

CHAPTER VII

Barisal Bar and B. M. College

I left Ripon College during the long vacation of 1917 and went to Barisal with the object of practicing law in the District Courts. It was deemed lucky that I started with some pending cases on the file of a lawyer friend who had lately expired. His Sherista, including the old clerk, had the reputation of having been presided over by a well-known lawyer who had shifted to the High Court a few years before. But there was one drawback: the previous occupant having died of T. B., although not in Barisal, people with some misgiving regarded his office and residential quarters. My father, naturally solicitous about my health, had the mud floors dug up and refilled with fresh earth; the mat walls treated with an antiseptic solution and profusely lime-washed; and the whole place fumigated with sulphur and incense. And when on the top of these sanitary precautions there was a half-night performance of Hari Kirtan, my father's scruples were largely allayed; and I too felt greatly reassured.

My clerk, a worthy old man of long experience, used to get everything ready for me; and so far as the filing of petitions and court papers were concerned, I had just to sign my name on the dotted line. The same was more or less his method of dealing with the rent-suits and Small Cause Court matters even the plaints and written statements of which were drawn up by my clerk and done much better than I could have hoped to do them. In these routine matters my hand was almost literally guided by my mentor. Only in the few new appeal cases, mostly criminal, I was expected to draw up the grounds of appeal; and I found this comparatively easy work, having had so many good models on Suresh Babu's old file.

As regards work in the Court, most of my time was spent in watching other people's cases conducted by the well-known lawyers; but now I did it with more attention and a bit more understanding than in the Calcutta Courts. Like all beginners I was attracted to the Criminal Sessions; and there were some undefended Sessions trials going on pretty frequently. At the suggestion of the Junior Public Prosecutor Rajendra Babu, who was very kind to me, the Session Judge Mr. Macnair, a young I. C. S. officer asked me if I would like to take up the defense in a murder case, to which I agreed. From what I had already seen of the case it was a very bad one for the accused—a cold-blooded murder without any extenuating circumstances. The only hopeful feature was that the crime was committed at night and the principal witness was a boy of 12. For it was a common saying among the people that Babu Gora Chand Das the great defense lawyer of Barisal, had assured his clientele that one need not be hanged for a night murder.

My immediate task was to cross-examine the prosecution witnesses including one or two police officers; and I stood up pluckily to fire away my questions. In this one or two colleagues, who were sitting by to watch the case, helped me. The time of the murder was a night of July or August when the sky is generally overcast; and it was about the middle of the dark fortnight. So I made some play about the possible visibility of men and things on that night even under the open sky. But nothing availed me; and after the trial had dragged on for two or three days the Jury returned a verdict of 'guilty' against the principal accused. It was the evidence of the boy witness-son of murdered Mukhtarali that did the trick; for he could not be shaken by cross-examination. Evidently he was a witness of truth; and he stuck to the main facts of the case with remarkable firmness.

My client was sentenced to death, and I could do no thing to help him except draw up a routine appeal to

the High Court through the Jail authorities. The tearful wife of the man saw me at my house and I believe paid me a nominal fee, by way of Nazar; and all the comfort I could give her was to advise her to wait patiently for the result of the Jail appeal. In due course the murderer was hanged.

The second Sessions case in which I took part was a dacoity case in which the notorious dacoit Abdul was the Chief accused. I had as a brother defense-lawyer my old class-fellow; Sukumar Dutt of Barisal and we jointly conducted the forlorn defense of Abdul who had half a dozen or so previous conviction to his credit. I have forgotten the details of the prosecution case; but I remember the circumstances under which he was arrested and they were thrilling. Abdul was about 40 years old, a broad-chested muscular man of none-too-dark complexion. He was a terror of the countryside, and since his release after the last conviction he had been involved in several crimes, but could not be caught. The police had been on his trail for sometime until they got the report that Abdul had been seen in a certain village where he had a sweet-heart, I suppose one of several claimed by him in different places.

During the night the police threw a cordon round the house he slept in with the help of some local people, and early in the morning when Abdul awoke and came to know of the danger, he broke the cordon and bolted. It was said that a crowd of people for about a mile chased him, when he suddenly disappeared. The baffled police made a search of every thicket and bush around the spot of his disappearance; but there was no trace of Abdul who seemed to have melted into thin air.

At last it was suspected that the dacoit might have concealed himself in the water of the nearby old tank, the surface of which was covered with a thick layer of floating vegetation. The pursuers beat upon the water with sticks and stone and scrutinized the green plain with the utmost care, but in vein. But as the chasing party was about to retire somebody noticed something like the snout of a big fish above the water, at a point where the covering green mantle had been broken; and presently it took the shape of the tip of a man's nose. At once a hue and cry was raised; and the nose-dived and emerged several times in different parts of the tank, until the owner of the nasal periscope was thoroughly exhausted. At long last the human submarine rose above the water and cried aloud 'I surrender'.

There was hardly any scope of defense and all our joint ingenuity of argument were wasted, as we knew it was bound to be; and the Judge sentenced him to 10 years' hard labor. Abdul was heard to say to the Judge 'Would it be possible for me to serve out that long sentence in my lifetime, Saheb?' He looked 10 years older when the sentence was pronounced; perhaps he had expected one much shorter.

I do not remember to have taken part in any other serious trial. But I defended the accused in a case of trespass, theft, and assault before a Magistrate in a Subdivision. There were several experienced Mukhtears to assist me, and I was paid a decent fee too, commensurate with my status as a District Court pleader. Here I secured an acquittal for the accused; and made some name as a rising criminal lawyer. I argued some appeal cases too in my time, both civil and criminal, and had fairly satisfactory results. But I soon found that one could not subsist on appeal cases only but must have grounding in original cases, both civil and criminal. Original Suits or Complaints, however, were slow in coming to me for I had no special pull with any good Mukhtear or Munsiff-court pleader of large practice. So in spite of my being envied by many another junior pleaders for the comparatively good start I had in the profession, I did not feel very comfortable. Besides my past record of teaching as a College teacher kept

haunting my mind from time to time, and raising visions of future happiness if I could become a teacher again.

And this secret hope of mine was not long in being realized for in a few more months Principal Nriyalal Mookerji of B. M. College enquired if it would suit me to work part-time as a Teacher in his College, as he wanted to increase the strength of the English staff, in view of his hoping to open English Honours course in the College. I expressed my willingness. There was a little bargaining about the salary; and Aswini Babu himself said that it was bound to be so long as 'Kali Prasanna' (meaning K. P. Ghosh, the old Vice-Principal) was there; and about the special accommodation in the timetable that I required in the interest of my connection with the Bar. The college authorities yielding on both points, I accepted the appointment and really felt happy for the time being. But I did not know that I had taken a step that would in the long run, and not such a very long run either, lead to my complete severance from the Bar.

In six months I began to feel that this divided loyalty was not going to be tolerated by the jealous mistress of Law. My work in the courts suffered for my absence from Court practically up to lunch time; and my personal requests to the Bench Clerks or Judges to take up my cases after lunch were not, and perhaps could not be, always complied with. As a result, some of my suits were struck off the file for default, and I had great difficulty in having them restored. Some cases were completely spoilt and, most dreadful of all, I was getting a bad name and losing my clients. After sometime the College authorities also wanted to withdraw some of the facilities that they had given me, on the plea perhaps correct—that the University looked with disfavor on the old practice of employing part-time teachers. And before long I was given a broad hint that I must finally choose between the Bar and the College.

It was the year 1920, when Mahatma Gandhi's clarion call of non-co-operation with the Government had been sounded, and numbers of lawyers were suspending their legal practice to join the movement. Even at Barisal a number of my friends had left the Bar, and what was more the profession itself seemed to have fallen into disrepute. For some time I had been planning to go to England for further studies in Modern Literature at Cambridge and, if possible, to become a Barrister. I had collected some funds also for this purpose, and it only remained for me to secure my Passports to sail. But as my fund was limited I wanted to make sure that I should not have to wait long for admission to the College I had in view. I was therefore having correspondence with the Official Adviser for Indian Students in England in the hope of having an assurance on the point in advance. But such assurance was not forthcoming; on the contrary I was warned to be prepared for an indefinite wait in view of the phenomenal rush of British and Colonial students to the Colleges after the long interruption of the Great War. I was also in touch with some Indian friends who were in England at that time; but no one held out any hope except Dilip Kumar Roy who wrote from Cambridge encouraging me to go ahead without delay for, he wrote, no really earnest student need wait long for admission. Roy's letter bucked me up considerably and I planned to sail in company with Nirmal K. Siddhanta, who was also going to Cambridge for the new Modern Languages Tripos.

But it happened that the Honorable B. N. Basu, Indian Adviser to the Secretary of State for India, to whom I had applied for advice sometime before now wrote back that in consideration of my slender purse he would not advise me to go to England in that Session. That was a complete damper for my hopes, for how could I act on young Roy's advice to sail in disregard of the veteran Basu's advice to the contrary? Siddhanta had perhaps a better assurance or a longer purse, and so he went ahead while I stayed back with a sad heart. I had still a lingering hope

that I might have better chance the following year, but I soon realized that great opportunities do not knock twice at the same door.

Within a few months of this retreat, our domestic firmament was heavily overcast, and a family litigation was clearly foreshadowed. It soon took shape as a demand for partition of the family property between my father and my uncle, and gradually developed into a long drawn arbitration suit, during the pendency of which the administration of the estate was vested in a common manager in the control of the arbitrators. This reduced my father's solvency to a minimum for he became a sort of pensioner dependent on another's generosity. My two younger brothers were then at College, and it soon became evident that unless I financed them they would be compelled to stop their studies. My own hopes of foreign study were thus doomed, and I resolutely turned my back on all such ambition. Fortunately for us all, I had by this time secured a good job as senior Professor of English in Ramjas College, Delhi, and had already joined my post. This happened in January 1921, and I welcomed it as a partial compensation for the loss of my high hopes.

Principal N. Mookerji.

Principal Nityalal Mookherji of B. M. College was a man to love, admire and remember. His father Rai Bahadur Pramatha Nath Mookerji was a pro-Government man and a loyalist of loyalists and therefore a 'persona nongrata' with the public, especially with the student community. Nitya Babu was free from any special leaning either towards the British Government or towards the National Congress.

He was an independent man par excellence—the impartial observer and critic of all men with a 'mission' and all partymen. As a student too, Nitya Babu had not been a partisan or devotee of any special subject like Philosophy, Politics, or Economics; but he was a worshipper at the temple's central shrine, —the shrine of Literature—where in a sense all the different branches of liberal knowledge melt and merge together. He was peculiarly free from bias or prejudice: and talking with him one got the impartial man's—the sell—possessed man's point of view, which was no small advantage when the thoughts and feelings of people were unusually excited and violently partisan.

He unconsciously supplied the norm in an age that was inclined to be a bit abnormal. Yet he was not cold or cynical. He was the embodiment of cheerfulness and fun, and bubbled over with high spirits. When very serious he looked like a petulant schoolboy forced to behave under protest. One could almost catch him smiling under his masque of seriousness, and the students he had to deal with waited patiently for his laugh, like a burst of sunshine breaking from a passing cloud. I imagine that was the main reason why he resigned his place in the Executive service to take up the job of Principal of a College. He was not the man to command.

But he was a most delightful comrade and colleague. His cultured wit, his never failing smile, his flair for apt quotations from English, Sanskrit, and Bengali poetry with which he loved to garnish his ordinary conversation, and above all his fine sense of humor made him a most delightful conversationalist. The only weakness he had was his incorrigible habit of badinage. But he made up for it by the love he inspired among his students, so that the boys cheerfully did that for him, which others found it difficult to get done by exercise of authority. He was an easy-going man in the best as well as the worst sense of that expression, and communicated ease and hilarity—

unfortunately not unmixed with slackness and indolence—rather than tension and conscious striving to others. As a teacher it was not so much his depth of knowledge, although that was not inconsiderable, as his fine sense of literature and literary craftsmanship as well as his critical appreciation of the books he taught that most impressed his students.

He was a temperamental man—one with an artist's temperament; and he was a good deal whimsical, which made it a trifle difficult for his subordinates to get on with him sometimes. But he was apt to be misunderstood by strangers, for he was at heart extremely shy and sensitive. A good speaker and a better writer, he had, I fancied, something of the famous R. L. Stevenson in him both in appearance and in department, although I have no knowledge of the romantic side of his life, if indeed he had any such side at all; and although I cannot find anything to support the comparison on the adventurous side either. For Nriya Babu was not a lover of games or sports; I suppose he never had been in his life. Essentially a man of books, he loved to have long walks; but that too at a late hour of the evening by preference—one of his many small oddities.

He remained a bachelor all his life out of love it is said for his motherless nephews whom he cherished with more than a father's care. He had a few chosen friends not many, for the many shunned him as being a crazy fellow; many others as a 'high-brow', which he really was not. But he was a little out of the common in some respects. He had troubles with the college Council that wanted more driving power in him, and looked askance at his leisurely ways.

It was Nriya Babu's misfortune that he, a pacific man, had taken charge of a ship that had ridden many a storm before, and the owners of which were accustomed to expect reports as of old, although the ship now sailed in comparatively smooth waters. It is a pity that he was nearly forced to leave the college at last—more pity for the college than for him—for while he gained new laurels wherever he went, B. M. College, Barisal, never found a worthy successor to occupy his chair.

Of his many colleagues in the Brojomohan College Prof. Atul Das Gupta of the Sanskrit Department alone seemed to understand Nriya Babu truly, for he came closest in sympathy to Nriya Babu's fine temper of mind; and that is why he, in my opinion, was his most intimate friend on the staff. I was comparatively a distant observer yet I shall never forget Nriya Babu's kindness to me,

A Benefactor.

Before I bring the story of my Barisal life to a close I shall pay my tribute of gratitude to one from whom I received abounding kindness although I had no special claim on him. I have referred to my abortive plan of going to Cambridge for further studies. I have also mentioned that the fund I collected for the purpose was very limited. Now of the friends who offered me financial aid, the foremost was one who was hardly an intimate friend. He was a slightly senior student of my college whom I knew well, liked, and respected for his character and goodness of heart. At this time he was in business and doing well; and he was known for his private educational charities.

As soon as I wrote to him on the subject of my project, he offered me a loan of a few hundred rupees in one lump and also promised a monthly remittance for one year in the first instance. It was one of the pleasantest surprises of my life. In fact it was with his contribution that I first opened my account with Thomas Cook & Sons.

Next only to myself, I judge that he was most disappointed when my plan ended in smoke.

A lifelong bachelor of spotless character and deep religious convictions, Ramesh Chandra Chakravarti, formerly Managing Director of Messrs. Chakravarti, Chatterjee & Co., Booksellers, was a leader of social service at Barisal and later in Calcutta: and a more worthy pupil of Jagadish Mookerjee and Kalish Chandra Vidyavinode never breathed. Now he has renounced the world and embraced the ascetic order and lives, where his heart has always been, in holy Brindaban, as a Vaishnava Sadhu.

CHAPTER—VIII

Ramjas College, Delhi.

One bitterly cold and foggy morning of late January, 1921 I alighted at the Delhi Central Station and hired a Tonga for Ashmanpura Road near the Jumna where lived Prof. Nishikanta Sen of St. Stephen's College. I had no friend or acquaintance of my own in Delhi, so I had brought with me an introduction from Prof. Sen's relatives in Barisal. He himself had been a student of Brojomohan College; so it was not very difficult for me in our bluff East Bengal fashion to claim his hospitality. He received me very warmly; but on hearing that I had come with an appointment to Ramjas College he said something that discouraged me. He spoke rather disparagingly of the College then under construction somewhere outside the city of Delhi; and also of Raisaheb Kadar Nath, the founder, as a sort of crank who had spent a potful money to sink a well on the top of hill. Prof. Sen gave me the impression that Rai Saheb was some sort of Arya Samajist prototype of the Christian Jesuit who held that the end justifieth the means.

After my bath and breakfast, Prof. Sen provided me with a guide to take me to Ramjas College. We traveled in a Tonga through dusty roads to the foot of a barren rocky prominence, on the distant crest of which were discernable the tops of certain low buildings; and an irregular high structure on a more distant crest. The low hill was popularly known as Kalapahar, but renamed as Anandaparvat by the founder of the College.

As we ascended the rise the cold wind beat upon my face and ears unmercifully. After a few minutes' drive we reached our destination; but the college of my imagination was nowhere to be seen, I saw instead a number of single—storied buildings in various stages of incompleteness, on either side of broad courtyard, and on different levels, as in a terrace garden; separated by lines of hedges with gaps to pass through. There were a few straggling saplings bordering the approach to the College that were trying hard to strike root in the stony soil. The whole aspect of the place was arid and dismal, except for the low Dhak bushes with their broad green leaves that were peeping out of the corners of the big boulders. The leafless thorny bushes with little berries like diminutive 'Kul' fruits that grew plentifully and the taller Babla trees only added to the desolation of the landscape. A pall of dust was overhanging the scene and making a picture of winter very different from the winter of Bengal. I felt a chill in my heart.

On alighting from the Tonga I was met by Bhandariji, a small Panjabee with a big safa who received me on behalf of Rai Saheb who, I was told, had not yet come to the college. Bhandariji was Rai Saheb's factotum and especially in charge of the building operations that in their various forms and stages were going on all over the place. The little office of Bhandariji was littered with building implements and besieged by men and women laborers, and donkeys.

Bhandariji took me to the College Office where I was met by Prof. N. D. Gurbuxani who was next in rank to Rai Saheb the nominal Principal. The former Principal of the College Mr. Gidwani an Oxford graduate having left the College a few months before, in obedience to the Non-Co-operation call of Mahatma Gandhi, the founder himself had assumed the Principalship and later advertised for an experienced man to help him as Vice Principal. Gurbuxani took me to the staff-room, and introduced me to the Lecturers who were present. They welcomed me heartily, particularly the two Bengalees: Ksheniesh Chandra Deu and Kalika Ranjan Quanungo who had recently joined the College and, who both belonged to Chittagong. The students thronged to welcome me and to make my acquaintance. Dey and Quanungo invited me to their rooms in the Hostel, which was still under construction.

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The life of the hostellers appeared to be a hard life amid harsh surroundings and yet the boys seemed to be quite happy and contented. The walls of the hostel rooms were yet un-plastered and the floor unpaved and dusty, with a thick layer coal, dust, which I also saw being freely mixed with the mortar for its supposed sticking value. A few rope-charpoy and several iron and wooden, chairs around a pair of tables were all the furniture of Mr. Dey's room; unless we included the inevitable earthen pot for drinking water in a corner. He told me about the food he had from the common mess that it was of the coarsest quality and least appetizing for the Bengalee palate. I wondered how it would be possible for me to lead this kind of Bedouin life in a desert like place.

The material aspect of things rather repelled me; but I gradually perceived at the back of it all a pioneering zeal to overcome difficulties and to create something new; and that unconsciously attracted me. In the course of my journey back to the City I came up against Rai Saheb trudging on foot to the College. He was about 65 years old as I learnt after-wards. A sturdy thick-set man with an ample pepper-and-salt beard and a big white *safa* his head, and wearing a long and loose fitting coat over a *Puttoo* waistcoat and a pair of striped shirts half concealing his pajamas the capacious pockets of his coat, waistcoat, and shirts bulging with note-books and papers, the Rai Saheb greeted me with abroad smile and folded hands, as somebody informed him that I was the *new* Professor from Bengal.

After the usual exchange of common places Rai Saheb asked me to wait a few minutes, for he said he would presently return to the city after giving some instructions to Bhandariji. When he came back he said that he would like to show me the pedestrian way of going to the city, which he generally followed. I could not refuse his offer; but I did not quite like the idea of walking a long way on foot, after the two practically sleepless nights I had spent in the train. I quickly found that the old gentleman in *Nagrai* slippers was a much sturdier and swifter walker than myself. I was almost out of breath by the time we reached the *Saddar Bazar* terminus of the city Tramline and boarded a tramcar. We got down near the famous clock tower of *Chandni Chowk*, as *Raishaeb* lived in a nearby lane. A College student offered to accompany me to Prof. Sen's house. Thus ended my first day in Delhi.

The next day I made the acquaintance of a young Bengalee teacher of the *Ramjas High School* attached to the College, one *Mukherjee*, who suggested that I might put up in a Bengalee lodging of which he himself was a member. I inspected the place and shifted to it after two days' stay with Prof. Sen as his guest. Some 8 or 10 Bengalees lived there in one mess; and the food served was cooked to suit Bengalee taste more or less. I was very kindly received by all of them and one *Babu Dwijen Ghosh*, an elderly gentleman who was to be my roommate became a sort of guardian to me. He advised me now and then on the manners and customs of the local people or warned me about the vagaries of Delhi weather and the peculiarities of Delhi food.

Another member of the mess was a Mr. P. Sinha some 10 years older than myself who was the senior English teacher of *Ramjas High School No. 2* in the City, and had already been in Delhi for several years. It was said that Rai Saheb afterwards spoke to Mr. Sinha to look after my comforts, which Mr. Sinha did so long as I was in that mess. He was a nice person to talk to; but I soon noticed his opium eating habit and I was a little on my guard against him on account of a scandal I heard about his past. Although I kept an alert eye I could see no harm in the man, except that he was a rather lazy fellow who mostly kept his own company and preferred to stay behind closed doors. Once when the talk was about physiognomy, phrenology, and similar matters Mr. Sinha paid me the compliment of saying that by my face I ought to be a ladies' favorite—a remark that I laughed away at the moment; but it was one not to be easily forgotten. Afterwards I passed my life in review. I was 31 at the time, and I review my life again today when I am 63; but I cannot recall one instance of a lady other than my own wife, taking a special notice of me, although there may have been several instances perhaps the other way about. I suppose that either Mr. Sinha's science of physiognomy is as hopeless as the weather forecasts of the Meteorological office; or that I have ever lacked the sixth sense to know when a horse laughs, a serpent sneezes, or a woman loves.

It was here that I heard for the first time loud cries in the surrounding area, which were interpreted to me by Mr. Ghosh as warnings given by masons and laborers to the women folk of the neighborhood to look to their *Purdah*

as these people were about to get to the roof of some building for their work. What an eloquent tribute, I thought, to the tyranny of the Purdah in this ancient capital of successive Pathan and Moghul empires!

I noticed also a striking difference between Bengal and up-country modes of sleeping. In this lodging the Bengalees, at least those who lived without their families, simply spread their bedding on the floor and slept thereon, as we usually do in Bengal when not living on the ground floor. But I found that up-countryman, however poor, would never care to sleep, ground floor or fifth floor, except on a charpoy. My mind was a bit inclined to note such little similarities and differences between the habits and customs of one people and another wherever I lived.

My first summer in Delhi.

The first winter in Delhi was terrible indeed but with a supply of extra blankets and soaks and with a samovar thrown in, it was not intolerable; that epithet was really deserved by the first summer I passed in Delhi, and in this very place. The broad slabs of stone that formed the ceiling of the house, there being no second floor, and the thin stone walls around made it as hot as a stove alight from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.; and I was condemned to stay the whole noonday at home, the College classes being held early in the morning from April onwards. I had to tramp a fairly long way at both ends, in spite of the Railway lift in the middle, coming back from the far college about mid-day; and I had to remain indoors till about 6 in the evening when I visited some nearby park or garden, and sat in the shade of trees or on the soft green grass. Fearing to go far I made the Queen's Garden in front of the Railway station my favorite rendezvous.

After the night meal it was a pleasure to scale the rickety wooden ladder to the roof of the building and throw myself on the Charpoy to pass the night. The air would not cool before 10 O' Clock; but it was a great relief to sleep on the roof with a breeze blowing the whole night, which became decidedly cool towards the morning. Mr. Ghosh my mentor warned me against the Loo and recommended me to have a glass of roasted green mango sherbet in the afternoon to avoid catching it. In the month of June I had my first experience of Andhi or dust—storm which turned the blazing day almost into night, and blew enormous quantities of sand and dust particles into people's noses throats, ears and eyes; besides spreading a thick layer of black deposit on all one's household belongings, in spite of the closed doors and windows. The black dust entered the rooms through every chink and crack in the ventilators, and the door—way, the window sashes. But the Andhi also heralded a shower, at least a few big drops, so coveted in that season; and it invariably brought down the temperature. Still it was an unmitigated nuisance to be driven off your open—air beds by a patter of rain-drops for a few minutes only; for it sent you scuttling down to the hot oven of your bedroom below, with the certainty of having to go up again in a few minutes. Nothing spoilt one's 'sleep and soured one's temper like Andhi at night.

It was therefore a heavenly relief when about the end of June or beginning of July real clouds began to appear in the sky, and when men and animals gazed at them with wistful eyes. Rain or no rain, the air would cool if only the sky was overcast. The peacocks went mad crying for delight; and they cried day and night in the meadows and gardens a little off the haunts of men, dancing peacocks could be seen in all the glory of their outspread plumage, displaying half the colors of the rainbow. The feathered tribe generally, like the animals in the fields, and the crickets, insects, frogs, and reptiles in the earth below—practically life in all its forms, not excluding the trees

and creepers would seem to be in an excited mood, a mood of expectancy, as it were, of the great boon of the common Mother—a shower.

Rabindra Nath has immortalized the rainy season, but mainly that of Bengal in his poetry, and operas; but the advent of the rain cloud is a much greater event in the life of Upper India than it is in Bengal. And happily for me, the appearance of the monsoon clouds signaled the closing of the college for the long vacation, and the eagerly awaited Journey back to Bengal—and home, sweet home!

In their own ways, not necessarily prosaic—for the young folk's swinging from the boughs of the leafy trees is romantic in the best sense—the people of upper India celebrate the rainy season heralded by the cloudy days without rain. Schools and colleges observe holiday in honor of a 'fine day' i.e. a rainy day; songs are sung and picturesque processions of girls with flower bedecked pitchers heaped with green foliage on their heads are led through the streets of towns and villages. The first showers of the season are not only lapped up by the cattle but also joyously received on their bare heads and bodies by the children who dance about naked under the shower of liquid bliss. In the language of the poet "One touch of nature makes the whole world kin".

My Delhi prospects.

Delhi was not as near Calcutta thirty years ago as it is today. When I left Barisal for Delhi there were hardly 25 persons in the whole town who had ever seen Delhi. There was therefore a touch of novelty, if not adventure, in going to Delhi in those days. I plumed myself on the privilege I was given of living in Imperial Delhi in completely new surroundings; and I wove in my imagination iridescent gossamer of hopes of future advancement in life. A new University was going to be established in Delhi, which, I fancied would rank as the central Imperial University. Besides Delhi was the bee-hive of Princes and Maharajas, as well as mighty members of the Central Legislature who normally wanted literary Secretaries to help prepare their speeches or look after their correspondence; and I secretly hoped that, God helping, I might annex one such glittering prize of a part-time secretary ship in addition to my teaching work. For these reasons I felt considerably buoyed up and at times caught myself walking with my head in the clouds and building castles in the air as I strolled by myself along the Alipore Road or sauntered about in the Qudsia Bag or Nicholson Garden in the crisp cold weather of Delhi.

The actual conditions of my life or service at that moment were not very enviable; but I thought of the possible future; and when I listened to the glowing accounts of Rai Saheb Kedarnath of what he proposed to do and how the clock tower he had in mind would one day raise its spire higher than the tallest minaret of Juma Masjid, I almost persuaded myself that I was living in a palace! But my dreams received a rude shock when I saw Rai Saheb pay the salary of the staff in dribblets; and also when I noticed an utter absence of method and system in his transactions; there being no regular account keeping Rai Saheb being his own Cashier and his capacious pockets his cashbox—I felt rather cold in the feet about the future of the institution.

He was an autocrat of autocrats and loved to centralize all power and initiative in himself. It gave me a cold shiver to see him carry cash, sometimes to the tune of thousands of rupees upon his person from the city to the college, back and forth, when he had no more than a student or two as his attendants; and at odd times he was stark alone. Not that case of robbery on the lonely road he had to travel was unknown, but Rai Saheb was never afraid of

being waylaid. He replied to our anxious remonstrance “Well, nobody will touch me”; and strange to record, he was never interfered with during the many years of almost daily perambulations between the city and Anandparvat. When one seeks for a reason, for one thing Rai Saheb was widely known and respected by the common people of that area, and for another the number of daring criminals in and about Delhi City was then but a fraction of what it must be today.

Raj Saheb never cared for such trivialities as personal appearance or conventional dignity of bearing. He thought nothing of shouting at people if necessary, and it was funny to see him produce bulky wads of currency notes from his protuberant inside pockets and counting out the requisite number to various people as he walked and without any ceremony and, to help his memory sometimes, to make a pencil note in the small notebook he carried. I heard it said what it was his practice, on return home in the evening, to throw his long coat with all its contents at the head of Pt. Chiranjilal, his most trusted Secretary, to take care of; and after his frugal evening repast he proceeded to tell Chiranjilal, mainly from memory, the payments he had made during the day as well as the funds he had obtained from various sources, to be entered in Chiranjilal’s ledger. Sums were at times reported to be lost from Rai Saheb’s pockets; but in view of the splendid absence of method that he followed it was impossible to trace however the loss took place. Naturally people talked suspiciously about the integrity of the individuals who were closest to Rai Saheb’s person.

Rai Saheb was a Bania by birth, frugality and thrift were inborn in him but I have never seen a man more careless in the actual handling of cash than he. He was, the son of a poor father Lala Ramjas; and it was chiefly by his efforts that he made his way through the University, then the Calcutta University as the Punjab University had not yet been founded Rai Saheb passed the M. A. Examination in Mathematics and later entered the Punjab Judicial service. He rose to the position of a District Judge; and when I first met him he had retired from service 7 or 8 years before, on a pension, of Rs. 400/ per month. He was a widower without issue, and was imbued with ideas of social reform and has been closely associated with the Arya Samaj for a long time.

Soon after his retirement Rai Saheb devoted his entire property worth about two lakhs of rupees to the cause of education. At first, it was said, Rai Saheb thought of devoting himself to the service of the existing Hindu College and was even its Secretary for sometime; but it appears that differences arose between him and some other members of the College Council until he decided to do pioneering work in his own line.

He performed the Viswajit Jajna according to Arya Samaj rites and renounced everything he had, including the Dhoti he was wearing, only reserving half of his monthly pension for his personal expenses. This sacrifice naturally caused a great stir in Hindu society and a number of rich Hindu individuals came forward to help his cause. Seth Laxhmi Narain Gadodia of Delhi was the Chief of these and he donated cash and property worth several lakhs, and was made the chairman of the Ramjas Education Trust, a legally registered body; Rai Saheb being the Secretary. Rai Saheb also found a worthy lieutenant in Rai Saheb Radhikanarain, a Delhi Kayastha and an old student of his—and a retired Executive Engineer to boot—who became the Secretary of the College Council under the Trust; with Pandit Rajnath, Advocate, as President when the College came into being.

Kedarnath soon gathered around him a band of enthusiastic workers prepared to help him realize his dream. His main object was to educate the poorer classes of people; chiefly the villagers round about Delhi, the class of

people who did not much benefit by the existing institutions. And it was with this object that Rai Saheb chose an out-of-the-way site for his project. Many for his unhappy choice blamed him, and Prof. Ser of St. Stephen's College was one of them. But looking back today, although the entire site has now passed from the hands of the Trust, the Government having acquired the property for military purposes during the last World War, we cannot withhold admiration for Rai Saheb's wonderful foresight.

Although he could not have foreseen the war and its effect on the College, he had visualized the vast expansion of the city of Delhi so as to include the Anandparvat within its wide embrace. All the intervening space of about three miles including Karol Bagh and Regarpara of my time up to the foot of Anandparvat is now one uninterruptedly built area, teeming with regular inhabitants, not counting the Refugees.

Rai Saheb had purchased a portion of the hill for a nominal sum about the year 1916; and thirty years after when the Government acquired the estate, the Educational Trust received compensation, I believe, of over 20 lakhs. True a few lakhs had been spent by the Trust in buildings, roads, playgrounds, waterworks, and Electric installation. Yet the total could not have exceeded 10 lakhs. Besides these 20 lakhs Rai Saheb had previously sold to the P. W. D., the Delhi Municipality, and the B. B. & C. I. Railway vast quantities of road metal and ballast quarried from the hills; and also leased building sites for high salami on the side of the hill facing the city. All this had fetched a good income for the college.

Although it was misfortune to lose the site so dearly loved by the founder yet the transaction with the Government has now put the finances of the college and the Education Trust generally on a stable basis, practically for all time. The Degree College has now merged with the old Intermediate College in Daryaganj and I believe, it also maintains its Hall in the University area on an equal footing with the rival colleges. The name of Ramjas is now assured to last forever. It is almost an epic story how within a space of 20 years an ordinary person by sheer dint of will power and self-sacrifice succeeded in establishing the biggest educational organization in the metropolis of India. I consider it a high privilege to have been associated with this great man of character and vision for about 4 years in an early chapter of the history of Ramjas College.

My Relations with Rai Saheb Kadarnath.

But my relations with Rai Saheb were not always very happy, for in spite of my recognition of the greatness of his work, I could not help disliking some aspects of his personal rule. We in Bengal are perhaps more in love with democratic methods than the people of the other provinces; or states and hence arose my difficulty in getting on with Rai Saheb. We are apt to expect certain forms of doing business, even when we are assured of the honesty of purpose of the doer. But Rai Saheb had scant respect for forms and formalities, even for what we call decencies; he was too intent on his object to be troubled by out of the way considerations. He was a visionary and realist rolled in one, perhaps a mark of greatness; but a great man is not necessarily a popular man. Apart from his personal equations of which I shall speak later, I could not often approve the policy he wanted to follow in University affairs. His policy was simple to a fault. The Christian Mission College is hostile to Hindu religious interests—fortunately the Arabic College had not yet joined the Delhi University, otherwise a third Communal interest would have had to be reckoned with—therefore let us be in the opposite Camp to St. Stephen's College' was

the policy of Rai Saheb. And that meant a perpetual alliance with the Hindu College. I could see that this oversimple communal policy was virtually making Ramjas College an appendage or Camp follower of the Hindu College led by its masterful and shrewd Principal N. V. Thadani.

As Vice Principal of my College I had a place on most of the University Committees and I wanted to exercise my vote according to my unfettered judgment, except in matters where the interest of my college was directly involved. Rai Saheb's view was that we should all vote together as representatives of the same college; and with great difficulty I obtained from him my freedom of voting in neutral matters. Even so, difference of opinion occurred between us. I remember one case particularly; and it happened in the Admission Committee of the university.

A Mussalman post-graduate student of St. Stephen's College had been turned out from that College on a charge of moral misdemeanor, which in the judgment of the Principal of that College disqualified him to be a student of the University which, at this initial stage, was anxious to set up high principles. This student had approached the Principal of Hindu College for admission and the Principal was prepared to admit him. The case had come before the Admission Committee for formal approval, which however the Principal of St. Stephens urged should not be given. Elaborating the grounds of his objection, Principal Monk observed that he did not wish to enter into the details of the student's conduct; but that it could be briefly described as 'Oscar Wilde-an'. It was disclosed that this student had written certain letters to a junior student of the same college, the taste and tone of which letters was so characterized by Mr. Monk.

I found that the student in question was not an outsider seeking admission in St. Stephen's college and being refused: but that he was an old student of that College, and a promising one too, whom the authorities had thought fit to expel after proper investigation, and after hearing the accused in his own defense, malice or personal vindictiveness being neither alleged nor deemed probable. I agreed with the contention of Principal Monk that such a student should not be entertained in any other college of University, especially as the M. A. Classes of the three constituent colleges were intended to have joint teaching. Accordingly I voted against the admission of the student in spite of Mr. Thadani's attempt to import the cheap Indian-vs.-European argument into the case. Rai Saheb voted with Mr. Thadani; and there were whispers in the Committee expressing some surprise that the Principal and Vice Principal of Ramjas College should have voted differently over this question. St. Stephen's College having a majority of votes in its favor won the division; and Rai Saheb could not suppress his indignation at my voting against the Hindu College.

