

Martha Root's travels in India, Burma and Australia—her death in Honolulu¹

First of the Bahá'ís to arise for service in response to the Master's Tablets revealing America's Spiritual Mission in 1916 and 1917, Martha L. Root in her very last days continued to consume the candle of her mortal life as teacher and valiant herald of the Bahá'í Faith. Death overtook this great and renowned servant of Bahá'u'lláh at Honolulu on 28 September 1939, extending her career into higher worlds. When the frail body could endure its burden no more, death cut short her intention of returning to America in order to devote herself to assisting the Inter-America Committee in its task of establishing the Faith in Latin American lands. It was in South America that Miss Root began her international teaching mission in 1919. The example of her life and the influence of her self-sacrificing spirit have, however, proved an invaluable influence and stimulant to all the workers in this field. Perhaps in death she can accomplish even more than in life.

Previous volumes of *The Bahá'í World* have traced the steps of this unique Bahá'í career. In the present work we close the noble record with an account of her teaching activities in India, Burma, Australia and New Zealand. First, however, we should follow the broad outlines of her successive journeys as they were summarized in the memorial tribute prepared by the American National Spiritual Assembly and published in *Bahá'í News* of November, 1939, following the national gathering held in her honor in the Foundation Hall of the Bahá'í House of Worship on October 29 of that year.

"It would be impossible for the Bahá'í world to trace in its full and rich detail her untiring services. In 1919, we find her visiting every important South American city. Possessing no Spanish or Portuguese literature, and without speaking knowledge of these languages, she was, with the help of translators, heard and read by thousands, and because of her, the first Bahá'í booklet in Portuguese was prepared by Brazilians for publication.

"In Europe and Asia, thousands heard her message, from the humblest firesides, to the palaces of royalty. To Thomas Masaryk, first president of the Republic of Czechoslovakia, Martha gave the Bahá'í Teachings; and to King Faisal of Iraq; to Y. S. Tsao, president of the Tsing Hua University, who translated many Bahá'í writings into Chinese; to Prince Paul and Princess Olga of Yugoslavia; to Nishuama, head of the Board of Religions of Japan; and to Queen Marie of Rumania, of whose interview the Guardian himself wrote:

'One of the visible and potent effects which this historic interview proved capable of achieving was the remarkable appeal in the form of open letters which. Her Majesty freely and spontaneously caused to be published to the world at large, testifying in a language of exquisite beauty to the power and sublimity of the Message of Bahá'u'lláh.'

"With what tenderness our hearts follow her on her journey of October 1933, to Adrianople, where the Blessed Perfection had 'planted a seed under every stone'. Through her we are welcomed by the Governor and Mayor. With her we kneel reverently in the Muradiyyih Mosque and sense 'how far Bahá'u'lláh had come to meet our Western World!' Through her eyes, many times tear-dimmed in that city, we see the gentle

¹ Current Bahá'í Activities, *The Bahá'í World* 1938-1940, vol. 8, pp. 60-73.

Muṣṭafá Big, who had been in the Presence of the Beloved and was able to tell us of His gardens, His house, His great generosity, and of the reverent esteem of His fellow citizens. Between the lines of Martha's gentle pen appears the persuasion of her own indelible impression upon Adrianople.

"Martha even traveled to the outposts of civilization. In 1935, she journeyed to Iceland, where a radio station turned over its News Hour to her dynamic message, and where newspapers printed for the first time Bahá'í utterances in Icelandic.

"A last touching tribute comes to us from the Bahá'ís of India and Burma, who, unaware of her approaching departure from this life, wrote in their Convention report the news of her spiritual victories in the present year. 'The most outstanding feature in the year under report has been the teaching activities of our beloved sister, Miss Martha L. Root. This star servant of Bahá'u'lláh toured from Bombay to Mandalay, and from Srinagar to Colombo. Wherever she went, she delivered the message of Bahá'u'lláh in her own convincing way, and published the divine Cause amongst almost all of the educated people of this great continent In Sindh, she visited Karachi and Hyderabad. In Karachi she attended the tenth Convention of the Bahá'ís of India and Burma, and probably did the greatest service of her life. She stayed in that town for three months and got the book *Ṭáhirih the Pure* printed and mailed the world over. It was here in this city that she met Sadaq Viswani and made a deep impression on the mind of that saintly man. ... In Shimla she graced the first Bahá'í Summer School of India and Burma with her presence and drew down the blessings of God on this institution. In Peshawar, Rawalpindi, Gujrat, Gujranwala, Sialkot, Lahore, Amritsar, Jullundur, Ludhiana, Delhi, Patiala, Aligarh, Lucknow, Allahabad, Benares, and Patna, she visited colleges and universities, and delivered the Message of Bahá'u'lláh to students, professors, and intelligensia of the universities of India Miss Martha Root has opened the whole of India for us, and it now devolves upon us to so utilize these openings as to produce the best of results.'"

The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of India and Burma published extensive reports of Martha Root's public activities in those countries. The following excerpts will indicate the scope of the mission she undertook at an advanced age, and its results in promoting the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh.

"Miss Martha Root arrived in India from Ceylon on 15 October. The believers of Bombay accorded her a right royal reception. The National Spiritual Assembly had also fixed their half-yearly meeting to be held in Bombay in order to meet the beloved sister. Miss Root stayed in Bombay for 5 days and these 5 days were gala days for the believers of the place. While the Bombay friends held meetings and arranged for lectures, which were fully reported by the press, the NSA in consultation with Miss Root, chalked out a program for her.

