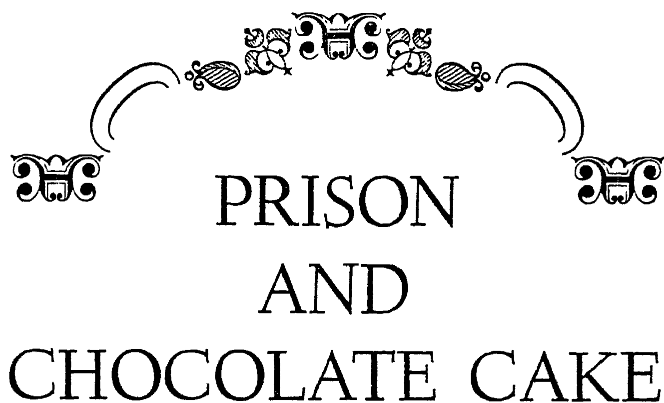
UNIVERSAL LIBRARY
127 446
UNIVERSAL LIBRARY

PRISON AND CHOCOLATE CAKE



PRISON AND CHOCOLATE CAKE

Nayantara Sahgal

ALFRED A. KNOPF NEW YORK

1954

L. C. *catalog card number:* 54-5974

THIS IS A BORZOI BOOK,
PUBLISHED BY ALFRED A. KNOPF, INC.

COPYRIGHT 1954 *by* NAYANTARA SAHGAL. *All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form without permission in writing from the publisher, except by a reviewer who may quote brief passages and reproduce not more than three illustrations in a review to be printed in a magazine or newspaper. Published simultaneously in Canada by McClelland & Stewart Limited. Manufactured in the United States of America.*

FIRST EDITION

TO MY PARENTS

Vijaya Lakshmi and Ranjit Sitaram Pandit

WHO HAVE MADE ALL GOOD THINGS POSSIBLE

PREFACE

THERE are three of us—Lekha, older, myself, and Rita, younger than I. We grew up at a time when India was the stage for a great political drama, and we shall always remain a little dazzled by the performance we have seen. This is the story of its influence on our lives, and as such it may interest people whose childhood was different from ours.

Our lives were as normal as our parents could make them, but because they themselves had chosen to play a part in that drama, we could never live in quite the same way other children did. We had a somewhat unusual background and, perhaps as the result of it, we have had some unusual opportunities.

If I write haphazardly, it is because I describe events as I remember them and not necessarily in the order in which they occurred. It is like putting together the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. The pattern forms in its own way as the relevant pieces are located, and not in the neat, methodical way desired. Much of the atmosphere we knew as children is fast vanishing, for already Gandhiji's name is history and Anand Bhawan, our home in Allahabad, is a deserted house. Only a memory remains of the glamorous aura that once surrounded it.

So I have tried to recapture a little of that fading atmosphere.

I have said that in certain ways our lives were different from those of other children. One of the events that stand out as being "different" was our parents' decision to send us to America in 1943. The difference lay not in our going to America, but in the reason we went: apart from the fact that the political situation was tense and not conducive to study, education at that time was surrounded by restrictions.

The non-co-operation movement begun in August 1942 was in full swing, and all over India thousands of men and women of all ages were in prison. Lekha, too, had been arrested; her college education had been interrupted by seven months' imprisonment. When she was released, the police authorities in our town demanded that she give a written guarantee to the effect that she would not take part in any political activity or demonstration. A similar guarantee would have been expected of her no matter in which part of India she had chosen to continue her studies. It would also have been required of me, for I was about to enter college and was a member of a "suspect" family. Originally Lekha was to have gone to Oxford, but in 1941, the year she was to have entered college, the blitz was on in London, and two years later the war situation was equally grave. So America, because it was a country comparatively untouched by the war, came into our scheme of things.

Our parents did not want us to study in an India that was a vast concentration camp. They wanted us to have the opportunity, for the first time in our lives, to work, play, and live in an environment free from crisis, to grow up unembittered by the events taking place in our country, and, above all, to have a happy girlhood to look back upon. This would never have been possible at home.

Mummie and Papu made their plans during the brief interviews that they were permitted to have with each other in jail. They were both in the same jail, Naini Central Prison, near Allahabad, but were interned in separate barracks. In March that year Mummie was released on parole because of illness, and this gave her time to make a few hurried preparations for our departure.

Papu was still in prison when it was time for us to leave. The authorities granted us a half-hour interview with him in the presence of the jail superintendent and various jail officials.

Naini Central Prison was a long drive from Anand Bhawan. On a steamy hot day in the middle of April, Lekha, Rita, and I climbed into a two-wheeled, horse-drawn tonga to make the journey we had so often made before, sometimes to visit American friends who lived in the Jumna Mission in Naini, sometimes to visit members of our family in prison. Once again we crossed the ugly red bridge over the Jumna River into Naini, and our tonga jogged along the road circling

the high wall of the prison building, and through the outer gates to the main entrance to the jail.

Barely two months earlier, when Lekha had been released from jail, I had come to fetch her and, waiting at the barred door, had seen my father in the superintendent's office beyond. Suddenly I had rebelled against his being there, behind iron bars, and had started to cry in misery and helpless anger. Papu, hearing me, had come to the entrance and spoken to me quietly through the bars.

"We mustn't let these people see us cry," he had reproached me gently, "especially not in such pretty clothes."

And he had admired my new silk sari, and the bright silver earrings I had put on for Lekha's homecoming. I stopped crying and tried to smile back at him.

"Papu, when will they let you come home? There are so many things I want to talk to you about."

Papu handed me his large, rough khadi[1] *handkerchief, and I blew my nose, making it redder.*

"We will talk about everything when I come," he had promised. Then, seeing the guard waiting to escort him back to his barrack, he had left me standing there holding his handkerchief.

Now we had arrived at the jail once again, this time

[1] *khadi,* hand-spun, hand-woven cloth. It had a special significance in India because it was used by all members of the Congress, in preference to mill-made and foreign cloth, as a means of encouraging Indian cottage industries.

to say good-by, and all the many things I wanted to say to him would have to remain unsaid.

The entrance to the superintendent's office was low, and Papu had to stoop slightly when he walked in to greet us. He was nearly six feet tall, and very brown, with the bronzeness of a man who loves an outdoor life. His thick hair was crisp, curly, and black, with hardly a gray hair visible. He was dressed as usual in a white khadi kurta-*pajama,*[2] *and wore brown leather sandals on his feet. Although his sensitive hands and contemplative eyes were those of a scholar and thinker, he had the determined chin of a strong-willed, hot-tempered man. Once in this very jail he had exchanged angry words with an impudent guard who had tried to insult my grandmother when she had come to visit him, and had been given solitary confinement for his behavior.*

To me he was the handsomest, the most lovable, kind, and understanding person I knew, the human being nearest my heart, and the one whose opinions I most respected. Toward him I had felt an inexplicable closeness since childhood, as though in some way my happiness and unhappiness were deeply bound up with his.

Papu came into the dingy little room, bare except for the superintendent's desk and the bench on which

[2] *kurta-pajama,* the dress of men in northern India, consisting of a long, loose shirt and loosely cut trousers.

we sat, and I swallowed my tears. We wanted to make our parting as cheerful as possible. But we need not have been afraid that it would be otherwise, for during that interview he laughed and teased us in his usual fun-loving fashion. Soon we were at ease too, ignoring the guard at the door and the superintendent busy at his desk in front of us.

Suddenly Papu leaned toward him and said: "Do you mind, Mr. Gardiner, if my daughters and I sing?"

The superintendent, a jovial Anglo-Indian, looked up and smiled at the unorthodox request. "No, not at all."

We chose our song and took deep breaths, but just as we were about to sing, the jail gong in the yard outside broke into a series of violently discordant clangs. We burst into laughter at this foiling of our attempt.

"Come along, now," said Papu, aroused as always by a challenge, "let's see who can make more noise, the British jail gong or the Indian prisoner's family!"

The prisoner's family won, because for the next few minutes we sang without restraint, while Papu accompanied us by beating out the rhythm on our wooden bench with his practiced hands. We were an exuberant chorus, and the superintendent found it difficult to concentrate on his work.

"So you're going to America, you two," said Papu, after we had subsided.

"The only trouble is that nobody seems to approve of our going," said Lekha, looking worried.

"That may be because they are anxious, but at any rate it is nothing to worry about," Papu assured her. "The point is to do what you feel is right, and to have a wonderful time doing it. Since Mummie and I have to be in jail, you two must have our share of a good time also. Buy up all Fifth Avenue," he joked. "What is the family fortune for?"

Not once had our parents inflicted advice upon us. We had grown up making our own decisions and exercising our own judgment. Now when we were leaving India, Papu gave us no advice but to enjoy our new life.

"When I was going to Europe for the first time as a young student," he reminisced, "my father said to me: 'I'm not going to tell you not to smoke, because I know you're going to smoke, but see that you smoke the finest tobacco!' That was the only advice he ever gave me. So, like him, I can only say: 'See that you have the best time possible!' "

The interview came to an end all too soon, as the superintendent reluctantly reminded us that it was well past the half-hour. Papu rose and kissed us good-by.

It was unbearable to go away leaving him there, with his wonderful energy, his superb intellect, and his beloved personality wasting away behind prison bars. A year later the news of his death reached us in America. He had fallen seriously ill in prison and had not been released soon enough to benefit by any treatment.

Lekha and I sailed in May 1943. Rita was still in

school at the time. She and Mummie joined us in the United States at the end of 1944.

Most children owe all good things to their parents, and all parents are deserving of gratitude. But I have always felt that my parents deserved something more. They were, in a sense, parents on trial—on trial, that is, to prove whether, in spite of their work, destiny, and conditions in the country, they could provide us with everything that children should normally have. We can say with assurance that they did. To them we owe our wonderful childhood. They were able, through some miracle of love and understanding, to preserve a family oneness that might easily have been lost to us. It is to them also that we owe our happy years in America. They had the vision and courage to let us go abroad alone on a troop ship through dangerous waters in wartime. They had sufficient faith in the upbringing they had given us to trust us alone in new and strange surroundings. If we achieve anything worth while in the years ahead, it is to them that we shall owe it. To them, therefore, this book is lovingly dedicated.

■

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I	En Route to America	3
II	Politics and Us	17
III	Indian Childhood	27
IV	The Elections and After	60
V	Interlude	69
VI	The Atmosphere of Home	73
VII	The War to Us	88
VIII	Wedding Story	95
IX	Indian Symphony	105
X	Before Departure	115
XI	The First Glimpse	120
XII	Nehru's Nieces	126
XIII	About People	136
XIV	Some Thoughts on Education	160
XV	Speaking of India	170
XVI	Vacations	175
XVII	Rita's Graduation	187
XVIII	The United Nations	196
XIX	Going Home	206
XX	With Pride and Prejudice	211
	Glossary	235

ILLUSTRATIONS

Nayantara Sahgal FACING PAGE 16

Mme Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit and her three daughters 17

Anand Bhawan 48

Ranjit Sitaram Pandit 49

Mme Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit 144

Rita Pandit, Danny Kaye, Nayantara, Hollywood 1946 145

Mme Pandit, Nayantara, Chandralekha, Rita, Carlos Rómulo, Mrs. Rómulo 176

Thakier Nu, Nayantara, Jawaharlal Nehru 177

PRISON
AND
CHOCOLATE CAKE

A NUMBER of people in *Prison and Chocolate Cake* are referred to at times by familiar names. For the reader's assistance in identifying them, they are:

BAPU—Mahatma Gandhi (also referred to as Gandhiji)
BIBIMA—the author's great-aunt, a sister of Mme Pandit's mother
INDI—Indira Nehru, the author's cousin, daughter of Jawaharlal Nehru
LEKHA—Chandralekha Pandit, one of the author's sisters
MAMI—Kamala Nehru, the author's aunt, wife of Jawaharlal Nehru
MAMU—Jawaharlal Nehru, the author's uncle
MASI—Krishna Hutheesingh, the author's aunt, sister of Mme Pandit
MUMMIE—Mme Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, the author's mother
NANIMA—Swarup Rani Nehru, the author's grandmother, mother of Mme Pandit
NANUJI—Motilal Nehru, the author's grandfather, father of Mme Pandit
PADMASI—Padmaja Naidu, daughter of Sarojini Naidu
PAPU—Ranjit Sitaram Pandit, the author's father
TARA, TARU—Nayantara Sahgal, the author

A GLOSSARY *follows the text.*

Chapter I

EN ROUTE TO AMERICA

SOME things will always remain a mystery to me. One of these is the perpetually baffling question: how did Mummie and Papu have the courage to send us to America in 1943? Many people had journeyed abroad before the war, and many more were to go after, but few went as we did, at our age, from a peaceful country on a troop ship at the height of the war. I have grown up since then, married, and had children of my own; yet the older I grow, the less able I am to answer that question. I am quite certain that I could never send my children away from home so confidently and fearlessly in such circumstances. Perhaps it is because I have not had the training in courage and discipline that my parents had. At any rate, there we were on board ship in Bombay harbor, waiting for the voyage to begin.

Masi,[1] Mummie's only sister, Krishna Hutheesingh, who lived in Bombay, had rushed us through our last-minute shopping and the numerous other arrangements that traveling during wartime entailed. She had seen us off at the dock with garlands of flowers, had put a red *tika*[2] on our foreheads, and had given us

[1] *Masi,* mother's sister. No other aunt is known as Masi.

[2] *tika,* a red mark on the forehead, formerly used only by Hindu women. Nowadays it is considered a beauty mark rather than one having any religious significance.

each a coconut for good luck and a little box of carved wood containing a handful of Indian earth, "in case you get homesick." She was clearly apprehensive about our journey, though she did her best to hide her fears, and told us stories about her own first, exciting trip abroad.

"The thing to remember," she said, "is to look helpless, but be efficient. That way everybody gives you a helping hand, and if everybody doesn't, you can take care of yourself anyway."

We found it was sage advice, though Lekha afterwards complained that it did not work out so well. As I always looked helpless, she was forced to be efficient.

Although we had come on board on the appointed day, the ship did not sail till several days later because at that time the dates of arrival and departure of ships were not announced. We had not been told what route we would take or where we would land. Everything concerning the voyage was shrouded in an air of secrecy. The man in the shipping office in Bombay had warned us dramatically: "Loose lips sink ships!" And all around us, even on the ship, posters graphically warned that walls had ears.

The only thing we knew was that we were among the fifty regular passengers, that on board were also seven hundred Polish refugees who had escaped to India through Russia and were bound for Mexico, and, of course, a great many servicemen. We also discovered that the ship had been one of the famous and beautiful Conte liners. It had been converted into a troop ship by the United States Navy, and no trace of its former elegance survived. It was painted the regulation dull gray that wartime required, and what must

once have been comfortable, spacious staterooms were crowded with extra bunks. We later found that we were to be wakened by cries of "Reveille" and called to meals by the cryptic announcement of "Chow." For all practical purposes we had joined the United States Navy!

The ship offered no facilities for recreation. There were no deck tennis, swimming, dancing, cinema shows, or any of the other amenities of travel by sea. According to our dispirited fellow passengers, the voyage augured nothing but drabness, dullness, and seasickness. And, of course, there was always the possibility of attack by an enemy submarine, we were cheerfully informed by the captain.

Lekha and I were totally unconcerned about these warnings. We had never been on a ship before, so we did not miss peacetime comfort and amenities. It was recreation enough to lean over the railings on deck and feel the salt spray on our faces, to watch the changing panorama of the ocean, and to talk to the other passengers. As for the submarine scare, it only added to the excitement of our first voyage. To us the war was merely theoretical, so we did not know any fear toward it. And as we had long since taught ourselves to coax the greatest possible enjoyment out of every situation, we were exhilarated at the thought of the adventure that lay ahead.

When all the passengers had assembled on board, the captain held a meeting at which he briskly informed us that for the duration of the voyage we would be under the jurisdiction of the United States Navy. "You will obey my orders," he explained curtly. "I have the authority to put you off the ship

at my discretion and to exercise my judgment in all matters."

Lekha and I exchanged happy grins. It was adventure-to-order, with all the ingredients of a wartime drama. The captain then showed us how to don and use our life-belts, and said that we must either wear or carry them all the time. This was a trial for me, for my life-belt would not stay up around my middle. I had to keep it slung bulkily across one shoulder like an unattractive accessory. Still, I consoled myself, that was better than carting it about like a piece of luggage.

There were only two classes of passengers, officer and troop. The Polish refugees belonged to the troop class. They lived on the lower deck and slept on camp cots closely packed, row upon row. The rest of the passengers were assigned to the officer class and lived in cabins on the upper deck. The messroom was common to all the passengers, and we mingled freely with one another.

After the meeting dispersed, we went to our cabin and found that we were to share it with two elderly missionary ladies going home on furlough. Sharing it would not have mattered if it had not been a miniature cabin originally meant for two. It could scarcely accommodate the four bunks that had been crowded into it, let alone the two extra people. We later discovered that not more than two of us could dress or undress in it at the same time unless we all did so in our bunks. This meant dressing in a crouching position, which was highly uncomfortable, so two of us would wait outside while two dressed. The bathroom

was much tinier than the cabin, and the water was a rusty yellow.

In circumstances of such alarming intimacy the romance of the voyage began to fade, and we eyed one another with suspicion. Then one day Lekha decided to call our cabinmates Cotopaxi and Chimborazo after the poem by W. J. Turner, and automatically our spirits lifted. Cotopaxi took a motherly interest in my welfare and insisted that I accompany her to the church service on Sundays. She was so kind and concerned that I could not refuse; so while Lekha played gin rummy or read a detective novel, I sang hymns and joined in prayers for the salvation of my soul. Lekha was never invited to accompany us. Somehow, I am always being taken for a religiously inclined person, and noble thoughts and lofty motives are attributed to me. It was very amusing for Lekha, who knew me better and regarded my Sunday-morning activities with a complete lack of reverence.

In the beginning I could not get used to the motion of the ship, and felt sick and dizzy. The one tiny porthole in our cabin framed a gray, tossing sea, and I rolled from side to side on my bunk, powerless against the ship's heaving rhythm. One night I rolled right off the bunk onto the floor, much to my annoyance and Lekha's uncontrolled hilarity. Luckily, Cotopaxi and Chimborazo were sound asleep and, both being buxom, firmly geared to their bunks. The airless cabin reeked of a stale odor. Yet if I went to the deck for fresh air, there was the zigzag ocean in full view to taunt me. When I did go on deck, I had to muster all my self-control and try to think of the

ocean in poetical terms instead of as the unleashed monster it appeared to be.

"Don't you dare get sick," threatened Lekha. "Once you start, you'll be sick all the way, and we have a long way to go. Besides, it's all a matter of will power. Look at me."

Looking at her was no consolation. Weakly I watched the evil ballet of the waves. Crazily they danced higher, higher, higher, and then thundered down heavily into the sea with a motion that rocked the ship and sent me spinning to clutch the railing of the deck.

"The way the ocean is leaping about hasn't got much to do with my will power," I retorted feebly, "and besides, I haven't got any will power."

"Rubbish!" said Lekha scornfully.

But I did not get sick. She would not let me. It just shows what will power can do, even if it is somebody else's.

When I started enjoying the trip, I also started enjoying the food. We ate navy-style out of aluminum trays divided into sections. We had to queue up for our meals, which were doled out in the cafeteria manner. The strong American coffee we drank out of thick white china cups tasted wonderful, as did the cherry pie, ice cream, and other delicious American dishes that were our daily fare.

Our new-found friends of the ship were of different nationalities. There was a tall, attractive Maori army officer, black-haired and dark-skinned as any Indian, from whom we learned about New Zealand and his people; and a wiry Englishman, who went about hunched in a dilapidated brown raincoat, complain-

ing about the weather. "Dark! Damp! Dank! Miserable!" he spat out, as we strolled by him on deck. We argued with him about the war, the future of India, and the destiny of the British Empire. There was a towering, blond Dutch officer of the Royal Netherlands Navy, in his glamorous blue and gold uniform, whose rumbling laughter and guttural voice enlivened our long evenings; and a shy, thoughtful young Chinese student who did not talk much, but gazed soulfully at Lekha across the table where we gathered every day. Altogether there were eleven different nationalities on board, a wide assortment of men and women whom the war had thrown together, most of them gay, friendly, and companionable.

Once a day the ship's megaphone boomed: "All hands abandon ship!" At this signal all passengers were required to drop whatever they were doing and rush to the deck to which they had been assigned at the start of the voyage. It was a disciplinary exercise to prepare us for the eventuality of an enemy submarine attack. I could never bring myself to obey the signal at once. I would head straight for my cabin, unbraid my long, thick hair, brush and comb it free of tangles, rebraid it, give it a final pat, and then find my way to the deck.

"Are you mad?" Lekha whispered each time I arrived on deck late. "Who cares what you look like if we're attacked and have to jump into the ocean?"

"I refuse to abandon ship looking like a ragamuffin," I declared with dignity. "Besides, I have to keep up my morale."

To fly harum-scarum to a deck just because a megaphone had boomed out an order annoyed my sense of individuality. I was airily unconcerned at the pros-

pect of incurring the wrath of the United States Navy and being set afloat in mid-ocean for disobeying orders. If such were my destiny, nothing could deter it, I philosophized, and continued to attend to my coiffure before each exercise.

The first inkling we had of our route was when chilly winds began to blow and we started to shiver, having brought no warm clothes with us. Most of the time we wore cotton slacks and blouses, as saris were flimsy protection against the powerful ocean breezes. Who would have thought that the end of May would be a chilly time of the year? But it was, on the other side of the world, and with our teeth chattering we realized in dismay that we were approaching Australia. On a cold, windy day our ship sailed into Melbourne harbor. We stood on deck clad in our thin cloth coats, trying to gaze out through the dense fog. All we could see was a few twinkling lights piercing the curtain of mist here and there. But I was delighted at even this small glimpse of land.

"Did you ever think we would get to Melbourne?" I marveled.

"No," said Lekha flatly, "and what's more, I don't think we ever will."

"What do you mean?" I demanded indignantly.

"My dear child," she explained with elaborate patience, "don't you ever hear what goes on around you? Civilians are not allowed to go ashore."

It was disappointing. We had to content ourselves with what we could see from the ship. A military friend brought us each a souvenir, a metal kangaroo and a wooden boomerang, and that was all we saw of Australia.

Standing in a corner of the deck looking out at the lights that evening, I felt very lonely and wished with all my heart that the harbor was the familiar one of Bombay. It was so dark that I did not see someone come up beside me, and I turned with a start when a friendly voice said: "Hallo!" I could almost hear the grin in it as it went on to ask: "Did I scare you?"

"You did," I replied. "I was wishing I could go ashore." I was ashamed to admit my homesickness to a total stranger.

"Too bad you couldn't. You must be pretty tired of this boat. Been on it long?"

"I came on board at Bombay."

"Really?" His voice registered interest. "Had you been in India long?"

"All my life."

"You weren't born there?"

"Yes. As a matter of fact I was."

"Were your parents missionaries?"

This was really too much. Didn't it occur to him that one could be an Indian?

"No," I replied curtly, "they were not missionaries. I am an Indian. I was born in India, and I've lived there all my life."

"Now, who would've thought that!" was his unabashed rejoinder. "You speak English as well as I do."

I tried to think of a withering reply to this announcement, but he had begun asking questions again.

"Are you going to school in the States?" he continued, oblivious of my cool silence.

"No, I'm going to college."

He chuckled. "Same thing. In the States we call the whole works school." And then, as if it had suddenly

occurred to him, he added: "How come you decided to go abroad at a time like this?"

"Because I'm not allowed to study at home," I replied. "You see, at home students have to promise not to take part in political activities."

"Political activities?" he asked, bewildered.

I thought to myself: "For the past nine months all my family have been in jail for wanting their country to be free, and nobody outside India knows anything about it." Out loud I patiently explained: "You see, at home we are not allowed to say what we think. If anyone says he wants freedom for India, he gets locked up in prison."

My companion whistled his surprise. "You don't say! And here I've been away from home for a year fighting a war for freedom! It's enough to make Hitler laugh up his sleeve."

I could not suppress a giggle.

"You giggle just like an American girl!" he said in pleased surprise.

"I see. Then there must be hope for me."

The young soldier laughed good-humoredly.

"I'm sorry if I've been too inquisitive asking you all these questions. But, honestly, I can hardly believe I'm among human beings again. You can't imagine what it feels like to be going home after a year in the Pacific war."

I was suddenly ashamed of myself for the abrupt way I had been speaking to him. If he could come out of a war laughing and joking, there must be more to him than I had imagined. There must be something to a country that could produce young men like him.

He interrupted my thoughts. "I was thinking of what you said about India awhile back. We Americans don't know much about the East. This war is teaching us a lot. Will you tell me more about your country?"

It was getting cold on deck, so we went back to the messroom to continue our talk about India and America.

We had obtained permission to write letters home and mail them in Melbourne. Later Mummie told us how frantic she had been on receiving our letters and learning that we were in the Australian winter without any warm clothes. For several nights afterwards she had had confused nightmares in which Lekha and I were stark naked on an iceberg in the Pacific, while she stood on a distant iceberg armed with blankets that she could not throw to us.

Our next stop was Wellington, New Zealand, a few days later, and again we had to content ourselves with the view from the ship. It was a bright, clear day, and Wellington looked to us a little like Mussoorie, its green hillsides dotted with red-roofed houses. Here a great many marines who had been wounded or had fallen ill fighting in the South Pacific came on board; and through them, for the first time in our lives, the war that was raging over half the world became a reality to us. But before we came into any closer contact with the war, we found out what marines actually were. Up to that time the only thing we had known about them was the expression: "Tell it to the marines!"

I asked one of them: "What exactly is a marine?"

"We're the guys that do all the dirty work for the

army and navy," he replied, amid the good-natured guffaws of his companions. "We go on an island, clean it up—you know, wipe out all the Japs—make it nice and safe, and then the army and navy come along and take over."

They looked very young and happy-go-lucky to have done so much wiping-out of Japs. With their arrival, the messroom of the ship resounded with noisy, lively talk, and we sat and listened. Amid the buzz of conversation the megaphone would continue to drone out its instructions at frequent intervals in drawling, nasal accents: "Now hear this: Baker—G. W.—Private—First Class—U.S. Marine Corps—report to the troop office immediately."

"If not without delay," Private Baker would solemnly drone, mimicking the megaphone. Throwing down his cards, and with an extravagant sweep of an imaginary hat, he would shuffle off to answer the summons.

One day some of the marines were discussing the souvenirs they had collected at Guadalcanal.

"I got a whole bunch of gold teeth off a dead Jap," said one young man casually. "Took me ages sawing 'em off."

Lekha and I stared at him in disbelieving horror.

"D'you mean to say you took out a dead man's teeth?" Lekha burst out.

"Sure. He was dead. He couldn't use 'em. And gold is gold, isn't it?"

The other marines roared with laughter at our incredulous expressions.

"There's a war on, you know. This is nothing compared to some things that go on."

We did not want to listen to all the grotesque stories of war they had to tell, but we listened because there was nothing else to do The stories were bad enough, but the nonchalance, and sometimes the actual relish, with which they were related was much worse. It was unbelievable that these young men, most of whom were in their early twenties, should be so unconcerned and at times so cynical about suffering and death. It was as if they had seen the worst, and little was left which could affect them deeply again.

Nothing in our experience had prepared us for such an approach to life. We had been born and brought up against the background of a revolution in India, but what a different revolution from the type of war and violence about which these young people of our own generation across the seas talked! The rebellion inaugurated by Gandhi was a peaceful one. He had taught Indians that if they valued the goal of independence they must set an even greater store by the manner in which it was to be achieved. The freedom of a nation could not be worthily built upon a foundation of bitter fighting and bloodshed. He believed that if truth and honor were important in the life of an individual, they were just as vital in the life of a nation. If it was wrong for an individual to kill, then it was equally wrong for a nation to indulge in violence.

We compared the Indian struggle with the early struggles of the Christian Church. Not since the apostles of Jesus went forth to preach his gospel of peace and to accept willingly whatever hardship came their way had the world seen a crusade of this sort. This was the only kind of war we had experienced. We discussed it with our companions, but we might as well

have been speaking different languages. Our talk of non-violence only made them laugh.

"This guy Gandhi must be crazy. Suppose a man came along and killed his sister; would he sit still and not do anything about it?"

"Well, whatever else he did, he certainly wouldn't murder the man's second cousin," I replied firmly. "What problem would that solve? It would only make more problems."

Nobody agreed with me, so Lekha tried.

"Well, even if you believe in fighting, you don't fight for nothing. You fight for a reason or an ideal. Yet that very ideal is forgotten in all the bloodshed."

"Ideal, nuts!" said a disgruntled marine. "You know what we're fighting this war for? We're fighting for apple pie à la mode, and don't let anyone tell you different." And that seemed to put an end to all further discussion.

Soon after we left New Zealand, it dawned on us that our route was taking us to the west coast of America, and that the only person whom our parents knew personally, and who was awaiting our arrival, lived in New York City, some three thousand miles from there. Sure enough, when we had been at sea six weeks, we finally sailed into San Pedro harbor. It was a hot June day, and after the ship's company had dispersed with friendly good-bys, we found ourselves standing on the dock without the slightest idea of what to do or where to go.

Nayantara Sahgal

Mme Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit and her three daughters (Chandralekha sitting crosslegged, Rita standing, Nayantara lying on the floor)

Chapter II

POLITICS AND US

I DO not know how well or ill prepared we were to meet the New World or, for that matter, any world outside our own. In America we were often asked: "What is it like in India? How does an average Indian girl live? When did you become politically conscious?" We were at a loss to answer these questions.

