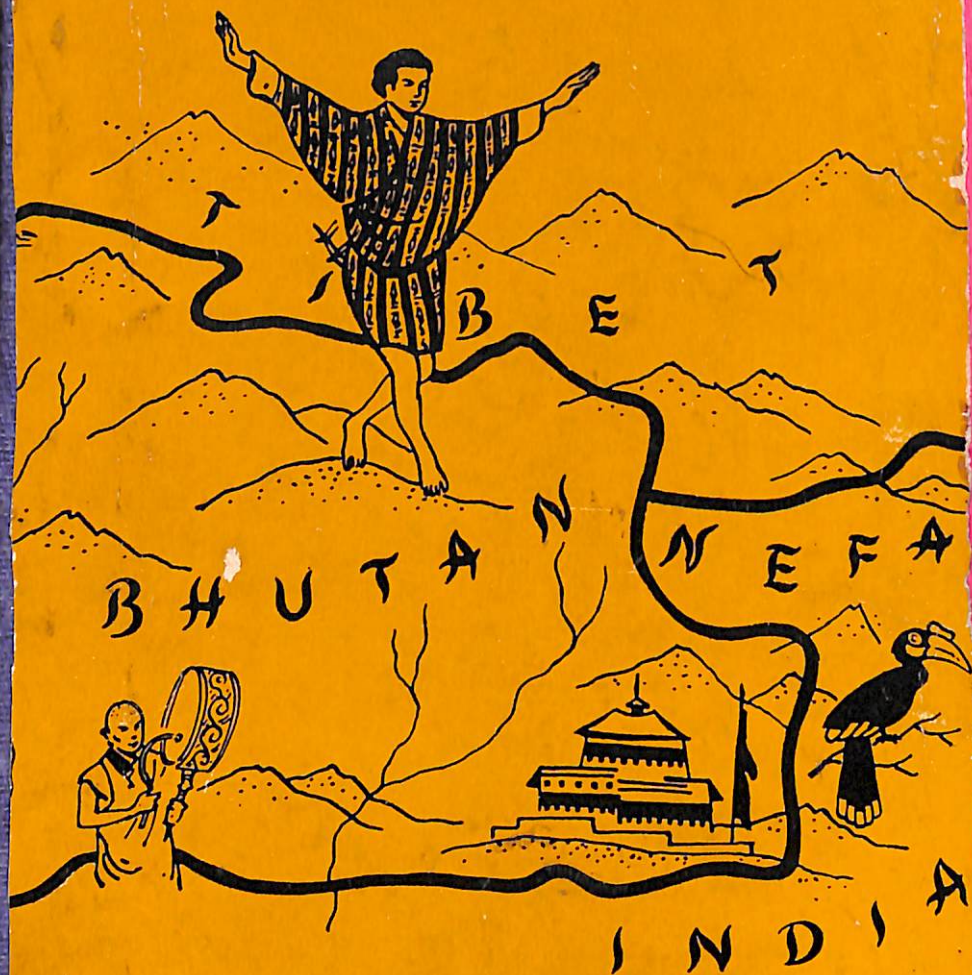


ENCHANTED FRONTIERS

SIKKIM
BHUTAN
AND INDIA'S
NORTH-EASTERN
BORDERLANDS



NARI RUSTOMJI

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NARI RUSTOMJI


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Prologue



MANY years ago, during Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi's historic trek to Bhutan, somebody referred to the fascinating, sometimes even scholarly, narratives by frontier officers of former days, and deplored the lack of initiative of their successors in office of more recent times. I felt, suddenly, the eyes of the entire company, and more particularly Nehru's, focus sharply on myself. For six years my field of work, as the Assam Governor's Adviser for Tribal Areas, had been the Naga hills and the colourful people of India's north-east frontier. And, as if that were not enough, it was now in Sikkim and Bhutan. Nothing more was said, but the Prime Minister's reproving look clearly signalled that, if, with such a wealth of opportunity, I had not been inspired to creative effort, something must be seriously wrong! And that was how I was first provoked to write this book.

I have been slow in making a start, as I do not write easily and have no shining message for the world. But it has been my happy lot to have found myself, through most of my service, in exciting places and exciting situations, meeting exciting people. People have always interested me, even more than places. I like people, all sorts of people. In my friendships I am quite incorrigible, which can be embarrassing for the aspiring Civil Servant! I have enjoyed the trappings of high office, but, thankfully, am no longer attached to them. If I am saluted in the streets, well and good. If not, still well and good. But I cannot shake off old allegiances and my friends are, as a consequence, a widely-assorted, motley crew.