"After attending the public meeting on the Birthday of the Báb, which was presided over by an ex-Mayor of the Town, Miss Root left for Surat.

"Surat—During her two days' stay here Miss Root met lawyers, judges and other notables of the town at the home of Mr Vakil and delivered a public lecture in the Arya Samaj Hall. This was attended by 250 to 300 people—students, lawyers and other notables. The press published elaborate articles and thus a good publicity was achieved for the Divine Faith.

"Poona—Owing to her brief stay here no public lecture was arranged; but she met press representatives and the believers of the place. She visited the Bahá'í School and the Bahá'í Cemetery. To the friends she delivered a talk on teaching. Miss Root will visit Poona again when she returns from her tour in South India.

"Rangoon—Leaving Poona on 26 October she stayed one day at Bombay and then left for Burma where she arrived on 2 November. The believers of Rangoon had chalked out a busy and elaborate program for her. She spoke at the YMCA (Town Branch), Arya Samaj (Central), Theosophical Society, Brahmo Samaj, Malabar Club and Rotary Club. Press publicity had preceded her arrival and when she arrived all the leading dailies of Rangoon published glowing articles about her and about the

Cause she had come to teach. Rangoon *Times*, widely circulated English daily, published an interview with her about Bahá'í work in Shanghai. Rangoon *Times* has been devoting weekly two to three column space to Bahá'í articles for the last 11 months. Rangoon *Gazette*, another English daily, had an equally fine interview of more than a column and in addition there was an editorial about the history of the Bahá'í Faith. Her lectures attracted large numbers of hearers and were presided over by religiously inclined public men. In fact, Miss Martha Root created a stir in the religious circles of that great city of 500 thousand souls comprised of almost all civilized nations of the world.

"Miss Root had two meetings with the Bahá'ís of Rangoon in the Ḥaẓíratu'l-Quds (Bahá'í Hall). The meeting with the children was very interesting. She started a children's class and gave the first lesson to youngsters. This class, the Rangoon Spiritual Assembly is determined to continue, in remembrance of the visit of our beloved sister.

"Mandalay—Miss Root arrived in this ancient city of Upper Burma on 10 November. She was received at the station by the believers led by our revered Bahá'í teacher Siyyid Muṣṭafá Rúmí. She delivered a public lecture in Mandalay Municipal Library. The attendance was the largest of any public Bahá'í lecture given up to this time in Mandalay. The Headmaster of the Normal School U. Thet Swe, BA, LLB was the Chairman. Some of the hearers came later on to see Miss Root and asked questions. Bahá'ís who live in towns near Mandalay came all the way to see their beloved guest.

"Toungoo—On leaving Mandalay Miss Root detrained at this town of about 23,000 inhabitants. No Bahá'í teacher has ever before visited this place. It was through the efforts of Dr M. A. Latiff, that the town was opened. He had gone to the place and had arranged for a lecture in the Jubilee Library. Dr Bahl, Civil Surgeon of the district presided. He also gave a dinner in his home after the lecture and four interested people came to meet the Bahá'í teacher. Miss Root took the train that same night and nine people who had attended the lecture were on the station to see her off. It is a great thing for our Faith that Toungoo is opened and we have our dear brother Dr M. A. Latiff to thank for it.

"Daidanaw (Kungyangoon)—Accompanied by Siyyid 'Abdu'l Hussain Shirazi and Mr Siyyid Ghulam Murtaza 'Ali, Miss Root reached this Bahá'í village of 800 believers on 20 November. The believers of the place had made elaborate preparations for reception of their beloved guest. A special roadway. was cut through the grass from the main road to the Assembly Hall, which was tastefully decorated. The Assembly Compound was full of believers when Miss Root's car arrived. Mrs Kahn garlanded her amidst the acclamations of Yá-Bahá'u'l-Abhá. She met these friends and they chanted holy songs and prayers. Miss Root writes: 'What a royal welcome we received! Never shall I forget their chanting and the reverence and love in their kind faces.'

"At 4 p.m. Miss Root drove to Kungyangoon, an important town of 6,000 people situated about 3 miles from the Bahá'í Village. The lecture was held in the National School under the Chairmanship of Dr Gurbaksh Singh. It was translated into Burmese by U. Sein, the headmaster of the School. There were about 150 people present including the Township judge, the staffs of the National and Board Girls' High Schools. The lecture was well received. Dr and Mrs Gurbaksh Singh called on Miss Root that evening and had a long talk with her.

"Next day the friends again met in the Assembly Hall. After the usual prayers; Mr M. I. Kahn read a beautiful address of welcome to which Miss Root replied in suitable words and the meeting closed in an atmosphere of spiritual joy and happiness. Mr Murtaza 'Ali describes the scene of Daidanaw as follows:

"The friends of Daidanaw gave a right royal reception to our sister Miss Martha Root. She was deeply moved."

The remaining reports were prepared by Miss Root herself for the National Assembly of India and Burma.

"Calcutta—A great scholar, Professor M. H. Hidayat Hosain of the Royal Asiatic Society Library of Calcutta, a leading Orientalist of the world, has written about

Qurratu'l-Ayn. Perhaps he is one of the first great Indian scholars to write about the Faith. He said that he had met the fine Iranian Bahá'í teacher, Ibn Asdaq, who came to India about 1902 or 1903. 'He was so charming, so spiritual, so cultured' said Professor Hosain, 'and we read the *Íqán* together in Persian!'

