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## In the Mountains

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di

Sarala Behn\*

Sarala Behn ha formato alcune tra le principali attiviste indiane e si è adoperata per rendere consapevoli le giovani donne del loro importante ruolo sociale. Sono le donne infatti le principali attrici del movimento Chipko che sorge negli anni Settanta per la protezione delle foreste dal disboscamento.

Tratto dalla sua autobiografia, tradotta dall'hindi da David Hopkins e intitolata *A life in two worlds. Autobiography of Mahatma Gandhi's English Disciple* (Lakshmi & Pahar 2010) il brano che segue illustra il primo arrivo di Sarala a Kausani. L'autobiografia di Sarala dedica ampio spazio alle vicende esteriori, alle condizioni del prossimo, dimostrando come la vita intera di questa coraggiosa donna fosse dedicata all'aiuto dei più bisognosi. E le principali protagoniste sono soprattutto le donne delle montagne e la natura.

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Not knowing the way to Chanauda, I decided to go by way of the Gandhi Ashram in Meerut. As I alighted on the platform in Meerut, a gentleman asked very politely, "Where are you going? Can I arrange for some conveyance for you?" As I had a lot of luggage I gladly accepted his help. Later on I came to know that he had been sent from the intelligence department for this help.

The following day I was called to meet someone from the intelligence. When I came I found this gentleman from the station also sitting there. When I set off from Meerut he again came to see me to the station.

The office and the central store of the Gandhi Ashram in Meerut were in a large building constructed in the middle of a beautiful garden belonging to the Gandhi Seva Sangh. The Sangh had given it to the Gandhi Ashram for their activities. The workers' dwellings were small houses made of earth, thatched with grass and straw. In the shade of the mango trees these cottages seemed very beautiful. The workers lived there very contentedly; among them was a total feeling of mutual give and take. Spinning and weaving were done in the villages, while dyeing, printing and finishing were done here. The finished goods were sent to sales centres throughout the state. The most highly respected person in the institution was the old watchman who had been working in the Ashram from the very beginning.

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\* Catherine Mary Heilemann, (Londra 1901-1982), alias Sarala Behn, collaboratrice di Gandhi, impegnata nella lotta per l'indipendenza indiana, attivista sociale; nel 1948 fonda il Lakshmi Ashram, un centro educativo per ragazze sulle colline dell'Himalaya, a Kausani. Si ringrazia il traduttore David Hopkins per averci concesso la pubblicazione di questo breve estratto di *A life in two worlds. Autobiography of Mahatma Gandhi's English Disciple*.

Vichitra Bhai had gone out on tour, and in his absence Rajaram Bhai had assumed responsibility for his work. He had had some raw wool washed, and was having it spun on a spinning wheel, which in appearance resembled a pedal-operated sewing machine. The spinner's features looked rather Mongoloid. Rajaram Bahi told me that I would have to learn this skill, among such people.

After one or two days I set off for Chanauda. I had been told that, while it was possible that I might catch the last bus from Haldwani going towards Chanauda, it was more likely that I would miss it, which would mean spending a night in Almora and continuing the following morning to Chanauda. He had informed the Gandhi Ashram in Almora by telegram about my arrival. However I got a bus as far as Someshwar. I decided to leave my luggage in the bus and walk the three miles to Chanauda in the fresh evening air. After Mussoorie it was the first such opportunity that I had had to walk in such cool and bracing air.

That day Jamnalaji had come to Almora to meet with the political detainees. People were worried, as I had not arrived according to the telegram. Many days later I also learned that the water flowing in the river, thundering over the rocks. Listening to this pleasing sound I fell soundly asleep.

Following Gandhi's advice, I would get up in the morning at four o'clock, and go walking in the hills covered with pine forest or among the fields of yellow rice, on my return bathing in the river before preparing a simple meal. In the afternoon I would try to spin Tibetan wool on the Kashmiri implements. The fibres of Tibetan wool are particularly long, and therefore it needs more time and care to spin it. Besides learning to spin wool, gathering a group of some of the local women together, I began to teach them knitting with needles. In those days the villagers did not know knitting at all. In the evenings I would put on the cooker and then go out for a walk. Sometimes I would go between the fields to some nearby village. While the children suffered from coughs and colds, also from diarrhea, the old suffered from wind and rheumatism. A small dispensary was run in the Ashram, and I would keep some of their medicines with me.