Everybody today has heard of Assam, with her capital at Shillong. Yet it was not so long ago that a young police officer, on reaching Bombay from England and receiving

his posting orders to Shillong, was merrily shunted off to Ceylon! Everybody today knows of Sikkim and her capital at Gangtok, but it was only a few years back that the postal authorities were in a state of perpetual confusion over letters intended for Gangtok being addressed to Bangkok. Thimphu is, of course, Bhutan's capital, but, for the man in the street, it is still Punakha, as shown in the maps — if, indeed, he knows anything of Bhutan at all. And so it goes on. My work has taken me to little-known places and little-known people. And I have been happiest in little places, away from the crowded, clanging city. But much of the magic and mystery of the places I have known is fast vanishing. If an echo of it can be recaptured in these pages, I shall feel more than repaid.

Of exciting situations I have had my ample share — the civil disobedience movement of the Mizos in 1948; the Chinese entry into Tibet in 1950, with its repercussions on India's north-east frontier; the massacre of an Assam Rifles column by NEFA tribesmen in 1953; the Naga rebellion; the visit of the Dalai and Panchen Lamas to Sikkim in 1956; the Chinese incursion into Longju in NEFA in 1959, followed by their full-scale attack in 1962; and the tragic assassination, in 1964, of Bhutan's Prime Minister and my very dear friend, Jigmie Dorji. My difficulty in writing is that my relations with the actors in the drama have, more often than not, been on a personal as much as on an official basis. We have shared confidences which we hold as sacrosanct. My embarrassment is that I know too much! And I value my friendships too dearly to be prepared to abuse them.

This is to be no compendium of facts and figures, and the reader who is looking for population statistics and geographical information must seek elsewhere. It is not possible, within the compass of a single volume, to give even a summary description of the numerous and fascinating varieties of people inhabiting the Himalayan and

Indo-Burmese borderlands. My interest, in writing this book, has been not so much in the collection and presentation of factual data as in the study of situations, in evolving, from my years of experience among the tribal people, not only a personal philosophy of life, but a practical philosophy of work. If I have contributed at all to the shaping of the future of the tribal people of the frontier, I have myself been shaped and re-shaped in the process. My influences in early life had been Plato and Beethoven. My ideal, in those fresh and exciting days, was of the Philosopher-King, manifesting, in the exercise of his sovereignty, the identity, the indivisibility, of 'the good' and 'the beautiful'. The Adagio of Beethoven's Choral was my strength and consolation when, alone in a distant corner of Assam, I received news of my father's death. And as, with life's joys and sorrows, my experience widened, I won entry into the hallowed world of the last quartets.

It was through Beethoven, I think, that I was prepared, made ripe, for receiving the Compassionate Buddha's message. And my years in the Buddhist milieu of Sikkim and Bhutan affected and influenced me as profoundly in my later years as had the study of Plato in my youth. It was a traumatic experience during the Chinese invasion in 1962 that created a dividing-line in my life, and it is at this point of time, therefore, that I have thought fit to bring my present story to a close. For there has been a change, since then, in the quality of my life, in the direction of my purposes, with which I have yet to come to terms, and, until this is accomplished, I feel I have little more that is worthwhile to offer.

The problem that faces every administrator in tribal areas is that of 'acculturation'. Much of the confusion and frustration that troubles tribal people today stems from the difficulties of adjustment that follow their contacts with a more materially advanced culture. I have found in myself much of this same confusion and frustration, but by a



I

Lahore, Bedford, Cambridge

My memories of Lahore, where I was born around the end of the First World War, are few but vivid. I have no clear recollection of my maternal grandparents, but I *do* remember that there was always lemonade for the children when we visited my mother's home. My mother's maiden name was Cooper, and her father's business, as implied by the name, was wines, spirits and aerated waters. He was evidently prosperous, as he could afford to send five of his sons to England for their education and furnished a substantial dowry to each of his many daughters. On the death of his first wife, my grandfather married again, and my mother was an offspring of this second union. Those were spacious times, with no nonsense about loops and family planning. To this day, my dear mother has to do a little calculation before she can remember the names and tot up the number of her many brothers and sisters. Life in her home was a ceaseless round of parties and picnics — scrumptious eats and gallons of fizz. But for all his happy-go-lucky ways, my grandfather was also, it seems, a God-fearing man and left a considerable endowment at his death for establishing an *agiari*¹ for followers of the Zoroastrian faith.

I have very clear memories indeed of my paternal grandfather, who was a self-made man of enormous energy and initiative. He started business as a lone dealer in bicycles and sewing machines and ended up by amassing a considerable fortune through his daring enterprise in a variety of industrial ventures. He too, like my maternal grandfather,

¹ Place of worship for Parsees.

sent his sons to England for their education. His eldest son, my father, was one of the most brilliant law students of his year in London and a special prizeman of the Middle Temple. By temperament, however, he was shy and retiring, and not cut out for the hurly-burly of day-to-day practice in the Courts. His bent was study and research, and he surprised the legal profession by the publication, at a very early age, of his scholarly treatise on the Law of Limitation. This came to be recognised almost at once as the definitive work on the subject and has remained as such ever since, the seventh edition having been brought out over twenty years after his death.

