between Sylhet and Poil even to-day. Our only means of transportation during the rainy season was the country boat. We could get a fairly large-sized boat with three men to drive it for between three to five rupees for the whole trip from the town to our village. It took usually from twenty-four to thirty hours, including stoppages for our meals on the way. The roofs of these boats were cut into two parts with an awning or opening in the middle that had a removable cover. This helped to divide the length of the boat into two parts or compartments, the front serving as an outer room for the men and the back, curtained off from it, served as a zenana. Generally we got into the boat after an early dinner in the evening, and came home some time the following night.

We have no large and tumultuous rivers in Sylhet. Our waterways, during the dry winter months,

reams that rise in the Cachar, the Tipperah or Jayantia Hills and flow ich or tributary of the Meghna or the eat river-courses of lower East Bengal. ...ring the rainy season and the autumn months the entire low-land of the district lies under water, and there is free boat transportation from one place to another across flooded wastes or paddy fields that always leave some margin of unsown land along the boundaries of the sown fields. Then there are small channels or *khals* that serve as drainage canals, which,

though dried up in the winter and spring, are filled during the rains and provide free passage for country boats. It was a pleasant experience to me passing through growing paddy fields, rich with the promise of the coming harvest, along the vast and weedless expanse of water that gave to my unillumined imagination the idea of the sea, through shallower water-courses smelling the cool scent of water hyacinths and other water weeds, or by villages half-submerged in water, resounding with the vesper hymns of the devout, or with the ribald songs of the gayer folk late in the night: and all these rendered our annual journey from Sylhet to Poil one of the happiest experiences of my young days.

But the most exciting part of the journey was when we approached our village. It is a rather large village; and as it stands on very low land, it lies practically under water during the rains and throughout the autumn months. It is divided into a number of *pallis,* or *paras* as we call them, containing a group of dwelling houses. These *paras* are converted into islands during these months. These *paras* are named after the principal families occupying them. Our quarter is known as *Pal-para* or the *para* of the Pals. There was *Sen-para* or the *para* of the Sens. The Pals and Sens were the oldest among the *Bhadraloks* of the village to come and settle here, and were, therefore, counted in those days as the most respectable, taking

precedence over the others (except, of course, Brahmins, who did not come really within the order of precedence among Kayasthas and Vaidyas) in all social functions. There was a *Deb-para* named after the Debs, another Kayastha family. The Brahmins lived in what was called the *Paschim-para* or the West-*para,* and there were in this *para* in those days, and are still, two families, who are not Brahmins, the Guptas and the Endas, who came and settled in our village long after the Sens and Pals and had not sufficiently multiplied to people a whole *palli* and give it their name. On the outskirts of the village there were the fishermen's quarters, called *Machooa-hatee* and the *Vedia-hatee* or the Gipsy quarters, and Mussalman-*para* which held the home of a very respectable family of Mahomedan zemindars. In the centre there were also *Teli-hatee* or the oilmen's quarters and the *Bania-hatee* or the quarter of the goldsmiths. The other castes lived mixed up with the rest in these *paras.* These *paras* were divided from one another by ditches or narrow canals that formed, during the rains, the main waterways of the village. Our boat had to steer its course along these waterways that intersected one another; and it was no easy thing for boatmen, not very familiar with these, to direct their boat to its destination, particularly in the darkness of the night.

As we approached our village, the boatmen oftentimes got confused by the intersecting waterways in it,

and commenced to cry out for guidance to our landing stage or *ghat*. Our own people were not more familiar with these as they frequently changed from one year to other. The directions and counter-directions given to the boatmen then commenced to create confusion and mutual protests and even abuse, causing considerable disturbance in the sleeping village, breaking the slumber of the people, who cried out from their beds, where the boat wanted to go and who was the passenger; and then there were cries of recognition and rushing out of beds and exchange of greetings and of friendly enquiries about health and clear directions to the boatmen; all these created a joyful excitement in us all. And when the boat stopped at our *ghat*, there was the auspicious cry of *ulu* from the women, and rushing out with light of the servants and maids, the greetings, the salutations, the questions and answers, and the hurry and bustle of getting on land, and the removal of the luggage. All these still linger in my mind, after seventy years, as landmarks of a period of life which was among the sweetest I have lived.

My father had no brothers nor any first cousins except on his mother's side, who, of course, did not belong to his family, but had their own home in their own village, though they used to live with us at Sylhet. And as my father practically lived in the town, our home in Poil was in charge of a dependent who formed, with his old mother and his wife and a

daughter or two, a part of our own household. His mother was much older than my father and used to call him by his pet-name of Ramdhan.* My father called her *Didi* or elder sister, and her son, Dagoo by name, used to call my father *Mama* or maternal uncle, my mother *Mamee* or maternal aunt. I used to address him as *Dada* or elder brother, and his wife as *Bau-di* or *Dada's Bau*. Slavery of a kind existed in Bengal at the time of my grand-father, and was not altogether unknown even in my father's earlier days. I think Dagoo's mother had been bought by my grand-father for a small sum ; or it may be that she was herself the daughter of some bond-slave of my ancestors. But though not of our flesh and blood, Dagoo was as much a rightful member of my father's family as myself. He was the master of our house in Poil during ten to eleven months in the year, and employed and worked the labourers and domestics required for the upkeep of the house. He responded to all the social invitations of the village as well as those from our friends and relations in the countryside on my father's behalf and as his representative. The tenants looked upon my father as their nominal landlord, while they regarded Dagoo as their real master, and uniformly treated him with the consideration due to his position as such. He collected all the rents and spent whatever was necessary

* His name was Ram Chandra Pal.

for the upkeep of the house or for other purposes himself, with as much freedom as if he was the master of the house and all its property, rendering a rough account of his stewardship to my father when he went home for the Pujas.

How my father's tenantry looked upon this "retainer" of my father was brought home to me once when I was passing through his estate on my way from Poil to Sylhet in the summer of 1875, after I had left school and had joined the University in Calcutta. It was my summer vacation, and hearing that my parents were staying in Poil, I went from Calcutta to our village to meet them. But they had left Poil for Sylhet before I arrived ; and I was going by boat to Sylhet with Dagoo (whom I always called *Dada*), a servant and a couple of Mahomedan *Payiks* or *peons* employed in my father's zemindary. There was a large dairy farm on the bank of the river in my father's estate ; and as it is usual for these tenants to make presents of their best dairy produce to the landlord if he happens to pass by, one of our Mahomedan *peons* went up to the owner of the dairy and asked for some cream and curd for me. The man wanted to be paid for his things ; but as this was refused, he also refused to part with them. The *peon* came and reported it to us ; and then *Dada* went up to the river bank, and called out to the milk-man in an angry tone. He came at once with due humility and, when asked

why he had refused to give the things wanted, he replied: "How could I know, Dagoo *Dada,* that you had sent for the things? The *Payik* came and told me that these were wanted for Bipin Babu. I did not know they were for you."

At this *Dada* introduced me to the dairyman, and the dispute was settled to the satisfaction of all parties. But this revealed to me the position that *Dada,* though a mere retainer or the son of a slave girl, had acquired in our household and among my father's tenants.

Dagoo was for a few days with us at Koterhat, when I was a little child of four or five. And I remember that he had a bad attack of cholera and was in a state of collapse for many hours, hovering between life and death, and how my father nursed him almost day and night, and how I was taken to have what they then thought was my last look of him, and how my mother, prevented by cruel custom from going out to attend his sick-bed which was in the outer or men's quarters, wept incessantly throughout the time he was ill, as if he was her own flesh and blood! His wife was treated by my parents almost as a daughter-in-law and had everything almost that my younger sister had. When *Dada* had children, two daughters, they were tended and brought up almost as my sisters, and my father looked upon them as his own, and could not rest contented until they were duly married. Dagoo came to Calcutta in 1883 with my

sister on his way to Gaya. I was then a disinherited and excommunicated son of my father.* Dagoo walked about the vast wilderness of this city in search of me, longing to see me once again. But he found no trace of me, and going to Gaya died there of cholera. My sister on her way back managed to discover my whereabouts, and coming to see my wife and child, told me the story of *Dada's* fruitless search of me, and how he died with my name on his lips, saying that there was one unfulfilled wish with which he was leaving this side, and that was that he could not see me once before he died!

Our home at Poil was a group of huts, built of bamboo and wooden posts with the walls of a kind of straight reed called *shar* in our vernacular, that grows in abundance in our parts, and the roof made of meadow grass supported by bamboo rafters. It stood upon two or three acres of land, including the two tanks or water reservoirs of a fairly large size, one in front of the house and the other at the back, reserved for the use of the ladies and protected from the public eye by high bamboo walls, and the houses of retainers and tenants stood on the bank of the outer tank. It was divided into two parts, the outer and the inner. The outer part consisted of a *Chandi-Mandap* or the house of the Goddess Chandi, which is

*Bipin Chandra embraced Brahmoism, but his father was an orthodox Hindu.

another name for Durga, where the image of the Goddess used to be set up every year during the Durga Puja, and where the other Pujas also used to be performed. In front of this *Chandi-Mandap* there was a big shed, with eight triangular roofs, and therefore called an *at-chala,* which could accommodate from two to three hundred people, all squatting on the floor. It had no wall, and was used as the music hall during the Pujas and as general reception hall on other festive occasions. To the east of this shed stood a long hut divided into two or three rooms, that combined both kitchen and dining room for our Brahmin guests, when we had any, and where sometimes such of our friends or relations before whom my mother and other ladies of the house could not or would not freely move about used to be accommodated when they came to visit us. To the south of the open hall was another hut, that opened on the north to the outer or men's quarters and on the south to the inner court-yard where the ladies reigned. This was the living and bed-room of the younger folk ; for me, when I grew up and was assigned a separate bed and bed-room for myself ; and my cousins and uncles used to occupy it whenever we were at home in Poil. The inner or the ladies' part of the house also had three or four huts, besides kitchen and cowshed. At the back of the ladies' quarters was the ladies' tank, and a fairly big compound on which vegetables used to be grown for the kitchen. A public

road, or lane strictly speaking, ran between the *Chandi-Mandap* and the outer tank which had a brick bathing *ghat* or platform. Some tenants were settled on the northern and western banks of the tank, and another lived inside our own compound, who belonged to the class to which Dagoo belonged and were related to him. The other branches of our family lived in this *para,* which was therefore called *Pal-para.* And they too had their own retainers living about them. There were also one or two families who, though belonging to the servant class, called "Singhs" in our parts, occupied a higher social status than our retainers, and who never inter-married with them. There were a few families of Malis or so-called untouchables of the scavenger group in this *para,* who were our dependents and had their land and homestead free of rent in consideration of the services which they were expected to render us in sweeping our yards and compounds and generally keeping the *para* clean. The other *paras* were also of this type.