"The Bahá'í Cause has made remarkable strides in Calcutta since I visited that city in 1930. They have a good hall, fine meetings and the membership seems to have increased five times its number in 1930.

"Shantiniketan, India, at the International University of Dr Rabindranath Tagore.

"Mr Isfandiar Bakhtiari of Karachi, a member of the National Spiritual Assembly of India and-Burma, and I visited Shantiniketan on 13-14 February 1938. We were guests in the School Guest House. It was a great privilege to meet Dr Tagore and to hear him talk with deep love and appreciation of 'Abdu'l-Bahá whom he had met in Chicago in 1912. I am writing the interview for *The Bahá'í World*, volume 7. Dr Tagore said that the Bahá'í Faith is a great ideal to establish and that they in Shantiniketan welcome all the great religious aims and will be most glad if a Bahá'í Chair of Religion can be arranged in their school.

"He and Mr Bakhtiari spoke of Iran (Mr Bakhtiari is an Iranian, he came from Yazd to India about twenty years ago), and of Dr Tagore's trip to Iran. The Poet asked particularly about the progress of the Bahá'í Faith in the Land of Its Birth, and praised the tolerance and fineness of the Bahá'ís.

"Dr Tagore's School has a very excellent selection of Bahá'í books in the Library and they take great interest to have it as complete and up-to-date as possible.

"A lecture was given in the hall before the whole student body and the professors. Questions were asked and answered. They brought all the Bahá'í books for an exhibition in the hall, and near the close of the lecture I explained the books, one by one. Mr Bakhtiari was invited and chanted some Bahá'í prayers in Persian. (Many of the cultured people of India know Persian, and the Urdu language, which is used by several millions of people, is akin to Persian.)

"The Associated Press and the United Press used interviews and one professor whom I had known in Marburg University and who knows the Cause well wrote an article about the lectures for the Associated Press of India.

"Madras—Mr Bakhtiari and I worked in Madras, 25 December-3 January 1938. We met the few friends and talked about how to promote the Faith, and had the Feast. We visited all the large libraries to see what Bahá'í books they have. The University of Madras Library has an excellent collection and the Librarian, Mr S. R. Ranganathan, is keenly interested to build up the department of Bahá'í books. He is in correspondence with American Bahá'ís, the NSA, but up to this time he had never met a Bahá'í. His face is full of light. He said the Bahá'í books are drawn out and much read. (We later found many who have been reading the books.)

"Adyar Theosophical Library, at Adyar, Madras, has also a good collection of Bahá'í books, and we found that many university students living in that section have been reading these books. We visited editors of all the leading newspapers of Madras and all used interviews followed by other articles about the Faith and resumes of our lectures later. Over two hundred articles about the Bahá'í Faith have appeared in the newspapers of Ceylon and India from 13 September to 13 February 1938.

"A large public lecture was given in Ranade Hall, a cultural center whose directors are connected with the university and some newspapers. Dewan Bahadur K. S. Ramaswami Sastri, retired District Sessions Judge and one of the brilliant scholars of Madras presided; the lecture was under the auspices of the South Indian Cultural Association. In introducing us he spoke concisely about the Cause, quoted *The Dawn-Breakers* and Words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá—has since presided again and has written for me to use in the West, two short articles, which were really his introductions; these are most interesting because they show the Bahá'í Faith in its relation to Hinduism. He is a great Hindu Indian scholar who has arisen to write about the Faith. I lectured in the YMCA in Madras, Mr Bakhtiari

chanted and we both spoke before the Brahmo-Samaj Society of Madras. Brahmo-Samaj is a very quickened spiritual movement of India, a little like our Unitarianism of the West, its members are always friendly and very sympathetic to the Bahá'í Teachings. The Madras Brahmo-Samaj has since translated into Telegu language, *What is the Bahá'í Movement?* booklet and one thousand copies are being distributed. This is the first booklet, I think, that has ever been published in Telegu, and it is a fruit of the visit to Madras.

"Also, two thousand booklets, *The Dawn of the New Day*, translated into Tamil language are being published (were to be finished by February 15), Mr Ishaq Pahlavan, a devoted faithful Bahá'í in Madras helped with this. The Tamil newspaper that published the booklet used the history and principles in a nearly three column article that has a circulation of twenty thousand. We felt very happy about these booklets because Tamil is much used in Southern India, Ceylon, Straits Settlements and a large colony in Durban, South Africa.

"Mr Bakhtiari, Mr Pahlaván and I went out to Adyar to three sessions of the International Theosophical Convention held 26 December to 3 January 1938; we met many friends. The Vice-President of the International Theosophical Society, Mr Datta, said to me that the Bahá'í Teachings are the highest essence of Hinduism. Mr Bakhtiari who did such great work returned to Karachi the evening of 3 January.

"As Madras is such an important spiritual and cultural center in Southern India, Mrs Shirin Fozdar and I came to Madras when we were returning from Colombo and stayed for six days, 18–23 January, met the press, lectured in Pachaippa College of Madras University, also gave a public lecture in the P. S. High School, Mylapore Section, to several hundred students; lectured at an annual meeting of the Brahmo-Samaj ladies, and Shirin spoke at an evening meeting of the Brahmo-Samaj and broadcast.