For one thing, there is no "average" in India, as there is in the West, because there is not the same degree of uniformity in the way Indians live. There are many different levels of living, not just the simple horizontal divisions of the upper, lower, and middle classes. There are these and more. There are varying degrees not only of education, but of "Westernization." There are a dozen different yardsticks to measure wealth and culture, which determine a man's position in his community. So "average" is a complex word. Certainly we were in no sense average, if one took the word to mean representative of the whole of India. And yet, to a certain extent, so far as living-standards and education were concerned, we were like many others.

As for our political consciousness, at first we laughed when we were asked that question. How can one suddenly become politically conscious, we

thought. It is like saying: "On the 6th of November I got fat." Can awareness of this sort descend on one without any background? Our American friends assured us that it could. One of my classmates told me: "I became politically conscious during the last presidential elections. It was then that I started reading the newspapers regularly and taking an interest in what was going on in the country." I realized that she was right, and that for most people an interest in political affairs is an activity voluntarily begun, like tennis or swimming, and not the long-drawn-out involuntary process it had been for us.

With us, political awareness was a gradual and unconscious process and the most important influence in our lives. We were born and grew up at a time when India had come under the leadership of Gandhi and was maturing to nationhood under his guidance. My sisters and I were among the youngest of India's children to be touched by the spark with which Gandhi illumined our country. It touched our lives in innumerable small ways and penetrated our consciousness gradually, so that as we grew, it became a living part of us.

We did not see Gandhiji[1] often. To us, India's fight for freedom and all that it symbolized in the way of valor and idealism was represented by our uncle, Jawaharlal Nehru (whom we called Mamu[2]), who had guided the political destiny of our family toward Gandhiji. It was Mamu, among the first to respond to

[1] *ji* is commonly added to a name to indicate respect.

[2] *Mamu,* mother's brother. No other uncle is known as Mamu.

Gandhiji's call when he came to India from South Africa in 1916, who had influenced our grandfather, Motilal, to join his ranks.

The Indian National Congress, a party that had been started in the late nineteenth century as a "loyal opposition to His Majesty's Government," became after the end of the First World War a rebel organization having as its ultimate goal the independence of India. Gandhiji himself was never a member of it, but it soon became the instrument through which he was to carry on his novel and startling method of nonviolent warfare. When Gandhiji inaugurated his first jail-going campaign, calling upon Indians openly to defy certain repressive measures launched in India after the war—and by so doing deliberately to court arrest—Mamu threw in his lot with him, eventually persuading his father to do the same.

Mamu's example had fired the imagination of the Nehru household, and so it was natural that our father, when he married Mummie, should have been drawn into the same fever. It was all the more understandable because Papu's family had settled in the same part of western India from which Gandhiji himself hailed, and Papu's father, Sitaram Pandit, had been in many ways Gandhiji's "guru." [3] So the stream that bore us toward Gandhi came from two sources, as it were, and was greatly intensified by the remarkable bond of comradeship and affection between our father and our uncle.

Our parents were adults when Gandhiji appeared on their horizon. Our children will never see him.

[3] *guru,* teacher; actually the word implies a blend of teacher, guide, and philosopher.

They will hear of him, but to them he will be only a name, one of the many illustrious names of Indian history. But we are truly the children of Gandhi's India, born at a time when India was being reborn from an incarnation of darkness into one of light. Our growing up was India's growing up into political maturity—a different kind of political maturity from any that the world had seen before, based on an ideology inspired by self-sacrifice, compassion, and peace. The influence of these strange politics wove into our lives a pattern of unique enchantment. Enchantment? The word may sound incongruous when one recalls that our parents had to spend a great deal of their time away from us, either at work or in prison. But that again was part of Gandhi's magic. We learned to take pride in our parents' contribution to the struggle and to feel that it was our own.

Gandhiji's teachings summoned men and women of courage to interrupt the humdrum routine of their lives and take part in the battle for freedom. His jail-going program was devised as a means of peaceful non-co-operation with the Government. Going to jail was a procedure carried out with the utmost simplicity, dignity, and courtesy. When Gandhiji launched a non-co-operation movement, his followers were in duty bound to defy certain specific Government laws or bans. They would do so very quietly, having first sent a polite note to the district magistrate of their area to inform him of the action they intended to take. On receiving the information, the district magistrate would promptly arrest the person or persons concerned.

This program brought about the separation of hus-

bands from wives, and of parents from their children. It involved a discipline whose emotional impact might well have warped the lives of children by disrupting their normal daily routine and disturbing their sense of security. And yet, contrary to all lessons in child psychology, it did not. I can only speak for ourselves and say that for us it created a whole new world of values in which to believe and by which to live.

There were bleak moments during the separations. I missed my mother and cried for her, always in secret, because crying over such matters was not allowed by our self-imposed family code. But we emerged from these spells each time more convinced that our parents were doing the right thing. The time we spent together in a family group became doubly precious because it was rare; as a result of this, family life became happier, more closely knit, and imbued with a deep sense of unity and common ideals. So childhood, despite its unhappy moments—and what fairy tale does not have its witches and goblins?—had an enchanted quality.

Our earliest association with politics was far from unpleasant. One day, when I was about three years old, we had chocolate cake for tea. It was a treat because ordinarily we had bread and butter. It was a rich, dark cake, chocolate through and through, with chocolate swirls on top. While we were at tea, a group of policemen arrived at the house. When Lekha asked why they had come, Mummie explained that they had come to take Papu to prison, but that it was nothing to worry about, that he wanted to go. So we kissed him good-by and watched him leave, talking cheerfully to the policemen. We ate our chocolate

cake, and in our infant minds prison became in some mysterious way associated with chocolate cake.

It was an apt introduction to Gandhiji's teachings, for according to him prison should have no unpleasant associations. Arrest was to be voluntarily courted and imprisonment gladly accepted. It was not an evil to be reluctantly borne. As we grew older we saw that jail-going was always treated as a gala occasion, not a somber one. It was accompanied by a great deal of laughter and congratulation and mutual back-slapping. It made friends of total strangers, Spartans of soft-living comfort-lovers. The jail-goers were no silent sufferers, but pilgrims armed with song, for wherever Gandhiji went he was followed by the haunting strains of the hymn *Raghupati Raghava Raja Rama.* Seeing Mummie, Papu, and all the family go to jail, we longed to be old enough to go too. Prison life (as Lekha discovered later) was no happy experience, the political prisoners being interned with thieves, murderers, other desperate law-breakers, and even sometimes lepers, but that was all part of the crusade, and nobody complained.

Some of our later associations with politics were not so pleasant, for as we grew up we missed our parents more and more, but we were determined not to let them know it.

One such association was our first interview with Mummie in prison. She was interned in the Lucknow District Jail, and because we were very young children we were allowed to go into her barrack instead of seeing her in the superintendent's office. The barrack was long, narrow, and dormitory-like with its row of crude beds. There were a number of women there, all wear-

ing coarse khadi, and Mummie emerged from among them dressed the same way. I had a fleeting impression of an environment alien to the one I had thus far known, and it left its imprint of ugliness on my mind. It was hard enough to accept the fact that we would not see Mummie again until her release, but to picture her there in that dingy, airless place, wearing coarse clothes, was harder still.

We had always associated our mother with the ordered beauty of home. We were used to seeing her early in the morning on the veranda, where she would be down on her knees among freshly cut roses, arranging them with care in the vases arrayed before her. We were used to hearing her silvery laugh float out from the drawing-room on evenings when there were parties in the house. We were used to hearing friends and strangers who had never seen her before exclaim: "Is that your mother? Isn't she lovely!" How unfair that she of all people should have to go through this ordeal!

Another such unpleasant association was the memory of Lekha, aged seven, being taken by Papu to a boarding school in Poona, where she was to stay when he and Mummie went to jail soon afterwards. Rita and I were to join her a little later. Lekha sat in the train clutching a long pole from which waved the Congress flag.

"Why are you holding that large flag, darling? You'll get tired," said Mummie, who had come to see her off.

Lekha blinked back big tears and smiled jauntily. "Oh no, Mummie. You see, it's to frighten the police away with."

A home where politics is the dominating influence is the scene of a number of unusual events. One night many years later, during the 1942 movement, the police were expected at our house to search for "seditious literature." The literature was labeled "seditious" because it was written by the Congress Party office. Actually these pamphlets, printed at frequent intervals, contained repeated and urgent appeals to the people not to indulge in violence of any kind. It was a time when stormy feeling ran high in the country and when, if isolated instances of violence had turned into open revolution, there would have been no one to control it, for all the leaders were in jail. Mummie, one of the few influential people still out of jail, felt responsible for the distribution of the pamphlets because peace depended upon them. She had received warning of the arrival of the police and had hidden all the hundreds of pamphlets under our mattresses, telling us to pretend to be asleep. She did not want them to be found because of the difficulty and cost of reprinting them. Of course, their discovery would have meant her immediate arrest, but that had to come sooner or later, and she was prepared for it. When the police arrived, Mummie met them on the front veranda in her dressing-gown.

The chief was a tall young man whose family Mummie knew well, but at that moment he was very much the chief of police, distant, polite, and formal.

Slightly embarrassed by his mission, he said: "We have received information that you have seditious literature in the house. We would like to search."

Mummie is nothing if not resourceful. She gave him a charming smile. "Well, I did have some, but if

you mean *this*," and she drew a crumpled pamphlet out of her pocket, "I'm afraid you are a little late. The pamphlets were distributed several hours ago."

It was a gamble, but it worked. The chief examined the pamphlet looking baffled. "Oh, well, in that case," he muttered, "we won't waste our time."

Soon after he left, the pamphlets were actually distributed. It was not easy, for in those days the house and garden were guarded day and night by men from the Criminal Investigation Department.

Mummie was arrested a few days later, and though we had been expecting her arrest for weeks, we had never imagined that it would take place as it did. For some reason, the police liked to do their work at night, perhaps because there was less likelihood of popular agitation starting at that time.

At two a.m. one hot August night seven truckloads of armed policemen drove up to the house to take Mummie to prison. Mummie woke us up, and we helped her throw a few belongings into a small suitcase before going out to the front to say good-by to her. It was an incongruous situation. Rows of khaki-clad men and seven military lorries waited in grim silence in the dead of night to take away one defenseless woman whose creed was non-violence. Such was the power of non-violence! We waved good-by to her as she drove away, looking more petite and helpless than ever in the midst of that formidable escort.

I did not like Gandhiji when I first met him. I was four years old when he was in Allahabad, staying at Anand Bhawan, my uncle's home. I remember toiling up the stairs to the open veranda where his prayer

meetings were held. In one perspiring fist I clutched a bouquet of red roses.

"Now, remember to give the flowers to Bapu," my mother coached me, using the name by which Gandhiji was known to his followers.

I thought she meant Papu, my father, and ran up to him with the bouquet. Mummie pulled me toward the little man sitting on the floor and leaning against a white bolster.

"But he's ugly," I objected loudly. "I don't want to give them to him."

I stubbornly clutched my roses and scowled at him. Bapu gave his gleeful laugh and lightly slapped my cheek, which was his way of showing affection, and remarked that he hoped I would always be as honest. I backed away from him and went to sit near my father. I did not enjoy that prayer meeting. It was a trial to be still for so long. My foot went to sleep, I fidgeted endlessly, and I told my father I would never attend a prayer meeting again.

But I did attend other prayer meetings, and many years later I sang for Bapu at one of them.

■

Chapter III

INDIAN CHILDHOOD

AMERICANS often asked how we lived in India, and we tried to give them a glimpse of our childhood.

To do so we had to take them in imagination to the city of Allahabad, known of old as Prayag, situated in northeastern India in the province of Uttar Pradesh.[1] Allahabad was a city of about 260,000 inhabitants whose culture was a blend of the ancient civilization of the *Ramayana* and the much later influence of the Moguls. Prayag was its original Hindu name, and the Hindus considered it holy because it was the meeting-place of the two sacred rivers, the Ganges and the Jumna. It had an added significance for them because it had been the scene of a moving incident from the *Ramayana.*

Rama, the young prince (considered by Hindus to be an incarnation of God), had been sent into exile by his ambitious stepmother, who wanted her own son, Bharat, to ascend the throne. But Bharat, devoted to his beloved brother, had thought himself unworthy to rule in Rama's place. Instead, he had put Rama's slippers on the throne and had gone in search

[1] *Uttar Pradesh* literally translated means Northern Province. In British times this region was known as the United Provinces. It is commonly referred to as the U.P.

of Rama, determined to bring him back to his capital. It was in Prayag that their joyful reunion took place.

Centuries later, the Emperor Akbar, consolidating all of India into one great empire, named the city Allahabad, the Abode of Allah, the name that has been used ever since. Today there are two railway stations in the city. One is the central station of Allahabad, the other a small one, fifteen or twenty minutes' drive from it, known as Prayag.

At first we lived not far from Anand Bhawan, our grandparents' home, in a house with dark-green shutters, a garden full of spreading trees, and a lawn bordered with bright roses. This was the house where Rita was born not long before Papu gave up his practice at the bar to join Gandhiji's movement.

Every morning Lekha and I walked with Papu in the garden, one on either side of him, holding a finger. In the evenings we would listen impatiently for the sound of his horse's hoofs clattering on the smooth path to the house. Papu rode every day, and on his return we would wait with slices of sugared bread and carrot sticks to give his horse.

Mummie and Papu lived and entertained like any young couple, for politics was still on the fringe of their lives and had not spread over its entire design. Their party nights were gala nights for us, for we would creep into the kitchen and demand some of the party food from our inseparable companion, Buddhi, the cook. Hot *kebabs* of finely ground meat blended with crushed ginger, cardamom, cloves, and red chilies; flaky golden *samosas*, their pastry-like shells stuffed with peas and new potatoes or tender pieces of cauliflower; steaming, fragrant, saffron-flavored rice, each

long grain separate from the others, flecked with peeled white almonds; meat succulent and tender on its bone, cooked in rich gravy, dripping with spices; a trayful of small, round, earthenware bowls of *kheer*, made of rice boiled with sugar in creamy buffalo's milk and allowed to thicken, every bowl of *kheer* covered with a gossamer-fine layer of *varakh*, or finely beaten silver, and decorated with a sprinkling of chopped pistachio nuts. The kitchen was redolent with the pungent odors of Kashmiri cooking.

On the kitchen table were laid out the shining *thalis* and *katoris*, respectively round trays and small bowls of highly polished silver, in which the food was to be served. After dinner, pan would be served to the guests, each shiny green heart-shaped leaf of betel smeared with the paste of lime and betel nut, sprinkled with shreds of areca nut and the tiny black seeds of cardamom, and folded into a neat little cone.

Sometimes, though not often, Mamu came to these parties. Once at a breakfast party he mortified Mummie by first calling her chief guest Mrs. Hopeful, and then making matters worse by calling her Mrs. Hopeless, when the lady's name was really Mrs. Hopewell.

Our parents were the center of our lives, as parents usually are. Mummie was a person of beauty, warmth, and understanding. Her presence was like sunlight, and we blossomed in it. When she walked into a room, it became home. When she put her hand to the most ordinary meal, it became a banquet. When we were guided by her, the most unpleasant ordeal became a challenge. We were her ardent admirers.

A career, especially a political one, is proverbially said to rob a woman of much of her femininity. It has

never had this effect on my mother. She continues to be a genius at whipping up miraculous meals out of nothing, at arranging flowers, at interior decoration, and all the things that make a house a home. And she continues to be the most feminine woman I have ever met, dainty and petite, with the time and inclination to look fresh and lovely, no matter how heavy her work.

When the boycott of foreign goods began in India, Mummie, in common with many women all over the country, took to wearing coarse white khadi saris. Khadi at that time was not the finely woven material it later became. Stored away were the expensive, beautiful saris of her trousseau, and all her exquisite jewelry. But never did clothes and jewelry have less to do with enhancing a woman's appearance. Austerely dressed, and without any of the ornaments that tradition demands that a Hindu wife wear, she emerged far more striking than before.

Our father combined the most extraordinary qualities. He was a Sanskrit scholar who had translated a number of the classics into English, and a gifted linguist, speaking several European and Indian languages. But he was far from having the scholar's retiring temperament. He was gay and laughter-loving, with a passion for both Western and Indian music; his voice, though untrained, was beautiful. He was an enthusiastic sportsman, too, and loved to swim, ride, and shoot; he enjoyed any activity that took him out of doors. Gardening was one of his favorite occupations, and he had a great love of nature and the "green thumb" that induced all things to flourish under it. Often when serving prison sentences he planted flowers in the jail

courtyard and brought to its drab grayness a vivid splash of color, which remained to cheer his fellow prisoners after his release. From prison, also, he wrote us long letters and stories illustrated by lively pencil and ink sketches.

Papu was a person eminently unsuited to a political career. In a free country he would not have chosen to take part in political life; his contribution would have been of a very different nature. But in a country that is not free, politics is not a matter merely for politicians. It is the vital concern of every sensitive and thinking person. Papu felt that he could not with a clear conscience devote himself to an academic life. The fact that he gave up the life he loved brought India, I believe, a step nearer the day when future artists and scholars will be able to devote themselves unharassed to their pursuits.

He was an indulgent and proud father. If he had ever wanted a son, we never knew it. He firmly believed that girls should have essentially the same type of upbringing as boys. In a country where the education, opportunities, and freedom given to boys are far greater than those allowed to girls, his was a rare attitude.

He was a tolerant person, but there was one thing that he could never tolerate and that instantly aroused his fiery temper. It was what he called the "purdah mentality." This was any view that countenanced the seclusion or repression of women or denial of privileges to them. In western India, where he came from, women have always enjoyed a greater degree of freedom than in the north. Papu was an uncompromising rebel against the U.P.'s more orthodox cultural tradi-

tions. They seemed to him the decaying relics of Mogul civilization, romantic enough in story and song, but totally unrelated to modern living.

"Shelter," he would dryly remark to some startled listener, "is for the decrepit, the disabled, and the feeble-minded, not for healthy, alert, normal young people."

With his keenly poetic nature, it was he who chose our names. Lekha's name is really Chandralekha, meaning the Crescent Moon. It was taken from the *Rajtarangini*, a Sanskrit history of Kashmir which Papu had translated into English. My name is Nayantara, which means Star of the Eyes. I was named after Papu's first client, a lady whose case he argued and won. Rita's name (pronounced "Ritta") means Truth, in Sanskrit.

Rita was dissatisfied: she wanted to have a long name like Chandralekha's and mine. On a visit to Kashmir when she was four, she heard that the Kashmiris call the Jhelum River the Vitasta.

"I want Vitasta to be my second name," she announced.

"That is an excellent idea," Papu agreed, and ever since then her name has been Rita Vitasta.

Papu's home was in Rajkot, Kathiawar, the colorful far-western land of Indian chivalry. But his family had originally come from the village of Bambuli, on the Ratnagiri coast, in the Maharashtra (region of the Marathas). These two parts of India, so unlike each other, combined to create his background, and wove into his character something of their numerous contrasts and complexities. The Marathas are a tenacious, hardy, virile people, accustomed to living with dis-

ciplined austerity. Theirs is the land of the celebrated hero Shivaji, bitter enemy of the Moguls, who in the seventeenth century fiercely fought to keep Maratha territory free from the Emperor Aurangzeb's spreading tentacles.

The Pandits were a respected family in their native Ratnagiri. Our great-grandmother, Gopika, fulfilled the loftiest of blessings showered upon a Hindu bride at her marriage: she was the fortunate mother of eight sons and five daughters. When she went to the temple to pray followed by her eight daughters-in-law, she was the envy of her community Gopika had yet another distinction. She was the last woman in her village to perform suttee, the self-cremation of a widow on her husband's funeral pyre, and a shrine has since been dedicated to her memory.

In this sturdy environment Papu's father, Sitaram, grew up and married after his return from London, where he had studied law. He later left Ratnagiri with his wife, Rukhmini, to migrate to Kathiawar, a place better suited to the establishment of a law practice.

The province of Kathiawar was made up of a network of princely states [2] permeated by British influences. Undaunted by new customs, a new language, and a type of Westernized living she had never known before, our Maharashtrian grandmother, displaying the pioneering spirit of her ancestors, quickly adapted herself to her surroundings. While Sitaram made a name for himself and came to be revered for his scholarship, Rukhmini learned to ride and shoot as expertly

[2] India was divided into two types of provinces: those directly under British rule, and those ruled by the princes, but controlled by the British.

as any man. Their home was open to a stream of callers; long before Gandhiji became a national figure, he was a frequent visitor there.

It was in the feudal milieu of the princely state of Rajkot that their son, Ranjit, grew up, living like a young prince himself. Kathiawar is the home of bright folklore, lilting melodies, and graceful dances, of much that is joyful, artistic, and carefree in Indian life. These qualities left their impress upon Ranjit. He was given the finest education that western Indian colleges could offer to an exceptionally brilliant student, and he distinguished himself both in his academic career and in sports. He continued this high record abroad when he went to Christ Church College at Oxford and later the Middle Temple in London, taking degrees at the Sorbonne and Heidelberg during his vacations. Heidelberg, German music, and the German language formed some of the happiest memories of his student days.

After Papu married Mummie he chose to settle in the U.P., the heart of the national movement. So we were brought up in our mother's home, in the Kashmiri tradition, observing Kashmiri customs, and speaking Hindi and Urdu instead of Marathi. But our father's background was not lost to us, for he had brought to the mannered refinement of the U.P. the irresistible combination of an adventurous Maratha spirit and the brimming gaiety of Kathiawar. A voluntary exile from his province and his inheritance, he dreamed of them nevertheless. Living in the U.P., he yearned toward his boyhood home, the brother and sisters he adored and of whom he could see little after

he had, to their surprise, chosen to join the Congress. Doggedly devoted to the cause he had elected to serve, he had no regrets about it; but he lived, I felt, in a nostalgic aura. It was as though he longed to draw his entire family into the Gandhian circle, which had charmed and held him captive in its spell. But much as they loved him, the youngest of them all, his brother and sisters could never understand why he had left his home and given up his successful career to lead a life of insecurity.

Papu's great love was Khali, an estate situated high in the Kumaon hills near Almora. It was his retreat from the noisy clamor of politics. Inaccessible though it was by car or train (the last few miles of the journey had to be done on foot or horseback) and in spite of its frequent droughts and lack of modern comforts, Papu succeeded in making of it a beautiful home and a place where we could spend our summer vacations. Khali became the symbol of happy family life. It was one of the few places where we could all be together and our parents could rest from responsibility, work, and worry.

Khali brings to mind early suppers eaten on the porch, from which we watched the sunset casting a rosy glow over the snow peaks of the Himalayas; fragrant pine-cone fires crackling every evening in the living-room; picnic lunches taken to the many beauty spots in the forest around the house; pure, sweet, icy, sparkling water drunk from mountain streams; the walled orchard of cherries, apricots, and peaches where we played; the lonely mountain paths where more than once we saw a graceful tawny panther prowling

at sundown; and above all, like a constant refrain, the look, the smell, the soft regular swish of the slender pines with their spicy-sweet dry odor.

In Khali, Mummie read to us every evening from the *Ramayana*, and we learned by heart some of its flowing musical verse. It seemed singularly appropriate that against the background of India's ancient Himalayas we should become familiar with her ancient heritage, learning to appreciate it both as literature and as the centuries-old way of looking at life which belonged to us as Indians.

When we think of Papu now, it is in Khali that we picture him, for only Khali was a suitable frame for his many-sided personality. There he could live and breathe freely and joyfully among the pines he loved, his skin burned a deep brown from days spent under the sun, the house and garden resonant with his frequent laughter and snatches of song.

Whenever he could take a few days off from his work, Papu went to Khali alone. He wrote us rambling letters from there, commenting on the state of the nation in bantering fashion and giving us news of the estate. In May 1940, which was a tense time for India because the Congress had decided not to cooperate with Britain in the war effort, and prison loomed near for Congressmen again, Papu wrote to us in Mussoorie, where we were at school:

This is Khali calling in the Kumaon broadcast at two thousand metres height. Good morning, Homestead, good morning everybody! Hope you are having fine weather after the recent half-inch of rain at Mussoorie.

The Viceroy in India appealed to everyone to pray for the British Empire and victory against Hitler, on Sunday the 19th. I was rather far from the Viceroy, and was pretty sure he would not notice if I did not pray. In fact I did not.

To begin with, I had no desire to pray for the British Empire. If I did desire it, still I might not have prayed, not knowing if God existed. For if he did not exist, it would hardly be worthwhile to try and make him do his duty by the British Empire. If he does exist, then we may be sure he knows what to do with the British Empire.

Then perhaps Lord Linlithgow has conveniently forgotten what his countryman, Lord Tennyson, wrote: "The old order changeth, yielding place to new, and God fulfils Himself in many ways lest one good custom should corrupt the world."

The letter then went on to give us a detailed and scintillating account of affairs at Khali: of the fields covered with golden, ripening wheat, of the thriving poultry farm, of the flourishing grapevines brought from Quetta and Kashmir, and the trees loaded with apples, cherries, and figs, of the masses of wild raspberries, strawberries, and mulberries, of the primary school he had started for the hill folk's children, and the tannery he had set up. He would proudly tell us of his country breakfast of coffee, Khali honey, Khali bread, Khali butter, and Khali Leghorn eggs. In the evenings, he wrote, he would spin for a little while, as all followers of Gandhi were pledged to do. "I have chosen the time of the Moscow broadcast in English, so that I can hear of the collective farming of the So-

viets and ply the charkha [spinning wheel] of Gandhi Baba!"

Allahabad, our home, has changed now, become shabby and uncared for, but in our childhood it was a serene city of gracious homes and well-kept gardens. For those who preferred the atmosphere of a metropolis, it was a dull place. Its charm lay in its tranquillity. Its life was geared to the high courts, the university, and the intellectual and cultural activity that men like my grandfather, Motilal Nehru, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, and Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, all eminent lawyers, inspired around them—for in those days the legal profession offered the highest rewards to men of culture. Allahabad had always been an honored city to Indians. Later it became famous as one of the centers of the national movement.

Mummie had grown up in this very town, in Anand Bhawan (Abode of Happiness), the beautiful home of her parents, brought up in the care of an English governess, and educated at home by private tutors. At this very house she was married; afterwards she and my father continued to live in Allahabad, though in their own home.

After my grandfather, whom we called Nanuji, gave up his fabulous law practice to join the national movement, he gave his grand old home, as he had already given his time, his fortune, and himself, to the nation, and Anand Bhawan came to be known as Swaraj Bhawan (Abode of Freedom). It was used partly for Congress Party offices and partly as a medical dispensary, which dispensed services free of charge; but three quarters of the enormous house lay empty

and unused. The indoor swimming-pool, which had been the first private pool in Allahabad and the scene of many festive gatherings, was also left to gather dust and cobwebs.

Across the road from Swaraj Bhawan, Nanuji built a smaller house, the new Anand Bhawan. Although I was born in Swaraj Bhawan, in the very room where my mother had been born, and Lekha and I had been left there with our grandparents when Mummie and Papu went on holiday to Europe, we were, of course, too young to have any recollections of the old house. It was the new Anand Bhawan that we knew and loved, and that became our home when in 1935 we went to live there with our uncle.

Both houses were, and still are, places of pilgrimage for the nation. Not a day went by without crowds of people streaming in at all hours of the day to see the home of the Nehrus, the house that Motilal had built and Jawaharlal had lived in, to slide loving hands across the smooth floors and pillars of the veranda and—when Mamu was at home—to pierce the air with cries of "*Jawaharlal Nehru ki jai!*" [3] till he had to come out and with folded palms acknowledge their greeting.

The chokidar (watchman) employed to steer the crowds and to keep them from swarming joyously into the house had grown old in the service of the family, but he had not been able to devise any argument to convince people that they must confine their sightseeing to the outside of the building. It was no use. His pleas were never heard. And often, when we were eating or sleeping, curious visitors would appear in the

[3] *Jawaharlal Nehru ki jai*, "Victory to Jawaharlal Nehru!" This is the popular greeting slogan used by crowds.

rooms, eager to see what was going on. These occasions would be more frequent during the season of the Magh Mela in March each year, when pilgrims would come to Allahabad in their hundreds of thousands to bathe at the confluence of the two sacred rivers. After completing their holy pilgrimage, they would throng to Anand Bhawan, a vast marching column of humble folk.

One afternoon I was lying on a divan in the drawing-room. It was a hot day, and the whirring fan had lulled me to sleep. Suddenly a peculiar noise entered my consciousness, and by the time I was fully awake its rhythmic beat had turned to thundering cries of "*Panditji ki jai!*" I got up and peeped out through the window. I saw men, women, and children clambering eagerly onto the verandas. I shivered in spite of the heat, for it was awe-inspiring to see a mammoth crowd moved to adoration.

They did not stop roaring till Mamu came downstairs and spoke to them, his usually grave face lit up by his radiant smile, his low voice asking quiet, interested questions, making humorous remarks, laughing with them; till, listening behind the window, I had a queer sensation. All at once I became one of those anonymous faces outside, gazing with complete belief and affection at the man who stood before them. The little girl behind the window was on the wrong side of it. She should have been out in the garden with those others, with whom she felt a strange and sudden kinship. It was a miraculous accident that she lived in the house with Jawaharlal, accident that he played with her, and that she called him her uncle. For actually she was one small ripple in the sea of humanity

that looked trustingly to him for inspiration and guidance.

We were brought up by a series of governesses—I think there were eight in all—who kept us on a strict regime of boiled vegetables, custard puddings, regular walks, and early bedtimes. On Sundays we visited our grandmother and great-aunt at Anand Bhawan. For these visits we dressed up in saris, which we tore off when they became too cumbersome for our games; ate rich Kashmiri food, which Mummie deplored; refused to take our afternoon naps; raced around in the hot sun shouting like hooligans; and came home hoarse, stuffed, and exhausted. Going to Anand Bhawan was always an eagerly anticipated event because of the unlimited freedom we were allowed there.