And looking back upon the social life of our village, as it was sixty years ago, it is borne in upon me that inspite of our caste exclusiveness and the restrictions that obtained in the matter of eating and drinking between the touchables and the so-called untouchables, and the honour that used to be paid to so-called higher or *Bhadralok* classes by the so-called lower or common people, there was a far more real

and powerful spirit of democracy of a kind in our rural life than what strikes the eye to-day. There was a clear distinction between the obligations of caste and the obligations of the social life. For instance, no one in the village, however low his place in the scale of caste, would come and take his food in the house of the highest caste people, Brahmin or Kayastha or Vaidya, unless he was properly invited and properly received and served. He did not want to dine under the same roof or in the same line with the so-called caste people, but he claimed—and enforced this claim when occasion called for it—in other respects the same honour which was due from a host to his guest. He had to be served by the host or some one of his family, or some near relation who could legitimately represent him. In the house of a *Bhadralok*, no untouchable Mali would accept food served by another Mali or by a servant of the host, but it had to be served by a *Bhadralok*. This was a point of honour with them. The so-called Singhs or the servant-caste equally stood upon their own rights and dignities and would not touch food in our house on any ceremonial occasion or at any social function, unless it was served by us. And, I think, the same rule obtained in the houses of Brahmins also. Every class or caste had their own seats assigned on all ceremonial gatherings, and were equally served with *pan* or betel leaves and areca nuts and the

tobacco-pipe or the *hookah,* the different castes having their own *hookahs.*

Indeed, our caste prejudices did not seem, in those days, particularly in our village life, to interfere in any way with the freedom of our social intercourse. Our old ideas of this social intercourse were different. It did not mean what is called interdining among members of the different castes. The non-Brahmin never felt hurt because the Brahmin could not take his food out of his hands ; nor the Brahmin looked upon this thing as in any way a proof and sign of his social superiority. People used to take these restrictions as matters of course, which did not indicate any real personal superiority or inferiority. In Bengal, at least, we have no memories of any time in our social history when the Brahmin and the so-called untouchables did not freely mix with each other except only in the matter of eating and drinking. The untouchable Chandala used to address the highest Brahmin as brother or uncle and was similarly addressed by the Brahmin himself. These social honours used to go neither by birth nor by riches nor rank, but uniformly by age alone. And as no one could claim any credit for himself for having come to the world earlier than others, the order of social precedence or regard based upon age seemed to preserve the spirit of equality and democracy in the midst of the inevitable differences in learning or wealth or rank or even birth and parentage.

Our poorest and most untouchable neighbours were never excluded from any social functions in our house. They used to come and sit on mats reserved for them in my father's house alongside of the so-called higher castes, and used to freely take part in their conversation. And my father also used to go to their house every now and then, particularly if there was any illness or function there ; only he was given a separate seat from the people of their own caste. The very wide intellectual and moral chasm that our modern English education has created between the classes and the masses was absolutely unknown in my young days, particularly in our villages.

We had a *Tol* or Sanskrit Seminary in our village in those days presided over by a learned Pandit who had received the title of *Vidyalankara.* He was in some sense the leader of our village society. He interpreted the ceremonial law of the Hindus to our people, Brahmin or Kayastha or Vaidya. His house was open to all classes and conditions of people of the village, including those that are called untouchables. People used to go there at all times of the day, even when he was engaged in teaching his pupils. And in the interval of his discussions or expositions of the subtle points of grammar or logic or complex questions of Hindu ceremonial law, the amiable *Vidyalankara* could make time to exchange a few kindly words with these people, who often-times simply sat and listened

to his talk to his pupils which, of course, they could not really follow ; but all the same they spent some part of their time in an atmosphere of refinement and culture. And, it is this subtle atmosphere of good manners and noble thoughts and pure sentiments, in which our ignorant and unlettered people lived in our villages, which contributed to their higher humanity. All our liberal education notwithstanding, I am afraid, we have not been able to create or keep up this helpful atmosphere in the present social environments of our people! The most orthodox of our Brhamins were rigidly sanctimonious and exclusive in their religious rites and practices and in their eating and drinking only ; but in the other affairs of their life they were generally as free from exclusiveness as those of the most democratic among us, English-educated people.

The community in our village was, as has already been said, a very mixed one. We had not only almost every important Hindu caste but a fairly large Mahomedan population also. And the intercourse between the Hindus and the Mahomedans was almost as free and friendly as that among the different Hindu castes themselves. In my father's house we used to invite our Mahomedan neighbour, the zemindar, to all our domestic functions, except the Pujas, which he could not attend, though there was regular exchange of presents between us during the Mahomedan festival of Id as well as on occasions of marriage or death.

This Mahomedan neighbour, I still remember, used to send a piece of cloth and a couple of rupees whenever there was any *shradh* or after-death ceremony in our house ; and we used to return these to him on similar occasions. We were permitted to catch fish from his tanks on every festive occasion in our house as he was permitted to freely use our fish preserve for his own use on festive occasions in his house. In these matters no manner of distinction was made between our Hindu and our Mahomedan neighbours. And the general Moslem population of the village were treated similarly and practically on the same footing of social equality, within the limitations that caste and religion imposed, as the Hindu peasantry used to be treated. Our differences in religious faiths and practices made not the slightest difference in these social amenities and relations. There was perfect toleration of one another among members of both the communities.

There were neither carriages nor even bullock carts in our parts in my school-days. Everybody, including the ladies, therefore, had generally to walk from house to house on festive occasions, whether religious or social, unless occasionally palanquins or the lighter *doolies* were requisitioned for going from one part of the village to another somewhat distant part. Boat was used for this purpose in our village during the rains when the country was under water. But in our own *para* my mother and other ladies of

our family and class used to go about freely, just standing by the roadside with their back turned to any stranger, who might by chance be met on the road, to let him pass. And though there was some sort of zenana seclusion, it did not materially affect the freedom of movement or social intercourse between the sexes.

We had a Vaishnava temple or *Akhara* in our village. It stood very close to our home and was originally endowed, I think, by our family. It was not a very old institution. I heard that at one time we had our own family deity or the symbol of Narayana in our own house and our family priest used to come and attend to his worship twice every day. But when there was no one living from year's end to year's end in our village home, the worship of the god came to be neglected ; and it was thought advisable to transfer the image or symbol of the deity to some shrine and to place it in charge of some people whose vocation it would be to tend and worship it. There were other images and symbols in other homes also belonging to our clan, and these also went to this *Akhara* to be tended by the Vaishnava *Mohanta* there who must have brought his own images also. For, in my early days, there was quite a goodly collection of these in this *Akhara*. And I remember to have heard it from elders that this *Akhara* was endowed by our people with land sufficient in those days to pay for the upkeep of the institution.

An old *Mohanta* was the head of this *Akhara* in my young days; and he had at that time, I think, about a couple of assistants or disciples and two or three females of the Vaishnava mendicant class. There are two kinds of Vaishnavas, the householder and the mendicant. The householders, again, are of two classes. One class follows the rules of the Hindu Smritis, like those, for instance, of Manu and Parasara; while the other class follows the social law as given out by Shree Chaitanya or his friend and premier apostle, Nityananda. These latter Vaishnavas, though householders, do not really observe the rules of caste but form a new caste by themselves. The mendicant Vaishnavas take the vow of celibacy and poverty like the other religious mendicants of India and take up the staff and the bowl and affect the loin cloth or *kaupin* of the general body of our Sannyasins; and though they do not take forbidden food or things cooked by low caste householders, and frequently even by Brahmin householders, they do not acknowledge their birth or caste or family or home. I cannot say to what caste the old *Mohanta* in our village *Akhara* originally belonged; and as these Vaishnava mendicants, unlike those of the other orthodox Hindu Sannyasins, generally come from the lower castes of Bengalee society, these people did not receive that social honour to which their order and vocation fairly entitled them. And it sounds curious, but nonetheless

it is true, that though our family Deity, Narayana, used to be brought to our house from this *Akhara* for every domestic function as well as during the Durga Puja, the men who performed the daily worship of the Deity had no share in these ceremonial worships in our own house. Our family priest had to fetch the Narayana from the *Akhara,* and had to purify it by administering the sacramental compound known as *panchagavya* or the five products of the cow, and then worship it in due form. Indeed, my father never took food cooked or touched by the *Mohanta* or his assistants; nor would my mother receive the Vashnaveens of our *Akhara* into her living room, but she used always to receive them in the outer verandah.

This *Akhara* was a very useful centre of the social life of our village in those days. It combined the functions of both poor house and rest-house of the village. Whoever had nothing to eat or a hole to lay his head in at night, had simply to walk to this *Akhara* during the mid-day *puja* and offering of cooked food to the Deities here, to have a free meal, and any decent person could find shelter in the open shed or the music hall of the temple, that stood just in front of the thrones of the images, for as many nights as he wanted to stay there. All the Vaishnava feasts and festivals, *Dol-Yatra, Jhoolan-Yatra, Ratha-Yatra, Rash-Yatra,*—all these used to be held here with due pomp and circumstance, with feastings and music parties and

other amusements, in which the whole village took part. Besides these, there used to be *Keertans* every evening before the gods, and not only the devout elders but even youngsters, to whom the mere sound of *Mridanga* and cymbals and conch-shell made a powerful appeal, used to gather here to pass a pleasant hour of the evening. Sometimes the *Mohanta* used to read of an afternoon from some Vaishnavic scripture, the *Bhagabata* or the *Chaitanya-Charitamrita,* which was in Bengalee ; and people, with nothing else doing or going in the village, used to assemble here to listen to these readings. More frequently the gossips of the village gathered here to spend their idle hours in the afternoon in idle talk or in dealing out local scandals. We had neither public houses nor many people, perhaps not a single person, given to drinking spirituous liquors ; but the social purposes, which 'Pubs' perform in England and America, used to be more than fully met by this *Akhara* in our village. It had very little real religious value to the generality of our village population but it had an undoubted social value.

The present system of primary education was introduced in Bengal in the seventies of the last century. Before this, however, we had our own elementary schools both for the Mahomedans and Hindus of the higher or literary classes. We had, I think, some of these schools in our village also. There

was a teacher or *Guru-Mahashaya* in our *para,* who held his classes, in my early boyhood, in our own house. and little boys came here every morning and afternoon to learn their alphabet and elementary arithmetic and mensuration and practise Bengalee calligraphy under him. They used to squat on the ground and having learnt to trace the alphabets on the ground, used first to write words and sentences on fresh banana leaves ; and after they had sufficiently advanced in this art, and when they could be trusted to write out things with a certain measure of accuracy and their hand had become steady, they wrote out their lessons on dry palmyra leaves. Every boy, when he was allowed to write on palmyra leaves, considered himself quite learned and carried himself with a certain degree of conscious superiority over his fellows. No regular fees were charged by the *Guru-Mahashaya* but he received a little cash either monthly or annually from the more well-to-do people of the village, while the boys themselves made some payments in kind, in the form of rice from their home or the vegetables of the season from their gardens, every now and then. There was a *Moulavi* also to whom the boys of the higher classes of Mahomedans used to go for elementary lessons in Arabic and Persian. Before my time, when my father was a boy, boys of many a respectable Hindu family, who looked forward to employment under the Government, also went to the *Moulavi* and had their training

and education there. This Moslem school used to be held in the house of the Mahomedan zemindar in our village and, I think, the *Moulavi* was attached to their family mosque also.

