

Pundita Ramabai.

Pundita Ramabai was the daughter of a priest who suffered persecution for educating the women of his family. At the age of 16 she was left an orphan, and 3 yrs. later she traveled under the protection of her brother across India urging in all parts the emancipation and education of women. After a short illness her brother died and 6 mths. later she married a Bengalese - a Sanscrit scholar. But at his death in less than 2 yrs. she was left at 24 yrs of age to face the future as a Hindu widow. Again she sought the rostrum. To acquaint herself with better methods of advancing her work she went to England and was rec'd so warmly and her scholarship so appreciated she ~~has remained in the~~ ^{has remained in the} chair of Sanscrit in a Woman's College. Here she remained till the first part of 1886 when her ~~daughter~~ ^{daughter} Dr. Joshee, also a Hindu Brahmin of high type, took the degree of doctor of medicine; and with her daughter, Manorama, she came to Philadelphia. The two Hindu women met there for the first time, having previously known each other only by correspondence. Ramabai entered heartily into the graduation exercises, rejoicing particularly in the fact that a Hindu woman was, for the first time to receive the degree of doctor of medicine. ~~Soon~~ ^{Soon} she became interested in American institutions, so much impressed with a public school system which included girls as well as boys that, instead of returning to work in England she decided to remain here for personal investigation in behalf of her down-trodden country-women, and soon began to prepare a regular series of school books.

She could not forget that of the 99,700,000 women and girls in her home land some ~~99,700,000~~ were unable to read and write. Those who have read Pundita's book, "The High-caste Hindu Woman" are not ignorant of the conditions of these wretched creatures. The more Ramabai thought of them, strangers to any means of support, destitute of the least promise of education, devoid of all hope of second marriage, the more the idea grew upon her of founding an institution which would insure 1st, self-reliance; 2nd., education, and 3rd., women teachers. Strong in her determination to work ~~in this direction~~ ^{for a direction}, fully aware of the difficulties in the way, she went forth to lecture among our people. Her good knowledge of the English language made this a possibility. Her sincerity, good judgment, and Christian faith- for while in England she accepted Christianity and she and her daughter were baptized- soon won for her the attention of serious and philanthropic minds. In the summer of 1887, after she had spoken in nearly 150 meetings, a Ramabai association was discussed in Boston, and by Dec. it was a settled fact with Rev. Edward Everett Hale as president. By the time the association had been in existence a year, there were 60 circles auxiliary to the central one in Boston, and nearly 3000 members, each one pledging annual support.

Not only the Atlantic but the Pacific coast claimed Ramabai's attention, for the delicate in health, still following the Hindu custom of eating neither flesh, fowl, nor fish, she traveled alone to the western coast, speaking in every important city in behalf of her Hindu sisters. She spoke in S. F. at the educational convention of July, 1888, and at 50

other meetings in that vicinity. As a result, a branch Ramabai Assoc. was formed with 20 auxiliary circles.

The outlook was so encouraging that Ramabai's going to India to begin her school was assented to. Her daughter, who had during this time been in England, had already arrived, and when asked why she had not left her in England to be educated, she replied, "I want her to grow up among her people, to know them as they are, and to prepare herself for the work there is before her. If I left her in England, she would grow up to be an English girl, not one of us."

All the arrangements for school work were made on a sound business basis, with Pundita as principal. Bombay was finally settled upon as the place for the school, and a building engaged. Four pupils of the Brahman caste having been promised, the school was opened March 11, 1889, and Ramabai's dream of years was a reality.

The opening of this Sharada Sadan or Home of Wisdom, as the school was named, was a great success, an occasion to be remembered in the history of India. At the end of the first quarter, the number had reached 22. In spite of this success, however, public opinion in India was still bitter against the work.

But the brave woman determined to go on working quietly to see if faith in God and man would not bring about the desired change.