As soon as the meeting was over, he turned round upon me and almost in the hearing of others, said "Now, Mr. so-and-so, you have done a great wrong without knowing it. The charge of the Mission College Principal is based on certain letters written by a student of Persian. Now what does Mr. Monk know and what do you know either about Persian poetry? The sentiments objected to be mere poetic commonplaces, and can possibly mean no harm. Europeans and Bengalees are not fit to judge such cases". I kept quiet, not knowing anything about Persian poetry outside Fitzgerald's Omar Khayyam. However, I made some research regarding what Rai Saheb had said, and found that he was largely correct. But I did not repent the way I had voted for the simple reason that the guilty student had couched his amorous sentiments and poetic imagery not in classical Persian, but in current English!

I had an almost head-on collision with Rai Saheb on a more serious issue. It happened about the end of my first session in Ramjas College. Pt. Kishanlal Sharma was the Lecturer in Sanskrit, and junior Lecturer in Mathematics, and had served the college for several years when I came. He lived in the city neighborhood of Lala Sri Ram, Managing Director of the Delhi Cloth Mills, and was in the habit of visiting him off and on, so that the two were supposed to be on very friendly terms. It appeared that Rai Saheb was not on very good terms with Lala Sriram, who had started a Commerce College in Charkhawan Gali in the city; but it was still an Intermediate College. It seems that there was some rivalry between Ramjas Intermediate College and this Commerce College over the recruitment of students.

Rai Saheb once complained before me that Lala Sriram was doing propaganda against the Ramjas Colleges and Schools; and that Rai Saheb did not like that Pt Kishanlal should hobnob with him. I conveyed the hint to the Pandit but he did not care for Rai Saheb's complaint about who he mixed with, so long as his 'results' i.e. the examination results of his students were good. He stood on his results, he declared; and went his way. Sometime later Rai Saheb complained again that Pt. Kishanlal was slandering him before Lala Sriram and divulging college secrets to him.

This was a serious charge and I again brought it to the Pandit's notice, not officially, but as a friend. He simply denied the allegation and pooh-pooed the consequences, which I had advised him to beware of. He said he suspected that Rai Saheb wanted to appoint somebody else in his place; and if that was the fact, he queried, why did not Rai Saheb say so? I advised the Pandit to make up the matter with Rai Saheb in a private meeting; but he did not agree. Soon after I heard rumors about Rai Saheb's intention of discharging the Pandit, which I thought was perhaps inevitable in view of Panditji's obduracy.

Presently Rai Saheb told me to give a month's notice to the Pandit and terminate his service. I pointed out to Rai Saheb that if there was no other alternative than to dismiss the man, a step, which the whole College staff would regret, the Pandit should be given his salary for the long vacation which was but a month away, as he had given satisfactory service for so many years. I had not been formally appointed Vice Principal yet, for my inability to comply with a particular condition, so the staff looked up to me as the proper man to protect their interest.

So, although Pandit Kishanlal had not requested me to intercede with the Principal on his behalf, I thought it my natural duty to do so. When Rai Saheb refused to pay three months salary to the Pandit, I pointed out that it was a rule with the other Universities that if an employee had served for nine months of a session he was entitled to the vacation pay; and that he could not be robbed of this right by a month's notice given just before the long vacation. Unfortunately we were in a period of transition—an interregnum so to say—because the Punjab University was relaxing its control over the Delhi Colleges, while the New Delhi University, destined to take over the charge, had not yet framed its rules.

Rai Saheb had probably been advised to take advantage of that anarchic position. I consulted some Professors of the other Colleges, but they were not very hopeful about the Punjab University taking any interest in the matter, even if the Pandit made an appeal. In this predicament I planned a memorial to the college Council in the name of the whole body of teachers, since the Pandit's case was likely to create a bad precedent for all of us.

I called an informal meeting of the staff and explained to them what I intended to do. The first thing

necessary was that we should be prepared to resign in a body if our demand on behalf of the Pandit was not conceded; and that to make that pledge effective we must put our signatures to a document embodying the pledge in black and white. At this point I discovered that all of us were not of the same mind. Some hesitated to put their signatures for fear of the possible consequences, others apprehended that a few might break their pledge and retain their appointments, while the rest were sacked by the authorities. As there was nothing but their honor to prevent them from withdrawing their resignations, some shrewd members of the staff stated that they were prepared to accept the pledge subject to a proviso, and that was that if either x or y withdrew his resignation then the other would not be bound by his pledge. That showed of course how much x and y trusted each other.

Fortunately 2 or 3 persons only insisted upon such reservations. I assured my Colleagues that I would not show the pledge to any outsider but keep it entirely to myself. Then the questions arose as to who should put his signature first. Of course that honor belonged to me and I actually signed the document before their eyes. Who should sign next was a more difficult question to decide. I suggested then signing in the order of seniority; but some senior men demurred and preferred to stand last. Some body frivolously suggested a Sailor's Round Robin as a desperate solution of the problem; but luckily for our self-respect the suggestion was not acted upon. After about 3 hours wrangling I got all the signatures I wanted.

Now it struck me that the cause of Panditji's salary was too small an object to justify all this marshalling of willpower. 'As well be hanged for a sheep as for a lamb', says the English proverb and as we looked around there was quite a number of other grievances of the staff and students, which we now resolved to include in the proposed memorial. In the result the memorial became an elaborate document—a sort of Petition of Rights of the British Parliament!

I duly submitted the memorial in the name of the whole staff to the President of the College Council; and a date was fixed for a special meeting at which about half a dozen of us were invited to be present. The President Pt. Raj Nath read the memorial in the council meeting and put some questions to us, and then he called upon Rai Saheb to make his reply. I saw that Rai Saheb was very angry and he made me personally responsible for many of the grievances of which we had prayed for redress. He said in effect that the very fact that I was not living on the College premises was the root cause of these irregularities; and he insisted that unless I shifted to the college quarters immediately he would ask the Council to appoint the next senior Professor as Vice Principal.

I saw that Rai Saheb had very adroitly turned me the complainant into the defendant, and also put me in fear of losing my just right. I said that for an important domestic reason, which I later explained privately to the President, I was not in a position to remove my family to the college quarters for the remainder of that session; but I gave my word that from the beginning of the next session I would do as desired by Rai Saheb. But Rai Saheb seemed to be eager to supplant me by his favorite Prof. K. C. Dey; for brushing aside my excuse he went to the length of asking Prof. Dey directly whether he was willing to work as Vice Principal. There was a tense moment of silence followed by voices of protest from the members of the stall present in the meeting, and Prof. Dey had no opportunity of saying anything.

At this point the President asserted himself and expressed the opinion that it would not be advisable to supercede Prof. X who was an experienced man and appoint another without previous experience simply because

the first could not comply with Rai Saheb's demand for a matter of 3 months only. He insisted that I should be appointed Vice Principal at that very meeting on the condition of my living on the College site from the following September, to which proposition the Council agreed. It also removed some of our grievances, and accepted our main contention that Pt. Kishanlal should receive three month's salary instead of one month's; but the notice of discharge from service remained unchanged. We had therefore reason to rejoice that our united demand had produced the desired result, and that a good precedent had been set up.

Imagine therefore our astonishment when the headstrong Panjabee Brahman declared, after thanking us for our kind intercession, that he would much rather submit his own resignation than take a notice of discharge. We tried our best to dissuade him from this suicidal course but he was adamant. True to his word he submitted his resignation on the day the college closed for the summer vacation; and all our efforts to help him were spurned. After the vacation the utmost I could do for him was to induce Rai Saheb to pay him one month's salary as a matter of grace. I breathed gratefully when I received Panditji's postal acknowledgement of the money order, which certainly he had not expected, but for which he did not care even to thank me.

Pandit Hardatt Sharma.

The Professor of Sanskrit who succeeded Pt. Kishanlal was a young man of a very different type. Pt. Kishanlal was taciturn, morose, and irascible; whereas Pt. Hardatt Sharma was social, jovial, talkative, suave, and scholarly, being a first class M. A. of the Benares Hindu University. The laughter, wit, and songs of this young man brightened the life of the little colony of teachers living on the otherwise bleak Kalapahar.

He could speak Bengali a little, and understood it a good deal more, having lived with Bengalees in Meerut and Benares. He joined the two other Bengalees on the staff in calling me Dada, and was soon followed by one or two non-Bengalee colleagues also.

A third Bengalee had in the meantime joined us as Professor of Philosophy in the person of N. V. Banerjee, another First Class man, from D. A. V. College, Lahore. K. C. Dey, Professor of Economics was a first class man too, and so was Prof. Sita Ram of Mathematics. Prof. Quanango had already published his History of Sher Sha, and was collecting materials for his History of the Jats. We six formed a walking squad, and went out for long strolls in the spring and summer evenings, sometimes, along the Rohtak road, sometimes along the Gurgaon Road and sometimes to villages like Narnaul or to New Delhi then under construction. At times we went along the Irrigation Canal into the fruit gardens of Sabzi Mandi. I was the only man of over 30, the others were below 30; but I doubt if ever there was a more jovial company of grown-up young men who owed no part of their hilarity to the corked bottle or the fowling piece.

Talk and laughter, laughter and talk were the endless merry-go-round that we rode for hours almost daily. Gradually it was realized that new topics of conversation being difficult to find, our talks and pleasantries had a tendency to fall into grooves; and that the butts of our wit were often the same. One such butt was Rai Saheb himself, at whom we not only laughed behind his back for his many idiosyncrasies but we often caught ourselves bringing up his name repeatedly as the central theme of our conversation. Our sense of propriety and decency, as well as our instinct of not losing our mental sanity warned us that this must be stopped; and we adopted a resolution

that anybody uttering Rai Saheb's name more than twice in the course of one evening must pay a penalty of one anna per offense. Under this self-imposed ordinance of verbal control a little money was collected too, but good resolutions like some other good creations of man and God are, as a cynic has observed, made to be violated.

Rai Saheb Jokes.

Some of our jokes about Rai Saheb may be mentioned here. A new student had noticed the yellow color of Rai Saheb's teeth and innocently enquired why his teeth were so, to which Rai Saheb had replied "How can it be otherwise, my boy? Does a lion ever clean his teeth? I imagine the first year boy had a shiver of fright as he noticed the resemblance of Rai Saheb's face to a lion's head. Another time some rats had died in the college Hostel and simultaneously there were several plague cases in the city; so naturally the boys were frightened. Rai Saheb came to the Hostel to put courage in their hearts, when a boy came up to him and said in a panicky voice "Sir, a rat has died in my room. I want to go home today". Rai Saheb comforted him saying, "What else did you expect to die in your room, you simpleton? Did you expect to see a dead elephant? The boy was effectually silenced.

We had coined a phrase "Rai Saheb's Mechanical Theory of Koshish"—which the Professor of Philosophy once humorously elaborated for us in a short lecture. 'Koshish' means 'effort' in Urdu. It had reference to Rai Saheb's pathetically heroic belief that everything can be accomplished by effort specially students' good results, if only their teachers would goad them to put in adequate efforts. After the Test Examinations it was Rai Saheb's practice to take down in his notebook the marks of the students in whom he took a special interest. He would then call the teachers concerned and explain to them that a little deal more effort would have placed so-and-so in the First Division; a good more effort would have raised to the top level of second class a boy who had just escaped with a third class; and a much greater deal of effort might lift a third division to the first division, it was a subject on which Rai Saheb was never tired of lecturing the teachers. As a mathematician he had perhaps worked out the requisite degrees of effort to place the good students in the different divisions and places of merit. Of course all this elaboration was imaginary and hyperbolic—the work of idly—busy brains during our evening rambles.

Before I take leave of Rai Saheb I should mention that he had a particular fancy for Bengalee teachers. The first Principal of his college was the late Prof. Nikhil Nath Maitra, formerly of the Presidency College, Calcutta. When the I. Sc. classes were introduced Rai Saheb indented his old friend. Prof. Bhattacharya, a former Principal of the Hindu College, from distant Hazaribagh to arrange the Science Laboratory, and to plan and equip the Science Lecture Theatre although the work might have been done cheaper by local service and talents.

In spite of my differences with him he was very reluctant to part with me, and even suppressed as long as he conveniently could a letter and a telegram that had fallen into his hands calling me to another college for an interview; and when at last I got the appointment and was determined to go, he insisted upon my finding another Bengalee professor 'as good as yourself,' as he was pleased to put it, to take my place. I had the satisfaction of putting in my place one whom I considered better than Sukumar Dutt of Barisal, old friend, my classmate and myself.

Many years later when Dr. Dutt was securely installed as Principal of Ramjas College and the affairs of the College as well as of the Delhi University were on the up grade, Dr. Dutt made an attempt to draw me back to the

old college; and I was more than willing to go; but he was unsuccessful on account of a new alignment of parties and interests that had occurred since I left, and on account of secret opposition from unexpected quarters. Yet I had the satisfaction of passing a month of my summer vacation in the old surroundings and among old faces. It was in 1938: and I have not visited the place again. Men cannot see far ahead or I should not have left the Ramjas College in 1924, lured by apparently better pay and prospects.

Rai Saheb At Home.

One social event in the life of Ramjas College stands out in my memory above all others. During my time the college received visits of many distinguished persons. Dr Jadunath Sarkar, G S. Khaparde, Mahatma Hansraj of Lahore was amongst the people who paid their visits at the invitation of the college authorities or Students' Associations. The annual College Day was celebrated with great rejoicings on the Basant Panchmi day; but as Havans and Bhajans formed the main part of the function, it did not greatly attract non-Arya samajists like myself.

Once Rai Saheb awoke to the duty of being At Home to the teaching staff of the sister colleges after we had several times expressed to him our embarrassment in accepting invitation of the other colleges, but never once standing hosts to them in return. Rai Saheb told us to draw up a list of the necessary equipment, crockery, provisions etc. for about 75 persons and to issue the invitations a fortnight ahead. He said "Please tell me the things you want and don't worry about the expense".

It was Rai Saheb's habit to do things in a grand way; and he wished that no item should be omitted and no expenses spared to make the function a grand success. Days in advance laborers were engaged to throw red brick-dust over the way and to level and sweep the long dusty road over the hill, along which the guests would travel. The day before the event Bhistees were observed to sprinkle water on the road, pavilions were rigged up on the graveled court of the college; carpets spread on the floor, and cartloads of elegant chairs and tables arranged under the pavilion. The whole place was en fete and Rai Saheb enquired if a Band Party should not be requisitioned to entertain the guests; but we considered that as over-doing the part.

Rai Saheb personally went to Subzi-Mandi and purchased at wholesale rates—he had a fancy for purchasing things wholesale—huge quantities of oranges of the biggest size, apples of Kulu, and grapes of Chaman. A five-pound tea chest, and half a dozen tins of Cream-Cracker biscuits, and a dozen each of condensed milk and cigarette tins, and hampers of sweetmeats—in short everything on a scale fit for a regiment. Ovens were kept ready for boiling water for tea in big copper cauldrons. We were amazed at the lavish arrangements for a party of 5 guests, the remaining 25 being our own people.

What chagrin was in store for Rai Saheb and what disappointment for us was revealed when altogether 15 guests arrived, half of who were Europeans, to honor the invitation to Rai Saheb's At-Home party. The unopened tins of condensed milk, biscuits, and cigarettes were returned to the shops but the rest of the provisions were distributed among the members of the school and college Hostels. Rai Saheb bitterly complained of the discourtesy of the other colleges, and expressed his opinion that we should no more honor parties given by others.

But this did not suit us. It was pointed out to Rai Saheb that courtesy like mercy cannot be forced, and mere courtesy was not enough to overcome difficulties like those of traveling a distance of 5 miles over some of the worst

roads of Delhi. That only an overmastering sense of duty could accomplish. We suggested that we had better keep in reserve our ambition of playing the bountiful host till we were able to make the communication between the college and the city reasonably easy and comfortable. To ourselves we said, "Now that our conscience has been appeased, why should we deny ourselves the pleasure that is within our reach—namely being guests at other people's tables?"

There was an inspection of the Ramjas College in 1921 on behalf of the Punjab University in connection with our application for the recognition of the I. Sc. Classes in Biology and Botany. The University sent a panel of inspectors under the leadership of Principal Saindas of D. A. V. College, Lahore.

It was comparatively easy to equip a Biological museum including a tank of water for gold fish and frogs, and a warren of guinea pigs or to catch cockroaches for dissection; but to plant a Botanical garden on the rocky soil of Kalapahar was a Herculean task. Yet the rules of the University demanded it. Nothing daunted, Rai Saheb started with the students and some laborers to remove the boulders from the surface of the ground behind the science Department of the College, and to fill it up and raise the level with earth brought up from the foot of the hill. A large number of potted plants, shrubs and flowers were secured from the Subzimandi nurseries and arranged in the garden plot. But as it was necessary to show that some of the specimens were growing naturally, some of the pots were buried in the ground showing only the plants above. But there were a few necessary specimens that could not be obtained in pots; so it was thought proper to set up the cuttings in the soil as if they grew naturally.

In about three days' time a flourishing little Botanical garden was set up on the top of Kalaphar, as if by magic, presenting a pleasant contrast to the surrounding area. The cuttings were not planted till the night preceding the inspection day but were kept as fresh as frequent sprinkling of water by the Bhistis could keep them.

After inspecting the Laboratory the Inspectors entered the Botanical Garden. Rai Saheb, Mr. Gopalji Ahluwalia, the Lecturer in Botany and Biology, and myself were with the Inspectors. After expressing their admiration for the garden at first sight the Inspectors seemed to become a little suspicious and began to put searching questions as to how the plants were normally watered and soon. They also put Botanical questions to Ahluwalia as they went round. Presently Mr. Saindas began to pull some plants upwards, and before long one or two came up in his hand and there were no roots to them. He turned round upon Rai Saheb in indignant surprise; and Rai Saheb turned towards me, as if expecting me to supply the answer to the unasked question. I pushed Ahluwalia forward to face the music and slipped behind.

I was not really responsible for this trumped up show; it was mainly the work of the daring and resourceful Punjabee Lecturer who had Rai Saheb entirely under his thumb. I did not catch what explanation one Punjabee Bhai gave to another, but I hope the Inspectors realized the literally uphill nature of the task imposed upon the College by the rules of the University. In due course, however, the necessary recognition was granted to the College.

Gopalji Ahluwalia.

By the way, Mr. Gopalji Ahluwalia was an interesting character. For many years he was remembered by the people of Anandparvat for the "follow your nose" footpath that he had marked out over the undulations of the hill while prospecting for the shortest route to the city. The Ahluwalia road was bordered with lime-washed stones, which he and his students planted with their own hands. Some of the sections of his route were hazardous sheep

tracks, which ordinary pedestrians could not negotiate but Mr. Ahluwalia and his students always used the route and claimed that they saved 15 to 20 minutes by following it.

Apart from his work in the college and road laying, Mr. Ahluwalia's hobby was dissemination of Birth control literature. He kept a sort of office in Chandni Chawk for this purpose; but his interest in this novel propaganda was rather difficult to understand, for he was a bachelor and said that he would not marry. After about two years in Ramjas College he left for England ostensibly to study in the London School of Economics. He was an M. Sc. in Biology, so it was difficult to understand his newfound passion for Economics. Later we heard that he was in business in England. Many years later I read in the papers about his lectures in Hyde Park, London, on the subject of Birth Control, and subsequently about his prosecution, conviction, and a sentence of fine in a London Police Court. I do not know if he ever came back to India. He was a bundle of contradictions; fancy an Indian lecturing in London on birth control—and he a native of the Punjab—where the rate of birth was perhaps the lowest in India!

Delhi University Court.

In one of the early meetings of the Court of the Delhi University under the Chairmanship of Dr. H. S. Gour, Vice Chancellor, some members elected from the Delhi Bar, especially one Mr. Bose, a pushing young lawyer, were anxious to show off their debating skill by making a fuss over nothing and by putting irrelevant questions and raising frivolous points of order and thereby they made the work of the meeting practically impossible. I was sitting in one of the back rows, the front ones being occupied by some of the distinguished members.

Dr. Gour did not seem to be particularly disturbed, for he sat impassive in his chair; perhaps he intentionally allowing the young Court to let off its superfluous steam. But it was more than some of us liked and mild remonstrance were voiced by one or two more sober members; and even Dr. Gour thought it fit to ask the hecklers and wranglers to moderate their zeal. Still the dogfight between two lawyer members went on unabated till it got on my nerves, and I could bear the racket no longer. I rose in my seat and said in a rather loud voice "In the name of common decency, Sir, may I request you to curb the ardor of the gentlemen who are reducing the dignity of this Academic Body to the level of a third class Magistrate's Court?" My interjection acted like a bombshell. There was instantaneous silence; the startled assembly turning round or craning their necks to see whom the audacious mentor was; and when they saw that it was an obscure youngish Bengalee they did not much wonder, for already Ben had earned a name as bomb throwers. They were rather pleased, only the wranglers of the front benches glowered at me more viciously than at each other.

Dr. Gour was compelled to say a few words to enforce order and discipline, and the meeting proceeded in an orderly way. At the end as I was leaving the Hall, Dr. Nandlal Puri, M. L. A. Bar-at-Law of Lahore, stopped me to say "I congratulate you young man, on your pluck. You have taught us a lesson today".

The First Convocation of the Delhi University.

I was present at the first Convocation of the Delhi University presided over by Lord Reading, the Chancellor. For the creation of the constituency of the Registered Graduates it was necessary to enroll practically all the teachers of the constituent Colleges as Graduates of the new University. Consequently a Special convocation had

been held before this one to confer 'addendum' degrees on all of us. I am therefore an M. A. of both Calcutta and Delhi Universities.

The present annual convocation was held in the Assembly Hall of the old Central Legislature at Timarpur; and there was a parade of resplendent scarlet and gold, furs and feathers, lawn and crape, robes and gowns, and hoods and caps of a bewildering variety. The finely chiseled features of Lord Reading arrayed in his richly embroidered robe of State made him the most striking figure in that gathering of the intellectual and social aristocracy of the capital of India.

In a fine clear voice the Chancellor read his convocation address after the Vice Chancellor Dr. Gonn's initial speech; and in an atmosphere of solemnity worthy of the occasion the few degrees were conferred upon the first graduates of the Delhi University. This happened in the spring of 1924. I have a vivid recollection of the Chief personalities who helped to give shape to the constitution of the new University. Mian Sir Mahammed Shafi, the then Education Member; Sir Henry Sharp, Education Secretary; Canon Western, Principal S. N. Mukherjee of St. Stephen's College, Principal Thadani of Hindu College, Prof. C. B. Young, Dr. Miss. Dorothy Young, Prof. N. K. Sen, Prof. Laxmidhar, Prof. K. C. Nag, Prof. Khub Chand of St. Stephen's College Prof. S. K. Sen, Prof. C. C. Mitra, Prof. A. T. Banerji and Prof. A. Bhattacharya of Hindu College, Prof. K. C. Key and Prof. N. V. Banerji of Ramjas College, it was mainly these people who in their different ways licked the infant University into shape.

Principal S. K. Rudra was one of those who had conceived the idea of a residential, University in Delhi on the lines recommended in the Sadler Commission Report, but he retired before the new University came into being. Principal Monk succeeded him. Mr. Ritchie was the Superintendent, of Education for Delhi, Ajmer, and Central India. He and Mr. Littlehales, the Education Adviser to the Government of India also took a hand in fostering the baby.

The first Reader of Economics Prof. Chhablani was ably assisted by Prof. Dey, Prof. K. C. Nag and Prof. Ganpatrai in shaping the courses in Economics which has been a strong point of the University from the very beginning; and under the inspiration of Dr. Gregory, Dr. Ganguli, Dr. Boolchand and others has since become one of the most popular, subjects in the University.

Since my departure from Delhi some professors whom I had not known personally have made their names. Dr. Kothari of the Science department; Dr. Spear of the History department, Dr. Indrasen of the Philosophy department are some of the outstanding names that occur to me; beside; old friends and new acquaintances like Dr. S. Duct of the English department and Prof. N. N. Choudhri of the Sanskrit department. Prof. Bangali. B. Gupta my old student, whom we jocosely counted as a Bengalee on account of his name, is now, the Principal of Rarnjas College and it fills me with pride that it is so. But the prime movers of the scheme of constituting the College of Delhi into a new University on the lines recommended by the Sadler commission, subject to certain modifications to suit local conditions, were the principal and European Professors of St. Stephen's College, the Principal of Hindu College and the head of the English Mission in Delhi, not to mention Sir Henry Sharp, the Education Secretary. Principal S. K. Rudra was credited with having devoted some thought to the subject and made an outline of the constitution of the future University, but I do not know to what extent his ideas were embodied in the scheme that finally emerged. In the formative stage Rev. P. N. F. Young, Professor of History, St. Stephen's College; who

afterwards became Chaplain to the Viceroy; Prof. S. N. Mukherji who afterwards became the Principal of St. Stephen's College; Prof. C. B. Young; and Principal N. V. Thadani of the Hindu College were those who took the largest part in discussing the general principles and lines of policy. The St. Stephen's College people usually thought alike; but difference of opinion frequently arose between them and Principal Thadani. There is no doubt that the St. Stephen's College people who were in close touch with the Government wielded the largest power, and that Principal Thadani was very largely the leader of the Parliamentary Opposition. As a debater Thadani was head and shoulders above the others: the subtlety of his arguments often went like a steel blade through the conclusions of his adversaries. But he too often gave one the impression of opposing for the sake of opposition; for which his unofficial position as the Opposition Leader was perhaps partly responsible. The best speaker on the other side was Prof. P. N. F. Young so long as he was on the College staff. After him Principal Monk figured as the best speaker of St. Stephen's College and later on Principal S. N. Mookherjee. Prof. C. B. Young spoke seldom but he spoke with weight. Prof. Chablani, the first University Reader in Economics, afterwards proved himself a fine debater; and he greatly added to the strength of Thadani when they were on the same side; but when they were on opposite sides then was the tug of war—Greek meeting Greek! Indeed we had some fine battles of wit when the two sharp Sindhis sparred at each other.

Canon Western was a worthy Chairman who had frequently to mediate between these two College groups. Prof. C. C. Mitra of the Hindu College acted as the Secretary to the Committee. There was one Mr. Strong on the staff of the St. Stephen's College, and he was very enthusiastic about the creation of the new University; but I do not recollect how he faded out of the picture. Prof. S. K. Sen of Hindu College often spoke but was not very impressive. Mr. Sahani of the Law Department later took part in the debates; but for a long time the Chief duelers were Principals Mukherjee and Thadani. Although Principal Thadani was the more finished speaker and debater, it was Principal Mukherji who carried more weight and conviction on account of his being a Cambridge Wrangler, and therefore conversant with the practices of the English Universities and also for being the more heavily built man of the two. He made the points; while Mr. Thadani received the applause.

Out-door life in Delhi.

I have already referred to our evening walks. Apart from these, we had invitations to garden parties, social gatherings, and inter-college sports and matches. Besides we had outings and excursions to fairly distant places in the neighborhood of Delhi, of which the Okhla Anicut on the Jumna was a favorite site, particularly in the rainy season, when it was such a pleasure to see the swirling waters of the river rush through the sluices and to watch the anglers hook big Ritha fish with yellow under-bellies. Qutab and Firoz Shah Kotla were also favorite places for holding picnic.

We of the Ramjas College were more in love with the countryside than our colleagues of the other Colleges, who belonged to the City proper. Once in winter I remember we had a picnic in a small pavilion inside a flower-garden in the garden area of Subzi-Mandi the suburb of Delhi famous for its fruit and flower gardens and watered by an irrigation system said to be as old as the Moguls I remember that Khir (Payas in Bengali) was prepared in a large pot and Pandit Haradutt Sharma half filled it with rose petals plucked from the garden to give the

delicacy a flavor, as he said. We found that there was a rosy fragrance; and some of us in their admiration for the novelty ate the roseleaves too, without caring to throw them aside.

One particularly remembers the fig trees, the Kamrak (Kamranga in Bengali), the apricot, the papita (Papua in Bengali), the Karamja bushes and the Khirni and Shatoot (Mulberry) trees all laden with fruits in the seasons proper to them, as well as the roses, Belas, Jasmine and other fragrant flowers in luxuriant growth. All these fruits and flowers were raised there for the market.

The parks of the City became veritable flower-shows on account of the season-flowers in winter and spring. The finest chrysanthemums and dahlias of the plains were, I suppose, grown in Delhi, the Florence of northern India. There was not much to see in New Delhi or Raisina as it was called in those days, for a new Thebes was just emerging, so to say, from the vast burial ground of royalties and imperial capitals that lay to the South east of Moghul Delhi, if not exactly to the Music of the flute of Amphion, certainly to the music of the hammer and chisel of the masons and bricklayers of Sir Edwin Lutyens—the great city planner and architect of New Delhi.

The newly laid roads were full of dust and roadblocks caused by heaps of bricks and other building materials; and The Imperial Secretaries and clerks who were already in residence were pitied by the Delhiwalas for their many inconveniences, chiefly of water supply, sanitary service, Bazar and conveyance. The central dome of the Parliament House and the high turret of the Viceroy's house were slowly rising upwards, as we could see from the top of Anandparvat, inside the forest of timber scaffolding that enclosed the structures, and below the overhanging cranes that dominated the sky.

New Delhi is of course a different story today, specially the Connaught Circus and the Parliament House, the National Secretariat, and the present Rashtrapati Bhavan, not to mention the great Gate on the Queen's way and the Birla Temple. The only relics of the past in New Delhi are the old Fort and the Astronomical Observatory of Maharaja Jaisingh, popularly called Jantarantar, if we do not include the Monument of Safdar Jung in the new City. Everything else is new and was made with an eye to rivaling the grandeur of Moghul architecture and the Moghul bigness of design; and to be fair, it compared very favorably with old Delhi, except for the horrid monotony of the residential barracks built for an army of clerks and petty officials.

Politically speaking, when I arrived in Delhi the public mind as still charged with grief and indignation over the awful massacre of Jalianwala Bagh. One heard songs sung by Tanga wallahs and common people lamenting the bloody event and I still remember the refrain of one of them: 'Zalim Dyerre Kya Kia tune Jalianwala Ke Baghme' i.e. 'What hast thou done, O cruel Dyer, in the Jalianwala garden?' The concluding notes of which refrain were indescribably haunting and sad.

The mind of the people was bitter against British rule. I heard one old Mussalman, apparently not belonging to Delhi, who had climbed with me to the top of Qutab Minar observe thoughtfully and with apparent satisfaction. "Babu Saheb, if Governments that could build structures like the Qutab Minar disappeared in course of time, can the present one last for ever?"

I was in Delhi when the Duke of Connaught visited Delhi in the teeth of public opposition. I saw from the top of the old City wall between Kashmir Gate and Mori Gate the procession in which H. R. H. the Duke made his state entry. The Congress had declared a Hartal and Delhiwalahs generally kept in doors, while the police and the

magistracy collected from the country side rustics to do honor to the Royal Duke. The gray homespun headgear of the villagers harmonized well with the gray clouds of dust raised by the cavalry procession; and the ensemble of the picture in my memory is one of dull gray in which the glitter of gold and crimson, as well as the flash of polished steel, was all but eclipsed.

Larger Social life.

I do not know how it is in these days but in my time the Professors of the College, at least the senior ones, were included in the invitations to garden parties etc. given by the Viceroy or held in honor of high Officials of the Govt. of India. I was present at the opening of the famous Chelmsford Club of India in Delhi. Lord Reading and almost every body who was anybody in the capital at the time were present. It was the biggest open-air party that I have seen or hope to see in my life. Then again such a function was possible only in Delhi—the Metropolis of India. I was present at the opening of the Tibbi College of Yunani and Ayurvedic medicine by M. Gandhi in 1921 and that was the first time I had the honor of seeing the Father of the Nation.

Another big party attended by me was the Farewell party given to Sir A. C. Chatterji by the Bengalee community when he retired from India and went to England as the first Indian High Commissioner of India in Great Britain. Bengalees predominated at the party but there was a very fair sprinkling of other communities including Europeans.

Rai Bahadur Ram Kishore on his becoming Vice-Chancellor of the Delhi University gave A fourth big party I attended was in the course of a visit to Delhi many years later and it. He was a leader of the Delhi Bar and a prominent pro-Government man. The occasion gave me an opportunity of meeting many old friends, of renewing many old acquaintances, and making a few new ones.

Inside the College.

My relations with the students and my colleagues on the staff were generally very friendly and harmonious. But I had slight frictions with one or two Panjabee Professors, against whom I was obliged to take disciplinary measures. Mr. Mohanlal Sethi was the Lecturer in Biology and Botany. He was a first Class M. Sc. of the Punjab University and a good teacher; so I had a very good opinion about him. Rai Saheb naturally valued him and his services; but he i.e. Rai Saheb had a way, which I thought was wrong, of pampering and molly—coddling bright young people, teacher or student, possibly with the object of binding them all the closer to the institution. But often it had the effect of spoiling the youngsters either by making them insolent or turning them into flunkeys and favor seekers.

Mr. Sethi set out to please Rai Saheb, but it was not clear with what object in view, for he had been looking for a Government appointment. Anyway he took the easiest line of showing himself to be the one, teacher who worked the hardest for his students. Not content with holding extra classes for the Examination candidates, he tried to set up a new record by taking his classes on Sundays as well. This was not liked by some of his own students who therefore absented themselves from his Sunday classes. Mr. Sethi now went a step further, and started taking roll call to enforce attendance, and instructed the College Darwin to ring the bell to announce the hour of his Sunday

lectures. Some Biology students complained to me, about the over-zealousness of Mr. Sethi and once I gave a very mild hint to him not to go so fast, for his practice put the other teachers at a disadvantage with Rai Saheb who was a believer in the unlimited power of 'Koshish'. But Mr. Sethi did not take my friendly remonstrance in good part. I heard later that he had observed in his class that every teacher was free to teach his classes as often as he liked so long as it did not interfere with the college timetable. Why should the Vice Principal seek to put handicaps on the fast horses?

I was satisfied that this new stunt was but Mr. Sethi's reckless bid for Rai Saheb's special attention; so I decided to put a spoke in his wheel. It was about time to total the attendance of the candidates preliminary to sending up their names for the University Examinations. I called for the Order Book and indicted an order to the effect that all lectures delivered by a Professor outside college time and without the express permission of the Principal were off the record and as such should not be counted. I called for Mr. Sethi's class register and ran my pen through all the entries of lecture attendance on Sundays; initialed the corrections and sent the document back to Mr. Sethi. He was furious, and immediately biked down to the City to make his complaint to Rai Saheb.

I knew that I was on secure ground and also that Rai Saheb who had experience of judicial work would not poke his nose where the law was not with him. So nothing happened; but I could not but feel doubly pleased when a few months later Mr. Sethi got an appointment in Government service and left the College.

The other unpleasant incident occurred on the eve of my leaving Ramjas College, and in this way. The personal relations between Mr. Sitaram, Lecturer in Mathematics and Mr. Sant Ram, Lecturer in Physics were not very cordial; although both were Arya Samajists. Mr. Sant Ram was a full-blooded Punjabee and a Khattri to boot; while Mr. Sita Ram was a Deihiwala and a Bania; and therefore, I imagine the other on both counts looked him down upon. Although Delhi was included in the Punjab Province, still the Punjabees of the hinter regarded it—land as an extension of the U. P. As for Baniyas, Khattris, Jats, and Mussalmans equally contemned them.

Mr. Sita Ram was more social, polite, and of a gentler disposition than the tall and gaunt Punjabee. In the late matter of Mr. Sethi, another Punjabee Khattri, Mr. Sant Ram, had naturally taken Mr. Sethi's side and so nursed a grievance against me and those who were with me of whom Sitaram was one. I am trying to provide the back-ground against which the unseemly incident between the two colleagues took place.

