VIGNETTES OF INDIA

BY NICHOLAS ROERICH

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

* 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?

* 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!

* 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.

* 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.

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 is he needed now!

"Buddhism is the most scientific and most cooperative 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, Mahabarata, 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!

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!

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

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

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 scrip-
tures in which is outlined the past, the
present, the future. And we shall re-
member thee with the same tremor as
the most precious first flower on the
spring meadow.

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN GERMANY AND FRANCE

BY SHIV CHANDRA DATTĀ, 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 educa-
tion 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, can-
not 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.”
(Comparative Pedagogics, p. 1).

While in no way ignoring the impor-
tance of general education in contribut-
ing to the efficiency of a people, Prof.
Sarkar attaches the very greatest
importance to vocational education be-
cause of its very great help in contribut-
ing 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 institu-
tions and systems of almost all the
advanced countries, with more or less
intensity. So far as vocational educa-
tion is concerned, he has paid the great-
est 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 men-
tioned, 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.