The mountain women were very hardworking and brave. In all the mountain areas of the Himalayas the women do most of the agricultural work. The men only did the ploughing, repairing of the walls of terraced fields, and the management of the irrigation. The women were entrusted with the full responsibility for sowing, hoeing and weeding, and harvesting. The women also did the difficult work of transplanting the rice. Besides this the women alone cut fodder for the cattle, cut and carried down wood from the forest for use as fuel, etc. In whatever time was left over, cooking, bathing the children and washing clothes kept them ever occupied.

In the evenings after supper I would take my spindle and chat with the manager's family. Shantilal Trivedi, the manager, was Gujarati. His father had renounced the world, and he had been raised and educated by his uncle. The latter wanted to send him for higher studies to America, but Shantilal's leanings too were towards a life of renunciation and the Himalayas. In the end, at the age of twenty he came to a decision and, rather than going to the Himalayas, he started to live in Gandhi's Sabarmati Ashram. Working there for several years he became skilled in

spinning and weaving. But he continued to feel the call of the Himalayas. Bapu<sup>1</sup> gave him leave for three months to go walking in the Himalayas. Coming to Almora he accompanied the Congress workers to the villages. He felt as if he had returned home. At that time the Congress had a majority on the District Board, and they wanted to introduce spinning and weaving in the schools in the district. They had written to Gandhi to ask if he would allow Shantilal to stay there on deputation, and Gandhi agreed.

Keeping in close contact with the village schoolmasters and the general public allowed him constant opportunities to wander in the area. In the next elections for the District Board the Congress were defeated, and the new chairman of the District Board began to treat Shantilalji not as a colleague but more as an employee. He submitted his resignation and for the next two years worked in a sugar mill on the *Terai* belonging to Jamnakakji as a social worker among the labourers there. When the Gandhi Ashram took the decision to start woollen production in the hills, the responsibility for this was entrusted to Shantilalji. This activity had now been going on for three or four years and was expanding very fast.

[...]

The Chanauda ashram was built on leasehold land. The buildings were constructed from wood and were roofed with tin. Shantilalji had gathered a group of dedicated young workers around him.

A few days later I received an invitation to go to Almora on the occasion of *Gandhi Jayanti*<sup>2</sup>. Gandhi himself did not like this term, preferring that people refer to it as *Charkha Jayanti*. I went there. Every morning at dawn a procession was taken out, while in the middle of the day we went out selling khadi<sup>3</sup>. Four or five people, khadi cloth on their shoulders, hawked their stock from house to house in the town. At each house they had to explain the importance of khadi in national life, I would go with them and in this way came to meet the women. Almora is situated on the crest of a mountain ridge, and every step found one going up or down. It was difficult to walk with a load on ones shoulder. What we wanted was that people would come to the shop to make purchases, as this would reduce the workload of the workers and maybe more khadi would be sold. At that time the government had slowly began to release the political prisoners, and because of this the numbers of people in the demonstrations increased by the day. [...]

Every year Shantilalji would go into the higher reaches of the mountains to purchase and bring back a year's supply of Tibetan wool. He suggested to me that I accompany him. It was the first time since 1931 that I had gone off on foot, and I derived an immense amount of joy from this journey. Two ashram workers carried our bedding, and on arrival at our night halt would make arrangements for our lodging and food. I had misgivings about them carrying such a weight, yet in a way there was no alternative. Shantilalji had a weak foot, while I lacked the strength to carry such a load while walking. Every day saw us proceeding further on our way,

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<sup>1</sup> *Bapu*: è l'appellativo affettuoso che Sarala, come altri gandhiani, riserva a Gandhi.

<sup>2</sup> *Jayanti*: birthday.

<sup>3</sup> *Khadi*: tessuto tipico indiano.

sometimes between fields, sometimes along the banks of rivers, sometimes climbing up or dropping down from hills, at times passing through forest. I was ever living in the hope that on reaching some ridge top that we would have a view of the Himalayan ranges. In the daytime they were mostly hidden by cloud, but late in the afternoons fresh snow would begin to fall from these clouds on them, and then the red glow of the sunset would spread across this fresh snow. Whenever our night halt was on a summit we reveled in the joy of such sights.