The occasion was that of the farewell function arranged in my honor by the staff and students of the college. After the farewell address and party, my Colleagues in the Principal's Office for formal leave taking met me. I cannot recollect exactly what the matter of dispute was, but some angry words were exchanged between the two Rams; whereupon like a flash of lightning Santram landed a blow on Sitaram's face. This sudden explosion of temper, but in a few seconds' voices of condemnation arose and Mr. Sita stunned the whole Company. Ram with tears in his eyes appealed to me for protection against such brutality.

I had not yet formally made over the charge of my office so I was pressed by several of my outraged colleagues to take disciplinary action against the offender. It was certainly not a pleasant task for me, particularly on the eve of my parting, to chastise an erring colleague; still I felt it incumbent on me to do so in the best interest of the institution. I called for the order-book and penned my last order calling upon Mr. Sant Ram to apologize to all and make full amends to Mr. Sitaram for the assault on pain of having suitable disciplinary action taken against him

in due course. After that order I made over charge of my office to Prof. K. C. Dey, in the absence of Rai Saheb who strange to say, had not attended any of the farewell functions arranged in my honor, presumably because he did not like that I should go.

CHAPTER IX

Kanpur

I arrived at Kanpur on August 4, 1924. Here the tenor of my life was on a low key comparatively speaking, but in certain respects it was more satisfying. In the first place the Sanatan Dharma College service appeared to be considerably better than Ramjas College service from the economic point of view; more secure because the financial position of the college was sounder; and the surroundings of the college, situated close to the Ganges, more peaceful and congenial to the inborn instincts of a Sanatani Hindu, which the average Bengalee of my age was at heart, in spite of his partially heterodox habits.

Spiritually speaking, I did not feel quite at home in the Ramjas College milieu for it was pronouncedly Arya Samajist, but here in the Sanatan Dharma College founded with the blessing of the Bharat Dharma Mahamandal, Banaras, I found my self in ideal surroundings; in spite of the fact that a Bengalee was considered a Sanatanist with a difference on the score of his non-vegetarian habits. But that was the common point of our difference with the Arya-Samajists as well, for living in the College Quarters on Anandaparvat we the four Bengalees of my time found it irksome, if not galling, to obey the injunction of the founder that no one shall take animal food on the sacred hillock.

We respected this injunction so long as we had not taken our families to live with us, and all the four of us lived together. But when the ladies arrived, it was difficult to interdict fish for them; for Bengalee married women consider fish-eating almost as a sine qua non of their 'sob hag' i.e. happy conjugal state. We placed this argument before Rai Saheb; but he paid no heed to it. At last we accomplished by subterfuge what we could not do openly.

Here at Cawnpore we lived independently of the College and outside the college area; so the question of prying into people's kitchen did not arise. For another thing, the Principal of S. D. College Mr. S. P. Bhargava was a very nice man to get on with and had none of the angularities or idiosyncrasies of old Rai Saheb. He was a man of my age and our tastes and temperaments were largely alike. We took kindly to each other from the first meeting and our friendly relations remained unimpaired to the last.

In Ramjas College I was the senior most member of the staff as also Vice Principal; wherefore I had to take the lead or bear the brunt of affairs not always pleasant; but here in Cawnpore I was in a comparatively sheltered position, there being three colleagues who were senior to me, beside the Principal. In length of experience, I stood second, Sardar Pritam Singh being 3 or 4 years senior to Mr. Bhargava and me. So I commanded some respect amongst my colleagues, without exercising any authority over them; and this suited me much better.

In the fourth place, in the Delhi College I had to deal mostly with Jats and Punjabees; here I was among U. P. people who were a bit more like Bengalees than Punjabees and Jats. In the S. D. College I found a College Union already in existence and the Principal nominated me as his Representative on its Executive Council, later converted into the Cabinet of the Union when the constitution was recast on British Parliamentary lines. I felt drawn to the

College Union and devoted myself to its service. It also gave me an opportunity of taking part in debates, which I rather liked. The College soon starting its Magazine, I was appointed the first Editor of the English Section. Above all the living conditions of Cownpore were much better than those we lived under in Delhi as dwellers of Kalapahar, which was two miles away from the nearest market. It was a piteous sight to see the poor Garhwali cook toil on foot back from the city with loads of provisions that bent him double, sometimes followed by creaking bullock-carts loaded with fire—wood and moving at a snail's pace.

Here in Cawnpore almost everything was handy; fish in plenty, and milk much cheaper than in Delhi. My colleagues were an extremely agreeable set of men and everything around appeared smiling so to say. Within two years of my joining, the College became a B. A. as well as B. Com. College and the Principal held out hopes of opening M. A. Classes in some subjects in the non-to-distant future. So in every way my change of place seemed to be a change for the better and I inwardly congratulated myself on being fairly recompensed by the gods for my loss of the chance of going to England and returning a prosperous man.

So it went on for four years, when unfortunately for my future as well as some others differences arose between Rai Bahadur Vikramajit Singh, the founder and Secretary of the College Governing Body and the popular Principal Bhargava. Babu Vikramajit Singh was a dour and masterful man who wanted the Principal to let himself be guided in all matters by the advice of the all—powerful Secretary, who we heard, was dissatisfied with the slower tempo of the Principal's movements, and with the general slackness of his administration.

The matter came to a head in a strike by the College students for the redress of some grievances they had against the college Governing Body generally, and against the Rai Bahadur in particular, over the failure of the authorities to provide filtered drinking water to the inmates of the main Hostel. Some of the students allied themselves with the local Congressmen for the ventilation of their grievance; and this gave dire offence to the Secretary who was a pro-government and anti-Congress man. He suspected, without reason, that the Principal had a secret hand in bringing about the strike. But we who had inside knowledge of the situation knew that Mr. Bhargava was wholly innocent of this charge. Far from encouraging the strike, he took the utmost pains to put an end to it.

The strike of course was resolved as all strikes are; but the impression in Rai Bahadur's mind was not removed; with the result that a little later the Principal was given notice of discharge. The happy life we had lived in the college for full four years was thus suddenly disturbed and dark forebodings arose as to the future.

To make matters worse, our good friend Prof. Pritam Singh also resigned in a huff. It suddenly transpired that the Sardar had a grievance against Mr. Bhargava on the ground that he (i.e. Sardar) considered himself better qualified than Mr. Bhargava to be the Principal of the College. We tried to persuade Sardar Pritam Singh to withdraw his resignation and to press instead for his appointment as Principal in Mr. Bhargava's place. We did so in our own interest as well for we knew that Sardar Saheb would make almost as mild a chief as Mr. Bhargava and he was therefore preferable to an unknown man from outside.

But Sardar Saheb, true to his Punjabi Character, was as headstrong as my old Colleague Pt. Kishanlal Sharma of Delhi, stuck to his gun, and left even before Mr. Bhargava had left. The Principal who succeeded Mr. Bhargava was the famous Prof. P. Seshadri of the Banaras Hindu University. His name had appeared in bold print in the front pages of several North India Newspapers in connection with his collection of donations for the Banaras

Hindu University. As the papers had it, Prof. Seshadri's progress from province to province was a triumphal march, for wherever he visited bags were presented to him representing thousands of rupees, so that in the course of one Summer vacation he was credited with collecting several lakhs for the University.

It happened that Rai Bahadur Vikramajit Singh was in need of such a man to collect funds for his Cawnpore College. He had indeed led several foraging expeditions to the big cities of India but the yield was very moderate, as the boom of the war-period and its inflated incomes, on the crest of which the College had been started a few years ago, were on the shrinkage. Although well-informed people knew the secret of Prof. Seshadri's phenomenal success, the Rai Bahadur was not in the know. So he resolved to make a bid for the services of the wonder-working Professor of Banaras. He offered Mr. Seshadri a princely grade of Rs. 1000-50-1500 and some valuable amenities to lure him to the S. D. College, as against the poor Rs. 700 that the Professor was drawing at Banaras. And Mr. Seshadri after some pretence of balancing his advantages at the two places, under cover of which he managed to secure his billet for 10 years, accepted the offer.

The new Principal came trailing clouds of glory, behind him and made as if he conferred a favor on the Cawnpore College by accepting its Principalship. Babu Vikramajit Singh walked in front of the famous man very much as Sir Walter Raleigh might have done before the Queen, ready to spread his coat on the ground for the other to walk over. But the disillusionment was not long in coming; for during the first summer vacation of the new Principal he collected a few thousands only by stumping the country on behalf of the Sanatan Dharma College. In the following Dusserah vacation the volume of Mr. Seshadri's collection dwindled further, until it became a mere trickle, no more than what we collected locally from the Cawnpore Bazar; and at last it dried up altogether.

It was then that the disillusioned Rai Bahadur saw in a new shape the moral of Aesop's old fable of the Ass and the image of Diana—namely that the obeisance of the people were not for the carrier but for the carried. The great Pandit Malavya had obtained the promises, while Prof. Seshadri merely collected promised amounts, and here in the Cawnpore picture there was no Pandit Malavya. Gradually the Rai Bahadur realized his mistake that in appointing Mr. Seshadri he had caught a Tartar from whom he could not now shake himself off.

The college undoubtedly rose in fame, for people said that at last Sanatan Dharma College had a Principal to rival Principal Dewan Chand of the D. A. V. College. In fact Principal Seshadri out-rivaled the homespun Lala Dewan Chand in the cut and quality of his clothes; in the polish and luster of his shoes and in the immaculate whiteness of his gold-fringed Safa. As against Mr. Seshadri's Bond Street necktie and diamond pin Lala Dewan Chand's wardrobe had nothing to show even by distant way of comparison.

Mr. Seshadri was the better speaker and finer writer of the two; above all he was incomparably the better social figure. In fact he was soon recognized as one of the best-dressed men in Cawnpore, Indian or European. He started a number of Societies and clubs in the college and in the city and set the pace of fashionable life. The Cultural Society of which he was the President, not only promoted music and dancing, but had also its literary side, including the reading of papers, debates and symposiums. He found worthy lieutenants in Prof. P. D. Gupta of Christ Church College, and Prof. S. N. Misra of D. A. V. College; and mainly these three kept the enlightened Indian society of Cawnpore in a hectic whirl of social entertainments.

Most of Principal Seshadri's spare time, when at the station, was spent in presiding over sports, matches,

meetings, or in visiting clubs, cinemas and theatres; and wherever he went he was lionized. But he was often out of the station to attend academic meetings of several Universities with which he was associated. Often he found no time to inform his classes of his impending absence from College; and as I lived close to him I frequently received little chits from him requesting me to inform his students, especially those of the M. A. Classes.

Prof. Seshadri was immensely proud of his private Library. It was undoubtedly a splendid collection of over 5000 books and wanted a hail to itself for proper accommodation. So great was the initial fascination he exercised over the Rai Bahadur that the latter had a fair-sized hail built along side the Principal's quarters for housing his library at a cost of nearly Rs. 8,000/. And Mr. Seshadri was never so proud and happy as when showing his books to his visitors. He was a voracious reader, but hardly so voracious as to catch up with the yearly additions, for I found many books with uncut pages on his shelves. That was perhaps unavoidable.

He had flair, he claimed, for sucking the marrow of a book in a few minutes: as he had the gift I noticed have marking M. A. answer-books while he kept talking with his visitors. These were rare gifts indeed. But he had also a way of making his audience feel small when he regaled them with the opinion of Lord so-and-so that no one had a right to be called a respectable man unless he had a private collection of at least 3000 volumes. How low the barometer of our own respectability would sink in our minds when we listened to him! But he was a tactful, affable, and cultured man and avoided giving offence individually. He would sell us in the gross, not by retail.

He was so much in love with social and out-door life that he once confided to some of us sitting with him and watching an intercollegiate Hockey match, how he wished that Indian colleges had two Principals each, one for internal administration and the other for extramural activities and social functions; and if it were so how he would prefer the second office to the first! Sinecures like the modern jobs of Welfare officers and Public Relations officers had not yet come into vogue; or we should have seen him in one such place. More, it can be safely predicted that if Mr. Seshadri were living today he would have adorned an Embassy, for a man of his stature and Shri Jawaharlal Nehru would not have ignored eminence.

In spite of it all Principal Seshadri was losing ground with his employers. The Rai Bahadur slowly awoke to the fact that his appointing Mr. Seshadri was a mistake; for without the windfalls of money that he had hoped that Mr. Seshadri would be able to collect, it was difficult to carry on the normal administration of the college. The number of students had not increased according to expectations. A handful of students in the M. A. Classes did not mean any appreciable increase in fee income. The number of B. A. students showed no sign of increasing while there was a marked decrease in the I. Corn and B. Corn admission as the D. A. V. College was steadily building up its Commerce Department and thereby challenging the supremacy of the S. D. College as the premier Commerce College in the U. P. On the whole the fee income had increased; but the number of teachers having also increased on account of the M. A. classes, the monthly pay bill etc. cast up a greater deficit than ever before. And when the Secretary noticed the excess salary paid to Mr. Seshadri over the former Principal, he could not but feel concerned about the future.

When things were in this pass, the renewed non-co-Operation movement of Mahatma Gandhi after the failure of the second London Round Table Conference precipitated a crisis for the college. Following the hoisting of the Congress flag over the Hostel of the College and an attempted hoisting of the same over the college building

itself, the popular movement against the Government threw the normal work of the college practically out of gear. There was daily picketing of the college gates by the Satyagrahis so that no student might enter the college. The S. D. College, more or less like the other colleges of Cawnpore remained practically closed for over a month; and the holding of classes by stealth naturally became a precarious business. For a few days the Professors had splinter classes in their own houses and behind closed doors; but before long the picketers got wind of it and appeared before the Professors houses and made all teaching impossible. Then for a few days more there was a sort of hare—and hound play between the Professors holding their classes, by secret arrangement with the students, in remote and unlooked—for places like vacant houses, gardens, or Ghats on the Ganga and the prowling picketers who ultimately broke up such meetings.

Second Non-co-operation Movement

I hope the teachers after me will not see such days—a veritable night—mare in the life of the teaching community. There was no realization of fees—the life-blood of the teachers—from the students; the salaries of the staff fell into arrears; the annual increment due to the staff was suspended, it being a question how long the college authorities could hold out against this wild and insensate state of things.

It was precisely at this stage that the D.P.I.'s office informed the stricken college authorities that the Government had decided to stop the monthly grant-in-aid to the College till the Congress flag was removed and normal working restored in the college. It was a staggering blow from which not all, the finessing skill and political credit of the Rai Bahadur could save the college. The Rai Bahadur saw “mustard flowers in his eyes” as we say in Bengali, and cudged his brains for a way of saving the overloaded ship in storm. He thought of lightening the vessel by overthrowing some of the heavy cargo; and his eye fell naturally on the pampered Principal.

But it was not an easy job to touch Mr. Seshadri, so carefully he had guarded his position. I have reason to suspect that the adroit Mr. Seshadri who scented danger, himself suggested the discharging of some of the senior men, drawing comparatively large salaries, in order to save his proper skin. Three persons were chosen for the sacrifice, of which I happened to be one. It is significant that the combined salary of these three was roughly equal to that of the Principal.

All on a sudden we were served with notices of discharge, in my case after six years of service. It was just before the Pujah vacation of 1930. My fellow-victim Mr. K. L. Govil who is now Registrar of the Allahabad University was lucky enough to secure a Lectureship in Commerce in that University; and the third victim, the Junior Lecturer in Sanskrit, was eventually saved through the personal intervention of Swami Dayananda, the Spiritual Visitor of the College. Of the twin Iphigenias voted for sacrifice to float the grounded Grecian fleet—the Sanatan Dharma College of Cawnpore—I had to wait till the end of the session for a new appointment. I was advised by my friends to make a representation praying for at least 3 months' notice or 3 months' pay instead of the one month's pay that was offered me in lieu of notice. Principal Hiralal Khanna of the B. N. S. D. Intermediate College, an influential member of our Governing Body, was believed to have supported my case and it was thought the Rai Bahadur himself was willing to concede it but opposition came from Principal Seshadri who had been highly offended by certain remarks of mine in the course of my reply to the farewell address given by the students. It was

tactless of me to fall foul of Mr. Seshadri while my representation to the Governing Body was pending, but I was so very exasperated with the Principal for the injury he had done me that I did not care for the consequences when I had the opportunity of venting my spleen upon my injurer.

Unluckily for my pecuniary interest, and equally unluckily for his own feelings, Principal Seshadri had readily agreed to preside over the function and to express the conventional sentiments of regret at my departure. I had not thought that he would consent to preside as he must have had some inkling of my injured feelings; for I was not the man to digest them in silence. But probably Mr. Seshadri thought that his presence at the meeting would exercise some restraint over me and that he would have an opportunity of putting on a smug face and of smoothing away by his unctuous phrases any unfavorable thoughts regarding him in the minds of the students, who were sympathetic towards me.

But he had miscalculated; for when I saw what an easy target he offered I could not check the temptation of firing at him pointblank. What angered me most was the Pecksniffian role of innocence he tried to play and I gave him more than a bit of my mind. I ended up by uttering a kind of prophecy that before long Mr. Seshadri himself would have to tread the way I was going. He writhed under the lash of my words, and perhaps shuddered or just shrugged his shoulders at the prophecy. But to give him his due, he had the decency not to hit back, not even to attempt a defense in that meeting. What he did instead was stoutly to oppose my demand for two months' more salary, and to have my application rejected.

I remembered the case of Pt. Kishanlal Sharma and reflected that it was perhaps not given to man to receive in the measure that he gives!

The effect of my farewell speech, which some described as a Philippic oration, was to swing the sympathies of the students almost permanently away from Mr. Seshadri and, as I learnt later, not all his blandishments and fine speeches availed to charm them back. I took counsel with some lawyers to see if I had any chance of legal redress, and even went to distant Allahabad to consult the famous Pyarelal Banerji, but I was advised by all not to go to law against such a powerful adversary as Rai Bahadur Vikramajit Singh. I called on Munshi Narayan Prasad Asthane, the Vice-Chancellor of the Agra University, who was impressed by my arguments but could see no way how he could interfere. However it was no mean satisfaction to me to know later on that my case and one or two other cases of the same type had at last led to the University adopting some rules for the safeguard of college employees from discharge in the middle of a session.

But so far as Mr. Seshadri was concerned I never thought that my prophecy, uttered in a passion, would so quickly be fulfilled; although I remember quoting in my speech the words of the poet about truth lying on the tongues of dying man. Before the end of that very Session, as the evil genius of Mr. Seshadri put it in his heart he became anxious to go to Europe and America at the invitation of the Empire Universities Congress, and therefore obtained 2 or 3 months' leave in continuation of the summer vacation. I was in Bengal at that time waiting for some new employment, but I heard afterwards that the enemies of Mr. Seshadri in the College Committee, and there was none greater than the Rai Bahadur himself, took advantage of Mr. Seshadri's long absence to set the stage for his eventual overthrow.

During the three years of his regime Principal Seshadri had caused, or permitted the causing of, or had

condoned the commission of many irregularities in the records of the college liable to be scrutinized by 'the University, the worst of which, I believe, was to make up the shortage of lecture attendance of the Examinees by means of holding ad hoc lectures at the last moment. Some of these irregularities are common, and can be found in almost every college, if one goes looking for them with a torch; but there were some serious breaches of the rules and regulations for which Mr. Seshadri's own easygoing ways were responsible.

Although he was very regular and quick in disposing of the day's correspondence, and in dealing with the files on his own table, his aversion to do any official work outside the office hours naturally led to the piling up of arrears in the nooks and corners of the Head clerk's or accountant's office; and when they were discovered, as they sometimes were too late, Mr. Seshadri was daring enough to solve the difficulty by some make-shift method of his own.

During his long absence from India Rai Bahadur had an excellent opportunity of preparing a dossier against the Principal; and some of the charges drawn up against him were simply unanswerable, and hardly called for a reply. The Rai Bahadur, himself a leading lawyer of Cawnpore, had taken counsel with eminent lawyers of Allahabad and Lucknow as how 'to hit the dragon's soft underbelly' in spite of all the layers of spiked armor in which it was encased.

Mr. Seshadri could not be removed by means of a notice of discharge, for he had sufficiently insured himself against that predicament by having incorporated in the terms of his appointment that in case of discharge he must be paid the balance of his salary for the entire period of 10 years for which he had contracted to serve the college. He on his part was free to leave at 3 months' notice!

The contract was practically unilateral and might be found bad in law if tested in a court of law; but Rai Bahadur was not the man to take the risk of terminating Mr. Seshadri's services in the ordinary way. The only safe method of getting rid of the unwelcome guest was to dismiss him outright on 'sufficient' grounds. These sufficient grounds were now provided by a thorough overhaul of the college records; and a charge sheet running, I have heard, into 50 or more paragraphs was drawn up against the absent Principal. When the case for dismissal seemed complete and the offence of the accused was deemed in every way fit to be tried by a Drum-head Court—martial, so to say, instead of an ordinary civil Court, Rai Vikramajit Singh took his heart of grace and demanded a summary dismissal of the Principal; and the Governing Body complied. It was a heroic step taken by the Rai Bahadur to undo his own folly of appointing a man he could not pay.

He took the tremendous risk of paying over a lakh of rupees to Mr. Seshadri, in case he lost the case. Thanks were due to his lucky star that Seshadri had given him the opportunity of affecting this 'coup d'etat' by being absent from India!

A copy of the decision of the Governing Body dismissing the Principal for serious dereliction of duty and other capital charges was sent by Registered Post to his New York address; and another was sent to Thomas Cock & Sons, Bombay, with instructions to deliver it to Mr. Seshadri as soon as he should land in Bombay.

Apparently the first letter had missed him, but the moment he disembarked at Bombay he was greeted with the stunning news. Imagine his surprise at receiving news of this kind as soon as he set foot on Indian soil, flushed with the success of his Euro—American tour! He swore to himself vengeance on the S. D. College and its secretary;

and sent letters and telegrams to his patrons and friends to come to his help. His first thought was to sue the college for damages on the ground of wrongful dismissal, and he consulted many lawyers to that end; but on a perusal of the elaborate charge sheet and after hearing what Mr. Seshadri had to say in self-defense they advised him to stay his hands. They recommended arbitration; and at last Mr. Seshadri approached Munshi N. P. Asthana, Vice-Chancellor, through whose mediation the consent of Rai Bahadur Vikramajit Singh was obtained to refer the dispute to the vice-chancellor himself. To make a long story short, Prof. Seshadri eventually received Rs. 7,000 or so, and the Rai Bahadur breathed a chestful sigh of relief.

But Prof. Seshadri was born under a lucky star; for within a few months of his expulsion from the Cawnpore College he wangled through the influential friends he had in Court i.e. the Public service Commission the place of Principal, Government College, Ajmer. His critics had the cheap jibe that he was 'kicked upstairs'.

However that might be, it must be said to Mr. Sashadri's credit that he did not let his countenance fall even during the months of his eclipse. I happened to meet him again about a year after my departure from Cawnpore, when I was on a short visit, in the Cawnpore Town Hall where the famous Ragini Devi— mother of the more famous Indrani Rahman, Miss India of 1952— was giving a dance. I saw that Mr. Seshadri was sitting only two chairs away; and when he recognized me I fancy a shadow of embarrassment passed over his face, but for a second only. Immediately he made up to me, greeted me and made kind enquires about my family and so forth. I had already been appointed to Beawar College and he made certain enquiries about the Government College, Ajmer, in my neighborhood as he was going to join it in a short time.

I saw that although Mr. Seshadri was still at Cawnpore he had not lost his caste, for he was still hobnobbing with the fashionable people there, both male and female. I found that this divorced wife of Cawnpore, so to say, was still in as great a request among society people as he ever had been. Another man would have looked a shade smaller, but not Mr. Sashadri whose vogue like that of Cleopatra of Egypt "Age cannot wither or custom stale". My admiration for the man grew from that evening; and the old feeling of resentment I bore against him slunk away from my mind like a hound chastised. My attitude towards him was changed by the magnetism of his personality.

Our Reconciliation,

When I met Prof. Seshadri next at Ajmer we were friends again; and our relations remained friendly and cordial till sudden death removed him from our midst. I fancied there was a slight touch of contrition in Mrs. Seshadri's affability towards my wife, and me and in his own ill—concealed anxiety to please me—his inferior in every way. Perhaps the new-born sympathy between us was due to our both having, in different ways, passed through the vale of tribulation; and also to at least one of us realizing the truth of the poet's words in Macbeth:

"We still have judgment here;.....

That we but teach bloody instructions,

Which being taught return to plague the inventor".

And what is true of 'bloody' wrong is not less true of bloodless ones.

PART V
CHAPTER I
Beawar College

After a few months' hibernation in my Bengal home, when I tried my hand at legal practice again, I joined the Sanatan Dharma Intermediate College at Beawar as Principal. This was on the 1st of July 1931.

The founder and first President of the College which by the way had nothing to do with the Sanatan Dharma College, Cawnpore, was Dewan Bahadur Pyarelal Bhargava who was the Excise and Income tax Superintendent of Ajmer—an officer of unusual importance on account of the double Revenues portfolio that he held. He was not much to look at: a small, dark complexioned man in a big safa, and with a small close-cropped iron-tawny beard. He too was an issueless widower like Rai Saheb Kedar Nath of Delhi, with a keen sense of family attachment, which led him to accept the legacy of the Sanatan Dharma High School and Sanskrit Pathshala of Beawar, from the hands of his elder brother who had been the Secretary.

Dewan Bahadur had never before thought of advancing the cause of education, nor had he much leisure for it in the press of his official work. He was an indefatigable worker, very much liked by the European officers for his honesty, and readiness to serve his masters as well as their families in both official and private capacities. I have heard a Commissioner of Ajmer say on the occasion of Dewan Bahadur's retirement that he was not only the man of the Government in the two departments over which he presided, but that whenever there was a particularly difficult job to be done Dewan Bahadur was the man chosen by him to do it. I was reminded of Milton's famous tribute to the Englishman. No wonder therefore that within 10 years Rai Sahib Pyarelal progressively became Rai Bahadur and then Dewan Bahadur Pyarelal; and he might have been decorated a C. I. E. had it not been for some reason that remains a mystery.

When I joined the College the old High School had been raised to an Intermediate College a year before, and funds had been raised for a new college building a little way off; and within two months of my arrival the construction was begun. It was finished in less than a year and the opening ceremony was presided over by Sir Leonard Reynolds, the Chief Commissioner. The elite of Ajmer Merwara, including the Principal educationists of the province, attended it. The Diwán Bahadur gave a large garden-party and about 500 people attended it.

I had learnt that with the backing of the Commissioner and approval of the Chief Commissioner Dewan Bahadur had collected over a lakh of Rupees from the Seths and Sahukars of Ajmer-Merwara for the construction of the College. The school Hostel in which the college students were also afterwards accommodated had already been built and named after Mr. E. C. Gibson, I. C. S., and Commissioner of Ajmer-Merwara of whom Dewan Bahadur was a great favorite. Dewan Bahadur was so very conscious of his obligations to his superior officers that he did not miss an opportunity of associating their names with the different blocks and wings of the College building. Thus the main block was named Reynolds Block after the Chief Commissioner already referred to; the left wing Gibson Wing, the right wing Galbraith Wing, and the Library Wakefield Library. Appropriate marble tablets were inserted; and the whole place became a sort of Valhalla of the European officers of Dewan Bahadur's time.

Beawar—

But before I proceed further with the story of the College I should like to give a picture of the place in which and the people among whom my lot was cast for long 14 years. The little walled town of Beawar stands embosomed in foliage, as you look at it from the top of Mataji Doongri or one of the neighboring uplands. Only the white tops of the taller buildings show up above the leafy mass; and the mill Chimneys tower high like gigantic censor stands. The Aravali range to the west is a rugged chain of hills without any touch of color except such as is imparted to it by the rainy season. The surrounding valley is flecked here and there with the vivid green of the wheat or maize fields: for the rest it is one dull gray or brown according to the change of season.

The only touch of bright color, except in the clouds, is due to the plumage of the peacocks which one can see in all seasons, and to that subtle change of hue perceptible even in the dullest trees in spring. The prevailing tone during rains is a sad green thanks to the abundance of Neem and Babool. Hardly any flower worth mentioning grows except in carefully cultivated gardens.

But when one turns to the inhabitants of the valley the contrast with nature is striking. One wonders where the people get their love of color from. Look at a crowd of people on a festive day—and there are many such—you will see a blaze of color. It is reflected from the headdresses of the men; from the scarves and veils of the women, and from the shoes of both sexes. Here, you will think, at last are the true children of the Sun—not the Moors but the descendants and dependents of the fabled Solar race of Rajasthan!

But it is not gaudiness alone that pleases, for we can see the refined taste of the artist in the shading and blending of hues in the printed silk or muslin. Nor is it as though the gay colors were worn on festive days only; for although you may see the same man putting on the ordinary white or yellow safa on work-days, you will never catch a woman, morning or evening, at home or abroad, in any but her brightly colored petticoats or Pajamas, bodice, and veil. She knows no other change of clothes; only certain extra-gorgeous items of color are excluded from the Hindu widow's weeds. So deeply wedded is the heart of the people to color. Next to their love of color, is the people's love of painting. Rude painting of scenery without perspective or shading, and themes like an elephant procession or a familiar sight like a Railway train, a fleet of airplanes or a company of Rajput Sepoys or fictitious English soldiers is to be seen executed by unskillful hands on the fronts of most houses.

Inside you may see some wall decoration done by the women in the traditional way and composed of conventional patterns and designs, geometrical figures, birds, animals, flowers, creepers, and religious symbols. On a festive day one would see the floor of their houses both inside and out chequered with colored powder or liquid paint in which white and red predominate. It is a relic of the hoary folk art of the country practiced by the women for thousands of years and is to be found all over Hindu India. The national love of painting is carried into most of the household object. The earthen pots, whether used for holding water or flour, bear traces of painting. The bedposts, the baby's cradle, the toys, the wooden pestle of the big mortar for grinding corn--in fact everything that will bear a coat of color is painted, as if in proof of the people's childlike fancy for color and design.

Another remarkable thing about the people is their love of song, although you rarely hear a singing bird in their bare country. And there are songs for about everything—birth, the preliminary ceremonies connected with birth, marriage and ceremonies ditto, even death. Songs fill the sky till midnight, especially in summer when people

cannot sleep early for the heat; but the women sing on into the small hours of the morning. They sing in little groups squatting in front of their houses, drawling away quaint rustic tunes, sometimes to the accompaniment of drums in excellent chorus. The musical value of these vocal exercises may not be much, but there is prettiness in the frequent variations of the tune. The men also, but this is true of the poorer classes only, have their songs which they sing in chorus to the accompaniment of Ektaras and cymbals. There is more modulation of the voice in their songs; while the female songs are angular and shrill.

Another difference between the two classes of songs is that while the women sing folksongs, a sort of musical self-expression evoked by the incidents of the little world in which they live; -the men's songs, unless they are purposely vulgar and lewd-and I was told that this reproach was equally shared by both the sexes on certain occasions like Holi or a wedding are generally of a religious nature. The best of this class of songs is Bhajan or hymn, which sometimes is touching. Whether it is a dirge for the dead or a hymn reminding us of the transitory nature of life, there is something in the tune, which is sure to touch the deep mystic chord in the heart of an Indian. Often lying in my bed I have listened to these wailing songs composed by Rabidas or Kabir, laden with a mysterious pathos and followed by haunting burdens dying away in the still night air. Such songs were usually sung in the evenings following a death and in front of the bereaved house. What comfort, consolation, and wise outlook on life they have inspired in these simple-minded people, generation after generation, it is impossible to measure.

Besides music, dancing seems to come naturally to the people of Rajasthan. The style may be rude and dull, and the long veil worn by the female dancers may neutralize most of the charm, yet it cannot be gainsaid that it provides an excellent exercise for the body; and as far as it goes, a natural outlet for the expression of the dancer's sense of joy. The performance is generally of a mechanical style, consisting of frequent gyrations to which the wide-flying skirts give a pretty effect, and an ample twisting and flinging about of the arms. In fact there is a little too much of this hand-play, and what is worse, it seems to have lost all its symbolical meaning. A dancer would sometimes show her superior skill by balancing on her head a pitcher or two full of water during the performance.

What is most remarkable about this kind of dance is the staying power of the dancers who will at times wear out the hefty drummer. But the worst feature of the entertainment is the instrumental music that accompanies the dance. To a stranger it would seem as if all the brass and copper utensils of the house were being hurtled together to produce noise, and the drummer would seem to beat his tom-tom for dear life. Altogether one might be pardoned for thinking that the concert should suit a dancing camel better than a delicate member of the gentle sex

The men also have their dance, which they perform mostly in the course of lathi play called 'Ger' on the occasion of Holi. A crowd of 100 or 200 men and boys, as colorfully and fantastically dressed as possible, might be seen dancing and measuring sticks in beautiful formations in a large circle, while the drummers sat in the center and went on beating the drums for all they were worth. But it is the sticks that provided the best part of the music by their rhythmical striking against one another. There is a touch of martial air about the performance, possibly indicating the vanishing point of medieval Rajput tournaments and mock-fights.

But Beawar was also a great industrial center and possessed three big cotton mills, a number of ginning presses, and was a great mart for the export of wool. There were many rich people doing flourishing business of many kinds and it was mainly for the benefit of the business community that the College was founded.

To return to the College from where I digressed, Dewan Bahadur and I having been brought up in different atmospheres future conflict was implicit in our relations, however tolerant we were of each other's way of looking at things.

My past life and training inclined me to sympathize with the nationalist movement which was anathema to the Dewan Bahadur. Beawar was a stronghold of the Congress and many of the students of the College came from pro-Congress families. While it was Dewan Bahadur's policy to maintain order and discipline by a strict enforcement of the Government regulations, my idea was to inculcate in the boys' minds a respect for the rules and traditions of the college itself as a semi-autonomous body, without their thinking too much about the external rules of the Government. I wanted them to realize that if they respected themselves they could not but respect most of the rules of the Government; in other words, that self-respect would make them generally law-abiding- And that even when it became a duty to oppose or resist a rule or order of the Government the final decision should come from the boys collectively and as a result of their collective deliberation, rather than as an order from an outside body like the Town Congress—Committee. To make this possible I established a Students' Union within a year of my joining the College, and gave it wide latitude to discuss all matters even questions of current politics, under my own supervision. My object was to make the Union a virile and healthy institution capable of molding the thoughts of the students from within.

Unfortunately this was not appreciated by Dewan Bahadur who wanted to run the College as one of the departments of Government, by means of the Fundamental Rules and civil service Regulations. We had occasional differences of opinion, but things went on pretty smoothly till Dewan Bahadur took it into his head to offer a personal affront to me by scaling down the grade of my salary without the least ceremony. The maximum was reduced by Rs. 100/ and the yearly increment by Rs. 10/ on the pretext of the supposedly diminishing income of the College. And this by a resolution of the Managing Committee from the membership of which the Principal was excluded, although the old Headmaster, now Vice-Principal, continued to be a member.

The reason given for this Gilbertian arrangement was that the Managing Committee was governed by a constitution adopted long since which had not foreseen or provided for the inclusion of the Principal; and the constitution could not be easily changed. I tried to bring home to the Dewan Bahadur and his Secretary that this reduction of my grade by unilateral action was arbitrary and illegal. The correct procedure would be to ask me to accept the reduced grade, and on my refusal to discharge me by notice. Dewan Bahadur on the contrary held it was open to me to resign if I did not like to accept the reduction. Thus we were in a vicious circle.

I refused to accept my yearly increment of salary month after month for a whole year, and even brought it to the notice of Rev. J. C. Chatterji, Superintendent of Education, who paid at least one visit to the college yearly; but he hesitated to interfere in the matter although the unfairness and illegality of the action was readily admitted. Thus was sown the seed of the Peepal tree that was destined to burst the structure ten years later.

