sit up now,” she said to me, “Go and rest an hour on the children’s bed. Go on! Don’t sit there. I’ll sit right here and not go downstairs at all. You go and get a good rest.”

So I went and lay down and slept for three-quarters of an hour. But I thought I heard him call, and so I waked up, startled to find it broad daylight. I got up then and, washing my face, prayed to God and then went to Himself’s bedside. He had just wakened and opened his eyes and was softly repeating his usual *shloka*. His face was pale and he looked worn. It frightened me. Making some sort of excuse, I went to look at his feet, and discovered as I uncovered them that both were much more badly swollen than for the last few days. My heart sank within me. My hands and feet began to shake and my heart was suffocating me. Nevertheless, I sat down behind him and started rubbing his back and feet. As a result, he began to feel better and presently got up, prepared for the day and went as usual to the living room, where

<sup>6</sup> A fan hung from the ceiling, kept in motion by a servant who pulled it by a rope.

he had the boys read to him. About ten-thirty he finished his work and went out for his bath. I was there to help him bathe, and in the process he chanced to look at his feet, and said,

“Why are they so swollen today, think you?”

I replied, “For no special reason. It’s likely to be so when one sits so steadily in one place.”

When he was sitting at his breakfast, he again spoke to Wansa about the swelling, and she said to him,

“Well, you’d better stop the doctor’s medicine. What can he tell by feeling the pulse and reading the thermometer! To cure a disease, you should do less work and rest more. How do you expect not to get weary, reading incessantly all day? I think you should take a real rest and see what happens.”

He made no reply to her suggestion. He was pretending to eat; but instead of putting the food in his mouth he just sat rolling it about with his fingers. He’d start to lift it to his mouth and then put it down again. “Give me this” or “Take that away”; this went on for a long while. His mind was deeply engrossed with something. Wansa noticed this, and just to say something, she began,

“Aren’t you going to Mahableshtar soon? If you do, you’ll soon feel better; but you have no business to keep up so much reading. If you obey the doctor’s orders and take a real rest, you’ll be better; if not, and you carry on as you do here, it makes no difference where we go!” and she sat silent as she finished.

Then he said,

“Who knows what you all are thinking? I con-

tinue to be amazed at you. Apparently you believe that I am stubbornly doing what will increase my pain, even though I know better. Now listen : I am taking medicine night and day, as directed, for two reasons, first, that I may not be blamed as stubborn, and second, that I may do as much as possible before my next life. Aside from this, what reason is there for medicine or doctors ! Whatever means and instruments there are for reducing pain, that one should know.

“Why can’t you understand this ? You keep chattering, ‘Rest, rest !’ And what is rest ? Will one find any rest in giving up the occupation to which one is accustomed, of reading stories that the mind enjoys, in which one finds comfort and which help one to forget the irritating little pains ? Let those who enjoy resting in idleness, do so ! The man who has to drag out an empty existence without any work to do will think that if he dies today it will not matter,” and he heaved a great sigh as he looked about. Realizing that we had all finished eating, he continued, “Get up now. I’ve finished.”

He looked directly at me and half laughingly said, “I haven’t eaten your food today as I should have, I know. Somehow, I don’t seem very hungry.”

I made no reply, because as I listened to his talking, and especially to the last sentence, my heart broke within me. I had been standing there, controlling myself with difficulty, until he should have finished eating ; but I couldn’t keep control any longer, and so, putting out the dessert fruit and *supari*, I went off



upstairs to my room and locked the door on the inside. It was a long time before I could stop crying and control myself. Presently the force of agony spent itself, but my heart was not eased. I scarcely knew what I was doing nor what it was all about.

Finally, however, I got angry at my stupidity and, mastering myself, went downstairs, but I was not happy. I kept sighing. My throat frequently contracted and the tears came to my eyes. Between hope and fear the hours passed, and I was bewildered by the awful uncertainty. I kept on doing what had to be done each day, but it was all done by force of habit. I couldn't keep my mind on anything. I couldn't sit still very long. I would try going to sit somewhere else to find peace of mind, but it eluded me. If I sat downstairs with the women, I would think that a mistake, and would rise quickly to go upstairs to sit near Himself in the living room. Yet everywhere my unrest persisted. Can there be a worse enemy in the world than one's own mind! How often I determined not to be controlled by the foolish imaginings of an evil mind, only to be defeated by it.