We mostly stayed at spinning centres of the Gandhi Ashram. Usually two or three workers lived in these centres. The local Congress workers as well as spinners and weavers would also come to meet us. The topics of conversation centred on Gandhi's health and programmes, political activity and local leaders.

Despite the remoteness, there was a great deal of political awareness in Almora district. At the time of the offering of individual satyagraha also, more than four hundred satyagrahis were moving around the villages. There was only provision for eighty prisoners in the jail in Almora, and when the jail became overcrowded, the arrests had to be stopped. At almost every resting place satyagrahis<sup>4</sup> came to meet us.

Finally crossing the 9,000 feet high Kala Muni mountain ridge we reached Munsiyari. We could only complete half the ascent in a whole day, and then stopped at an ancient dak reaching the top, see the red glow of sunrise on the white peaks of Panchachuli. We had now come very close to the Himalayan ranges. It was not even sunrise when we reached the top. Shantilalji jokingly took my muffler and gloves and, lying down as if to take a nap, said, "Wake me up when it's sunrise!" How can I describe the joy of seeing the splendor of the sunrise on the fresh snow while sitting in the middle of that dense forest? After a little while we descended to the valley to commence our task of collecting wool.

Living in the higher reaches of the Himalaya is a community of mixed blood, Tibetan and Indian. Formerly they would go every year in the summer months to Tibet, along with their sheep and goats, mules and *jhabbus* (a cross between the Indian cow and the Tibetan yak). They would return from there in October and spend the winter months moving from place to place on the plains selling their wool and woollen products, at the same time purchasing jiggery, cotton cloth and brass utensils, to be bartered in Tibet for wool, rock salt and borax.

It was very dangerous to cross the high, snow-covered ranges. On taking leave of their families they could not be confident whether they would meet again or not. Often the snow bridges by which they sought to cross the rivers would give way under them; sometimes they were trapped by blizzards. At times they had to maintain homes in three separate valleys among these landslide-prone mountains. In a way theirs was a nomadic way of life. Every year they would go on foot along with their families from their homes on the banks of the Ramganga, flowing in the lower reaches, up to the high reaches of Milam, from whose glacier emerges the Gori Ganga. While moving up during the spring and also on their way down in the autumn, they would halt for a month or two in Munsiyari.

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<sup>4</sup> *Satyagraha*: significa "fermezza della verità", ed è il metodo di lotta non violenta adottato da Gandhi e dai suoi collaboratori per ottenere l'indipendenza dell'India.

Sitting out in the sun early in the mornings, we would occupy ourselves with our spinning, chatting, reading and writing. Wild Japanese cherries and French marigolds were in full bloom. In the middle of the day after taking our lunch, we would go on foot to meet with one or another of the big traders on one of the nearby villages. The women could be seen everywhere, busy in spinning and weaving. They wove beautiful coloured rugs, white *thulmas*<sup>5</sup>, shawls, cloth, etc., and knitted sweaters. The men's hands too were never empty. The whole day long the spindle danced in their hands.

The nationalist agitation could also be observed in this remote area. Here also as in other parts of the country, we saw and heard people's discussions on politics. From the national viewpoint the importance of the traditional woollen industry had greatly increased. Tibet was also a topic of conversation among them, for example that this year there had been such a severe outbreak of cholera that a great number of men, women and children, falling by the wayside, had been left behind, or that large numbers of bands of robbers were entering Tibet. It may be that they were some community living in Central Asia who had been uprooted from their homeland by the spread of communism. These bands were armed horsemen. What could an ordinary caravan of traders going on foot do when faced with them?

The families from the lower valleys, along with their flocks of animals, would set off in the mornings around six o'clock, and by around ten o'clock would set up the camp somewhere. On arrival the women would remove the children's cradles from the backs while the men put up the tents. A stone hearth was made, a search was made for firewood, the fire was lit so as to prepare the meal and then, opening their box looms for weaving wool, the women got down to their main occupation, that of weaving. The men, spinning all day on their spindles, busied themselves in grazing the sheep and goats. The women wore a very broad woollen or cotton ghaghara<sup>6</sup> and a woollen blouse, and also wrapped a very long, white cotton band around their waists. Maybe this helped them while climbing the mountains. In place of a sari they wrapped a woollen blanket around their bodies, and on their heads wore a distinctive kind of white head-dress whose border hang down to their knees.