My father was a strong-willed person, of great independence of mind. His life was devoted to the writing of legal treatises, which left him master of himself and of his time. When he was in the mood for work, the rest of the world just did not exist. We would often see a thin streak of light still showing through under his office door in the early hours of the morning, hear the tap-tap of his typewriter, and know that he had worked solidly through the night without thought of sleep or food. His physical discipline was abnormally rigorous. When well past middle age, he thought nothing of bicycling the fifty miles from London to Bedford, where our family had moved as evacuees during the early years of the war. If his mind was disturbed, he would suddenly leave the house, often without informing any of us, walk out into the country and not return until the following day. He was friendly and kindly by nature, but his shyness and absorption in his work precluded friendships, and apart from his family he was a lonely man, who found companionship in books more than in people.

If my father was something of an introvert, my mother is as opposite as opposite can be. She reminds one of the ancient Athenians in her irrepressible and uninhibited enjoyment of everything around her. She, more than my father, has been the architect of her children's lives. She was

determined that we should excel in all things, and, through her sheer determination, excel we did! She is the sun of our lives, and we revolve round her still, as in childhood, for warmth, comfort, strength — and fun.

A few years after their marriage, my parents set off for a prolonged holiday in Europe. My father had always admired the British, and it was during this trip abroad, I believe, that my parents first thought about taking their children to England one day for their education. I do not think they realized then, or wanted to realize, the full implications of this decision. My mother tells me that she envisaged a stay of six or seven years abroad, after which she could return home with her perfectly educated little chicks! We must have disappointed her as very slow children, as it took the English over fifteen years before I could be dispatched back to India, the finished article.

And so, according to plan, we left India in 1927, my parents, elder brother and elder sister, by P. & O. for England. My most vivid memories of Lahore are of Jehangir Manor — my grandfather's large yellow house in Lawrence Road, where I was born and where we lived; the zoo; picnics in the Shalimar Gardens; the great cannon immortalized by Kipling; ice-cream treats at Stiffles hotel; and the Cathedral School, where I learnt, fascinated, about the metamorphosis from caterpillar to butterfly. The zoo, in particular, always provided excitement, as it was quite near Jehangir Manor and the animals had a habit of escaping and seeking refuge in our family home. There was much consternation, for instance, when a bear unceremoniously broke into the bathroom where my sister was peacefully seated performing certain natural functions. We also gave asylum to a wolf. And one of my two 'foreign-returned' uncles had the signal distinction of having his hand mauled while feeding the lions.

We seemed surrounded those days by our several 'foreign-returned' uncles. It was obvious that they had

been over-lavishly financed and had acquired extravagant habits during their stay abroad. They took a very avuncular interest however in their nephews and nieces, to the extent of getting us all nearly drowned in the enthusiasm of a picnic excursion on the river Ravi!

But of all my childhood memories, I remember most the smell of rain on a dusty road. And even today, forty years on, rain on a dusty road will transport me as by a magic wand to my childhood and Lahore.

My father's two younger brothers, Homi and Saros, had been sent as boarders to Bedford School, after which they graduated at Oxford, ate dinners and returned to India as barristers-at-law. My brother Minoo and I were admitted as day-boys to the Prep. section of Bedford School and my sister Thrity to the Bedford High School for Girls. We spent our first few weeks in Bedford at the Cavendish Hotel, which became the base for our daily house-hunting expeditions. We eventually settled down in a double-storied house in Warwick Avenue, where we remained for the next ten years. A car, bicycles, radio, our little mongrel spaniel Bonzo, and our home was complete.

My mother is a great planner. She had already decided in Lahore that her elder boy, who wore spectacles and looked clever, should join the I.C.S.¹, and that the younger (myself), who looked pretty in his golden curls (I am reliably informed that I had golden locks when I was little), but had otherwise shown no evidence of brain-power, should grind his way to be a Chartered Accountant. My brother was undoubtedly clever and quickly started winning prizes. But he was always out for adventure and tended to be wayward in his studies. I, on the other hand, was the perfect little gentleman (I can hardly bear to think of my prim little self!), always ahead of time for everything, earnestly profiting from each golden hour. My only misdemeanours were

¹ Indian Civil Service, a *corps d'élite*, whose members are popularly referred to as 'the Heaven-born'!

when I was from time to time led astray by my wicked brother, who was then administered a double ration of punishment, my share in the crime as well as his, on the logical assumption that I had been, after all, merely a sleeping partner. By the time I left the Prep. school and joined the 'Big School' my diligence and virtue were already paying off and it was I who was winning the prizes.