Now She has 1400. *What do you think? I am curious for a first year at*
I didn't know all of these facts till I had dug them out
of an old magazine in the library, but I knew a few. And it was not till I reached ~~India~~ *India* I hadn't given *India* a thought as I neared India till I reached Singapore. While visiting in a n Anglo-Chinese school there I met *Mr. Dickson* who had been in missionary work in India for several years with headquarters in Bombay. She knew Ramabai personally very well indeed and couldn't say too much of her charming personality and wonderful work. Her enthusiasm was ~~infectious~~ *infectious* and we straightway made up our minds to visit her if it were at all possible.

We left Bombay at 10 o'clock one night, or the 22nd. hour, as they say there. At three in the morning, about 200 miles south of Bombay, we rose, dressed, packed our bedding, for bedding always has to be carried in that country, and at the cheerful hour of 4:10 we got off at a station called Ghond- nothing there but the station house, the pens about it filled with natives like so many sheep all huddled together waiting for trains.

We arrived at Kedgaon, our destination, at 6:55. The station agent told Pundita usually saw that a bullock met the trains to take strangers to the school, but we went on Sunday so ~~we~~ had to walk. The work was started in Bombay, I think I told you, then moved to Poona, but city life had so many disadvantages they again moved to their present location.

As I approached the place, I was reminded of a large farm, and that is just about what it is. It is an industrial school, you know, where sewing, cooking, dairying, and farming together with book instruction of a simple kind are taught. MR. Koffman of Iowa had the agricultural work in charge, and he told us every bit of the labor was done by women. There are 200 acres in all 180 of which are tillable and the remainder jungle. Met a tiny girl at the gate, a widow I suppose. Were shown rooms by one of the lady managers, who by the way was an English woman. The buildings are low of gray stone with a crude sort of porch along the entire front of the main line of buildings, the coverings of which is *them*

made of bamboo tied together with rope...I had the queerest room. It was like an adobe inside- the walls were whitewashed, the floor was cement, rafters made of poles were visible and above them the tile roof. There were iron bars at the windows for protection at night, I suppose, and over these a fine wire netting to keep out the birds. And by the way, it is a beautiful sight to see bird and beast fearless of man, and one certainly does in India. You know of theri worshipping animals, and ~~wherever~~ a house is built, I care not how simple, ~~never~~ a temple erected, I care not how grand but that provision is ~~not~~ made for a home for birds. And the poor Hindu starving for something to eat ~~and~~ ^{feeding are not infrequent} would not think of taking the life of his bullock in the field or that of the deer in the jungle. But let me get back to my room. Two walls of cement ~~were~~ about 4 ft. high made a bath room in one corner, and on top of these walls were jugs filled with water to bathe with. There was no tub, ~~just~~ ^{just} a drain through the outside wall. Over the door were the words, "God is our refuge," and the other ornament in the room was a "Daily Light Almanac", and the verse for Nov. 20", the day I was there was, "By strength of hand the Lord brought us out."

We were brought an early breakfast, called "choto hazri", which consisted of cocoa and bread, and then we watched the cunning youngsters in ~~with~~ long skirts and smiling black eyes go to Sunday school, which commenced at 8 o'clock. At 9 we were taken along the line of buildings where our rooms were and in the rear were most amazed to find a large church in the shape of a Greek cross. By the time we got into it, the place was half filled with natives. In they came noiselessly in their bare feet by ones and in groups till the church was packed. They sat on the floor as thick as they could sit- one solid mass of black faces.

The service was much the same as ours opening with a song, and my - such singing. I know it inspired me, and I know it must have made Pundita's heart glad. The service was led by a Mr. Norton, a New Yorker, an elderly man who has spent the years since he was 26 in missionary work in India. At the close they were permitted to remain for prayer if they wished. Not one of the churchful moved, and presently murmurings were heard. The murmurings became wails and the wails became cries. Some were on their knees, some were sitting, some were standing, all with eyes closed and hands upraised. Some shook as if having a chill, some went through such contortions the shook their hair down- none quit, I believe till forced from sheer exhaustion. I staid 45 minutes after the service and by that time most had gone. They seemed to stop as if they had been in a trance, picked up their bibles and hymn books and left as quietly as they came. I never saw such earnestness, such supplication, such an outpouring of the spirit before in my life. I never was so moved and impressed by anything. Three of us sat there half crying- speechless, the fourth of our party had to leave the building, and she told me afterward the sound from without reminded her of a mighty wind or the waves on the sea shore.