Some two years after there was a quinquennial inspection of the College on behalf of the Rajputana Board of Education; and a panel of four visited the college headed by Principal Stowe of the Mayo College, Ajmer. In the course of their enquiry one member asked Dewan Bahadur what salary the Principal was being paid; and the latter had no hesitation in trotting forth the maximum that he himself had reduced by Rs. 100/—, and this in my presence!

I had to keep quiet, but I could not control myself when. Dewan Bahadur was assuring the commission that the yearly increments were being given to the staff regularly. On this very point the staff to bring to the notice of the Commission that they had not received their annual increments for two years had specifically briefed me. So after a little scratching of my head I said to the Chairman apologetically ‘Excuse me, Sir, there is a slight mistake; no increments have been paid for the last two years’. Mr. Stowe flushed red and turned to Dewan Bahadur enquiringly; and Dewan Bahadur allowed himself an outburst of temper saying, “What if no increments were paid? The staff did not deserve an increment on account of the bad results”.

But here one of the Commissioners said “Well, Dewan Bahadur how can you say that? We find that the Superintendent of Education in his Inspection Report has congratulated the Principal on the good results of the College”. When Dewan Bahadur found his way of escape barred in this manner, he rejoined, “Apart from the question of results, the Principal’s administration has been very unsatisfactory. I saw that the searchlight of enquiry into the affairs of the College was sought to be turned by Dewan Bahadur upon me personally and therefore I lodged my protest saying, “But surely gentleman you are not going to turn your inspection of the College into a trial of the Principal?” Upon which the Chairman shouted in some disgust “We don’t want to see a dog-fight between the President and the Principal”. That of course silenced us; but I wondered which of us came off best from that fight. The District Inspector of School, an old acquaintance, drew me apart and said, “Well Mr. so-and-so, you may know how to rule, but surely you don’t know how to serve”; to which I replied “Well. Khansaheb, I do not care either to serve or to retain my service on these terms”.

There was a good deal of talk, in education circles over this incident and my friends thought that I would be fired. But nothing happened; the Inspection Board’s report glozed over the unpleasant episode and expressed the usual pious hopes about the future of the college. Then I understood the rock bottom of tacit understanding between the parties concerned, upon which the bureaucratic administration of India was carried on. I wonder if things have changed today,

CHAPTER II

Major Betham.

My life in Beawar, from the service point of view, was a series of crises. I have just described one; but it was not the first. My friendship with a Commissioner of Ajmer was the cause of an earlier crisis; but of that later.

The new Commissioner of Ajmer—Merwara was a Military officer, Major C. L. Betham M. C. who had been Political Agent the N. W. frontier. We were attracted towards each other from our very first meeting at Beawar. He invited me to see him at his Bungalow in Ajmer; and I paid him several visits. I called on him at the Circuit House whenever he came to Beawar and gradually we became very friendly. He was a great talker and sometimes we had long conversations on various topics, social and political. He even asked to know my views on some of the current problems of India and I complied, the more readily since Major Betham had expressed on more than one occasion his regard for Mahatma Gandhi whom, he said, some lady relative of his had met in London and spoken highly about.

Big parties were used to be given in honor of the high officials by the rich mill owners and capitalists of

Beawar at which the Commissioner was frequently present; and Major Betham made it a rule to seek me out and exchange a few words with me. One such party was arranged by an ambitious Vaid i.e. Kaviraj in the early days of Major Betham's stay in Ajmer, with the object of worming himself into the favor of the new Commissioner. Tansukhji Vaid was a noted pro—government man, popularly believed to be a police spy, and was already an Honorary Magistrate. He now aspired to be a Rai Saheb, which he eventually became. He knew me as pro-Congressman and therefore generally avoided me. I too had never felt an urge to cultivate particular acquaintance with him.

I was therefore not a little surprised when he called upon me one morning with a request to make a speech on behalf of the citizens of Beawar at the party he had arranged in honor of the new Commissioner. It transpired that the necessary funds had been collected from the usual pay masters, namely the business community of the place; but that Vaidji's game was to take the whole credit for the show himself and to feather his own nest. The role assigned me was to draw the attention of the officer to the solid mass of opinion represented by the none-too-vocal common people who formed the majority, but who some how went unheard and unattended to. I could see that it was Vaidji's strategy to pass himself off as the leader and mouthpiece of this silent majority community!

I agreed to the proposal on one condition, namely that I should be allowed to represent the case of the common man according to my own understanding, to which the other agreed. At the garden party I found that Vaidji was the busiest man flitting about everywhere, whispering in the ears of persons whom he had briefed like me, and trying in various ways to catch the eye of the Commissioner in the center. After the formal address had been read, he quietly came behind me and made a sign to me to play my part. I obeyed and soon found, myself quoting the famous words of Edmund Burke in the Reflections on the French Revolution wherein he referred to the great silent English bees chewing the cud in the shade of the English elms while a handful of crickets made the place ring with their obstreperous chirping.

I divided the entire Indian society into three classes—first those, comparatively small in number, who gyrate about the officials like flies around stale sweetmeat, and had the closest access to their ears—the Government Servants, courtiers, official favorites, place seekers, touts, and toadies ad hoc genus omens who have some sort of personal axe to grind and therefore stick to the Government at any cost. Secondly, those, again comparatively few, who perpetually range themselves against the Government; complain loudly against its lapses and sins, and try to force their view or will upon it by sheer power of lungs the congress people and the other political parties; the Press, the platform speakers, the politicians, the terrorists, bomb throwers and others of that class whom the Government cannot ignore; and thirdly, those, and they were the vast majority, who pray neither with the Government nor with the opposition parties in the same temple but who have a mind of their own to think and judge the most weighty section of the people—men of intelligence and commonsense who are not easily swayed by eloquence or propaganda, but go steadily on in their own ways and are content to play a passive role in public life. Yet they are the people wooed equally by the Government and the Congress, the Chief protagonists of the political drama of India.

This central block of common people, I said, holds the balance of power: and whichever side wishes to win must have the support of this block. And the only way to win over this mass is to serve it truly. Not by distribution

of a few favors or by cajolery or preaching of loyalty, nor by intimidation or repression, nor yet by the vote—catching tricks and tall promises of the politicians can this Leviathan be hooked, or even made to rise to the bait. The genuine goods must be delivered before it will take notice of its friend; and it was as well that a new ruler of the district knew these truths. It was a long speech and fairly impassioned; and the Commissioner listened to every word I said. I thought that I had debunked the artful Vaid by my classification, but it was not so. Vaidji became a Rai Saheb in due course; and my gain or loss was that Major Betham got the impression that I was a strong nationalist. Otherwise his opinion about me was not unfavorable.

But I spoiled the effect of this speech by another I made in the presence of Major Betham sometime later. The occasion was the opening of a Temple and a Dharmashala built and dedicated by a local businessman, a very pious Sanatani Hindu, who, incidentally, was also a member of my College Committee. He had gone into considerable expense over the function; and people marveled at his doing so, for he was reputed to be a rather close-fisted man. Like the Vaidraj, the Sethji or his son was also angling for appropriate Government recognition of his act of munificence.

Somebody had approached me on his behalf to say something on the occasion of the party as I had done in Vaidji's case; but I told him frankly that I did not quite trust myself when on my legs, so I had better be excused. But apparently they thought otherwise, and insisted on my speaking. And so I spoke; but before I had been in action for five minutes I felt my coattail pulled from behind by an official; and as I proceeded significant whispers sounded in my ears. Major Betham, I observed, was ill at ease. He gradually went red and redder in the face and sat with downcast eyes. I realized I was on the wrong tack, but it was not possible to change the tack at that speed, nor did I much wish it. The effect of my speech on the official and English-knowing business people was even more disastrous. They felt that unlike the Prophet of the Old Testament I, who had been invited to bless ended by cursing!

What I said was in effect that although the public charity of Seth Saheb was very praise-worthy and more so from the point of view of a Sanatanist Hindu like myself, because the charity was in the shape of a fine Dharamshala right in front of the Railway station, with a temple and a well attached, it was rather incongruous that the District Magistrate, a Christian and an Englishman—had been invited to perform the opening ceremony. Surely the donor hoped to win merit in heaven by his pious act. But was not that enough for him leaving aside the grateful appreciation of the Hindu Community, the beneficiaries of the charity? Why then this anxiety to lay up a store of credit in the official account-book?

I said that the Commissioner who was a newcomer and a stranger to Hindu thought and tradition might have overlooked the point in his eagerness to associate himself with the public activities of the people in his charge. But surely the officials who advised the Commissioner to accept the invitation had not served him well. In short it was as in appropriate a speech as one could have made; many by making it I gave offence in many quarters.

Not that I had no sense of the offence I was giving, but somehow I felt as if I was wearing the mantle of Jeremiah and that it was my duty to read a harsh lesson of self-respect and propriety to an audience that had lost its sense of both. I was greeted with sour looks on every side after the speech and I could overhear loud criticism of my indiscretion. Only a few guests, generally congress minded, came up to me and warmly congratulated me for having torn up the clock of sanctimonious piety and hypocritical public service. Major Betham left in a dudgeon and I

thought it would not be possible for me to keep up good relations with him for long; if they had not already been spoilt beyond repair. But, strange to say, the next time I happened to meet him he was quite his old self again. I thought he had lived down the irritation of that day, perhaps even realized the justice of what I had said, and therefore bore me no further resentment.

As to the Seth whose hospitality I had repaid in that scandalous manner and who had such good reason to feel aggrieved, I had the surprise of my life when a few days after as I was passing by his shop, he called me in with one of his sweetest smiles. He was a man of few words and was respected by his community for his piety and character. The idea of inviting the Commissioner to open the Dharmashala was not, I felt sure, his. It might have been Vaidji's for aught I knew; and it must have appealed to the Seth's son who in many respects was unlike his father. The old father only toed the line of his son's desire; and although he had not understood the full import of what I had said, the substance only of my speech having been conveyed to him, he could not have failed to know that I had done a great injury to him. My admiration for the man therefore grew when I found him welcome me cordially, and speak to me rather apologetically about that day's affair. I thought that the true Hindu that he was he had realized the justice of my criticism; and having no ulterior motive in the matter, even felt repentant.

Not so his son Durga Prasad who must have later on attributed his bad luck in drawing a blank in two or three consecutive raffles of official prizes (i.e. biennial publications of Honors' lists) to the mischief done by me. He avoided speaking to me; and to be very frank I did not feel much sympathy for him when he was involved in a criminal prosecution for hoarding a quantity of small coins during the war-period, when small change had nearly disappeared from the market. But I could not but feel for him, poor man, when he was unjustly harassed by the Police and the Magistracy of the time; and the cage was kept hanging for months like a sword over his head, all that the man had done to placate a former Commissioner having been forgotten. The ways of the bureaucratic Government were strange, and perhaps they were never stranger than in wartime. Durga Prasad and his father Lala Hansraj were reputed to be among the richest people of Beawar: but as the old Seth ever avoided publicity, they largely escaped the periodical bleeding at official hands, at least to the full extent of official satisfaction. When therefore Durga Prasad committed a technical offence and caught his foot in a nasty hole there was jubilation in the house of the Philistines.

To make matters worse for Durga Prasad, he was mightily afraid of going to jail; perhaps for fear of losing caste with his fellows or perhaps for fear of losing his embonpoint. He was willing to give thousands to buy his immunity from imprisonment; and in this view of the matter his father was probably at one with him, the only son. If he faced a trial in a court of law, everybody thought that he could escape with a fine of a few hundred rupees and a few weeks in jail. But his claustrophobia exactly suited the people who wanted to milk him as long as possible. His case was never ripe for a hearing; and adjournment after adjournment was readily granted, at what cost only Durga Prasad and the Omniscient God knew. I do not know how the case against Durga Prasad was eventually disposed of.

Now to return to Major Betham. My very friendly relations with him encouraged me to speak to him on the subject of my chronic grievance against the Dewan Bahadur on account of the unwarranted stoppage of my grade—the thorn in the side that would not give me peace of mind. Accordingly I wrote and made an appointment to see him at his place one morning' in early spring. It was an inauspicious day for me.

The waiting room of the Commissioner's Bungalow was full of callers when I arrived; and they had been waiting for sometime for the emergence of some Frontier Pathans closeted with the Commissioner for over an hour. Loud, guttural voices were to be heard inside of the Pathans, apparently wrangling over something with the Saheb; and the loudest voice was that of Major Betham who broke in angrily from time to time. All of them were speaking in Pushtu, hardly a word of which was intelligible to me or to the other visitors.

I gathered from enquiry that these Pathans had been interned by the Government of India somewhere near Ajmer and were guilty of some act of insubordination or contempt of lawful authority, for which they had been hauled up before the Commissioner. That they had been ordered to surrender their arms, which they refused to do. The Commissioner was now persuading them to obey the order, which had an effect similar to that of shearing wolves. After about three quarters of an hour of hot argument the three Pathans filed out with crest fallen heads and without their rifles.

I was called in first and as I entered Major Betham's office I saw a number of firearms lying about, including a revolver on the table. Major Betham was trying to recompose himself after the exciting interview he had just had. He was not yet cool enough for a familiar talk; but when after a few questions about his late visitors I thought he was himself again, he urged me to say what I had to, and warned me to be quick about it; for there were a number of people waiting to see him. I ought to have deferred mentioning my chief topic till a more opportune time; but my evil genius prompted me to fire away.

I told him that I had tried all peaceful ways of inducing the Dewan Bahadur to undo the wrong he had done to me but in vain. I even mentioned that I had communicated my grievance to the Superintendent of Education who could only suggest my seeking redress in a court of law, which was of course unthinkable; and so I was driven to mention the matter to him in the hope that perhaps he might speak to the Dewan Bahadur and make him see reason. This was what I wanted to say but perhaps in my excitement I was too long in saying it; so that Major Betham lost patience and cut me short with these words: "But why have you come to me to whine all this. What can I do? Dewan Bahadur is a faithful servant of the Government and has built up a college at Beawar. He is the master there and I have no wish to interfere with him. Nor I have the power to do so. Why don't you see the Chief Commissioner about it?"

I was shocked by the reply and could only say that I did not know the Chief Commissioner half so well as I knew him; that I had not asked him to act officially, but as a common friend so to say. He repeated that I should see the Chief Commissioner, and then wished me good morning. I had to come away, but wondering at the sudden change in the Saheb's manner. I put it all down, in our Indian way, to my bad luck; and kept quiet until a few days later Dewan Bahadur accused me of complaining to the Commissioner against him. He appeared to be so very angry that I feared to be discharged in a matter of days. "Major Betham told me that you also complained to the Superintendent of Education", he complained. I replied that it hardly lay with him 'to complain that I had done so after exhausting all the way of inducing Dewan Bahadur to undo the wrong done to me. He should remember, I said, that I had waited for years, till my patience was exhausted. He retorted, "You can wait for ever. If your present pay does not satisfy you, you can go elsewhere". The iron of servitude in a private educational institute had never before entered my soul as at that moment. My education had taught me to expect to be treated as a freeman; but here I was

being treated like a slave without any rights. 'I can keep you under my heel. I do not care a rap for your vaunted education'—that seemed to be the meaning of my employer. But I was helpless, for my sense of duty to my family made me swallow the insult. I was particularly amazed to think that an English officer like Major Betham could descend so low as to peach against me to Dewan Bahadur. What price English honor; I thought.

I wrote a stinging letter to Major Betham telling him in effect that I could not dream that an Englishman would in any circumstances deprive a trustful Indian of his family bread, for I considered the loss of my appointment to be the certain result of what the Major had said to the Dewan Bahadur. The suggestion of dishonorable conduct touched the gallant Major to the quick; and he went and actually complained against me to the Superintendent of Education Rev. J. C. Chatterjee. But as the latter had some regard for me he advised me to make it up with Major Betham, as otherwise the Major might ask Dewan Bahadur to get rid of me. I requested Rev. W. Drummond of the Scottish Mission to act as the peace-maker; and afterwards gathered from him the real state of affairs. The Major had only expressed to the Dewan Bahadur his unhappiness over my disclosures to him, for he could not help me in any way. Dewan Bahadur who was not keen to make the Major 'happy' for no particular reason was on the other hand comforted to know that the Major would not help me in the matter; and therefore he felt free to deal with me as he liked. And the first thing he liked to do was to triumph over me and make me feel that I was now entirely at his mercy. Major Betham's reply to Mr. Drummond showed that he was still highly incensed against me, for he had expressed his hope not to see me darken his door again. But one sentence struck me particularly "The Government of the country will fall into irretrievable ruin if the Principal of an Intermediate College is permitted to write a letter like that to the District Magistrate". That showed me in a flash as it were the unbridgeable gulf that divided such as me from the mighty representative of the British Empire in my district—a fact which was apt to be glossed over and overlaid by polite phrases, very much as a mailed fist is said to be unsheathed in a velvet glove. 'Scratch a Russian and you find a Tartar'. I thought; and from that day I was resolved to keep my distance from European officers. Major Betham had however ended his long letter to Mr. Drummond with an assurance, which he desired to be conveyed to me, that he had no intention of harming me.

About two years after this episode I happened to visit Udaipur where Major Betham was stationed as Resident. As I got down from the train, whom should I see in front of me if not Major Betham who had come to receive some friends from Ajmer! As soon as he caught sight of me he came up with a smile on his face, and held out his hand which I could not help taking. He made a few kind enquiries about me and invited me to see him at the Residency, which I did a couple of days later. He received me kindly, very much as he used to do in the old-days in Ajmer, and offered me the honors of his tea table, and we talked about Ajmer and Beawar.

Many years later I had the pleasure of meeting Major Betham (then Lt. Col. Betham) once more, and this time in Calcutta. He was at that time British Resident in Nepal and had come to Calcutta on an official visit, which fact was reported in the newspapers. I wrote to him asking for an appointment, and he quickly replied inviting me to see him. But at the interview I noticed that he was a bit less warm than on the last occasion; and that he mostly talked as though he nursed a grievance against the Government of India for not sufficiently rewarding his services, and when I made an enquiry about Sir E. C. Gibson, his predecessor at Ajmer, he spoke in a manner clearly showing his jealousy of the other fellow's superior good luck. I asked myself if Europeans also suffered from green-eyed

jealousy as we Indians did!

Talking of quarrels and reconciliation, I have had experience of many in a fairly long life, but two instances stand out in my memory of differences that were never composed, and both happen to belong to the Ajmer-Beawar period of my life. The first of these lost friends was a well-known figure in the University circles of Ajmer, Agra and Allahabad and an astute academic politician. The phrase may not be readily understood in other countries; but in 'India there is a class of teachers, in the Universities who are more politicians than teachers. This particular gentleman was at first very friendly towards me and we had many private meetings, confidential chats and informal snacks together but after years he suddenly discovered that I, a Bengalee, was a foreigner in Rajputana exploiting the students for your selfish interests', forgetting that by the same token he was a Punjabee in a snug billet in the Government preserve of the same province and doing the same kind of service! I had appealed to him for advice in a crisis of my service career as to an old friend and well-wisher, and he chose to give me the above answer. In effect he turned his back upon me and wished me to the devil! He was a Rai Bahadur and all that; but when I noticed his volt face I said 'Quits' and have not spoken to him again. I never owed anything to him and had no compunction in washing my hands of him. I had 'found him on the roadside and lost him in the tavern'. No regrets.

But it was another matter to break with Dr. P. B. to whom I owed a debt of gratitude for obtaining for me the Beawar College appointment after I had lost my Cawnpore job. We had many common friends and I was always his admirer and well-wisher. He was very kind to me for years and at the time I had the privilege of playing the part of a peacemaker between him and Rev. J. C. Chatterjee when the rivalry between the two had almost culminated in personal enmity. I was happy that I had partially succeeded in easing the tension of feeling between the two stalwarts. I was always a loyal supporter of Dr. B's interests in University and Board affairs, although the value of my support might not have amounted to much. I am afraid that mischief-makers had been busy between us for in my hour of distress when I looked to the Government of Ajmer-Merwara to protect me from the vindictive College Council; I found that Dr. B. was no longer the prop that I could lean upon. Not that Dr. B. could not possibly appreciate my distress when I was suddenly discharged after 14 years' service, for he too had very lately passed through the valley of humiliation in being obliged to leave Maiwa to seek shelter in Mewar after nearly 25 years' distinguished service. I had hoped that common suffering would have made us sympathetic to each other.

But when I approached Dr. B. for a favor practically in his gift he treated me almost like a beggar, and displayed a rudeness that I was not prepared to digest even on an empty stomach. I came away from his presence more deeply humiliated than I ever had been in my life. I have not forgotten the good he did me once but I cannot also forget the way he hurt my sense of self-respect.

Two years later I came across him at the Jaipur Railway Station, both of Returning from a meeting of the new Rajasthan University; and he made as if he wished to speak to me; but I deliberately cut him. Now we occasionally pass each other, both retired from service, in the streets of Calcutta; but by a tacit mutual understanding as it were we behave as if neither of us ever knew the other. We are permanently caught in a vicious circle of our own making. But one cannot but feel a twinge of regret after each encounter; at least I cannot that our brave old friendship should now lie a corpse in the gutter. But such is life.

"The Moving Finger writes; and having writ,

Moves on: nor all our Piety not Wit,
Shall lure it back to cancel half a line,
Nor all thy Tears wash out a word of it.”

CHAPTER III

In the coils of a falsehood.

Only once in my fairly long career in the Beawar College did I play a part, not freely chosen but rather forced upon me, of which I am really ashamed. All I can plead in self-defense is that I was a victim of circumstances but that, I am aware, is only an unwilling confession of one's weakness.

With great difficulty we had succeeded in having the College recognized as a center for the High School Examination of the Rajputana Board. Naturally I was anxious to conduct the Board's Examinations with the utmost vigilance and the strictest compliance with the rules. But, as the saying goes, 'miscarriages will take place even in the best regulated families'. Everything had been arranged for the third year's Examination session down to the smallest detail; and the Examination was to commence on the morrow, which was a Monday. On the previous Saturday evening there was a grand feast given by a rich Sett and I, among others, enjoyed it not wisely but too well. On the following day I had, as sometimes happened to me after a too hearty meal, a severe attack of diarrhea, which left me shaky like a leaf at the end of the day.

I feared that I should not be able to attend the Examination on the first day and requested the Vice Principal to be in charge of the center at least for the next morning's Examination, and forced upon him the key of the steel safe in which the question papers were kept. But early next morning the Vice Principal came to my house in a car that he had obtained from somewhere and insisted on my going to the College with him. At his insistence I hastily dressed and with rather unsteady legs got into the car and drove to the College.

It was already 7 o' clock when I reached there; and to add to my helplessness I found I had forgotten my spectacles. As the light in the office room was still inadequate, I gave the key of the safe to the senior most lecturer Mr. R. F; Bhargava to take out the envelope of the morning's Question paper, to open it and distribute the question papers straightaway, as it was already late. The envelopes had been arranged date wise, but Bhargava somehow took out a wrong envelope—the one for the next morning. And as there was no time to go through the necessary formality of opening the envelope before witnesses and of obtaining their signatures to the certificate—forms attached, the error remained undetected till about a dozen sheets had been given to the candidates, when Bhargava himself noticed the mistake and immediately collected them back. It was all done in a split second, so to say and hardly a candidate had time to read more than a line of the question paper. Bhargava had the presence of mind to give out immediately that wrong papers had been put in the envelope. In two minutes or so the right question papers were given and the examination proceeded as usual.

But naturally the Invigilators, some of whom had been recruited from the teaching staff of the rival local High School the Muhammadali Memorial Institution, and from the more distant Sirohi Colvin High School were curious to know what Lad happened, and how the mistake had arisen.

I was reclining all the time in an easy chair in my office, too weak to move about. After distributing the

right papers Bhargava met me behind closed doors and discussed with me what should be done to save the situation. I told him straightaway that I was for admitting the mistake and taking the blame on myself. So far no harm had been done for although I had an opportunity of reading the Question papers before they were repacked and resealed, it did not matter for I happened to be the setter of that paper and therefore the questions were already known to me.

But unfortunately my weakness, mainly physical but now spreading so as to affect my will power, made me fall a victim to the stronger will of my assistant. He represented to me the dangers of admitting the mistake, firstly for the offence it would give to Dewan Bahadur who was not too pleased with me; and who as a nervous man was morbidly afraid of losing the Examination Center secured at great pains and some cost; secondly the Chairman of the Board, Bhargava went on to say, would form a bad opinion about us and that would seriously discount the chance of our having in the College a center for the Intermediate late Examination as well which we so greatly desired. On the other hand nothing was easier than to throw the blame on the Board's office for putting the papers in the wrong envelope. Both the opened envelopes were before us, and, as in the play of *Mecbeth*, it was quite easy to foist the murder on the 'sleeping chamberlains'. The world outside was under the impression that the error had been made in the Board's office—why not keep it up? argued my clever colleague. It would be easy enough to secure signatures of the witnesses and their certificates as to the seals etc having been found intact. The Serpent in the Garden had not spoken to Eve with a more persuasive tongue than did Bhargava to me. I made one feeble objection on moral grounds before I surrendered to the superior will and intelligence of my junior "Would **it** be proper to throw the blame on the innocent Secretary of the Board? I said, which objection Bhargava immediately countered by saying that it would be much easier for the Board Secretary to live down the scandal than it would be for me who was still on my probation as Superintendent of the Examination center. That clenched the argument and I said "Well, then please yourself".

It was necessary to inform the Board Secretary both by telegram and by letter of the little irregularity. Bhargava quickly drafted a short report for me, which I approved and he immediately clattered it off on the typewriter and placed it before me for my signature. A special messenger was dispatched to Ajmer with the letter and from that moment I placed myself under Bhargava's guidance in this matter to the end of the chapter.

The necessary formalities of packing and sealing the envelope for the following day and the other requisites were attended to; and the deck of the ship was cleared and washed, so to say, after 'the morning's action. Everything was put shipshape and we three fellow conspirators, counting the Vice Principal with us, now waited for the reaction in the Board's office. Nothing was heard during the day: but on the following day I heard vague reports that the Secretary of the Board had been to Beawar during the night and made secret enquiries. It was believed that he had seen certain persons connected with the Examination center, chiefly the Invigilators from M. M. Institution and Sirohi High School. Bhargava brought me news later on that these people had told the Secretary what they believed to be the case; but one particular teacher of M. M. Institution seemed to have smelt a rat; and perhaps he had given an inkling of his suspicion to the Secretary.

On the advice of Bhargava again I sent a wire to Dewan Bahadur who was away at Jaipur and he arrived the same evening. Bhargava and I told him all the facts and sought his advice. Experienced official that he was, Dewan Bahadur after rebuking us for our bungling told us point—black to stick to the position we had taken up

come what might. For he said to impress me all the better, I should deserve to be peremptorily dismissed if I admitted having intentionally told a lie of such, grave import. I believe that is what the fundamental Rules of Government Service said on the point!

We were now prepared for a long siege, for the Secretary of the Board who was naturally Jealous of his reputation would not easily give up the campaign against us. After sometime Rev. J. C. Chatterji, Chairman of the Rajputana Board of Education, called for me, my Vice Principal Mr. Varma, a Bhargava; and put all sorts of questions to us jointly and separately; and although it was plain that he did not quite believe our story we had to stick to our guns desperately. It was an uneasy time for all the three of us; but most for me for I stood doubly accused both before the Board and before my own conscience.

The long—drawn six months during which our citadel of falsehood defied the knocking at the gate gave me as near a taste of hell as I ever had or care to have in my life. Dante's Inferno could not have held more horrors for the dead, I fancy, than I suffered alive. On several occasions I felt like throwing up my hands and giving up the lost battle; hoisting the white flag and (opening the gates to the enemy;—but it was shame—very shame— not so much the fear of consequences, that held me and my accomplices back from opening own mouths to own the truth.

By this time our pretence of innocence had worn pretty thin and almost everybody knew or suspected the truth; but we were our own prisoners. Out of respect for mere form the Chairman of the Board had refrained from coming to a finding; but he was waiting for an avowal from us three. At last I could bear the strain no longer: and even without informing Dewan Bahadur or my accomplices I wrote to the Chairman asking for an appointment to meet him private. His reply came quickly enough; and I went to see him draped in a white sheet, so to say, at his Ajmer Camp. With a contrite heart I told him everything and he listened to me patiently and sympathetically, only politeness preventing, him from saying that he already knew everything. All he said was "I see. However you have done well to own up". I was immensely thankful that he did not inflict upon me a sermon on common morality.

In due course, the Chairman, at the instance of the Secretary who was anxious to clear himself of all suspicion, passed orders disqualifying me from acting as Superintendent at the ensuing year's examination, and appointing an outsider to act in my, place. To save my face I applied for a month's leave covering the examination period and went home to Bengal.

I have made Bhargava rightly responsible for dominating my judgment at a weak moment; but to be fair to him, he stood by me loyally to the end, resisting all temptations to do the contrary. And I add with thankfulness that he was an old pupil of mine, how I wish that all my old pupils behaved like him.

CHAPTER IV

Under the new President.

To resume my story from after the inspection of the College by the Board of Inspection described in a previous chapter. In a couple of years the old President of my college Dewan Bahadur Pyarelal was dead. A local millionaire and mill owner Rai Saheb Vitthaldas Ráthi, one of the old donors of the College, was elected new President in the expectation that he would make a big donation to the College and put it above its chronic want: But this hope was not realized for years, in fact not till I had left the college some six years later. The Seth Saheb

contented himself with a casual contribution of a thousand or two thousand rupees in honor of some domestic event, like a birth or a marriage in his family.

Once only to my knowledge he had to part with a pretty big sum when a big Seth from Bombay, Sitaram Saksaria I believe put him to shame by making fairly big donations to the various private educational institutions of Ajmer and Beawar, although he had nothing particularly to do with the district Like the true Rajputs the Seths of Rajputana—the Marwari Community as they are called—have their point of honor. This touchiness is well known to the people of Calcutta, where many stories are current of the rich Marwari clients of the big: solicitors and doctors making silent bids against one another in enhancing the amount of their votive offerings at Pujahs or the value of their presents at weddings Rai Saheb Rathi was piqued into shelling out some six thousand rupees to the College.

Recently, I have heard, the Seth, who is now no more, made a bequest of a lakh of rupees to the College on certain conditions. But during my time no improvement was noticeable in the financial position of the College on account of the change of president ship. If anything, it seemed to be worse than before. I had hoped that the new administration would probably undo the wrong done to me personally. But in a few months I found that the new President, I suspect partly under the influence of the old Secretary, had taken over from his predecessor in office certain legacies, one of which was the suppression of my grade, as sacred trusts, which he dared not violate.

This Tartuffe touch in the new President certainly did not induce me to take kindly to him, any more than to the deceased Dewan Bahadur. I clearly foresaw that I was not going to get justice from the College Council however it might be changed. In fact the Rai Saheb once pleaded 'limitation' against my demand. I was reminded of Major Betham's recommendation to approach the Chief Commissioner, which now appeared to be my last hope. But I wonder what that gallant officer would have said if he knew the sequel to the story.

It was an Indian Chief Commissioner Mr. Shivdasani to whom I made a representation on the failure of my petition to the Superintendent of Education. As soon as the clever Secretary of the College got wind of my petition to the Superintendent of Education, he started prejudicing my demand by raising false cries against me. With the help of a Lecturer of the College he trumped up a charge of misappropriation against me; but as the Superintendent of Education sat over my representation for months and months without taking any action, either the College Secretary did not press the fantastic charge against me or the Superintendent himself did not attach any importance to it. But the Secretary kept the charge of misappropriation in pickle for me, so to say and as soon as I submitted a formal representation to the Chief Commissioner, the Secretary made a countermove by serving me with a notice of discharge on the ground that I had reached the age of 55, although retirement at 55 was never a rule observed in any private institution. To further buttress his position he took up his charge of misappropriation from the pickle jar. It was alleged that I had sold some books of my own to the College library and thereby improperly helped myself to college money and that this was done without the knowledge or approval of the College Council. When the Chief Commissioner demanded my reply to the above charge, I said that I had really sold some books on Economics and Politics belonging to my son; who was an ex-student of the College and a keen student of the subjects. I had written to him to select from the Bombay bookshops some suitable books on Economics for the College Library. It was the year 1943-44 the peak year of the World War II when all import of books from foreign countries was practically at a standstill and necessary foreign publications were not easily available in India. My son therefore suggested that if I

had no objection he might supply some of the books he had purchased in recent years for his private study. He is a distinguished student of Economics; so I directed him to send me a parcel of such books of his, as he considered useful for teachers or students. I invited the Lecturers concerned to inspect the books and they made a selection themselves.

The books were practically new, having been read but once, but technically they were second-hand books; so in view of the difficulty of obtaining suitable books at that time I allowed a discount of 12% to 15% only on the catalogue price and no freight was charged. The lecturers concerned considered the price charged by me very reasonable; so in this way books worth about Rs. 200 were purchased for the Library over a period of two years.

I replied that there was no question of taking the sanction of the Managing Committee; for the selection of books within a maximum limit fixed by the Committee in the yearly budget, was left entirely to the discretion of the principal and his staff. I said that I was not in the least ashamed of this transaction and saw nothing shady about it. In fact I claimed thanks from the College Committee for being able to get such a supply of books at a time when the superintendent of Education yearly made adverse remarks in his Inspection Report that there were no adequate additions to the College Library in certain subjects.

Great therefore was my surprise when I found that my defense cut no ice with the Chief Commissioner, on whose table I found all the books in question, brought by the overzealous College Secretary, for the Chief Commissioner's personal inspection. I heard afterwards about the previous passage of little presents in the shape of Dalis from Beawar to Ajmer. The President of my College was the proprietor of two big Cotton Mills; and the Secretary had been the Secretary of a third big Cotton Mill; and nothing came more readily to the mind of people of this class than the sending of a Dali to get something done or undone by the authorities. And I believe nowhere Dalies were more popular than in Ajmer-Merwara. I am sure if one kept tally of all the Dalies coming to Ajmer from Beawar alone in a year one would be able to furnish highly interesting statistics. The spectacle of a Commissioner or Chief Commissioner's Car being filled with select specimens of the textiles produced by the Mills inspected by the officer was an open if unedifying sight, to which the public was accustomed. If the new Government of India has succeeded in putting a stop to this screaming scandal it deserves no small praise. To make a long story short, the clever Rajasthan Brahman neatly turned the tables upon me the College Secretary and I was gerrymandered from an accusing complainant into a convicted accused. I have swallowed some bitter Pills in my time, but the bitterest pill was the one administered by this Indian I. C. S. Mr. Shivdasani. It is some satisfaction to know that this Daniel' disappeared with the political change over of 1947.

When I had lost my case before the Chief Commissioner the College Committee generously offered me a solatium in the shape of an extension of service, on the old terms but for one year at a time, which I spurned with the contempt it deserved.

The Sequel

I had purposely kept the matter of my discharge from service from the knowledge of the students in the interest of the College itself. But when after the reopening of the College at the end of the long vacation the students came to know about it, they went on strike and picketing; and no classes could be held for a whole week. It was a

spontaneous expression of the students' love for me; if ever a students' demonstration has been spontaneous. The President, Secretary, and members of the Managing Committee applied their combined strength and resources to break the strike but failed. I did not like this attitude of the students, for I had no wish to go and occupy my chair again borne on the shoulders of, the students. Besides there was the danger of its being 'thought that J was secretly fomenting the situation.

Now appeals began to come privately to me from the members of the College Council to persuade the students to attend their classes. So one morning I invited them all to my place and read them a long lecture on their duty to the College, and after wards led them personally, and when they had entered the College gates I came back. I had fought for the vindication of my rights and stood on a principle; but when the highest administrative authority of the province did not uphold those rights, and that principle was overthrown, nothing could possibly induce me to continue to work there. The students were naturally slow to understand this, and hence the trouble.

But the very place where I tested the bitterest cup of my life also offered me the sweetest. In my own person I experienced the contrary effects of the two forces that were contending for supremacy in the wider field of Indian politics—the bureaucratic and the democratic. When: the one had done its worst to wound, the other came forward to do its best to apply salve.