"Some of the young men who had been interested in the Cause when Shirin went to Madras in March of last year, arranged a meeting in their school where we spoke and they said they would form a study class. Mr Pahlaván has a meeting sometimes for a little group of fine young men who before had been Muslims. A group had been formed last year, may an Assembly soon be started.

"Colombo, Ceylon—Dr and Mrs Fozdar and I went to Colombo, Ceylon, for ten days, January 5 to 16, 1938. It was my second trip to Colombo since 13 September. The press used many favorable and long articles about the Bahá'í Faith, the editors and journalists were our true friends. A newspaper in Tamil language also published the history and principles translated into Tamil. I spoke before the Rotary Club of Colombo and the speech was broadcast from the luncheon table. Shirin spoke over the radio about Qurratu'l-'Ayn and sang one of the latter's poems. A gramophone record was made of this song. Both broadcast speeches were printed in full in the Colombo papers. One public lecture was given in Colombo University under the auspices of the University College Economics Society, and another public lecture took place at the Ramakrishna Mission School. We spoke before the teachers of a Buddhist school for girls, and Dr and Mrs Fozdar spoke at the Parsi Club. Some very fine Muslim people invited us to their homes, so also did some Christians, Hindus and Buddhists. We invited a number of friends to our hotel. The Mayor of Colombo called. Shirin spoke before the Women's International Club. It was all a most worthwhile visit to Colombo. Dr Fozdar after helping us much, returned from Colombo to his hospital work at Ajmer.

"Bangalore—Mrs Fozdar and I came *via* Madras to Bangalore and Mysore where she had been ten months before. Three Bahá'í lectures were scheduled for the three days of our stay, 24–26 January, at the Mythic Society, a high Cultural Society in Bangalore, in Daly Memorial Hall, a building given by the Maharaja of Mysore. The Secretary of the Mythic Society, a lawyer, Mr S. Srikantaya, ably presided at the three lectures; all were reported in the *Bangalore Post*. Questions were asked and answered and each day the audience increased. Teachers from the Fort High School present invited us to come over to their school and speak to seven hundred boys. The Dewan of Mysore, an Iranian, a Muslim, is so fine in

his character that Bahá'ís could well say he is 'Bahá'í' in spirit, in the sense that he seems to have 'all the human perfections in activity.' He received us and did everything to help us—he helps the Muslims, the Hindus, the Jews, the Christians. He invited us to a great garden party where he was the guest of honor and introduced us to some friends as Bahá'ís. The Vice-Chancellor of Mysore University and his wife were in Bangalore and invited us to their home; he was most kind and helpful both times Mrs Fozdar came. One of the Magazines in Bangalore promises to publish three articles about the Cause. One man in Bangalore said in fun: 'The people swarm like locusts to eat the Bahá'í Teachings!' It was not quite like that, but certainly people were interested and you can see from this account that we found friends everywhere who helped us to spread the Fragrances of the Teachings.

"Mysore City—The next days, 27–29 January were spent in Mysore City. Mrs Fozdar and I each gave two lectures in the University and she spoke to an Educational Association. One Professor who presided at my lecture said that he had read seven or eight Bahá'í books carefully, and that when a distinguished Ramakrishna Swami spoke in that same University Hall on 'Modern Religions' and did not mention about the Bahá'í Faith, this Professor who was acting as Chairman said that one of the most important modern religions had been left out and he gave the history of the Bahá'í Movement. I told the audience it was like that in our country; at the World's Parliament of Religions, in Chicago, Exposition, in 1893, a Professor, founder of Beirut University, has spoken about the Bahá'í Faith and now we have thousands of Bahá'ís in America.

"One Professor said: 'What we professors and students need is a great quickening of religion in our inner life. If the Bahá'í Faith brings that, we will study it.'

"We met one Professor who is a relative of Qurratu'l-'Ayn and he has made a deep study of the Bahá'í Teachings.

"The Mysore University Library in the past year has gathered quite a good selection of Bahá'í books and these are being read by the students. The librarian and the former librarian are most friendly to our Cause. I believe that great scholars from Mysore will write about the Teachings.

"One Professor in the University is the Director of Broadcasting and Mrs Fozdar and I both gave radio talks which were sent out to six newspapers and magazines in India. A young private secretary from a neighboring state told us that when he visited the Hill Palace of the Maharaja of Mysore in 1933, there was a book on the table, the life of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, which he carefully studied. The Mysore University Library will have pictures of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and a picture of the Bahá'í Temple at Wilmette to hang on the Library wall.

"Mrs Fozdar, as I said, had been to Bangalore and Mysore ten months earlier and made many friends and this helped us very much. May she go again and many times to Southern India! She is not only a very fluent speaker but they called her the Bahá'í nightingale of India when she sang the Qurratu'l-'Ayn songs!

"Hyderabad, Deccan—Then we came to Hyderabad, Deccan, where we were the guests of the State and stayed in the State Guest House. We arrived at 5 p.m., and at 6:30 o'clock I broadcast. This radio talk was published in full in their newspapers.