Though copper and silver coins had already come into vogue in my young days even in our villages, *cowrie* shells were still current, to some extent, as token values among our people. Barter was still the general practice in local trade. There were cotton plants in almost every homestead, and the spinning wheel was found in almost every house. The widows, particularly of the so-called *Bhadrolok* classes, used to ply these wheels in their leisure hours, and yarns thus produced by them were exchanged for cloth by the weavers in the neighbourhood. Family was the unit of our social system. Almost every family had its own culturable land, either owned and held by them as freehold or on lease from the zemindar of the village; and agriculture was the universal occupation of the rural populations. They drew their main subsistence from land with the labour of their own hands and plied whatever other professions they pursued, more or less, during their leisure hours. This gave the artisans an amount of freedom which contributed both to the perfection of their art and the preservation of the basal elements of their humanity. And in the disposal of their art-produce they frequently followed the method of barter. Not only artisans but others who produced

the necessaries of our village life usually followed this practice. The oil-man pressed oil for his neighbours, in exchange for the mustard seed, grown by them on their fields. The carpenter exchanged the contrivance used for pressing oil for oil from the oil-man. The milk-man exchanged *ghee* and curd for the produce of his neighbours. So on and so forth. The ordinary economic life of the village was conducted upon barter in those days. Even the land-lord not infrequently received his rent in kind instead of, as now, in cash. And though people had few luxuries and had little cash in their house, life was much easier and pleasanter, with much less of storm and stress and the inevitable wear and tear of a competitive economic system, than it is to-day.

Much less money was in circulation in our villages, indeed in the whole country, then—sixty or seventy years ago—than now. But though judged by cash or money accumulations, people were much poorer than they seem to be to-day, they had enough to eat and enjoyed their simple life much more than we are able to do. A lakh of rupees seemed to our boyish imagination sixty years back as quite a fabulous sum; while to-day one hears accounts, almost at every turn of trade or land, of transactions covering many lakhs. And this very scarcity of huge cash kept down the value of money to its natural level in my younger days. Money could buy land or horses and build palaces and secure

gold and diamond ornaments or fine household furniture; but it could not buy social distinction in the way and to the extent that it does at the present time. Wealth was, no doubt, a power of a kind then as it is now. But its power and potency depended entirely upon how it was used and not at all simply upon its existence in the hands of its owner. No one was permitted to gain any social advantage over those who were otherwise his equals or superiors, simply because he could command large cash or credit.

In fact, money had little social value in those days, particularly in our villages. Social honour went generally by caste; and in those rare instances where caste considerations did not enter, as in the case of men with saintly character and reputation, it used to be regulated by what may be called moral and spiritual values. Wealth made no difference among men of the same castes; and the poor man with greater family prestige or higher social connections, within the caste rules, had precedence always of the richest man in the community. Indeed, people openly resented any display of wealth by the richer members of their caste, especially outside those who are called *Bhadraloks*.

We had a very rich zemindar or landlord in a neighbouring village who came of a lower caste. Once he had invited his caste-people to a feast in his house. He made great preparations for the dinner and brought out all his bell-metal platters and cups and glasses.

such as are usually used in the house of Brahmins, Kayasthas and Vaidyas, or the so-called *Bhadraloks,* for his guests. His idea was, of course, to honour them in this way. But when his guests saw all these things, they refused to sit down to their meals. The host was very much perplexed by their attitude. They went and stood silently at the door of the dining room, where cushions had been arranged for their seats, and plates and glasses had been set for their use. After repeated questions, the oldest among them, who had led his fellows, said in ill-concealed anger: "Have you invited us to your house to insult us?" The host fell from the skies at this charge and humbly begged their pardon, if unwittingly he had done anything wrong, and wanted to know what his offence was. "Your offence?" cried the old man, "Don't you know that we cannot entertain you in this way when we ask you to our house? We are poor, we have neither plates nor glasses nor carpet in our house. Have you invited us to insult us by this display of your riches? We won't touch food in your house unless you can serve us exactly in the same way as we are able to entertain you when you come to us." At this all the plates and glasses and cushions had to be removed, plain banana leaves had to be brought and set, and it was then that these poor people would agree to accept the hospitality of their rich caste-man.

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

EARLY TRAINING OF A POETIC CHILD

From morning till night the mills of learning went on grinding. To wind up this creaking machinery was the work of *Shejadada*—Hemendranath. He was a stern taskmaster, but it is useless now to try to hide the fact that the greater part of the cargo with

which he sought to load our minds was tipped out of the boat and sent to the bottom. My learning at any rate was a profitless cargo. If one seeks to key an instrument to too high a pitch, the strings will snap beneath the strain.

Shejadada made all arrangements for the education of his eldest daughter. When the time came he got her admitted into the Loreto Convent School, but even before that she had been given a foundation in Bengali. He also gave Protiva a thorough training in western music, which, however, did not cause her to lose her skill in Indian music. Among the gentlemen's families of that time she had no equal in Hindustani songs.

It is one merit of western music that its scales and exercises demand diligent practice, that it makes for a sensitive ear, and that the discipline of the piano allows of no slackness in the matter of rhythm.

Meanwhile she had learnt Indian music from her earliest years from our teacher, Vishnu. In this school of music I also had to be entered. No present-day musician, whether famous or obscure, would have consented to touch the kind of songs with which Vishnu initiated us. They were the very commonest kind of Bengali folk songs. Let me give you a few examples:

"A gypsy lass is come to town
To paint tattoos, my sister.

The painting's nothing, so they tell,
Yet she on me has cast a spell,
And makes me weep and mocks me well.
By her tattoos, my sister."

I remember also a few fragmentary lines, such as:

"The sun and moon have owned defeat,
The firefly's lamp lights up the stage;
The Moghul and the Pathan flag,
The weaver reads the Persian page."

and:

"Your daughter-in-law is the plantain tree,
Mother of Ganesh, let her be;
For if but one flower should blossom and grow
She will have so many children you won't know
what to do."

Lines too come back to me in which one can catch a glimpse of old forgotten histories:

"There was a jungle of thorn and burr,
Fit for the dogs alone;
There did he cut for himself a throne. . . ."

The modern custom is first to practise scales—*sa-re-ga-ma*, etc., on the harmonium, and then to teach some simple Hindi songs. But the wise supervisor who was then in charge of our studies understood that boyhood has its own childish needs, and that these simple Bengali words would come much more easily to Bengali children than Hindi speech. Besides this, the rhythm of this folk music defied all accompani-

ment by *tabla*. It danced itself into our very pulses. The experiment thus made showed that just as a child learns his first enjoyment of literature from his mother's nursery rhymes, he learns his first enjoyment of music also from the same source.

The harmonium, that bane of Indian music, was not then in vogue. I practised my songs with my *tambura* resting on my shoulder. I did not subject myself to the slavery of the keyboard.

It was no one's fault but my own, that nothing could keep me for many days together in the beaten track of learning. I strayed at will, filling my wallet with whatever gleanings of knowledge I chanced upon. If I had been disposed to give my mind to my studies, the musicians of these days would have had no cause to slight my work. For I had plenty of opportunity. As long as my brother was in charge of my education, I repeated Brahmo songs with Vishnu in an absent-minded fashion. When I felt so inclined I would sometimes hang about the doorway while *Shejadada* was practising, and pick up the song that was going on. Once he was singing to the *Behag* air, "O thou of slow and stately tread." Unobserved I listened and fixed the tune in my mind, and astounded my mother—an easy task—by singing it to her that evening. Our family friend Srikantha Babu was absorbed in music day and night. He would sit on the verandah, rubbing *chameli* oil on his body before his bath, his *hookah* in his hand, and

the fragrance of amber-scented tobacco rising into the air. He was always humming tunes, which attracted us boys around him. He never *taught* us songs, he simply sang them to us, and we picked them up almost without knowing it. When he could no longer restrain his enthusiasm, he would stand up and dance, accompanying himself on the *sitar*. His big expressive eyes shone with enjoyment, he burst into the song, *Mai chhoro brajaki basari,* and would not rest content till I joined in too.

In matters of hospitality, people kept open house in those days. There was no need for a man to be intimately known before he was received. There was a bed to be had at any time, and a plate of rice at the regular meal times for any who chanced to come. One day, for example, one such stranger guest, who carried his *tambura* wrapped in a quilt on his shoulder, opened his bundle, sat down, and stretched his legs at ease on one side of our reception room, and Kanai the *hookah*-tender offered him the customary courtesy of the *hookah*.

Pan, like tobacco, played a great part in the reception of guests. In those days the morning occupation of the women in the inner apartments consisted in preparing piles of *pan* for the use of those who visited the outer reception room. Deftly they placed the lime on the leaf, smeared catechu on it with a small stick, and putting in the appropriate amount of

spice, folded and secured it with a clove. This prepared *pan* was then piled into a brass container, and a moist piece of cloth, stained with catechu, acted as cover. Meanwhile, in the room under the staircase outside, the stir and bustle of preparing tobacco would be going on. In a big earthenware tub were balls of charcoal covered with ash, the pipes of the *hookahs* hung down like snakes of *Nagaloka,* with the scent of rosewater in their veins. This amber scent of tobacco was the first welcome extended by the household to those who climbed the steps to visit the house. Such was the invariable custom then prescribed for the fitting reception of guests. That overflowing bowl of *pan* has long since been discarded, and the *hookah*-tenders have thrown off their liveries and taken to the sweetmeat shops, where they knead up three-day-old *sandesh* and refashion it for sale.

That unknown musician stayed for a few days just as he chose. No one asked him any questions. At dawn I used to drag him from his mosquito curtains and make him sing to me. (Those who have no fancy for regular study revel in study that is irregular.) The morning melody of *Bansi hamari re*...would rise on the air.

After this, when I was a little older, a very great musician called Jadu Bhatta came and stayed in the house. He made one big mistake in being determined to teach me music, and consequently no teaching took

place. Nevertheless, I did casually pick up from him a certain amount of stolen knowledge. I was very fond of the song *Ruma jhuma barakhe aju badaraoa...* which was set to a *Kafi* tune, and which remains to this day in my store of rainy season songs. But unfortunately just at this time another guest arrived without warning, who had a name as a tiger-killer. A Bengali tiger-killer was a real marvel in those days, and it followed that I remained captivated in his room for the greater part of the time. I realise clearly now what I never dreamed of then, that the tiger whose fell clutches he so thrillingly described could never have bitten him at all; perhaps he got the idea from the snarling jaws of the stuffed Museum tigers. But in those days I busied myself eagerly in the liberal provision of *pan* and tobacco for this hero, while the distant strains of *kanara* music fell faintly on my indifferent ears.