It was known to everybody that we had come to purchase wool and that we wanted to know how much wool could be made available, what would be the rate this year, etc. Yet in the beginning neither they nor we raised the subject. Only when the opportune moment came did we begin.

The Bhotiya community of this border area of Johar had their own very distinctive and effective social organisation. Rather than competing one with the other, they worked together as a group in their trading activities. The elders among the men chatted one with the other, and in the end one of them opened the subject. Then, seeking out everyone's opinion, a price was fixed, as well as how much wool in total they would supply to us. They also agreed one with the other as to who would supply what quantity of wool. This was a very important decision, for throughout the coming year this rate would remain fixed.

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<sup>5</sup> *Thulma*: a thick woollen betting popular in the hills.

<sup>6</sup> Ghaghara: an ample, ankle-length skirt.

While all this was going on, one of the Congress leaders of the district, Shri Hargovind Pant, recently released from jail, arrived there on horseback. A number of meetings took place. In the first meeting, opening his speech he said, "I am fifty five years old and today is the first time that I have had the good fortune to come to Munsyari". It was not everyone who would commit his or her time and energy to go there. Shantilalji though was one of those old hands who had been coming for a long time. I began my speech by saying, "My life in the mountains is but two months old, and yet I have been able to have the good fortune to come here".

Some meetings with the women were also called so that they might better make my acquaintance. There was an ongoing reform movement in Johar. The Arya Samaj<sup>7</sup> and the nationalist movement were having their influence on the women. There was a women's organisation there, whose meetings took place regularly. This was the one and only women's organisation in Almora district. I had tried to call meetings of the women in Almora, but not one woman came to them.

In these upland areas there was a misconception that because of the cold it was necessary to drink liquor, therefore in all the households the women made a local liquor, known as *chang*, from barley, and gave it to their men-folk and to guests. The women themselves did not drink the liquor. This women's organisation had taken up the cause of prohibition. The women had first of all taken a vow that they would not brew liquor in their homes. They had then got their men-folk to take a vow not to take liquor. The women here do not cover their faces, and have complete equality in going out in public places for their work, also working in the fields and forests. Nevertheless they do not mix freely with the men, and also try not to talk directly with them. Therefore they took the help of their older sons in getting their men-folk to take vows of abstinence.

The three elderly women, who were the fountainhead of inspiration for this organisation, were not educated in the modern sense. But there was a farsightedness and wisdom in their eyes, born out of enduring the hardships of these mountains over so many years. Seeing them an English hymn came to mind:

We are grateful for the power of the mountains,  
Oh Lord, the Lord of our forefathers,  
You have made your people powerful  
Through the touch of the soil of the mountains.

The purchase of wool completed, we had it weighed and marked, and then set off with it loaded onto the "Mountain Goods Train", on the backs of goats. Leaving Munsyari we set off on foot along the banks of the Gori Ganga towards Jauljibi. This was extremely beautiful. One felt like losing one's way and just staying there. The name, Gori Ganga, was indeed an apt name. Its white water, breaking often against the rocks, turned into foam became even more pure. Forest covered the high hills on both sides, sometimes extending right down to the water's edge, while sometimes there were expanses of pasture or fields. For long distances there was no

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<sup>7</sup> Arya Samaj: Hindu reformist movement founded by Swami Dayanand Saraswati in 1875.

sign of population or villages. We had set out with three days of rations and slept at night on the verandah of a school or in an empty and open cattle shed.

Jauljibi is situated at the confluence of the Kali Ganga and Gori Ganga rivers, the Gori flowing down from the Johar valley while the Kali rises in Byans. The Kali marks the border between India and Nepal. For a good distance even below the confluence the waters of the two rivers could be seen flowing quite separately. In the end they became one, forming the Sharda river.

The Bhotiyas from the two valleys had set up separate camps. The tents were full of bales of wool and finished woolen goods. Nepali people from nearby villages came to sell ghee and make purchases of honey. Here and there, in very simple shops, heaps of sweets and basic daily needs were on sale. Almora businessmen had also come on the occasion of this fair, and the people purchased small necessities for the coming year from them – exercise books, pencils and books, pins and cotton yarn, knives and scissors, etc. Once the Almora shopkeepers had sold their ware, they purchased wool and woolen goods, honey and ghee, and made the return journey.

During the fair there was also a camp of Christian missionaries and one of the Congress. The fair went on for three days. Every morning the Congress took out a procession. In their meeting in the middle of the day the businessmen, as well as the local public, came along.

