

# Life in Baroda, 1893–1906

## The Swaying Sensation

I was standing on a scaffolding which was swinging to and fro. At one point I saw the walls nearby swinging like a pendulum. I understood the reason, but the sight of swinging walls was so vivid that I put my hand on the wall nearby to convince myself that it was not moving — yet the “eye-mind” refused to accept the evidence of the “touch-mind”!

But what was it due to? The sense of swinging of the scaffolding communicating itself to the walls as it were in the impression upon some brain centre? After travelling long in a boat I had once or twice the swaying sense of it after coming off it, as if the land about me was tossing like the boat — of course a subtle physical impression, but vivid enough. 4 April 1935

## Maharashtrian Cooking

I was just invited by the Dewas Maharaja for tea. I hope he will give me good cakes!

I hope it did not turn out like my first taste of Mahratti cookery — when for some reason my dinner was *non est* and somebody sent to my neighbour, a Mahratta professor, for food. I took one mouthful and only one. Oh God! sudden hell-fire in the mouth could not have been more surprising. Enough to burn down the whole of London in one wild agonising swoop of flame!

15 September 1936

## An Attack of Smallpox

A book says one attack of smallpox generally protects for life; but second attacks are not uncommon.

Well, there are people who say that smallpox attacks immunise for only a few years.

But if it is as you say, then there are others, I suppose. There is X among the servants for instance who nearly died of smallpox. I myself had a slight attack in Baroda soon after I came from England — so you needn't try to come up and vaccinate me.

13 April 1937

### The Power of Prayer

As for prayer, no hard and fast rule can be laid down. Some prayers are answered, all are not. An example? The eldest daughter of my Mesho, K.K. Mitra, editor of *Sanjibani*, not by any means a romantic, occult, supraphysical or even imaginative person, was abandoned by the doctors after using every resource, all medicines stopped as useless. The father said "There is only God now, let us pray." He did, and from that moment the girl began to recover, typhoid fever and all its symptoms fled, death also. I know any number of cases like that. Well? You may ask why should not then all prayers be answered? But why should they be? It is not a machinery — put a prayer in the slot and get your asking. Besides, considering all the contradictory things mankind is praying for at the same moment, God would be in a rather awkward hole, if he had to grant all of them — it wouldn't do.

7 October 1936

### The Charm of Kashmir

Quite agree with your estimate of Kashmir. The charm of its mountains and rivers and the ideal life dawdling along in the midst of a supreme beauty in the slowly moving leisure of a houseboat — that was a kind of earthly Paradise — also writing poetry on the banks of the Jhelum where it rushes down Kashmir towards the plains. Unfortunately there was the over-industrious Gaekwar to cut short the Paradise! His idea of Paradise was going through administrative papers and making myself and others write speeches for which he got all the credit. But after

all, according to the nature, to each one his Eden.

7 November 1938

### **The Age of Swami Brahmananda**

Captain Guha, an Assistant Surgeon, asked me whether there was any proof that Swami Brahmananda of Chandod lived for 400 years. Could you possibly enlighten me?

There is no incontrovertible proof. 400 years is an exaggeration. It is known however that he lived on the banks of the Narmada for 80 years and when he arrived there, he was already in appearance at the age when maturity turns towards over-ripeness. He was when I met him just before his death a man of magnificent physique showing no signs of old age except white beard and hair, extremely tall, robust, able to walk any number of miles a day and tiring out his younger disciples, walking too so swiftly that they tended to fall behind, a great head and magnificent face that seemed to belong to men of more ancient times. He never spoke of his age or of his past either except for an occasional almost accidental utterance. One of these was spoken to a disciple of his well known to me, a Baroda Sardar, Mazumdar (it was on the top storey of his house by the way that I sat with Lele in Jan. 1908 and had a decisive experience of liberation and Nirvana). Mazumdar learned that he was suffering from a bad tooth and brought him a bottle of Floriline, a toothwash then much in vogue. The Yogi refused saying, "I never use medicines. My one medicine is Narmada water. As for this tooth I have suffered from it since the days of Bhao Girdi." Bhao Girdi was the Maratha general Sadashiv Rao Bhao who disappeared in the battle of Panipat and his body was never found. Many formed the conclusion that Brahmananda was himself Bhao Girdi, but this was an imagination. Nobody who knew Brahmananda would doubt any statement of his — he was a man of perfect simplicity and truthfulness and did not seek fame or to impose himself. When he died he was still in full strength and his death came not by decay but by the accident of blood poisoning through a rusty nail that entered into his

foot as he walked on the sands of the Narmada. I had spoken to the Mother about him, that was why she mentioned him in her *Conversations* which were not meant for the public — otherwise she might not have said anything as the longevity of Brahmananda to more than 200 years depends only on his own casual word and is a matter of faith in his word. There is no “legal” proof of it. I may say that three at least of his disciples to my knowledge kept an extraordinary aspect and energy of youth even to a comparatively late or quite advanced age — but this perhaps may be not uncommon among those who practise both Raja and Hatha Yoga together.

1 February 1936

### **Learning Gujarati**

I learned Gujarati not for the literature but because it was the language of Baroda where I had to live for 13 years. I have now picked it up again because there are so many Gujarati sadhaks who do not know English — just as I am picking up Hindi now.

25 December 1935