Our grandmother, whom we called Nanima, was tiny and doll-like, with a Dresden china perfection about her. She had the fair complexion and hazel eyes common to Kashmiri women, and her hair had been a rich chestnut brown before it turned gray. She had small, beautifully shaped hands and feet, and a sharp, imperious manner that was the result of long years of frail health.

Life had been kind to Nanima. It had given her a husband whom she adored, three lovely children, great wealth, and a famous name. But it had also demanded a great deal of her. Born and bred in luxury, a typical example of the flower of Kashmiri womanhood, helpless, beautiful, and pampered, she had willingly given up all her comforts and shed generations of orthodoxy to follow her husband when he joined Gandhiji's ranks. Uncomplainingly she had discarded her lovely

clothes for coarse white khadi, had seen her husband, son, daughter-in-law, and daughters go to jail, and had herself proudly courted arrest and imprisonment at a time when her age and ill-health could well have excused her from taking an active part in politics.

Nanima disliked all children except those of her own family, and made no bones about it. Toward us her manner was one of humorous tolerance rather than the demonstrative attitude of most grandmothers.

When we arrived at Anand Bhawan, we were always greeted at the front steps by the old gardener, Datadin, who, with a smile creasing his grizzled face, would present us each with a nosegay of flowers. Bibima, our great-aunt, would come hurrying out to meet us and take us to our grandmother. Already tired of my enveloping sari, I would start dragging it off, trailing it behind me as I ran, emerging in my finger-tip-length cotton frock.

"Be careful your frock doesn't trail in the mud," Nanima once cautioned me dryly. "It's even longer than usual today."

I sneezed and sniffed. Our governess always pinned a handkerchief on the front of our dresses with a large safety pin, but it was too much trouble to unpin it when we wanted to blow our noses. I sniffed again against the back of my hand.

"In heaven's name, what is the handkerchief for?" asked Nanima, waving her exquisite little white hands in despair. Turning to Bibima, she added: "No wonder these children are always sniffling. Look at their absurd high frocks."

Our beloved Bibima, widowed at an early age, had devoted her life to the care of her fragile younger sis-

ter. Her apartments were a separate unit a short distance from the main house, and she lived a serene, peaceful life of worship and service. Bibima cooked her own food, as she did not eat meat and would not touch the semi-European food cooked in the main kitchen. In her Indian kitchen with its spotless, swept floor and its neat small earthen stoves, we had our Sunday lunches, sitting cross-legged on little bamboo mats while she gave us piping hot *puris* [4] and delicious vegetable concoctions fresh from gleaming copper and brass vessels.

After lunch we would lie under a tree in the garden if the weather was cool, under a fan indoors if it was hot, while Bibima sat beside us, chopping areca nuts with her large, heavy *sarota* [5] and peeling cardamoms and arranging them in piles on a tray. All afternoon she told us stories from her endless store, holding us enthralled in an atmosphere of princes and princesses, of animals who lived and spoke like human beings. This way we learned not only fairy tales but the colorful stories of our epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, and other classics. We loved folk tales too, and among our favorites was one I have often thought of since.

"Once there was an old woman," began Bibima. We stretched out on our full tummies, our chins propped on our hands.

[4] *Puris* are made of wheat flour or whole-wheat flour, and fried in ghee (clarified butter). When they are ready they resemble golden-brown, crisp puffs, and are eaten with vegetables.

[5] *sarota*, an instrument used for chopping areca nuts. It is shaped somewhat like a pair of scissors with a blade-like edge for chopping.

"I want an animal story," I objected.

"Just wait," said Bibima; "soon an animal will come into it. Well, this poor old woman had no child, though she had prayed for one all her life, and because she had lived such a good life, at last the gods took pity on her and decided to reward her piety. One day she was sitting beside the little stove in her hut, cooking her lunch, when a drop of hot fat jumped from the pan and splashed onto the back of her hand. It made a big blister, and before she could even cry out in pain, the blister burst, and out popped a frog!"

I shuddered. "I don't want a story about a frog," I said. "I want real animals like lions and tigers."

"Well, I want to hear this one," said Lekha firmly. She was deeply interested in frogs, and poked and prodded the ones she found in the garden.

"After this I'll tell one about real animals," Bibima compromised. "Just wait, this one is very interesting."

"Frogs aren't interesting," I persisted. "Do princes and princesses come into it?"

"Of course," said Bibima. "Now listen. Well, this frog jumped out, and the old woman was overjoyed because the extraordinary manner of his appearance could only mean that the gods meant him to be her son. So she brought him up and lavished love on him, and he learned to read and write. And though everybody laughed at her for treating a mere frog like a son, she did not mind.

"One day, when the frog was grown up, a royal messenger came to the old woman's town bearing the proclamation that the king's daughter's *swayamvara* (the ceremony of choosing a husband) was going to be held. All the young men who wished to compete

for her hand were invited to assemble at the palace on the appointed day. Of course the invitation was intended only for the wealthy nobles and princes, but the frog also began to prepare for his trip to the palace.

"Now the old woman was very upset. She knew that other people did not look upon the frog with the same loving eyes that she did. Others would only laugh at him if he went to the *swayamvara,* and she wanted to save him this unhappiness.

" 'My son,' she pleaded, 'you have been a good son, and you are enough for me I do not crave a daughter-in-law. Why must you go to the *swayamvara?'*

" 'I must go, Mother dear,' said the frog happily, and a dreamy, faraway look came into his eyes, 'for they say that the king's daughter is as beautiful as the crescent moon. I must not lose this opportunity to win her.'

"In vain did the old woman try to stop him. Off he went, dressed in the finest robes he could afford." Bibima paused to pop some areca nut into her mouth.

"Well, then what happened?" we clamored impatiently.

"The frog arrived at the palace and was given a seat among the princes and nobles of the realm. They were dressed in rich garments and jewels, and they were all accompanied by retainers carrying costly presents for the king's daughter. When they saw the frog, they burst out laughing. But he held his head high and paid no attention. At last the princess came out."

"How old was she?" I breathed.

"Oh, about fifteen or sixteen."

"And what did she look like?"

"Well, her skin was the color of golden-brown wheat, and her eyes were large like a deer's and almond-shaped. When she walked, she swayed gently as if she were walking to music, and her anklets tinkled as she moved. Her hair was threaded with pearls, and her clothes shimmered with precious stones. In her hand she carried the *jaimal* (garland of flowers) with which she was to indicate the suitor of her choice.

"She passed before each suitor and, to the amazement of everyone assembled, she stopped in front of the frog and placed the garland around his neck. Everybody laughed, thinking it was a joke, and the king told her to repeat the ceremony. The second time she again chose the frog. The king was angry and puzzled, and told her to try a third time. But the last time she again placed the garland about the frog's neck. There could be no mistake. The princess had chosen the frog for her husband. The king was enraged and the nobles humiliated, but they were helpless to prevent her. The age-old custom of the *swayamvara* gave the princess the right to choose whom she liked. And then a miracle happened."

"Oh, I hope there will be a happy ending," I interrupted anxiously.

"Oh, yes," Bibima said, "a very happy ending indeed. Well, the miracle was this: suddenly the frog, the ugly, squat creature, turned into a young prince. So beautiful and strong was he in his glittering robes, and with his shining sword at his waist, that he put the rest of the company to shame."

We gasped in unison.

"He smiled at the princess, who had lowered her

eyes before him, and said: 'A spell had been cast on me that I would remain a frog until a lovely princess looked upon me with love. Your beauty and love and kind heart have released me from it forever.' And so they were married with fitting pomp and pageantry, and lived happily ever after. And the old woman lived with them in comfort all her days."

"Oh, how wonderful!" I sighed. "Tell us another."

We did not let a minute elapse between the telling of one story and another. And Bibima would gladly have continued had it not been time for us to drink our milk and leave for home with our governess, Miss Collins, who had come to fetch us.

On the way home I would complain: "I'm getting a headache."

"To bed the minute you get home," Miss Collins would say briskly. "It's all this heavy food, and no naps during the day."

"No," I would object in irritation. "It's not so bad *now*. It's just *starting*, and by tomorrow it will be really bad."

I regularly developed a headache on Sunday nights. The thought of school on the following day was a hateful one.

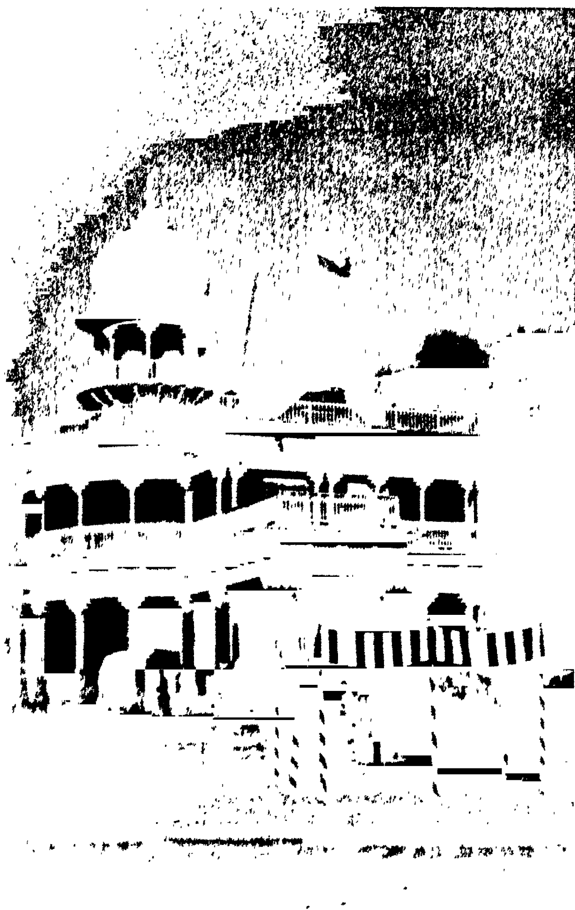
"Well, we'll see when tomorrow comes," Miss Collins would say unsympathetically.

Bibima taught us more than stories. She made the Hindu approach to life a reality for us; not through words, for she was not a learned woman, but through her own extreme simplicity, her deep religiousness, and her tranquil calm faith in the goodness of God. I trailed around after her devotedly, and sometimes she took me to the temple with her. But better than

this, I liked her *puja-ghar*, her room of worship at home. It always smelled of fresh flowers and mild incense. Often I was given the happy task of picking flowers for her worship and staying in the room while she prayed. Guided by her, I began to believe in the nearness of God.

When Bibima died, just twenty-four hours after my grandmother's death (for the shock of her beloved sister's death had been too great for her), I suffered my first irreparable loss. Day after day I sat in the deserted little *puja-ghar*, convinced that if I waited long enough she would return, for she had always come to me when I had needed her. Perhaps it was a good thing that my earliest loss should have been of someone I loved so dearly, because I quickly learned that she was not lost to me. To this day her memory revives the charmed hours of childhood and the belief that goodness prevails and that the world goes on because of it.

Our first school was a convent. Classes were a torture for me. My highest mark in arithmetic was four per cent. I could spell and learn long poems by heart, but history and geography were a mystery to me. The former, as we had to study it from a brown book called *Highroads of History*, was, I realize now, a blot on the name of history. The author had a rather lively imagination and should have written fiction instead of fact, because much of what he wrote was only fiction. The book was filled with lurid accounts of the Black Hole of Calcutta, the villainies of Tippu Sultan, and the valor and courage of Clive and Warren Hastings and other British heroes in a land of vindictive na-



Anand Bhawan, Allahabad, with the Indian flag flying

Ranjit Sitaram Pandit

tives. If I know any history now, it is no thanks to *Highroads.*

Infinitely more interesting was the history I learned from my father on our walks together. Ancient India, the land of Sanskrit, was alive and vivid to him, and he infused breath and color into dead kings and emperors, poets and statesmen. He spoke of them with a flowing ease and intimacy that only a lover of learning can achieve, making the centuries fall away before my eyes and India's hoary past leap to life and action.

I did well at catechism because it was memory work, and won a medal for my prowess. Lekha, being of a more skeptical turn of mind, did not do so well at it, and asked too many questions. She was confused, as she had always imagined that God was Nanuji, and Jesus, Mamu. It was a severe shock to her when a nun firmly explained that there was no relationship.

The corridors and classroom walls were lined with pictures of scenes from the Old Testament. Lekha wanted to know why God had a beard and what the lower half of him looked like. The pictures showed only the upper half, with the rest submerged in swirls of clouds. When she read her *Bible History* she took a distinct dislike to God because he drove Adam and Eve out of Paradise, because he let Cain kill Abel when he could have prevented it, and, above all, because he let "sweet baby lambs" be sacrificed to him. A God who was unkind to animals was not one whose acquaintance she cared to cultivate, Lekha decided She was not a child who kept her views to herself, and her new-found atheism became a topic for gossip among her friends.

These precocious goings-on were not calculated to

please the nuns, who preferred me with my complete acceptance of all that the Scriptures taught. For being a good girl I was from time to time given a "holy picture" illustrating an incident from the life of Christ, and I collected a number of these. But still I hated school and longed to get home every day.

Taking my report card home was an ordeal, not because my parents worried about my marks, but because I was distressed at not being able to do better.

"I'm terrible at arithmetic, Papu," I would tell my father unhappily.

"So am I," he would promptly reply. "No daughter of mine can be expected to do well at arithmetic." And he would laugh heartily at the four per cent on my card.

If I looked too mournful, he would say: "What's the matter? Are you going to let a school get the better of you? You know you have a brain, and I know you have a brain, and we don't need any third person's assurance."

In the country all kinds of revolutionary changes were taking place while we went to school and played and quarreled. For a while Rita was my playmate. She was a sunny-tempered, rosy-cheeked, auburn-haired baby, and Papu called her Rio Rita after a song that was popular at the time. Rita and I spent hours with our dolls, while Lekha became a tomboy and ruined her clothes climbing trees. Rita and I never had to wear hand-me-downs, because there were never any left to wear. Lekha took every opportunity to tear up our paper dolls and make jeering remarks about our games.

I had a favorite yellow-haired, blue-eyed doll called Stella, which Mummie had brought me from Paris. I took Stella to bed with me every night, and slept blissfully with her cold face close to mine. One night Lekha said: "I shouldn't be surprised if she gets up and strangles you some night." "Strangle" was a new word in Lekha's vocabulary, and she was proud of its acquisition and the effect it had on grown-ups. It certainly had the desired effect on me. I was frozen with terror. When Lekha was asleep, I crept out of bed. I was afraid of the dark, but I was even more afraid of what Stella might do to me. I carried her to the nursery, raced back to bed without a backward glance, and curled myself into a ball with the covers pulled over my head. For a long time afterwards I was not on speaking terms with Stella, and her smooth angelic face seemed only a mask for the evil deeds she was planning.

My sisters and I, like our parents, wore clothes made of khadi, and in the evenings when we went out for walks we also wore little Gandhi caps. Naturally, we looked conspicuously different from the children we met and played with in the park, and Lekha did not like it. One day she came home crying, saying she would never wear a Gandhi cap again because some English children had laughed at her.

"Why can't I wear hats like theirs?" she demanded tearfully.

Mummie tried to explain the significance of the Gandhi cap, telling her that she should be proud to wear it.

"But you need not wear it if you don't want to,"

she ended. "What do you think about it?" she asked, turning to me.

"Let them laugh," I scowled, my five-year-old temper rising. "I'm not going to take mine off. I'll see how long they laugh. If Mamu can go to jail because of it, I can keep mine on my head."

Mummie looked a little startled at my vehemence, but it convinced Lekha, and she decided she would continue to wear hers too.

The Swadeshi movement (the movement to encourage Indian-made, particularly hand-made, rather than foreign goods) was a fairly recent one in India at that time, and it was an essential part of Gandhiji's policy of non-co-operation with the Government. Khadi was the badge of every Congressman and patriotic Indian. For a family like the Nehrus, accustomed to extravagant living, it meant a complete revolution not only in dress, but also in living and thinking habits. Nanuji had frequently bought his children's clothes in the most fashionable shops in London and Paris. Because he firmly believed that an untidily dressed individual could not think clearly, his own clothes, too, were in elegant and impeccable taste, giving rise to the legend that he had them laundered in Paris. This was, of course, untrue, but it was in keeping with the magnificent scale on which he lived.

When he joined Gandhiji—and he never did a thing half-heartedly—he made a huge bonfire of all his family's foreign apparel, pledging himself to wear only swadeshi and to use only swadeshi articles in his home from that day. The Nehru household had always maintained both a European and an Indian cuisine and a cellar of distinction, for my grandfather was

something of a gourmet, and his generous hospitality was as much an institution as his immense roar of laughter and his brilliant reputation as a barrister.

With the onset of the non-co-operation movement, the two cuisines were reduced to one and the cellar abolished altogether, for teetotalism was another of Gandhiji's tenets. The vast retinue of servants was cut down, and Nanuji sold his horses and much of his treasured china and crystal. To understand how it happened that a man with an epicure's enjoyment of life could at the age of sixty quietly give up overnight the luxury in which he had always indulged and, following his son, could undergo a complete conversion of his entire mode of living is to understand a fraction of the mind of a nation bewitched by Gandhi.

With Nanuji's conversion, the other members of the household followed his example. When Mummie was married, in 1921, she wore a khadi sari during the ceremony instead of the traditional silk. Her only ornaments were fresh flowers fashioned into bracelets and a necklace, and a few arranged in her hair. She wore none of the jewelry an Indian bride usually wears. Her sari was made of yarn spun by Gandhiji's wife. Since that time, all brides in our family have been married in saris of hand-spun, hand-woven cloth, and have been adorned only by flowers.

In our childhood extreme simplicity had already become the established hallmark of family life, and we grew up believing that ostentation in any form was out of keeping with the times and with our patriotism.

The world of make-believe was more vivid and important to me than that of reality, and I had an

enormous collection of fairy tales. One day Papu found me sobbing in my room, with my book on my lap.

I cried: "Why do they always have golden hair, Papu?" I meant the princesses of my books. Their coloring made then remote from my experience. My urgent need to identify myself with them could never be satisfied.

Papu replied gravely: "They don't. The English princesses have golden hair, but the Italian and Spanish princesses have dark hair. And what about the Indian princesses? Have you forgotten about them?"

I brightened, as always, at the prospect of a story. "Tell me about them."

Papu sat down beside me and told me about the princesses of Indian history and legend. "They were not only beautiful; they were brave and noble too."

He told me of the lovely, delicately nurtured Princess Sita, the ideal of all Indian women, whose selfless devotion to her husband, Rama, led her to share his fourteen-year exile in the jungle, though she could have lived in luxury in the palace. He spoke of Savitri, who so loved her husband, Satyavana, that when Yama, the God of Death, came to claim him as had been preordained, her inspired pleas won him his life again. I listened rapt to the tales of the courageous Rajput women who, when their menfolk were defeated in battle, chose to end their lives by leaping into a fire rather than face disgrace and dishonor at the hands of the enemy. Then there was the beautiful Empress Mumtaz Mahal, to whose memory a sorrowful Mogul Emperor, Shah Jehan, built the Taj Mahal. More recently there had been the gallant Rani Lakshmibai of

Jhansi, who in the nineteenth century had unsuccessfully but valiantly led her troops to battle against the British.

"So you see," said Papu, "there are other princesses besides the golden-haired ones. They have provided you with a grand tradition."

"But that was all in the olden days," I objected with a sudden spurt of realism. "Why aren't we like that today? Why does everybody say India is so different now and so backward?"

"Well, India *is* backward in many ways. That's why we must all work harder to make ourselves better people. The important thing is not to fight for freedom, but to fight to improve ourselves. Then freedom will come, and we will be worthy of it, as we were before."

I digested this thoughtfully.

"That is what Bapu says, isn't it, that if we live and think rightly, we will be free? But suppose we go on living rightly, and still we don't get our freedom?"

"Then freedom cannot be worth having," said Papu with finality. "If the cause for which we fight is a great one, then we must be worthy of it."

"Why does Bapu wear so few clothes?" I asked, puzzled.

"Because most people in India have very little to wear, and he feels that by living and dressing as they do, he will be nearer to them and understand them better."

"But he didn't always dress this way, did he?"

"Certainly not," answered Papu, laughing. "When I was a little boy, I remember Bapu coming to my father's house in Rajkot in a frock coat and a top hat. He had a mustache too in those days."

I could not picture as the dapper young lawyer Mr. Gandhi the slight, bony Bapu of the loincloth whom I knew.

After we had been at the convent a few years, our parents decided to send us to school in the hills for the sake of our health. It was a coeducational school, Woodstock, run by American missionaries. Some of our parents' acquaintances raised startled eyebrows at the idea. To the modern conservative Indian mind, accustomed to an education along strictly British lines, an American education amounted to no education at all.

"Do you want your girls to learn hiking instead of arithmetic?" a lady asked my mother sourly. "And, speaking of arithmetic, you realize they will be learning it in dollars and cents?" This remark was intended to be pregnant with ominous prophecy.

For me, dollars and cents were a salvation after the intricacies of pounds, shillings, pence, florins, half-pennies, and half-crowns, which I had never been able to master. A dollar had a hundred cents, and that was that. My marks soared and I became a prize student, much to my astonishment. Allahabad with its sultry heat had been left behind for the pure bracing air of the Himalayas, and *Highroads of History* and all my other unhappy associations were forgotten.

We entered with great zest into a crowded schedule of work and play. We took part in sports, theatricals, and student government. Lekha and I joined the two school orchestras, while Rita started piano lessons. School became fun instead of an ordeal, and we were always eager to go back after the holidays.

Once my mother remarked to a gentleman who had come to call on her: "You must meet my American children."

"Oh, really!" he said, somewhat taken aback, and did not relax till we trooped into the room to be introduced.

We brought back slang expressions to tell our convent friends. Their mothers did not appreciate our Americanisms, but Papu enjoyed them enormously and named Lekha, who had the biggest collection, and who obviously enjoyed shocking her friends, "Chandralekha Americana."

The general feeling in the community was tacit disapproval of our upbringing, and there was an atmosphere of "These children will come to no good end." People had, of course, long since resigned themselves to the fact that our parents were lunatics: a father who threw away a flourishing law practice, and thereby all financial security, to follow a crazy man who believed that freedom would come through self-sacrifice; a mother who wore coarse, unattractive clothes and preferred to languish in prison rather than look after her home and children—well, the parents were too far gone to be saved, but what would become of their poor, innocent children?

Among the activities we took part in at Woodstock, Rita and I joined the Bluebirds (Junior Campfire Girls). Before a Bluebird could be officially confirmed, she had to take an oath of loyalty to "God, King, and country." Rita and I were greatly disturbed about pledging ourselves to a King whom we did not recognize as our own, and we discussed the matter with Papu and Mummie, who had come up to Mussoorie

for the occasion. They in turn discussed it with the principal of the school, a wise and understanding person who sympathized with our point of view. He agreed that it would be sufficient if we took our oath to "God and country."

The long-awaited day arrived, and Rita and I in our khaki dresses and blue ties took our places among the other Bluebirds for the ceremony. There was a hush in the auditorium as the proud parents of prospective Bluebirds sat expectant. My turn came and, stricken with self-consciousness, I stepped forward, eyes downcast, mumbled the oath, and returned to my place.

When Rita's turn came, she marched forward and spoke in a clear, ringing voice: "I pledge myself to serve God—" Here she paused meaningfully, and seconds danced by during that pin-drop silence. Rita cleared her throat and concluded loudly: "—and country!" She glanced triumphantly around the room while I glared at her and Mummie and Papu tried to suppress their smiles.

"You were supposed to be taking a solemn oath," I scolded her afterwards. "You needn't have made such a show of it."

Her brown eyes regarded me innocently. "Did I do anything wrong?"

During the first few days at Woodstock I suffered a slight setback when, during a recess, an eight-year-old classmate asked me: "Say, is it true your folks have been to jail?"

I nodded nervously. How explain to him all the background that I took so much for granted? And what would my new friends think of me now?

My questioner bounced his Yo-yo back and forth

unconcernedly. "What for? Did they steal something?"

"Oh no," I said hastily, "it's not like that at all." I strove anxiously for the right words. "You see, it's just that they want the British to leave India, and when they say so, they're put in jail."

"Aw—that's not fair," he sympathized, and then went on earnestly: "You know what? The British used to be in America too, but they aren't there any more. I guess it'll be the same way over here."

My classmate must have explained our position to the rest of the class, for no more questions were asked.

■

Chapter IV

THE ELECTIONS AND AFTER

OUR first vacation from Woodstock was a memorable one. It was 1936, the year when the Congress decided to take part in the country's elections for seats in the legislative assemblies of the provinces. We came down from school in December and found ourselves caught up in a whirl of excitement and activity. Mummie and Papu were both standing for election to the U.P. provincial assembly. Mummie's constituency was the rural area of the near-by city of Kanpur; Papu's was the even closer district known as Jumna-par, across the river from Allahabad.

To a foreigner it might have looked like a curious paradox that elections were going to be held in a country that was not free. It was not really so paradoxical. According to a new Constitution imposed on India, the Government of India Act of 1935, the Viceroy was to continue to hold the actual reins of authority and the Central Government was to function at his bidding as before, with control over the vital portfolios. The provinces were to be given a limited control over certain subjects, but even this could be wiped out by one ordinance issued by the Viceroy. The Viceroy, it seemed, was the most powerful man in the world, more powerful even than the

King whom he represented, for he had the power of life and death over four hundred million people.

Then why were we going to take part in an election provided for by such an act, we asked Papu, if we believed it was a farce?

"Look at it this way," Papu explained. "We have been given no choice. Whether we like it or not, this new Constitution is here to stay. It is nonsense to call it a measure of self-government, because self-government must come from the people themselves; it cannot be doled out to us by a country several thousands of miles away. But, faced with it, whatever it may be called, we can do one of two things: either ignore it utterly, or accept it in the spirit of a challenge. The Congress has decided to accept it because it will help us, who seek election, to establish closer contacts with the people. Winning the election is not as important as seeking it on the principles we hold to be correct. If we do win, it will be a triumph for those principles and for all that the Congress upholds."

"And if we don't win?" we asked anxiously.

"Then nothing is lost," said Papu, "because the actual power given to the provincial governments will be very little. But remember that winning or losing is not the chief thing. We want to know what the country thinks of us. All these years we have stood for certain ideals and shouted them from the housetops. Now we shall see if anyone has listened and understood. Do those ideals have any meaning for the people of India? That is what we have to find out."

Often during the campaign we accompanied our parents on their tours, listening to their speeches,

playing with the children we met, and drinking tall glasses of thick, creamy milk sweetened with chunks of jaggery, which the villagers of Papu's constituency brought us. Sometimes we stayed at home with Nanima and Bibima, who did not think that dusty roads and political meetings were the proper places for children.

Once Papu brought home a baby deer from his constituency and another time a crane we called Johnny Walker. Johnny Walker was the most ungrateful, ill-tempered bird we had ever encountered. He ignored our affectionate advances and repaid us by pecking us with his sharp, pointed beak whenever he could. Members of the family and strangers alike were his enemies, and often we saw the postman, one of the servants, or a visitor to the house tearing across the garden at full speed with Johnny Walker racing behind in long-legged pursuit. The only person for whom he had any consideration was the sweeper woman, who gave him his food. Because he had been a gift from one of Papu's constituents, we did not have the heart to send him away, and bore with all his tantrums. His only saving grace was that he looked decorative from a distance, a graceful, white, red-beaked creature, balancing first on one and then on the other of two incredibly long pink sticks of legs while he fished insects expertly from the grass.

The election campaign was as inspiring a milestone in our lives as it was in the life of the nation. It was the Congress Party's first decision to co-operate with the Government in its appraisal of the various political parties. It was more stirring than any election in a free country, because it was a challenge: an indul-

gent government had decided to see whether an enslaved people could rise to such an occasion and take the first step toward eventual self-government.

Papu explained to us what a lot of hard work an election involved. The Congress, for the first time, had to face a number of practical problems, among them its inability to provide transportation for its electorate, as rival parties were able to do. For footsore villagers the lure of buses or other vehicles to take them to the polling booths was an attractive one. Often they had great distances to travel in order to reach a booth, and the Congress could provide no easy way to vote. But hardship is the daily lot of the average Indian, and he understands it well. It is the sudden generous offer of ease that he eyes with suspicion, however much it may appeal to him.

The Congress called upon the Indian people to go to the polls in the same dedicated spirit with which they went on their pilgrimage to bathe in the Ganges, walking many miles for a dip in the sacred river. The election, too, the Congress declared, was a pilgrimage, and its success depended upon the measure of dedication to its cause. And the people responded with enthusiasm to the cry of "On foot to the polling booths," as people so often heroically respond when heroism is demanded of them. They were able to do so with all the greater inspiration, perhaps, because before them lay the example of another near-villager, Mahatma Gandhi, who in 1930 had walked many miles, staff in hand, to an ocean beach to break a salt law that we considered unjust.

We became fiery campaigners for our parents, and our enthusiasm was a reflection of the nation's enthu-

siasm when, in seven out of eleven provinces, a Congress majority was elected. India emerged from the election unimpressed by wealth and power. She had voted the hard way and had showed that there was a corner of the world where asceticism could walk hand in hand with politics.

For us the days before the results were announced were spent in a fever of suspense. We could neither eat nor sleep, and rushed to the telephone every time it rang. One night we were having dinner, the three of us alone in the dining-room, when a telegram arrived. Lekha tore it open and read: "Yes for Mummie." We looked at each other bewildered.

Suddenly Lekha shrieked: "Yeah for Mummie! It means 'Yeah for Mummie.' Mummie's won the election!"