Hearing the songs and slogans of the dawn procession people, rubbing their eyes, looked out of their tents, and then quickly washing their hands and faces they would come running to join us. In the midday meetings the slogans, reverberating off the high hills, echoed loudly all around. The message of the Congress had penetrated so far and was so strong, that from this it seemed that this was the demand of the entire country and that Self-rule<sup>8</sup> would surely come. Shantilalji was kept busy all day long in purchasing goods. We also wanted to purchase wool from Darma<sup>9</sup>, but this year their traders were late returning from Tibet, so we went up the valley of the Kali as far as Dharchula. The traders had not yet reached there either, so we set off up towards Narayan Ashram. Narayan Swami had come from Karnataka. Shantilalji was well acquainted with him. Because of the spiritual inclinations of his youth, he often liked, to stay in contact with such people.

This was my very first opportunity to stay in a spiritual ashram. I was very surprised. There was no distinctive atmosphere of solemnity, rather there was a natural and deep joy in living and feeling of concern for others – and this was because the one Soul is present in us all, we are all forms of the One. Every year Narayan Swami would go with his followers to Mount Kailas. It was said that on reaching there he went into a transcendental mental state and arrived at *samadhi*, a state of total absorption in the Absolute.

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<sup>8</sup> *Hind Swaraj*, o India Home Rule, vale a dire l'autosufficienza indiana, intende l'autonomia dell'India dall'Inghilterra secondo il programma gandhiano, che prevedeva la rinascita e diffusione delle piccole attività artigianali di villaggio, in particolare quella tessile.

<sup>9</sup> Darma: The valley of the Dhauliganga (E), whose confluence with the Kali Ganga is at Tawaghat.

With an eye on developing the land of the ashram, he was actively increasing his local contacts. The atmosphere in Chaundas Byans was very different from that of Johar. The need there of the influence of the ashram was also felt, and as time went by so its influence was increasing. People had slowly started to come to the ashram from all over India, to find peace and for some time to be freed from the perplexities of modern life. It was a pillar of light in the surrounding darkness. Through Swami's efforts a high school had been established near Jauljibi in Askot to spread education. This school also paid attention to the moral development of the students. Through his efforts arrangements for x-ray machines and other equipment had been made in the local hospital. In this remote area Narayan Swami, like Gandhi, was using the wealth of the rich in the service of the poor, especially for those people who from all social and moral standpoint were backward. Narayan Swami was powerfully built physically, long black hair and a huge beard, a personality shining with joy and well being, but he died premature death from cancer. People experienced a great loss through his passing away. Even after leaving his body there was a glimpse of the joy and peace of *samadhi* to be seen on his face.

We still had to wait, so we went in the direction of Chaundas for a few days. This was an area largely of grass pastures, and among the chestnut trees memories came back of the English countryside. The first evening when we were approaching Sausa village, we heard the sounds of noise and shouting from the forest. We found nobody in the village, only an old woman who told us that some wicked boys from neighboring villages had abducted a girl from her village.

There is nothing new under the sun! This plot was hatched in the *rang-bang*. Imagine the *rang-bang* as being a traditional form of the modern nightclub. The girls of one village pass the night with the boys from another village singing, dancing and drinking liquor. In our travels we had come across one or two *rang-bangs* and, plunged in thought, I could not get to sleep the whole night.

The girls of Sausa village had arranged in the *rang-bang* that on a given evening they would all go into the forest with a particular girl, so that the boys from a neighboring village might abduct her. We felt very bad on hearing this. The following day we went to the village with the hope that we could do something. However, we came to know that nothing could be done, that the marriage had taken place. The boy said, "I had requested her hand from her father. When he refused, then I had abducted her and brought her here". The bride also said that everything was quite all right.

We stayed in Roong with Rukmani Behn. She was a teacher and had helped the women's movement in Johar a lot. Now she had returned to teach in her own village, however she despaired of the situation there. Whenever circumstances permitted, then for one or two days she would go to Narayan Ashram to find some peace of mind.