"I broadcast again and Mrs Fozdar gave a radio speech about Qurratu'l-'Ayn and sang. A gramophone record was made of her speech and song and the talk was published. We gave a public lecture the second evening under the auspices of the Writers' Association of Hyderabad. We spoke before the Hyderabad Ladies' Association to two hundred and fifty members and the wife of the second son of the Nizam presided. This beautiful young Princess is a grand-niece of the late Sultan Abdul Hamid of Turkey. Lady Akbar Hydari, wife of the Prime Minister, is President of this Association. I spoke in Osmania University and at the same hour Shirin spoke at the Nizam's College. Excellent articles appeared in the newspapers. The Secretary of the Prime Minister, a Cornell man, had attended a Bahá'í Conference in Geneva, NY, where he had been the guest of Mr and Mrs Willard McKay. There he had met Miss Mary Maxwell;² he said he felt even then she had a very high destiny

² Later called Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánum Rabbani.

and that she was the most radiant girl he had ever met. We were invited to the home of the Prime Minister and to the home of Sir Amin Jung; the latter had received Mrs Schopflocher, later myself, then Keith and then Mr Schopflocher. He loves the Teachings and says they do not take away from any other Faiths. Says if he would be able, he would go to the Bahá'í Convention in Karachi in April, but he is quite ill. The Bahá'ís of Hyderabad met us at the train, helped us, and came with us to the station when we left. They came to the public lectures and brought booklets for distribution. Mrs Fozdar spoke to a large group in a private home the last evening and I broadcast. We were in Hyderabad only three days, evening of 31 January to early morning of 4 February.

“Poona—We left on an early train for Poona and arrived there in the night. Poona is a Bahá'í paradise and one of the high spiritual lights in India. The first morning, February fifth, we had a beautiful program of welcome in the Bahá'í Hall in the National Hotel. The pupils from the Bahá'í school marched to the hall. All Bahá'ís were present, and after the program tea was served.

“The entire stay was so well arranged that even New York and Tīhrán would say ‘Bravo!’ I think the plan could with profit be carried out in other cities. At 7 p.m. that first day, the President of the Local Spiritual Assembly gave a tea in the Bahá'í Hall for twenty-four journalists of India. I had prepared my speech (the resumé) to journalists very carefully and made carbon copies. I spoke on ‘Journalism and the Cause’ and then read to them my interview and distributed it to them. Shirin spoke and there was a resumé of her talk. Questions were asked and some of the journalists came each day afterwards and were very interested. (If it had been a big reception we could not have spoken intimately of journalism and the Cause and what Bahá'u'lláh said about the press.)

“The next forenoon, Sunday, at ten o'clock, a great lecture was staged in the

cinema theatre, 'Deccan Talkies' to more than a thousand people, 99 per cent of whom were university and college students. Many came, who could not get into the hall. We had the loudspeaker. Mr K. F. Nariman, one of the very popular men in India, was the Chairman, and he was sympathetic to the Faith. Fourteen copies of the resumés of our speeches were given to the journalists whose papers represented several different languages. A number of students and journalists came to the hotel afterwards to ask further.

"In the afternoon we visited the Bahá'í School to meet the pupils.

"The following morning, Monday, the Bahá'í school presented a Peace Play and Bahá'í Songs for us. In the afternoon a tea was given in the Bahá'í Hall by the Local Spiritual Assembly President to the educators of Poona. I spoke to these professors about the Bahá'í Faith in various universities of the world and what great scholars have said and written about it. At each tea there was a fine and beautifully arranged exhibition of Bahá'í books and we explained the books for they were interested. Shirin spoke on Qurratu'l-'Ayn and sang, and we both gave resumés to the reporters. The professors said they would gladly arrange lectures in their schools when we come again.

"The third afternoon the tea by the President was for the lawyers of Poona. We had a talk and discussion followed; they, too, said they would arrange lectures when we return, for most of them belong to clubs.

"One lawyer said in fun: 'I belong to Brahmo-Samaj but we are a little lazy in working; but I say "it is all right, for the Bahá'ís are promoting all the ideals for which we stand!"'

"That night the Bahá'ís gave a farewell party for us. In the times in between lectures and interviews we had a number of heart to heart talks about Haifa and about promoting the Cause.

"The Bahá'í School in Poona is a model and I believe great Bahá'í spiritual teachers for the Cause will come out from that school. They are getting a marvelous training there.

"The Secret of the very wonderful Bahá'í work in Poona is mobilized Unity for service! The Holy Spirit is with them, attracted by their unity. The Bahá'í world over the five continents has been gripped at times by Poona's work, and travelling over India three times as I have; I have met a number of fine people who said they first heard of the Teachings when staying for a few days in the National Hotel of Poona. I must give tribute to Poona because since 1915, when I first met them, I feel they are 'living the life' up there.

"Bombay—Early the morning of 9 February we entrained down to Bombay. Bombay is the 'Mother City' of all the Bahá'í work in India. Many dear Bahá'í friends met us at the station with smiles and garlands of sweet jasmines and roses and fragrant bouquets. Such a great program was planned, but alas, as all the chairmen and most of the journalists of Bombay were in Haripura for two weeks at the fifty-first Congress of India, it was thought best by all of us that we postpone the intensive campaign in Bombay until March twenty-first. However, in these three or four days there we had a glorious welcome reception in the Bahá'í Hall and they asked us to tell about the tour. We lectured in C. L. High School, Dadar, Bombay, to more than five hundred students and met with the Bahá'í friends who are arranging our program. We spoke Sunday in Bahá'í Hall to a large audience. We were so happy to see all the friends. There are nearly eight hundred Bahá'ís in Bombay.