Resigned to our use of American slang, Mummie had obviously thought "Yeah" would be the most apt way to announce her victory to us, and the telegraph office had of course changed the word, thinking it was a mistake. We dropped our forks and joined in a wild dance around the dining-table. We whirled into our grandmother's room, where she and Bibima sat on the floor reading the *Ramayana*, and sang out the good news.

Once again we celebrated when not long afterwards the news came that Papu had defeated his rival, a powerful and wealthy landowner.

The sequel to these events came the following summer, when a letter from Mummie arrived at Woodstock telling us of her appointment as a minister of the U.P. Cabinet. She had been given the portfolio of health. All over India newspapers and magazines

flashed Mummie's picture, beautiful and black-haired, the first Indian woman to become a Cabinet minister and one of the first women in the world to hold such a position. We were the proud recipients of congratulations from our friends.

The next two winters we went to Lucknow for our holidays instead of Allahabad, for Lucknow was the capital of our province. For us life continued as before, but there was the added pleasure of taking Mummie's lunch in a picnic basket to the Secretariat and hearing people refer to her as "Honorable Minister."

On my first visit to the Secretariat, exploring a corridor in search of a wastepaper basket in which to throw a chocolate wrapping, I could not find one. I made my way to Mummie's office and complained about it.

"This is rather a serious matter," she agreed. "Why don't you write a note to the Premier about it?"

I had greeted the Premier, Pantji (as Pandit Govind Vallabh Pant was known), in our home on several occasions, and recalled his towering figure, his drooping gray mustache, and his twinkling eyes. But to write him an official letter was another matter. With Mummie's encouragement, I penned a hesitant complaint to him, requesting that bins be installed in the corridors of the Secretariat. I was jubilant when my request was granted.

Mummie's office was attractively furnished by her, and brightened by bowls of roses from the Secretariat gardens. When she had first started to refurnish her room according to her own taste, her secretary had been alarmed at the changes she made. He felt that

any signs of feminine frivolity would surely distract from serious work. When she asked that flowers be sent up to her table, he was openly dismayed.

"But, madame, it has never been done before," he began helplessly.

"Well, it will be done now," said Mummie briskly and, armed with a pair of garden shears, she prepared to go down and collect the flowers herself.

The secretary, still more dismayed at the prospect of the Honorable Minister cutting flowers in full view of passers-by, hastily assured her that the gardeners would send roses to her room every day.

The name of Vijaya Lakshmi became a legend in the villages of the U.P., and many babies were named after my mother. She became enormously popular wherever she went, particularly with women, young and old, whose rights she tirelessly championed and to whom she was a shining example of all that a woman was capable of achieving. The young women imitated her, the older ones sorrowed for her because she had no sons, and blessed her work. Her autographed picture became a possession much sought after by both children and grown-ups.

Letters poured into her office in the thousands, with requests ranging from the simplest to the most complicated, and from the most official to the most personal. Sometimes they were pathetically urgent in their need for help, and confusedly began: "Dear Sister: You are my father and my mother. If you cannot help me, no one can."

To everyone in the U.P. it was a matter of personal pride and triumph that Mummie had risen as she had. But to them her achievement was a natural thing, and

no more than they expected of the daughter of Motilal Nehru. While the rest of India acclaimed her success, the U.P. received it with the quiet confidence of a parent who sees his faith in a favorite child's talent fulfilled.

Yet so new was the concept of a woman minister, a woman touring cholera-ridden districts and famine areas and doing work that no woman had ever done before, that some were still unconvinced that it was true. During one of her speeches, a grizzled old *kisan* (peasant) wagged his head in wonder and remarked to his neighbor: "It is true—she really is a woman!"

No woman had held such a position before, but the concept of the equality of men and women was not foreign to Indian thought. Often buried deep by custom and convention through the centuries, it had, nevertheless, existed since ancient times, when a wife had been a man's honored and equal partner. Sanskrit literature referred to a wife as *ardhangini*, meaning "half the being" essential to the composition of the harmonious whole. This concept outlived all attempts to subdue it, and emerged once again under Gandhi's guidance.

Indian women did not have to march in suffragette processions to proclaim their equality with men, or don bloomers in place of their feminine garb. No such measures were necessary. Gandhi's call to women to take part in the national movement beside their men brought them forward as naturally as if they had been born to such a life—as if they had been born to make political speeches from the public platform, suffer blows when the police attacked their peaceful gatherings, and spend months at a time in jail, separated

from their children. It was a curious, happy-go-lucky type of self-imposed discipline. Mummie was only one of those stouthearted women.

In the West, the emancipation of women brought about a change in their appearance. Short skirts and cropped hair became the order of the day. But the appearance of Indian women has on the whole remained unaltered. They still wear their graceful saris, proving that an efficient job of work can be done in very feminine-looking attire. Long hair is still considered a hallmark of beauty in a woman, and most Indian women wear it that way.

■

Chapter V

INTERLUDE

RITA and I will never forget Lucknow for our own private reasons, which had nothing to do with Mummie's being a minister. For the first time in our lives our freedom of thought was imperiled, and we found ourselves in the uncomfortable position of being able to do nothing about it! The winter after Mummie's appointment, we came under the care of a Swiss-Italian governess who was a firm believer in some form—her own patchwork version, I suspect—of mental doctrine. "Mademoiselle," as we called her, did not teach us much French, but she initiated us into her own world of thought-control much against our will.

Soon after her arrival she started subscribing for us to a magazine called *Wee Wisdom.* Its regular feature was a prayer entitled "The Prayer of Faith," which we had to learn and repeat every night. Every day we had to indulge in fifteen minutes of meditation. Keeping quiet for even a few moments was difficult for us, and fifteen minutes seemed an eternity of time wasted.

"What's meditation, anyway?" Rita inquired crossly.

"It's thinking," said Mademoiselle.

"But I can think without sitting still for fifteen minutes," Rita objected.

"Sitting quietly enables you to think more clearly," said Mademoiselle, and would not brook any further discussion.

One day I caught a severe cold, and before leaving for her office Mummie asked Mademoiselle to put me to bed and call the doctor. An hour later Mummie telephoned to find out what the doctor had said.

"Oh, I did not send for him, Mrs. Pandit," said Mademoiselle.

"But why not?" asked Mummie, worried.

"It would have been a moral defeat," was the firm reply.

The doctor was sent for much against Mademoiselle's wishes.

A few nights afterwards Mummie came home late from a party and tiptoed into the bedroom where Rita and I slept. She halted in the doorway and stifled a scream. There was Mademoiselle, an eerie figure in her long white nightgown, seated on the edge of Rita's bed, muttering in a low tone while she waved shadowy hands over Rita's face. Mummie recovered her composure with an effort and marched in, breaking the spell.

"May I ask what you are doing, Mademoiselle?" she demanded.

"Autosuggestion," explained Mademoiselle brightly, rising from the bed. "You see, Mrs. Pandit, Rita has been very naughty lately, and I feel sure a little autosuggestion will cure her. It works more effectively while the child sleeps."

It cured Mummie of Mademoiselle: the good lady left us soon after the incident.

That very winter Anna Ornsholt came into our fam-

ily. She was a tall, slim, erect Dane, with iron-gray hair, blue eyes, a smooth, unlined rose-and-tan complexion, and a swinging stride.

"So now!" she announced to us with a nod. "We are going to be friends. You must call me Tante Anna."

And Tante Anna became an institution in our lives. She was an ardent believer in cold showers, exercise, and sunbathing. On bitterly cold December mornings in Mussoorie, we were unceremoniously pulled out of bed and marched to the bathroom, where the icy spray of a hose greeted us. After this we walked to a pale strip of sunshine on the hillside outside the house, where we did deep-breathing exercises. If ever we protested that it was too cold, we were met by a scornful "Chaw! We are all Vikings!" And Vikings we became.

Tante Anna was contemptuous of people who did not do things for themselves. Under her tutelage we made our own beds, polished our own shoes, learned to sew and mend our clothes. We had never done these things outside of boarding school, for at home there were servants to do them. "Sit up! Walk straight!" she was always commanding us. "How will India ever be free if you young people always sit hunched up? Look at me, how straight I am, and I am much older than you."

"How old are you, Tante Anna?" Rita asked curiously. We had discussed her age among ourselves, but could never arrive at any definite conclusion.

"A hundred years old," was her thoughtful reply, and it seemed an echo of some forgotten Hans Andersen fairy tale.

"Oh, that's very old," said Rita. "You are the oldest person in the world."

"It is how young you feel that counts," said Tante Anna.

She had more vitality than anyone we had ever known before. She was an enthusiastic vegetarian and frequently went on diets consisting only of raw vegetables, including raw potatoes, and yoghurt. In her zeal she even tried to convert our cairn terrier, Tangle, to vegetarian food, but had to give up when the little fellow became listless on spinach soup.

Tante Anna brought harmony and happy discipline into our hitherto disturbed lives. Everything about her fascinated us, for no one like her had ever looked after us before. She had come to India before any of us had been born, to become a confirmed Theosophist, and later to work as secretary to Sir Jagdish Chandra Bose, the celebrated natural scientist. She always wore a sari when she went out. It was unusual for a European woman to adopt so many Indian ways. She became Tante Anna to our friends, relations, and the servants as well, and people never ceased to be amazed at her abundant store of energy. She swam, played tennis and badminton with zest, and on summer afternoons when the searing heat and brutal glare of the sun had driven everybody into cool, darkened rooms for a nap, Tante Anna would get on her bicycle, bareheaded, and pedal to the bazaar a mile away to do some shopping for Mummie. The European community in town was convinced that she was quite mad.

■

Chapter VI

THE ATMOSPHERE OF HOME

NO story of an Indian home can be complete without a description of those whose life's work it is to serve it. Our family servants played a major role in our lives. During our absences from our parents we would have felt lost and uprooted if we had not had them around us, to bring us up with love and care, looking upon us as their own children. Their calm, loyal devotion seemed to reflect the very soul of India, grown old in personal sorrow and suffering, visited by a hundred calamities perhaps, but peaceful and unhurried still.

The most vivid symbol of this spirit was Lachmania, our sweeper woman. Day after day, year in and year out, we saw her, broom in hand, back bent, sweeping the dead leaves from the lawn or, squatting on her haunches, polishing the marble floors of the house with a mop. Her face was creased, but her eyes had a twinkle, and she smiled when she spoke, revealing teeth blackened by an overfondness for pan. She was sparsely clad in a ragged sari and blouse, for however many clothes we gave her, there were still not enough to clothe her rapidly increasing family. In her ears hung heavy silver earrings, so weighty that besides the hooks that secured them in her ear lobes, a chain had to be circled over her ears to relieve their burden.

Yet, despite the chains, her ear lobes were torn by their weight. Colored glass bangles jingled on her smooth dark arms. Around her ankles she wore solid, heavy anklets, and a toe ring adorned one toe of each foot. She was poor and of humble origin, but she was a woman, with a woman's pride in ornaments.

"Lachmania, don't your earrings hurt you?" I asked in great concern I had to suppress a shudder each time I looked at the huge holes cut into her ear lobes.

She laughed at the idea. "No, little one, they do not. I am so used to these earrings."

She peered at my ears. "You should have your ears pierced now. You are a big girl."

Lekha and I were longing to have our ears pierced so that we could wear eardrops when we dressed up in our saris, as some of our girl friends did. But Papu frowned and muttered: "Barbaric custom," each time we broached the subject.

Lachmania's children were beautiful—a brood of golden-skinned, curly-brown-haired, gray-eyed babies, who tumbled over each other like playful puppies in the cloud of dust raised by her busy broom. The dust did not seem to worry them, nor did the blazing summer wind or the cold December dew. They grew like young plants shooting up toward the sun, unmindful of the discomforts of heat and cold which we hothouse blooms experienced. Lachmania brought even her youngest child, a six-week-old infant, with her to her work, when he could have been left in the little hut on the edge of the guava orchard where she lived.

"Why don't you leave him at home?" I asked. "Won't he be happier there?"

"Oh, he is happy here," she assured me, "and I can feed him as soon as he is hungry."

I glanced to where the baby lay stretched on his back on a dirty piece of cloth under a neem tree. Lachmania had just given him a vigorous massage with mustard oil, and his little body glistened with it.

"Oh, do be careful, you will hurt him," I had cried out, dismayed at the rough manner in which she rubbed his arms and legs and turned him over on his tummy.

"He will not get hurt," she smiled. "How will he grow strong unless I massage him properly?"

The baby did not seem to mind the treatment. Afterwards he fell asleep in the shade of the neem tree, a tiny, bare-bodied infant, with a black thread tied around one creased wrist, a type of charm to protect him against mishap of any kind.

Sundar, of the "untouchable" class, was our bearer. He waited on us children at meals, and looked after our room. I do not know when Sundar came to us. He seemed always to have been there taking care of us, a short, dark, wizened little man who belied his name, for Sundar means "beautiful" in Hindi.

"I cannot possibly call him Sundar," said Papu emphatically one day. "It is æsthetically most improper."

"But you must call him Sundar," Mummie insisted. "That's his name, and it's too late in life to change it."

"Well, all right," Papu compromised, "I shall call him Guapo, which means the same thing in Spanish. It's less obvious."

And to Papu he was always Guapo. His hands and feet, broad, spreading, veined, and gnarled, resembled

nothing so much as the roots of ancient trees. His face was carved into deep furrows, and his voice was a murmuring cackle. There was something of the gnome about him. Every time Mrs. Sarojini Naidu came to visit us she would exclaim to him: "Good heavens, man, are you still alive!" And he would cackle his acknowledgment.

Sundar scolded us regularly, and patiently cajoled us into eating our meals. The intrusion of governesses into our lives he bitterly resented. He accompanied us everywhere, to Mussoorie, to Lucknow, to Almora, but he was never so happy as at home in Allahabad, where he could order the other servants about and command an audience whenever he spoke. But Allahabad was more than the place where he was boss. It was a sacred city to him, as to millions of Indians. "There is no air purer than the air of Allahabad," he would declare, "because it is the air of both the Ganges and the Jumna."

Our family tailor, Mohammed Hussein, was another old and loved servant. He had sewed some of the clothes for Mummie's trousseau, and since that time had remained in her service. I cannot recall a time when the little *darzi* (tailor) was not there, seated cross-legged before his softly buzzing machine in a sunny corner of the veranda during the winter months, a shady corner during the summer. The machine was an old-fashioned one with a handle, and on it most of our childhood clothes had been made.

The darzi had a fascinating variety of spools of colored thread, which we took from him for our games. From the bundle in which he kept sewing materials we would take scraps of left-over silks and

satins to make clothes for our dolls. Twice during his working hours the darzi would leave his machine and, facing toward the direction in which Mecca lay, would say his solemn prayers, for he was a devout Muslim. Always when he prayed we would stop our activity to wait in respectful silence till he returned to his sewing-machine. Only then did we resume our play.

There were two chowkidars at Anand Bhawan, one to stem the flood of visitors and sightseers during the day, the other a night watchman. Nanima did not like either of them, and they lived in fear of her sharp tongue. One day Bansi, the day chowkidar, a timid, knock-kneed man perennially incapable of controlling the crowds, came running to my grandmother's room. He mumbled a few incoherent words about a waiting group of people wanting *darshan* (sight, interview, audience).

"Well, tell them they can't see the house," said Nanima crisply. "How many times must I tell you that no one is to come inside the house?"

Bansi suddenly shed years of sheeplike obedience, flung out his arms in irritation, and vehemently declared: "But it is *your* darshan that they want, I tell you, *yours*, not the house."

Nanima was so taken aback that in a daze she consented to receive the visitors, a thing she never did otherwise, and they streamed onto the veranda to get a glimpse of the mistress of the house.

The night watchman was equally unpopular with Nanima. "The wretched man sleeps all night instead of keeping watch," she grumbled.

"No," soothed Bibima, "he is very alert. You need not worry."

"How should I know whether he is awake or asleep if he never makes any noise?"

Thereafter the night watchman was given strict instructions to cough, clear his throat, and bellow at intervals during the night. The dark hours were punctuated by roars and murmurs, and my little grandmother, hearing them, lost her fears and slept soundly.

Hari had strayed into the Nehru household a disheveled urchin of five or six years. His father, who was a cook at the house of an English official, was an irresponsible, hard-drinking rascal who beat his wife mercilessly. The poor woman finally sought refuge in the premises of Swaraj Bhawan, and so Hari came to be noticed by my grandfather. Nanuji, always ready to help those in distress, found him a bright youngster and decided to employ the little "untouchable" boy, so Hari grew up in the family's service and was sent to school by Nanuji.

Unaccustomed to a life of rules and regulations, he cheerfully ignored its demands. He lied outrageously, stole whenever he had the chance, and coolly betrayed the trust that had been placed in him. Nanuji was magnanimous to a fault, but he could not tolerate dishonesty; his majestic wrath, once aroused, was not easily abated. When he discovered Hari's misdeeds he thrashed him soundly, and Hari ran away from the house determined never to return. But return he did, not long after the episode, for he soon learned that his master had been a just and kind one, and that he would not easily find another like him. He was received back into the fold and groomed to become a valet. Disciplined by Nanuji's stern training, Hari learned to do a good job of work, but it was his own

irrepressible good nature that made him one of the family, the confidant of its elders and the playmate of its younger members. By the time we appeared on the scene, he had already become an institution, known to everyone who had ever stayed at Anand Bhawan. He soon became our favorite companion.

He was a tiny man, barely five feet tall, with a sprightly walk. His mischievous, elfin ways set him apart from any grown-up we knew, and we were mystified by the black hair that sprouted out of his ears, giving him a faunlike appearance. He would tell us in the most droll fashion impossible stories of his splendid imaginary past, of the days when his charity was a legend, and when he would scatter basketfuls of fifteen-rupee notes [1] to beggars in the streets. If we happened to come upon him at work, he would fling aside the shoes he was polishing, or the clothes he was folding, and start cutting a series of absurd capers, until, with tears of laughter streaming down our faces, we would beg him to stop.

"All this," he would say disdainfully, indicating with a flourish his unfinished chores, "is just to fill in time. Actually my work is to dance and sing for little children."

We never tired of the nonsensical yarns he related to us with great relish, and made him repeat them endlessly.

"Tell us about the time you were accused of stealing a watch," I would prompt him.

[1] A rupee is equivalent to twenty cents. The joke in Hari's story is that there is no such thing as a 15-rupee note (bill). There are 5-rupee notes and 10-rupee notes, and after these comes the 100-rupee note.

"Stealing!" he scoffed. "I, who distributed alms to the poor and bathed in the Ganges, accused of stealing! Did I not have enough gold watches and to spare? A man as rich and famous as I naturally had many enemies. Do you know I was arrested and sentenced to six months' hanging?"

Duly impressed, we shivered our sympathy.

"To hang by the neck for six months! Can you picture a more ghastly fate for an innocent man?"

We could not, even for a guilty man.

"I could not even be certain that I would come out of that noose alive."

We shook our heads, feeling the tension in our throats as he graphically clasped his own in imitation of the threatened noose.

"Of course, my influence cleared me of that appalling charge. When the judge found out who I was, he released me at once."

We heaved sighs of relief.

"*But,*" barked Hari, making us jump, "nobody can treat Hari like that and get away with it. Do you know what I did to that judge?"

"What?" we echoed.

"Before I left the court," said Hari ominously, "I took hold of that old judge and I put his head right between his two ears."

"Serve him right too," said Rita with satisfaction.

"Every time he looks at himself in the mirror, he thinks of me," concluded Hari grimly.

Nanuji had had great hopes for the little boy whom he had helped. He had believed that Hari might amount to something more than a good valet, and it had often happened that whomever Nanuji had smiled

upon had been favored by fortune too. Hari's golden opportunity came, but not until after the death of his master. It came in 1936 when the Congress Party put him forward as one of their candidates for election to the Legislative Assembly of the U.P. We were as pleased as Hari, and no candidate could have had more ardent campaigners. Lekha, Rita, and I canvassed tirelessly for our friend, and on voting day we stood near the red-and-green ballot boxes of the Congress in agonized suspense. We were wildly excited when Hari was elected, and took all the credit for his victory. Hari attended the Legislative Assembly with solemn importance until the Congress ministries resigned in 1940. The little waif had come a long way in life.

When the Congress decided not to co-operate in Britain's war effort, Hari, like other members of the family, was arrested, and we gave him a festive send-off when the ungainly police lorry came to take him away. Going to jail was to be his crowning achievement, and he was extremely proud. A few days later we attended his trial in Naini Prison, seated on long wooden benches in a small, whitewashed room.

"How old are you?" questioned the magistrate, a young Englishman.

Hari pondered awhile. He had no idea how old he was. "I really could not say," he declared finally with regret, "but this much I do know, I had started shaving daily when Panditji [Jawaharlal Nehru] returned from college in England."

The magistrate smiled in spite of himself.

Hari was sentenced to a year's imprisonment, and we waited eagerly for his release. The house was a

gloomy place with its liveliest member away. The day we received the news that he was to be released, we waited impatiently for him on the front steps. At last a tonga clattered into the portico and an unrecognizable roly-poly form bounced out of it. The spare, spritelike little man had disappeared, and in his place there emerged this prosperous-looking substitute. During his enforced idleness Hari had gained twenty-eight pounds that he was destined never to lose. He looked as wide as he was high. Prison, an experience of suffering for most jail-goers, had proved a happy holiday for him. From that time onward his rotundity became a family joke, and all the other servants declared that they, too, would like to spend a few months in jail if such was the result of martyrdom!

Our servants took a deep interest in the country's politics, as they affected our parents so closely. *Girafter* and *mukadma* (arrest and trial) were common words in their vocabulary. They prided themselves on their connection with the family, wept when our parents went to jail, and rejoiced when they were released. Our gardener, the gentle Rama, was an unhappy man each time my father went to prison. There was no one then to walk with him in the garden, appreciating his loving handiwork, no one with whom to discuss the planting of young seedlings, to debate the condition of the fruit trees and the vegetable patch. Papu and Rama had in common their affection for trees and flowers and all things that grew. Watching Rama at work in the grove of orange and grapefruit trees which we children had planted, Papu would remark: "There is a wise man. He un-

derstands the things that will last." Rama could never control his tears when Papu was arrested, and they would course freely down his face when the time came to say good-by to his beloved master. And Papu never went away without embracing him and assuring him that he would soon be back. It was for men such as Rama, Papu always asserted, that India's freedom must be achieved, for it was to them, the simple, gentle people, that the soil of India really belonged.

Home is where one's parents are, and wherever we lived became home to us. But in the deepest sense of the word, home was Anand Bhawan. It was the familiar faces of our servants; it was the guava orchard where we played and stole hard green guavas from screaming parrot raiders; it was the smooth marble floors, the curving staircase to the library where we browsed, the smaller staircase leading to the roof where we sunbathed and sometimes slept in the summer, and where every 26th of January we hoisted the Congress flag, pledging ourselves anew to the cause of India's freedom.

Home was summer mornings spent seated around a zinc tub, with towels tied around our necks, sucking one luscious mango after another. Home was evenings spent in the twilight-drenched garden, chewing on long, thick sticks of sugar-cane. Sometimes Bibima would send for delicious tidbits from the near-by bazaar. They would arrive in containers made of dried leaves. Our favorite was *dahi-baras,* dumplings made of lentils, fluffy and light, and soaked in peppery curds. On hot days we drank glass after glass of iced watermelon juice or iced buttermilk flavored with salt, pepper, and cumin, and ate a sweet-sour cool con-

coction made from the thinly beaten brown pulp of the juicy tamarind.

Every year brought its galaxy of festivals. Early morning on a day toward the end of March the Kashmiri New Year (Naoroz) begins. Mummie would wake us, saying "*Naoroz Mubarak*" ("Happy New Year"). She would sit down on the edge of our beds, turn by turn, placing in front of her the *thali* she was carrying. The *thali* contained raw rice, the symbol of fertility, sweets of milk and coconuts, almonds, or pistachio, fresh fruit, flowers, a little curd, a container with powdered red *tika*, and a mirror. After putting a *tika* on each of our foreheads with a finger dipped in red powder and curd, and giving us some of the sweets to eat, Mummie would hand us a mirror to see ourselves. And so the New Year would begin, with the flame-colored gulmohr blossoming in the garden and the household clad in gay new saris.

Just before Naoroz comes Holi, the celebration that heralds the warm season. It is the liveliest of all the festivals, when there are no barriers between young and old, master and servant, stranger and stranger. At Holi we broke all bounds of convention and propriety and indulged in a riot of merrymaking, smearing one another's faces with colored powder and squirting colored water from syringes on each other and even on passers-by in the street.

Our celebration took place in the garden, and the crowd of merrymakers would grow as friends poured in to join the chase. Along the circular veranda stood a row of pails, each containing a different shade of water, from which we replenished our supply. The little pond where Papu had carefully planted lilies

would be rudely disturbed as dignified leaders of society, justices of the High Court, Congress chiefs, and visiting dignitaries were carried to it amid shouts and plunged gasping into its cold, slimy depths. After exhausting our own supply of colors, we would pile into the car, a disreputable gang, and call on our friends.

Later in the year we celebrated Raksha Bandhan. On that day girls tie *rakhis*, bands of colored threads, on the wrists of their brothers or those whom they adopt as brothers. In return for this token the brother must give his sister a gift to show that for the duration of a year he will be her protector whenever she needs him. In olden times the traditional gift among those who could afford it was a jeweled bodice, but nowadays it may be anything at all, and often takes the shape of a bottle of Chanel. A man who accepts a *rakhi* from a girl must regard her as his sister. It then becomes his sacred and chivalrous duty to help her whenever she requires his help, no matter at what cost or inconvenience to himself.

Indian history records a stirring incident of the sixteenth century, when a Hindu princess, Kurnavati of Chittor, sent a *rakhi* to the Mogul Emperor Humayun at Delhi, accompanied by a desperate appeal for help against invading armies. The Emperor, disregarding his own pressing problems and the fact that the invader of Chittor was a brother Muslim, left his capital with troops to rush to the Princess's aid. It was a great distance from Delhi to Chittor, and unfortunately he reached her kingdom too late. Chittor had already fallen to the invader, and Kurnavati, followed by hundreds of Rajput women, had gone to her death

on a burning pyre rather than endure captivity and dishonor Although the story has a tragic ending, it illustrates the romantic and chivalrous spirit of Raksha Bandhan.

Rita and I enjoyed the festival of Guria Panchmi more than any other when we were children. It is the Festival of Dolls and celebrated only by little girls. On this day we would invite our girl friends and their dolls to tea. We would dress the dolls in pretty new outfits, discuss their good and bad qualities, and arrange their marriages. Mummie would send for the *maniharin*, the bangle-seller. When she arrived we would sit around her, admiring her brilliant glass display. One by one, she would glide bangles onto our wrists.

"That one will never fit me," I would object as she skillfully selected a tiny bangle from her collection. "It's much too small."

But holding the glass circlet between her thumb and middle finger, the *maniharin* would cleverly mold my hand into it, just as if there were no bones in my hand, but only soft flesh that she manipulated like clay. When we had all been fitted, the woman would find even smaller bangles for our dolls.

Diwali, which comes in November, is the most beautiful of the festivals. It is the anniversary of the day, centuries ago, when Rama returned to his capital, Ayodya, after fourteen years of exile. It is the day when houses are lighted by innumerable tiny oil lamps in memory of that joyful welcome, and when prayers are said to Lakshmi, the Goddess of Fortune. At Anand Bhawan the religious part of the proceedings took place in Bibima's little room of worship.

We would assemble there to pay homage to the gracious goddess, resplendent in her picture on a great pink lotus blossom. Beneath her picture there would be *thalis* of gleaming silver containing offerings of flowers, fruit, rice, and richly prepared sweets. A faint fragrance of incense lingered in the room.

On Diwali Day, trays of sweets and fruits were sent to the homes of relatives and friends and distributed among the servants, while similar trays came to our house. But the thrill of Diwali came in the evening, when the illumination of the house began. Before dark the servants would have lined the upper and lower verandas and the roof terrace with rows of tiny earthenware bowls. In each of these they would have poured a little mustard oil, and in the oil planted a tightly rolled wick of cotton wool, pointed at its upper end. As twilight came, the servants would light each cotton wick. Excitedly we would run to and fro, watching the lights grow brighter and more numerous until the entire house emerged from the surrounding darkness like some radiant fairy structure.

After dinner Papu would take us for a drive through the city, where every house would be similarly illumined. Even the poorest dwellings had a few glimmering oil lamps for decoration because it is believed that those who keep a dark house on Diwali night do not receive the blessings of the goddess.

▪

Chapter VII

THE WAR TO US

WHEN war broke out in 1939, uncertainty again entered our lives. We did not know what shape Congress policy would take in the face of this new emergency, or how our parents would be affected by it. At school in the peaceful Himalayas, we were nevertheless troubled by the news we heard over the radio every day. My twelve-year-old mind was perplexed by the torrent of new words and phrases and the frightening possibilities prophesied by radio commentators. In my confusion I turned to Papu:

Homestead, Mussoorie,
September 11th

Darling Papu,

The world is in a dreadful state of affairs, and there are some things that I don't understand.

Do you think that India should help England? If she did, then Germany would be squashed, which would be one good thing. If she didn't, England might be beaten, and then Germany and Japan would together march into India. What good would non-violence do then? I don't know when non-violence has ever done any good. I suppose it has, but it certainly won't if Germany and Japan get into India. Then we will either have to fight or slave for them. I think we

jolly well ought to fight, like Patrick Henry, "Give me liberty or give me death."

What do you think about it?

Will you please explain to me what "communism" means? I asked Lekha, but she says you would explain it thoroughly.

