

VIGNETTES OF INDIA

BY NICHOLAS ROERICH

Is it really India? A thin shore line. Meager little trees. Crevices of dessicated soil. So does India hide its face from the south.

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Multicolored is Madura with the remains of Dravidian strata. All the life, all the nerve of the exchange, was near the temple. In the passages of the temple are the bazaar, the court, the sermon, the reciter of the Ramayana, the gossip, and the sacred elephant who wanders in freedom; and the camels of the religious processions. The ingenious stone carving of the temple is colored with the present-day crude colors.

Sarma, the artist, sorrows over it. But the city council did not listen to him, and colored the temple according to their own plan. Sarma is saddened that so much of fine understanding is gone, and has as yet been replaced only by indifference. . . .

Sarma inquires about the condition of artists in Europe and America. He is genuinely surprised that the artists of Europe and America can live by the labor of their hands. It is incomprehensible to him that art can provide a means of livelihood. With them, the occupation of artist is the most profitless one. There are almost no collectors. Sarma himself, tall, in white garments, with sad, calm speech, awaits something better, and knows all the burden of the present. . . . Hard is the life of the Hindu artist. Much resolution is needed in order not to abandon this thorny path. Greetings to the artists of India! Why is it that in all countries of the world the condition of scientists and artists is so precarious?

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Thorny also is the way of the Hindu scientists. Here, before us, is an example, in a struggling young scientist, a biologist and pupil of Sir Jagadis Bose.

He began his laboratory in the name of Vivekananda. In his peaceful little house above the laboratory is a room dedicated to the relics of Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, and other teachers of this group. This young man, pupil of the closest pupil of Vivekananda, carries into life the principles of this master, who fearlessly proclaimed his evocation to action and knowledge. In this little top chamber he formulates his thoughts, surrounded by the things which belonged to his beloved leaders. One remembers vividly the portraits of Ramakrishna and his wife. Both faces impress one with their purity and striving. We sat in complete silence near this memorial hearth. Greetings!

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Who can explain why the path of knowledge and beauty is the most difficult? Why does humanity accept with such hesitation all that is predestined? It is therefore the greater joy to see in India the signs of an ascent of knowledge and art. It is joyful to see that in India the number of schools is increasing, and that legions of new enlightened workers for science and beauty are ready to serve in the victory of evolution.

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In Calcutta, not far behind the city, are two monuments to Ramakrishna. On the shore, Dakshineswar, the Temple, where long lived Ramakrishna. Almost opposite, across the river, is the Mission of Ramakrishna, the mausoleum of the teacher himself, of his wife, of Vivekananda, and a collection of many memorable objects. Vivekananda dreamt that here should be a real Hindu University. Vivekananda took care of this place. There is a great peace here and it is with difficulty one realizes oneself so near to Calcutta with all the terror of its bazaars and confusion. . . .

On the memorable day of Ramakrishna as many as half a million of his admirers gather.

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On the shores of the Ganges, a grey-bearded man, cupping his palms like a chalice, offers his entire possessions to the rising sun. A woman quickly telling her rhythms performs her morning *Pranayama* on the shore. In the evening she may again be there, sending upon the stream of the sacred river a garland of lights as prayers for the welfare of her children. And these fireflies of the woman's soul, prayer-inspired, travel long upon the dark watery surface. Beholding these offerings of the Spirit, one can even forget the stout priests of the golden temples. We are minded of other things. We recall those Yogis who send into space their thoughts, thus constructing the coming evolution. Not the usual priests these, but active hermits; they are bringing our thought near to the energy which will be revealed by scientists in the very near future. . . .

Everywhere, much incense, rose water, and fragrant sandalwood. Hence the smoke from the bodies in the Burning Ghats of Benares is not turbid. And in Tibet, also, cremation is used.

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Regard the gentle child games of the Orient—and listen to the complicated rhythms of the chants and soft music. There are not evident the profanities of the West.

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Each day a woman's hand molds the sand at the entrance of the house into a special design. This is the symbol that within the house all is well, and there is neither sickness, death nor discord. If there be no happiness in the house then the hand of the woman becomes stilled. A seeming shield of beauty is placed before the house by the hand of the woman at the benevolent hour. And little girls at school early are being taught a variety of designs for the signs of happiness. An inexplicable beauty lives in this custom of India.

Vivekananda called the women of India to work and to freedom. He also asked the so-called Christians, "If you so love the teaching of Jesus why do you not follow it?" So spoke the pupil of Ramakrishna who passed through the substance of all teachings and learned through life "not to deny." Vivekananda was not merely an industrious "Swami"—something lion-like rings in his letters. How he is needed now!

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"Buddhism is the most scientific and most coöperative teaching," says the Hindu biologist, Bose. It is a joy to hear how this truly great savant who found his way to the mysteries of plant life speaks about the Vedanta, Mahabharata, and about the poetry of the legends of the Himalaya. Only true knowledge can find the merited place for all existing things. . . .

Bose's mother in her day sold all her jewels in order to give her son an education. The scientist, in demonstrating "His kingdom," says: "Here are the children of the rich in luxurious conditions. See how they become puffed and baggy. They need a good storm to bring them back to healthy normalcy." Knowing the pulse of the plant world, the scientist approaches wholesomely all the manifestations of life. . . . One of Bose's best books was written on the heights of the Punjab in Mayavati—in the shrine of Vivekananda. Vivekananda departed too soon. Bose and Tagore—noble images of India!

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Some of the most cosmogonic parts of the Vedas are written by women, and now in India has arrived the epoch of the woman. Greetings to the women of India!

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Ramakrishna says: "In Atman there is no distinction of male or female, of Brahmin or Kshatrya and the like."

Ramakrishna executed the work of the sweeper to show, personally, that there were no distinctions.