I have written of my mother's zest for life. I still remember her playing the piano in our family home in Lahore; no soft and sentimental nonsense for mama, with the single exception of the 'Mother's Prayer', which she played with touching expression. But for preference she would choose a stomping bravura piece, all lightning and thunder, with complicated octave-runs and crashing chords like the opening of the Tchaikovsky Piano Concerto, while we petrified little children shivered with fear lest the piano, house and all should suddenly disintegrate. My mother also sang, played the violin, harmonium and sitar, and took lessons in the mandolin during our stay in England. Of her two mandolins, one was a beautiful instrument she had acquired during a visit to Italy, exquisitely inlaid with mother-of-pearl. Though her formal education stopped at school, my mother has always been insatiably curious, with the result that she has a wide range of knowledge on a variety of subjects extending from the kitchen garden to the Stock Exchange.

While my brother inherited my father's brains, my mother's artistic temperament is shared to some degree between my sister and myself. I remember playing little tunes by ear on my mother's harmonium in Lahore, and, when I was a very good boy, she allowed me to try my hand at her violin. Soon after joining school at Bedford, I was given regular violin lessons by Alfred de Reyghere and made rapid progress. Alfred was a top-flight musician and often used to play with the Isolde Menges Quartet, one of the finest chamber-music ensembles of the time. He was a

strict task-master, and woe to me if I didn't practise. At the annual Eisteddfod held at Bedford, I was regularly entered by my proud teacher as his star pupil and almost invariably carried off the first prize. My sister played the piano and there was always music in the house.

Amongst the most treasured experiences of my life was a concert performance, during my final year at Bedford, of Mozart's D major Violin Concerto (K 218). I have played the work often since, but never again with the verve and rapture of that far away schoolday outburst. And although my musical horizons have extended widely with the passage of time, I achieved that evening my musical summit as a performer — and the concert review that I have preserved these thirty years since, perhaps through some premonition that I would not again scale such heights, reads today as the epitaph of a part of myself that has vanished, so that I feel no sense of conceit in its resurrection, although I *recollect* as though it were yesterday the boyish pride with which I read it first:

'The most remarkable performance of the evening was appropriately enough given by Rustomji. Perhaps there were not enough people in the audience familiar with the conventions of the eighteenth century Concerto to realise quite how remarkable this performance was. The essence of these Concertos was an attempt to compromise between two things: charming music and brilliant musical effects — in other words to "de-vulgarise" musical fireworks. Rustomji took the more lyrical part of the movement in his stride, and when the cadenza came, just settled down and gave us a remarkably finished performance of one of the *most difficult* cadenzas ever written for this Concerto — not by Mozart, by the way. Our enjoyment of this effort was much increased by the evident relish with which it was given.'

A few years after my entering Bedford School, Humphrey Grose-Hodge joined as the new headmaster. Grose-Hodge

was undoubtedly one of the important influences in my life. Himself a Classical Scholar of Pembroke, he had joined the I.C.S., but retired prematurely on account of his wife's ill-health. Earlier in the century, Bedford was known mainly as a rugger school, with little claim to scholarship. Grose-Hodge soon changed all that, setting to work with true reforming zeal. The supposedly bright boys were hand-picked, and, from the age of twelve, put on to Latin and Greek, to the exclusion of everything else, in preparation for winning Classical Scholarships to Oxford and Cambridge. I must, by now, have been showing signs of illumination, for I was picked as one of the chosen few and rose in due course to the Classical Sixth from where, under the firm but affectionate discipline of 'George' Seaman, I took a Classical Scholarship to Cambridge. One of the results, however, of Grose-Hodge's methods was that the so-called bright ones were taught nothing of physics, chemistry or the most elementary facts of science. A car carburettor still remains for me, alas, one of the great mysteries of the universe.

But Grose-Hodge did not stop at Latin and Greek. His was the Platonic ideal in its entirety, including especially music and gymnastics. As it happened, gymnastics came to me as easily as breathing and I felt completely at home swinging grand-circles on the horizontal bar. I have had to perspire to be a Classical Scholar and to play the fiddle, but gymnastics, for me, was no effort at all and, from the age of thirteen until I left Cambridge, I remained undefeated in the annual School and University Gymnastics contests.

Left to myself, I think I would have chosen to teach as my life's vocation. I was deeply attracted and influenced by Plato and pictured myself as a little Socrates (but handsomer), encircled by a band of doting Alcibiadeses. But Grose-Hodge, no doubt aided and abetted by my fond parents, decided otherwise. I was obviously cut out for the I.C.S. The very idea of wasting a good classical education

on school-mastering after all the pains he had taken to prepare me for proconsular responsibilities in the Indian Empire! Stuff and nonsense! If I was interested in education, it must be in the direction of framing 'higher policy' for the millions on the Indian subcontinent, and this could only be by entering the I.C.S., not by school-mastering.