"I came from Surat to Bombay 15 March 1938. Wrote a radio speech and broadcast it over The All-India Radio, 17 March. Finished some writing for *The Bahá'í World* Volume 7. Beginning 21 March, Naw-Rúz, the Bahá'ís of Bombay had arranged a remarkable program. We had a Feast in Bahá'í Hall in the forenoon and another Feast for several hundred in the evening. The youth gave a Bahá'í play and original poems to welcome me. 22 March, the former Mayor presided at a large gathering where I spoke under the auspices of the Social Workers' Society of Bombay.

"Mrs Shirin Fozdar arrived in Bombay 23 March, and we spoke together on every program in that city. 23 March, the LSA of Bombay gave a reception in Bahá'í Hall

for two hundred guests—journalists, educators, statesmen and others. The Mayor of Bombay came and he acted as Chairman for our short talks. The press took photographs and used good articles. Lectures were given before Theosophical Societies, Brahmo-Samaj, Buddhist Society, Arya Samaj, and an Oriental Institute, High Schools and a number of public lectures were given in the large Bahá'í Hall, centrally located. The Bahá'í community in Bombay is the 'mother' group, the largest, the oldest, and all the friends did glorious work.

"5 April, I came with Mrs Shirin Fozdar to her home in Ajmer for one week's visit. Dr Fozdar had arranged everything so well. They have interested many friends. We spoke at the Ajmer Women's Club, and I lectured in Government College, Ajmer. (Mrs Fozdar had spoken there a short time before.) Every day friends came or we went to their homes. In Ajmer I wrote my speech, 'What the Bahá'í Faith Can Do for Poverty', for the Indore Conference.

"14 April, I arrived in Indore to take part in the All-Faiths' League Convention. The Poona friends had so kindly mimeographed five hundred copies of my speech and forwarded them to Indore. The United Press in Indore sent out two hundred copies of my speech with advance interview to newspapers throughout India. It is still appearing in newspapers; only yesterday I received *The Rangoon Times*, with the entire speech, four columns, printed in the July 1, edition. In the first two weeks it came out in newspapers aggregating 300,000 copies altogether. In Indore I also published seven thousand copies for distribution, and Bombay gave us two thousand *Dawn of the New Day* for distribution at the Conference. Mrs Fozdar arrived in Indore 17 April. She is Honorary Secretary of this League. Interviews and her speech were sent out that day all over India.

"We both spoke at the opening of the Convention, 18 April, more than fifteen hundred people were present. I read the following cablegram from our beloved Guardian: 'Martha Root, Care of Postmaster, Indore. Convey All-Faiths' League Convention expression my best wishes for success deliberation. May divine Guidance enable assembled representatives achieve their high purpose and extend range their meritorious activities.—Shoghi.' Bahá'í literature was given out at every session during the four days. All religions were represented in the audiences, delegates coming from all parts of India; the thinkers of India were there! 1,500 people were present at every evening session and often more than 1,000 at the day session. There were 1,500 present when Shirin spoke and when I spoke on 20 April.

"The Dewan (like a Prime Minister) of Indore who opened the Convention, Sir S. M. Bapna, invited Shirin and me to his home to tea. For twenty years he has tried to interest the people of Indore in establishing courses in the study of Comparative Religions in all the schools of Indore. He has had a textbook written and published for the children and another is being written for the boys and girls, and a third textbook on Comparative Religions for the College students. How we hope the Bahá'í Faith will be included in those textbooks! If you have any Bahá'í books that you think would help him, please send them. Thanks. His address is just Indore, India. He belongs to one of the foremost families of Rajputana and Central India. His ideals are most lofty and he has set his heart on having these textbooks as perfect as possible—and representative of all the religions.

"Our Bahá'í Faith was criticised by one ultra-orthodox group at the Convention. I answered it, Shirin answered it another time, and non-Bahá'ís championed our Faith! Really the criticism did no harm!

"One man had a paper on the need of a great universal religion, and explained what it ought to inculcate. A great Hindu professor arose and said: 'The Bahá'í Faith we have been hearing so much about in this Convention is a universal religion and it inculcates all your suggestions and more. The Bahá'í Faith is *ready*, why not accept it for a universal religion?' The man who had prepared this paper had not heard of the Bahá'í Teachings until he came to this Convention; he was very much impressed by the Message. It is remarkable how many Religious Conventions are being held in different parts of India, and the NSA of India and Burma are invited to send, and do send, Bahá'í speakers to every one of them. The NSA

is very efficient and very, very spiritual; they work almost beyond human endurance and they are as united as one soul in nine bodies.