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Sir Jagadis Bose affirms that the

sensitiveness of plants is completely astonishing. As the plants feel the formation of a cloud long before it is visible to the eye, so the East feels the thought at its inception.

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In the close interrelation between the visible and the invisible, and in the epic simplicity of their interplay, lies the charm of India.

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In sudden support of fundamental Buddhism, the realist of realists, Huxley, says, "No one but a superficial thinker rejects the teaching of reincarnation as nonsense. Like the teaching of evolution itself, reincarnation has its roots in the world of reality and is entitled to the same support commanded by every consideration which evolves from analogies."

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L. Horn writes: "With the acceptance of the teachings of evolution, the old forms of thought everywhere are crumbling. New ideas arise in the place of outlived dogmas, and we have before us the spectacle of a general intellectual movement in a direction becoming ever more strange, parallel with Eastern philosophy.

"The unheard of speed and variety of the scientific progress current in the last fifty years cannot but call forth an equally unprecedented hastening of thought in the broad non-scientific circles of society. That the highest and most complete organisms develop out of the simplest organisms; that upon one physical basis of life stands the whole living world; that there cannot be traced a line which divides animal and vegetable kingdoms; that the difference between life and non-life is a difference in gradation and not substance—all this already has become commonplace in the new philosophy. After the recognition of physical evolution it is not difficult to say that the acknowledgment of psychic evolution is only a question of time."

The observation of the East astonishes and rejoices one. And not the

obvious power of observation which leads to a dead stereotype but observation, fine and silent in its substance. One remembers how the teacher asked the newly arriving pupil to describe a room, but the room was empty and in a vessel was swimming only a tiny fish. In three hours the pupil wrote three pages, but the teacher rejected him, saying that about this one little fish he could have written all his life. In technical imitation is revealed the same sharp observation. In the adaptation of the meter of a song, in the character of a call, in movements, you see an all-powerful culture. Somewhere the Hindus enveloped in their mantles were compared to Roman senators. This is an inane comparison. Rather liken them to the philosophers of Greece, and still better, call them the creators of the Upanishads, Bhagavad-Gita, Mahabharata. For neither Rome nor Greece existed when India was flourishing. The latest excavations begin to support this indubitable deduction.

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Hindus regard objects of art with fine understanding. From a Hindu you naturally expect an interesting approach and unusual remarks, and so it is. Therefore to show paintings to a Hindu is a real joy. How captivatingly they approach art! Do not think that they are occupied only in its contemplation. You will be astonished by their remarks about tonality, about technique, and about the expressiveness of the line. If the observer be long silent, do not think that he has become tired. On the contrary, this is a good sign. It means he has entered into a mood, and one can expect from him especially interesting deductions. Sometimes he will tell you a whole parable. And there will be nothing vulgar or crude about it. It is astonishing how transformed are the people of the East before the creations of art. Indeed it is more difficult for a European to enter into the current of creation, and as a rule he is less able to synthesize his impression.

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India, I know thy sorrows, but I shall remember thee with the same joyous tremor as the first flower on the spring meadow. From thy Brahmins we shall select the greatest who understood the Vedic wisdom. We shall select the Rajah who strove for the finding of the path of truth. We shall notice Vaishya and Shudra who have exalted their craft, and labor for the upliftment of the world. A boiling kettle is the forge of India. The dagger of faith over a white goat. The phantom flame of a bonfire over a widow. Conjurations and sorcery. Complicated are the folds

of thy garments, India. Menacing are thy vestures blown by the whirlwind. And deadly burning are thy inclement rocks, India. But we know thy fragrant essences. India, we know the depth and finesse of thy thoughts. We know the great AUM, which leads to the inexpressible Heights. We know thy great Guiding Spirit, India, we know thy ancient wisdom! Thy sacred scriptures in which is outlined the past, the present, the future. And we shall remember thee with the same tremor as the most precious first flower on the spring meadow.

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN GERMANY AND FRANCE

BY SHIV CHANDRA DATTA, M.A., B.L., F. R. ECON. S.

Prof. Benoy Kumar Sarkar (whose views we are considering here) attaches great importance to education as being helpful towards bringing out what is best in every man or nation. The spread of education, general or technical, and the heightening of the standard of education he regards as important because education is one of the many factors which contribute to the efficiency of a people. "There are many other factors besides education which play a *formative force* in the human personality. But all the same, the importance of education, literary, scientific and technical, in *individual or collective efficiency*, cannot be entirely ignored. In no scientific study of a *people's working capacity or possibilities of achievement* should it be reasonable to leave out of consideration its educational institutions, *primary, secondary, university and professional.*" (*Comperative Pedagogics*, p. 1).

While in no way ignoring the importance of general education in contributing to the efficiency of a people, Prof. Sarkar attaches the very greatest importance to vocational education because of its very great help in contributing to the individual greatness of a people. It will be remembered that we have already mentioned that, according

to him, advanced vocational education constitutes one of the factors which lie at the foundations of modern economic life.

Prof. Sarkar has carried on a first-hand study of the educational institutions and systems of almost all the advanced countries, with more or less intensity. So far as vocational education is concerned, he has paid the greatest attention to the systems prevailing in Germany and France, and next to these, to those prevailing in Great Britain, the U.S.A., Japan, Italy and the U.S.S.R. We shall deal with the vocational education prevailing in the advanced countries in the order mentioned, and after that we shall close with a few remarks and statistics about general and professional education and educational finance.

In studying the facts and figures given in this connection, however, it should be borne in mind that the factual contents of the terms 'schools', 'colleges', 'universities', 'higher' or 'lower' professional institutions, etc., are not absolutely the same in the countries under consideration and also that considerable adjustment in the official figures had to be made by Prof.