

Coorg: the Indian Walden

by Suchita Malik

WE had gone to Coorg for our summer holidays this year; Coorg, that the British claimed was the "Scotland of India". Nature, they say, had been partial to Scotland in bestowing abundant, and unparalleled verdant beauty. One has to see it to believe or it may even be beyond one's paradigm of beauty. At least, that is what we thought until we visited Coorg in Mysore this summer.

After Cauvery darshan, as we descended through the road, we saw the sangam of three rivers (a confluence), with river Kani-ka on the left, river Sujoti in the centre and Cauvery on the far right. As we drove through Mer-

cara to one of the private coffee estates of Coorg, thickets of bamboo appeared by the roadside, pronouncing the onset of lush terrain for which Coorg is famous. We meandered through the narrow roads with neatly lined coffee plants and shrubs of cardamom, pepper and poinsettias and came upon quaint little cottages built right in the middle of the estate surrounded by silver oaks and rosewood trees.

The cottage where we were supposed to spend the night was a delight, in the midst of solitary and serene nature, totally undisturbed and untamed by man. The environment was fresh and green and the world appeared washed

and laundered to the naked eye.

We experienced, first hand, the humming and singing of the crickets and birds, the nocturnal insects and animals and the lightning bugs glistened against the dark green foliage. A stream gurgled nearby and we sat munching peppered rice-pancakes and sipped tea under one of the open thatched huts, looking at the raindrops clinging to the straw covering the huts. Ferns and bushes had sprung up all around in the wild with specks of lavender flowers dotting the estate.

Our reclusive cottage was a little haven right in the lap of Nature; nature as it should be, and not perfectly manicured,

and trimmed. Coffee stems had been used liberally in the furnishings inside the cottage, including the mirror frame on the wall and even the tiny lamps were made of coffee wood.

As we got ready to take pictures of the heavenly scenario with the sunlight glinting off the wooden pillars and panels, my mind went back to the writings of the famous American transcendentalist, Henry David Thoreau and his living experiment in the solitude of Nature on the shore of Walden Pond. His symbolic retreat from the world to "move away from public opinion, from government, from religion, from education,

from society" was also aimed at meeting "myself face to face".

The lesson that he learned and left for others was one word, i.e. "Simplify", which meant that one should simplify one's needs and ambitions and learn to delight in the simple pleasures that the world of nature offers, a philosophy also propounded by Wordsworth in his famous poem, The Tintern Abbey.

It took me a trip to Coorg to understand this simple philosophy that could seem so bookish in real terms. Perhaps, we need not go to Walden to experience that "simplicity" as we have it in abundant measure in our own hill resort called "Coorg". ■