So much for music. In other studies the foundation provided by *Shejadada* was equally generously laid. It was the fault of my own nature that no great matter came of it. It was with people like me in view that Ramprosad Sen wrote, "O Mind, you do not understand the art of cultivation." With me, the work of cultivation never took place. But let me tell you of a few fields where the ploughing at least was done.

I got up while it was still dark and practised wrestling—on cold days I shivered and trembled with

cold. In the city was a celebrated one-eyed wrestler, who gave me practice. On the north side of the outer room was an open space known as the "granary". The name clearly had survived from a time when the city had not yet completely crushed out all rural life, and a few open spaces still remained. When the life of the city was still young our granary had been filled with the whole year's store of grain, and the *ryots* who held their land on lease from us brought to it their appointed portion. It was here that the lean-to shed for wrestling was built against the compound wall. The groud had been prepared by digging and loosening the earth to a depth of about a cubit and pouring over it a maund of mustard oil. It was mere child's play for the wrestler to try a fall with me there, but I would manage to get well smeared with dust by the end of the lesson, when I put on my shirt and went indoors.

Mother did not like to see me come in every morning so covered with dust—she feared that the colour of her son's skin would be darkened and spoiled. As a result, she occupied herself on holidays in scrubbing me. (Fashionable housewives of today buy their toilet preparations in boxes from western shops; but then they used to make their unguent with their own hands. It contained almond paste, thickened cream, the rind of oranges and many other things which I forget. If only I had learnt and remembered

the recipe, I might have set up a shop and sold it as "Begum Bilash" unguent, and made at least as much money as the *sandesh-wallahs*.) On Sunday mornings there was a great rubbing and scrubbing on the verandah, and I would begin to grow restless to get away. Incidentally, a story used to go about among our school fellows that in our house babies were bathed in wine as soon as they were born, and that was the reason for our fair European complexions.

When I came in from the wrestling ground I saw a Medical College student waiting to teach me the lore of bones. A whole skeleton hung on the wall. It used to hang at night on the wall of our bedroom, and the bones swayed in the wind and rattled together. But the fear I might otherwise have felt had been overcome by constantly handling it and by learning by heart the long, difficult names of the bones.

The clock in the porch struck seven. Master Nilkamal was a stickler for punctuality, there was no chance of a moment's variation. He had a thin, shrunken body, but his health was as good as his pupil's, and never once, unluckily for us, was he afflicted even by a headache. Taking my book and slate I sat down before the table and he began to write figures on the blackboard in chalk. Everything was in Bengali, arithmetic, algebra and geometry. In literature I jumped at one bound from *Sitar Banabas* to *Meghnadbadh Kabya*. Along with this there was natural science.

From time to time Sitanath Datta would come, and we acquired some superficial knowledge of science by experiments with familiar things! Once Heramba Tattvaratna, the Sanskrit scholar, came; and I began to learn the *Mugdhabodh* Sanskrit grammar by heart, though without understanding a word of it.

In this way, all through the morning, studies of all kinds were heaped upon me, but as the burden grew greater, my mind contrived to get rid of fragments of it; making a hole in the enveloping net, my parrot-learning slipped through its meshes and escaped —and the opinion that Master Nilkamal expressed of his pupil's intelligence was not of the kind to be made public.

In another part of the verandah is the old tailor, his thick-lensed spectacles on his nose, sitting bent over his sewing, and ever and anon, at the prescribed hours, going through the ritual of his *Namaz*. I watch him and think what a lucky fellow Niamut is. Then, with my head in a whirl from doing sums, I shade eyes with my slate, and looking down see in front of the entrance porch Chandrabhan the *durwan* combing his long beard with a wooden comb, dividing it in two and looping it round each ear. The assistant *durwan*, a slender boy, is sitting near by, a bracelet on his arm, and cutting tobacco. Over there the horse has already finished his morning allowance of gram, and the crows are hopping round pecking at the scattered grains.

Our dog Johnny's sense of duty is aroused and he drives them away barking.

I had planted a custard-apple seed in the dust which continual sweeping had collected in one corner of the verandah. All agog with excitement, I watched for the sprouting of the new leaves. As soon as Master Nilkamal had gone, I had to run and examine it, and water it. In the end my hopes went unfulfilled—the same broom that had gathered the dust together dispersed it again to the four winds.

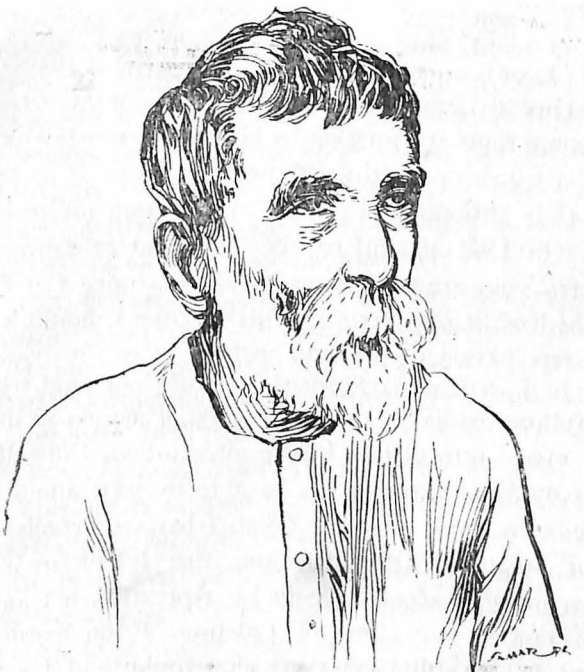
Now the sun climbs higher, and the slanting shadows cover only half the courtyard. The clock strikes nine. Govinda, short and dark, with a dirty yellow towel slung over his shoulder, takes me off to bathe me. Promptly at half past nine comes our monotonous unvarying meal—the daily ration of rice, dal and fish curry—it was not much to my taste.

The clock strikes ten. From the main street is heard the hawker's cry of "Green Mangoes"—what wistful dreams it awakens! From further and further away resounds the clanging of the receding brass-pedlar, striking his wares till they ring again. The lady of the neighbouring house in the lane is drying her hair on the roof, and her two little girls are playing with shells. They have plenty of leisure, for in those days girls were not obliged to go to school and I used to think how fine it would have been to be born a girl. But as it is, the old horse draws me in the rickety

carriage to my Andamans, in which from ten to four I am doomed to exile.

At half past four I returned from school. The gymnastic master has come, and for about an hour I exercise my body on the parallel bars. He has no sooner gone than the drawing master arrives.

Gradually the rusty light of day fades away. The many blurred noises of the evening are heard as a dreamy hum resounding over the demon city of brick and mortar. In the study room an oil lamp is burning. Master Aghor has come and the English lesson begins. The black-covered reader is lying in wait for me on the table. The cover is loose ; the pages are stained and a little torn ; I have tried my hand at writing my name in English in it, in the wrong places, and all in capital letters. As I read I nod, then jerk myself awake again with a start, but miss far more than I read. When finally I tumble into bed I have at last a little time to call my own. And there I listen to endless stories of the king's son travelling over an endless, trackless plain.



SIR P. C. ROY

USE AND MISUSE OF TIME

"Time is infinitely long, if we use it fully most things can be got within its compass"—Goethe.*

I recently delivered a lecture to a group of youngmen on "The Use and Misuse of Time," with Cowper's

* A great German poet.

well known lines* as the text, particularly with reference to how much a man can do if he strictly follows a routine drawn up by himself. I am convinced that a man can multiply himself ten times, if he does the right thing at the right time. During my several tours in England and on the Continent of Europe I always took care to have my breakfast arranged at 7 or at the least at 7-30, even in winter, so that I should have the rare luxury of enjoying an hour or two of reading before I went out. Formerly I could not read while travelling by mail trains as the jerking motion strained my eyes. But, of late I have so accustomed myself to this mode of travel as to be able to read almost an hour at a single stretch. When I have to arrange my tour programme the first thing that I look to is an assortment of select books in big type. When I am in the mofussil, *i.e.*, out of Calcutta, I am naturally besieged by visitors of every description and I am at home to them ; but from noon till three—generally the hottest part of the day—scarcely any visitor would call, and then I shut myself in and have ample time to indulge in my favourite recreation. I can say with Carlyle† that books are my chief recreation and I

* "The lapse of time and rivers is the same :
Both speed their journey with a restless stream;
* * * *
But time that should enrich the nobler mind
Neglected, leaves a dreary waste behind."

† A great English writer of the nineteenth century.

sympathise with the great philosopher when he was anxious to get rooms in London away from the crowd, where he could slam the door against vexatious intrusions. Indeed, Carlyle's vast reading and linguistic acquirements were to a large extent due to his burying himself at Mainhill. Thus, before his departure for London, "there was, perhaps, no one of his age in Scotland or England who knew so much and had seen so little. He had read enormously—history, poetry, philosophy; the whole range of modern literature—French, German and English—was more familiar to him, perhaps, than to any man living of his own age."

I have always regarded my study room as my sanctum but it is often a difficult task to preserve its inviolability. Even our educated men feel no hesitation in intruding, no matter whether one is intent upon a book or deep over a problem. Macaulay's voracious appetite for reading may also be mentioned here. "Literature has saved my life and my reason;" he says, "my mornings from five to nine (at Calcutta)* are quite my own. I still give them to ancient literature." But such a feat is, of course, an impossibility with me. Even if I had the will I have not the strength for it. As I suffer from disturbed sleep I cannot read for more

* Macaulay was a member of the Governor-General's Council in the thirties of the last century. He was a great lawyer, historian, essayist and orator.

than an hour and a quarter in the morning at a stretch.

Newton was almost in a state of trance on the eve of his propounding the Gravitation Theory. Imagine what would have happened if he had been constantly disturbed by exacting visitors. Coleridge* has left on record his bitter experiences in this respect—how, while he was in a reverie, he had composed two or three hundred lines of *Kubla Khan* or *A Vision in a Dream*. On awaking he was putting them on paper, when he was suddenly called out on business and detained for more than an hour and, on his return to his room, he found to his no small surprise and mortification that he retained only some vague and dim recollections of the general purport of the vision. Emerson† also bitterly complains: "At times the whole world seems to be in conspiracy to importune you with emphatic trifles. Live no longer to the expectation of these deceived and deceiving people with whom we converse. Say to them: 'O father, O mother, O wife, O brother, O friend, I have lived with you after appearances hitherto. Henceforward I am the truth's.'"

One must, however, make the best of the situation one is in and need not fret over it. Of late years, it has been my lot to be literally besieged by people, especially youngmen, seeking information and advice

* A famous English poet of the Romantic Period.

† A great American prose writer.

on a variety of subjects, including the means of earning one's livelihood. Over and above this, I am flooded with letters from every part of India and my correspondents are sometimes exacting and inexorable. I am not in a complaining mood—as I know that I have brought much of such distractions on myself by my activities in various directions. I try to put the best possible face on it and emulate my exemplar, Marcus Aurelius,* whose motto was equanimity and "whose meditations composed in the tumult of a camp are still extant."