At my feet sat Pundita and her daughter. She is getting along in years and is so busy with other things- for one a translation of the bible,- she is relieved

when possible from taking an active part in the service. We staid as long as she did, and she remained as long as there was another praying. She shook hands with us and we told her how fortunate she was to be able to carry on such a work.

At 12 o'clock we had breakfast. We were taken into a rectangular shaped room with a cement floor. ~~The~~ Nineteen of us, all foreign with the exception of Pundita's daughter, sat on the floor with our backs to the wall. All the dishes were brass and copper, hand wrought, very very pretty. The meal was served on a square of wood about the size of a board from the cook table, we sat on one of the same size, and had our backs to a third. After a song and prayer the meal was served. It consisted of rice, a sor of beans that had to be hulled as eaten, some salt, brown and wet, a piece of pickled lime, bread, buffalo butter, a saucer of curd, and a glass of warm buffalo milk. These things were brought in on a copper tray. ~~To~~ To the left we had flat open bowls in which we washed our hands before beginning to eat from the jar filled with water that stood beside it. It was also used at the close of the meal and as often through ~~it~~ as one liked. You know thw thing to do is to eat witha ones fingers but we were given the ordinary implements. When one eats in native style it is easily understood why finger bowls must be ever present during the meal.

We wandered back to our rooms and slept soundly till 2 o'clock when the English lady came again and ushered us to church. The occasion was the christening of six babies followed by communion.

Later on in the afternoon, we had the plesasure of a talk with Pundita down under the bamboo arcade in front of our rooms. She wears a ~~mark~~ ^{mark} in the middle of her forehead designating her caste and former religion, but she has given up both and, as I told you, calls herself a Christian. There is no caste among those of her school. If you were ever in that country, even for as short a time as we were, you would realize better than you do what it would mean to get 1400 to drop caste and work peaceably together. On our boat going to Calcutta were a Mr. and Mrs. Murdock She had English parents but was born and raised in India. They told us that they had a native boy pull the punka in their bedroom at night. Mrs. M. was awakened ^{one by one} and upon asking him ^{what he was} ~~who he was~~ he told her that his father had died and that his mother and several children were dependent on his small earnings for their living. She was greatly moved and as soon as the dawn came she perpared some food for her husband to deliver. He said he found them in a starvig condition, and most happy apparently over the arrival of food. He placed the food on the ground and in leaving his shadow fell across the food, defiling it in their estimation and making it unfit to eat. They in that starving condition, not knowing when or how they would get any more, threw food, dishes and all into a near by gutter. That is not an unusual ^{happening} ~~case~~ at all. Every one of India's 389,000,000 are just as particular. ^{black}

Pundita is short and stout, has short ^{black} wavy hair and grayish ^{blue} eyes. She always dresses in a white robe which is nothing more than a piece of goods about 8 yds. in length draped about the body with one end brought up over the head. On her feet she wears sandals, nothing else. She calls her church Christ's church, and b believes all denominations should be reduced to one. When she first concieved the idea of founding a school for widows her chief aim ~~was~~ ^{was} educational, but now it is ~~spiritual~~ ^{religious} spreading the

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the gospel of Jesus Christ through her women preachers.

~~The sun was setting . The bullock cart awaited us at the gate.~~
Pundita handed us some mignonette she had picked in her garden, and said in farewell, "Salaam", which means, peace unto you.

*The sun was rising when we started. The sun
was setting when we started to leave. A bullock
cart awaited us at the gate.*