My father was a fair-minded man, and, though he was fond of me, felt that, as he could not afford to send all three of his children to Oxford or Cambridge, we should all graduate at London. Grose-Hodge, however, and my mother were set on my going to one of the older Universities. Grose-Hodge felt sure I should be able to win scholarships, and my mother, who had some money of her own, planned to make up the balance. As I had quite a pleasing singing voice, I thought I might also compete for the Choral Exhibition offered by Christ's College. In the event, I went up to Cambridge on a Classical Scholarship and Choral Exhibition, lived frugally and was not too much of a burden on my family.

I lived quietly in Cambridge, confining myself mostly to College rather than University activities. I was elected Secretary of the College Musical Society and President of the Milton Society for debating. Frankly, I disliked debating. I am highly-strung and get in a state of nerves over public performances of any kind, including concertizing. But my dear mother insisted I must do everything, and, much against my will, I joined the Milton Society, was voted the best speaker and elected as its President. I played the violin frequently as soloist both at University concerts and the more informal Smoking concerts held in the College Hall. We had a brilliant pianist at Christ's, Derek Kidner, who was soloist in the Rachmaninoff Piano Concerto performed by the CUMS¹ orchestra under Boris Ord. Kidner and I also played the Franck sonata for violin and piano at a CUMS concert to a not unappreciative audience.

¹ Cambridge University Musical Society.

My rooms at Christ's were in the first Court, directly over C. P. Snow's. Snow must be a man of boundless patience and charity. I used, in those days, to practise the violin at the most unorthodox hours — usually well past midnight. Never once did Snow manifest the slightest symptom of irritation. A saint indeed!

S. W. Grose was Senior Tutor at Christ's and in overall charge both of my studies and my personal affairs. Though a Classics man, his main interest was in coins, and my Classics tutor was A. L. Peck. Peck was rather a severe looking bird, but would usually open up after a sherry or two. He was the solid sort, who kept his oak sported while translating the more abstruse works of Aristotle for the Loeb Library. The Classical lights of Christ's in my time were both octogenarians — dear old Rackham and Rouse. Rackham was one of the friendliest souls on earth, with an unrivalled facility for translating English poetry into Latin and Greek. He was not really of this world, and we loved him for it. We also used to invite the great Rouse to read papers to our Classical Association. Rouse lived in the country and it was always rather a business organizing a taxi to take him back and forth. His talks were, of course, Homer, and nothing but Homer, when, for a brief hour, he would translate us to the battle-fields of Troy, to fight the good fight. My last recollection is of seeing him to his taxi outside the College gate after a latish meeting of the Classical Association — a little old man, shielding his brief-case from the cold drizzle as he waited patiently in the starless night, solitary and celibate.

The star in the Classical firmament was, of course, Sheppard, Provost of Kings. With his pulsating energy and great mane of white hair, he captivated every heart. I rather think he enjoyed looking older and more venerable than he actually was — the girls adored him and he was all the more at liberty to cuddle them fondly! Sophocles' *Antigone* was being produced under his direction during

my freshman's year, and the rehearsals were, of course, no more than Sheppard playing every part himself. The music for the play was composed by Patrick Hadley of Caius, and I was cast as a leading elder of the chorus. My great moment was my solo aria, 'Eros anikate makhan'¹ — into which I burst forth to this day in moments of high ecstasy.

I put in very hard work during my first two years, and took a comfortable first both in the Preliminary and Part One examination of the Classical Tripos. My scholarship award was enhanced, my choral exhibition renewed, and the College nominated me for numerous prizes. I was on top of the world and it felt good. My last year in Cambridge was rather bleak. Most of my friends had been called up for war service and it seemed all wrong to be toying with ancient Greece and Rome when the whole of civilization was on the verge of collapse. With black-outs and air-raid sirens, the charm of Cambridge soon vanished away, and, with it, the zest for study. I was not surprised that I missed a double first and was awarded only an upper second in Part Two of the Classical Tripos. But it was typical of the old-world courtesy of Cambridge that the Examiner in Classics, Professor Anderson of John's, should send me a personal note of explanation, almost an apology, for the examiners' inability to award me a higher ranking! I cannot say I was not disappointed. Up to now, everything had been roses, roses all the way. This was my first knock in life and doubtless did me good.

As planned, I was duly appointed to the I.C.S. Most memorable was the final interview, when I was summoned to face a formidable array of hoary ex-India hands, K.C.S.I.s and the like, seated in a row along one side of a long, highly-polished table in a stately, ornate hall of the India House of pre-Independence days. I had put on my best Sunday suit and sat shivering with fear in the vestibule until I was called up at last for the grim ordeal. I was

¹ Love, unconquered in the fight.