Lots of love from your loving
Taru

Lucknow,
September 19, 1939

Taru darling,

I have your letter of the 11th and was very happy to read your views and your questions. It is only the enquiring mind that finds a solution to difficult questions. The solution of the questions you have asked is occupying the minds of many very big leaders of our country today. The Working Committee of the Congress has published a long statement which was written by Mamu. It says what is in the minds of most people in India. In short it says we do not want to see the spread of triumphant Hitlerism. We stand for freedom, peace, and progress. We are against wars to destroy the freedom of weaker nations by violence and force. If England is in favour of the freedom of the nations, then she must not forcibly occupy India, and keep the people of India in bondage. Freedom must not mean freedom for the people of European countries only. Such freedom must be for all countries, including countries in Asia and Africa. If the British Government are willing to agree to this, then Indians may co-operate with Britain to establish a new and better world. On the 7th October a meeting of the All-

India Congress Committee will be held at Wardha. This Committee is the Indian non-official Parliament with elected representatives of the provinces of India. I am a member and I shall be asked to vote on the important issue of our attitude towards war.

Non-violence is good, my darling. When we are at war we do many very violent and vile acts, but when war is over the warring nations sit around a table to discuss peace. It would be so much better if human beings were to discuss all matters on which they disagree in a quiet and peaceful manner instead of massacring and slaughtering one another. . . . This world has many beautiful things which each one of us can enjoy. There are also sorrows. But it is madness to add to them the horrors of war.

If, however, our country is invaded by cruel people, we cannot save it by talking of non-violence. Force must be resisted by force. But we must use only as much force as is necessary for defence, otherwise there is the danger of being ourselves brutal and cruel.

Communism means working together in common and sharing benefits in common, with equal justice to all. This is a beautiful idea. It aims at producing a classless society. That is to say where there are no rich and high and mighty who have all the good things of the world and more on the one hand, and, on the other, a vast mass of ill-clad, ill-fed, ill-housed humanity. . . . This is the theory of Communism. But between theory and practice there is a world of difference. You know the Sermon on the Mount, and what a Christian should be like, and how he should act towards Christians. Now watch what the Christian English, French, and Germans, and others are doing, and

how different their conduct is from what it should be. And so it is with the Communists. The Nazi and Communist Governments are tearing up the body of sorely stricken Poland bravely fighting against overwhelming odds.

You must be calm, darling. We are a great nation, and the Brahmans among us have had a great tradition of peace, tolerance, and culture, also courageous resistance to evil. If we get upset we cannot think clearly or act correctly. So we must, above all, be able to preserve our mental balance and not give way to panic. The war may last long, for several years, and we shall need strength, physical and mental, for a long time so that we can help others.

My love to you and to Lekha and Rita,

Papu

My sisters and I tried to agree with our parents that non-violence was an excellent way of solving problems, but we could not quite be convinced that this was so. For months we carried on a controversy by correspondence with Papu and Mummie, arguing the issue with them, and asking them to explain all the bewildering new developments that were taking place. It was, on a diminutive scale, the same controversy that was going on between the Congress and Gandhiji. In reply to a letter I wrote him, Papu wrote back:

Anand Bhawan,
July 1, 1940

Taru darling,

Thank you for your delightful letter, but you asked a difficult question: "Is non-violence good enough to defend a country against aggression?" Well now, that

was exactly the question before the Working Committee of the Congress and Gandhiji. Briefly, the former thought not. Gandhiji was quite sure, and still is, that non-violence is the way. When we meet we shall form a small Working Committee, shall we? As Gandhiji's views are known to me for over twenty years, perhaps I shall be able to put his points, and the rest of you may argue against them.

You see, we Indians are good talkers and also we try to think wisely—that is called being fond of philosophy. This wise talk about not causing injury, not retaliating, not giving blow for blow, is very ancient talk in our country. Since the days of Buddha we have heard it. Gandhiji revived this and kept it in the forefront for political purposes. Even in the midst of a terrible war our wise politicians discussed it! So it has a peculiar significance. And when it troubles the mind of our little wise friend in Homestead, then we should hold a debate and clear our throats for action.

I shall be happy to hear you argue and to learn from you and, if necessary, to change my view and vote with you. And perhaps you may do the same after hearing me. There is also a third possibility—we may say to ourselves, "Much may be said on both sides" and may keep to our views!

My love to you,

Papu

The Congress decided not to co-operate with Britain in the war effort, so when we came down from school in December 1940, another non-co-operation movement had begun and Mamu had already been arrested.

Mummie had a great many arrangements to make for us before she, too, was arrested. Lekha was ready to enter college, and preparations had to be made for her departure for Isabella Thoburn College, Lucknow. Rita and I were to stay at Anand Bhawan with Tante Anna, and tutors had to be engaged for us. Harassed by last-minute worries, Mummie did not have the time to talk to us at leisure. So she sat up late one night and wrote us each a long letter explaining to each of us, as we would best understand it, the significance of the new *satyagraha* [1] campaign. To Rita, because she was the youngest, Mummie wrote the fullest explanation, telling her why she would be going to jail again soon. She concluded:

Mamu has already gone. Papu is going in a day or two, and my turn will come next week. You and Lekha and Tara will remain out, but you will be satyagrahis *just the same as we, and you will do your bit by keeping the flag flying over Anand Bhawan. This is a big job and you will be helping in the good fight just as much as we are. . . . It will be a bit lonely sometimes, but if you remember there is a war on, and how many little boys and girls have had to leave their parents, you won't mind.*

I want you to be happy. If you are happy and well, Papu and I will be happy too. . . . This is just for a little while. Soon we shall be home again, so be your usual brave and bright little self. We want smiles and grit to win through in this fight which will mean freedom for us all, and for this great, big, beautiful India

[1] *satyagraha,* fight for truth. It was the word applied to Gandhiji's non-co-operation campaigns.

averse to haste, for it has been bred on the ideal that all decisions should be approached with a studied serenity. The more significant the decision in question, the calmer should be the approach to it. So an Indian would not think of waking up one morning and casually announcing that he was getting married the next day or week, or even a month later. Such a matter rests with the pandit, who chooses an auspicious day. Ours was by no means an orthodox family, but it was a family deeply rooted in the country's cultural traditions. With the help of a pandit, a favorable day in March was found for the wedding.

The celebrations usually begin when the bridegroom, his relatives, and friends arrive in the bride's town a day or two before the wedding. From the moment of their arrival, when they are greeted at the station with garlands of flowers, they are the honored guests of the bride's family. It is unnecessary to say "honored guests," for in India a guest is automatically an honored person. Whoever he may be, if he enters your house with good will, you must accord him your most gracious hospitality. This is true of a guest on any occasion, and more especially on the occasion of a wedding. A house is taken for the bridegroom and his party. There the bride's relations fete them and servants of the bride's family wait on them. This is the normal pattern of a wedding, but at Indi's wedding the need for a house to accommodate the bridegroom's party did not arise, for Feroze Gandhi's family lived in Allahabad.

Music is part of the wedding scene. It lingers in the background and forms a continuous accompaniment to the proceedings before the ceremony. In northern

India it is usually provided by the *shahanai* (a musical instrument resembling a bagpipe), whose beautiful, rather mournful strains introduce the only melancholy note in the gaiety. Often expert musicians are invited to play at a wedding, even though this may mean their coming from distant parts of the country. This again was not so at Indi's marriage, for at a time and in a house of important political conferences it was impossible to have a continuous program of music. Consequently Indi's wedding was to be a blend of the traditional with the necessary restrictions imposed by circumstances.

This had not been the case at Mummie's resplendent wedding. She was married in 1921, a year of changes for the Nehru family. But though Gandhiji's influence already guided the family of Swaraj Bhawan, the wedding made no concession to Gandhian simplicity except for the fact that Mummie wore a khadi sari during the ceremony itself. In every other respect it followed the conventional pattern, with its hours-long marriage service and its lavish feasting of hundreds of guests, which must have given full scope to Nanuji's fabled extravagance.

Mummie, the darling of her father, received a glittering trousseau of one hundred and one [2] exquisite saris with matching accessories from blouses to dainty satin slippers to go with each sari. Her jewelry was fit for a princess, for in addition to the usual sets of necklaces, earrings, and bracelets which a bride is given, Mummie was also given a gold belt such as Indian women used to wear around their waists, gold armlets,

[2] When making gifts of any kind in India, the odd number is always considered more auspicious than the even.

and gold anklets. Normally anklets are made of silver, for no ornament made of gold is supposed to be worn below the waist except by royalty and the goddesses of Indian mythology. But Nanuji was a man of royal tastes who scorned such distinctions. Besides this elaborate personal trousseau, Mummie was given linen, furniture, and silver articles for her new home, a car, and, not least, a horse. As a child she had been taught to ride and had inherited her father's love of horses. It was a trousseau that far exceeded what is ordinarily given to a girl by her parents.

Her wedding photograph, now faded, shows a doll-like bride seated demurely on a carpet at the feet of her parents. She is dressed in a sari of heavy gold Benares tissue encrusted with jeweled embroidery. Her *palla* (the portion of the sari which falls over the left shoulder) covers her head, but not enough to conceal the threaded pearls that line her center parting and extend across her forehead. Her long hair, Mummie told us, had been braided with gold cord and coiled above her neck with jeweled pins. Sitting beside her in the picture, Papu looks like a fairy-tale prince in a brocade *achkan* (a knee-length coat with a high, Russian-type collar buttoned all the way down) and *churidar* pajama (trousers close-fitting below the knees and loose above). A gauzy Benares *safa* (a head-gear made of a length of material wound around the head at an angle, but not fitting the head squarely like an Indian turban) is wound jauntily around his head.

To those who had attended Mummie's wedding, Masi's in 1933 must have presented the greatest possible contrast. Nanuji had died three years earlier, and

Nanima, never in robust health, was a frail shadow of herself. The year 1933 had been one of political austerity. In October, Mamu was out of prison, but there was no knowing when he would be arrested again. All these reasons combined to make the wedding a short, simple affair. It consisted of a brief registration in the drawing-room, with Masi attired in pale-pink khadi.

To us, seated gravely on one side of the room, it was not like a wedding at all, for it bore no resemblance to the gay and glamorous Kashmiri weddings that took place in Allahabad. Added to this disappointment was the thought that Masi would be going to live in far-off Bombay with a tall, quiet stranger named Raja Hutheesingh, and the room upstairs, where she had so often dressed us up in bits of finery from an old clothes box and taught us to sing and dance, would be empty. It was altogether a forlorn occasion for us, and the sight of Nanima lying pale and quiet on a sofa across the room, her small white hands looking almost transparent against her white sari, was a sobering one to all those assembled. Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, who had been a dear friend of Nanuji's, echoed our bewilderment when, after the registration was completed, he asked: "But when is the *wedding* going to take place?" He could not believe that tradition had been side-stepped to so great an extent as to dispense with all ritual.

Talk of Indi's wedding sent a wave of interest through India, and presents began to arrive from all over the country. Her room became a cloud of rustling tissue paper and satin ribbon from which emerged gifts of silver and crystal, lovely saris, and occasionally a velvet-lined casket containing a jeweled ornament.

Most of these presents had to be carefully rewrapped and returned to the senders, for many of them were people whom the family did not know.

How seldom one realizes the significance of a solemn occasion! Having, as children, attended several weddings, we were familiar with the ritual, but because the priest chanted verses from the Sanskrit scriptures, we had never understood their meaning. Now that there was to be a wedding at Anand Bhawan, we wanted to understand every detail of it and asked Papu about its significance. Marriage, to us, was the height of romantic achievement, and we told him so in a burst of enthusiasm.

"Yes," said Papu, "it is that all right, but here in India we consider it something more than the concern of the two people who marry each other. It is, in a sense, their dedication to the community as well. Our marriage service emphasizes this point. I don't know of any other marriage service that does."

"Is the entire orthodox ceremony going to take place?" we asked, well knowing that a Hindu service could last all night.

"No," said Papu; "Mamu is in favor of a simplified version, so we shall have only the essential ceremony, which is really all that is necessary and meaningful. It should not last longer than an hour and a half."

The ceremony was to take place on the open, circular veranda outside the room that had been my grandmother's. Facing the veranda a few yards away from it were the apartments once occupied by Bibima. Anand Bhawan on this occasion was not the full and happy house it once had been, for the years had left a widening gap. The biggest gap had been left by Indi's

own mother, our Mami,[3] who, for many years an invalid, had died in Europe in 1936 after a prolonged illness. Ordinarily the bride's parents sit on mats facing her and the groom during the ceremony. But instead of only Mamu's mat being placed for the service, another was placed where Mami would have sat. There was a poignancy about that small, unoccupied mat, reviving the memory of Indi's courageous young mother, whose health had been sacrificed to a cause that she had considered more worth while.

Indi came down from her room in a shell-pink khadi sari made from yarn spun by her father and edged with delicate silver embroidery. She sat down near her father, for until the *Kanya Dan* took place, she was still a member of her father's house. The *Kanya Dan*, Papu had explained to us, was the giving away of a daughter by her father, much the same as in a Christian wedding. In India it is considered the most exalted form of gift a man can make, for there is no more precious possession than a daughter. Sometimes a man who had no daughter of his own adopted one only for the purpose of partaking in such a ceremony and achieving the merit of *Kanya Dan*. After the priest had chanted the appropriate verses, Indi took her place beside Feroze and sat facing her father.

The veranda had been decorated with greenery, and in the center a depression had been made to accommodate the fire, the symbol of purity. A couple married according to Hindu law require no marriage certificate, for the fire is witness to the ceremony. Guests were seated on a carpet on the veranda as well as on chairs arranged below its steps. But such

[3] A mamu's wife is known as Mami.

was the attraction of a wedding at Anand Bhawan that hundreds of citizens had poured in uninvited, and nobody had been able to stop them. They had gathered around to watch the proceedings, and the more agile among them had even climbed trees to get a better view. In the middle of the rapt scene a photographer from an American fashion magazine struggled with his equipment, beads of perspiration trickling down his temples and glistening on his upper lip. In the warm March morning the subtle fragrance of incense drifted through the air, the priest's chant rose and fell, and the fire sizzled as he dripped clarified butter into it from a silver spoon. Grouped around the glowing orange flame, the soft rich colors of silk saris shimmered in the sunshine.

Mummie, standing near one of the gray stone pillars of the veranda, was watching the ceremony, her eyes filled with tears. I wondered what was making her cry—and cry in front of all those people, a thing she had never done before. Was it the thought of Indi's mother, who was no longer there, or of her own mother and father and aunt? Or, looking across the garden wall at Swaraj Bhawan, a deserted giant shell of a house that once had resounded with life and laughter, was she thinking perhaps of her own wedding in that very house and the unpredictable changes that had come over her family since then? Long before, she had shed the gorgeous clothes of her trousseau. Some of her most priceless possessions had been taken away by the police on raids during civil-disobedience movements. Little had she dreamed, that sheltered, flower-like little bride of 1921, what future of hardship lay ahead for her. And now an-

other young and beautiful bride took her vows in another Anand Bhawan twenty-one years later. How soon would she be called upon to transform that verbal dedication into a living reality? Mummie's prayer must have been a silent one of faith that this bride, too, might emerge from any future trials blessed with the inner fulfillment that she herself had received.

After the *Kanya Dan* was completed, Mamu's role in the ceremony was over, and he rose and stood on one side. The young couple, too, stood up hand in hand to perform the *Sapt Padi*, the seven steps around the fire, during which they took their vows to each other, repeating the Sanskrit words after the priest turn by turn. Back in their places, they repeated the phrases by which they dedicated themselves to their community and the world.

After this came the portion of the ceremony in which all the friends and relatives of the bride participate. Leaving our places, we went up to Indi and, showering her with flower petals, sang verses invoking her to uphold with dignity the honorable traditions of Indian womanhood through the ages. The verses quoted the examples of India's most revered religious heroines, and it was these simple and lovely lines that brought home to us more than any other part of the ceremony the Hindu ideal of marriage. Marriage, Papu had said, was more than love and companionship between two people, for they were not merely two individuals. They represented the link between past and future generations. Marriage was the climate for the flowering of a new generation. Ultimately, it was the continuing fulfillment of a cosmic design. And

so the grand ideals of Hindu antiquity continued to have meaning for a modern Indian bride. To us it was another indication that India's culture was a vital, breathing one, expressed in her daily life, not one buried and forgotten in ancient books and monuments.

Indi and Feroze moved into a little house down the road from Anand Bhawan to spend a few happy months before an uncertain future might claim them. In September of that year they were both to be imprisoned, for the law against non-co-operators was no respecter of young people who had just started life together.

Chapter IX

INDIAN SYMPHONY

MUSIC is an integral part of Indian life, as it can only be of a civilization that has not yet come to rely completely on machines. It is not that Indians are more intrinsically musical or more knowledgeable about music than other people. But they express themselves, their thoughts and feelings, spontaneously through music. Whether it is music of a high level or not I do not know, but it is simple and heartfelt and natural. Perhaps something about the slow, jogging motion of a bullock cart upon an open road urges the driver to sing, or the swaying rhythm of a row of women carrying baskets of newly cut grass on their heads persuades melody out of them. We were not aware of the reasons, but we were conscious of the fact that Indians sang and danced as freely as they breathed.

On summer nights in Allahabad, when our beds were placed out on the lawn and we could watch the stars glimmering through the fine mosquito netting stretched across bamboo poles over our heads, we frequently heard a passer-by spilling his joyful serenade into the dimly lit, deserted street beyond the garden wall. At early dawn we were awakened by the sonorous voice of some worshipper singing a *bhajan* on his way to a morning dip in the Ganges.

This early singer interested us. We never saw him or discovered who he was, but his sunrise chant became a familiar melody, and we missed it when he stopped passing by the house.

In the hills of Mussoorie and Almora in the U.P. we were often struck by the haunting strain of a wandering coolie's song. The hill ballad had its own characteristically melancholy, somewhat monotonous ring. It echoed in ghostly fashion across the valley, vibrating back again on an answering call from a distant listener. Sometimes its arresting appeal was enhanced by the lilting accompaniment of a flute.

Strolling past a wooden shed where ill-clad coolies gathered of an evening to keep warm near a tiny fire and puff at a community *hookah*,[1] we heard a different kind of song. There amid the fragrance of wood smoke, the friendly glow of live red coals, and the warm gray-blue ash of the hookah, the music was a chorus instead of a lonely refrain, and its beat was lively and pulse-quickening. One of the coolies would lead the song, the others repeating it in chorus after him, evolving an animated tune.

Just as Indians can sing uninhibitedly on city streets, mindless of crowds, traffic, and the busy world, so they can dance unself-consciously, purely for the joy of dancing. Every province has its treasure of folk dances, and each festival and happy occasion calls for their performance. So a people can be carefree

[1] *hookah*, a waterpipe, and an elegant smoke of leisure. The coolies' hookah is a much cruder version of it. It is shaped like an earthen bowl and is filled with cheap, strong tobacco and coals. It is passed from coolie to coolie, each man puffing at it in turn.

though surrounded by cares, youthful though age creeps rapidly upon them, making them tragically short-lived, innocent and lighthearted though experienced in anguish. Rita and I had a glance at this fabulous heritage of ours when we joined Uday Shankar's Culture Centre at Almora for a summer course.

Khali was never more beautiful than in the summer of 1942. We had no premonition that it was the last time we should ever be together as a family group, for up there in the remote and lovely calm of the Himalayas, who could have foretold that prison and separation were only a few months away, and that the coming imprisonment would be Papu's last? If we had realized it, we might have stayed at Khali the entire summer instead of going our diverse ways, Lekha on a fourteen-day trek with our cousins to the Pindari Glacier, and Rita and I, at Papu's suggestion, to Uday Shankar's Centre ten miles away, while our parents remained at Khali.

For a short while, at least, we were together, feasting on the Khali scene. As always, the mountain air was a welcome relief after the grueling heat of the plains. Allahabad in May and June was like a furnace, and not till July, when the monsoon brought cool rain to the parched earth, did it once again become a comfortable place to live. We made the journey to Almora in two stages—actually three, if one considered the last mile, which we made on foot up the steep mountain to the Khali estate. The first half of the journey was made by train, the second half by car. It was the second half that we enjoyed, especially when Papu himself drove the car. The road was narrow and winding in its ascent around the mountain,

and with each swerve of the car around a bend we breathed in draughts of colder air, until we drove at last through evergreen forests and mossy banks strewn with tiny blue and white violets.

Sometimes Papu stopped the car near a waterfall so that, cupping our hands, we could drink as it splashed deliciously into them. On the way there was a little wayfarers' restaurant, a small one-room place which, in spite of its crude structure, was spotlessly clean. The meal, served in small brass *thalis*, was simple and appetizing, and we ate it at a square wooden table. There were always piping-hot puffy *puris*, a vegetable, usually potatoes in a highly seasoned gravy, or a sweet-sour pumpkin dish, and a bowl of yoghurt, firm, white, and creamy, through which a knife could slice sharply and come out clean. After lunch we would wash our hands, drink the icy water of a waterfall, and continue on our journey refreshed.

Khali weather was pleasantly warm and drowsy in contrast with the plains, and that summer Papu's honeybees seemed to fly even more busily from flower to honeycomb and back to flower. Daisies and wild orchids carpeted the hillsides. We climbed trees in search of luscious purple berries, and ate plump, juicy yellow ones on our porridge every morning. We discovered a way of making table mats by plaiting pine needles and stitching them together. Rita and I did not feel like leaving Khali, but after Lekha had left with our cousins for the Pindari, Papu thought it would be a pity if we did not take advantage of the fact that Uday Shankar's Centre was so close by. Music being one of his great loves, he could not envisage

letting an opportunity to learn more about it slip past unnoticed.

Until we joined the Centre, Rita and I had never touched anybody's feet except Gandhiji's. Touching the feet of an elder denotes respect and reverence. In some parts of India, children touch their parents' feet on meeting after an absence, on parting, and on all auspicious occasions to receive the blessing of their elders. We had never observed this custom except in Gandhiji's case, partly because there had been so many Western influences in our lives, and partly because neither our parents nor Mamu cared for this form of greeting when it was directed toward themselves. I had often seen the flicker of mingled annoyance, impatience, and embarrassment cross Mamu's face when an admirer bent down to touch his feet. Mamu would invariably check the gesture and protest that he did not want such homage.

At the Centre all the students touched Uday Shankar's feet each morning when he entered the class, and those of all the other gurus, in observance of ancient Indian tradition. For the first time in our lives we found ourselves in a wholly Indian environment, untouched by foreign influence.

Uday Shankar was a dancer of international reputation. He had won his first success in Europe, where he had achieved fame as Pavlova's dancing partner, and he had toured Europe and America with a brilliant troupe at a time when little was known abroad about Indian dancing. On his return he had established his Centre, choosing Almora, I am sure, for its remoteness from "civilization" and for the scenic

beauty that lent its natural background to his compositions, based on the grand stories of the *Ramayana*. Every September he performed the *Ram Lila* on the hillside, the dance pageant of the battle between Rama and Ravana, and tourists came from many parts of northern India to see it.

The Centre was the first dancing school of its kind in India, for its primary purpose was not to teach any orthodox form of Indian dance. It was Uday Shankar's idea to distill the essence of India's traditional styles of dance (there are several of these, each with its own background, history, and complex technique), and in so doing to evolve a new approach to dance, one unfettered by rigid adherence to any technique. His originality lay in the fact that he borrowed freely from the wealth of India's folk dances and from Indian life itself. Because of this, his dancing was not a highly stylized art form like most of Indian classical dancing, comprehensible only to those who understand its technique. It was Indian life captured in all its magnificent color and natural grace and set to music. It was not his object, he told us over and over again, to teach us how to dance. Any skillful dance instructor could do that, and there were excellent schools all over India to interpret her great dance sagas.

"I want to bring out the dance that is in you," was his formula, for he firmly believed that Indians, watching the life around them, could reproduce in their own movements some fragment of the untrammeled artistry that was India.

Two classical forms of dancing were taught at the Centre: Manipuri, the light, pretty dance of Assam, and Kathakali, the epic dance of southern India. Every

student was required to study one or the other of these in order to gain some knowledge of technique; but the emphasis was not on these, and the classes that Uday Shankar himself conducted were wholly unorthodox. He would sit cross-legged on the wooden floor of one of his hilltop studios. We would sit in a semicircle facing him while he painted a word picture for us.

"You are peasants going to draw water from the village well. But it is a time of drought and famine, and there is very little water left. You are thinking of the future when there will be none at all. Some of you are old and infirm and can scarcely walk. Others are carrying crying children. You are all praying for the rain to come and relieve your agony."

And then the musicians sitting behind him would strike up on their instruments in the tone and tempo suited to the scene he had just described, and we would have to get up and improvise a dance on the spot, without rehearsal or consultation with each other. Of necessity we had to be spontaneous, for there was no time to plan effective gestures, yet our actions had to blend with one another's. For the first few days I was painfully shy and awkward. Then gradually I noticed that my fellow students were not concerned with one another at all, but only with the picture they were trying to create, and I forgot my shyness. After the dance, Uday Shankar would criticize the unity of the composition as a whole, as well as our individual efforts. Sometimes he called upon us to improvise one by one, and after a while even this ordeal became bearable.

Uday Shankar believed that, in order to dance, one

did not have to study technique so much as to observe the world around one. Dancing, he felt, was not an art confined to the studio, stage, or drawing-room. It was closer to reality than all the other arts, for it involved the whole human body. To those students who came to him from other schools proficient in technique, he said: "Forget what you have learned. Try to see things as if you were seeing them for the first time."

"You could not possibly take such mincing steps if you were carrying a pitcher of water on your head," he scolded a pupil. "Next time, observe a woman carrying a pitcher. See how smoothly she must walk under such a weight, and how she must sway to keep her balance."

The pupil, who had been thinking she had accomplished a graceful movement, would subside in disappointment. Uday Shankar was not interested in grace or beauty of movement unless it stemmed from reality. Movements, however perfect, had no significance unless they were taken from life. Innumerable graceful variations could be created around an authentic gesture, mood, or expression, but a dance had to comprise more than merely a sum total of effective gestures. Its inherent meaning and organic completeness demanded that it be founded on truth.

Of the two traditional classical dance forms offered at the Centre, Rita and I chose Manipuri. It is probably the least exacting of all Indian schools of dance. It tells no story as Kathakali does. It does not have the difficult symbolism of Bharat Natyam, another southern Indian dance form, or the swift intricate footwork of Kathak, the dance of the U.P. Nor does

it require skillful use of the facial muscles, as nearly all Indian dances do. Its basic style is contained in a set of hand and arm movements whose charm lies in their light, airy, floating prettiness. Using these as his theme, the student may compose his own variations.

Our Manipuri guru was a slight man in his late seventies. His smooth golden skin and bright, alert, slanted eyes belied his age. He wore a saffron-colored dhoti [2] and *kurta*,[3] and his head was shaved, giving him the appearance of a Buddhist monk. His movements were quick, light, and endowed with a curious weightless quality. Beside him we felt clumsy, and our hands looked as dull and inexpressive as if they had been lifeless. While he recited the rhythmic instructions to which we performed our movements, his son, a young man dressed like his father, played the barrel-shaped drum that hung on a cord around his neck. As both hands tapped the drum expertly, his feet danced a buoyant accompaniment, so that he seemed to be always in the air like a bird in flight. We came to love those classes in the little wooden studio among the pines where the beat of the Manipuri drum and the crisp voice of our guru disciplined us in the ways of the dance of Manipur.

The guru was not a learned man, and his knowledge of Hindustani was limited, but in his supple dancer's body he had a poet's imagination, and he

[2] *dhoti*, a piece of cloth several yards long and about four feet wide. It is wound around the waist, then taken between the legs and tucked into the waist at the back.

[3] *kurta*, a long, loose, collarless shirt with long sleeves. This is worn over the dhoti.

managed to convey it to us through the similes he used to describe his beloved Manipuri.

"These movements which I show you," he would explain, pausing frequently to select the right words, "you must treat them like flowers, for the Manipuri movements are just as fragile and delicate. In one uncontrolled gesture you can injure the flower's petals. So your hands must move smoothly, and your gestures must be rounded. But at the same time they must be precise and not trail unnecessarily. But remember, also, that singly and separately flowers do not last long. It is for you to combine and arrange them into garlands of beautiful design, and so a new dance will be born."

We did not learn to dance at the Centre, but we left it with a new awareness of India's loveliness, one we would be able to look back on in the unhappy months that were to follow.

■

Chapter X

BEFORE DEPARTURE

ON the 9th of August when we were having dinner and the radio was tuned to the nine-o'clock news, the announcement was made in precise tones that the members of the Congress Working Committee had been arrested that day in Bombay.

Mummie said: "Well, it has begun."

What it was the beginning of, no one could foretell, because this *satyagraha* campaign was obviously going to be different from all the rest. It was not, in fact, *satyagraha*, but a campaign protesting against the Government's unjust and precipitate action. The members of the Congress Working Committee (and later other prominent Congressmen) had been arrested quietly during the night almost immediately after the Working Committee had declared its future policy. Its resolution demanding that the British "quit India" was due to be passed on the following day. The people arrested were known as Q prisoners, and were detained without a trial, some for as long as three years. This campaign had few of the characteristics of the previous ones.

Students and citizens organized peaceful processions and public meetings in Allahabad, as in other cities, protesting against the arrest and detention without trial of their leaders, while the police made mass

arrests. For the first time Lekha, Rita, and I could be part of this activity instead of mere envious observers. We marched in the processions and attended the gatherings.

Mummie sat at home torn with anxiety for our safety because at times the police tried forcibly to break up the crowds and occasionally fired to compel their dispersal. Mothers of young men and women came to upbraid her for her influence over their children.

"If it hadn't been for you, my son would not have gone to the meeting yesterday and been arrested," cried an angry and distraught woman.