I advise my young friends to read carefully Benjamin Franklin's autobiography. Born of poor parents, Franklin had to earn his daily bread by dint of hard labour as a printer's apprentice. He had very little schooling, "as at ten years old", to quote his own words, "I am taken to help my father in his business, which was that of a tallow-chandler and soap-boiler" but he made up for it by his own efforts. As he could not afford to buy books he made friends with a bookseller. "Often I sat up in my chamber reading the greater part, when the book was borrowed in the evening and to be returned in the morning, lest it should be found missing". "During his spare hours he used to give full scope to his bookish inclination after having worked in composing the types and

* One of the greatest Emperors of ancient Rome. He is described as a 'philosopher in the purple.'

printing off the sheets". By and by he attained success as a printer, "for the industry of that Franklin is superior to anything I ever saw of the kind. I see him still at work when I go home from clubs and he is at work again before his neighbours are out of bed". Franklin afterwards made experiments in electricity on his own initiative and account and is gratefully remembered as the introducer of the lightning conductor and proved, to quote his words, "the sameness of electricity with lightning", acquiring thereby a European reputation in the field of science. It is not necessary to pursue here the career of the great Pennsylvanian who, as a diplomatist of unrivalled tactics and persuasion, had a large share in bringing to a successful termination the American War of Independence.*

Franklin has given us a key, as it were, to his happy participation in multifarious activities in the scheme which he drew up for his own guidance. "The precepts of order requiring that every part of my business should have its allotted time".

Many eminent authors and men of note have been known to work by fits and starts, to labour assiduously for 10 or 15 hours without break for days together and then lapse into inactivity. Spasmodic efforts have never been congenial to my nature. Whatever I have done

* The author refers to the patriotic and decisive part played by Franklin in that war.

I have done by slow persistent and systematic methods. The hare in the race with the tortoise was at length overcome by his crawling competitor. My most serious study or writing has often been finished in the morning before young people could make up their mind to shake off their lethargy under the folds of the blanket. I generally get up at 5 in the morning and after a brisk walk and light breakfast sit down to my study at 6.

A few words may not be out of place here on the choice of books. Very few people read with a purpose; they catch hold of a book at random simply because it happens to be ready at hand. "An indiscriminate literary voracity can scarcely contribute towards intellectual nourishment."

Railway travellers often repair to the book-stall and select a trashy novel, a shilling-shocker, and go right through it, the only thing which seems to rivet their attention being its sensational denouement. Novels of acknowledged merit as those of Scott, Dickens, Thackeray, Victor Hugo, Turgeniev, Tolstoi* have no doubt their uses. One should, however, be on one's guard in reading novels too often as thereby he loses his capacity and inclination for serious study. Light

* Scott, Dickens and Thackeray were English novelists. Victor Hugo belonged to France, while Turgeniev and Tolstoi were Russian novelists. All these authors flourished in the nineteenth century.

literature should only fill in the hours of relaxation. During the last five years and more my love of history and biography has got the better of my love for standard novels, so much so that I have begun to conceive almost a distaste for the latter. I approach a new book with a serious purpose, with feelings akin to those which agitate my mind when I am going to make the acquaintance of a person for whom I have conceived a high regard from a distance. Desultory reading has had no charm for me; in fact, my reading has been confined to a limited range; but over and over again I go through my favourite authors.

As Haldane* puts it: "I had learned that if a book is really worth reading, it must be read carefully through, and its standpoint mastered. That cuts indeed both ways, for it tends to reduce the number of books one can read."

Morley† also very tersely puts it when speaking of Spencer‡:

"Among other innocent conventions that he resisted, he read no books. There is something no doubt to be said for this in one aspiring to found a system. There are men who have lost themselves by reading too much. They find that everything has been said.

* A great British lawyer, statesman and philosopher.

† A famous British journalist, historian and statesman who was for some years Secretary of State for India.

‡ Herbert Spencer (1820-1903), a great English philosopher.

'It is after all the ignorant', observed the best read man of our time, 'like Pascal, like Descartes, like Rousseau,* who had read little, but who thought and who dared—those are the men who make the world go.' "

I have already expressed my fascination for *The Vicar of Wakefield*. The characters in it are so very human. Two of the most illustrious writers of the nineteenth century are unstinted in their admiration for it. Says Scott, "We read *The Vicar of Wakefield* in youth and in age—we return to it again and again, and bless the memory of an author who contrives so well to reconcile us to human nature." Goethe records: "It is not to be described,—the effect which Goldsmith's *Vicar* had upon me just at the critical moment of mental development. That lofty and benevolent irony, that fair and indulgent view of all infirmities and faults, that meekness under all calamities, that equanimity under all changes and chances, and the whole train of kindred virtues, whatever names they bear, proved my best education."

There are gluttons of books, or, as Macaulay calls them, "intellectual voluptuaries". These people go on devouring one volume after another without ever

* Descartes (1596-1650) and Pascal (1623-1662) were French philosophers. Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) was a French philosopher whose famous book *Contract Social* paved the way for the French Revolution of 1789.

pausing to think over their contents and these book-worms soon part with their thinking capacity or critical judgment. With them it is only the question of the number of books consumed, nothing else matters.

II

In order not only to while away the idle hours but to add to the enjoyments of life one should cultivate some hobby suited to one's tastes. Among those who have enriched science or extended the bounds of knowledge by pursuing it as a recreation may be mentioned the names of Lavoisier, Priestley, Scheele and Cavendish.* Diocletian† and Washington‡ in their old age after retirement from their arduous labours found solace and contentment in the seclusion of rural life and the practice of agriculture. So did Garibaldi.§ Others have found supreme delight in doing good to humanity, alleviating the distress of the poor, in comforting the stricken, and in various grades of social service; in a word, in philanthropic work. Others have taken to the cultivation of fine arts, e.g. music, painting, etc. In this matter no hard and fast rule can be laid down as tastes differ as much as do

* Scientists of the last century.

† A famous Emperor of ancient Rome.

‡ The hero of the American War of Independence and the first President of the United States.

§ A famous Italian patriot and warrior of the last century.

the idiosyncracies of man. It has been well said that Satan always finds some mischief for idle minds. Such occupations as have been indicated are the best antidote against seeking pleasures in frivolous pursuits or amusements. One should be self-contained and contented.

The more dependent you are upon others the more do you invite miseries; most people as soon as their day's occupation is finished are hungry for the club or for the company of prattlers and gossip-mongers, and hour after hour is whiled away in their society. They simply kill time. Above all, cultivate contentment. In my younger days I read in Addison's* Essays:—'I have always preferred cheerfulness to mirth.' Cheerfulness indeed acts like a lubricant to the wheel of life. There are those who lose their temper over a trifle, who are apt to fret and foam at the slightest provocation. Such people are always miserable. I envy those who can dismiss an unpleasant thing with a hearty laugh. Always try to put the most charitable interpretation on other's motives. Jealousy is also to be avoided; it gnaws into one's vitals. It does no harm to one against whom you nurse it, but it corrodes your own heart. Envy and malice rob one of contentment. There is again an intimate connection between the mind and the body. He who harbours ill-feeling forgets that his peace of mind is at an end.

* A famous English essayist of the eighteenth century.

"In discussing the influence of habits of business upon literary pursuits, Mill* considered that nothing promoted activity of mind more. He found, in his earlier days at least, that he could do much more in two hours after a busy day, than when he sat down to write with time at his own command. Bagehot† is a conspicuous example of the union of admirable composition with close attention to practical affairs. Gibbon,‡ as we all know, says he never found his mind more vigorous nor his composition happier than in the winter hurry of London society and parliament. Grote, on the other hand, who worked eight hours a day at his history of Greece, found the demands of his bank too severe before he got two of his eight volumes out."§

As a specific instance of how much literary and even scholarly work can be done in the midst of pressing and exacting business call, the life of George Grote, the historian of Greece, may be further discussed. About the age of ten he passed to the Charterhouse and when sixteen he was snatched away by his father, "who

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* John Stuart Mill (1806-1873), an English philosopher distinguished for his books on Logics.

† A nineteenth century English writer, author of a classical work on the British Constitution.

‡ A great English historian of the eighteenth century, author of *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*.

§ Grote, an English banker of the nineteenth century, wrote a standard book on the history of ancient Greece.

had only contemptuous discouragement for his intellectual pursuits," and apprenticed to his bank. He remained there 32 years and became head of the firm; he devoted, however, all his leisure to literature and political studies. He completed, it is true, his *History* (12 Vols) on his retirement from the banking house in 1843; but he conceived the idea of writing it as early as 1822 and all along had to read extensively for collecting his materials. Grote was withal one of the most untiring promoters of the new London University, and was a member of Parliament for several years.

The saying that the busy man has always ample time at his disposal is well borne out by my own experiences. It is the lazy and indolent and unmethodical who complain of lack of time to attend to every day routine work, not to speak of urgent matters.

Cromwell fights the battle of Dunbar, one of the bloodiest in the campaign, on September 3, 1650; the whole day is almost taken up in the fight as also in the pursuit of the fugitive enemy. "On the morrow (i.e., 4th September) the Lord General sits down to write seven letters in succession; one is a despatch of some eight pages addressed to Speaker Lenthall. Amongst these one is also 'for my beloved wife Elizabeth Cromwell' and still another for his 'loving brother Richard Mayor', father-in-law of his son Richard."

The battle of Worcester was fought on the evening of Wednesday, 3rd September, 1651; "anniversary of that at Dunbar last year"; Cromwell "did lead the van in person, . . . and the deadliest tug of war begins. .... The fighting of the Scots was fierce and desperate. My Lord General did exceedingly hazard himself, riding up and down in the midst of the fire." It was "as stiff a contest for four or five hours, as ever I have seen".

On the same day at ten o'clock at night, i.e., almost immediately the battle was over, Cromwell writes an account of it to Speaker Lenthall "being so weary, and scarce able to write, yet I thought it my duty to let you know this much".

I cite these particular instances only to show that great men have at their command serene composure and imperturbable mood and being methodical are accustomed to look to many things side by side and do justice to each. Carlyle, always given to hero-worship, calls Cromwell the largest soul in England. There may be differences of opinion on this point. The Poet in fact regrets that Cromwell was not "guiltless of his country's blood".*

Still another example: Mustapha Kemal Pasha, who is almost adored by his countrymen as the saviour of modern Turkey, is a warrior, statesman, reformer

* The reference is to Gray's *Elegy*, where the poet speaks of "Some Cromwell, guiltless of his country's blood."

all rolled into one ; he finds time to work out everything in connection with the affairs of Angora and discuss important measures with his ministers and inspires them. And what is the secret of his many-sided activities? Miss Grace Ellison has summed it up in a few lines:

"He (Mustapha Kemal Pasha) has a power of concentration which is remarkable, and can apply it immediately to any subject, emptying his mind of whatever may have occupied it the moments before."