The entrenched vested interests and their caretakers the bureaucrats were fighting for the continuance of the old order while the people the oppressed, neglected, bludgeoned and browbeaten people were struggling for a change. The victim of official tyranny automatically became a hero of popular worship; and when I recall my last few weeks at Beawar I am overwhelmed with gratitude. My ascension in the popular esteem was an incomparably greater event than the official burial of my case in the pigeonholes of the Ajmer Secretariat!

But it did not happen overnight. I had come in contact with the common people in many ways and they held me in a measure of respect. They had heard me speak in the halls of the rich and mighty in accents never before heard there. I had come in contact with them in their clubs and associations, participated in their social, and religious functions, even in their funerals; cooperated with them in their educational and humanitarian activities; and on one notable occasion acted as one of two public arbitrators to decide the claims of the various candidates for election to the Municipal Board and our decision was abided by all the parties concerned.

The people had seen me attend the Congress meetings and conferences, although I was not a regular member of the Congress, and I was on the best of terms with the local Congress leaders like Pandit Mukat Behari Lal Bhargava M. L. A. (now M. P.), Pandit Jay Narayan Vyas, now Chief Minister of Rajasthan; Seth Ghisulal Jajodiya, the man who had scarified a princely estate for the love of his country; Mr. Yasin Nurie, Bar-at-law; former Congress Minister of Bombay Presidency, and even that most dreaded man of Ajmer-Merwara Swami Kumarananda, the Communist leader.

Even the petty shopkeepers of Beawar knew me and my two Bengalee friends Dr. Gupta and Dr. Banerji on account of our going from door to door to collect money for the relief of famine stricken Bengal in 1943. No wonder therefore that the people of Beawar who wanted to usher a new era of light and love, and were prepared to suffer for their convictions i.e. the pro-Congress people, using that word in its old comprehensive sense, made up to me in a wonderful way for the injury done by capitalism backed by officialdom.

I had found that in the degree I was popular outside the College, in the same degree I was a suspect in the College Committee and official circles. Perhaps it followed logically that the people should have rushed to help and honor me when they saw me humiliated and ill treated by the pro-Government interest. A number of farewell parties were held in my honor; addressees were given in about a dozen places; and valuable presents made. I was lionized in a manner I did not half deserve.

The biggest function was arranged by the local Congress Committee in the heart of the town and was attended by nearly 10,000 people, Pt. Mukat Behari Lal Bhargava (now M. P.) the President of the local Congress presiding. A large all silver tea set was presented to me on behalf of the public of Beawar along with a purse of Rs. 1101, which however I thankfully handed back to a representative of the contributors, with a request that the amount might be used as the nucleus of a fund out of which prizes might be given annually to the deserving students of the college that I had served so long and loved so well. It is no small satisfaction to me to know that the students still celebrate a day in the year which they have named after me.

The College students had reserved for themselves the honor of holding the last of a long series of farewell functions. As I expressed my unwillingness to visit the College again, the boys arranged their fare—well meeting in the spacious hail of the Collegiate School. It is a pity that neither the President nor the Secretary had the courtesy to attend this function of the students; although some prominent members of the College Council were observed among the audience on more than one occasion.

Mr. Y. Nurie, Bar-at-Law, a leading citizen of Beawar and a prominent Congress leader, presided. The students presented me with a large Silver Flower Vase and other little gifts, which I cherish as my proudest laurels. Making my reply to the address I suppose I had touched a high level of Sentiment or thought, or struck some rich vein of language of which I was not conscious, for Mr. Nurie in his concluding remarks paid me a compliment for which I was not prepared. No doubt it was an exaggeration; but as I had some vanity on the score of supposing myself a good speaker, I felt considerably flattered.

The students of the College were in an excited condition and did not know how best to express their love for me; and when I left Beawar the next day the Railway Platform was thronged by them and others in such a way and so great was the press in front of my compartment, that the passengers from Ahmedabad and Bombay on that September evening must have wondered who the great man might be who was given such a royal sendoff. At least half of my admirers must have traveled W. T. on the same train up to Ajmer: for there was a repetition of the same scene including heaping of garlands again at the Ajmer station. Other students of the College as well as some Ajmer students and many ex-students of my College had come to show their respect to me. Again there was mobbing, garlanding, Hurrahs, Jais and Zindabads, shaking of hands, and Namastes. Half the off-take of the famous flower-market of Ajmer that lay strewn and trampled on the plat form after the train had left; and again people wondered who the hero was; and when told that it was only the outgoing Principal of an intermediate College, they wondered again—what a very different estimate of a man from a bureaucrat's as expressed by Major Betham.

Friends who stood by me:—

I owe it to myself to mention the names of the friends who sustained me through the long period of travail

and suspense that terminated so gloriously for me: but while it lasted I was a prey to low spirits and gloomy forebodings. Dr. Annadamohan Gupta cheered me up when I tended to sink in despair: and put a new faith and hope in me when the prospect was most forbidding. He gave me shelter when I was turned out of the College quarters by the spiteful Secretary; and took charge of one of my sons who was preparing for the High School Examination and could not be easily shifted to Alwar where I went from Beawar. He looked after the health of my children and altogether gave me more than a brother's care. I still look upon him as the best friend and well-wisher of my family.

Next to him come Swami Bhagavatananda Sannyasi, for whom I have a very high regard; Swami Kumarananda, an erratic politician but a sincere well-wisher; Sj. Chirnan Singh Lodha, a tried Congress worker and my chief link with the great Jain Community and last but not least Sj. Saheb Chand Surana, a sort of freelance in politics but a very straight forward and outspoken man of liberal views. I shall never forget the fare well party given me by the Loafers' Club, of which Dr. Gupta and Surana were the Chief office bearers. Every detail of the party from the Manuscript address to the items of food served on the occasion on artistically clipped banana leaves was conceived in a spirit and executed with a taste, a bit eccentric and bizarre, but in perfect keeping with the character of 'loafer' assumed by the members. I particularly liked Saheb Chandji for the devil-may-care trait of his nature, so unusual in the cautious and calculating business-community of Rajputana.

CHAPTER V

1942—1943

I was at Beawar during the stormy months of the 'QUIT INDIA' movement launched by Mahatma Gandhi. Barely a week had passed since the first anniversary of the demise of Rabindranath when news arrived of the mass arrest of Mahatma Gandhi and the members of the A. I. C. C. in Bombay. In a few days the cries of "Angrez Bharat Chhoro" rose in a crescendo from hundreds of throats in the processions of pro-Congress citizens comprising men, women and children tramping the streets of our small town almost daily. News began to flow in of telegraph and telephone connections between the chief cities being severed; and of Railway Communications being suspended on account of the Rail lines being torn up in places. In a few days Railway traffic was completely cut off in certain areas and reports of destruction of Government property by fire and otherwise were being published.

The mills of Ahmedabad had closed, and martial law was introduced in certain industrial and strategic centers. The students stopped attending classes, partly voluntarily, and partly under the pressure of the picketers; and it was as much as I could do to keep the picketers out of the College compound without calling in the police who were always a round the corner, ready to come to my aid at half a call. But that I succeeded in avoiding their interference was due to the influence I had with the local Congress leaders.

It was a most ticklish time; and I had need of all the tact I possessed to pilot the ship of the College through a tempestuous sea. Reports arrived of educational institutions being reduced to ashes and we had reason to be apprehensive about the safety of our own. And we did not escape incendiaries altogether; but luckily the injury was but little.

One night at about 10 o'clock the old College Chowkidar came trembling to my Bungalow and informed me with a long face that fire had been set to the College office, He had just thrown a few buckets of water on the

burning furniture) and leaving 2 or 3 men at the scene had come running to me. I called the Hostel Chawkidar and a few Hostel students and with them ran to the College more than two furlongs away. It was found that the mischief-makers had entered the room through a back window by removing an iron bar, piled some chairs upon the large table of my office, thrown some books and papers upon the furniture, and after soaking the whole in Kerosine had set fire to the mass. The result was that a few chairs and half the top of a large table were completely burnt; and the fire had scorched the front of some volumes of the Encyclopedia Britannica in an nlmirah nearby.

Fortunately the Head clerk's office had not been entered or the damage would have been enormous and irreparable. After informing the President and the Secretary, I sent a report to the thana as an event of that type could not be withheld for a night. The police appeared on the scene almost immediately, and started their first round with the Chowkidar and other people who had first noticed the fire, or came to the scene. For the next few days the activity of the police continued unabated: students were interrogated, attendance registers inspected, and inquiries were put to me if I suspected anybody, and so forth. At length I heard a rumor that certain disaffected students, one of whom was nearly related to an important member of the College Council, had committed the crime just to demonstrate that the S. D. College students were not 'tame sheep', as it was put. I was doing my best to help the police in their inquiry; but there was a sudden lull in their activity., It soon became apparent that some private influences were at work and managed to hush up the matter at what cost to whom I never knew.

Sometime before this incident I came, through a son of mine, within the scorching periphery of the fire of 1942. One day in August as I returned home from College at about 11 a.m., the classes meeting in the morning throughout the hot months of the year, I heard that a number of College students had been arrested and taken to Ajmer; and that one of the arrested was my own son, a first year student. My wife and the youngest two children having gone to Calcutta and got stranded there on account of the stoppage of passenger traffic on the E. I. Rly. I had considerable trouble with my elder daughter, then about 12 years old, which was in my charge. She was weeping her eyes out to hear that her brother had been taken away to Ajmer in one of the black motor-lorries of the Police, known as Black Marias that she had seen on her way to school.

I put her in charge of the wife of the Hostel Superintendent and made for the thana, where I learnt that the boys had not been taken to Ajmer but were being confined in the Thana. The D. S. P. expressed his satisfaction that I had arrived so quickly, and he wished that I would use my influence with the boys to make them express regret and give a simple promise not to participate in political demonstrations in future. Unless they complied with the requirement before the S. D. O., the D. S. P. added, the boys would be sent to Ajmer Hajat to await regular trial in court. I went inside and saw the boys some 10 in number, squatting on the grass in a corner of the quadrangle. They were morose and sullen when I expostulated with them why they had acted in that way. I sent for their guardians; and some of them were soon on the scene, generally with consternation painted on their faces.

I explained to the boys the gravity of the position in which they stood and pointed out the consequences that would follow contumacy on their part. They were not guilty of any moral offence; but even a technical offence was serious in face of the open declaration of revolt by the Congress. How could the boys by absenting themselves from their classes and by leading processions, and shouting slogans make the British quit India I used also the other stock arguments of elders in a similar situation. The other guardians also reasoned with their wards; but their first

reaction was one of defiance of Consequences, which gradually softened as they felt the pinch of hunger.

The Extra Assistant Commissioner, who was a very good gentleman, arrived and started lecturing to the students, who at length relented enough to enquire what they were expected to do. The E. A. C. said that an oral expression of regret would be enough; but they would have to put their signature to a written undertaking not to take part in any anti-Government political activity in future. After some wrangling and waste of time, the boys complied with the direction and were let off, but not before the E. A. C. had treated them to some refreshments. So the matter seemed to end most satisfactorily for all concerned. But not really so, as I discovered three years later.

My son after passing the Intermediate Examination became an apprentice in a Naval Floating Dock in Bombay to learn Naval Engineering. After six months' apprenticeship without an allowance, when it was time for his confirmation and the sanction of a monthly allowance to him, the usual police enquiry was instituted with the result that my son was soon informed that his apprenticeship was cancelled. He was warned not to enter the Dock area, which was a Protected Area. It appeared on inquiry that the Ajmer-Merwara police had reported unfavorably about him for he had 'taken part' in the disturbances of 1942! To have taken part in the disturbances of 1942 was enough to down any man, for it might mean anything from wrecking Railway trains to shouting 'Quit India' slogans!

I contacted the police heads at Ajmer and they expressed regret for the 'unhappy' language of the report. They suggested that the Bombay Government might be persuaded to order a fresh enquiry, upon which the report could be rectified. I personally requested the Dock authorities to make a fresh enquiry, but they had not the courtesy even to acknowledge my letter. So the old hen of 1942 had not only come home to roost, but also to lay an egg, in 1945.

To return to my story of 1942. After waiting for many days in Calcutta my wife and children at last reached Delhi after a long detour through Central India; and after 3 days' wait in a Delhi Hotel they secured tickets for Ajmer and Beawar. When they arrived they looked like famine-stricken people.

The following year 1943 stands accursed in the annals of Bengal on account of the worst famine known for a century and a half. My family and I were in Bengal from April to June and we saw with our own eyes the first signs of the coming catastrophe. The price of rice suddenly shot up to Rs. 25/ per maund from the prevailing Rs. 10/ or thereabouts: and the numbers of beggars mounted up weekly and afterwards daily. I was in my village home where the great majority of the beggars naturally were Muslims, as 85% of the population was the same. But it now appeared that a large proportion of the beggars were Hindus—men, women, and children belonging mainly to the fishermen class, weavers, and small peddlers. There was a fair sprinkling of the poorer members of the more respectable business community; washer men and other artisan castes, in fact all varieties of poor landless people were represented in the daily swelling mass of beggars.

The weavers and fishermen had been hard hit by the Govt. policy of yarn control and the famous Wavell policy of denial of boats and sailing craft in apprehension of Japanese invasion. From begging alms of dry rice, the women and children soon fell to begging cooked rice; and from rice to gruel and canjee. They would come ready with earthen bowls, tins, and coconut shell cups to receive the liquid food and drink it on the spot. In a few days the inevitable swelling of the face, hands, and feet in the case of adults; and distended bellies in children were

prominently visible.

By the beginning of July I heard reports of a few cases of starvation deaths, one or two of which were by the roadside of our little town. When I came to Calcutta I saw the footpaths and open spaces infested with beggars, mostly from the villages around Calcutta, and the industrial centers far and near. They cooked their food on improvised ovens on the footpaths and slept either in the open or under the shade of trees. Already famished children could be seen to rummage the dustbins for possible morsels of food. From that stage it was but a step to fighting with the dogs for a share of the garbage, which, I heard later, became a familiar sight in the Calcutta streets.

It did not require much imagination to visualize what things were coming to, but I was providentially spared the agony of witnessing those horrible sights, for soon I left for Rajputana. Appeals for relief of distress were soon issued from Calcutta and other places, and there was quick response too, but what could nonofficial efforts do to stave off the province-wide calamity? The heroic efforts of the Marwari and other people through the Ramakrishna and Seva Sangh missions, and independent secular relief centers, although they deserved the highest praise for what they did, were as pitifully and ridiculously inadequate as the effort of the woman in the story who sought to sweep back the Atlantic ocean with her broom.

The then Government of the country that had little time and energy to spare from its war efforts thought only of saving the 'hands' considered essential for the conduct of war, through a system of doles and special rations. For the common people, its uniform prescription was the Langarkhana, the memory of which will for ages darken the last chapter of British and the first chapter of Moslem League rule in Bengal. The inevitable followed and men, women, and children died like flies all over the province, especially in the Eastern districts on account of their being nearer the theatre of war.

I have referred to my collecting funds in Beawar for the relief of the sufferers of Bengal. I shall never forget the enthusiastic response that my fellow-Bengalees and I had from the public of Beawar. The very idea that people were dying for want of food in Bengal acted like a goad to their conscience—the old Hindu conscience which could not contemplate the idea of our fellowmen dying at our side for want of food, which we had in plenty ourselves. The shopkeepers appealed to, contributed on a scale much higher than customary; one rich Seth Rai Saheb Lal Chand Kothari donated Rs. 5000 from the family charity Fund. In a few weeks we collected Rs. 15,000, out of which we were able to remit Rs. 10,000 to the Central Relief Committee of Dr. S. P. Mookerjee. I had the satisfaction of remitting Rs. 3000 for the relief of the middle class families of my native town, which was also devastated by an epidemic of smallpox in the wake of famine.

CHAPTER V

Alwar.

From Beawar to Alwar. Alwar caught me on the rebound so to say. I was not enamored of service in a princely state, but when I was suddenly thrown out of employment at the age of 55, with some of my children reading in school and two in College, it was not easy for me to strike my tent and be on the move for Bengal again. My old friend and Chief Principal S. P. Bhargava of Raj Rishi College, Alwar, now extended his hand of fellowship to me. That college had recently been raised to the Degree standard, and he wanted to strengthen the staff and

desired to have me. But as the appointment was not in his gift, and as usual in the States there were party factions, he advised me to apply but not 'to publish the fact that we were old friends.

I appeared before an Appointment Board consisting of the Education Minister Thakur Chain Singh Saheb of Pokhran, a Cambridge graduate and a Bar-at-Law; his Secretary Mr. S. C. Ghosal, a retired Minister of Education Pandit Balabhadra Ojha who was an erudite Sanskrit Scholar, the Chief Judge of the State High Court; and the Principal. There were several other candidates including one Ph D and one or two with foreign University qualifications, but as my luck and Principal Bhargava would have it, I was selected. But the chief difficulty was to find a house to live in with my family. Luckily two lecturers of the College were my old pupils, and one of them Prof G S Jaiman after some searching found a place to put me in. It was not a good house at all but one that just served my purpose. Water supply was the worst problem of Alwar; almost all the water being drawn from deep wells by the most primitive methods, and the watermen charging exorbitantly. The house had no electric connection and I got it electrically lighted at my own cost.

Of all the place I have lived in outside Bengal, Alwar gave me the worst comforts and amenities, However my work in the College was congenial; the entire staff held me in respect for my seniority in age and also for my friendship with the Principal. The Principal and I started planning about the future improvement of the College, its removal to an extensive new site from its present makeshift accommodation in an unsuitable building, an old palace—the Vana Vilas Palace—in the middle of a vast fruit garden.

But unluckily for the College and all of us, Principal Bhargava had a paralytic stroke even in the College premises and after first aid and medical examination we had him carried home. All that Allopathic and Ayurvedic treatment could do for him was tried, Dr. Kattre, the Chief Medical Officer of the State attending on the patient day and night during the first few days; but Mr. Bhargava made very little progress towards recovery. He was given long medical leave and went to his home at Cawnpore where he remained for about six months, but without much improvement. He made a last attempt to retain his place in the State service by coming back to Alwar again with the intention of joining office, but he was too ill to do so and was advised by all his friends to give the idea, and to retire from service altogether.

He had rendered valuable services to the Alwar state, in several capacities, as Economic Adviser, Revenue Officer, Education officer, and Principal of the State College, and I trust the Maharaja made adequate provision for him by way of pension and reward. But before the question had been decided I left Alwar.

A few days after Mr. Bhargava's incapacitation, the State appointed as Principal Dr. Jaipal Singh, a Lecturer in History of Balwant Rajput College, Agra. About 45 years old, a small and strong-built man of active habits Dr. Singh seemed to be an improvement, physically speaking, on the older and slack-twisted Mr. Bhargava; and on his arrival Dr. Singh took up the games of the College and seemed to put a new stimulus into them. But that was the only constructive work he did so far as I could see; for the rest, his policy seemed to be to undo whatever Mr. Bhargava had done before him.

He began with the College Union, the foundation of which had been laid by Mr. Bhargava, who had hoped to build it up on the successful lines of the Union of the Sanatan Dharma College, Cawnpore. Mr. Bhargava was very glad indeed to have me with him once more in the work of the College Union and I took to it easily

enough, arranging debates, preparing students for debate, inducing the teachers to participate in the debates, and so on. Students were being trained to preside over the Union meetings, when Dr. Singh usurped the Presidential Chair himself and proceeded to put gags in the mouth of the speakers on the plea that the students frequently imported political matters into their speeches.

Hitherto Dr. Singh had tried to play up to me, probably in the hope of having at least one senior men of the staff on his side where so many were equal to him in age and might dispute his authority. He used to regale me with the story of his very friendly relations with persons like Prof. Jiban Chandra Taluqdar and Prof. Birendra K. Mukherji of Agra who, he knew, were my personal friends. I used to take him at his word, having no means of verifying what he said. Besides I felt that I should give him what little support I could. But as his real nature came out in his dealings with the students; and his intellectual equipment burst at the seams in his lectures to his classes, I thought that I had no particular call to keep a 'pompous ass', in the irreverent language of Nabin Bose, in clover.

By this time it was an open secret that Dr. Singh had been specially selected by Thakur Raghunath Singh, the Education Minister on the ground of his being a Rajput; but that his claim to be a true Rajput was already being questioned by many. Even Parikshit Singh, son of the Education Minister, who was a student of the College and whom Dr. Singh was particularly anxious to placate, told his friends that his father had erred in choosing Dr. Singh, who was only a Daroga i.e. a hybrid Rajput. Be that as it may; but in utter disregard of the constitution of the College Union Dr. Singh proceeded to carry matters with a high hand, so as to reduce the College Union to a mere Literary Society. It was pointed out to him that as a Professor of Constitutional History he should not act in an unconstitutional manner; that he must abide by the constitution or abolish the Union altogether by an executive order. In case he wanted an amendment of rules, it was represented to Dr. Singh, he must introduce the changes within the framework of the constitution itself.

But Dr. Singh would not listen to reason but went on indulging his whims in a most exasperating manner. The result was that the Professors stopped attending the Union meetings and were content to see the Union extinguished. But it went against the grain with me to see the fine work of Principal Bhargava ruined in that way.

So one day I persuaded some Professors to attend the Union meeting and to take part in the proceedings. One of them took up cudgels on behalf of the Union and had hot exchanges with Dr. Singh who presided. And when I got on my feet I went at him hammer and tongs, and practically turned my speech into an impeachment of the interfering Principal I knew he was a bit afraid of me; but I thought later that if he had but a spark of ordinary human spirit in him., not to say Rajput spirit, how he could help but hit back at me. To my surprise he sat and swallowed all that I said for nearly half an hour. And that was the last meeting of the Union in my time.

Soon after this clashes started between the students and the police and several students were arrested. A College strike followed in obedience to the call of the local Congress and Dr. Singh defeated in his attempts to reason the students over from participating in the popular movement that demanded an overhauling of the entire state administration on democratic lines, and ultimately and very curiously too, culminated in a strike of the entire body of Secretariat clerks (on the plea of increased pay)—the defeated Dr. Singh avoided direct contact with the students and spent most of his time with the Secretaries in the empty Secretariat Goodness alone knows what plans be devised to control the situation!

Between two mill-stones.

It was about this time that Dr. N. B. Khare came to the State as the new Dewan in place of Sir Seremal Bapna of Indore, who had been ill' for a long time. The State Darbar had probably banked on Dr. Khare's well-known hostility to the Congress High Command to stem the inroad of the Interim Cabinet in Delhi headed by Pt. Nehru, into the affairs of the princely states. It was a time of great commotion, the massacres of Amritsar and Rawalpindi had already taken place and the country was going to be partitioned' and the British were packing up to leave. Already the fire of the Punjab had spread to the districts of Rewari and Gurgaon and to the States of Alwar and Bharatpur, and touched off the old powder magazine of the Meos.

There was already great unrest among the Mussalman population of Alwar city, most of the Mussalman families moving to safe places like Delhi and Jaipur, if not into Sindh and West Punjab. There was a stir among, the opium eating Rajputs who were being whipped up by the cries of "Rajputana for the Rajputs" and "Gird up your loins, Rajputs! The hour of Destiny strikes". There were secret meetings and confabulations among the descendents of the ancient Chivalry of the land to prepare to seize power—their historic birthright—in the void that would follow the British withdrawal.

The atmosphere was charged with electricity and people naturally feared that a thunderstorm might burst forth any moment. Alwar was a center of the R.S.S. volunteers and great activity was noticeable amongst them. The Mussalman minority was naturally in a panicky condition. Hundreds of Mussalman families with their cattle and chattels came from the villages in bullock carts and on foot or on camelback to the City of Alwar for shelter or on their way to other places. The open spaces of Alwar were filled with these refugees and the whole area of the Railway Station up to half a mile or so either way and on both sides was packed with intending passengers who had to wait sometime for days for the chance of boarding a train. Special trains were arranged for them, and they were not permitted to travel by the ordinary trains. There were Muslim League volunteers with appropriate badges giving them drinks of water or morsels of food.

The panic of the Mussalmans was accentuated by the Rajput policy of reclamation or re-conversion (Shuddhi) of the Meos, who were said to have been Rajputs but converted, by force to Islam in the time of Emperor Aurangzeb. Now was the time to claim them back to the Rajput fold to strengthen the Rajput cause, which was traditionally opposed to the interference of Delhi. Sometime before Pt. Nehru had deputed Mr. Sree Prakash to enquire into certain matters connected with the imprisonment of Congress workers and volunteers, and although nothing was left undone by the state to whitewash matters, the interference of Nehru was keenly resented by the state Government.

Here was a new setting of the stage for a return to the Middle Ages when the Rajputs were the undisputed masters of Rajasthan. I do not know how widely this ambition was shared by the Rajputs of the other states, but Alwar was perhaps symptomatic of the rest of the area.

Re-conversion of Meos.

The process of re-conversion was very simple. A number of barbers were in commission and were seated in

the shade of the trees not very far from the College site, and a number of water-men were ready by a large well to draw water for the bath of the converts. As soon as the would-be converts were shaven clean of hair, beard, and moustaches, except for a tiny pigtail behind the head, pails of water were poured over them and then a few drops of the sacred Ganga water strewn on their heads. The Brahmans in waiting performed a brief religious rite before the sacred fire; a Hindu name was given to each convert and certain Mantras uttered into the convert's ear and a rosary given to each to repeat the mantras with. The new converts sat apart telling their rosaries for sometime and then they were treated to a community feast. It was all done in less than two hours.

I have heard, but I cannot vouch for the truth of the report, that some over enthusiastic social reformers insisted upon the convert's tasting a little soup of bacon kept ready-cooked, to ensure that they might not go back to the Muslim fold again. Yet I heard that one shaven-headed Mussalman who had been converted the previous day was seen emerging from the big mosque in the Bazar after the Jumma names on a Friday; and that there was a sensation among the Hindu. It is obvious those conversions could not be serious; that many such conversions were more forcible than voluntary; and that only the helpless people could be dealt with in that way. Not that many such mock conversions were made, but the very rumor was enough to unnerve the Mussalman.

Reports were already arriving of Meos burning villages and looting townships and markets and of the military being sent against them. Uglier stories of the Punjab armed police helping the Meos in their predatory activities and of shots being exchanged between the Alwar state troops and Punjabi troops on the frontier of Alwar state also came. This happened a couple of months or so before the formal creation of Pakistan, necessitating an enquiry on the spot-by the highest military authorities of Alwar and the Punjab.

In the course of my Railway journeys to Delhi and Jaipur during these months and even earlier I saw smoke rising from several villages far and near and was told that it was the doing of the Meos, who not only set fire to their own houses but also to those of their Hindu neighbors before they fled westwards. Later on I heard that the important trading center of Tijara had been laid waste by fire and looted by armed Mussalmans including many deserters from the Alwar state Army.

It was therefore wise of the Maharaja to have discharged the Mussalman Commander-in-Chief and to have appointed a Hindu officer in his place; for nobody can say how the state troops would have behaved in that crisis under the old command. I have heard that the discharged C-in-C whom I have met—a fine-looking smart young officer—was a great favorite of His late Highness Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh, who had picked him up as a boy in the course of his Kāshmir tour. But the Maharaja was not fortunate in his selections. They were not to be trusted, as the people of Alwar knew to their cost; for one of his choices—a former Mussalman Prime Minister hand-picked by him—was responsible for inciting the Meos to revolt against the state, and for breeding the spirit of disloyalty in their hearts.

It is said that Maharaj Jaisingh took fancy to a tall Punjabi Mussalman and appointed him Prime Minister of Alwar. When the Maharaja was away in Europe on one of his long visits, the Prime Minister contacted the Meos and incited them to rebellion against the Maharaja, God knows to what end.

When His Highness got the news he hastened back to India; and as soon as he reached Alwar he ordered the troops to destroy the Meos villages. Semi lunatic that he was, the story goes that he employed elephants to

trample down the crops of the Meos and used such other drastic and barbarous methods that the Political Department of the Government of India had to interfere. A long tug-of-war followed between the Maharaja and the Political Department at the end of which the Maharaja was forced to leave the state and to reside abroad, in the course of which exile he expired. In a sense therefore his favorite was the root cause of the Maharaja's downfall, if not of his death.

To turn to the new Dewan Dr. Khare, the people did not feel very easy at his appointment. The people that he had been brought in to check the influence of the Congress in the state, as I have already said, openly talked it. The Gazetted officers of the state, including the Professors of the College, went to pay their respects to the new Dewan who was said to be a very plain and simple man ready to see all people without ceremony. But when I heard that his open boast was that he was an enemy of Gandhi I thought that something was wrong with him; and I refrained from going to see him. Not so much because I was a great devotee of Gandhiji, as because I considered such an open declaration to be a sufficient proof of the man's lack of balance if not of sanity. The remark was said to have been made in this context. Some of Dr. Khare's courtier—like visitors had paid him a compliment by saying "Now that a statesman of your caliber has come to the state, surely we have much to hope for. To this Dr. Khare was reported to have said, "No. No, I have no claim to experience of administration, not to speak of statesmanship; my only qualification, is that I am an enemy of Gandhi".

Yet certain events occurred in Alwar that suggested that Dr. Khare was probably acting as an instrument of the state policy of establishing Rajput Raj under the saffron-colored banner of revivalist Hinduism. Besides the R.S.S. who were already there, agents of the Hindu Mahasabha of whom Dr. Khare was himself such a great leader; Swami Karapatriji the reverend Shankaracharya of Dwaraka said to be a blood brother of Dr. Khare all these religious leaders found Alwar a convenient center for their meetings, preaching's, and propaganda. It was none too soon that the eagle-eyed Sardar Patel swooped down upon this nest of Hindu revivalism and saved Rajasthan as a part of the secular state of India.

Now to return to my own story. All that the revengeful Dr. Jaipal Singh could do to spite me was to refuse to give me an extension of service beyond my two years' appointment. I was well content to come back to Bengal before the 15th of August, 1947, because I wanted to take charge of my home in the absence of my father who had departed this life a few months before and; if possible, to resume my twice interrupted legal practice in Pakistan. Of this, however, I was disillusioned within 3 months of the partition of the Country; but that is another story.

CHAPTER VI

Chaumuhani.

My friends wondered at my choice and some possibly doubled my sanity but politeness prevented them from expressing their fear, when I accepted the Principalship of Choumuhani College in the autumn of 1947 i.e. within three months of the creation of Pakistan. They had reason for wondering, because I had spent the preceding 27 years of my life in North and Northwest India. They pulled long faces and warned me to be very careful. Perhaps there was a ring of bravado in my reply that I knew the East Bengal people, even the Musalmans, thoroughly well; and as for the people of Noakhali, they were racially and linguistically the same as I had lived among from my

childhood. Even the terrible occurrences of the previous year had not shaken me greatly, for I had a conviction that I understood the essential nature of the people, however, some of them might have been led away by outside propaganda and artificial excitation.

Long years of contact with the youth mind in other parts of the country had given me the confidence that if I could control young people of the Punjab or Rajputana, there was no reason why I should be afraid of Bengalee youth, albeit Mussalmans. My relations with my Muslim fellow citizens and associates had always been friendly, even cordial—one of the best friends of my boyhood was a Musalman fellow student. As a lecturer of Barisal College I had among my favorite student some Mussalmans who have since risen to eminence. In distant Rajputana I was on the best of terms with certain Mussalman gentlemen, so much so that my partiality for one, of them Seth Mazhar Hussain of Pipar was a subject of comment among his rival Hindu Seths. It would be clear therefore that I had little hesitation in accepting the Noakhali appointment, especially as it brought me nearer my home, which required my frequent attention.

The College had not yet recovered from the effects of the disturbances of the previous year. The former Principal of the College Babu Radha Govinda Nath, an elderly, pious and learned gentleman had come away to Calcutta but was still functioning as nominal Principal, while the actual control of the College was in the hands, of the senior-most lecturer present on the spot. It went against the conscience of the old gentleman to carry on any longer in that anomalous position, for there was practically no hope of his going back to Noakhali. He had offered to resign earlier but the College Governing Body, still composed of the people who had started the College in 1943, refused to accept his resignation. The Principal had brought away with him the important records and papers of the College for safekeeping, and meetings of the Governing Body were held in Calcutta where a majority of the members had also migrated,

The President of the Governing body Shri K. N. Dalal, founder and managing Director of the Nath Bank and Principal R. G. Nath were very pleased that an experienced man like myself was willing to take up the job and to go and live in Chaumuhani. I took charge of my office in Calcutta and took with me to Noakhali the College records, and even 'the College Typewriting machine which had been brought over to Calcutta. The people of Chaumuhani and the staff and students of the College were rejoiced to see one gray-haired man succeed another as Principal of the College.

I occupied one of the thatched quarters for the Professors contiguous to the Hindu students' Hostel, There were eight such quarters in which the members of the staff had lived with their families before the upheaval of the foregoing year. I found only one quarter so occupied; while in another four teachers lived in common mess. All the remaining quarters were vacant. The Staff of the College had been reduced to less than half; and there were no lecturers for certain subjects. I quickly appointed some new hands to fill up the gaps.

There was considerable misgiving in the minds of the local people, specially among Mussalmans, as to whether the old Governing body was still interested in running the College after the exodus of so many Hindu student, Hindu teachers, and Hindu donors had taken place. I said in my very first address to the students that I was there to assure them that there was no reason for such apprehension. I told them that the men who had founded the College were men of optimism and vision; and the very fact that I had been sent by them was proof enough of their

future intentions. Personally I would not have chosen to accept the responsibility if I had no faith in the future of the institution.

In fact I had undertaken the responsibility in the spirit of a man accepting the challenge of an accident deflecting history from its appointed course. The result was that the students and their guardians both Hindu and Mussalman felt reassured; and this was soon reflected in the increase of students seeking admission both in Intermediate and in B A. classes. The work was going on pretty smoothly for sometime when trouble arose over the attempted use of an outhouse in the college compound as a place for noonday Namaz by the Mussalman students. The Professor of Arabic was the mouthpiece of a demand that a separate room be provided in the college compound as a sort & chapel for the students. The Maulavi Saheb had already collected some money and even engaged laborers to fit up an outhouse as a mosque, without any reference to me.

I stopped this on the ground that the Governing body ought to be consulted in the matter, especially as a room of the College had already been set apart for that purpose by the former Principal and was being used as a prayer hall. Pending the Governing Body's decision I had that room thoroughly repaired and had a new doorway opened to it for the greaser convenience of the worshippers. This satisfied the students and when the President afterwards disapproved the Maulavis' proposal, there was no trouble for the time being.

The second wave of trouble came from the same Moulavi who voiced the demand of the Moslem students for the introduction of Islamic History and for the appointment of a new lecturer for the subject. I accepted the first part of the demand but: demurred to the appointment of a new lecturer in History in addition to the existing one on the ground of economy. There was a good deal of angry argument on the part of the Moulavi in the course of which he so far forgot himself as to say, in order to give emphasis to his demand, "I am a ruler of this state and you must listen to me." The crude way in which the prevailing sentiment of Pakistani Moslems was expressed gave me my opportunity. I peremptorily asked him to withdraw his words for I was as good a Pakistani as himself, and when he refused I said "You must withdraw and apologize or I will suspend you from service." He retorted, "You cannot suspend me." and left. I gave him yet another chance to save himself. I wrote to him that he must withdraw in writing his offensive remark by 8 o'clock that evening or I would be obliged to take disciplinary action against him.

It was said that he had taken counsel with some rowdy old students of the college and they had encouraged him to flout my order. He sent back word per bearer that he would see me in my office the next day and talk over the matter. That very night I wrote an order suspending the Moulavi until further orders; and as soon as he arrived at College next morning he was shown the order and directed not to take his classes. Now he had cold feet; and from that evening his friends started coming to me on his behalf. I said that I had already referred the case to the President and was powerless till the President had communicated his decision about the Moulavi. The President approved of my action but left the matter to my discretion. On the 5th day I accepted the unqualified apology of the Maulavi and withdrew my order of suspension. I had appointed three Mussalman lecturers to the vacancies in the staff and they all supported my action, one of them taking a special interest in making the erring Moulavi see reason.