"From Indore, Shirin and I came to Karachi, arriving 25 April. Here the NSA of India and Burma held their annual Bahá'í Convention during Riḍván. There was a stir throughout Karachi that week, everyone was talking about the Bahá'í Faith. Everything was so well planned in advance both by the NSA and the LSA of Karachi. We had a tea for the journalists and our chairmen the day after our arrival. The Convention opened the following day, 27 April. A great meeting was held in the largest hall in Karachi, Khalikdina Hall, that same evening. The man who became Mayor of Karachi a few days later was our Chairman. Mr Abbas 'Ali Butt of Simla, Prof. Pritam Singh of Lahore and I spoke. 28 April, the Mayor presided and Shirin Fozdar and I spoke at a public lecture in Theosophical Hall. Mr H. Manji of Bombay also spoke. 29 April, the LSA of Karachi gave a great garden party, inviting 350 guests to Bahá'í Hall Gardens. It was a beautiful event and almost all religions were represented. Here, too, Abbas 'Ali Butt and I spoke. 30 April another public lecture was held in Theosophical Hall. Mr Jamshed Mehta, Mayor, who had been my Chairman when I was in Karachi in 1930, acted as Chairman. Prof. Pritam Singh and I were the speakers. Sunday, 1 May, we spoke in a Jain Temple at 8.30 a.m. and in Sharda Mandir, a large school, at 6 p.m., and a great public meeting was held in Bahá'í Hall in the evening when the speakers were Abbas 'Ali Butt, Mrs Hashmatullah of Delhi and myself. 2 May we were invited to speak at a public lecture arranged by the Parsis and held at Katrak Hall. The Managing Editor of *The Daily Gazette* presided. Mrs Fozdar and I spoke. Some of the NSA members and Mr Manji spoke in a school at 6 p.m. These were only some of the events. Mr Momenzadih gave tea for the delegates to meet the Iranian Consul and his wife. The LSA rented a large bungalow next to Bahá'í Gardena as the home for all delegates during that week. The Bahá'ís had breakfasts and teas and dinners for the Bahá'í friends to meet one another and several people of Karachi had dinners or teas where we spoke informally. During the eight days the NSA held their sessions.

"Then the NSA members left, and I began the task of printing my book *Táhirih the Pure, Iran's Greatest Woman*. Mr Isfandiar Bakhtiari helped me every day, always going with me to the printer. It was so difficult to get the accent marks, etc., and it has taken three months, but patiently at last it is finished, three thousand copies. It is announced in Appendix III that some of the copies have gold leaf letters—we couldn't get the gold leaf, and I could not delay my scheduled tour any longer, so they are printed in two styles only, red with gold-dust letters and in blue paper covers. One thousand copies have just been mailed out.

"During the three months here in Karachi, besides the book, I have spoken several times each week, or met people in small groups. In Bahá'í Hall there were two public meetings each week and one Youth Group meeting. I was invited to speak again in several societies and to some new organizations. Some of the Bahá'ís had groups in their homes, and I invited people to my place. The Mayor came and he invited us to his home and to several events where he was the guest of honor. He is a Muslim, a liberal Muslim, and he has read a number of our books. He asked me to speak in the discussions at the meeting in Municipal Corporation Court Hall which he called to form a Universal Peace Brigade in Karachi."

On 23 May 1939, Martha Root drafted a report of her work in New Zealand which was later reprinted and distributed throughout the Bahá'í world by the Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Haifa, Palestine. We cite the following passages:

"I arrived in Auckland, 26 April.

"The beloved Bahá'í friends met me at the pier; dear Mrs Charlotte Moffitt of Sydney (I had known her in London) came with me for two weeks, so it was like a 'group' coming to Auckland. The friends were so happy to meet her, and she is so radiant and happy, it was indeed 'spiritual skylarking' for us all during the heavenly days working together.

"I had been in New Zealand in September, 1924, and Margaret Stevenson, Ethel Blun-

dell and Hugh Blundell and their mother had been with me in Haifa, in March 1925; these three, with the other believers, gave us such a sweet and glorious welcome! When you come to New Zealand you will be in love with every one of them!

“Just as on my first visit here the first meeting was in the home of the dear Stevenson sisters, so this time, too, our first gathering—the Feast—was in the same house of dear Margaret and Liliás. Keith Ransom-Kehler (she came here in 1931) her spiritual children were present and their spiritual children, Keith’s spiritual grandchildren, all so illumined and capable, how proud she must be of them! And the pioneer Bahá’ís here, saints of God every one of them, have interested other new souls, so that the Bahá’í Faith in Auckland has developed in the sixteen years in a manner as thrilling as any romance, the greatest romance of all, because this is the romance of religion.

“Such a program! Such an intensive spiritual drive during the past month! The next day, April 28, I spoke in the morning to the Travel Club, which has a membership of 750 and 200 in the waiting list. I used the microphone. It was a great opportunity and people from this lecture and from many others continued to come to other Bahá’í gatherings. That same afternoon I spoke before the Pen Women’s Club, about 150 being present. Some of these friends later presided at other lectures. The Press had interviewed me at the ship, and every public lecture was reported; Auckland was most generous and discerning in publicity. Most public lectures were followed by questions and answers, and at nearly all, tea was served. New Zealand and Australia are most hospitable nations; their peoples are altruistic and honestly work for the good of all; they are interested in Truth.

“It would take too long to tell you about the 25 public lectures—the Fabian Club; the People’s University; the Unitarian Church (and this pastor first heard of the Bahá’í Faith at the great lecture of 600 people which I arranged for the Jenabe Fazl in Rabbi Wise’s Church in St. Louis, in 1920); the Esperantists’ Club; the Business Girls’ Luncheon (for 400); the Quest Club; the Optimists’ Club, YMCA; United Women’s Peace Movement; Overseas Club; Sunday evening lecture in the Strand Theatre before the Rationalists and Sunday Freedom League (more than 1,200 present—used microphone); Women’s Crusade for World Peace and Brotherhood; out-of-town lecture in the Manurewa Town Hall; Crusade for Social Justice Society; public lecture in the Lewis Eady Hall; the New Women’s Club; Theosophical Society; Better Health Society; lecture arranged by Mrs Leighton in her home, for 60 friends; public lecture in Chinese Church.