Let me again bring forward another example and a living one—and an embodiment of non-violence and bloodless warfare. Mahatma Gandhi, because of his method and punctuality, in the midst of his pre-occupations, carrying on momentous correspondence and interviews with the Viceroy and the Home Secretary, flooded every day with hundreds of telegrams and letters, receiving callers of diverse descriptions and giving them audience—writing articles for *Young India** and so on—yet finds time to write letters on his own initiative to his numerous friends and fellow-workers in the cause to which he has dedicated himself. I have always been shy of intruding myself upon his precious time and do not remember to have ever written to him during the last couple of years and more ; yet on reading my appeal in the papers to the

* A journal, now no longer in existence; it has now been replaced by "Harijan".

philanthropic citizens of Bombay he finds time to write two lengthy letters to me and my righthand man in the Flood Relief operations.

Nature has, though to a limited extent, endowed me with the gift of "emptying my mind of whatever may have occupied it the moments before"; and this has enabled me sometimes to attend to half-a-dozen things in the course of the day.

III

If any one were to ask me what period of my life has been most active, I would unhesitatingly answer: From sixty onwards. During this space of time I have toured throughout the length and breadth of this vast peninsula, at least 200,000 miles, in open Exhibitions, National Institutions and preaching the gospel of Swadeshi; over and above that I have been to Europe twice. But a glance at my daily routine of work will convince any one that in spite of my numerous pre-occupations I have never allowed my research at the laboratory to suffer though the universal opinion in India is that I must have bade farewell to it long ago. It is true that when one's activities are spread over a broad area, scientific work cannot possibly receive that degree of attention which a secluded recluse can afford to bring to bear upon it. In order, however, to make up for this sort of diversion of my energies, I have been

under the necessity of curtailing my holidays and vacations. Formerly it was my custom to spend fully a month of the summer vacation in my native village ; of late, I have to be contented with only flying visits to several places at Khulna or elsewhere. The whole of the long (summer) vacation minus 12 to 15 days as also the Puja, Christmas and Easter holidays have found me glued to my laboratory. In fact, the several trips to and from Bombay, Madras, Bangalore, Lahore, Nagpur, etc. are regarded as portions of my holiday recreations. It will thus be seen that I have always taken good care to make up for these diversions or distractions. Throughout the last 21 years it has been my custom to spend on an average a couple of hours in the *maidan* in all seasons of the year, which practically does away with the necessity of recouping my energies by an exodus to the hill stations. Moreover, I have always avoided work requiring continuous strain, which may tell upon health and which certainly calls for prolonged rest or absolute abstention from arduous labours.

During the last half a century, in consideration of my health I have had to abstain from any and every kind of mental labour after 5 or 5-30 in the afternoon except when I have sojourned in the cold climes and even then I have only indulged in reading light literature for an hour or so before going to bed. My intimate connection with so many industrial concerns

has no doubt taxed a good deal of my time and attention, but by contrivance I have always found it possible to dovetail all such activities in with the special call on my time—I mean, research. In fact, the rigid adherence to the daily routine has left me ample time for the pursuit of my favourite occupation. I can well realise the truth of Goethe's saying: "Time is infinitely long, if we use it fully most things can be got within its compass."

MAHATMA GANDHI

EXPERIMENTS WITH TRUTH IN SCHOOL

I was not regarded as a dunce at the High School. I always enjoyed the affection of my teachers. Certificates of progress and character used to be sent to the parents every year. I never had a bad certificate. In fact, I even won prizes after I passed out of the second standard. In the fifth and sixth I obtained

scholarships of rupees four and ten respectively, an achievement for which I have to thank good luck more than my own merit. For the scholarships were not open to all, but reserved for the best boys amongst those coming from the Sorath Division of Kathiawad. And in those days there could not have been many boys from Sorath in a class of forty to fifty.

My own recollection is that I had not any high regard for my ability. I used to be astonished whenever I won prizes and scholarships. But I very jealously guarded my character. The least little blemish drew tears from my eyes. When I merited, or seemed to the teacher to merit a rebuke, it was unbearable for me. I remember having once received corporal punishment. I did not so much mind the punishment, as the fact that it was considered my desert. I wept piteously. That was when I was in the first or second standard. There was another such incident during the time when I was in the seventh standard. Dorabji Edulji Gimi was the Headmaster then. He was popular among boys, as he was a disciplinarian, a man of method and a good teacher. He had made gymnastics and cricket compulsory for boys of the upper standards. I disliked both. I never took part in any exercise, cricket or football, before they were made compulsory. My shyness was one of the reasons for this aloofness, which I now see was wrong. I then had the false notion that gymnastics had nothing to do with educa-

tion. Today I know that physical training should have as much place in the curriculum as mental training.

I may mention, however, that I was none the worse for abstaining from exercise. That was because I had read in books about the benefits of long walks in the open air, and having liked the advice, I had formed a habit of taking walks, which has still remained with me. These walks gave me a fairly hardy constitution.

The reason of my dislike for gymnastics was my keen desire to serve as nurse to my father. As soon as the school closed, I would hurry home and begin serving him. Compulsory exercise came directly in the way of this service. I requested Mr. Gimi to exempt me from gymnastics so that I might be free to serve my father. But he would not listen to me. Now it so happened that one Saturday, when we had our school in the morning, I had to go from home to the school for gymnastics at 4 o'clock in the afternoon. I had no watch, and the clouds deceived me. Before I reached the school the boys had all left. The next day Mr. Gimi examining the roll found me marked absent. Being asked the reason for absence, I told him what had happened. He refused to believe me and ordered me to pay a fine of one or two annas (I cannot now recall how much).

I was convicted of lying. That deeply pained me. How was I to prove my innocence? There was no way. I cried in deep anguish. I saw that a man of

truth must also be a man of care. This was the first and last instance of my carelessness in school. I have a faint recollection that I finally succeeded in getting the fine remitted.

The exemption from exercise was of course obtained, as my father wrote himself to the Headmaster saying that he wanted me at home after school. But though I was none the worse for having neglected exercise, I am still paying the penalty of another neglect. I do not know whence I got the notion that good handwriting was not a necessary part of education. but I retained it until I went to England. When later, especially in South Africa, I saw the beautiful handwriting of lawyers and young men born and educated in South Africa, I was ashamed of myself and repented of my neglect. I saw that bad handwriting should be regarded as a sign of an imperfect education. I tried later to improve mine, but it was too late. I could never repair the neglect of my youth. Let every young man and woman be warned by my example, and understand that good handwriting is a necessary part of education. I am now of opinion that children should first be taught the art of drawing before how to write. Let the child learn his letters by observation as he does different objects, such as flowers, birds, etc., and let him learn handwriting only after he has learnt to draw objects. He will then write a beautifully formed hand.

Two more reminiscences of my school days are worth recording. I had lost one year because of marriage, and the teacher wanted me to make good the loss by skipping a class—a privilege usually allowed to industrious boys. I, therefore, had only six months in the third standard and was promoted to the fourth after the examinations which are followed by the summer vacation. English became the medium of instruction in most subjects from the fourth standard. I found myself completely at sea. Geometry was a new subject in which I was not particularly strong and the English medium made it still more difficult for me. The teacher taught the subject very well, but I could not follow him. Often I would lose heart and think of going back to the third standard, feeling that the packing of two years' studies into a single year was too ambitious. Yet this would not only discredit me, but also the teacher, because counting on my industry he had recommended my promotion. So the fear of the double discredit kept me to my post. When, however, with much effort I reached the thirteenth proposition of Euclid, the utter simplicity of the subject was suddenly revealed to me. A subject which only required a pure and simple use of one's reasoning powers could not be difficult. Ever since that time Geometry has been both easy and interesting for me.

Sanskrit, however, proved a harder task. In Geometry there was nothing to memorise, whereas in

Sanskrit. I thought, everything had to be learnt by heart. This subject also was commenced from the fourth standard. As soon as I entered the sixth I became disheartened. The teacher was a hard task-master, anxious, as I thought, to force the boys. There was a sort of rivalry going on between the Sanskrit and the Persian teachers. The Persian teacher was lenient. The boys used to talk among themselves that Persian was very easy and that the Persian teacher very good and considerate to the students. The 'easiness' tempted me and one day I sat in the Persian class. The Sanskrit teacher was grieved. He called me to his side and said: 'How can you forget that you are the son of a Vaishnava father? Won't you learn the language of your own religion? If you have any difficulty, why not come to me? I want to teach you students Sanskrit to the best of my ability. As you proceed further, you will find in it things of absorbing interest. You should not lose heart. Come and sit again in the Sanskrit class'.

This kindness put me to shame. I could not disregard my teacher's affection. Today, I cannot but think with gratitude of Krishnashankar Pandya. For if I had not acquired the little Sanskrit that I learnt then, I should have found it difficult to take any interest in our sacred books. In fact, I deeply regret that I was not able to acquire a more thorough knowledge of the language, because I have since realised that every

Hindu boy and girl should possess sound Sanskrit learning.

It is now my opinion that in all Indian curricula of higher education there should be a place for Hindi, Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic and English, besides, of course, for vernacular. This big list need not frighten anyone. If our education were more systematic, and the boys free from the burden of having to learn their subjects through a foreign medium, I am sure, learning all these languages would not be an irksome task, but a perfect pleasure. A scientific knowledge of one language makes a knowledge of other languages comparatively easy.

In reality, Hindi, Gujarati and Sanskrit may be regarded as one language, and Persian and Arabic also as one. Though Persian belongs to the Aryan, and Arabic to the Semitic, family of languages, there is a close relationship between Persian and Arabic, because both claim their full growth through the rise of Islam. Urdu has adopted the Hindi grammar and its vocabulary is mainly Persian and Arabic, and he who would learn good Urdu must learn Persian and Arabic, as one who would learn good Gujarati, Hindi, Bengali, or Marathi, must learn Sanskrit.

PANDIT JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

IMPRESSIONS OF PRISON LIFE

Two of us were transferred together from the Bareilly District Gaol to the Dehra Dun Gaol—Govind Ballabh Pant* and I. To avoid the possibility of a demonstration, we were not put on the train at

* Later on Chief Minister of U. P.

Bareilly, but at a wayside station fifty miles out. We were taken secretly by motor-car at night, and, after many months of seclusion, that drive through the cool night air was a rare delight.

Before we left Bareilly Gaol, a little incident took place which moved me then and is yet fresh in my memory. The Superintendent of Police of Bareilly, an Englishman, was present there, and, as I got into the car, he handed to me rather shyly a packet which he told me contained old German illustrated magazines. He said that he had heard that I was learning German and so he had brought these magazines for me. I had never met him before, nor have I seen him since. I do not even know his name. This spontaneous act of courtesy and the kindly thought that prompted it touched me and I felt very grateful to him.