"We are all in it together," said Mummie quietly.

And because she felt responsible for the part other women's children were playing in the proceedings, she felt doubly unhappy when they were injured or locked up. Yet seeing the tragedy before her eyes, she still could not forbid us to take part in it It was what she had brought us up to do, and she could not erase what the years of her own example had taught us. Her moment of supreme courage came when she was given the news that two processions had been fired upon and several people injured, including one of her daughters. She left the house to go to one of the processions.

"But, Mataji [Mother], you are going the wrong way. Your children are in the other procession," said the messenger who had brought the news.

"These are my children too," she replied, and calmly went her way.

It was not until she returned home late that evening, after taking the wounded boys to a hospital and going to their parents' homes to break the news, that

she discovered that we were safe and had not been injured during the firing.

Anand Bhawan during those days was a silent beehive of activity. Mummie, knowing that her own arrest was imminent, was busy organizing the house in preparation for her absence. Lekha would be liable to arrest also, for she was eighteen, and Indi and Feroze would undoubtedly be taken. That would leave only Rita and me in the house, and a governess had to be engaged to take care of us, Tante Anna having gone away.

Besides these domestic arrangements, there were pamphlets to be distributed, which the Congress Party office continued to print until its cyclostyle machine was confiscated. Various other papers had to be disposed of so that the police would not find them. Two friends were staying with us, in an upstairs room, in hiding from the authorities. One of them, in his eagerness to dispose of certain important papers, tried with disastrous results to flush them down the toilet.

Mummie wailed in exasperation: "What a time for the plumbing to go wrong! As if there isn't enough to worry about already!"

Valuables had to be sent to the houses of friends for safekeeping, as the police on their searches took away anything they fancied. There was martial law in Allahabad, and a curfew was imposed, preventing us from leaving the house after six p.m.

But in spite of all these measures, once more the air rang with cries of "*Inqualab Zindabad!*" ("Long Live Revolution!") as it had rung from time to time for twenty years. Once more little urchins who waved the orange, white, and green tricolor of the Congress were

taken to the local police station and whipped. But little boys still waved paper flags and shouted slogans in their shrill voices, for had they not been bred in defiance? On the very same street outside Anand Bhawan where they shouted, their fathers had been made to crawl on their bellies if a white sahib was passing by. Mummie's eyes sparkled with pride as she told us of incidents that had taken place during other civil-disobedience movements.

"Do you know what the authorities here used to say? They said: 'These damned Nehrus! If we could break them, it would be easy to deal with the rest.' "

But though Mamu was already in jail somewhere in India, and the rest of the family was soon to follow, Anand Bhawan remained the steadfast symbol it had been before, brazenly flaunting the tricolor and defying defeat.

When Mummie, Indi, Feroze, and Lekha were arrested in rapid succession, Rita and I were completely cut off from them. During earlier imprisonments, political prisoners had been allowed interviews, a limited supply of books, and a censored correspondence at the discretion of the prison authorities. This time all facilities were forbidden. We were not permitted either to see our parents or to write to them. All contact between the prisoners and the outside world was at a standstill, and they had no idea what was happening beyond high prison walls in a war-torn world.

Early in 1943 Gandhiji started a fast that might have been fatal, so weak did he become. While a sorrowful nation prayed for his recovery, Rita and I sought frantically for a way to send news to Mummie about the fast. The superintendent of the jail was a kind

gentleman who might well have been brought to book by the British authorities for his leniency toward the political prisoners. We obtained his permission to send a few ordinary household supplies, such as soap and toothpaste, to Mummie. Around a tube of toothpaste we wrapped several newspaper clippings reporting the progress of Gandhiji's fast, and put the tube back into its container. And so she got an actual account of the fast, though the news had reached her earlier through inevitable jail gossip.

Alone with Rita and our governess in the big empty house, I tried to concentrate on studies for my approaching examinations Reading history had no meaning, for history was being made in a blood-stirring way every day of our lives. Time dawdled by with painful slowness, and I waited impatiently for my examination to be over.

Two months later, Lekha and I sailed for America.

■

Chapter XI

THE FIRST GLIMPSE

ONE of the remarkable things about life is that wherever one goes there are always some people willing to help one for no reason other than the goodness of their hearts. In San Pedro, one such chivalrous person turned out to be an Australian, Mr. Quinlan, who had traveled with us, and who, like us, was in the United States for the first time. We were standing bewildered beside our luggage, wondering what to do, when he came to our rescue. We told him of our predicament, and he generously offered to help.

"I'll make hotel reservations for us all," he said, "and then we'll see what can be done about getting you girls to New York."

We waited while he went to telephone. Some of the ship's passengers were standing around in groups. Suddenly Chimborazo emerged from one of the groups and came up to us to say good-by.

"We call this God's own country," she said sorrowfully, "but there are many in it who have forgotten God. I hope you girls will take only the good from us." We assured her we would try to take only the good.

Mr. Quinlan came back looking red and flustered. "I had to phone sixteen hotels before I could get two rooms," he said. "There was a single room available

in several hotels, but every time I asked for a second one I was told: 'Don't you know there's a war on, mister? You're lucky to get *one*.' I felt like telling the blighters we didn't have to come here to find out there was a war on. We've been nearly abandoning ship every day for the past six weeks because of the war!"

It was evening by the time, all formalities completed, we crossed to Los Angeles by ferry and from there took a taxi to our hotel. As the taxi drew up in front of it, we found ourselves in a lively part of the town. Colorful posters of a scantily clad redhead announced a forthcoming attraction at the neighborhood theater: "More Curves than the Burma Road." Mr. Quinlan took one startled look at the redhead and the title as we left the taxi, and hustled us into the lobby.

"Sixteen phone calls," he groaned, "and this is what I get! I had no idea I was bringing you girls straight to the burlesque district!"

He looked utterly dejected. We giggled at his discomfiture and told him not to worry, but he continued to look distressed and to hold himself personally responsible for the mishap.

We went up to our room, where Mr. Quinlan helped us to put through a call to Mrs. Frances Gunther in New York. It was arranged that we should spend a week in Los Angeles before going east. After Mr. Quinlan had left us, we had hardly kicked off our shoes and made ourselves comfortable when there was a knock on the door. The man who entered introduced himself as Mr. Stone, the hotel detective.

"Are you two little girls staying here all alone?" he inquired in surprise.

When we said we were, his concern was even greater, and he immediately took us under his wing for the remainder of our stay. In the week that followed he drove us around the city in his car, proudly showing us all the places of interest. Los Angeles, with its wide boulevards, its de luxe shops and restaurants, and its glamorous film colony, was to him the most fascinating city imaginable. He had never left it, and he never wanted to leave it. "What do I want to go away for, when I've got everything I want right here?" he asked contentedly. He knew it as thoroughly as if it was a little village, and we could not have had a better-informed or more enthusiastic guide.

To us, Los Angeles seemed a sprawling giant of a city. It was as bright and shining as a new penny, but its glitter, far from appealing to us, made us homesick for the more leisurely tempo of the Indian life we had known. We visited many of the high spots, from picturesque Olvera Street, the oldest street in the city, to Romanoff's, the famous restaurant of Hollywood celebrities. It was all bewilderingly new, and often exciting, but we were not drawn to it.

Our hotel being situated in a particularly noisy part of the city, it was difficult to get any sleep. Late into the night, lights glared and neon signs winked and gleamed in rainbow colors. Jive music was heard and the fire engines roared and clanged. This must definitely be one of the places where God has been forgotten, we decided, because with so much noise going on, it must be impossible to think about God or anything else. Chimborazo would have been horrified to know we were there.

"Another fire," grumbled Lekha when we heard the

engine thunder by for the third time that night. "One would think the whole city would be in ashes by this time."

"I don't think these people ever go to sleep," I sighed, looking down at the brilliantly lighted scene below our fourth-floor window We had been told that the lights of Los Angeles had been dimmed by wartime regulations. We could not imagine what they must have been in normal times.

When Mr. Stone was too busy to take us out, we wandered about by ourselves, window-gazing, and to our embarrassment attracting a great deal of attention in our saris. Passers-by stopped to comment on our clothes and to ask us where we came from, and shook their heads, puzzled, when we told them. The only Indians they knew were the painted, feathered demons of Hollywood westerns, and we had on none of the familiar regalia.

One of the more intelligent reactions to our reply came from a pert young lady who was with her boy friend. The boy friend looked dazed when we told them we were Indians, but the girl, giving him a scornful look, explained: "*You* know, stupid; they're from that country near Egypt." Lekha and I stared at each other dumbfounded. Five-thousand-odd years of civilization and culture had been airily dismissed as "that country near Egypt." We continued on our way considerably chastened.

"We may as well get used to the idea," said Lekha, always practical. "Nobody here has ever heard of India except ourselves."

"But why has anyone heard of Egypt?" I protested.

Lekha gave me a long-suffering look. "Hollywood

made a film about Cleopatra some years ago, and Egypt had to be brought in once or twice. It was unavoidable. And they have heard of China because there are Chinese laundries here."

The shops were full of the most beautiful things we had ever seen. The salesgirls were chic, heavily made up, and many of them platinum-haired. There was nothing of the healthy, well-scrubbed good looks here which we were to encounter in other parts of America. Mr. Stone had told us that most of the girls working in shops and restaurants lived in the hope that they might be "discovered" by a Hollywood talent scout, and were always prepared for that coveted possibility.

"Say, honey," a salesgirl drawled, leaning toward me across a cosmetic counter, "are those eyelashes your own?" I was too startled to reply. Whose did she think they were?

She laughed at my expression. "You're lucky. Some of us have to curl ours or wear false ones." She was friendly and informal, as were most of the people we met, and eager to make conversation. When we told her we had come to America to study, she said: "I bet you won't want to go back home. You'll just love being here." We could not convince her that, much as we might enjoy being here, we would still want to go home. Home was home, after all. She did not understand why anybody would ever want to leave the United States.

"Have people in India got automobiles, and radios, and all the things we have here?" she asked.

"No—very few people have those things," we admitted.

"Well, there you are!" she declared triumphantly. Her naivete was both exasperating and charming. She was perfectly happy where she was, and had not the slightest concern for anything beyond her own small sphere

Much that we saw perplexed us. It was strange to see sailors and their girls strolling along the streets with their arms around each other. There was a casual air about these people which was foreign to us. We felt awkward and out of place in that glittering city of bright lights, high-powered cars, and sophisticated people. It was as if a flamboyant technicolor film had been too rapidly unrolled before our eyes, leaving us with a blurred and confused impression of sights and sounds. Mr. Stone tried to interpret the ways of his countrymen for us.

"A lot of things happen now because there's a war on. People are different in wartime. Anyway, this isn't America—it's only a small part of it. You wait until you've seen more of it before you decide how you like it."

With the reminder that we should let him know of our safe arrival, he saw us off on our train at the end of the week.

Chapter XII

NEHRU'S NIECES

WHEN I was a little girl of ten, Mamu made a speech which so impressed me that I copied it into a notebook I kept for favorite quotations and learned it by heart. I have never forgotten it, and I thought of a part of it as we reached New York early in July:

Wherever in this wide world there goes an Indian, there goes a piece of India with him, and he may not forget this fact or ignore it. It lies within his power, to some extent, to bring credit or discredit to his country, honour or dishonour. . . .

Three quarters of my notebook was filled with excerpts from Mamu's books and speeches, so this addition was not unusual. As I grew older, the scrawled collection was replaced by a wide variety of selections from famous writings, but Mamu's still occupied a large part of it. Besides having been our boisterous playmate when we were very young, he had always been our uncontested hero, and we could not tolerate the slightest criticism of him. Time and again I fiercely defended him against Papu's teasing remarks.

Each time Mamu came to visit us, he would organize some new game or activity for us. Sometimes we would form a procession, with Rita leading because

she was the youngest, and Lekha, Mamu, and I following in order of our ages. Around the house we would march, waving Congress flags and singing national songs in loud voices. It was no use Mummie's asking us to come in for lunch, or a nap, or homework. Even if we had heard her voice above the din, we would have paid no attention. We did not disperse till Mamu gave the signal.

Often we four conspirators upset the decorum of the drawing-room when there were guests present.

"Now we will stand on our heads," Mamu would announce, and one by one he would tip us upside down.

We would be tremendously pleased with ourselves and the sensation we were creating, while Mummie threw silent pleas to Mamu. She would be forced to hold her peace, however, for fear that if there was one word out of her, Mamu would make her stand on her head too! When he was there, grown-up authority and discipline faded away, and we ran riot with him in a noisy, exuberant world of our own.

One rainy night after dinner at Anand Bhawan, Mamu took us up to the library with him, and we took from its shelf an enormous, dusty book of his Harrow school songs. Together we sang the fag song, "Jerry, You Duffer and Dunce," and "When Grandpapa's Grandpapa was in the Lower Lower First." The library held reminders of his school days, for there were two large pictures of Mamu there, taken while he was at Harrow, one of them showing a solemn-faced, fourteen-year-old boy dressed in the smart outfit of the Harrow Rifle Corps.

Once I twisted my ankle running down the stairs

at Anand Bhawan. Mummie was rushing about helplessly with a bandage in one hand and a bottle of ointment in the other when Mamu arrived on the scene.

"What *are* you doing?" he inquired coldly.

"Well, she's twisted her ankle, and something ought to be done about it," said Mummie vaguely.

Mamu gave her a look of amazement and told me to follow him. With me hobbling behind, he stalked upstairs to his bathroom. On his shelves stood an impressive array of bottles and jars. Most of them had been sent to him by the makers of the products, and they piled up till some had to be given away to make room for new ones. He looked them over carefully and selected a magnificent-looking bottle with a red and black label, and the letters P.K.L. written across it.

"What d'you think of that!" he asked triumphantly, showing me the bottle.

"What does it mean?" I asked, impressed by the lovely colors.

Mamu read from the label: "Pain Killing Liniment: Every Drop Kills Pain."

He applied some of it to my ankle and tied an expert bandage. I forgot about the pain and hopped downstairs elatedly to show Rita my beautifully bandaged foot.

The standard that Mamu expected of us was the one we always strove to achieve. Mummie and Papu were wonderful parents, but Mamu was in a class apart, and our feeling for him came as close to adoration as it did for anybody. The high standard he expected of us came back to me, and I remembered that favorite speech as we reached New York.

Despite our excitement over our new surroundings,

and our breathless awe at the majestic city of New York, we were still homesick. The thought of Papu and Mamu in prison was a perpetual shadow across our enjoyment. (Mummie had been released soon after we reached the United States.) We made an earnest pact to make the most of our opportunities, and to be the "genuine and sparkling pieces of India" that Mamu had called us.

During those early weeks in New York we were showered with kindness by people whom we had never met before, and some whose names we had heard, but whom we had never dreamed we would have the good fortune to meet. They were good to us because they were kind people, but also because to them we were not just two teen-age girls on their way to college: we were the nieces of Nehru.

The Nehru name also produced the profusion of telephone calls, flowers, attention in the press, and even fan mail. The fan mail came from school and college students, from organizations interested in India's fight for independence, from Negro organizations, from a Puerto Rican nationalist, and from young servicemen in England, Italy, and India whose families had sent them newspaper clippings about us. These were touching letters, some containing invitations to stay at their homes during our vacations so that we could become acquainted with American life. *Time* had a paragraph referring to us as "the raven-eyed nieces of Nehru." Another magazine referred to our "musical names, Chandralekha and Nayantara."

"How nice to know we have such musical names!" said Lekha absently, occupied in opening mail. "It had never occurred to me."

"Well, I suppose Minneapolis doesn't sound musical to Americans, but it does to me. It sounds like rippling water—"

Lekha interrupted my poetizing with a cry of joy. Among the letters and magazines we had found at home on our return from a shopping expedition, two square white boxes appeared and, on opening one, Lekha had cried out. It contained a perfect speckled orchid tied with gold ribbon. The other box contained an identical one, and the accompanying card said: "Let me know if there is anything I can do for you. I cannot do enough for Nehru's nieces." They were the first corsages we had ever received, and they were from Colonel Louis Johnson, President Roosevelt's personal envoy to India in 1942.

We suddenly woke up to the tremendous responsibility of being Nehru's nieces In the apartment that Frances Gunther had kindly allowed us to use during our stay in New York, we sat down, overcome by so much attention, and thought about the strange paradoxes that life presents. The man whose name evoked such enthusiasm in a foreign country was a prisoner in his own. We did not even know in which part of the country he was imprisoned, or how many years he would be kept there without a trial. We did not know when we would see him again, and yet here, eleven thousand miles across the world, his name was magic. It was respected and admired to such an extent that for its sake people extended to two schoolgirls all the courtesy and hospitality that a warm-hearted nation can offer to a stranger.

A group of our friends decided that we should have a press conference before we left for college. Afraid

that the ways of American reporters might alarm us, they tried to give us some idea beforehand of the type of questions we would be asked. They need not have worried, for Lekha was equal to the occasion. I sat in stunned admiration while she answered a battery of questions with complete poise. Anyone would have thought that she'd been having press conferences every Friday of her life, I said to myself in wonder.

The questions ranged from politics to fashion: "Why doesn't Gandhi believe in helping the war effort?" "What about the Hindu-Moslem problem?" "Do Indian girls use make-up?" We were to be asked the same questions over and over again during our stay in America. One of the reporters, hoping to embroil Lekha in an argument, asked: "Isn't it true that people of higher castes refuse to associate with untouchables, to eat anything cooked by them, or even walk near them?"

Lekha leaned forward confidentially and whispered to the roomful of reporters: "Don't tell a soul, but our cook at home is an untouchable!"

A roar of laughter went up, and the conference ended on that happy note.

During our stay in New York we were entranced by the new world that had been thrown open to us. We could have found no bigger contrast to the sleepy little city of Allahabad. New York was a teeming cosmopolitan center, more like a small country than a city. The day was not long enough to see all we wanted to see. We went to concerts, plays, and parties, to the zoo, the circus, and the Museum of Modern Art. We learned to wash dishes, prepare our own

breakfast, use a can-opener and a vacuum cleaner. We were told that a maid to do the housework was an undreamed-of luxury since the war began, and could not be found even if you offered to lend her your fur coat on her afternoon off and gave her an occasional theater ticket. While finding our way about the city, we learned to distinguish dimes from nickels, nickels from quarters. We discovered that taxi-drivers, far from being men who merely drove you from one place to another, were highly interesting and intelligent people, full of curiosity, eager to make conversation and ask questions, full of sarcastic comment on political events and witty remarks on any subject they cared to discuss.

We shopped in the elegant department stores of Fifth Avenue for skirts, the "sloppy sweaters" that college fashions decreed, and ski suits to wear in the bitter Massachusetts winter. During vacations, too, we saved our saris for parties and for formal occasions. We did this partly because saris created a laundry problem, and partly because skirts were so much easier to live in. We could scramble into buses and subways with ease, and do our shopping without being stared at and asked questions.

Now and then we met a fellow countryman who did not approve of our attire. I sat opposite one such gentleman at a luncheon. He kept staring at me until, unable to contain himself any longer, he said: "Miss Pandit, I don't think it is proper for you to dress as you do. Why do you wear Western clothes?"

I looked at his immaculate English suit and asked: "Why do you?"

He was taken aback. Evidently it had not occurred

to him that he was dressed from top to toe in "Western clothes."

Although the shops were the most beautiful we had ever seen, we did not enjoy shopping. We stood awaiting our turn at counters for long periods, and were finally waited on by overworked salesgirls who were just as tired as we were and in no mood to cater to a customer's whims. The feverish activity of New York's department stores was a world removed from the leisurely tempo of shopping at home.

Shopping in the bazaars of India was a ritual reflecting age-old courtesy and calm. Often we went to a shop not to buy, but to see the new goods that had arrived. The shopkeeper took such visits for granted, and greeted us smilingly with offers of refreshment.

"What can I offer you? Some pan, some tea, some lemonade?" he would coax, and a man would be dispatched to bring what we wanted.

Seated on rickety wooden chairs on the edge of a white sheet that covered the floor, or on the sheet itself, we would sip lemonade while the owner of the shop and his assistants took silks, satins, and brocades out of glass-doored cupboards and unfolded them before us. There was no cloth in the world to surpass the lustrous gold and silver textiles of Benares, and its gorgeous, heavy, tapestry-like brocades; the bright-patterned prints of Murshidabad, which become increasingly softer-textured with each washing; or the glowing opulence of southern Indian silks, shot through with a medley of iridescent colors, one violet in one light, red in another, a second one rose-pink in one light, apple-green in another.

Engrossed in the wealth of color and design, we would ignore the heat, dust, and noise of the bazaar, with its congestion of traffic, its flies, and its shrill vendors. That sharp contrast would serve all the more vividly to enhance the loveliness of the wares arrayed in the shop, and would lend shopping a strangely unreal quality. To drive through the narrowest of crowded streets between crooked, closely packed buildings, alike only in their surrender to dirt and age—to step gingerly into the street in a cautious effort to avoid banana-peel or the sticky remains of some sweetmeat—to walk into the interior of a drab little shop, only to be dazzled by its unexpected treasure—was an experience that never lost its fascination for us, though we lived in a land fabled for contrasts. The treasures that emerged from squalid surroundings were like the blossoming lotus that rises out of the mire. Eagerly we examined expert craftsmanship displayed in intricate ivory and silver filigree objects, exquisitely carved articles of fragrant sandalwood, delicately embroidered feather-textured shawls, rolls of borders of varying widths woven of gold, silver, or silken thread to sew along the edges of filmy Georgette saris. In India ugliness, too, was a fruitful thing, not to be destroyed, but to be sublimated until it gave birth to beauty in some form.

One week-end we went to Nyack, near New York, where we stayed with a charming couple who wrote and illustrated children's books. It was a peaceful two days in the cool green countryside, where we had a chance to rest from the heat and noise of the city. We realized that there were places in America where people lived at a leisurely pace.

Our hostess's young nephew, Richard, was home on leave from the navy, and we had long talks and exchanged ideas with him. We found that young Americans knew very little about India, particularly what was happening in India at that time.

"That's not hard to understand," said Richard. "Why, right here in the States, a New Yorker knows very little about Texas, and vice versa. How can we know about a foreign country when we don't know our own?"

When we told Richard about the political situation at home and how thousands of people were in jail for wanting their country's freedom, he looked at us in consternation. It was a revelation to him.

"That could never happen here," he said indignantly. "Here, a person can go right up to the White House and say: 'Mr. Roosevelt, I think you're an old stinker,' and nobody could do anything to him—except maybe throw him out of the White House," he ended with a chuckle, and we laughed with Richard at the idea of such unrestrained freedom of speech.

■

Chapter XIII

ABOUT PEOPLE

AT home Papu had read to us from a book called *Paul Robeson, Negro*, written by his wife, Mrs. Eslanda Goode Robeson

"Why does she call it *Paul Robeson, Negro*?" I asked. "Everybody knows he's a Negro."

"Because she is proud of the fact," said Papu. "There are places in America and South Africa and other parts of the world where a man is looked down on if he has a dark skin. He is made to feel ashamed of it. So Mrs. Robeson wants to emphasize the fact that her husband is a Negro and proud to be one."

"How silly to hate somebody because he's dark!" murmured Rita, aged eight, admiring her own pretty complexion in the mirror on the opposite wall. "I wish my own were darker; then the dirt wouldn't show on my face, and Mademoiselle wouldn't make me wash so often."

"That's one way of looking at it," Papu said, smiling. "I hadn't thought of that advantage."

Through this book and the phonograph records we had of Paul Robeson's voice, we came to know him. To Wellesley, one day in September soon after we had entered college, came a letter from Mrs. Robeson, inviting us to spend a few days at her home in Enfield, Connecticut, ". . . if you have nothing better to do."

It was a warm, direct, friendly letter, with no preliminaries and no ceremonial phrases. It was typical of Essie, as we came to know her, generous, straightforward, and plain-speaking. Essie and Paul had met Mummie and Mamu some years earlier in London, so they felt entitled to consider us their daughters.

We spent a happy time at the Robesons' home. Paul was away, but young Paul—or Pauli, as he was known—was there, and he and his mother regaled us with anecdotes about his famous father.

We ate quantities of good American food and drank large glasses of milk, for Essie was of the opinion that schools and colleges never give young people enough to eat. We washed our saris and hung them up to dry all over the house and garden. Essie did not mind in the least, and joined in the hectic activity of washing and ironing yards and yards of silk. "What's a home for if my daughters can't use it freely?" she said cheerily. She gave us a standing invitation to arrive any time we liked, with as many friends as we liked, and to wash as many saris as we liked when we got there!

We did not meet Big Paul till the following summer when Pauli took us to see him in *Othello* on Broadway. For two hours we were held spellbound by his magnificent voice and presence on the stage—the voice that seemed to have more depth and beauty and power than any voice we had heard, the presence that dwarfed all the other actors and made Paul appear a giant beside them.

After the play, Pauli took us backstage to meet his father. He was still in his Othello robe, and rose from his dressing-table to greet us. I looked up and up at

the largest man I had ever seen. My hand disappeared into the huge one he held out, and I was dazzled by his smile.

"So these are my daughters!" spoke the deep, rich, musical voice.

When he bent down to kiss me, I was overcome with confusion. In all my seventeen years I had not had such an overwhelming experience.

Celebrities were not strangers to us, for Anand Bhawan had often been host to distinguished guests, both Indian and foreign. There were few times when all the rooms were not filled (it was not a large house as the old one had been), when the dining-room was not crowded, and when the servants were not hurrying to and fro between the kitchen and the dining-room.

Because Allahabad was one of the centers of the national movement, it was natural that Anand Bhawan should be the hub of political activity. The library was used for political meetings, and for such occasions all the furniture was removed and a large, white sheet spread on the carpet, with bolsters placed around it against the walls. There the Congress leaders lounged and talked and made decisions.

We were never part of this exciting activity, and only seldom did we make an appearance in the drawing-room when there were guests present, but we had our own methods of observing the proceedings. We watched people arrive and leave from our position between the rails of the banisters. Often the only way we could hear the arguments taking place in the library was by climbing the staircase to the roof and

peering down at the select gathering through one of the blue-glass skylights. Little did we know that while we spied for fun, momentous plans were being laid which were revolutionizing the mind of India day by day.

Life at Anand Bhawan could be very trying for the grown-ups, especially the ladies of the house. Whenever a meeting was in session, my mother would ask the members to stay for lunch or tea. The reply was always: "No, thank you so much, but we have to leave immediately after the meeting." Invariably they stayed. Sometimes when five people had been expected for lunch, twenty-five would stroll into the dining-room. It would then become clear that three were vegetarians of the egg-eating variety, and two of the non-egg-eating variety. One or two did not touch meat or eggs on Wednesdays, or whichever day of the week it happened to be, and at least one gentleman was on a pure fruit diet. They would sit down, cheerfully unconcerned, protesting that they would not eat anything, sweet-tempered, jovial, hungry, in the manner of men who have done a satisfactory morning's work and feel entitled to the relaxation of a good meal. The dining-room would echo with their joking sallies and their laughter. There was never a solemn note in the conversation, for all solemnity had been left in the library upstairs. The polished Urdu of the distinguished and inimitable Maulana Azad, a stately Richelieu-like figure with his trim, pointed beard, would mingle with the scholarly Hindi of the flowing-haired, flowing-bearded Tandonji. High good humor reigned while hurried last-minute preparations were being made in the pantry, where Mummie would be

at work producing appetizing dishes from nowhere. Her ingenuity never failed to astonish us.

"Anybody can produce a good meal when all the ingredients are there. The point is to be able to use your imagination and concoct a meal out of nothing," she told us.

We never saw her use a spoon, or cup, or any other measure. She poured, sprinkled, mixed, and tossed deftly and smoothly, with an Indian woman's instinctive sense of proportion and disdain for recipes and instructions. Afterwards she would wash her hands and calmly join the others in the dining-room to coax more food upon them in the traditional Indian manner. For Indian hospitality demands that while it is unseemly for the guest to accept a second helping the first time it is offered to him, the host must continue to tempt him, and eventually persuade him to have more. This gracious ritual requires time, attentiveness, and extreme courtesy.

Occasionally the strain would be too much for Mummie, and she would moan: "If only someone would tell me whether there will be five people or fifty!"

On one particularly harassing day I had gone to Mummie's room in search of a book. I found her door locked, which was very unusual, and the first indication of an ensuing crisis. I soon saw a small white card pinned to the door, with a message written on it in bold black ink: "This is to inform the public that Mrs. Pandit passed away quietly after tea. No wreaths by request."

One of the most frequent and best-loved visitors at Anand Bhawan was Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, the poet-

ess and politician, and one of the only two women who had been President of the Congress. She had been Nanuji's friend, and her daughters had been friends of Mummie's since childhood. There was laughter in the house whenever she was there, and a festive, lively atmosphere of a kind that only she could create.

Spontaneous, blunt, and sharp-tongued, she could also be gentle, and music flowed from her speech as it did from her pen. She was a great story-teller, with a completely unself-conscious way of accompanying her anecdotes with vivid facial expressions and gestures that could not but produce immediate hilarity among her listeners. She turned every gathering into a festival, for she infected those around her with her irrepressible vivacity and *joie de vivre.*

She would look us up and down at each visit and say to Mummie: "Good gracious! How did a lovely woman like you produce these odd-looking children?"

Once she asked me: "Would you rather be the most brilliant woman in the world or the most beautiful?"

"The most beautiful," I breathed ecstatically, for, apart from the fact that I was a remarkably ugly child, what little girl does not want to be the fairy princess of her dreams?

"Humph!" grunted Mrs Naidu. "A true woman! She doesn't care a fig for brains. I hope she'll have more sense later on!"

I treasure a book she gave me, in which she wrote the characteristically lyrical lines: "As a star illumines the sky, so may you shed radiance on earth."