CHAPTER VII

“Kashmir Day”

The next wave and it was more than a wave a tidal bore so to say—came a little later and from another quarter. It appeared that some central association of East-Pakistan students in Dacca had issued a fiat to the students of the various schools and colleges to observe a particular day in December 1948 as ‘Kashmir Day’ to voice the demand of Pakistan for Kashmir. I knew nothing about the matter. At about 11:30 a.m. Some first year students whom I hardly knew by face approached me in my quarters and requested that the College might be closed for the day to enable the students to take out a procession in honor of ‘Kashmir Day’ and to attend a public meeting in the Bazaar area. The first two class periods being nearly over, I expressed my surprise that they should have come with that request when the college was already in session. Why had they not informed me earlier? I enquired. I said I would allow them to celebrate the Day under the auspices of the College Union after the midday recess. It did not look well I said, that the College students should hold a meeting in the Bazaar instead of their own College.

The deputation did not seem amenable to my arguments but wanted to have their own way. At last I told them to wait for half an hour more as I would be in the College after my breakfast, which I had not till then, had. The boys left and in a few minutes I heard loud cries of “Pakistan Zindabad” and “Kashmir belongs to Pakistan” and so forth; and I could see them leave the college in a body and proceed towards the market place. I was stunned by the behavior of the students and immediately hurried to the college and found that the Lecturers were in the staff room, and that half a dozen students mostly Hindus were loitering about in the office room, while all the rest had gone. I called an emergency meeting of the staff Council to determine what to do and found that there was a general agreement that such flagrant defiance of authority could not be overlooked. After some discussion it was decided that collective punishment should be given in the shape of cancellation of 5 lectures in English of all students who were present in the ‘first two periods on that day. Only 3 or 4 days before ‘free’ and ‘half-free’ studentships and stipends had been granted on condition of good conduct and diligent studies. It was now decided to withhold these concessions for two months from those guilty of disorderly conduct on that day. With the full concurrence of the staff I wrote these orders in the order book; and with my own hand scored out the attendance of those who came within the mischief of my order. I did not then realize that much water had flowed down the rivers of India since the year 1923 when I had done a similar thing to punish a Professor in Delhi.

On the following day I called a meeting of the entire body of the students and teachers and enlarged on the duty of Alumni to their Alma Mater and on the reprehensible conduct of the students on the preceding day. At last I read out the punishment that was meted out to the law-breakers. It must be said to their credit that they listened to me with respect and attention, and made no protests. But I did not know that there were some outsiders present at the meeting who afterwards raised a hue and cry about what I had said on the occasion. I knew that the Kashmir question was a tender sore with the Muslim students of Pakistan and that my action in connection with it might easily be misunderstood. I was therefore more than sufficiently guarded in my language; still I found later that my unseen critics could get behind my guard and deal a shrewd blow at me when they chose to do so.

Before a week was out an anonymous letter appeared in the Azad of Dacca accusing me of high-handed action against the students for ventilating a national aspiration. It was followed by another two or three days later;

and yet another was published in the Ittihad edited by Mr. H. S. Suhrawardi. My colleagues pressed me to publish a contradiction and correction of some of the misstatements. At last they prevailed upon me to write a letter to the Azad, which was duly published; but it also led to the Editor's making some adverse comments upon my action in the editorial column. That offered a handle to the local Muslim League leaders to take up cudgels against me. A member of the college Governing Body who was also the Secretary of the local Muslim League made an attempt to bring up the matter before the Governing Body, but as Secretary to the governing Body I put my foot down upon the move.

Rumors began to be heard that the local members of the Legislative Council were interested in putting questions to the government on the matter; and that pressure was being brought to bear on the Minister of Education to look into it. All this left me undisturbed, for I felt that there was nothing to worry about so long as either the University or the Education Department did not intervene and there was no enquiry by either. About this time signed letter appeared in a Dacca English paper from an office bearer of the Dacca Central Students Association bearing personal testimony to certain statements that I was supposed to have made in that December meeting of which he claimed to be an eyewitness. The allegations were based upon either perversion or exaggeration of what I had actually said. Luckily a few days after a law student of Dacca who claimed to be the President of the Dacca Students Association came to see me and politely inquired what had actually taken place in connection with the 'Kashmir Day' demonstration.

I complained to him about the none-too-truthful letter of his Secretary published in the press, and then explained to him my point of view about the whole incident. He apologized for his Secretary's hasty action, and expressed his general approval of what I had done in the interest of discipline. Finally I appealed to him, if he was convinced of the rightness of my action to save me from the unwelcome attentions of the Dacca Press, supposing he had any influence over it. He promised to see the Editors and, to give him his due, there was no more Press attacks upon me. But the trouble was not yet over.

As Secretary to the Governing Body I was expected to translate into action the desire of that body to admit a few prominent Muslims of Choumuhani to its membership and to affect a gradual devolution of power from the old to the new Governing body. The President Mr. K. N. Dalal had realized the necessity of associating the Mussalman community with the administration of the College for three chief reasons. Firstly the Muslim students already predominated in numbers and the staff was also being denuded of Hindu teachers in whose place, Muslims were being appointed. In the second place, it would no longer be possible to run the College from Calcutta; and thirdly, new ways and means must be found for raising funds for the maintenance of the college; as it was no longer possible for the old President to finance the College as he had hitherto done.

Shortly before I took charge the President had consulted some important Moslem leaders of Chaumuhani and drawn up a plan of collecting a small cress or voluntary contribution on the jute, betel nut, and chili purchased in the local mart for export or local consumption. But this plan could not be successful without the willing cooperation of the local businessmen and leaders. Besides it could not be made binding on the traders without Government sanction of the scheme so it was necessary to introduce the District Magistrate into the College Governing Body and that could not be done without also making him the President.

I suggested therefore that Mr. Dalal be elected a life member of the governing Body and given the exalted position of Patron, while the District Magistrate be invited to become the President. The Governing Body was reconstituted accordingly and the new District Magistrate K. S. Shamsuddin Ahmed, whom I happened to be acquainted with from before, accepted the President ship and soon gave his approval to the scheme of raising a levy upon certain new commodities of trade. Three Muslim members were added to the governing Body under the category of guardians of students.

About this time there arose some complaints regarding the management at the Moslem hostel in charge of the Maulavi Professor of Arabic.

There was no proper supervision over the students and several ex-students and even rank outsiders lived in the Hostel, for the maintenance of which the College had to foot a fairly heavy bill every month. At the same time there was a demand by some Moslem students for accommodation in the old Hindu Hostel, which was lying, more than three-fourths empty. I felt view of the increasing admission of Moslem students to the College it would be necessary sooner or later, to accommodate at least the overflow from the Moslem Hostel in the vacant rooms of the Hindu Hostel; and considering the spirit of the times it was not unlikely that these students might make their entry by force. So in order to avoid trouble and also, I must admit to diminish the power and influence of the Maulavi Saheb who was repeatedly coming in my way I proposed that the outer one of the two barracks of the Hindu Hostel be turned over to Moslem Hostel and the old Muslim boarders in the Bazar be abolished altogether.

This proposal was acclaimed by a majority of the Mussalman students; but a minority under the influence of the Moulavi objected to the change. Objections were raised also by the Hindu families in the neighborhood to the proposed induction of Muslim students into a purely Hindu locality. Even the donors and leasers of land to the College for the construction of the Hindu Hostel represented to me bitterly that it would be a serious breach of faith of the Governing Body to convert a Hindu Hostel into a Muslim Hostel, for if they had, foreseen such a development they would not have, donated or leased their the. College. I could not deny the force of this argument altogether; but I begged them to consider everything in a new light and in a more liberal spirit. I found after some, discussion with them that their main objection was to cow-slaughter which would be performed by the students; at least as a religious observance I hoped that, given good will on both sides, this direst of all offences to Hindu sentiment might be avoided; but I felt that there must be a resolution of the Governing Body to cover the point.

In drafting the resolution for the Governing body meeting therefore I made a reservation, that out of respect for the feelings of the Hindu neighbors there should be no cow-sacrifice in the Hostel Compound. There was a good deal of objection taken to this clause in the meeting of the Governing Body by Moulavi Nurul Hue, the Secretary of the Moslem League, who sought to make a distinction between a cow-slaughter and cow-sacrifice (Kurbani). He was prepared to make a reservation forbidding ordinary cow-slaughter but certainly no Mussalman could barter or contract away his right to cow sacrifice, which was also a pious duty. To this I could only say that so far as Hindu feeling was concerned there was no difference between the two kinds of killing the cow; and that the whole object of the reservation was to avoid that injury to feeling. Upon this the Maulavi so far conceded as to give his word of honor that no cow—sacrifice would be offered but the expression cow-sacrifice should be changed to cow-slaughter. When the other Moslem members also pledged their honor, the Hindu members accepted the amendment; but this

did not satisfy the Mussalman extremists outside.

Now, it was my practice to write the minutes of a meeting of the Governing Body a day or two after the meeting and to secure the signature of the Preside afterwards, on the basis of the notes jotted by him on the margin of the agenda paper. It so happened that just after the last meeting of the Governing Body and before the minutes could be signed by the President I went on a few days leave: I left instructions with the Professor-in-charge to obtain the President's signature.

On return from leave I inquired if the needful had been done about the minutes, but the Professor concerned, regretted that it had not been done for one reason or another. A day or two later I had to open the minutes Book and was astounded to find that the resolution relating to the interdiction of cow-slaughter had been scored out by somebody line byline. The Professor-in-charge knew nothing about the matter; but then he recalled that once he had occasion to take the Minutes Book out of the steel Almirah. I also gathered from others that some of them had seen the Maulavi Saheb handle the book. Now I had no doubt in my mind as to who had done the mischief.

I called for Maulavi Saheb and asked him about it. His reply was significant. He said, "I am surprised that you suspect me".

"I had heard all about the resolution about cow-slaughter but how should I know what the minutes-book contained?" I had heard too that the Maulavi had fumed and fretted on hearing what had passed at the last meeting of the Governing Body, and that he had declared that it was an insult to Islam to agree to such a reservation.

At the next meeting of the Governing Body I brought this fact of an 'unknown' person's tampering with an important college record to the notice of the members. The President was visibly shocked and asked me if I suspected anybody. I said I did, but added that I should prefer an independent inquiry into the matter before the members came to a finding. Accordingly a Committee of three with myself as Convener was appointed to investigate the mystery and to report within a week. When this became known the Maulavi quaked in his shoes; for one of the Muslim members who generally supported the Maulavi had openly declared that if a College employee should be found to have committed the crime he should be instantly dismissed. The Maulavi therefore, made an abject surrender; his only self-defense being that he, had opened the book out of curiosity when he saw it on the Principal's table; and when he read the resolution in question he was so angered that he took up a pen and scored it out. He was now seriously repentant and begged pardon. We recommended the Maulvi for mercy, as he was temporarily deprived of his reason on account of his religious zeal. There the matter rested and I can say that Maulvi Saheb rested too, for he made no further trouble so long as I was there.

There was yet more trouble for me in the shape of a trial of strength with Moulavi Naziruzzaman, nicknamed Majhia Mia, the unelected Mayor of Choumuhani. It was none of my seeking, but once in it I followed the counsel of old Polouis and with profit too. Some students had arranged with a traveling theatre company a charity performance for the benefit of the college poor' Boys Fund. The idea was mine; but the labor was the student's, who went from shop to shop and house to house in Chaumuhani and the new District head quarters at Majjdi to sell the tickets, and raised Rs. 900 in. cash and about Rs. 300 in promise. Unfortunately I was absent, from the station during the week of the performance.

The play was staged under the auspices of the College Union and the invitations were issued over the

signature of the Social Secretary of the Union. It was therefore purely a College affair; but because I was absent when the money, was collected, the promoters made Majhia Mia the ad hoc Honorary Treasurer and deposited the money with him, for the time being. When I returned from leaves and heard about the successful benefit-night I was really pleased; and when Abdul Matin the student leader and others came to me, I congratulated them on the credit and profit they had brought to the College. I asked no question about the ticket –sale proceeds, but expected that the money would be given to me in due course. But 2 or 3 days passed without the students showing any intention of making over the collection to me; and then I was forced to put the question to them. They said that they would have delivered the bag to me, but for the fact that their account was not yet ready. Again 2 or 3 days passed and nothing was done. At length I wanted to know from them what their game was.

Then at last the cat came out of the bag—yet not the entire animal but only its tail. The students who had taken a leading part in collecting money desired that I would appoint a committee to administer the funds of the poor college boys. Such a committee had already been formed by election under the College Union; and I reminded them of the fact. But they wanted a separate committee to be recruited from amongst themselves, so that they might have a large voice in the distribution of the stipends. I realized that this demand was based on the party interests, for the group had lately lost in the elections of the College Union and now wanted to unseat the office-bearers and climb back to power themselves by distributing patronage and financial favors to their friends and supporters. I pointed out that the principle of election as provided in the Constitution could not be changed, but that room might be found on the Committee for two more members by way of cooptation. This did not satisfy them still their leader promised that a few hundreds would be made over to me on the following day. I told them that it did not look well that they should make the money they held in their hands a bargaining counter for gaining power in the College Union. Further that they must keep their word or I would be compelled to take drastic action against them.

The same or the following day I received a letter from Majhia Mea saying that the students of the College had deposited the sale proceeds of the Drama tickets with him and that as a member of the College Governing Body it was his intention to appoint a comprehensive public committee, including representatives of the students and the staff to administer the fund, he himself being the Honorary Treasurer. It was now perfectly plain that Majhia Mia who was not much noted for intelligence had been prevailed upon by a section of the students to have a rival show to that of Maulvi Sherajuddin Ahmed; the Secretary of the Finance Committee appointed, by the Governing Body for collection of trade-cess from the Bazar. There was keen rivalry between the Shiraj Mea and Majhia Mea groups; and now Majhia was resolved to strike for power over the student community, with an eye to the District Board and other elections in which he was interested. He was already a powerful man—a self appointed Daroga and Magistrate rolled in one for seizing and summarily punishing petty offenders, and even dealing with bigger cases in the Chaumuhani Bazar area, without any reference to the police or the law courts. This local Dictator was feared by all for his appearance, red eyes, harsh voice, rough-and-ready methods; and violent temper.

But I was not going to knuckle down to an intruder and trespasser simply because he was a big bully. I wrote back to remind him that the money had been collected by the College students for College students, in the name of the college, and under the authority, if not on the credit of the Principal; and although I was thankful to him for taking charge of the funds in my absence I could under no circumstances agree to his forming an independent

committee to administer the charity fund, in spite of his being a member of the college Governing Body. The members of my staff rejected with contempt the Mea's invitation to send their representatives to the Mea committee.

Thus began a long and acrimonious correspondence between the Mea Saheb, and me until I was obliged, to refer the matter to the District Magistrate for his intervention. In the meantime I received letters from several officials of Noakhali and other people inquiring if I had received the amounts, which they paid for tickets sold in my name. The District Magistrate was also the President of the College Governing Body and a well-meaning man. He first tried an amicable settlement of the dispute and spoke to Majhia Mea to make up the quarrel by handing over the money and the account books to the Principal. The Mea took time again and again under various excuses to comply with the Magistrate's direction; but in the meantime he had started giving aids to the poor students even publishing lists of the receivers names, a copy, of which, was dully pasted on the College notice-board.

I notified the students concerned to verify the correctness of the lists and to bring to my knowledge any false entry. By and by nearly a dozen students represented to me that their names were wrongly put in the list, for they had received no money; while some others said that they had never applied either. I brought this to the notice of Mea Saheb and warned him that he would be held legally responsible, even criminally responsible, for defalcation or misappropriation, as he had absolutely no right to give away college money, even in charity. This threat seemed to bring him somewhat to his senses, for he wrote to the District Magistrate that he was sorry to be over persuaded to distribute the bulk of the money amongst the needy students who had besieged him. He begged that the Principal would accept the balance of the amount and kindly absolve him of all responsibility.

At last Majhia Mea did the handsome thing by transferring to me a poor balance of some Rs. 50 along with the receipts and vouchers at a meeting of the Governing Body. At the request of the President and some members I accepted the offer and referred the accounts to an auditor for checking mainly in the interest of peace and harmony. The District-Magistrate read the Mea a homily on the wrong he had done and the bad example he had set and warned him for the future. The Mea expressed his regret for what had happened, and as if to prove the sincerity even offered to resign from the Governing Body. But nobody wanted him to do so at that time.

Moulavi Sherajuddin Ahmed to whom I have referred was generally well inclined towards me, as I think he was towards the Hindu community amongst whom he counted many intimate friends. He stood by me in several matters, chiefly in that of the assault committed by an ex-student upon Prof. S. N. Kar. The ex-student Rafiqzaman was an old timer and a ne'er-do-well fellow who had failed several times at the Intermediate Examination, and that year took his last chance. Prof. Kar had given him two warnings for trying to copy from noses before he made his report to me and I had no other alternative than to expel the candidate from the Examination hall. So he bore Prof. Kar a grudge for my disregarding his tearful entreaties to be forgiven; but I luckily escaped being manhandled by him or his friends.

When after the University Examination of 1949 the college was closed for summer, and Prof. Kar was going home and sat almost alone in a Railway Compartment at the Chaumuhani Station, this ruffian suddenly entered the compartment and struck him a few blows, luckily with his fist, and bolted. There was a hue and cry, and the culprit was noticed to run away by several College students who were at the Station. The Railway police were

informed and a statement of Prof. Kar was taken. Later the O.C. Chaumuhani and the local police took up the matter.

Prof. Kar did not like to be detained but left by the next train; but when Shiraj Mea came to know of the shameful incident he contacted the local police and moved heaven and earth to bring the offender to book. The culprit's house was searched that very night but he could not be found. He was in hiding. But Shiraj Mea did not give up the chase, although the red-haired Rafique who was a protégé of the redoubtable Majhia Mea succeeded in dodging arrest for sometime. At last Shirajmia had him arrested, hauled up before the Magistrate, and eventually released on bail.

When we returned to Chaumuhani after the vacation we found the whole official world interested in securing the conviction of the offender. But it all depended on whether Prof Kar wanted to get him convicted or not. Shiraj Mea requested me to bring my influence to bear on Prof. Kar to press the prosecution; but we took a different view of the matter. We thought and rightly that a formal conviction of the accused would only enhance the prestige of the Magistracy and the local police, but it would really do no good to the Hindus of the place. We thanked Shiraj Mea for all the trouble he had taken, but we were sorry that we could not take his advice in the matter. He was naturally aggrieved that his labors were wasted.

I used to tell the students of my College, a little pompously perhaps, that I had been sent by founders of the College to effect a silent devolution and transfer of power and responsibility from Hindu hands to: Muslim hands, very much as Lord Mountbatten had accepted the responsibility of transferring political authority from the British to the Indians along peaceful lines. I said that when the, transfer would be complete; when for example the Governing Body would consist entirely or almost entirely of Muslims, and the teaching staff would be similarly reconstituted, it would be time for me to disappear. But till then or at least as long as I was permitted to be in the College, I would fly my colors at full mast; for there were certain principles that I strove to follow, and one of them was not to bend my knee before wrong doing at least without a protest.

Following that principle could not avoid coming into clash even with Shirajmea over one or two matters affecting the interest of the college. Once he took away some bricks belonging to the College without the permission of the Professors-in-Charge during a vacation; and I wrote a stiff letter to him demanding the price. That he did not pay the price was not my Lank; but was due to the new mental and moral atmosphere created by the World War no. 2 and after.

On another occasion a misunderstanding arose between us over the payment to the College of the money collected from the Bazaar. Shirajmea would not disclose to me or even to the Governing Body the balance standing to the credit of the College in his account books, as Secretary of the College Finance Committee; and we could not get money from him hearsay according to our requirements. Yet we knew from that the collection in his hands was considerable. The Clerk working under him was a near-relation of his although Shirajmea used to complain to us about his kinsman's incompetence and even accused him of embezzlement. While the clerk repaid tile compliment by giving out that the Mia himself was in the habit of investing College money in his private business. Yet such was the toleration of one another's inequities in the Governing Body that no one cast a stone at another.

At last I was obliged to take up the stone myself and press in the Governing Body for regular audit of the

Finance Committee's accounts. The proposal was strongly opposed by Shiraj and only found lukewarm support from the others except Majhia Mea who had personal reason for pressing the demand. The President as usual hit upon a compromise by appointing the Circle Officer to do the auditing, which meant in effect that the matter was shelved indefinitely. This was the last meeting of the Governing Body attended by me, for in a few days more I submitted my resignation.

The direct cause of that drastic step was not anything either done or not done by the Governing Body, but the way in which the Education Department interfered with the internal administration of the college. The Press propaganda and political vendetta against me over what I did on the 'Kashmir Day' 10 months before had at last moved the authorities of the Education Department at Dacca. But the movement took curiously devious course. It was the practice of the Government to pay the D. A. of the College staff, including the menial staff, in one lump in the beginning of each financial year. But in 1949 the money had not been received by us up to August; while I had information that the neighboring Colleges like Feni College and Comilla College had had their quotas long since. I was puzzled at the delay, letters of enquiry as usual electing no reply. Therefore I instructed a Lecturer who was going to Dacca to enquire in the Education Office why the D. A. was being withheld. In a few days he came back with news that reminded me of the wonderful dead body in Mr. Jingle's story in Dickens that had been sucked into the water pipe and stopped the town pump! My colleague reported that with much difficulty he had gathered the secret information that the D. A. of the College had been detained on account of my action regarding the historic 'Kashmir Day' nearly a year ago. At first I was not inclined to believe him; but when he proceeded to give me details of how wormed out the great secret, I marvelled at the methods of Pakistan Secretariat but believed the story. I saw that the days of my service in the College were numbered and I said as much to my informant.

In a week I received a letter from the D.P.I.'s Office intimating that the D.A. of my College had been suspended on account of the punishment given to the "Muslim students" for participation in the Kashmir Day celebration of previous December. But the case was not yet hopeless, for the Government decision might be reconsidered if D.P.I.'s office was satisfied that the order had been cancelled and any fine collected from the students refunded. As a loyal subject of Pakistan, I immediately passed an order vacating my old order in supposed appreciation of the students' behavior and directed the students whose 'freeships' etc. had been withheld to apply for refund of the fees already paid by them. I informed the D.P.I.'s office of my immediate and complete compliance with the official requirement, as we could not afford to lose the D. A. of the employees, adding only that it would not perhaps have been amiss if the D. P. I. had made a reference to me before coming to such a momentous decision. The only point I did not mention was that vacating my old order I had also decided to vacate my chair.

The very next day I called on the D. M. and showed him the official letter, at which he expressed unfeigned surprise. I informed him that I was going to resign with the closing of the college for the autumn vacation, which was only a week away, as it was impossible for me to adjust myself to the changed atmosphere of the country as reflected in the Government action. The D. M. deeply regretted my decision and pressed me to carry on for one session more, so that the senior most member of the staff might have sufficient training to take my place. But I regretted my inability to change my decision.

I was afraid, in view of this sudden revelation of the official mind that I might be implicated in financial

liabilities and others trouble if I continued in office. I had the spending of many thousand rupees by my hands yearly, as Secretary of the College, and aspersions had already been cast upon me in the course of Majhia Mia's correspondence on the ground, of my supposed slackness in realizing college dues and in preventing loss of books from the College library. To speak the truth, I felt afraid for the first time in two years.

I had taken the precaution of having the accounts of the audited by a certified Auditor up to the middle of the current year. Now I immediately got the rest of the account audited by the Senior Lecturer in Commerce and certified 'correct' by him. I had the entire stock of furniture and library books taken by the Professor whom I had decided to make over my charge to. Then I made over charge of the cash and the key of the safe to the very man whom I had taken on to the staff a little over a year ago as Lecturer in Bengali, Moulavi T. Hussain, whom I had raised step by step, not solely out of love for him but also with the political object of checkmating the claims of the senior-most man, even Maulavi Shamsul Huq, the Professor of Arabic, who had crossed my path so often and so gratuitously.

That very afternoon I had a group-photo, taken of the entire staff, the students wondering why it was done in such a hurry. Afterwards I addressed a meeting of the staff and students and made a long speech reiterating the high principles I love to enunciate and hinting at the possibility of our never meeting again. But to throw them of the scent at, the same time I referred to my advancing age and none too-dependable health as a plausible cause. I still concealed the secret of my intended resignations order not to prejudice the admission of new students, which had been going on for the last few days and which would continue for sometime more after the reopening of the college.

When the students had left and the charge of the college had been formally made over to T. Hussain, I disclosed over a cup of tea with the staff that I was going to resign on the following day. Three or four of my colleagues already knew of my intention; a few more had suspected that something important was around the corner; while the clerk and menials were entirely taken by surprise. The servants, poor simple men, Hindu and Mussalman, burst into tears and implored me to stay. My colleagues came, in a body on the following morning to beg me to stay for at least half a session more; and T. Hussain appeared to be most distressed about his future, for under a new Principal he might not enjoy the privileges that I extended to him. In private he begged for a testimonial, which I supplied him later. I did not see how I could leave a note on record in his favor as he desired; but privately I had already recommended him to the President to succeed me. He was profuse in his acknowledgements of indebtedness to me and I was inclined to accept most of his professions at their face value, a blunder that I discovered in six months.

I might have realized my salary to the end of that month—barely five days being left to complete September—without any question from anybody or without a qualm of my own conscience knowing full well that I would not return after the vacation. But in view of the insufficiency of funds at my disposal on that date I went equal shares with the rest, not taking a shell more for the month of September. For this piece of socialism and self-abnegation I had to pay dearly, as the sequel would show.

To make a long and painful story short, T. H. kept me from receiving my due of one month's salary, on various excuses for the first few months; and since he was confirmed as Principal of the College he kept me on pure silence diet for full two years, until I was forced to send a lawyer's notice to the President of the Governing Body. I

learnt later that the Governing Body had adopted a resolution to the effect that the former Principal's dues be paid without delay; but T. Hussain as Secretary deliberately refrained from taking action upon the resolution, probably thinking that it would not be easy for me to execute my decree upon the College even if I obtained a decree in a court of law in Pakistan.

In January 1952, I was forced to go to Chaumuhani to claim my arrears personally. Even then I had to cross a few hurdles before, thanks to the good offices of Moulavi Shirajuddin Ahmed, I received the amount. Even then T. Hussain was as soft-spoken and unctuous as ever and expressed his joy at seeing me. Only he did not pay me the supreme compliment of saying that he had purposely held back my dues in order to have the pleasure of seeing me again!

As for the Muslim community of Noakhali who have heard so much blatant criticism about me in connection with the historic 'Kashmir Day' incident, the tenor of which criticism has been that I am not friendly to Muslim interests, I wonder how much they know about the friendly solicitude with which I really protected their interests, and on one occasion suppressed a case of serious misconduct of a number of Muslim students living in the new Hostel almost under my nose. Some half dozen hostellers were guilty of importing a prostitute from the local cinema house and of having a gala night in the Hostel premises. They had bribed the Hostel night watchman and his son to keep guard around the Hostel premises. The whole thing was so outrageously scandalous that the secret leaked out, and the Hostel Superintendent T. Hussain brought it to my knowledge. To give Hussain his due, he gave me yeoman's service in investigating the matter and finding out the offenders. But when it was found that one of his relatives or favorites was involved he was tempted to put on a lenient face over the affair; and once he even tried unfairly to minimize his favorite's guilt. This gave offence to the Hostellers as a body and their friends outside who demanded evenhanded justice for all. Two members of the governing body saw me and insisted upon my inflicting exemplary punishment upon all the offenders without distinction.

I formed a Committee of three including Hussain to go into the evidence again and come to a finding. The crime of four appeared to be graver than that of the other two. In the interest of the fair name of the college in general, and of the Muslim Community in particular, I managed the whole affair as quietly as possible, by asking the four to take their transfers from the college, and by turning out the other two from the Hostel and withdrawing the fee concessions they enjoyed.

As there were some second year students among the four expelled from the college, they were in despair of being admitted elsewhere' so shortly before the University Examinations. I went to the length of requesting the Principals of the two neighboring Colleges who were my personal friends to admit the boys; and they kindly acceded to my request. Nothing was put on record to testify to the shameful conduct of the students concerned, nor to reflect adversely on the community to which they belonged. What does the Education Dept. acting on anonymous complaints know about the matter, and what does the public of the Noakhali District so critical of the Principal know either? I am constrained to say that Pakistan does not seem to know her friends always!

PART VI

Post Script

CHAPTER I

Kazirkhil Gandhi Ashram

Mahatma Gandhi had founded several Ashrams for the upliftment of the villagers in various parts of the Noakhali District in the course of his humanitarian labors after the great communal flare-up. Kazirkhil camp was right in the heart of the worst affected Ramganj area. The site had been chosen by Mahatma Gandhi as it was formerly the home of the richest Hindu family of the area, the Pandits of Kazirkhil. It was a vast homestead consisting of several pucca buildings and a large number of strongly build corrugated iron cottages with pucca plinths. In the front half of the place we saw only the pucca buildings, bearing marks of fire upon them, the thatched cottages having all disappeared by being burnt to ashes.

Only in the back portion of the house a few large C. I. sheet cottages were still standing in rows, looking more like a market place than a residential place. A number of ghastly murders had occurred here in October 1946, and the whole house had been gutted. The surviving members of the family had all run away, leaving, as we were told, a vast mass of burning and half burnt debris, made of household materials and human bodies. The place was shunned by Hindus and Mussalmans alike as an accursed spot; and even when Mahatma Gandhi arrived many skeletons were lying about.

It was characteristic of the Mahatma that he selected this deserted place as the site for his camp. I have heard that it took him and his followers several days to remove the debris, burn the skeletons, and clean up the filth. Then a number of bamboo and straw cottages were built by the Ashramites for their various requirements. It was in the rainy season of 1948 that I and my colleagues of the Chowmuhani College paid a visit to this place. We came in a large boat through an endless network of canals and after several hours reached the ghat of the Ashram. I wondered how very different must have been the relations between the two communities that it was possible for a wealthy Hindu family of businessmen to live with happiness and security in a place, which was every way surrounded by Mussalmans.

Sri Satish Chandra Das Gupta was mainly in charge of the Gandhi Ashrams of Noakhali, but he was absent when we visited Kazirkhil. Sri Charu Chandra Chaudhury was then in charge and he received us with open arms. In a few hours' contact with him and his coworkers I could sense the stuff they were made of. Charu Babu said that he had been associated with Mahatmaji for a long time and we could see how he had caught the spirit of the Master. Utterly unselfish, fearless, quiet, stern in enforcing discipline, and unsectarian, he was worthy lieutenant to Sri Das Gupta. It was inevitable that such men should have had their influence upon the people they came in contact with, in spite of all the impediments that communal minded leaders of the Moslem League constantly threw in their way. Charu Babu told us that in the beginning they had a number of Musalman boys and girls attending the Ashram school for carding and spinning of cotton and weaving chattai and baskets. They were learning carpentry and other skilled work taught there, but he said with regret that the number was gradually declining thanks to the anti-Gandhi propaganda of the other community. Only one little girl was pointed out to us, and she was an orphan, as the sole representative of Musalman womenfolk. Among the boys there were still a few Mussalmans. It was said that some

old persons were still attached to the Ashram but that they dare not openly show their sympathy. Sometimes they come to the Ashram under cover of darkness.

There were a fair number of Hindu boys and girls in the Ashram, mostly orphans. They gave us a demonstration of their basic system lessons and exercises, songs and prayers. We were all treated to the Ashram breakfast which was very simple but not without nutritive value. Charu Babu explained to us the value of sprouting Moong, which was used with an equal quantity of rice in cooking bhat. One vegetable soup and one fish curry, there was no fish served on the day we were there, and one sweet and sour preparation completed the menu. Charu Babu explained that since the price of rice was very high, it was economical to have moong and rice in equal portions besides half sprouted moong was rich in vitamins and was laxative too. We ate a full belly in spite of the novelty of the food.

We saw the vegetable gardens all manured in a scientific way, papua and Ladies' fingers being most prominent in that season. There were large patches of banana cultivation and we saw several fishponds. Charu Babu told us that over and above their supplying the requirements of the Ashram, the fish and vegetables sold by them fetched a good income. To these were to be added the production of their handlooms and smithy and carpenter shops, not to mention the baskets and stools made of bamboos, grass leaves, and cane.

Besides the inmates of the Ashram a number of hired laborers were at work in different capacities; and most of them were Mussalmans. There were one or two apparatuses of Satish Babu's designing for filtration of drinking water, and his stock of Biochemical medicines that were given free to all who called for them. Medical help was one of the attractions of the Ashram that the hostile propaganda could not neutralize; for quite large number of men and women called daily for the medicines. Not content with civil propaganda, the enemies used violent methods as well against the Ashramites. The Ashram cycle peon who carried money, and letters to and from different places in the neighborhood was waylaid robbed of his cycle and money, and left in a dazed condition by the wayside some days before. This peon too had some of the Ashram spirit in him, for when neighboring people offered to take him to their house or give him food and drink, he refused all service and begged the would-be good Samaritans to do him the kindness of informing the Thana of what had happened. He remained the whole day lying on the ground, too weak to walk; and only when the Police came in the evening and took his Ejahar and after the neighbors had promised to recover the bicycle that he consented to be taken to the Ashram.

The attitude of the Police and the magistracy was sufficiently indicated by the several criminal cases in which the principal workers of the Ashram were involved Charu Babu and some others were arrested for alleged concealing of rusted sword blades and parts of firearms in the mud-plinth of one of the Ashram cottages! Sardar Jiwan Singh, the man-mountain, at least the largest man ever seen by me, a man absolutely without fear and long since broken by Mahatma Gandhi to the ways of non-violence, a man practically free from anger and hate, one of the central pillars of the Mahatma's Noakhali Mission of relief, was involved in a case of attempted dishonor of a refugee woman

The Sardar was kept in Hajat or under police surveillance for over a year, away from his Ashram and even in that condition he ran a school for boys and girls and taught them to read and write English, Urdu, and Arabic. The police inquiry in these cases was never completed and remand after remand was obtained by the Prosecution; and

even though Charu Babu and some others were granted bails, no bail was granted to Jiwan Singh. But to give the Noakhali Magistrate his due, Sardar Jewan Singh was allowed to live outside the Hajat in Noakhali town on his assuring the Court that he would not abscond. In short the Pakistan Govt. wanted to get rid of these men, but did not know how to do so.

I was at Choumuhahi when the news of Mahatma Gandhi's assassination were received over the radio. Hindus and Mussalmans were equally shocked by the news. Everybody inquired who had done the deed? When it was known on the following day that the murderer was a Hindu, there was a great sign of relief among the Mussalmans; but the prevailing hatred of the Hindus seemed to rise a degree higher. How could the Hindus excuse Mahatma who had done so much for the Mussalmans in Calcutta and Delhi? This was a common sentiment among them, but they were sincerely sorry for the Mahatma's death.

Apart from the largely attended condolence meeting in the college, there were several public meetings of Hindus and Mussalmans in the Bazar area. One of these convened jointly by the Congress and the Muslim League was mammoth gathering of not less than 30,000 people. Several Mussalman spoke in moving terms about the departed soul, and I heard it remarked that Chaumuhani had never seen such a gathering except when the Mahatma himself addressed the public in that very place three years before.

But the love for the Mahatma hardly included anybody else in that charitable feeling; for when the trial of Godse was taking time to be initiated as an elaborate police investigation was a foot; I heard it said by several educated Mussalmans that the government of India had no intention of punishing the murderer as Gandhi had been murdered for the fault of loving Mussalmans!

CHAPTER II

Playing with fire.