Personally, I have been very fortunate and, almost invariably, I have received courtesy from my own countrymen as well as from the English. Even my gaolers and the policemen, who have arrested or escorted me as a prisoner from place to place, have been kind to me, and much of the bitterness of conflict and the sting of gaol life has been toned down because of this human touch. It was not surprising that my own countrymen should treat me so, for I had gained a measure of notoriety and popularity among them. Even for Englishmen I was an individual and not merely one of the mass, and, I imagine, the fact that

I had received my education in England, and especially my having been to an English public school, brought me nearer to them. Because of this they could not help considering me as more or less civilised after their own pattern, however perverted my public activities appeared to be. Often I felt a little embarrassed and humiliated because of this special treatment when I compared my lot with that of most of my colleagues.

Despite all these advantages that I had, gaol was gaol, and the oppressive atmosphere of the place was sometimes almost unbearable. The very air of it was full of violence and meanness and graft and untruth : there was either cringing or cursing. A person who was at all sensitive was in a continuous state of tension. Trivial occurrences would upset one. A piece of bad news in a letter, some item in the newspaper, would make one almost ill with anxiety or anger for a while. Outside there was always relief in action, and various interests and activities produced an equilibrium of the mind and body. In prison there was no outlet and one felt bottled up and repressed, and inevitably, one took one-sided and rather distorted views of happenings. Illness in gaol was particularly distressing.

And yet I managed to accustom myself to the gaol routine, and with physical exercise and fairly hard mental work kept fit. Whatever the value of work and exercise might be outside, they are essential in gaol, for without them one is apt to go to pieces. I

adhered to a strict time-table and, in order to keep up to the mark, I carried on with as many normal habits as I could, such as the daily shave (I was allowed a safety razor). I mention this minor matter because, as a rule, people gave it up and slacked in other ways. After a hard day's work, the evening found me pleasantly tired and sleep was welcomed.

And so the days passed, and the weeks and the months. But sometimes a month would stick terribly and would not end, or so it seemed. And sometimes I would feel bored and fed up and angry with almost everything and everybody—with my companions in prison, with the gaol staff, with people outside for something they had done or not done, with the British Empire (but this was a permanent feeling), and above all with myself. I would become a bundle of nerves, very susceptible to various humours caused by gaol life. Fortunately I recovered soon from these humours.

Interview days were the red letter days in gaol. How one longed for them and waited for them and counted the days! And after the excitement of the interview there was the inevitable reaction and a sense of emptiness. If, as sometimes happened, the interview was not a success, because of some bad news which upset me, or some other reason, I would feel miserable afterwards. There were gaol officials present of course at the interviews, but two or three times at Bareilly there was in addition a C. I. D. man present with paper

and pencil eagerly taking down almost every word of the conversation. I found this exceedingly irritating, and these interviews were complete failures.

And then I gave up these precious interviews because of the treatment my mother and wife had received in the course of an interview in the Allahabad Gaol and afterwards from the Government. For nearly seven months I had no interview. It was a dreary time for me, and when at the end of that period I decided to resume interviews and my people came to see me, I was almost intoxicated with the joy of it. My sister's little children also came to see me, and when a tiny one wanted to mount on my shoulder, as she used to do, it was more than my emotions could stand. That touch of home life, after the long yearning for human contacts, upset me.

When interviews stopped, the fortnightly letters from home or from some other gaol (for both my sisters were in prison) became all the more precious and eagerly expected. If the letter did not come on the appointed day I was worried. And yet when it did come, I almost hesitated to open it. I played about with it as one does with an assured pleasure, and at the back of my mind there was also a trace of fear lest the letter contain any news or reference which might annoy me. Letter writing and receiving in gaol were always serious incursions on a peaceful and unruffled existence. They produced an emotional state which

was disturbing, and for a day or two afterwards one's mind wandered and it was difficult to concentrate on the day's work.

In Naini Prison and Bareilly Gaol I had several companions. In Dehra Dun there were three of us to begin with—Govind Ballabh Pant, Kunwar Anand Singh of Kashipur and I—but Pantji was discharged after a couple of months on the expiry of his six months. Two other joined us later. By the beginning of January 1933 all my companions had left me and I was alone. For nearly eight months, till my discharge at the end of August, I lived a solitary life in Dehra Dun Gaol with hardly any one to talk to, except some member of the gaol staff for a few minutes daily. This was not technically solitary confinement, but it was a near approach to it, and it was a dreary period for me. Fortunately I had resumed my interviews, and they brought some relief. As a special favour, I suppose, I was allowed to receive flowers from outside and to keep a few photographs, and they cheered me greatly. Ordinarily, flowers and photographs are not permitted, and on several occasions I have not been allowed to receive the flowers that had been sent for me. Attempts to brighten up the cells were not encouraged and I remember a superintendent of a gaol once objecting to the manner in which a companion of mine, whose cell was next to mine, had arranged his toilet articles. He was told that he must not make

his cell look attractive and "luxurious". The articles of luxury were: a tooth brush, tooth paste, fountain pen ink, a bottle of hair oil, a brush and comb, and perhaps one or two other little things.

One begins to appreciate the value of the little things of life in prison. One's belongings are so few and they cannot easily be added to or replaced, and one clings to them and gathers up odd bits of things which, in the world outside, would go to the waste-paper basket. The property sense does not leave one even when there is nothing worth while to own and keep.

Sometimes a physical longing would come for the soft things of life—bodily comfort, pleasant surroundings, the company of friends, interesting conversation, games with children..... A picture or a paragraph in a newspaper would bring the old days vividly before one, carefree days of youth, and a nostalgia would seize one, and the day would be passed in restlessness.

I used to spin a little daily, for I found some manual occupation soothing and a relief from too much intellectual work. My main occupation, however, was reading and writing. I could not have all books I wanted, as there were restrictions and a censorship, and the censors were not always very competent for the job. Splengler's* *Decline of the West* was held up

* A famous modern German writer on history and civilisation

because the title looked dangerous and seditious. But I must not complain, for I had, on the whole, a goodly variety of books. Again I seem to have been a favoured person, and many of my colleagues (A Class prisoners) had the greatest difficulty in getting books on current topics. In Benares Gaol, I was told, even the official *White Paper,* containing the British Government's constitutional proposals,* was not allowed in, as it dealt with political matters. The only books that British official heartily recommended were religious books or novels.

The vast majority of the prisoners are not allowed any newspapers or writing materials. It is not a question of censorship but of total denial. Only A Class (or in Bengal, Division I) prisoners are allowed writing materials as a matter of course, and not even all these are allowed daily newspapers. The daily newspaper allowed is of the Government's choice. B and C Class prisoners, politicals and non-politicals, are not supposed to have writing materials. The former may sometimes get them as a very special privilege, which is frequently withdrawn. Probably the proportion of A class prisoners to the others is one to a thousand, and they might well be excluded in considering the lot of prisoners in India. But it is well

* These were later on incorporated in the *Government of India Act, 1935.*

to remember that even these favoured A Class convicts have far less privileges in regard to books and newspapers than the ordinary prisoners in most civilised countries.

For the rest, the 999 in every thousand, two or three books are permitted at a time, but conditions are such that they cannot always take advantage of this privilege. Writing or the taking of notes of books read are dangerous pastimes in which they must not indulge. This deliberate discouragement of intellectual development is curious and revealing. From the point of view of reclaiming a prisoner and making him a fit citizen, his mind should be approached and diverted, and he should be made literate and taught some craft. But this point of view has perhaps not struck the prison authorities in India. Certainly it has been conspicuous by its absence in the United Provinces. Recently attempts have been made to teach reading and writing to the boys and young men in prison, but they are wholly ineffective, and the men in charge of them have no competence. Sometimes it is said that convicts are averse to learning. My own experience has been the exact opposite, and I found many of them, who came to me for the purpose, to have a perfect passion for learning to read and write. We used to teach such convicts as came our way, and they worked hard; and sometimes when I woke up in the middle of the night I was surprised to find one or two of them sitting by a

dim lantern inside their barrack, learning their lessons for the next day.

So I occupied myself with my books, going from one type of reading to another, but usually sticking to 'heavy' books. Novels made one feel mentally slack, and I did not read many of them. Sometimes I would weary of too much reading, and then I would take to writing. My historical series of letters to my daughter kept me occupied right through my two-year term, and they helped me very greatly to keep mentally fit. To some extent I lived through the past I was writing about and almost forgot about my gaol surroundings.

Travel books were always welcome—records of old travellers, Hiuen Tsang, and Marco Polo, and Ibn Battuta and others, and moderns like Sven Hedin, with his journeys across the deserts of Central Asia, and Roerich, finding strange adventures in Tibet. Picture books also, especially of mountains and glaciers and deserts, for in prison one hungers for wide spaces and seas and mountains. I had some beautiful picture books of Mont Blanc, the Alps, and the Himalayas, and I turned to them often and gazed at the glaciers when the temperature of my cell or barrack was 115°F. or even more. An atlas was an exciting affair. It brought all manner of past memories and dreams of places we had wanted to go to. And the longing to go again to those haunts of past days, and visit all the other

inviting marks and dots that represented great cities, and cross the shaded regions that were mountains, and the blue patches that were seas, and to see the beauties of the world, and watch the struggles and conflicts of a changing humanity—the longing to do all this would seize us and clutch us by the throat, and we would hurriedly and sorrowfully put the atlas by, and return to the well known walls that surrounded us and the dull routine that was our daily lot.

For fourteen and a half months I lived in my little cell or room in the Dehra Dun Gaol, and I began to feel as if I was almost a part of it. I was familiar with every bit of it; I knew every mark and dent on the whitewashed walls and on the uneven floor and the ceiling with its moth-eaten rafters. In the little yard outside I greeted little tufts of grass and odd bits of stone as old friends. I was not alone in my cell, for several colonies of wasps and hornets lived there, and many lizards found a home behind the rafters, emerging in the evenings in search of prey. If thoughts and emotions leave their traces behind in the physical surroundings, the very air of that cell must be thick with them, and they must cling to every object in the little space.

I had had better cells in other prisons, but in Dehra Dun I had one privilege which was very precious to me. The gaol proper was a very small one, and we were kept in an old lock-up outside the gaol walls, but

within gaol compound. This place was so small that there was no room to walk about in it, and so we were allowed, morning and evening to go out and walk up and down in front of the gate, a distance of about a hundred yards. We remained in the gaol compound, but this coming outside the walls gave us a view of the mountains and the fields and a public road at some distance. This was not a special privilege for me; it was common for all the A and B Class prisoners kept at Dehra Dun. Within the compound, but outside the gaol walls, there was another small building called the European Lock-up. This had no enclosing wall, and a person inside the cell could have a fine view of the mountains and the life outside. European convicts and others kept here were also allowed to walk in front of the gaol gate every morning and evening.