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serving those days as a volunteer in the Home Guards and the Royal Observer Corps, and had very smartly affixed the little badge of office of the latter organization in my button-hole. Sir John Woodhead was, if I remember right, the Chairman, and, after asking me what the badge was about, inquired how many enemy planes I had spotted during the previous week. 'I'm sorry, Sir, that's a top secret,' I solemnly and promptly replied. There was an amused murmur of approval among the grey beards, and I knew I had made it. There were no more questions and I received my letter of appointment, subject to physical fitness.

At this crucial stage, I contracted mumps and found in my enforced seclusion the opportunity I had always been looking for of growing a beard. God has been good to me in manifold ways, but has not endowed me with unusual beauty of countenance. It seemed to me that my beard brought symmetry to my features, it made the rough edges smooth. In fine, I began rather to fancy myself in my beard and when my illness was over, decided, against violent opposition from all quarters, to retain it. My mother who, in Dr Johnson's words, has a bottom of good sense, warned that the examiners would have second thoughts if I presented myself before the medical board like Bernard Shaw. But I was young and headstrong and, as my mother had prophesied, was summarily rejected! I was instructed to appear before the Board again after six weeks. Chastened and beardless, I appeared and was finally passed. Understandably, I have never since ventured on a beard, though I have stooped on occasions to a moustache.

The India Office lost no time in flooding me with circulars on how to survive in the tropics. This was my first initiation into the world of cobras and cummerbunds. What with war-time rationing, shopping was no picnic, but I managed to get myself fitted out with breeches, riding-boots and a handsome Harris tweed overcoat, which I wear to this day in the high mountains. The India Office also advised that,

as my departure had been delayed by my illness and I would be several months late in attending the training course for I.C.S. probationers at Dehra Dun, I should procure for myself the prescribed books on Indian law and history and put in some private study during the nine-weeks' sea journey round the Cape.

I can see my mother and father as I tearfully waved good-bye to them on a cold winter's morning from a train puffing its way out of Bedford railway station. I never saw my father again, but I feel comforted that, as he said good-bye, he seemed proud of me.



Sir Tashi Namgyal, Chogyal of Sikkim

First contacts with Sikkim and Bhutan

My brother saw me off to Glasgow, from where, on the miserably foggy, drizzly morning of New Year's day, 1942, I embarked on an ancient cargo steamer of the Anchor Line. Within minutes, I unpacked my Hugo's *Learn to speak Hindustani*, and, fortified by beef tea, set to work with a vengeance. There were some Indian students on board who were returning home after completing various technical courses in England under the Bevan Scheme. I soon started prattling with them in broken Hindustani and could manage to understand and make myself understood in Hindustani quite competently by the time we reached Bombay.

Looking back, I am myself amazed at the extent to which I had become 'de-tribalized' during my sixteen years' stay abroad. In the course of my twelve years at Bedford, I had had no opportunity of meeting Indians, except for our Parsee relations who visited us from time to time. There were, of course, a considerable number of Indian students at Cambridge, but apart from the two in my own College, I saw practically nothing of them. Not that I deliberately avoided them — our paths just did not cross. There is a Zoroastrian House in London, where Parsees used to congregate on Sundays and the more important Parsee festivals. We were not very regular attendants, as a sixty-mile drive from Bedford was required, but we generally tried to make it on Pateti, our Parsee New Year. My brother and sister, who graduated from London, were very much more in touch with students from India, and our house in Ealing was quite a gathering place for homesick young

Indians, tired of boarding-house routine and pining for the warmth of family life. I, on the other hand, was *abysmally* ignorant of things Indian. *Swaraj* and issues so vital to India's future, remained as remote and obscure to me as relativity.

My main preoccupation on board ship was learning Hindustani and studying Ratanlal's commentaries on the fundamental substructure of India's legal system, the Indian Penal Code, the Criminal Procedure Code and the Evidence Act. In my spare time, I collaborated with a charming young lady bound for Baghdad in getting up a performance of some of the more well-known choruses of the Messiah. I had a miniature score of my own, and from this we copied out the various vocal parts. It was a laborious affair, but since it was a labour of love we enjoyed every bit of it. There was also a competent pianist on board (male and very elderly!), who was always ready to accompany me through the violinist's repertoire of concertos, sonatas and concert pieces. And so our nine weeks passed quickly and happily, in spite of the war news that became more and more dismal each day. We heard, as we were approaching the Cape, of the fall of Singapore and the movement of Japanese submarines in the Indian Ocean. We were soon provided with a convoy, were put through practice exercises in the event of our ship being torpedoed, and, of course, completely blacked-out after sunset, when we took it in turns to sit or patrol as night-watchers.