Vivid and lovable a figure though Mrs. Naidu was in our lives, she was not so close to us as her daugh-

ter, Padmaja, whom we called Padmasi. Padmasi was a person of indefinable charm who did not belong to—and made no pretense of fitting into—an austere political atmosphere. The brilliant greens, golds, and purples of her saris were a startling contrast to the sober shades around us. Her bright silks rustled unashamedly amid the subdued whisper of khadi. She always wore flowers in her hair. There was something of the bird of paradise about her, confined, restless, in a glen of sparrows.

Padmasi had been an invalid all her life, a fact belied by her gaiety, her gift for swift repartee, and a keen sense of the ridiculous inherited from her mother. Like her mother, too, she was a poet, with a poet's intensified æsthetic sense. But in addition to this she had a sharp critical faculty, and no jarring note in dress, mood, or conversation escaped her. She was our favorite adviser and our severest critic.

We were fascinated by the air of silken luxury and sparkling wit which seemed to surround her, making her presence a salon and her personality a legend. With us she was our age, and we were able to talk freely with her as with no one else.

"How is it that you understand us so well?" Rita asked her. To Rita it was an unending mystery that anyone should treat her, the baby of the family, as a grown-up.

"I suppose I've got into the habit of understanding your family," Padmasi replied with her usual mock-seriousness. "I've been a confidante to three generations of it!"

"Three?" we chorused.

"Yes. Haven't I ever told you? It all began when I

was seventeen. I met your grandfather. Of course, there was never a man like him, and there never will be. I fell hopelessly in love with him. After that I met your Mummie, and then you three creatures came along! That makes three generations."

Gandhiji was the most honored of guests. Each visit of his was a novel and indescribable experience. However often one saw him, or watched the crowds react to him, one could not believe that such a phenomenon was possible. It is one thing to recall just one such event in memory, and quite another to see it re-enacted over and over again before one's eyes in all its unbelievable magnetism.

Whenever Gandhiji was a passenger on a train, it was stopped before it reached the station platform. This was probably done to prevent the waiting crowds from besieging his compartment. But if such was the purpose of this measure, it never succeeded. An eager mob of human beings always managed to reach him, stampeding across the railway tracks, trying to clamber into his carriage, and making it difficult for him to emerge. All the way to the house the route would be lined with cheering followers and curious observers.

Gandhiji's diet was very simple, and garlic was an essential part of it. Once I took some garlic up to his room in a saucer held at arm's length in an effort not to smell it.

Mrs. Naidu saw me and chuckled: "Don't be so snooty, young lady. You should eat some of that yourself, if you want to have a gorgeous complexion like the old man's when you're his age!"

Gandhiji may have been a saint and a Mahatma

to his countless adorers, but to Mrs. Naidu, one of his earliest disciples, he was "the old man" and "the chocolate-colored Mickey Mouse." She loved him dearly, and was loved by him, followed him devotedly, and saw no reason to make any demonstration or fuss about it. It was a refreshingly sane attitude in an environment often pervaded by sentimentality and cloying devotion.

Prayer meetings were a regular feature of Gandhiji's day whether he happened to be at his own ashrama [1] at Wardha or in some other part of India. The outstanding fact about them was their universal character, for at each meeting, besides readings from the *Bhagavad-Gita* and the singing of Hindu *bhajans* (hymns), excerpts were also read from the *Koran*, the *Santsahitya*—a Sikh holy book—and the Bible, and hymns of the various faiths were sung. Among his favorite Christian hymns was *Lead, Kindly Light*, which he had had translated into Gujarati for his prayers. Because of this inclusive approach, people of all faiths attended his gatherings, making them the nucleus of a universal brotherhood.

Bapu maintained that those who believe that God is One, but that men worship him in different ways, are responsible for seeing that this principle is carried out. His prayer meetings were daily evidence of his own enactment of it. At the ashrama where he lived with a community of close followers, the Hindu scriptures predominated at prayers. Bapu once stated that this was so because the majority of the ashrama com-

[1] *ashrama*, a colony, usually founded for a religious purpose, where people live in austerity, dedicated to certain ideals.

Mme Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit

Rita, Danny Kaye, Nayantara, Hollywood 1946

munity were Hindus. If the majority had been Muslims or Christians, readings from the *Koran* or the Bible would have predominated. Although he was a devout Hindu himself, there was no trace of bigotry in the Mahatma.

When Bapu came to Allahabad in 1941, his evening prayers were held on the front lawn at Anand Bhawan beside the fountain, on which a circle of white marble fish spouted jets of water into the air. The fountain was surrounded by clumps of dark-green foliage dotted with touches of bright-red salvia. On the grass near it a carpet had been spread. There, as blue-gray twilight settled over the garden, Bapu came to sit on a wooden *takht* (divan) that had been placed for him. People drifted in through the gates, leaving the dusty road and the noise of the neighborhood bazaar behind them, and sat down in informal clusters on the grass.

Reading from the *Gita* began, and those who had brought their *Gitas* with them opened to the selected passage. I listened absorbed, for though the words were Sanskrit, the verses were well known. They were the essence of the *Gita*'s teaching, and the part of it that best applied to Bapu's own life:

"Thy business is with the action only, never with its fruits; so let not the fruit of action be thy motive, nor be thou to inaction attached.

"Perform action . . . dwelling in union with the divine, renouncing attachments and balanced evenly in success and failure. . . ."

I sat cross-legged on the carpet holding a *tanpura*[2]

[2] *tanpura*, a stringed instrument. The sound box is globular in shape and rests on the floor, while the seated musician

against me, listening to the strains of *Abide with Me* float through the garden, waiting for my turn to sing. The lawn had become a blur of brown and white, the brown faces of men and women dark against the white of their clothes.

When it was my turn, I was so nervous that my fingers trembled as I plucked the strings of the *tanpura*, but Bapu's kind eyes looked reassuringly at me as I started to sing. My *bhajan* resembled a psalm of the Old Testament: "Lord, without thy help how will my boat cross this stream? Night is falling and my burden grows ever more heavy. I need thy mercy and thy guidance. Light my way for me."

Toward the end of the meeting the singing of *Raghupati Raghava Raja Rama* began and was taken up in chorus by the whole gathering:

Raghupati Raghava Raja Rama
Patita Pavana Sita Rama
Ishvara Allah tērē nam
Sab ko sammati dē bhagvan.

The song was a chant of praise to God:

Rama, the King of the Universe,
He who makes the sinner pure,
He who is known by diverse names, who is both Ishvara and Allah,[3]
He who gives his blessing unto all.

---

holds the attached stringboard against his shoulder, enabling him to pluck the strings with his right hand.

[3] *Ishvara,* the Hindu name for God. *Allah,* the Muslim name for God.

Bapu had added the last two lines to this Hindu religious chant. It had come to be associated with him, a tune that accompanied him wherever he went and recalled his presence when he was absent.

We have reason to remember two visitors from abroad. One of them was Mrs. Margaret Sanger, who had come to India in connection with her "family limitation" program. During the snatches of conversation we heard now and then, Rita must have pieced together several bits of information. When we came to say good-night to Mrs. Sanger one evening, Rita piped: "Don't you think we're an awfully well-spaced family?" Mrs. Sanger was highly amused, and reminded us of the incident when we met her, years later, in America.

Sir Stafford Cripps, who had stayed with us before in Anand Bhawan, came to India again in 1942. Politically, Anand Bhawan was buzzing with speculation on the outcome of his mission. Domestically it was astir with preparations for Indira's marriage. There could have been no more strange combination. Indira, with the wedding on her mind, offered Sir Stafford "potato Cripps," instead of potato chips, at dinner.

Mamu, though he was the master of Anand Bhawan, in some respects resembled a guest, for his work took him on long and frequent journeys throughout the country.

"Look at your Mamu," Papu would tease. "He chases all over India like a man possessed, telling people to grow more food, but I'm the one who stays home and grows it. That is the difference between the man of words and the man of action."

When Mamu was in Allahabad, the row of cane chairs on the semicircular veranda in front of the house was occupied all day long by visitors waiting to interview him. Yet in spite of his busy schedule he found snatches of time to play with us and answer the many questions with which we plied him during our conversations. He had an immense reservoir of energy and vitality; even the most fatiguing day did not leave its traces on him for long. Walking was too slow and staid a method of locomotion for him. Mamu's nimble walk resembled a run. With us there was always a competition to see who would reach the bottom of the stairs first in a headlong scramble from his room to the dining-room. Nobody was allowed to be lazy in his presence, and anyone lounging gracelessly in a chair could expect to be greeted with a resounding whack on the shoulder and the admonition to be up and doing It did not matter whether the victim was one of us or the visiting headmistress of some local high school.

On waking in the morning we would sometimes join Mamu in his room to watch him do his yogic exercises, and often to learn to do them with him. Standing on his head was a regular favorite with him, and he felt that, apart from being a healthy exercise, the topsy-turvy position was a good way of viewing the world bright and early in the day. His breakfast was a hearty one of eggs and toast and coffee—hearty, that is, in a family where fruit and tea were the normal breakfast.

"What is all this 'cup of tea' nonsense?" he would scold my mother. "How can you do a day's work on a cup of tea?"

"I wouldn't dream of facing an egg first thing in the morning," Mummie would say firmly.

For Mamu, breakfast time was by no means "first thing in the morning." By that time he had done his exercises, read a number of newspapers, and seen and talked with several people who had early appointments with him.

Sometimes, especially during the monsoon, when the steady downpour of rain prevented us from going outdoors, Mamu would come upon us in the library, where we browsed. Characteristically he would want to know what we were reading and why. He would point out his own favorite books, and we would compare our tastes.

"What's that you're reading?" he asked me once.

I showed him André Maurois's *Byron*.

"I have a link with Byron," said Mamu. "We went to the same school and college, Harrow, and Trinity College, Cambridge. In Harrow on top of the hill there is a fine view from a churchyard, and Byron is supposed to have gone there frequently. At Trinity College there is a very good marble statue of him."

"He must have been a wonderful man," I marveled. "I would love to have known him, wouldn't you?"

"No," replied Mamu emphatically, "I don't think so. I find it difficult to like him. He was so amazingly selfish and self-centered. If you like Maurois, you ought to read his *Ariel*. It is a much better book, and Shelley is, I think, a far more lovable and admirable character than Byron." And he began to explore the bookshelves in search of *Ariel*.

We were a family of voracious readers, and much

of the reading we look back on now was done in that library, with its high shelves of long-stored books. It contained everything from fairy tales to weighty volumes on law, economics, and politics. Many of the books were childhood possessions of Mummie, Mamu, and Masi. It gave us a thrill of pleasure to open a volume of Dickens and find written in it in a round, childish scrawl: "This book belongs to Sarup Kumari Nehru,[4] July 1912," or "To Bets[5] from her loving brother Jawahar, 1918." It was a lived-in room full of old friends cherished lovingly through the years. The fact that not so long ago Mamu himself had read and enjoyed the books he was recommending to us added to the joy of reading them. Mamu found *Ariel* and brought it to me.

"Mamu, don't you get sick and tired of traveling around the country?" Rita inquired solicitously.

Mamu joined us on the floor. There were several comfortable chairs in the room, but we always chose to sprawl on the carpet.

"Tired, but not sick," he corrected with his usual insistence on accuracy. "Yes, I do get tired sometimes."

"I wonder if life will ever be normal," Lekha sighed, "and you and Mummie and Papu and all of us will be able to live like other people."

"Normal?" Mamu repeated, savoring the word as though it was as foreign to his vocabulary as it was

[4] Sarup Kumari Nehru was Mummie's maiden name. In India, after a woman's marriage, her name is frequently changed by her husband's family. The name Vijaya Lakshmi was given to Mummie by her husband's family.

[5] Bets was a pet name by which my aunt, Mrs. Hutheesingh, was known as a child.

to his life. "The fact is that we live in an upside-down world, darling, and it's no use expecting life to be easy. It is not a simple matter adjusting to such a world, especially for those who are sensitive. It is not normal for most of us to spend our lives in prison cut off from our families and dear ones. It certainly should not be normal for intelligent human beings to spend all their time and energy killing each other off, as they are doing all over the world. It isn't normal either for some people to starve and others to get indigestion through overeating. All this is very abnormal and wrong, but it is happening."

"That's just what is so discouraging," said Lekha.

"But there is an advantage to living in abnormal times," Mamu went on. "Of course, if you are lacking in courage and poor in spirit—and I'm sure you three are not—you won't see the advantage. Such times open up all sorts of new avenues to a human being. They may be avenues full of risk and danger, but through them you can build a better world. There is adventure in living in abnormal times, and life without adventure would be a very dull affair, wouldn't it? So you must treat circumstances as an invitation to action. Then they will not get the better of you."

"I wish we could do something really important to help you, Mamu," said Rita earnestly. "All we do is go to school and have lessons and horrid things like that."

Mamu laughed wholeheartedly. "Those are just the things that will fit you for the future," he said. "They will give you a body that is strong, a mind that is as keen as the edge of a sword, and a character that is firm and steadfast and dedicated to high ideals. These

are all things I want you to have. There is so much work to be done, and before you know it, it will be your turn to shoulder the burden."

What Mamu said was always something to listen to attentively, stow away carefully in memory, and remember forever afterwards.

"Bibima always used to say that God would give India her freedom," I said. "Do you believe in God, Mamu?"

Bibima had died in 1938, but for us she was ever present still, and her beliefs continued to have their hold on me.

"Now, that is a very difficult question to answer," said Mamu thoughtfully. "It all depends on what you mean by God. Words are tricky things, and people use them in different senses. Then they argue quite needlessly and get hot and bothered. And all this misunderstanding could be avoided if at the start they understood each other's definitions of the same word. I could write a book on my own views on the subject of God, but if you are interested in my opinion why don't you read the chapter on Religion in *Glimpses:*[6] it doesn't say much, but it will give you an idea."

"One should believe in *something*, shouldn't one?" suggested Lekha vaguely. "I mean, one should not go through life feeling that nothing matters except oneself."

"That is very true," Mamu agreed, "and it is important to know what to believe and what not to believe. But it is always better to think out things for oneself and arrive at one's own conclusions than to

[6] *Glimpses of World History*, by Jawaharlal Nehru. (New York: John Day Co.; 1942.)

keep a closed mind and accept blindly what other people say. We should take the help of others, but unless we find our own way we can't go very far. The main thing is to keep all the windows of our minds open. The mind, you know, is the greatest thing man possesses. People who don't use their minds hardly deserve the name of human beings. Of course, our minds cannot solve all our problems, but they can help us toward a solution."

"It's very hard to decide on one's own what is right and wrong, and what to believe," I commented. "One could just go on thinking about it, and never settle down to doing anything."

"Yes, it is hard, and decision is a serious responsibility, but in thinking about all these problems one should not get lost in speculation. That would serve no purpose at all. There is a big enough job to do in this world to understand our fellow creatures and work for their betterment. One should never lose sight of this. And now isn't it teatime for my philosophers?"

As though in response to a cue, Sundar shuffled into the room cackling gleefully that tea was ready downstairs.

Some of the celebrities we met in America were people we had come to know through books, like Paul Robeson. Another was the remarkable and courageous Helen Keller. Lekha and I met her at the New York film *première* of Pearl Buck's *Dragon Seed*. It was unbelievable that Helen Keller, who had been born blind and deaf, had succeeded in living such a full and interesting life and had come to "see" a picture. She had read the book and was going to "hear"

the picture through its vibrations. We shook hands with her, and she "heard" what we said by the vibrations she got from our voices by placing two fingers close to our lips when we spoke. It was extraordinarily humbling to meet a person of her cheerful optimism.

Another of our "book" friends was Pearl Buck. In America, Pearl Buck became Mrs. Walsh to us, and Rita and I spent a summer vacation at the Walshes' country home in Pennsylvania.

It was a large house with spacious lawns around it and a farm attached, a house at once beautiful, comfortable, and welcoming. It was full of the noise and laughter of children, of a treasure of books, of lively conversation, and a wealth of friendliness and good will. The family besides Mr. and Mrs. Walsh consisted of Janice, who was about our age, and four younger children, Richard, Edgar, Johnny, and Jean.

We spent a lazy summer getting acquainted with the Pennsylvania Dutch countryside and visiting places of historic interest in the locality. We spent our days exploring the Walshes' library, sometimes helping the cook to shell peas, and in the warm summer evenings drowsing under the stars on the flagged terrace outside the living-room.

It seemed to us that all that was sane and civilized in American life could be found in this house, in the attitudes of these people, and in their outlook on life. Mrs. Walsh told us a story that revealed the sense of values she had tried to impart to her children in a world where so many false values based on creed and color exist. Many years earlier, when she was in China, a visitor had called at her house to see her. Janice,

then a child of nine or ten, had admitted the visitor and gone to inform her mother.

"There's a gentleman to see you, Mother."

"Is he Chinese or American?" asked Mrs. Walsh, who was expecting a Chinese friend.

"I don't know. I didn't ask him. Shall I go find out?"

"Never mind," said Mrs. Walsh, smiling, and went out to greet her Chinese friend.

We were struck by Mrs. Walsh's untiring energy and love of living. She often said that one lifetime was far too short to do all that she wanted to do. The business of living was neither mere fact nor routine to her. It was an adventure of which she could never have enough. She felt that life itself was the greatest gift imaginable, for it opened up avenues through which the world in its infinite variety could be explored.

Mrs. Walsh's interests were many and varied. They ranged from intellectual and political issues to the everyday affairs of her home and her farm. But above all, I think, her interest lay in people. The "Welcome Home" which she started some years after we met her, a home for unwanted children of mixed nationality, is only one indication of her deep absorption in human beings and their problems.

America is famous for its beautiful homes. During our first month in New York, Lekha and I were taken to the home of Dorothy Norman. As we climbed the carpeted stairs of her triplex apartment, we admired the row of sketches and paintings which lined the wall. On entering the drawing-room, we dropped our voices

to hushed whispers and tiptoed about on the thick carpet, looking at more exquisite paintings, high stacks of the latest books on politics, poetry, sculpture, and the theater piled on every available table, shiny new magazines strewn all over the room in studied disarray, the glass bricks lining one wall, and the streamlined, clean-cut furniture. Here was modernity of a kind we had encountered only in magazine illustrations of interior decoration.

We jumped when Dorothy came into the room and greeted us, breaking the hushed silence. She laughed when we told her how impressed we were by her taste; and, because we are sensitive to voices, we noticed that hers was low and sweet, and that its tranquil quality reflected her whole personality.

Dorothy's gracious home became home to us, and we found that she was one of those rare people to whom one can talk with ease after a comparatively short acquaintance. To me, especially, she became a close friend; our conversations revealed that we shared many of the same tastes, from chocolate milkshakes to metaphysics and modern poetry. I could talk to her about any subject and be assured of her quiet understanding.

The first time I was invited to spend a vacation at Dorothy's home, Lekha had already returned to India and Rita was in school. I arrived in New York a little nervous, for it was my first trip entirely on my own. I pressed the doorbell and heard it tinkle musically inside. A moment later a red-faced maid in a black frock and a white apron swung open the door. Mary was Irish, but she had surrendered to the call of American culture.

"Well, well, you're Tara!" she observed, beaming, and she pronounced my soft Indian name as though it were "Terror."

Her absence of preliminaries put me at ease. "They've all gone out," she chattered, "but you're to come right in and make yourself at home."

I walked behind her into a spotless, shining kitchen, where a red-and-white checked tablecloth covered a folding table.

"Sit down," she commanded. "You must be hungry. Besides, you need to put on weight. What do they do in college, starve you?"

I laughed. "If I eat from now till Christmas, I can't get any fatter," I explained. "I've always been skinny."

"We'll soon see," she said firmly, and she brought a platter of thick slices of rye bread and an enormous hunk of yellow cheese and put them down in front of me. From the refrigerator she produced a frosty bottle of beer and, prying it open, poured its frothing contents into two tall glasses.

I stared in amazement as she handed me one glass and lifted the other to her lips with a cheery "Here's to you! I hope you're going to like it here!"

By the time the family came home, Mary and I were thoroughly acquainted with each other, and the acquaintance showed distinct signs of blooming into a lasting friendship, mellowed as we were with the bond of beer between us.

Dorothy gave me a long, flat key to her apartment and told me to come and go as I pleased.

"Save one evening to have dinner with the family," she always reminded me, but I would gladly have saved more. Apart from enjoying her family, it was

an education to meet the many interesting men and women of New York's artistic and literary circle whom she continually entertained.

Elly and Razzack lived in a house in downtown New York. Little did we realize, the first time we entered it, stepping down two stairs below street level to its front door, that it would become so great a part of our memory of New York.

Elly was American and, what was more, Bostonian, she always added with a twinkle of her slanted blue eyes. Razzack was from southern India. And their home seemed to combine the gentle good breeding of the one culture with the philosophical calm of the other. They were curiously self-sufficient in a city where one need never rely on one's own resources for entertainment or amusement. Somehow, one always had the inexplicable sensation that there was a garden just outside their house instead of merely a street, for how could such a feeling of serenity reign, unless wafted there by fresh, flower-scented breezes?

We sat up late into the night, talking to them of many things. Elly, who had never been to India, liked to hear about our childhood, and to add the accounts we gave her to the numerous pictures that Razzack had given her of his home.

With Elly we chattered uninhibitedly, and she joined in our mischievous comments on American life and the world at large. Razzack was to us something of a sage, and we listened respectfully to his advice, though we teased him heartlessly for what we considered his conservative veiws. An air of Old World chivalry clung to him as to no one else we had ever

met. In his company we felt like princesses, for both he and Elly spoiled us.

It was in their home one chilly, snow-wet January morning that we received the news of Papu's death. There was no place in America where we would rather have been at that time than in this house of loving and wordless sympathy.

Chapter XIV

SOME THOUGHTS ON EDUCATION

SOME of our parents' acquaintances had approved of our going to America, others had not, and nothing could have been more indicative of their two points of view than two books that Mummie received as gifts shortly before we left home. One was a beautifully bound and illustrated book called *The Flowering of New England*, with the inscription: "This will give you a better understanding of the part of the United States to which your daughters are going." The other was a volume containing "statistics" of divorce, crime, and venereal disease in the United States, with a note attached pointing out the dangers of sending young girls unchaperoned to a foreign land. The latter book was just as ludicrous as the forms we had to fill in before being given a visa for America, forms that contained a list of questions such as: (1) Are you a moron or an idiot? (2) State categorically whether you plan to overthrow the Government of the United States. Apparently we satisfied the authorities that we were in our right minds and had no subversive intentions toward their Government. Similarly we managed to escape the harrowing fate predicted by Mummie's well-meaning friend.

We arrived at Wellesley in saris, feeling strangely out of place among the casually clad throng of young

women. The girls in the campus house to which I had been assigned were surprised that I did not smoke or use lipstick and that I had never been out on a "date." They were informal and direct, and quick to make friends. They would stroll into my room in groups, perch on my bed and desk, and sprawl unconcernedly on the floor, smoking innumerable cigarettes, asking a chain of questions. There was an air of complete self-possession and nonchalance about them which made me feel all the more shy and formal in comparison.

"But if you don't have dates in India, what do you do in the evenings?"

Somehow there had always been plenty to do. I had gone to the houses of my friends, or had stayed at home and read, or occasionally had gone to the cinema. I had never been bored. But it was hard to convince these sleek, confident young women, who seemed so much more worldly-wise than I was.

"How do you put that on?" they clamored, pointing to my sari.

When I showed them, they draped themselves in my saris, paraded down the corridor laughing at one another and at the unaccustomed feel of the material against their legs.

"Suppose it fell off? Do you feel absolutely secure in it without any pins or anything?"

"It hasn't fallen off for several thousand years," I replied, "and if it did, I imagine we would think of some way to keep it in place."

"It doesn't suit me because I'm blonde," said one of the girls disconsolately. "You have to have dark hair and eyes, like yours."

In vain I tried to explain that it was the way one moved in a sari that mattered, not the color of one's hair or eyes.

"What's that stuff you put in your eyes sometimes?"

I explained that it was *kajal*, and that there were different ways of preparing it.

"One way is to hold a silver spoon over a burning almond. The black sediment that collects on the spoon is taken off with a little pure butter, and applied to the rims of the eyes. Another method is to burn a wick in mustard oil. Hold a plate or cup of silver (or other metal) over the flame, so that it will collect the sediment while the wick burns. Then remove the sediment with a little butter and apply it to the eyes. Usually enough is made so that it can be stored in a little container and used for several months or a year."

"But is it safe for the eyes?" they asked, incredulous. To them it sounded like some ancient form of witchcraft, and fitted in with their bizarre imaginings about India.

"Oh, quite safe," I assured them, laughing. "In fact, not only is it harmless, it is actually supposed to be good for the eyes. We believe it has cooling properties. It is even applied to the eyes of tiny babies."

"Tell us about a typical day in your life in India," they asked.

This was the most difficult request of all to fulfill because when they said typical they hoped for something extraordinary, exotic, and different from their own experience. I could never provide enough Indian color to satisfy their craving for mystery and glamour. I was not Indian enough for them, and my "typical day" was too much like their own.

"But that's just the way we live," they said, crest-fallen.

"I think that is the way a lot of people all over the world live," I said, "yet we never seem to understand that fact about each other. We only see the differences."

Little by little they discovered that though I looked and dressed differently, I was like them in many ways, and we became friends.

Wellesley is said to have one of the most beautiful campuses in a country renowned for the beauty of its university campuses. It was one of the loveliest places we had ever seen, with its four hundred rolling acres of grounds, its lake, and its Gothic-style, ivy-covered buildings. The grounds alone were enough to get lost in during the first few weeks.

"It's like a country club!" I bubbled joyfully to Lekha, never having seen a country club in my life. "I keep forgetting it's a college."

"You'd better start remembering," said Lekha coolly, "or you'll soon be reminded when your marks are sent home."

So I energetically plunged into my curriculum and mapped out an ambitious course for my four years' work, keeping in mind the requirements I would have to fulfill before I would be eligible for my B.A. It was not the simple system of choosing which existed at home. Here, besides selecting one or two subjects for specialization, I would have to acquire a smattering of what seemed like everything under the sun. Judging from the number of courses I had to take, I should now have a speaking acquaintance with the history of Europe, America, China, and Japan, Greek and mod-

ern philosophy, child psychology, Spanish, Russian, the history of European art, physics, botany, Greek mythology, English composition, hygiene, and basketball. During my more discouraged moments I sought consolation in the thought that at least I would never be at a loss for after-dinner conversation. One of these formidable subjects would surely come to my rescue.

I became deeply interested in my work and did well at it, though never brilliantly. Lekha and I were of the opinion that though we had come there to learn, learning was not necessarily confined to our classes. Near by to be explored was the fascinating city of Boston, where we spent a good deal of our time during week-ends. We found it exciting for many reasons. It was the home of some of the historic landmarks of the American Revolution. (We had always referred to it as the American War of Independence, but were severely informed by our American friends that it was nothing of the kind.) Besides, Boston offered countless avenues for cultural exploration. It boasted wonderful museums and exquisite art collections, one of the best symphony orchestras in the country, and the distinction of showing the *premières* of a number of plays in its theaters before they opened in New York. So we richly supplemented our college education.

Only once was I made to feel that I was falling short of the ideal of the educated woman. This was when a distinguished visitor from India arrived at Wellesley and I took him on a tour of the campus. At first I was discomfited by his amazed stare till, looking down at myself, I saw that I was no pretty sight.

I was dressed in the manner decreed by the high

priests of college fashion, to which I had become accustomed, forgetting what an alarming appearance such an outfit could present to an unsuspecting stranger. I wore slacks, with the trousers rolled up to my knees, a disreputable-looking shirt several sizes too large for me hanging out of my slacks, and a dilapidated raincoat, which had weathered many a storm, thrown over my shoulders. Luckily for my appearance, my hair had never required curling, or it would have been screwed up in curlers all round my head and tied with a rakish bandanna. As it was, I must have looked like the poorest of poor relations washed ashore after a night of futile struggling against a powerful current. My guest continued to look incredulous while I stammered that that was the way everybody dressed on the campus. I could almost picture the voiceless whys forming in his mind.

As we walked along the campus, I pointed out the various buildings to him. "That's the observatory for astronomy students," I said. "That is the art library, and beyond those trees are the physics and chemistry laboratories. Over there, on this side is the music building—"

I was cut short by a distinct clearing of the throat. "I should like to know," said my visitor significantly, "*where* is the domestic-science building?"

I swallowed. "There isn't any." I should have broken the news more gently. There was a long pause.

"Extraordinary! No domestic-science building? Just as I thought!" was his eventual victorious rejoinder.

I hastened to explain: "There are special colleges and finishing schools where one can learn domestic science. . . ."

But the damage was done. My visitor maintained a polite silence as the tour proceeded. I felt that judgment had been pronounced on me and that I had been sentenced to several years of cooking, sewing, and darning. I do not know what report the gentleman took back with him to India, but it must have provided conclusive evidence that we had come to no good end.

I do not know what college means to most young women, but to me it was an incredibly full and happy four years—a time cut out of the crowded fabric of living to think and grope and analyze. What we learned in our classes was important, but what we students learned from one another, often as we sat huddled in uncomfortable groups in each other's rooms, drinking bitter black coffee till late at night, was to my mind just as important. The leisure to talk as we did, the wholeheartedness and single-mindedness with which we attacked and dissected every conceivable subject, will perhaps never be ours again. And now, more than ever, that time spent in thinking, arguing, and questioning stands out as time well spent. That in itself was an education.

Sometimes I had pangs of conscience. I asked myself if I was really utilizing my college years to the best advantage. These doubts were proved by a conversation I once had with a student of technology. He asked me what I was studying.

"Chiefly history," I replied.