I thought, "My mind will not be quiet; but what can I do about it? To whom go for shelter? Who like my own mother will avert this disaster? God! Let me come before Thee in my shame. Until today, why has so little trouble come to me? At those times, Thou hast run to me as I ran, and by healing Himself hast lifted me to the mountain top. Now, wilt Thou trample me beneath Thy feet? I believe that Thou wilt never treat me so, Narayana! From my earliest

recollection, Thou only hast known the place which was the storehouse of all my joy and well-being. Take care of it, I beg of Thee. I can conceive of no greater blessing than that. In all my life, I have had no children ; but I have never realized how great was my loss because I was so blessed and satisfied in his companionship. However rich and influential may be the women in palaces of rulers and *jahagirdars*, yet assuredly they are no more fortunate than I. There is nothing to compare with the happiness and comfort that have been mine since I was married to Himself ! Oh God, Thou art the giver of all good gifts. Thou hast the power to protect him for me."

Even with thoughts like this churning about in my mind, there was no relief for me anywhere. Apparently, Himself was in a similar state of mind. He had always maintained that whether in happiness or in sorrow, hopeful or hopeless, one should not let the shadow of pain appear on one's face. So I now began to realize that, although he knew his condition, he was patiently controlling all his mental and physical suffering. It was very evidently his desire, as well as mine, that I should constantly sit beside him and not leave him at all. But sometimes I simply had to go away for a few minutes to conceal my ungovernable grief. When I arose to leave him, he would grasp my finger and say,

"Don't leave. Where are you going now? You are getting up only because of your distress. What's the use of such nonsensical getting up and down? If there is anything to be done, tell the girls or have a

servant stay near by. I don't want you to be coming and going."

So I merely said, "All right," and sat still; but the state of my mind was amazing. All day I had to sit by him and talk to him, but as far as possible I talked without looking at him. I managed to avoid meeting his eyes.

This was my condition. But I felt sure that Himself was in much the same state of mind. I was utterly terrified as the darkness of evil imaginings enveloped me. I feared that if we looked into each other's eyes, my own dearly bought control and his, also, might fall to pieces, and then what would happen! We were both bravely dragging out the days, displaying a firm and calm exterior and concealing the torture of bees stinging within us! I kept living through hours of hope that he might even yet recover, and those were hours of comfort to me.

But God's will was different! I couldn't grasp it! For by the fear that fairly sears the heart, that very condition I have called comfort did not endure even another twenty-four hours! The time had come, when, loosing hold of the feet of the divine one who in his own form receives our service; the one in the light of whose brilliant, glorious and blessed presence I had spent twenty-seven years of utter happiness and contentment — bereft of all this, I must plunge into the utmost darkness, filled with anguish. That divine sun suddenly setting has left only the close blackness of desolation! Shiva! Shiva! How unfortunate am I!

My face is turned toward the time  
When the evil and good in life  
Will blend in eternal beauty  
And end all strife.  
I long for the dawn of that day  
When my soul, so eager and fleet,  
Set free from this body of mine,  
Will cling to Thy feet.  
The days of this age are long !  
I weary of merit and pain.  
Impatient, I strain for release  
To be with Thee, again.  
My thinking is broken, confused ;  
My emotions are endlessly stirred.  
I long for tranquility  
That comes at Thy word.  
Serenity is not for me —  
My terror will never cease —  
Let Thy mercy grant me, I pray,  
A speedy release.  
Though with words full of longing I plead,  
With agony, boundless grief ;  
O God, why continue to test me  
And send no relief ?  
Tuka says, I have heard of Thee —  
Thou dost hasten to bless the meek.  
O Lord, may Thy merciful kindness  
Be mine, as I seek !

— Tukaram translated by K. V. G.