On reaching Bombay, I became at once an object of curiosity to the shoals of relations who had not seen me since I was a little boy of seven. I was swept hither and thither, from uncle to aunt and cousin to step-cousin, completely bewildered and confused. It was on landing in Bombay that I first received my posting orders to Assam. I knew nothing of India, and took it in my stride. Not so the fond parents whom I had left behind in England. My father proceeded to the Bedford County Library to look

up Assam in a rather out-dated encyclopaedia. Assam, he *learnt*, was *the place you went to if you had a partiality for earthquakes, floods, malaria, cholera, dysentery, rogue elephants and man-eating tigers.* It was a wonder that anyone survived in the place. My dear mother was petrified. I soon received a letter from her that I should not hesitate to resign from the I.C.S. if Assam was really such. There were plenty of avocations apart from the I.C.S., and she insisted that I must, at all costs, survive!

Speaking of avocations, I should mention that the Chaplain at Christ's had frequently called in at my rooms to speak to me of the merits of the Christian faith. He was of the view that I was ripe for formal conversion and should set out to India as a missionary, as a Servant of Christ. As a Choral Scholar, I attended chapel every alternate evening and twice on Sundays. I was comparatively sober, and if I had vices, I had evidently been discreet about them. The Church, I was assured, offered openings no less splendid than the I.C.S. Just think how nice it would be to be a Bishop! All this was no doubt well meant, but I was put off rather by this dangling of enticements. I enjoyed singing in the choir and the poetry of the Bible, but felt no irresistible call. And so I returned to India as I had left her, a Parsee and a Zoroastrian.

My relations in Bombay helped to get me fitted out with tropical clothing, topees and mosquito-nets, after which I found my way to one of the main music stores, Rhythm House, to provide myself with spiritual sustenance — a portable H.M.V. gramophone and two cases of records of western classical music. Armed with these, my violin, my viola, an enormous family leather trunk for my clothes and a shiny black tin trunk for my books, I proceeded by train to Dehra Dun to attend the training course for I.C.S. probationers. My shopping-spree in Bombay had left me with very little cash in hand, and on arrival at Dehra Dun station I piled my worldly possessions into a *tonga* (being

cheaper than a cab) and cloppety-clopped to the training-camp some miles away. My entry into the camp area was not exactly impressive. Gypsies might have done better. But it was a cordial reception all the same. I was shown to my tent by the entire troop of bustling, budding young officers, each more curious than the other to have a look at this latest accretion to the mighty steel frame of bureaucracy.

After the dust and smut of two days' travel across the Rajputana deserts had been scraped off, I was escorted to the mess for lunch. And here a strange thing happened. I sat down, quite by chance, at the very end of the table where the young Maharajkumar of Sikkim and his cousin, Kumar Jigmie Dorji of Bhutan, were seated. During the course of that first lunch in Dehra Dun was laid the foundation of two life-long friendships and also, in a sense, of my career. We discussed each other's ages and discovered that I was the eldest, but only just. And so, from that first day of our meeting, they decided to call me 'Uncle', and we became inseparables.

With Jigmie Dorji, or 'Jigs' as he was affectionately called, it was a case, I think, of attraction of opposites. Jigs was an out-and-out extrovert and was infinitely amused by this strange fish from foreign waters and its mysterious ways and habits. If I had time off from work, I would retire to my tent, instead of dawdling in the mess, and regale myself with Beethoven and Mozart. This was too much for Jigs. 'Come off it, Uncle,' he would call, and physically drag me out. But, with all our differences, there was one thing we had in common. Although before coming to Dehra Dun, I had never ridden anything more dignified than a donkey at the seaside, within a few days our riding-master was embarrassing me with his repeated, 'Shabash, Rustum saheb, Shabash!' Jigs loved horses and anything connected with horses, — and I clearly came within the latter category. Neither of us ever quite outgrew the careless abandon of youth, and when he was cruelly assassinated,

twenty years later, he was the same unaffected, generous and full-blooded Jigs of our Dehra Dun adolescence.

The Maharajkumar of Sikkim¹ was a more complex personality and we were temperamentally more akin to each other. He had recently lost his elder brother, a gallant young officer in the R.A.F., and had thus become the heir-apparent. The Maharajkumars of Rewa and Tehri-Garhwal were also attending the I.C.S. Administrative Course, but I was never drawn to them as I was to the two young cousins from Sikkim and Bhutan. The former were men of the world, of crowded cities and extravagant living. Young Sikkim was a shy, timorous fawn, lonely and lost in the vast Indian subcontinent. In me he found, I think, a kindred soul, someone even more friendless than himself, and quickly he took me under his tender, protecting care. We felt happy and at peace in each other's company, and he took pleasure listening as I played my gramophone or my violin, often until the early hours of the morning. He was quickly infected by my passion for music and it was not long before he asked me to help him select a nucleus for a collection of classical records of his own. He had his little extravagances and I confess it used to give me quite a thrill to smoke his gold-tipped State Express 999's. (We have both of us since given up smoking, alas!) He was curious to know about my family, and as I have always been such a delinquent correspondent, was soon writing letters for me to my own home.