In this entire valley only two men were making efforts for prohibition. One of them was a primary schoolmaster. Instead of welcoming guests with liquor he had begun to offer them sweets, however the public had started to ostracise him. The second was a very influential trader. People could not ostracise him. Instead of liquor he took honey in hot water, and he said that this gave him the strength to resist the cold. He had also given up eating meat. As well as this he was also giving en-

couragement to the education of women. Many girls from this area have now received higher education and in their turn have imparted education to many more girls. But they do not go back to live in their own area. -

The Bhotiyas of the Chaundas valley are not migrating. They live the whole year in one place and plough the land themselves. The women had to do a lot of work. Getting up at four o'clock they would settle down to weaving, before working the whole day in the fields and forests, and in the evenings, after preparing the meal and feeding everyone, they spun on their spindles. Instead of a skirt they wrapped a red and blue piece of cloth around themselves. This cloth was woven from very fine yarn that they had spun themselves. Every mother taught her daughter before her marriage how to make this fine cloth from the yarn. This cloth was so strong that it was said that only three such pieces were needed to last a lifetime. They made their hair stick to the heads in a very beautiful way. It took a lot of time to fix it in this way, but having fixed it once this hairstyle stayed firm for weeks and did not even get disturbed when lifting loads.

The language of this valley resembles neither Tibetan nor Hindi; likewise, their religious practices have nothing in common with those of Tibet or India. Once we found ourselves present at a religious festival high in the hills in the midst of the forest. There was no temple or anything similar there, just a large bell hanging up. After the worship rice cooked in goats' blood was served as ritual offering.

In such an area there is a great need for other ashrams similar to Narayan Ashram. Everywhere we were received lovingly. Here also the people were keen to hear news of the Movement. Many years before, with the assent of Shantilalji had come to this area and was working in the field of industrial education. People there were long acquainted with him. If there was somewhere that people did not know him by face, seeing his white Gandhi cap they realised who it was. "I had come straight from Sevagram", that was sufficient enough an introduction for me.

Finally, we heard the sound of goats and we understood the people had returned from Tibet. We went back to Dharchula. There it took us some time to complete our work, and then we returned by a different route to Chanauda. Going up and up the hill towards Askot we had our last glimpse of the confluence of Gori and Kali Ganga. Shantilalji said in a very somber voice, "Every year I look at this view and think to myself, who knows whether I will be able to come here again next year or not".

The Bageshwar fair is held at the time of the most important festival of Almora district, *Uttarayani*<sup>10</sup>. This fair has a dual importance, spiritual and commercial. All the commercial activity of Jauljibi went on here on a very big scale, alongside this the women, filled with religious fervour and sometimes coming on foot for three or four days, came in large numbers. With their sparkling skirts and shawls it seemed as if in the streets all around flocks of multicoloured butterflies were fluttering. Bathing at dawn in the icy waters of the Gomti and Saryu rivers at their sacred confluence, they would then go and worship in the temple. It is said that the temple was established following an incident in the Mahabharat. Throughout the day the

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<sup>10</sup> *Uttarayani*: A festival falling on 14 January and marking the return of the sun to north; the festival is also known as *Makar Sankranti*.

women wandered in the bazaar and purchased small items for all the family. Often while doing so they met friends and relatives they had not seen for years.

In the evenings at the various crossroads the men of a particular area would gather together and perform their local folk dances. Such scenes were a delight to see. Here also a procession was taken out daily at dawn, while in the middle of the day meetings were held on a level meadow beside the river. That is to say that the national slogans were reverberating here too among the hills [...].

From Bageshwar I wanted to go up into the hills to the Ramganga valley. There I was to stay for a few days with some friends from Munsyari. Shantilalji was worried about my travelling alone. For the first two days I had the company of a Kashmiri district magistrate. The first day we got completely drenched in the cold rain. The third day we awoke to a white world. Since the middle of the night I had been hearing a continual drumming of sound, and could not understand what was going on. When I looked outside in the morning I saw that over a foot of snow had fallen, and now large lumps of snow were falling from the roof. The sun came out in the middle of the day, and we went out walking in the sunshine through the dazzling forest. After leaving home after the Christmas of 1931 this was the first time that I had seen snow.

After the second day our ways parted, and after some days staying with a friend I set off for Bhainkhal [...].

We reached Bhainkhal at sunset. I spent some extremely enjoyable days there among the women. Every afternoon we met together to chat. They competed one with the other to extend me hospitality. Sometimes I very happily passed the nights in nearby villages. I felt that I was following Babu's instructions, that is that I familiarize myself with the people, their circumstances and their problems.