In the winter of 1948-49 the students specially invited me and the Hindu members of my staff to celebration of the Prophets' Birthday in the College Common room. The Head Moulavi of the Madrassa presided and there was a large gathering of Moulavis, and their pupils as well as of students of the college and outside people. I was introduced to the President and given a chair just behind him. Some recitations from the Holy Quo having been gone through and some Qawwalis sung, a few students read religious poems and essays of their composition. Speeches came next and a few Moulavis spoke on religion generally rally and On Islam In particular, stressing some common points between the different religions. One speaker went to the length of saying that Islam counted Ram and Krishna among the Prophets of God, for the last Prophet had declared that God has sent His Prophets to all the nations of the world; and that there have been many thousands of prophets before Mahammed. The Hindus therefore could under no circumstances be called Kafirs which meant unbelievers in godhead. I felt that this novel note was perhaps due to, and a distant echo of Mahatma Gandhi's Prayer meetings in Noakhali.

It was now the President's turn to speak; but before, he spoke he did me the honor of inviting me to say a few words. I had not come prepared to speak; no withstanding I stood up and addressed the Chair in Urdu which seemed to create a mild flutter in the audience who all turned their eyes upon me. Although my Urdu was not very firm, yet I believed I could get away with a Urdu speech before an audience of Bengales Mussalmans especially of

the countryside. But on second thought I preferred to speak in Bengali as the previous speakers had done.

I began on a querulous note to say that coming to a meeting to celebrate the Prophet's birthday, I, a close neighbor of Mussalmans from my birth found that I did not know about the Prophet of Islam a quarter of what I knew about the founder of Christianity. For this lamentable ignorance of a non-Mussalman living among Mussalmans, I could not but make the latter, especially the Maulavis and Moulanas, mainly responsible. My charge was that they did not give us even a fraction of the intellectual opportunity that the Christian Missionaries did of knowing about their religion and its Founder. Perhaps they attached more importance to actual conversion than to dissemination of knowledge. The professional Moulana had, I said, a little too much of the appearance of the spider in the center of his web, and here I looked quixotically at the Chairman and said that the flies might be excused for their shyness to approach too near. I was skating on thin ice, I knew; so I treaded cautiously. But when I found that my daring smile had produced a smile in my hearers. I felt assured and went on to criticize then traditional methods of preaching as if time has been at a stand still since the Middle Ages.

I gathered courage as I went on; and compared the intellectual standard of a Modern European church sermon with that of a modern Indian or Pakistan Mosque discourse. In the Christian world the Clergyman and missionaries have to keep abreast of the progress in science and philosophy to maintain their position by here in the East, the crude and simple arguments of the early and medieval ages seemed to hold their ground still. I said, taking courage in both hands that if a Christian preacher of today used arguments such as were used by the Moulavis who had spoken before me to prove the existence of a Greater and His Governance of the universe by the law of His Will the preacher would have had empty pews before him by the time he finished his discourse.

I had previously taken precaution of begging the indulgence of the Chair and the audience for speaking my mind as a friend, and even more as a student of history and advocate of freedom of thought and speech: and my audience had nodded in approval. I cited the mechanistic argument in favor of special creation as one no longer presentable to a modern educated audience however useful it might have been in primitive times. The modern Christian preacher no longer enlarges on the miracles of the prophet, but is compelled to 'soft-pedal' on the story of Prophet Samuel and the Sun. Primitive ignorance was bound to cling to primitive wisdom or intuition as base metals encrust gold in the mine. The work of the modern mind is to smelt the ore in the crucible of criticism.

I said that the cause of Religion was not so poor against that of materialism that its advocates must needs appear in the field with poor bows and arrows; while their opponents were armed with tanks, armored cars, and bombers. Then I pitted the ancient Mussalman of history against his modern counterpart. It was pity I said; that the creators of history had degenerated into slaves of history. There was no reason why the Mussalmans should for all time think in terms of sixth and seventh century Arabia and Mesopotamia, since the Prophet of Islam lived and taught suffered and fought in the one and his first great disciples performed miracles of conquest in the other. Why should the Mussalmans suffer, I asked, from nostalgia for the camels, date trees, wells and watermelons of Arabia, and consider Arabia and Syria their true home while the brave prophet taught them to look upon the whole world as theirs?

The essence of Islam, I submitted, was not in the peculiar habits and customs of a certain people in a certain epoch of history; nor in the peculiar geographical disposition of the land which that people inhabited; but it lay in

the special message that the Prophet gave to the world; the new way of looking at men and things and the new relationship he sought, to establish between man and God. All this was above time and geographical limitation; and all this constituted the truth of Islam; and like all great truths it was dynamic and could not have been caught forever in the etymological and grammatical matrix of the Arabic language; nor its interpretation stereotyped forever. With the lapse of time and progress of knowledge the underlying truth of the texts of the Quaran demanded newer interpretation, because like life truth also has its evolution.

I noticed from the flitting shadows on the faces, of my audience that from the first impulse of angry dissent and protest they had come to a state of mystified asphyxia. Little slips of paper were passed from certain Maulanas in the audience to the President; but it did not also escape my notice that the President rolled them into little balls after looking at them and threw them away. He simply glanced at the objectors menacingly, to convey that the speaker might be allowed to go on.

Now I came to matters nearer home I referred to the universal appeal of Islam, its world mission, and its mighty courage. By way of contrast I cited the recent demand of the Indian Mussalmans for a separate home and a separate State where they might practice their religion with freedom and safety and live at peace amongst themselves in other words the demand for Pakistan. Was Islam down and out, I asked, and were the Mussalmans on the defensive? There was an electric effect on the audience, everybody looking at me like a tiger before springing on his prey. My Hindu friends were now pulling the tail of my shirt—even the bravest among them a member of the Forward Block and an ex-internee. But I went on undeterred. How many were they, I inquired, who founded the first religious colonies in India—in Ajmer, near Delhi, in Sarhind, in Deoband, in Janupur or in distant Sylhet? Did they require a special protection of the Emperors of Delhi or they Sultans of Gour from there: numerous Hindu neighbors? At this point some people cried that that was a different position. I agreed that they were a different proposition, since they chose to live among aliens as friends and brothers, and thereby to exercise their moral and religious influence over them, and become large centers of culture, light, and religion. I went on to describe the results of their wise policy of living side by side with the Hindus.

Apart from the countless conversions on a comparatively high level they made for Islam, the associations of the two cultures produced wonderful things in every field of art, culture, literature, and social life. The resultant Indian architecture, Indian painting, Indian gardening, Indian classical music, Urdu and Hindi poetry are achievements of which both Hindus and Mussalmans were equally proud. Now the cry was for separatism-separate electorate, separate language, separate religion and separate state. Now the cry was to 'go back' to Urdu and Arabic script. The idea of going back in these respects is historically incorrect; because Bengali was never written in Arabic script. But were we to understand that the policy now was to go back instead of to go forward? And strange, it was claimed that this demand was for the greater glory of Islam! I asked my audience to ponder deeply whether it was not more in the interest of the material comforts of life-on the principle of safety first! For what could hope to produce culturally by this policy of separatism, to with the achievements of corrupt Bengali language as many were to create in East I songs sung at that very them moved them more the forced Urdu Gazals or the spontaneous Bengali hymns? Look at history, I said, was there a single example of a great literary production in language done by a Bengali Hindu Mussalman, which was not surpassed by another work in Bengali done by a Hindu or

Mussalman? I said I might ask the same question on an all-India level and expect the same answer. Has an Indian Mussalman nurtured in the of Syria or Persia ever produced anything in the Persian or even Urdu language, not even excepting Ghalib or Isbal, which has not been matched by another Mussalman nurtured in the composite culture of India in the common Hindi language, as by Amir Khusra-the father of Urdu and Indo-Persian Malik Mohammad Jaisi, the poet of Padmavat? If the early Mussalmans had followed the policy of exclusiveness in the field of propagation of Islam, probably there would not have been enough Mussalmans in Noakhali that day to celebrate the Prophet's Birth', I said.

When I sat down, I realized the enormity of my performance. I had heard the lion in his own den, so to say; and like Damisal in the Bible, come away unscathed! The President expressed thanks for my frank speech, but he could not agree with me on many points. He said that I represented the wrong European view about Islam and Mussalman civilization. I had he said, formed my opinions mostly from the books of European writers. But nobody could form a correct judgment about Islamic religion or civilization unless he had read the original Arabic texts. By that test of course, I was altogether out of court. But Moulana saheb was nice. He complimented me on my fearless expression of opinion according to my light, and incidentally turned the compliment upon himself by adding that Islam was not afraid of criticism, rather it welcomed criticism, if it was well meant. He shook hands with me and invited me to visit his Madrassa, which I did a few days later, and was cordially received by Mulana Saheb and his colleagues and treated with the hospitality due to a guest of honor. I was pleasantly surprised to find that really learned men even among Mussalmans were not nearly as fanatical and dogmatic as those that had only a superficial Knowledge. My friends told me that the effect of my speech would have been very different if the Maulana Saheb had not been there to preside over the meeting. I thought that very likely. The power a leader in a fanatical society must be great indeed!

CHAPTER III

1946 and 1950.

During 1946 the year of the great Calcutta killing I was mostly at Alwar but my family was in Calcutta. I heard afterwards from my children how they were witnesses, from the balcony of their house, to the gruesome spectacle of one poor Mussalman, who had hidden himself for days in latrine inside a market being ferreted out and beaten to death like a dog on the road, and how the dead body was thrust into a manhole of the street sewer! The murderers were in the main mild Bengali Hindus who had suddenly lost their heads.

In October of the same year happened the holocaust of Noakhali. In Calcutta the looting and killing, however they originated, had in them the saving quality, I would not call it grace, of mutuality, which in my opinion, prevented the orgy, however deplorable, from sinking into utter diabolism that the Noakhali affair was and had been planned to be. Mahatma Gandhi realized this essential difference between the two cases and therefore he made Noakhali the principal center on his healing mission.

Noakhali Disturbance.

Now Noakhali is not very far from my home, in fact just across a river, but a river 20 miles broad. The

stories of the atrocities came to my people over the water on the lips of traders, travelers, and boatmen. My hometown and the surrounding areas, it was subsequently learnt, had also been included in the Noakhali plan of action; but later developments prevented that part of the plan from being translated into a fact. Yet the people of my place felt some repercussion of the Noakhali events. Some local bad characters were known to have crossed over to join the fray in the hope of loot and women. The island of Dakshin Shahabazpur became the main exit route of abductors of women and their victims to distant parts of the country, when the Isaksham and Chandpur ways of escape were guarded by the police. The Island came to be known as a secret hiding place for many of these unfortunate women a few of whom were rescued and some eventually absorbed in the local population, the bulk being passed on further west.

1950

But a specimen of the fate that the Hindus had escaped in 1946 was presented to them in the brief flare-up of February-March, 1950. Vague rumors of Mussalmans being killed in West Bengal and about Mulavi Fazlul Huq (may his shadow never grow less!) and his son-in-law having been murdered in Calcutta reached the place via Barisal, with the speedy result that the lives and property of the Hindus of a vast area became endangered. About a score of steamer-passengers including an entire family of seven, barring one providential exception, were hacked to pieces or stabbed and thrown into the river near the Ilsa Ghat steamer station. The markets and collection offices of several Hindu Zamindars were looted and burnt; and some of inmates done to death; several travelers were waylaid and wounded or killed to the South of the island; and the pilgrims to a well-known shrine of Shiva on the occasion of the Shiva Ratri festival were attacked, looted, abducted, and wounded.

That the Municipal area of our little town escaped the disaster was mainly due to the alertness, strong sense of duty, and humanity of the S D O, a Mussalman officer Mr. N.I. Khan. The panic produced in the minds of the Hindu population by the cries Allah-ho-Akbar shouted by thousands about a mile from the town can be better imagined than described. My eighty-year old mother and a son of mine, as well as my cousins and their families, were still there, I having left the place by chance a few weeks before.

I learnt afterwards that our house had become a refuge of scores of cowering villagers and other neighbors, not because it was a stronghold in any sense but because it was close to the police station. Hundreds of panicky Hindus took shelter in the Thana itself, and one night the panic was so great that even my old mother had to be carried there on the shoulders of my son. Perhaps on the third night a funny incident took place. Even the blind events of history seem sometimes to betray an unconscious humor. A new rumor had been put round, perhaps it was the creation of people's guilty conscience or heated imagination, that a large number of Sikhs had landed on the island at some point and were advancing towards the town laying in waste the homes of the Mussalmans as they came along, and cutting up whatever they found before them, and that the Ansars had marched out to hold them. The S. D. O. being out of the station, the second officer was in charge, and it appears that he readily swallowed this story of Sikhs. He quickly had consultation with the Thana Officer and the two made an estimate of the available police force, which was not much. It was therefore decided to hand out rifles to the town Ansars, and to the danger siren was sounded to summon the Ansars to the armory. A number of rifles were issued and the Ansars were sent out in

different directions, while the police guarded the roads to the town.

This sensational story about Sikhs, which according to some had been spread with a design to cause the destruction of the Hindus, had a strange boomerang effect on the Mussalmans themselves. They were now in a panic in no way less frantic than the prevailing panic of the Hindus. The officials and other educated Mussalmans were the worst effected it is said that they flocked with their families to the few pucca Government buildings; not a few climbing to the roof of the S.D.O.'s bungalow; and some of the old residents almost with tears in their eyes entreated their Hindu neighbors to give them protection or shelter!

Those without families concealed, themselves in the betel-nut plantations, fruit gardens, and jungles in the vicinity of the town. They told me a funny story of two refugees from the imaginary Sikhs concealing themselves in the Khal passing through the town and staying there nearly the whole night, with their heads just above the water, totally ignorant that the 'All clear' signal had long since been given.

The S. D. O. returned to headquarters at about 1 a.m. and saw the situation that had developed in his absence. He reprimanded the second officer and his advisers for their gullibility and lack of nerves. "How did you believe the story of the Sikhs? Do you think they dropped from the sky?"; he said and was too disgusted to enjoy the hearty laugh to which he was entitled. The refugees soon went back to their places and as the story goes, many who had taken shelter, in the woods and jungles had their fine Muslim Panjabees torn by the thorns of the cane-bushes or their pajamas soiled by the damp earth. But the S. D. O. realized that the arming of the Ansars in that hour of danger was fraught with more dangerous possibilities, and quickly sent the police to summon them back to surrender their arms.

After this began the stampede of the Hindus for escape to West Bengal, the like of which had never been even dreamt of before. The motor-launches and country boats made their fortune by charging extortionate fares from the panicky migrants the coolies charging Rs. 5 to Rs. 15 for a single load. The congestion of passengers at the Barisal Steamer Station was at one time 5000 people, waiting for days and weeks to purchase their tickets. The half-a-mile long queues for purchasing tickets at many times the normal fare; the herding of the passengers worse than like cattle on the decks of the steamers; the inhuman behavior of the lascars; the horrors of transshipment at the Khulna Railway station; the search at the border—all these became more or less the normal experience of the traveling public for months and months.

Although I have been spared these experiences at their worst, yet I have had sufficient acquaintance with the principal features of the picture in the course of my many journeys between home and Calcutta, until the requisition of my borne and the clamping down of the Passport-cum-Visa system almost put an end to my agony.

To return to my mother and my son who had to bear the brunt of the 1950 episode. With their best efforts to hasten their Journey to Calcutta, they reached there about the middle of April, after having had to wait at Barisal for four days for their steamer tickets, and spending Rs. 125 for the journey in place of Rs. 20 normally required, Rs. 15 having had to be paid to the Lascars of the Khulna Express steamer for the privilege of obtaining bare sitting space for my aged mother in a corner of the area reserved for them!

CHAPTER IV

Beawar Revisited

Twelve years after my coming away from Beawar under circumstances described in a previous chapter, I happened to revisit the town in the summer of 1957 at the repeated request of some of my old friends: The occasion of which they made excuse to call me publicly was a session of the District Youth Conference convened in connection with the bigger Ajmer Merwara Political Conference. That Conference was held in view of the big administrative organization of Rajasthan as a single political state, entailing thereby the abolition of Ajmer-Merwara as a centrally administered separate unit. The political Conference was an important event from many points of view. For the first time in the long history of Rajputana the Jagirdars (now expropriated) stood on the same level as the cultivators and deliberated over common problems and interests, it marked on one hand the termination of the historic Feudal System in one of its leading strongholds in India. On another hand the mill-owners and big industrialists sat with the representatives of Labor and Leaders of Trade Unions including Communists and Sàcialista whom they shunned as poison before. The President of the Conference was my old friend Shri M.B. L. Bhargava, M. P., the veteran Congress Leader of Beawar. Several ministers and deputy ministers including the Chief Minister Sri Mohanlal Sukhadia graced the session by their presence and expression of views. Great enthusiasm prevailed amongst the delegates who came from every part of the district and their chief demand was the rehabilitation of Beawar as a new District Headquarters of a Zila. Opposition from certain quarters of the city of Ajmer was of course anticipated but it appeared from the observations of the Chief Minister, although he was non-committal that the local demand might not go unheeded. All arrangements for the holding of the conference, accommodation and entertainment of the delegates and similar matters were principally in the hands of Sri Chiman Singh Lodha, the late Chairman of the Municipal Board and the maker of the new Beawar.

It was a pleasant surprise for me to be rushed straight into the Conference pandal from the Railway Station. It was the first day of the Conference, and the Youth Conference of which I was the President elect was already in session. I was about an hour late in arriving and the Deputy Minister for Education who was present was filling my place as a stopgap. He immediately vacated the Presidential seat on my arrival and personally conducted me to it. There was a great stir among the audience most of whom stood up and my name went from the lips of those who recognized me. Of the grown-up people I recognized a good many here and there and exchanged smiles and salutation with them. But among the younger section and they formed the bulk of the audience and many had come from the moffusil, I hardly found any whom I knew. It was but natural, more than a decade having elapsed since I had left the place; still I could notice that many of the young people had been put wise about me and they gazed at me with evident interest. On the dais however there was a sprinkling of young men whom I easily recognized as my old students now raised to the position of responsible citizens. Chief among them Seth Mukunddasji Rathi, Managing Director of Krishna Mills who functioned as Chairman of the Reception Committee. Among the elderly persons I was most warmly received and garlanded by my would-be host Dr. A. M. Gupta and the ruling spirit of the entire show Sri Chimman Singh. Sri Saheb Chand Surana had gone to the station with a batch of volunteers to receive me and was the first to greet me on arrival.

The business part of my presidency at the Conference that day was largely done by my friends and I had a

good excuse for asking them do so. I knew nothing about the questions to be discussed or about the resolutions to be moved. As to the object and purpose of the Youth Conference itself I had the haziest of ideas, all my information about the business being confined to a couple of telegrams from the organizers. The brief agenda that was shown me did not make me much wiser.

From the moment I got down from the train I was confronted with so many signs of change and improvement in the station itself and on the road I drove along, specially at the principal entrance of the town, the Chang Gate—that I fancied some wizard's wand had passed over the place since I had left it. A good deal I could put down to the spirit of Independence but not everything. I looked for an individual fairy band—a guardian angel so to say.

Coming to the pandal and hearing the huzza, running the gauntlet of garlanding and hand-shakes I felt as if I had resumed my union with Beawar at the very point I brake off 12 years ago After that evening of farewell, this morning of welcome the intervening years being but a night's dream. I could not but feel that I occupied the same place in the public heart of Beawar that I did formerly. In the first address I delivered at the Conference I was mainly reminiscent and sentimental, the more easily so as the welcome speech of Lodhaji had ranged over the old ground and revived my memories. It did not take me long to see that the real object of my Beawar friends in inviting an obscure and retired man like me to preside over a youth conference about the scope and utility of which I had some misgiving was to make me visit Beawar again without fail. The season was unfavorable to my undertaking a long journey in Upper India in the middle of June, but I have reason to think that my friends were pretty sure about my own eagerness to see them again. So the mutually wished for reunion at last became a reality. My friends were so very eager to detain me, and personally I was so charmed with the place and the companionship it offered that I actually stayed four weeks where my original plan was to stay at most two weeks. I was perfectly at home at Dr. Gupta's House and lived there indeed, as the head of the family. The younger children specially so endeared themselves to me that they became my day and night companions and it was so sad to part from them at last.

I was pleased with Beawar in almost every respect. The old college has been espoused by the State and is now named S. D. Govt. College, Beawar, and teaches up to the M. A. standard in several subject The old school is now a Government High School Only the old Sanskrit Pathsala still remains under the old management, but hi a much improved condition. The old Jam Gurukul has become a Higher Secondary School under Govt. management. The Society Girls' School is now a Government, High School. The Mahommadali High School is still has been raised to the status of a multipurpose school with extensive buildings under the name of Patel Multipurpose. High School. The old cantonment side, hitherto a desolate site is now a compact, closely built area comprising the new Hospital and the Maternity Home and numerous staff quarters. In place of the one old Municipal Garden now known as Subhas Garden there are now 8 parks small and medium scattered over the whole municipal town and fairly well kept. The chronic water scarcity has been remedied by adding to the old Jalia Waterworks the new extensive system of wells dug over against the dam of Makrera Lake, the water of which is going to be pumped and stored in a big reservoir built half-way up the Mata Doongri Hill so as to make it available to the tallest buildings in the town. The roads of the town have been widened in some cases, spread with pitch in many and cemented in the rest. The old town-walls have been pierced in places to make new roads or to extend old ones. The old Chang Gate has now

become a historic relic with two broad openings one on either side, for ingress and outlet of pedestrians and wheeled traffic. The ancient Dixon Chhatri in the center of the town has been surmounted without touching the original structure by a beautiful clock tower named Vithal Tower after the Late Seth Vithaldasji Rathi. The blank spaces on the roadside have disappeared, giving rise to new buildings of a modern style and adding to the beauty of the city. The standard of living of the population has gone up. Some rich men, the Rathis for example, have richly and beautifully renovated their old residential buildings, so that sitting inside some of the new Bear buildings one can enjoy the most up-to-date amenities of cities like Bombay, Calcutta or Delhi. The Rathi brothers, Seth Mukunddas and Seth Gokuldas, were my old pupils and I was naturally pleased to hear about their enthusiastic participation in the various affairs connected with public welfare. To me personally they were models of courtesy and hospitality and, to be frank, by their behavior completely wiped away from my mind any traces of the unpleasant memories of the past. If the sins of fathers are said to be visited upon the sons sometimes, more often it seems that fathers are justified and redeemed by their sons.

I paid a visit to Pandit Naurang Rai Sharma who is bed ridden with paralysis of the lower half of the body for the last eight years. It was so see him in that condition, but it was a wonder that his brain and memory were in a perfect condition. I tried to give him solace by reminding him of Bhishma Pitamaha who waited for death on a bed of arrows but discoursed on the deepest problems of politics and ethics. Panditji smiled in an uncomfortable way.

Having come to know that I had written an autobiography, my old students, friends and admirers expressed a keen wish that I should publish it. When I told them about my financial difficulties they begged me to wait 10 days more during which they felt sure that they would be able to raise the necessary amount. I agreed to their proposal but with the proviso that I would not accept any contribution except from my old pupils. I am proud and thankful that on my own terms they collected nearly one thousand rupees within the stipulated period, and presented me with a bag inscribed "Principal Chakravarti's Autobiography Publication Nidhi". If and when my book sees the light of day, it is needless to say that it will be due to the generosity of about a dozen and half old students of mine belonging to Beawar. One old student who was a favorite of mine in the old days and now lived in Bombay, Sri Heeralal Kothari, happened to visit Beawar while I was there. He left it to the subscription collectors to name the amount they wished him to pay and his brave gesture had its effect on some other contributors. On this occasion too, as on the last the inspiration was supplied by Sri Chimman Singh Lodha and Dr. A. M. Gupta, two of the most popular leaders of Beawar. I cannot suppress the name of Sreeman Ardhendu Gupta, M.A. worthy son of Dr. Gupta, who a mere school boy when I lived at Beawar, had so deeply imbibed the students' partiality for me that he grew up to be a leading exponent of what may be described as almost a cult of Personality at Beawar. Ramniklal Chatwani, a Gujarati student of mine, now Lecturer of a Training College, was as ardent a chela of his Guru as Ardhendu Gupta has proved to be later, although I cannot even claim to be his Guru. Almost a case of Ekalavya and Dronacharya, it is matter of deep regret for me that I could not meet Ramniklal during my stay at Beawar, it being vacation time.

Altogether my recent visit to Beawar has afforded me unmixed delight. My contacts with old colleagues like Mr. Radhakrishna Agarwal who came from Bhilwara on purpose to meet me, and with Pandit Taradatta Pant Shastri who came from Ajmer were actuated by the purest feelings of personal regard. My renewed companionship with Mr. B. L. Varma whom I met and talked to almost daily was inspired by mutual respect and goodwill. My old

grievance against my employers and my dissatisfaction with my poor salary are now swallowed up and forgotten in the gratifying spectacle of several of my poor colleagues of the old days being comfortably and securely berthed in Government service. My unavailing efforts to raise old college to a Commerce Degree College are more than compensated by the almost unsolicited downpour of state patronage let loose by the first Education Minister of Ajmer Govt. Pandit Brijmohanlal Sharma, who belonged to Beawar. I will not refer to the local parties and their rivalries for such are bound to be in every living center of popular activity. But I cannot help expressing my happiness at the resounding victory of Lodhaji and his party at the recent Municipal election. It is eminently fitting that the old chairman who has already given proof of his constructive vigor fills the chair again and has got another chance of completing his civic service to the town of his birth. I look upon him as a symbol of independence and efficiency in the public life of Beawar. His coming to the top in the new age means the victory of the cause for which I stood and suffered in the old.

CHAPTER V

Places I have visited

I am not much of a traveler, yet I have done a fair amount of sightseeing in the course of my journeys in Eastern, Northern and northwestern India where my lot was cast. Sometimes it was but natural to go a little out of the way to visit a place of some historic or scenic interest. Thus apart from cities like Delhi, Cawnpore and Ajmer where I have lived and worked, I have visited cities like Lucknow, Agra, Allahabad, Lahore, Bombay and Dacca, and hill stations like Shillong, Darjeeling, Mussorie, Nainital, and Mt. Abu. The religious interest has led me to Banares, Mathura and Brihdaban, Hardwar, Rishikesh, Gaya, Puri and to lesser places like Nathdwara and Kankroli in Mewar; lastly historical interest to Udaipur, Chittor, Jaipur, Ames, Jodhpur, Fatehpur Shikri and the Elephanta Caves, Sarnath Benaras, and Bodh Gaya. The Sanchi Stupa I have seen only from a passing train. It makes a poor list after all, hardly worth mentioning in this age of easy travel. And the places are so well known that nothing that I can say about their highlights will add anything to the knowledge or interest of others. But there are highways and byways all the world over; and sometimes when we are tired of the familiar attractions, the less familiar may have secret charms for us. From the nature of the case these charms would be subjective rather than objective i.e. what may charm one may not charm another. Passing by the well-known beauty-spots and charms of Darjeeling, the shifting fogs and snow-views; the sounding water falls and winding paths, the deep shadows and the distant views, what charmed me most was the rosy flush of the Kanchanjaugha at sun-set and the superb view of sun-rise from the Tiger Hill. Even these are well-known aesthetic experiences; but the view I had of the sun lit plain of India, as if through a tunnel bored in dense fog, as the train crept down froth Darjeeling, passed Tindhari, and headed for Kurseong is a memory that nothing can obliterate. It was so unexpected and novel an experience that I was quite bewildered. I drew the attention of several of my fellow-passengers to the strange spectacle and felt not a little disappointed that they did not react to the phenomenon as I did. I was at a complete loss to make but what it was I had read of fantastic optical illusions as of cities and castles in the sky produced by refraction of light and by the reflection of distant cities and for tresses projected in space-known as Gandharva-nagar in Sanskrit Literature. So I fancied that it might be one such mirage. My wonder was not diminished when I was put wise by my companions

that it was but a distant view of the sun baked plain of Northern Bengal beyond Siliguri seen through the semi-transparent envelope of fog that had completely shut in our view higher up. I watched the vision spell-bound, until I could distinguish the distant rivers interlacing the field like silver and blue threads; and gradually I discerned the Mango-groves that stood steeped in the sun light of a June mid-day

The only bit of mountaineering I ever enjoyed was to climb on foot all the way from Rajpur to Mussorie, but it was along a paved road and in the company of a friend. If it was arduous journey going up the hill, it was very pleasant, and comfortable getting down when I traveled in a Dundi. It was like floating through air in a springy chair comparable to a modern air-flight.

On the way to Shillong what charmed me most were the clusters, of the Lily of the valley growing wild and in profusion by the roadside; and, the rushing, mountain streams. The best attractions of the famous eastern hill station were the pine forests, eucalyptus avenues and the beautiful lake. To me the chief attractions of Nainital were the Cheena Peak and the lake with innumerable small yachts with their white triangular sails: The lake looked somber on account of the deep shadows cast upon its mirror and when I was shown a particular crag projecting over the water from which a number of people were said to have drowned themselves I could not help having an uncanny sensation while walking round the spot. When I read about Prof. S. K. Rudra of Allahabad University, whom I happened to know, losing his life while swimming in the Nainital Lake many years later, I could not but feel a shiver of horror, sitting in distant Calcutta but remembering the deep black water below that suicide rock. My mind suggested to me the presence of an Evil Power—the ancient superstition of men—in certain places of nature, as in that accursed spot in Nainital.

At Mount-Abu, apart from the wonderful Jain temples of Dilwara. I was most charmed by the famous view of sunset from the 'sunset point.' It was not sunset at sea but over the vast plain of Gujrat to the west of the Aravalli Hills. The view was dusty in winter, but still splendid. I can imagine that it is more splendid in autumn when the floating dust of the air would be laid by rain. One spot of great geological and biological interest in Mt Abu is the huge rock still mostly embedded in the earth, upon which are engraved the foot-marks and hoof-marks of various animals from the elephant to the deer, as well as of the tiger and possibly the lion, all in close proximity. It is a standing puzzle under what condition of the earth's evolution it was possible for so many animals of different types—killers and killed—to come together in a bed of clay which afterward; become black stone by volcanic or other geological changes. So far as I am aware nobody has suggested that the curio is a fake made by the hand of man!

In Fatehpur Sikri, of all the wonderful things in marble and red sandstone what impressed me most was the vastness of the Bulwand Darwaja and is brought home to the traveler by the divers who throw themselves into the deep well below from the top of the Gateway for a little Bakshish. Everything in the neighborhood dwindles into insignificance in the presence of this mammoth structure, as if its builder Emperor Akbar wanted to shadow forth in stone and mortar the immensity of the empire he had established. Surely from a view of the forts, halls, and mosques built by the Moghul emperors it cannot be thought for a moment that the well-known adages about the incompatibility of great empires and little minds can ever apply to the Moghuls. Their minds and imaginations were really cast in imperial moulds. As my train left the Fatehpur Sikri Station late in the evening for Agra, I kept

looking on at the lofty gateway which did not disappear from view for full half an hour but dominated the luminous western sky as a spectral sentinel of Moghul glory and past history

Of the many historic places of Mewar visited by me it is not so much the grandeur and rich furnishings of the palaces of Udaipur, the beauty of the island pavilions of Jagmandir and Jagnivas, the sweetness of the marble temples of old Chittore and the imposing fortification of Chittoregarh with its involution of seven gates one within another, but it was the recondite sculptures on the walls of the Victory Pillar of Rana Kumbha that impressed me most. If we want to see the cultural history of medieval India, especially in the arts of music and dance, ornaments, apparel, and female toilette in one continuous series of friezes we need just pay a visit to the Jaya-Stambha, which also surpasses in the exquisite beauty of its architectural construction any monument of the same nature all the world over, except perhaps the column of Trajan in Rome. But Trajan's column is only a gateway like the Bulwand Darwaja of Akbar.

The entrance to the fort of Jodhpur is really impressive but it is designed more for security than for grandeur. Of a class with the Fort of Jodhpur is the old Fort of Gwalior, both founded on rocks of convenient height, but the latter is both higher and more extensive. The principal objects of historical importance in Gwalior Fort are the twin temples—known as Sas and Bahu and Telika mandir priceless specimens of pre-Mahomedan Indian architecture. Mewar is rich in natural beauty, especially on account of the numerous lakes, the largest of which is Jay Samundar, about 30 miles from Udaipur. I had the pleasure of seeing it once; but the lake is some 40 miles long and irregular in shape so that one cannot form an adequate idea of its magnitude at a single glance from the level ground. Next in size is the Pichhola Lake familiar to all visitors to Udaipur. But the lake that impressed me most and on the shore of which I spent two days and nights is the Raj Samundar at Kakroli, famous for its Vaisnava temple. This lake was constructed by Maharana Raj Singh—the hero of Bankim Chandra's novel of the same name, by damming up one side of a natural trough bounded by low hills on the other three sides. This embankment is acclaimed as a great feat of engineering skill; and the inner facing of it is paved with granite gradually built up from the bed of the lake as the stairs of a vast bathing ghat, with a landing platform, half as wide as a football field, and over a quarter of a mile in length. There are large stone tablets fixed in the projections, buttresses and side-walls of the high embankment, full of inscriptions in Sanskrit verse which are considered of the highest historical value. The famous temple of Krishna stands directly on the high natural bank of this lake, about one mile square, and is fanned by the breezes passing over its rippling waters and thereby losing a good deal of their neat by the liquid contact even in summer. I stayed in a Dharmashala abutting on the lake and listened to its waves breaking at the foot of a vast old Peepal tree far below my windows all day and night. A dip in the cool waters was so very soothing in the dreadful summer of Rajputana that I wished I could live there through the whole season.

Kakroli, being a few miles off the railway is a comparatively quiet place. The ascent to the village from the valley below is fairly steep and the shops of the Kakroli market are ranged all along the way tier upon tier. The village and the temple were dedicated by the Ranas of Mewar to their dynastic Gurus, the Goswamis of, the place. The Maharana makes his pilgrimage to his Guru's abode on important occasions. It so happened that His Highness was due to come there for his Diksha ceremony when I was there. I was shown a kothi, outside the village of Kakroli where His Highness was accustomed to reside when he visited his Guru. It was said that the surrounding

area belonging to the Guru by right of Royal gift, the Maharana had to purchase a bit of land from his Guru to put up a camp Bungalow for his temporary residence. But as he could not use anything belonging to his Guru, he had to bang his supply of provisions, fuel, vegetables, down to the green twigs for cleaning his teeth, even drinking water, from Udaipur. There was a great bustle on account of His Highness's visit and the whole place was beflagged and decorated in his honor. Thousands of beggars-men, women along whom H. H. was expected to pass in state, and charity was distributed. I witnessed this scene twice. Scores of officials and peons were in control of the beggars seated on both sides of the road, and the police stood guard over them, so that nobody might leave his place or come in afresh until the distribution was over. As a result of it the baggers became virtually outdoor prisoners for several hours. I saw men with long canes accompanying the officers with the moneybags passing slowly and handing the doles—4 annas for each adult and 2 annas for each child. Strict watch was kept to ensure that the same person did not get the dole twice; and there was ample evidence that the canes were not carried for show only. Every state-progress or appearance of H. H., I was told, cost the State Exchequer over a thousand rupees. That gives one a measure of the royal charities that prevailed in the heyday of Moghul rule in Delhi, Agra, and Lahore. But it was the ancient feudal way of trying to bring relief to the poor not to solve the problem of people's poverty, compared with which it was like sprinkling drops of water over a desert. It never improved the condition of the masses and never can improve; and the masses have been more or less in the same rags during countless centuries. Even charity must be productive in order to be effective in its object.