He liked talking too of Sikkim and his boyhood days. As the reincarnation of his late uncle, Maharaja Sidkeong Tulku,² he was known in his country as Gyese Rimpoche, the Prince Reincarnate (literally, 'Precious Jewel'), and had had his early religious training in a monastery in Tibet. His uncle had been a person of exceptional talent, who had studied at Oxford, travelled round the world, and *almost* married a Japanese Princess. Public opinion in those days,

¹ Succeeded as Chogyal of Sikkim on the death of his father, Sir Tashi Namgyal on 2 December 1963.

² Tulku : Incarnate Lama.

notice, she should live outside Manipur and the arena of her former exploits. Gaidilieu chose to live with her brother at Anangba, a village in the Tuensang District of the Naga hills where I met her some months after her release. She had heard I was on tour and sent a message that she would like to see me. After having read and heard so much of her, I looked forward with excitement to meeting her, and I imagined her still, in my mind's eye, as the wild young thing of far-off days, fearless and passionate. But alas, twenty years of life in jail had left their ineffaceable stamp. The passion, the romance, the fire were gone. Her suffering had taught her resignation, and there was a gentleness and humility in her manner that moved me deeply. She brought me, according to tribal custom, an embroidered cloth woven by herself. She felt shy to present me with such a tiny piece, she explained, but she had been unwell and could find little time to weave. She expressed no bitterness over her twenty lost years. But jail had been especially hard for her, a tribal from Manipur, as she could enjoy no companionship, no common language even, with her fellow-convicts of Assam. The twenty years had formed an iron curtain between her and the past. I mentioned the name of Jadonang and expected to revive at least a flicker of the old flame. But it was dead.

The residential restrictions on Gaidilieu were in due course lifted, she was granted a small sum of money to build a house and a nominal pension for her maintenance. I met her again, some years later, quite unexpectedly, in Delhi. I was visiting Delhi as Dewan of Sikkim with a delegation from Gangtok, and we were being entertained as guests of the Government of India in Hyderabad House. I was pleasantly surprised to receive a telephone call one morning to tell me that Gaidilieu had heard I was in Delhi and wished to see me. When she arrived, she told me she had come from her remote village in Manipur to see the Prime Minister and place before him her difficulties. She

the present season, but if the villagers once find that there is a good market for their vegetable produce, they will themselves take the initiative in putting more of their land under vegetable cultivation. This was certainly my experience during the war in Sylhet District,¹ where there was an almost unlimited demand for fresh vegetables from the Americans. Every available square-yard of land was put under cultivation by the villagers, who derived enormous profits. I see no reason why we should not be able to help our Monpas similarly in the Tawang area. I should be grateful if the Director of Agriculture would please let me know after one month how much progress he has been able to achieve — e.g. amount of seed distributed, number of recipients, approximate acreage expected to be put under cultivation, estimated yield and approximate value of yield

We were given a stately and colourful welcome near Lohu village by Gompatsé Rimpoche. He is a reincarnate lama of great dignity, who has clearly reached a very elevated stage of spiritual development. He had taken great pains in connection with the arrangements for our welcome and informed me that he had performed special religious ceremonies so that we should have good weather for our journey.

Throughout the journey from Jang to Tawang, we were met by groups of Monpas engaged by the Political Officer to work on the road under construction by Army Engineers. They were smiling and cheerful, as Monpas always are, but everywhere I went, the villagers appealed that they might be relieved from having to work on the roads during the cultivation season.

1.30 p.m. — Reached Tawang, where we were given a wonderful and unforgettable welcome by the staff, lamas, Chorgens and local people. Mr Murty, Political Officer, Tawang, who had received us, according to custom, a few miles before we reached Tawang, had arranged a lunch-party on our arrival at Tawang, at which he had invited all the Chorgens present. This was a good idea, as it enabled me immediately on my arrival to make my contacts with the leading people.

After lunch, the Abbot of Tawang monastery, accompanied by the office-bearers of the monastery, paid their ceremonial call. I had an hour's private talk with the Abbot and was glad to know that the relations of the monastery and the administration are happy and there was no complaint against either our officers or our policies. The only request of the Abbot was for some help in rebuilding parts of the

¹ Vide p. 46.



NORTH-EAST FRONTIER AGENCY