“Among the public lectures arranged in Bahá’í Hall was one on ‘Bahá’í Scientific Proofs of Life After Death’—perhaps I could never give it like that again, but it thrilled me. The Teachings, the proofs, are such a spiritual security; I think I love that lecture most of all. The Bahá’í Hall was crowded; many stood, some even standing in the outer hall, where they could hear but could not see. Many of them had lost loved ones and they came to find truth and comfort. One evening at Bahá’í Hall was a ‘Social Contact Evening’ when people from other organizations came to hear more and to ask questions. Another evening in Bahá’í Hall, the Theosophical Youth Group members were guests, and it too was a happy question and answer time. There is cordial friendship between the Bahá’í Youth Group and the Theosophical Youth Group. ‘The Life of the Radiant Báb’ is the subject of the public lecture tonight in Bahá’í Hall. On May 28, I shall speak in the evening in the Chinese Church.

“Dr and Mrs Stanley Bolton arrived on the *Mariposa* at 7.15 a.m., 29 May. The Bahá’ís will give a luncheon in their honor at 1 p.m. in Bahá’í Hall. We shall meet the friends there all day, after the interviews with the Press on board ship. Our ship sails at 5 p.m. that day.

“Miss Florence de Lisle and her mother, Mrs de Lisle, gave a Saturday afternoon party just for the Bahá’ís, and I spoke on ‘How to Teach the Bahá’í Faith’. Also on another Saturday afternoon I gave a little ‘at Home’ just for the Bahá’ís, and we had questions and answers. At other times I invited in a few friends in little groups, but I could not do as much as I wished, because

the program was so full; and when one is going to give a lecture, it is important to study, concentrate, meditate. For example, the day I was to speak in the big Theatre I kept with my subject all day; I read, I thought, and I sent my 'mind' once through a lecture of 45 minutes; at 5 p.m. I jotted down an outline of five points. When I spoke that night, I did not look at the outline, and I did not say exactly what I had thought out in the day—we have to see our audience before we know what we are going to say! I came out very strong for religion, and in the first five minutes the top gallery shouted, 'No! No!' The main floor applauded, 'Yes! Yes!' (They do not have many religious lectures in that Rationalist Society!) But they very soon settled down and *listened*, and everything ended most happily. (Some of those people later came to the lectures.) Just as Colonel Lindbergh always prepared, we as Bahá'ís should prepare and be ready. Sometimes, I know, we cannot, because we are so interrupted, and then Bahá'u'lláh helps us just the same; but we should study and know well all the Teachings.

"One broadcast, 'Táhirih, Iran's Greatest Woman', was given from the National Broadcasting Studio in Auckland. The Táhirih book was presented to several Public Libraries in New Zealand. The *World Order* magazine is in the Auckland Public Library and also in the University Library. The Bahá'ís are giving out many hundreds of pamphlets at the lectures.

"At the public lecture this evening, dedicated to the Life of the Báb, there will be a little after-meeting, when the Bahá'ís will hear the Voice of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and the voice of Keith on the phonograph.

"There has been a great quickening in all Auckland; new splendid souls are seeking, and there is new ardor in the Bahá'í Study Class and in the Bahá'í Youth Group and surely in many of these fine organizations of which I have spoken; other Bahá'ís here can later go and give follow-up lectures. Two of the Bahá'í Spiritual Assembly members say they will go to Wellington later on and give some lectures there. I have great hopes of two young people of very great capacity who first heard of the Teachings with the deepest interest. I believe they will become confirmed believers. A visit of a Bahá'í teacher is only a beginning."

Regarding her stay in New Zealand, the National Spiritual Assembly published the following comment: "When she arrived in Perth in January it was only too evident she was in very poor health, which was increasingly obvious to the friends as her tour progressed. Her labours were lightened as much as was humanly possible, but her indomitable spirit carried her through and she victoriously accomplished the major part of the program of lectures arranged for her. She was very ill when she boarded the *Mariposa* at Auckland en route for Geyserville. By a merciful provision Stanley and Mariette Bolton of Sydney were travelling on the same ship to America, so were able to minister to her needs as far as Honolulu, where she was taken to the home of Mrs Kathrine Baldwin. It was here she ended her earthly career to 'assume her seat in the supreme concourse'. The last ounce of her strength was given to Australia and New Zealand. In a letter to the American believers written on the eve of her departure from Auckland she wrote: 'Among the public lectures in the Bahá'í Hall was one on 'Scientific Proofs of Life After Death'—perhaps I could never give it like that again; but it thrilled me. The Teachings, the proofs, are such a spiritual security. I think I love that lecture most of all. The hall was crowded, many stood, some even standing in the outer hall where they could hear but could not see. Many of them had lost loved ones, and they came to find truth and comfort.' At the end of her letter she wrote, 'And now that I am leaving, 29 May on the *Mariposa*, it will be very difficult to say farewell, but, if not in New Zealand, we shall again do "spiritual skylarking" together in the Heavenly Realms.' That last sentence reveals something of the spiritual radiance that was Martha."

A few months later, after weeks of loving care by the devoted Bahá'ís of Honolulu, Martha Root reached the goal of her earthly journey. Holding aloft the light of truth, this intrepid traveler entered palaces, universities, broadcasting stations, churches, halls and synagogues in all parts of the world, like the apostles of old.

In Honolulu is her last resting place. As this statement is being prepared, the Bahá'ís of that city, acting for all the American believers, are preparing a beautiful monument to be the Memorial of the “foremost Hand which the Will of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá has raised up in the first Bahá'í century”, as the Guardian described Miss Root in his message to the American Bahá'ís immediately after her death.