What charmed me most at Kakroli was the music of the temple bells and the hymns of Mangal-Arati sung by the pilgrims in the early hours of the morning i.e. long before day-break, after their ablution in the lake as they waited for the doors of the temple to open for an early-dawn Darshan of the loved Krishna. Then the famous flute-band of the Temple played exquisite tunes and the Temple musicians sang to the accompaniment of the Saringi Sanskrit songs of Jayadeva and the ancient Bhajans of Meera Bai, Surdas, and other poets in Ragas and Raginis appropriate to the hour of the day. I listened to some of these songs which were sung, I suppose, correctly enough from the scientific point of view; but I could not help noticing that the singers betrayed no emotion what's over except perhaps ennui. It was all-lifeless and mechanical work performed for the sake of the livelihood it brought them. I noticed the same listlessness among the flower-women selling beautiful garlands of Jasmine and Mogra, roses and champaks. The lines of Wordsworth about the petrifying effect of custom and convention occurred to my mind:

"Full soon thy soul shall have her earthly freight,
And custom lie upon these with a weight,
Heavy as frost and deep almost as life!"

Apart from the freshness of the flowers, the only freshness and flush of life was to be seen in the eager or rapt faces of some of the new pilgrims, for the habitual pilgrims, I thought, had also become wooden like the temple musicians! And this is the common tragedy of all old systems and institutions that seek to regulate man's life and conduct age after age.

Nathadwara is a bigger place than Kakroli. It is the biggest place of Hindu pilgrimage in Rajputana and

Gujrat. In fact it is called the Vrindaban of Rajasthan. It is a small town full of temples small and big, within the state of Shapura of which the Maharana of Udaipur was considered to be the overlord. The Mahanta Maharaja of Nathdwara is a considerable landlord himself with an annual income of over 10 lakhs of rupees from his landed estates alone. The income from the temple comes roughly to another 10 lakhs annually. He is a princeling, the head of the Ballabhacharya Sect of Vaishnavism. He has his own Government for the templetown of Nathdwara, his own Police, mounted troops, Magistrate, and Civil judge, his own jail, School, and Hospital. He lives in a palace of his own, a little off the temples; and there is a famous picture gallery mainly of the Rajput School of painting in the middle of his vast fruit and flower garden. The high lights of the gallery are a series of portraits of all the Goswamis of the sect from Ballabhacharya downward; and a set of exquisite miniature paintings of the various Ragas and Raginis of Classical Indian music. The pictures of Ragas and Raginis that we see in our journals etc. are really printed copies of the originals preserved in Nathdwara. There is a living school of painting still in Nathdwara; but it is decadent and has only a cheap commercial value.

The daily routine of the main temple of Sree Nathji is set on a high level. The richly endowed and appointed temples and their inner and outer splendor place them, I believe among the richest temples of India. It is said that the wealthy Gujratis men and women, bleed themselves white when they visit, the shrine; and it goes without saying that the donated 'blood' is transfused to the temple coffers.

But what to my mind most distinguishes Nathdwara is the plenty of food and milk available there, not so much in the open market as through the grace of the temple authorities as Prasad, which is also openly sold. Huge quantities of varieties of vegetable food, milk products and sweet-meats are offered daily to the Deities as Bhog, which is nearly sufficient to feed the entire permanent population of the town, besides the pilgrims. I have heard that as in Puri, very few people take the trouble of cooking at home: but by arrangement with the priests of the temple they receive at their places all that the family requires for food, and that on very moderate terms. All persons who present themselves at a stated hour in the temple Nat-Mandir are fed free and I was told that many people, especially the Brahmans, lived all their lives at Nathdwara without spending anything on their food. I know that many Brahman students from fairly distant places were attracted to the place for their classical education mainly for this reason.

I had my breakfast once in the Temple hall for partaking of holy Prasad, just to see that kind of meal was served there; and I found it quite sufficient and palatable. But as the world war had commenced, the prices of articles were already on the rise and people were wondering how much longer it would be possible for Nathdwara to maintain its tradition of being the Gastronomists' Paradise! Coming to the place by train and motorbus, as well as when leaving it, I noticed that the whole countryside was littered with cows and buffaloes supplying enormous quantities of milk for the cooks and confectioners of Nathdwara. In and around Mathura also I have seen such herds of cattle, justifying the names of Gakul and Gope-Raj. I wonder if the Railway passengers at the Mathura or Hathras junction who greedily lap up the famous cream and Malai of Mathura ever think of Krishna, whose blessings in edible shape these delicacies are? It is amazing to ponder how much of the rural economy of India in forest, cattle-wealth, and agriculture is still orientated to the ancient cult of Krishna and Balaram; how the joys of our life are bound up with those shadowy figures! Would any state Dairy Farm or Co-operative Milk Society of secular India

ever able to replace a part of that economy?

It is far easier to raise the price of milk in Govardhan or teach the Gokul Milkmen to adulterate milk with milk powder than to improve and cheapen the milk supply say of Calcutta! Secular India would lose nothing if the appeal to improve the cattle-breed of the country were still made even in the departmental circulars, in the name of Krishna, who after all was an historical personage. The Government of India can safely lay its account with the fact that it is so, in spite of all the willful doubts of the Christian Missionaries and all the skeptical suggestions of our over-rationalized Indian brain. Even our Mussalman fellow-countrymen, not yet over sophisticated by western education, would not seriously dispute the point. The Government of the country has been baffled in its endeavor to deal with the dishonesty and inhumanity of the Ahirs and Goalas in our cities by external enforcements of the penal laws; may we not try internal way of appealing to their conscience, even through that potent spiritual I fountain-head that Krishna is?

But in order to do that it would not do to banish religion from our life as we have done from the state, but we must cultivate it even more intensely in our private lives; for in India religion includes both nationalism and humanism, as it also includes history and biography. Mahatma Gandhi have done little by the mountains that he did if he had confined himself to secular means only, and not used his spiritual power; just as Acnarya Vonoba is doing today in secular India to bring about a silent revolution in the land-system through his campaign of Bhoodan Jajna. India still responds to the spiritual appeal more than to the intellectual or economic argument. I do not know if Bhaveji makes use of Krishna's name as Mahatma Gandhi made of Rama's—surely he has Krishna enthroned in his heart—but there can be no harm for the secular state that has already adopted Ashoka's Dharma Chakra in adopting Baladev's Plough and Krishna Flute and cow-boy makeup if the legend of his upholding the Govardhan hill smacks too much of the miraculous for our taste!

CHAPTER VI

Persons I have seen.

It is a pleasure to recall the many well-known men and women whom I have met or simply seen in my time. Besides those already mentioned, I have had the privilege of once seeing and hearing, I will not mention those who are still living—Sri Aurobinda Ghosh, He was addressing a students meeting in the College Square of Calcutta early in 1906. I have similarly seen and heard Ambika Charan Mojumdar, the grand old Man of Bengal, more than once in the town Hall of Calcutta and on the platform of the National Congress. It was a very early regret of mine that I had not seen the great Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar when he visited Barisal in the century. I was indeed a mere child at that time; but when afterwards I learnt that an uncle of mine, a boy of twelve, had gone to Barisal to see the great man, I could not help wishing that I had been born a few years earlier! I am afraid, now that I tax my memory harder, that Vidyasagar's intended visit did not for some reason or other materialize; and my uncle tame back disappointed from Barisal. Anyhow my regret, however baseless, was a fact. It belonged to the category of things that might have been. Rabindranath I saw and heard on many occasions in Calcutta but only once at close quarters in his own Bungalow in Shillong in the autumn of 1918. It was another regret of mine that I had missed seeing the Maharshi, his father, when I visited Calcutta for the first time in the winter of 1905 when he was still alive. I have

seen and heard Balgangadhar Tilak and Lala Lajpat Rai more than once during sessions of the National Congress in Calcutta. Swami Shraddhananda I have seen and heard many times in Delhi; and I am proud to recall my personal acquaintance with Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi, the Master of Kanpur. I have also seen and heard Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, C. R. Das, Pandit Motilal Nehru, Sreemati Sarojini Naidu and Mrs. Annie Besant; Dr. Ansari and Hakim Azmal Khan, on different occasions. Last and greatest of all I have seen and heard Mahatma Gandhi a number of times—at Barisal, in Calcutta, at Cawnpur, in Delhi and elsewhere. My only regret is that I have not heard him speak in English, except when reading a letter or moving a Resolution at a meeting. I treasure the memory of having had a glimpse of that tender flower of Indian womanhood—the universally lamented wife of our Prime Minister Sreemati Kamla Nehru, when she was carried in a stretcher from the Bhowali Sanatorium on the first stage of the last journey to Europe. Pandit Jawaharlal, then a prisoner on parole, was permitted to meet her I believe outside the sanatorium, and to accompany her up to a point. He was, however, permitted later on to be at her bedside in the Austrian Nursing Home where she breathed her last. I happened to be in the Bhowali Sanatorium in the early summer of 1935 attending my eldest son who was under observation or suspected bronchial trouble. I have seen and heard the great Musician Pandit Vishnu Digambar and the great Vishwanath Rao.

I have seen and heard the silver tongued Srinivas Shastri the finished speaker and Scholars like Mahamahopadhyaya Pt. Ganganath Jha of Allahabad, M. M. Pandit Satish Chandra Vidhyabhusan of Calcutta and M. M. Pandit Pratnatta Nath Tankabhusan of Benares and M. M. Pandit Giridhar Sharma of Jaipur. The late Justice N. G. Chandravarkar of Bombay I saw and heard once in the Calcutta Brahma Samaj, Justice Gurudas Banerji and later Dr. Brojendra Nath Seal, Dr. Jagdis Bose and Dr. P. C. Roy were familiar figures in the academic world of Calcutta for decades, and naturally I had many occasions of seeing and hearing them, except Dr. J. C. Bose whom I had the privilege of hearing only once. But it is bound to the greatest regret of my life that, being a Bengalee, I have had not the luck of seeing or hearing Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose.

I was practically away from Bengal during the entire period of his active life in India. At the fag-end of this roll of great names comes that of Dr Shyama Prasad Mukherji, the only great man whom I can claim to have known personally and who knew me in the same way. I will only refer to the personal magnetism of the man—the never-failing smile of recognition and greeting that played on lips and beamed frown, his eyes, and to his unruffled temper. The stamp of greatness was all over him his mind, body, and temperament. He gave one the impression of a great power in repose. India will take time to realize what she has lost by his untimely death.

CHAPTER VII

The Purdah System & Hindu Orthodoxy.

The social reformers labored for decades for the abolition of the Purdah system and the liberalisation of Hindu orthodoxy; but their success was limited to the top layer of the educated Society. It is true that the yeast was at work; and the process of leavening the mass was going on silently and slowly. The Brahma Samaj that had done so much to loosen the strings of the Purdah among women had become almost a spent force; and even the Swadeshi Movement had worked itself out for the entire stir it had made among the masses; but the age-old Purdah was hardly shaken to its central fibers in the villages. With customary oriental patience, we were content to leave the reform to

be achieved by the silent method of downward filtration as in other matters.

That was the position till 1920, when M. Gandhi virtually took up the leadership of Indian Politics and introduced his mass movements. The inert mass of ages began to move at last kind the women came out of the Purdah and on to the streets their hundreds and thousands. The avalanche had started force could stop it, until it found its own level. Thus of centuries imposed by a foreign civilization upon the Indian Society which first submitted to it under necessity and but later glorified it into an insignia of aristocracy by equating seclusion of women with their honorable status in Society was practically discarded all over the country.

Similarly in the matter of Hindu orthodoxy the defensive armor evolved by a conservative society in the course of its many conflicts with other religions and civilizations—Sakas, Hunas, Yavanas, Buddhists, Jains, Mussalmans, and Christians a device that like the Purdah system had given good service in its time but had become a cumbersome impediment to free life and movement under modern conditions at has as last been abolished by the Gandhian emancipation movement. With the judgment of an expert physician M. Gandhi diagnosed the chronic disease of Hindu Society as being rooted in the microbe of untouchability as Swami Vivekananda had discovered before him, and he flew at it straight like an arrow. Hindu orthodoxy on account of its comprehensiveness—from physical touch to matrimonial alliance—and its greater antiquity was more formidable than the Purdah which was practically clamped down upon northern India by the Mussalmans, very as the Chinese pig-tail and wooden shoes were thrust upon China by the Manchu Dynasty. The Purdah was only observed in practice; it had not become a part of religion, as in Islam, and did not have time to strike its roots and to fabricate Sanskrit texts in its support Beside, the entire Deccan escaped the penumbra of the system. Curiously enough the South remains the last stronghold of Hindu orthodoxy. Here also apart from the abolition of the bondage of the Pariahs and the opening of the great Temples to one and all, Mahatma Gandhi has pointed his spear at the very heart of orthodoxy by purposely promoting marriage between his own son and Sir Rajagopalachari's daughter. From the social reformer's point of view this marriage is a much greater achievement than the older one between Sarojini Devi of Bengal and Col. Naidu of Hyderabad.

Hindu orthodoxy is already on its knees on inter-dining front. The sanctity of Kitchen and even more, the sanctity of the dining Hall, lies prostrate in the dust. Inter-dining between the different castes of Hindus has become the rule even in domestic social functions. In public places inter-dining between the followers of different religions like Hindus, Muslims, and Christians has become quite common in cities like Calcutta and Delhi.

Only in the matter of inter-marriage the old walls of orthodoxy still hold some resisting strength; but the breakers of the sea of change with which the communistically minded young men and young women have already identified themselves will soon wear way the Old cement and the second fall of the walls of Jericho cannot be very far. The way the Parliament of India is going ahead with its Hindu Law Reform Bill under the driving leadership of the Prime Minister Nehru, Hindu orthodoxy in all its form-God save Hinduism itself! Will be a memory of the past within the next 25 years. India bids fair to be the most secular state in the world; but with four crores of Mussalmans within its belly who swear by nothing if not by their religion, and flanked on either side by Pakistan which literally means a theocratic state, secularism does not seem to have very plain Sailing. Let us wish success to the new Gospel of secularism if the inner and outer contradictions of the situation would, allow the ideal to realize itself; yet our

conservative instinct gives the forewarning that perhaps we are going too fast; and that history cannot be unmade so quickly.

However that maybe, it may not be without interest to survey the position of Hindu orthodoxy in Bengal half a century back in respect of one of the outer shells of its armor, namely the rule against inter-dining with non-Hindus. It would not have been quite so easy even for the new socio-political movement of M. Gandhi and the exigencies of a world war to overthrow orthodoxy in Bengal, had not the roots of the institution already become loose for a fairly longtime.

I could see even in my boyhood that the clays of orthodoxy were numbered. There was no punishment for heresy or heterodox opinion in the Hindu Code; all the penalties for non-conformity of practice or conduct. You must exactly as your forefathers were supposed to have done it or you are damned. During the last half century: I have seen several attempts of decadent Hindu formalism to assert itself and the only form that its Sanction could take was some sort of boycott. I will not dine at your house was the fundamental form of the boycott or excommunication. That perhaps did not matter much. But it was the secondary and tertiary forms that made the thing really uncomfortable for the party penalized and as it often turned out for the punishing party also. It followed logically from the proposition I will not dine that my family will not dine; my friends will not dine; If anybody dines I will not dine with him and so on. Thus far about inter-dining.

The next series of interdiction began with the officiating priest: 'I will not allow my priest to minister for you house; If he does will renounce him' and so on. And then came the third series with the barber; and the last with the washer-man. I have not come across a boycotted washer man, who was formerly supposed to complete the four-fold Hindu excommunication, like the Book, Bell, and candle of its Christian analogue.

Thanks to the printing of the Shastric texts and Mantras the invention of the safety Razor, and the universal use of soap and smoothing iron, people are no longer dependent on these services as they formerly were. So the old threat of social boycott has lost much of its force even in the villages. Refusal to inter-dine or inter-marry need not make one unduly nervous in these days, when economic reasons make it difficult work to give a dinner; and the field of marriage having been extended far, one rarely marries in one's own village. One difficulty still remained, namely the refusal of the neighbors, and in a Bengal village the refusal of the fellow caste people to offer their shoulders to carry a dead body to the place of cremation. But I believe since the last famine of 1943 and the epidemic that followed it, the untouchability of the dead has disappeared with that of living men.

Thus the whole sanction behind Hindu social discipline vanished, more completely in Pakistan than perhaps in Hindus than. But I can not forget the first instance within my experience when: fifty years back the jaded orthodoxy made an attempt to raise its head against new heterodoxy; and the last pitiable effort I saw made by the last representatives of the old order to salve their conscience in a new order of society barely two years ago.

An Incident of 1903.

About the year 1903 some Hindu students of our school had gone to play a friendly football match a few miles from our town at the invitation of a respectable local Mussalman Talukdar family—the Mians of Gangapur. The hosts had made all arrangements of cooking for their Hindu guests in conformity with Hindu scruples by Hindu

cooks and servants. But it was soon reported that several Hindu students preferred to dine with the Moslem hosts at their own table; and of these a son of the leading lawyer of our town happened to be one. The news spread like wildfire and reached us long before the return of the 'sinners'. It was such startling news, in spite of the fact that we already knew about a particular Hindu family in the town, where heterodoxy in food and kitchen service was practiced and some individuals were known to participate in the dinners; but it was not done openly. But this matter was different; it was a direct affront to Hindu Society—almost a slap in the face of old orthodoxy whose supporters had not yet become extinct. The elders of the town, especially members of the Bar Associations, both pleaders and Mukhtears—took up the matter and hotly debated what should be done to vindicate-the majesty of Hindu Orthodoxy. Dire punishments like ex-communication and ceremonial penance including shaving of the head and other expiatory rites were proposed and seriously discussed. But when it transpired that a son of the leading Pleader was involved, in the scandal, the social arbiters were deeply perplexed, Rajani Babu was not known to be particularly orthodox himself, and his son was already given to un-orthodox ways of living; the question was how to force them if they chose to dissent.

At last some wise leaders of society took up the face-saving device of pretending not to believe the story of dining with Mussalmans. 'Who has seen them do so'? They asked; and when the reply came that so-and-so were eyewitnesses, the elders suggested that it was possibly out of grudge that they said so. The best course according to them was to wait till the boys returned; and then to hold a regular enquiry.

When at last the party returned and were Questioned about the incident, Rajani Babu's son and one or two others admitted the fact; but instead of expressing regret they were proud of what they had done. Thus driven into a corner by this Open avowal of the guilty persons, the saviors of Hinduism did not surrender their pretence but said. "The boys may say so out of bravado, the shameless ones, but surely they cannot have perpetrated such an act of Sin! Still, they must perform some penance for their association with Mussalmans". The boys wanted to argue, but Rajani Babu sternly silenced them; and the old Purohit Lokenath Bhattacharyya undertook to perform the necessary purificatory rites for the benefit of the sinners. How exactly they were done nobody knew, but outraged Hindu conscience was appeased for the time being.

Orthodoxy became alarmed on one or two more occasions during the succeeding years. Once when the Kayasthas began to assume the Holy Thread like Brahmans and again when the Vaidyas cut down the prescribed period of ceremonial mourning to the minimum of 10 days enjoyed by the Brahmans. After a few shouts of 'Hinduism in danger' and of 'The law breakers must be penalized', and after the upsetting of a few feasts in the from which some Brahmans absented themselves, 'the bucket again went to the well and the cow to the pasture', as we say in Bengali.

But the final collapse of anti 'inter-dining' orthodoxy began with the Second World War, that did away practically with all distinctions of food and related habits of people joining the various war-service In fact it had started earlier from the coming into power of the Moslem League Ministry in undivided Bengal. As officialdom came to consist more and more of Mussalmans, the general social life, particularly in East Bengal wore an increasingly Mussalman complexion. This was inevitable; but the number of clubs in which Hindus and Mussalmans met together being limited, the Hindu ways and customs were not much affected. But when the world

war broke out, and the control system and the rationing of the prime necessities of life diverted the trade and commerce of the country into strange artificial channels the lock gates of which were operated by officials and the profits of which were mostly reaped by a new up-start class of businessmen whose front doors advertised them as licensed dealers handling agents, or Control shopkeepers' but whose backdoor opened into the various labyrinths of the Black market—cheap money accumulated in a few hands. But as none of these lock gates would open without the keys being greased and the palms of the key men too, parties and feasts became the order of the day as the outer version of the inner story of bribes and illegal gratifications.

I have with my own eyes seen several such parties lavishly catering the fat of the land for the pampered few—Mssalmans and Hindus—while outside the festive ring famished figures of boys and girls, men and women, prowled about like pitiful ghosts for a morsel of food or a mouthful of gruel. This happened in my hometown; and what was true of my out-of-the-way place was not less true of more central and important places. I read in the newspaper about a famished man in tatters who had eluded the Sub-divisional Magistrate's peons and snatched a handful of food from the Saheb's table when he was entertaining some friends on his garden lawn at Chandpur in 1943.

To return to my story, when the opportunity of eating and drinking with Mussalmans become so frequent, the Old squeamishness of the Hindus gradually disappeared, the few old incorrigibles disappearing from the scene at their own option. The rest who hoped to make their hay while the sun of the war still shone went a step forward in their ultimate association with the Mussalmans; and from eating off their own plates on the common table they soon began to snatch things from their neighbors' plates. To such spectacles I do not claim to be much of an eyewitness; but I am credibly informed that tossing about of Rasgollas between Hindus and Mussalmans soon became a feature of the public parties, after the principal guests had retired. So far the parties had been confined to tea, fruits, biscuits, cakes and sweets-meats; but with the advent of Pakistan regular dinners with Polao and the various meat preparations—albeit of mutton—beloved of Mussalmans came into fashion. At this stage a few more Hindus disappeared from the scene but about eight Hindu die-hards obtained notoriety as fellow trenchermen of the neo-Mussalman gentry of our town. Their antics and depredations at the dinner table became a matter first of amused comment and later on of ill-humored complaint among the more sober Mussalmans.

The last party of the old type attended by me and fortunately I was not invited to any of these new-fangled parties was the farewell given in honor of the S.D.O. Mr. N. I. Khan who saved the Hindus in 1950. As the Hindus were the Chief contributors to the expenses of the party, the service at table was reserved for them. I noticed three or four old Hindus gentlemen who attended the party as a social duty retire to a sheltered place and eat the sweets from a banana leaf instead of a gleaming porcelain plates stocks of which stood on the side tables. I believe it was the public farewell to Hindu orthodoxy in my home-town!

Yet not all this hobnobbing with their new superiors and masters could save half of those doughty eight from their inevitable fate as members of the minority community in Pakistan. The first to run away to West Bengal was the most strong minded of them all, a pleader who had openly declared on the strength of his friendship with the majority community that whoever might go he would not leave Bhola. He was in good practice, and he was a Brahman to boot. His Mussalman friends had apparently so far counted him as one of their own that one of them sent to him a hamper of 'fried' fish on the occasion of a marriage in the pleaders' family and this caused some embarrassment. The pleader had probably asked his friend for the supply of some fish from his tank. It is not difficult to guess the quality of intimacy between the two on the strength of which such a gift was possible.

But soon after the partition of the Country, this sworn friend and citizen of Pakistan was attacked in bed at dead of night by a young man with a dagger, demanding instant delivery of all he had in his steel safe! By the light of the electric torch carried by the assailant—apparently a novice in his trade—the pleader recognized him as a near relative of a friendly Mussalman neighbor. He pleaded, truthfully enough, that the key of the safe was neither with him nor in that cottage; but he quietly handed over the Rs. 50, which he had under his pillow. The burglar-cum-dacoit was satisfied with the booty and left—but he also left the victim determined to run away from the land of his adoption at the earliest moment.

An Ijhar was lodged in the Thana as a matter of duty; and the many Mussalman friends of the pleader as well as all the Hindus of the town were shocked to hear the news the next day. The Police swore

that they would spare no pains to bring the offender to book and pressed the pleader to disclose if he suspected anybody. Like the ancient king of England 'who never smiled again' our friend never opened his lips again on the subject. He arranged with brother-lawyers about his pending cases in court; disposed of some of his moveables; and on the 3rd or 4th day departed with this family, in disregard of the wishes and requests of the towns people, Hindu and Mussalman. He realized as though by instinct, that he should not make a day's delay to go while going was good. And later events proved the wisdom of his decision. He was pressed by the S. D. O. and other prominent Mussalmans of the town to come back to push the prosecution of the suspected persons, including the real culprit, who had been 'challaned' by the police, but the disillusioned pleader turned a deaf ear to all these appeals. His morale was broken beyond repair. He sent instead a Power-of-Attorney to a friend to transfer his homestead, which was the first house, sold by a refugee Hindu in our sub divisional town and, incidentally, fetched the best price. He is now practicing in the Alipur District Courts. He was an old pupil of mine and I wish him all success in his new sphere of life.

It would be tedious to follow the fortunes of the rest of the group who ran away as it would be uncharitable to say anything about those who still hold fast. Personally I do not wish to speak about the last 3 years of my own life, mainly occupied with my efforts of evacuation from Pakistan, and ending with the requisition of my house and my virtual expulsion. If I were to make the attempt, I am afraid, there would be more ventilation of injured feeling than I care to express. Man is apt to lose his standard of fairness when he speaks from a sense of grievance. May time deaden the pain in the severed limb, since there is no hope of reunion.

CHAPTER VIII

A look around

My personal story is now finished but I am tempted to review the changes that have come about in the social and moral life of my people, specially the youthful section of it during the last half-century.

The death of Queen Victoria in 1901 marks the end of a political epoch in the history of India. The old and benevolent government introduced by the East India company had run its course of a century and a half and the people were gradually demanding a much larger participation in the administration of the country; more power and more responsibility, in other words self-government. To the political awakening brought about by the Indian National Congress represented by men like Surendranath Banerjee, Anandamohan Bose, and Aswini Kumar Dutt was now added the higher spiritual Reveillie sounded by the vedic motto "Uttishthata, jagrata" of Swami Vivekananda, "get up, awake".

There was a new stir of life in Bengal after the Swami's return from Europe and America, and his strident call to Hindu India evoked a response unprecedented in living memory. If the death of the great queen marks the close of an epoch in England the death of Swami Vivekananda in 1905 marks the beginning of a greater epoch in the history of Bengal. Dr. Jagdis Bose was placing India on the world map of Science, simultaneously with Swamiji's spreading of Vedanta in America and Europe. At home Rabindranath the harbinger and exponent of a new cultural renaissance was coming to the front with his

wonderful poems and songs, and his delicate sense of national self-respect. Behind the scenes he laid the foundation of Santi Niketan in the very first year of the new century as a new experiment in national education.

Aurobindo Ghosh, the philosopher of the new nationalism, was feeling his way into politics as an educationist in Baroda State in the nineties of the last century and came to Bengal in 1906-7. The opening year of the twentieth century was a wonderful focal point of the mightiest forces of Bengal. A similar conjunction of mighty planets seldom happens in the horoscope of a nation's life. They had their affiliations with Kindred minds and forces outside Bengal. But it is of Bengal only that I propose to speak.

And the youth of the land responded to the many-voiced call in a wonderful way. The great leaders including Surendranath, were all rooted in the ancient culture and ancient tradition of India. The youth who followed them in the different spheres were therefore single in their aim and serious in their purpose. The average student of the first decade of the 20th century was still wedded to the old order but was serious-minded and had a clear understanding of his goal. He was respectful and law abiding, obedient and responsible, both in private and public life, Past tradition, family ties, a conscious religious bent, and a will to know and love the motherland dominated all minds in varying degrees. The will to become independent of British rule came long after. Even the most dare-devil fellows of the age were not wanting in their respect for their parents at home and for their teachers and elders outside. They were serious in their studies, some of them were serious in manufacturing bombs, when the first signs of the national awakening were sought to be throttled by the foreign rulers. The self-control and self-abnegation fundamental in Hindu culture were well in evidence in every field of their activity.

When the first Great War broke out, the sympathy of the people in general and of the student community in particular was with Germans. If mere wishing could win a war for others the Germans should have won. Yet the youth of Bengal volunteered for service and first Bengalee Battalion was formed. There was little idea of saving the British Empire; but their main object was to prove their worth as soldiers on the battlefield. The mind of the youth had not yet been clouded with doubts and diverted from its goal by the new gospel of atheism and militant materialism, masquerading as Communism.

It is true that the ancient feudalism and the later capitalism were still enthroned; and mere nationalism was not enough to liberate people. Since the first Great War the demand for an effectible distribution of wealth and opportunities for all has been internationally recognized, like the right to self-determination for nations in the charter of the League of Nations, as a distant goal to be gradually realized. But it was also recognized that such socialistic reconstruction of society was not possible as long as the British ruled India. So nationalism was placed first and socialism next; for it was firmly believed that the triumphant Indian nationalism that would be able to defeat British imperialism would not find the work of destroying the crumbling citadel of feudalism and capitalism beyond its capacity

But the Russian propaganda of Communism that began within a few years of the end of the first Great War could not be kept out by all the vigilance of the British Government in India. The communist agents and Russian gold found their way into the country as into many other countries of Europe and Asia;

and the Marxist literature gradually flooded the country and proved more untractable and corrosive than the sex-literature that invaded the bookstalls of the cities a few years later, in the wake of the birth-control movement. The victory of the allies in the first Great War and the emergence of the Soviet State in Russia released forces that have worked havoc in India and elsewhere. They have done some good too; they undoubtedly helped the Congress movement, since reinforced and re-oriented by the advent of Mahatma Gandhi in Indian politics. The slogan of self-determination brought tremendous pressure on the British rulers; and the example of the Russian Revolution taught the Congress to reach the masses. But in spite of Gandhi's new philosophy of peaceful devolution of wealth and power from the few to the many, the forces of communism have gathered strength in India, as the conditions were favorable to the Communist appeal. Subhas Bose and his party was a powerful antidote to the Communists so long as he worked in India. But since his departure from India, and the eventual dispersion of his followers into little groups, the field has been left practically open to the Congress and the Communists. There is no youth leader in this age of the capacity and magnetism of Swami Vivekananda or Netaji Subhas Chandra. Besides the students who having many times burnt their fingers in taking part in political movements have now become not wiser but more wary. Their hopes have been repeatedly frustrated. They do want a change—preferably a drastic change—that will usher an atmosphere where they breathe more freely and express themselves creatively. But without proper guidance, they are liable to be at the mercy of quacks and adventurers who place before them 'direct action' shortcuts to their hazy goals. As a body therefore the students are more with the Communists than with the Congress or any other nationalist party. The second Great War has made things even worse for India, except in so far as it has expedited British withdrawal. It has released forces more destructive physically and morally than the First Great War, apart from the portentous Atom Bomb.

The atom bomb has so far destroyed two, cities only but on the moral plane the second Great War has fearfully shaken, the moral structure of Society almost all over the world. And the combined effect of the World war and the ascendancy of Communism have been most disastrous for India. We can hardly hope to enjoy our new-won independence owing to the general moral decline that has happened in spite of all the lip service given to Gandhism.

The scramble for power and the loaves and fishes of office among Congressmen has exceeded all decency. The spirit of the black market and the urge to get rich double-quick stalk the land hand in hand like twin phantoms! And when we add to these sinister forces the deplorable reaction produced by the forced evacuation of over a crore of people from Pakistan, the witches' cauldron is full to overflowing. The whole country is bound to taste the hell-brew that is being concocted. Yet the result is no victory for the ideal of communism. There is no spirit of sharing with others even among the beneficiaries of the policy of nationalization of industries and abolition of capitalism. Every man is for himself. It is individualism in excelsis, each man trying to grab more and spend more than his brother and neighbor. The Congress Government finds it impossible to control the countrywide mad race for money and pleasure. Any other government is not likely to have better success.

But the state of the youth in whom I am especially interested is gloomier still, particularly in West

Bengal, where there is an all-but complete breakdown of discipline among the youth whether at home, or at school; in college or office. Contempt for authority is just below the surface and frequently breaks out into the open in ugly forms. Lurid light is thrown upon to poor scholastic merits of the students by their shockingly bad results year after year in the University and other public Examinations. For many years Bengal has lost her premier place in the all-India competitions. The student community no longer responds to calls of idealism, patriotic appeals, or even to the demands of humanity. They are callously indifferent.

The family tie is practically broken; preverbal 'old fool' the father has all responsibilities but hardly any rights. The craving for 'good time' without liabilities is eating into the vitals of the nation, and it quickly descends from the elder to the younger brother. Calls to join the National Defense forces go unheeded. The Restaurant and the Cinema are the twin temples that receive the chief homage of our young men and women.

Next to these, but more comprehensive in its appeal, is the cult of dance and music that seems to have taken a stranglehold of the Soul of the people. Culture has almost come to mean these two and a few daubs of color on the canvas. The perennial supply of fresh music by the Radio, and the countless music and dancing schools for girls is a portent that should make the elders society pause and ponder. The new craze is fast assuming abnormal proportions, as if the sole object of girls' education is to supply artists to the Cinema and Radio companies. The nightclubs of the West cannot be very far off at this rate of progress. The latest craze of Beauty Competitions and parades and Cricket matches by the Cinema stars, under official patronage, bids fair to bring the India of Gandhi down to the level of Hollywood in no great time. The care of the skin never stood as high as it does today in comparison with care of the soul.

Bengal has been famous for music for centuries and no wonder that her greatest poet has also been the greatest fountain of her songs; but let us not shelve the question whether this musical obsession may not become an instrument of enfeeblement rather than a source of power and strength. There is a very old proverb in Upper India, perhaps current from the time of Jayadev, the poet of Gita Govinda, that her song ruined the East. To one accustomed to old manners and wedded to old ideals and traditions like myself, the new wine seems too strong for the head and health of the nation. Almost everything seems different from what I have seen, known and expected to see. The squall of change that is sweeping over the country is such as has not been known for the last two thousand years; and the nation, if it luckily survives the storm, will be something unrecognizable by people who lived a generation ago. It seems that future historians will have to record that India. Never was so completely denationalized as when the British had left!

Nothing short of a revolutionary counter-change seemed capable of arresting this headlong rush of the people, God knows to what destination. But whether the ancient culture of the land and its custodians have a sufficient reserve of strength, to nourish such a counter-revolution, remains to be seen. Gandhism has apparently failed to stem the flood; but we must not lose faith in ourselves.

Yet I see Movement all around; new horizons and new hopes. The women are coming up and taking their rightful place by the men in the manifold walks of life. The young people are smarter and more intelligent and physically healthier than they were a generation ago. The young women are healthier, taller

and more handsome than their aunts. My complaisance would probably suffer a setback if I ventured to pay a surprise visit to their homes; yet from the outside they seem to be a happier lot than before. The fearful nervousness that enveloped us like an invisible blanket during the years of our struggle with the British Government has lifted. The freedom of speech that we enjoy in India today throws even England and the U.S.A. into the shade. The C.I.D. spies and informers are, I am told, still in undiminished numbers; but there is no more necessity of people looking over their shoulders to see who may overhear them from behind. Apparently the eaves-droppers and keyhole listeners have other work to do, similarly there is no more call for weighing and mincing one's words, for one can spout whatever comes to one's lips and against anybody from Nehru and Dr. Bidhan Roy down to the poor caretakers of the Dhakuria Lakes that we visit every morning. The gag has been removed from the nation's mouth. But it is not so in Pakistan, not only for the unwanted Hindu but even for the rightful Muslim citizen. The fear of being grabbed as a Communist prevents the people from opening even their Islamic mouths properly.

I have not so far touched on Politics except incidentally; but before I conclude this rapid survey of the last half-century I must mention what I consider a great Beacon of hope for mankind. I have in mind the last act of the long drama that the British played on the Indian stage for nearly two hundred years—I mean the way the British withdrew. As of King Charles I of England, it may be said of the British ruler also that nothing became as well in life as the leaving it.

However mixed the motives of our former rulers and however adversely these may be interpreted in Moscow and elsewhere, my reading of history does not furnish another such example of all imperialist nation relinquishing what it deemed "the brightest jewel of the crown" without firing a shot. The case of the Roman withdrawal from Britain bears no analogy to it. That it was not done from pure philanthropy may be readily admitted; but than no motive worse than farsighted self-interest can be imputed either. And there lies the point, if even in this age of all-out international struggle for existence one great nation can rise to the height, not of pure idealism but of 'enlightened self-interest;' there is yet hope for the world.