Only a prisoner who has been confined for long behind high walls can appreciate the extraordinary psychological value of these outside walks and open views. I loved these outings, and I did not give them up even during the monsoon, when the rain came down for days in torrents and I had to walk in ankle-deep water. I would have welcomed the outings in any place, but the sight of the towering Himalayas near by was an added joy which went a long way to removing the weariness of prison. It was my good fortune that during the long period when I had no interviews, and when for many months I was quite alone, I could

gaze at these mountains that I loved. I could not see the mountains from my cell, but my mind was full of them and I was ever conscious of their nearness, and a secret intimacy seemed to grow between us.

"Flocks of birds have flown high and away;
A solitary drift of cloud, too, has gone,
wandering on.
And I sit alone with Ching-ting Peak,
towering beyond.
We never grow tired of each other, the
mountain and I."

I am afraid I cannot say with poet, Li T'ai Po, that I never grew weary, even of the mountain; but that was a rare experience, and, as a rule, I found great comfort in its proximity. Its solidity and imperturbability looked down upon me with the wisdom of a million years, and mocked at my varying humours and soothed my fevered mind.

Spring was very pleasant in Dehra and it was a far longer one than in the plains below. The winter had denuded almost all the trees of their leaves, and they stood naked and bare. Even four magnificent peepul trees, which stood in front of the gaol gate, much to my surprise, dropped nearly all their leaves. Gaunt and cheerless they stood there, till the spring air warmed them up again and sent a message of life to their innermost cells. Suddenly there was a stir both in the peepuls and the other trees, and an air of mystery

surrounded them as of secret operations going on behind the scenes ; and I would be startled to find little bits of green peeping out all over them. It was a gay and cheering sight. And then, very rapidly, the leaves would come out in their millions and glisten in the sunlight and play about in the breeze. How wonderful is the sudden change from bud to leaf!

I had never noticed before that fresh mango leaves are reddish-brown, russet coloured, remarkably like the autumn tints on the Kashmir hills. But they change colour soon and become green.

The monsoon rains were always welcome, for they ended the summer heat. But one could have too much of a good thing, and Dehra Dun is one of the favoured haunts of the rain god. Within the first five or six weeks of the break of the monsoon we would have about fifty or sixty inches of rain, and it was not pleasant to sit cooped up in a little narrow place trying to avoid the water dripping from the ceiling or rushing in from the windows.

Autumn again was pleasant, and so was the winter, except when it rained. With thunder and rain and piercing cold winds, one longed for a decent habitation and a little warmth and comfort. Occasionally there would be a hailstorm, with hailstones bigger than marbles coming down on the corrugated iron roofs and making a tremendous noise, something like an artillery bombardment.

I remember one day particularly ; it was the 24th of December, 1932. There was a thunderstorm and rain all day, and it was bitterly cold. Altogether it was one of the most miserable days, from the bodily point of view, that I have spent in gaol. In the evening it cleared up suddenly, and all my misery departed when I saw all the neighbouring mountains and hills covered with a thick mantle of snow. The next day—Christmas Day—was lovely and clear, and there was a beautiful view of snow-covered mountains.

Prevented from indulging in normal activities we became more observant of nature's ways. We watched also the various animals and insects that came our way. As I grew more observant I noticed all manner of insects living in my cell or in the little yard outside. I realised that while I complained of loneliness, that yard, which seemed empty and deserted, was teeming with life. All these creeping or crawling or flying insects lived their life without interfering with me in any way, and I saw no reason why I should interfere with them. But there was continuous war between me and bed-bugs, mosquitos, and, to some extent, flies. Wasps and hornets I tolerated, and there were hundreds of them in my cell. There had been a little tiff between us when, inadvertently I think, a wasp had stung me. In my anger I tried to exterminate the lot, but they put up a brave fight in defence of their temporary home, which probably contained their eggs.

and I desisted and decided to leave them in peace if they did not interfere with me any more. For over a year after that I lived in that cell surrounded by these wasps and hornets, and they never attacked me, and we respected each other.

Bats I did not like, but I had to endure them. They flew soundlessly in the evening dusk, and one could just see them against the darkening sky. Eerie things; I had a horror of them. They seemed to pass within an inch of one's face, and I was always afraid that they might hit me. Higher up in the air passed the big bats, the flying-foxes.

I used to watch the ants and the white ants and other insects by the hour. And the lizards as they crept about in the evenings and stalked their prey and chased each other, wagging their tails in a most comic fashion. Ordinarily they avoided wasps, but twice I saw them stalk them with enormous care and seize them from the front. I do not know if this avoidance of the sting was intentional or accidental.

Then there were squirrels, crowds of them if trees were about. They would become very venturesome and come right near us. In Lucknow Gaol I used to sit reading almost without moving for considerable periods, and a squirrel would climb up my leg and sit on my knee and have a look round. And then it would look into my eyes and realise that I was not a tree or whatever it had taken me for. Fear would

disable it for a moment, and then it would scamper away. Little baby squirrels would sometimes fall down from the trees. The mother would come after them, roll them up into a little ball, and carry them off to safety. Occasionally the baby got lost. One of my companions picked up three of these lost baby squirrels and looked after them. They were so tiny that it was a problem how to feed them. The problem was, however, solved rather ingeniously. A fountainpen filler, with a little cotton wool attached to it, made an efficient feeding bottle.

Pigeons abounded in all the gaols I went to, except in the mountain prison of Almora. There were thousands of them, and in the evenings the sky would be thick with them. Sometimes the gaol officials would shoot them down and feed on them. There were *mainas,* of course ; they are to be found everywhere. A pair of them nested over my cell door in Dehra Dun, and I used to feed them. They grew quite tame, and if there was any delay in their morning or evening meal they would sit quite near me and loudly demand their food. It was amusing to watch their signs and listen to their impatient cries.

Dehra Dun had a variety of birds, and there was a regular jumble of singing and lively chattering and twittering, and high above it all came the *koel's* plaintive call. During the monsoon and just before it the Brain-Fever bird visited us, and I realised soon why it

was so named. It was amazing, the persistence with which it went on repeating the same notes, in daytime and at night, in sunshine and in pouring rain. We could not see most of these birds, we could only hear them as a rule, as there were no trees in our little yard. But I used to watch the eagles and the kites gliding gracefully high up in the air, sometimes swooping down and then allowing themselves to be carried up by a current of air. Often a horde of wild ducks would fly over our heads.

There was a large colony of monkeys in Bareilly Gaol and their antics were always worth watching. One incident impressed me. A baby monkey managed to come down into our barrack enclosure and he could not mount up the wall again. The warder and some convict overseers and other prisoners caught hold of him and tied a bit of string round his neck. The parents (presumably) of the little one saw all this from the top of the high wall, and their anger grew. Suddenly one of them, a huge monkey, jumped down and charged almost right into the crowd which surrounded the baby monkey. It was an extraordinary brave thing to do, for the warder and C.O.'s had sticks and *lathis* and they were brandishing them about, and there was quite a crowd of them. Reckless courage triumphed, and the crowd of humans fled, terrified, leaving their sticks behind them! The little monkey was rescued.

We had often animal visitors that were not welcome. Scorpions were frequently found in our cells, especially after a thunderstorm. It was surprising that I was never stung by one, for I would come across them in the most unlikely places—on my bed, or sitting on a book which I had just lifted up. I kept a particularly black and poisonous-looking brute in a bottle for some time, feeding him with flies, etc., and then when I tied him up on a wall with a string he managed to escape. I had no desire to meet him loose again, and so I cleaned my cell out and hunted for him everywhere, but he had vanished.

Three or four snakes were also found in my cells or near them. News of one of them got out, and there were headlines in the Press. As a matter of fact I welcomed the diversion. Prison life is dull enough, and everything that breaks through the monotony is appreciated. Not that I appreciate or welcome snakes, but they do not fill me with terror as they do some people. I am afraid of their bite, of course, and would protect myself if I saw a snake. But there would be no feeling of repulsion or overwhelming fright. Centipedes horrify me much more; it is not so much fear as instinctive repulsion. In Alipore Gaol in Calcutta I woke in the middle of the night and felt something crawling over my foot. I pressed a torch I had and I saw a centipede on the bed. Instinctively and with

amazing rapidity I vaulted clear out of that bed and nearly hit the cell wall.

In Dehra Dun I saw a new animal, or rather an animal which was new to me. I was standing at the gaol gate talking to the gaoler when we noticed a man outside carrying a strange animal. The gaoler sent for him, and saw something between a lizard and a crocodile, about two feet long with claws and a scaly covering. This uncouth animal which was very much alive, had been twisted round in a most peculiar way forming a kind of knot, and its owner had passed a pole through this knot and was merrily carrying it in this fashion. He called it a "Bo". When asked by the gaoler what he proposed to do with it, he replied with a broad smile that he would make *bhujji*—a kind of curry—out of it! He was a forest-dweller. Subsequently I discovered from reading F. W. Champion's book—*The Jungle in Sunlight and Shadow*—that this animal was the Pangolin.

Prisoners, especially long-term convicts, have to suffer most from emotional starvation. Often they seek some emotional satisfaction by keeping animal pets. The ordinary prisoner cannot keep them, but the convict overseers have a little more freedom and the gaol staff usually does not object. The commonest pets were squirrels and, strangely, mongooses. Dogs are not allowed in gaols, but cats seem to be encouraged. A little kitten made friends with me once.

It belonged to a gaol official, and when he was transferred he took it away with him. I missed it. Although dogs are not allowed, I got tied up with some dogs accidentally in Dehra Dun. A gaol official had brought a bitch, and then he was transferred, and he deserted her. The poor thing became a homeless wanderer, living under culverts, picking up scraps from the warders, usually starving. As I was being kept in the lock-up outside the gaol proper, she used to come to me begging for food. I began to feed her regularly, and she gave birth to a litter of pups under a culvert. Many of these were taken away, but three remained and I fed them. One of the puppies fell ill with a violent distemper, and gave me a great deal of trouble. I nursed her with care, and sometimes I would get up a dozen times in the course of the night to look after her. She survived, and I was happy that my nursing had pulled her round.

I came in contact with animals far more in prison than I had done outside. I had always been fond of dogs, and had kept some, but I could never look after them properly as other matters claimed my attention. In prison I was grateful for their company. Indians do not, as a rule, approve of animals as household pets. It is remarkable that in spite of their general philosophy of non-violence to animals, they are often singularly careless and unkind to them. Even the cow, that favoured animal, though looked up to and almost

worshipped by many Hindus and often the cause of riots, is not treated kindly. Worship and kindness do not always go together.

Different countries have adopted different animals as symbols of their ambition or character—the eagle of the United States of America and of Germany, the lion and bulldog of England, the fighting-cock of France, the bear of old Russia. How far do these patron animals mould national character? Most of them are aggressive, fighting animals, beasts of prey. It is not surprising that the people who grow up with these examples before them should mould themselves consciously after them and strike up aggressive attitudes, and roar, and prey on others. Nor is it surprising that the Hindu should be mild and non-violent, for his patron animal is the cow.