"Oh, really?" he said in surprise. "Don't you think that a subject like journalism would be more important and useful in India?"

"If I really wanted to do what would be most use-

ful for India," I said, "I would be studying medicine, or specializing in some technical field like you. Since I'm not gifted along those lines, I feel history is just as important as any other subject."

"But as a journalist," he persisted, "at least you would have an opening into a practical field of work. History is such a vague subject. Can it ever be of any practical use?"

"Perhaps not," I answered, "but many things that combine to make a civilized, tolerant human being do not, in themselves, serve any practical purpose. Yet together they have the effect of molding one's thinking and outlook, and after all isn't that the aim of education: to produce a more complete, balanced person?"

It sounded very correct when I said it, but on thinking it over, I was not satisfied with my reasoning. It was the old question of the ideal versus the practical. While no one doubted the desirability of learning for learning's sake, who could deny the world's great need for practical knowledge, especially India's great need for it? To me, in common with most Indian students, the thought of returning home and making some specific use of my education was ever present. What would be the use of a smattering of this and a smattering of that if, in the end, I could not achieve any concrete result from it all?

As I sat in the darkened room where my art classes were held and watched colored slides of Michelangelo's heroic frescoes, or listened while my philosophy professor discoursed eloquently on Plato's theory of ideas, or prepared a chapter of Chinese history for the following day's class, the conversation kept coming back to me. Four years of classrooms and libraries, I

thought, where these things are vitally important, and then will Plato's ideas or China's epic past make me a more useful citizen? Perhaps not, in the technologist's sense. But looking back, I am convinced that they lighted the path to becoming the "philosopher citizen" whom Socrates envisioned and for whom a tormented world cries out today as fervently as it did twenty-five centuries ago.

There was still more to be learned from Wellesley than what the books taught. One of the most interesting things about being there, or being abroad at all, was watching the manner in which the seasons stood out distinct from one another. To an Indian girl, who had never seen anything like it, it was a thrilling experience. It reminded me of the poem *Ritusamhar* by Kalidasa, the great Sanskrit poet, one of the illustrious "nine jewels" of the Gupta court of the fourth century of our era. Papu had translated this work into lyrical English, calling it *The Pageant of the Seasons.* It was indeed a spectacular pageant.

The icy New England winter was my bitter enemy until I learned to love the crisp snow that mounted steadily in immense white drifts all over the campus. Even when I started to appreciate it, I was in constant terror of my nose and ears freezing, and could not enjoy it with the obvious abandon with which Lekha did. In her scarlet ski suit and jacket, fur-lined boots, and bright wool scarf, she looked like some exuberant Russian peasant as she tramped gaily, pink-cheeked and cherry-nosed, through the snow to her classes.

Spring was my savior. I could hardly contain my joy each year when the watery sunshine began to melt

the snow, and glimpses of tender, newborn grass appeared. When spring came in earnest, we would take our books out under the trees, put them aside, stretch out, and go to sleep. It was enough just to be lazily alive and soak up the long-awaited sunshine. I understood then why Westerners are such fanatical sun-worshippers.

Summer coincided with vacations, the long months when we became acquainted with New York, Massachusetts, California, and Mexico. But autumn was truly the undisputed king of the seasons. Its crimson, gold, and velvety brown brilliance was a recurring miracle each year, and every year its flamboyant impact was startlingly new. October air was heady like wine, and there was about it a strange melancholy, a wistful reminder as of time slipping past. I longed for talent that would enable me to capture on paper or canvas its breathtaking beauty. To be able to paint it in colors or in words would have unburdened to some extent the fullness of the heart. But, like millions of others, I was doomed only to feel.

■

Chapter XV

SPEAKING OF INDIA

LEKHA and I were sometimes invited to speak on India at student gatherings. They were nearly always fascinated by Gandhi and what he had done. "Tell us something about him. What is so wonderful about him, anyway? How has he influenced your country and your family?"

It was a tall order. It was like being asked: "Tell us how you've felt about everything since you were born." For ever since we were born, Gandhi's influence has been there in our midst, affecting our parents' lives and, through them, our lives. It was even indirectly the reason for our being in America. We tried haltingly and clumsily to convey to them something of the atmosphere that existed in India because of Gandhi, and what it meant to us.

The sea at high tide sweeps majestically up the shore, enveloping with its salt spray everything it encounters. So everyone who came under the spell of Gandhi was overcome by him and drawn into his way of thinking. He did not change the face of India. The extravagant layer of make-up lavished upon it by the British Raj remained and "high society" reveled in it. Government House continued to hold elaborate social receptions, and invitations to these functions were widely coveted. Cocktail parties, tea dances, and cab-

arets went on as before, or perhaps as never before. *God Save the King* was played at the conclusion of cinema shows and public functions. Everyday life was in no way altered for large numbers of people Men continued to distinguish themselves in their careers and rise steadily in their professions. On the other hand, beneath the layer of make-up too, the face of India was the same. The poor were still poor. Their life had not changed, their burdens had not been eased.

India's face remained unchanged, but in her sleeping heart a strange longing stirred, a whisper as of something remembered and long lost. The humble people with whom Gandhi came into contact every day felt it, for they turned to him more and more in their troubles. To them he was no imposing leader, but a loved brother, one of themselves, living simply, his life and wants reduced to the barest essentials. He did not make high-flown speeches about his country's independence, using long words and similes they could not understand. His goal was not some promised glory for them or for India. It lay in "wiping the tear from every eye."

People in every section of society felt the stir, for they talked about him. They could not ignore him, just as one cannot ignore a sudden shower during a dry season, or the early and unexpected appearance of buds on a tree. Some made fun of him and treated him as a joke. Some spoke of him with respect, but with a feeling of relief that they themselves were "well out of it, thank God," and had not chosen to become jailbirds. Still others spoke of him with a faint uneasiness, their consciences urging them to throw in their lot with

him, their common sense holding them back. Some may have been oblivious of him altogether, but these must surely be the kind of people who do not realize there is a war on until a bomb explodes on their own roof. One thing was clear—that awareness had streaked through India like an electric shock, and that the shock had affected nearly every class of Indian to a greater or lesser extent.

We tried to explain to our fellow students the enormousness of that effect on the men who gave up their work to join Gandhi. Apart from being his livelihood, a career is a man's whole life. Yet to rise in a career had little significance for them because they thought nothing of the framework within which that career had to be pursued. Money and success sank low in their scale of values. They were no longer goals worthy of achievement.

When my grandfather was reflecting whether he should give up his practice at the bar in order to join Gandhi, his common sense dictated that he adhere to it.

"Your movement needs money," he counseled Gandhiji. "Let me continue my practice, and help you financially."

"It's you I want," said Gandhiji, "not your money."

And because standards were high, and hearts stout and incorruptible, it was as though a fresh breeze had blown through the land, sweeping away the rotten remains of human pettiness and ambition. A new outlook arose, an outlook indifferent to material welfare, proud of its austerity and asceticism. Those among our acquaintances who did not subscribe to this outlook could not cease to be amazed by it. They felt

that by harboring such an attitude our parents had jeopardized our entire future.

"It would be different if you had sons," a worried relative said to my father. "Sons could go their own way and earn their own living. But you have daughters, each one of whom has to be married. What will you give them when they marry? What will you give their husbands?"

My father always treated such conversations with the lighthearted disdain he thought they deserved.

"Give them?" he repeated. "I have, I hope, given them an imperishable set of values which will last them all their lives. As for their husbands, if there are any men good enough for them they can be thankful that they will marry my daughters. I have nothing more precious to give."

When the question of our going to America came up, Mummie was inclined to be a little tearful at first. "How do I know their ship won't be torpedoed on the way? Or that some harm won't befall them when they get there? How can I be certain it is the right thing to do?"

"Nothing in life is guaranteed," said Papu. "You and I have faced an uncertain future together for many years and not given up our faith in what we believe. Can't we have the same faith in our children's future?"

"Yes, but they are so young, such babies to send so far away alone." She may have been a brave woman, but she was our mother, after all.

"Would you rather they stayed in India and became more and more embittered day by day by what is going on around them? That would be a complete

negation of all that we have stood for and tried to teach them."

"No," Mummie agreed reluctantly. "I should not like them to grow up bitter human beings, nursing grudges and hatreds."

"Then the only alternative is to let them go, trusting to the upbringing you have given them. If they have learned anything in all these years, it will protect them from any difficulties they may be faced with in the future. And, above all, they will always have with them the memory of a happy time. That is an armor which no future, however uncertain, can pierce."

And because Mummie cherished the memory of her own happy girlhood, she could not deny us the chance to create a similar one for ourselves.

■

Chapter XVI

VACATIONS

LEKHA and I spent our first long vacation in New York City. With the help of kind friends we found a tiny apartment off Madison Avenue. It was situated on a hot, noisy street, where the trolley clanged deafeningly past every fifteen minutes, but the thrill of having our own apartment could not be marred by such a trifle. We shopped for supplies in a near-by delicatessen, had breakfast at a counter on the ground floor of our flat, and gave crowded parties where there was standing room only.

Lekha got herself a job in a publishing company, and I enrolled in a secretarial school to learn typing and shorthand. We would meet for lunch, which we usually ate perched on high stools at a drugstore counter. Afterwards we would walk along Madison Avenue, looking into the many fascinating shop windows. We did not have enough dollars to spend as freely as we should have liked, but window-shopping offered almost as much pleasure to our delighted eyes.

With her first pay check Lekha bought a chic black dress, and arrived home wearing it.

"There's no point in saving money when one has a yen for something," she philosophized. "That sort of thing can do a lot of psychological damage." I heartily agreed.

Sometimes we spent week-ends in the country near

New York. On one occasion we were taken by a friend to the home of a beautiful young lady. It was the sort of lavish setting one seldom finds outside America. The house and garden were designed in exquisite modern taste, and a swimming-pool adorned the garden.

The father of Cecile, our hostess, was in Toronto on a business trip, but he flew back for the day to have lunch with us. We ate it under spreading trees on the lawn, served by a French maid and an English butler, and there was champagne in our honor. After lunch, as we lay on the grass near the pool, the unaccustomed mixture of champagne and sunshine must have gone to my head. I was studying our hostess's long, gleaming, red-gold hair and her radiant pink and white complexion, and similes began to form in my mind.

"What are you thinking of?" asked Cecile, noticing my absorbed expression.

"I was thinking," I replied, "that you remind me of a luscious red, ripe tomato."

"Good heavens!" she burst out, laughing. I grew hot and embarrassed, and deplored my inability to tell a lie. My brain does not work rapidly enough, so the truth, whatever it is, must out.

"Well, now that I think of it," said Cecile, "you look rather like a string-bean."

After that everybody joined in the game, and we spent an uproarious afternoon comparing each other and various people we knew to vegetables. We decided that Lekha resembled a green pea, because she was small and round. Our cousin Indira was a celery stalk, and Cecile's father a squash.

"I wish I'd known this game when I was in jail,"

Mme Pandit, Nayantara, Chandralekha, Rita, Carlos Rómulo, Mrs. Rómulo, United Nations, 1947

Thakier Nu of Burma, Nayantara, Jawaharlal Nehru, Delhi 1947

said Lekha; "it certainly would have helped to pass the time. The wardress looked rather like a large cabbage, and there were one or two limp asparagus-looking females around."

Cecile sat up with a shock. "Jail?" she echoed. "Why would anyone want to put a little slip of a thing like you into jail?"

Lekha shrugged. "I don't know," she said nonchalantly, "to this day I don't know. There was never any reason given, and no trial."

"How long were you there?"

"Seven months. I was lucky to be in the same barrack with my mother and cousin, otherwise I don't know what I would have done."

"But, you poor child, it must have been terrible!" went on Cecile, dismayed.

"No, it wasn't bad," said Lekha with the same airy indifference, "except once when I was sleeping and a bat fell plop on my chest. Then I really screamed. Fortunately, I'm not afraid of rats and mice. If Tara had been there, she would have passed out."

Cecile shuddered. "But what did you *do*?"

"Oh, Mummie and I read the *Ramayana* together, and she taught me how to cook on a tiny little oil stove. You see, we were given raw rations and had to cook our own food. It wasn't a very balanced diet, and I lost about ten pounds, besides breaking out in boils for a long spell. I had never been ill in my life, so I didn't enjoy that part of it very much. But there were compensations. One of the prisoners who was serving a murder sentence had an infant with her, and I used to bathe the baby and help take care of

her. She was a darling, and I hated to leave her when I was released."

And so we were on the subject of politics again, with Cecile asking all sorts of questions about India. All roads seemed to lead to politics, but at times like this we welcomed the opportunity to have discussions with our friends. It was worth while if we could give them a clearer picture of what India represented.

Cecile marveled. "But you girls talk about it so casually, as if going to jail were like having pancakes for breakfast."

"Well, it's like having chocolate cake for tea!" Lekha said, and we laughed at Cecile's bewilderment.

"What do you mean by that remark?" she demanded.

We told her of our introduction to politics, and the significance it had held for us ever since.

"Gandhiji believes that you cannot fight for truth with hatred in your heart," said Lekha. "He feels that in your words, your thoughts, and your actions there must be no trace of anger or resentment. If you go to prison, you must go gladly and look upon it as a privilege. Otherwise you are no believer in non-violence."

"It is unheard of," said Cecile, "to talk of non-violence in this day and age, when the whole world is being overrun by violence!"

"In this day and age," repeated Lekha, "it needs all the more courage and strength of character to believe in non-violence."

"It also needs genius," said Cecile, "and we Americans, as a nation, haven't got it. We've got talent, and enthusiasm, and guts, but we don't have genius."

Nor do we, we tried to explain. One man among

millions, an artist, had arisen who had created heroes out of ordinary men and transformed politics into prayer. He had the genius, not India.

By the following summer Mummie and Rita had been in the States six months. Mummie had gone to San Francisco in April as an "unofficial" representative of her country at the San Francisco Conference. So, while she made life difficult for the "official" Indian delegation at the Conference, we tramped all over New York looking for an apartment to live in on her return. We found one we liked, but Mummie did not, and she moved from it at the earliest opportunity. The only reason to remember it at all was that it was there that the welcome news of Mamu's release from prison reached us on a sultry August day after the end of the war.

In late 1945, Mummie found an apartment that suited her better. She telephoned me at Wellesley to inform me of the change of address a few days before I was due home for the Christmas holidays.

It was snowing lightly when I arrived home from college one December evening. The taxi pulled up to the curb and the driver peered out through the gloom.

"Are you sure this is the place you want?" he asked dubiously.

I stepped out and looked around. The taxi had stopped in front of a liquor shop. Bottles of gin, Scotch, and liqueurs decorated with festoons of holly berries were gaily displayed in the window. To the right of the shop, a few paces from it, a doorman stood muffled up to his ears in a winter coat under

a large sign announcing: "Monkey Bar." Across the street winking neon lights brightly spelled out: "Bill's Gay Nineties." I blinked. There was no sign of an apartment building anywhere.

"Well, this is the address I was given," I said doubtfully.

"I hope it's the right one, miss," said the driver, hauling my suitcase out of the cab.

Just then a dark door near the liquor shop flew open, and Lekha and Rita appeared from the depths of a gloomy corridor.

"Oh, here you are at last! We were wondering why you hadn't arrived. The train must have come in long ago."

They took me upstairs to a cosily lit drawing-room where a fire crackled, throwing dancing shadows on the opposite wall.

"How d'you like our new apartment?"

It was the largest place we had had yet, with two bedrooms, a drawing-room, and a dining-room. Mummie with her special flair had made it comfortable and homelike. She came into the room.

"Well, darling, how do you like it?"

"It's lovely, but the location is so peculiar," I said.

"I know, but one can't be too choosy nowadays. We took what we could get. Besides, whenever I invite people here, I tell them it's just off Park Avenue, which it is!"

"I always say it's opposite the Gay Nineties," said Lekha. "It sounds much more interesting."

"I don't," chirped Rita; "I tell them it's above a wine shop."

Mummie gave her a severe look.

"Well, it is, Mummie, and it's no ordinary wine shop either. It's owned by an Earl."

Rita always managed to find out the life histories of the people she met, within a few days of knowing them, and now she gave us a graphic sketch of the Earl's picturesque career. In the end it was her designation for the apartment that remained, and that we and all our friends used. In the apartment above the wine shop we celebrated our first Christmas in proper style with all the trimmings, a thing we had never done at home. It was to be our last holiday together for some time, as Mummie and Lekha were returning to India a few months later.

By the time Rita and I went to Los Angeles in the summer of 1946, we had become confirmed New Yorkers, so the West in all its grandeur did not sweep us off our feet as it might have done earlier. With my curiosity about new places and my passion for scenery, I soon forgot my "homesickness" for New York, but Rita grumbled regularly: "Give me the smoke in my lungs any day." She spent her vacation religiously crossing the days off her calendar and counting the hours till our return. That was in the beginning. Later, events took a more interesting turn.

The West was as different from the East as one country from another. We felt as though we should be using foreign currency and speaking another language. It was really not surprising, considering that California was as far from New York as London.

My first brief glimpse of Los Angeles had not been a real visit, and I did not clearly recollect a great deal that I had seen and done. This time we lived in a

house with a large garden. Our hostess was a kind lady who spared no effort to make our visit successful. Our only complaint was that there was a small persistent cat who disliked me and was always on my trail. With Rita as my stalwart guardian, I managed to ward it off, and this became another reason for Rita's mutterings. To have brought her to an uncivilized place for her vacation when she could have been enjoying herself in New York, then to make her my bodyguard and summon her with screams each time the cat appeared, when she might have been relaxing in the sun, was too much for her to bear with grace.

Like all tourists in Los Angeles, we wanted to visit the Hollywood studios. At first there seemed no way of arranging a visit, and once or twice when arrangements were made they had to be called off at the last minute. We were disappointed, and then, as so often happens when resignation sets in, things started to take a turn for the better. In the space of two short weeks we were given opportunities to see all the major studios.

Every day we rushed about in the blazing sun from studio to studio, watching scenes being shot, meeting film stars, and being photographed with them. One picture, in which Rita and I stood laughing on either side of Danny Kaye, was published in India, and we later received letters from well-intentioned people at home discreetly pointing out that pictures of this sort were not good publicity if we intended to return to India and settle down there. Settling down anywhere was very far from our minds at the time, and we saw no reason why we should not have posed with Danny

Kaye, who had been a charming and hospitable host to us.

The tours of the studios, which we had looked forward to so eagerly before, became exhausting and monotonous. At each studio our guide thought it was our first visit of its kind and expected us to show enthusiasm, interest, and even a little well-bred hysteria when our favorite film stars appeared. By the time we reached Warner Brothers one hot, sticky afternoon, our saris were crumpled and our hair clung damply to our foreheads and hung lifelessly on our shoulders. Our feet ached and burned in high-heeled shoes. We were out of sorts, and Hollywood had lost all its glamour for us.

"Now," said our guide brightly, "this way, please, for your picture with Miss Crawford."

"Oh, dear!" I sighed. "Would Miss Crawford mind very much if we didn't pose with her?"

The guide gaped at me in astonishment. Never before had he encountered reluctance on the part of a visitor to be photographed with a star. And he was horrified that I should consider myself the central figure of the photograph.

"My dear young lady!" he exploded, at a loss for words to express his consternation, "*Miss Crawford* mind if *you* don't pose? Miss Crawford is doing you a favor. She doesn't have her picture taken with everyone who comes here."

There was nothing for it but to wait till Miss Crawford had finished the scene she was making. But when she had finished, and joined us for the picture, we found her a friendly, attractive person, and we felt ashamed of ourselves for having made a fuss.

We reached home late in the evening, hot and tired. Our hostess met us in the hall.

"Girls!" she called out gaily, "I've got a wonderful surprise for you. I've got a pass for you to go to the Paramount studios tomorrow afternoon!"

She looked at us, puzzled, as we threw her wan smiles and tottered speechless past her up the stairs.

In Los Angeles there was a Ramakrishna Mission. Our hostess knew the Swami well and took us to visit his ashrama. We met the monks and nuns, most of them young Americans who had left their families and homes at an early age to devote themselves to a life of study and worship.

The study aspect of their program appealed to me, as did the spiritual nature of their learning; but God, it seemed to me, could be worshipped everywhere. To realize God, I had always believed, one must live to the fullest and highest of one's ability, and how could that be possible within the narrow precincts of an ashrama? Religion, to me, had always been inseparable from the idea of service, for this is what Gandhiji had taught us by his example. Unless he is the Buddha incarnate, or some other divine incarnation, no man who segregates himself from his community and retires to a mountaintop or some retreat of his own making can be truly religious. He is serving himself that way, not others. Call that contemplation, meditation, a very necessary part of man's religious life, but not religion. The mountaintop is the ultimate goal, but in order to reach it one must journey over the perilous mountain road. We must be fit for the company of men before we seek the company of God.

The Swami was a gracious gentleman who made us

feel warmly welcome. He was a man of wide learning, and he willingly and thoughtfully answered my many curious questions.

"Have you ever considered a life of worship for yourself?" he asked. "Your family has made such a worthy contribution to the country, they should now make one to religion. You have the makings of a nun."

"Bosh!" said Rita unceremoniously. She had thoroughly enjoyed disagreeing with the Swami. It was the only aspect of the visit that she had enjoyed. "She's no more a nun than Goldilocks was," she grumbled. "She's always trying to fool people that way."

The Swami smiled tolerantly. "Your sister has some fine spiritual qualities," he said.

I gave Rita a smug look, and she wrinkled her nose in disgust.

"Well, she keeps them well hidden," she retorted, contradicting herself. "You're the only person who has discovered them so far."

"That is my job," the Swami said amiably.

When we went to bed that night, Rita said with a grimace: "Spiritual qualities indeed! It's a shame to break up happy families and make people come and live here away from their homes. It isn't natural, and I'm sure God doesn't like it."

"The Swami doesn't make them come," I argued. "They come by choice."

"Choice, nothing!" said Rita grimly. "It's not choice to be hypnotized into making a decision."

I stared at my sister in surprise as she rolled over and fell asleep after using the longest words she had ever used in her life.

During that summer our hostess took us on a car

trip to Yosemite Valley, in the immense and beautiful Yosemite National Park, with a grove of giant redwood trees. Our car was driven through the tunnel that had been constructed through the broad trunk of one of the trees. We were enchanted by the squirrels, tame deer, and bears that roamed unmolested in the forest and ate from the hands of visitors. At a summer camp where we stayed, we got up early to wade in an icy mountain lake, and went for long rambles through the woods.

Rita brightened visibly as our departure for San Francisco drew near. "A big city again!" She heaved a sigh of relief as we drove into San Francisco. "Fresh air is all very well, but one can have enough of it."

San Francisco was unlike any city we had ever seen. Situated on hills with the Pacific Ocean lapping at their feet, it was romantically veiled in a perpetual drift of mist. It was busy and cosmopolitan in the manner of New York, but with none of New York's impersonal atmosphere. It was elegant, chic, and prosperous, yet with an Old World air about it, and none of the tinsel glitter of Los Angeles. Rita and I were entranced, and added it to our list of favorite places.

We were not there long, but we had time enough to do a little shopping, and explore the quaint seafood restaurants along the sea front for which San Francisco is famous. It was amusing to see cars parked at right angles to the curbs to prevent them from slipping downhill.

▪

Chapter XVII

RITA'S GRADUATION

MUMMIE and Lekha left the United States within a few weeks of each other, Mummie in January 1946, Lekha in March. So when May came around, I was the only member of the family left to attend Rita's graduation from Putney School, in Vermont. It was an experience I shall never forget. I discovered that while I had been acquiring my education in classrooms, libraries, and other such conventional places, Rita's had been of a very different sort, along more imaginative lines.

I had been to Putney once before for a week-end in winter. It had begun in a harrowing fashion. I had taken a taxi at the station because it was a long way to the school. The taxi-driver, a young lad and a newcomer to the town himself, had lost his way in the snowbound forest. We had spent three grotesque hours trying to find a way out, while the bare, cruel shapes of trees circled endlessly around us and a deathly winter silence reigned. We had finally reached the school late at night, frozen with cold and nervousness.

This time I decided to take an earlier train and besides, I told myself confidently, it was May now and the sun was shining and nothing could possibly go wrong. So, comfortably seated in the train speeding north to Vermont, I dozed contentedly. Some hours

later I got down at the station, spick and span in my trim spring suit, with a gardenia pinned to one shoulder, and smart new high-heeled shoes bought specially for the visit. My lightweight suitcase in one hand, I looked for a taxi.

"Hey, Tara! How are you? Come up to see Rita graduate?" I saw a red-headed, freckle-faced young man greet me enthusiastically. I tried not to show that I was startled. On my last visit this young taxi-driver had driven me back to the station. It was flattering to be remembered, but I was taken aback by so much informality on second sight.

"I'll take you to the school," he said, seizing my suitcase and swinging open the door of his taxi. "You know, we're going to miss young Rita out here. She sure is a nice kid."

I agreed, saying that Rita would miss Putney too.

When I arrived at the main building of the school, I found crowds of boys and girls dressed in blue jeans or shorts and open-necked shirts wandering around in the front room and the hall. I stood about uncertainly, feeling overdressed and ill at ease. Suddenly Rita saw me, detached herself from one of the groups of students, and hurled herself at me.

"Oh, I'm so glad you've come," she said shakily. "I'm the only one whose parents aren't here."

"Nonsense!" I declared firmly. "I'm your parents."

We both laughed, and she pointed out her friends. "That's Julie, whom you met when you were here last time, and that's José, whom she's been going around with this semester. Isn't he romantic? He's Colombian."

"He may be Colombian," I said, "but he's a good two inches shorter than she is."

"Oh, no," said Rita loyally. "It doesn't show at all if she doesn't stand straight or wear high heels."

That explained her peculiar posture, I thought to myself, and began to feel sorry for Julie, who must have been forced to slouch flat-footed through her last term at school in order not to look taller than her boy friend.

Suddenly I noticed a long thin scratch on Rita's forehead. "What happened?" I asked.

"Oh, that," she said nonchalantly. "Last week I was given the job of cleaning the stable. When I went in, the horse started getting frisky. I got scared and rushed out. I wasn't looking and I landed on a nest of eggs near the stable. Naturally the hen flew at me."

I swallowed my dismay. Putney was a progressive school, situated on a farm, where in addition to their studies the students did all the farm work themselves. Milking cows, cleaning stables, collecting eggs, feeding pigs, and other chores came as naturally to them as arithmetic and geography. They had not come so naturally to Rita, and during her year at Putney she had been chased by an angry cow, had broken several dishes at the Putney Inn, and had fallen off a sledge during a winter ride to the village to get stores.

"Heavens! It's nearly dinner time. We have to go to the K.D.U. for dinner," said Rita, bustling me out of the room.

Translated, K.D.U. meant Kitchen-Dining-room-Unit, and I imagined it would be a few steps away. It turned out that a hazardous precipice had to be de-

scended and an equally perilous ascent made before we reached the hill on which the K.D.U. was situated. It did not take me long to make the descent. With the first step, my foot caught in a loose stone on the hillside. Away came the stone, and I landed bruised at the bottom of the hill, my suitcase bumping after me. Rita was doubled up with laughter.

"You should know better than to wear high heels in Putney! This isn't Wellesley, you know," she gasped, and added wickedly: "I wish the Swami could see you now, you look *so* spiritual!" I took my shoes and the remains of my stockings off and made the ascent in my bare feet.

"Come in here and wash your hands first," said Rita, leading me to the bathroom. "You look a mess."

I went in and found a girl in blue jeans and shirt with her sleeves rolled up, scrubbing her grubby hands in the basin. The dirt of several centuries seemed to be pouring off them.

"My goodness, what have *you* been up to?" I forced myself to be jovial. "Getting all cleaned up before your mother arrives?"

The girl looked up with an amused smile. "I'm professor in the English Composition Department here," she said. "I'm not graduating!"

I fervently prayed that the earth would yawn open to receive me, but it didn't, so I tried to recover my composure.

The professor noted my acute embarrassment. "It's quite all right," she continued in her friendly way; "other people have made that mistake. Here at Putney we don't believe in having barriers between the

faculty and students. It's so much nicer if the students can look upon us as their friends."

Try as I might, I could not imagine myself and my Wellesley English professor, clad alike in blue jeans, scrubbing the dirt off our hands at the same washbasin before dinner.

Rita shouted: "Hurry up! Or we won't get any dinner."

While we were eating, she explained: "There's going to be a dance after dinner in the main hall. At Putney we have only polkas, waltzes, and folk dancing."

"Oh, good," I said. "Now at last I'll be in my element." Dancing was one thing I could do well.

"You don't mind if I leave you at the dance?" asked Rita anxiously. "Julie and José and a few others are going down to the village for a farewell coffee party, and they've asked me to come."

"Of course you must go. Don't you worry about me. Just tell me where I have to sleep tonight." She gave me the name of the hostel and told me where to find it.

After dinner we joined a milling throng of students and their parents in the main hall. There was a smooth wooden floor, ideal for dancing, and on one side of the room was a two-piece "orchestra"—a man with an accordion and another seated at a piano. A gray-haired, rosy-cheeked gentleman with an improvised cardboard megaphone stood at one side to call the instructions for the folk dancing and to preside over the proceedings.

"Well, folks," he rumbled, "let's begin with the students asking the parents for a polka! The parents

get to one side of the hall, and the students to the other. Now take your partners for the polka, everybody!"

A hefty, broad-shouldered young man with a crew cut and a determined manner made his way toward me. I found it hard to believe he was a schoolboy.

"Hey, are you Rita's parents?"

I gave him a feeble smile. "That's me."

"Well, c'mon, let's do this polka." Before I had time to give my formal consent, I was whirled off my feet and bounced around the room like a marionette. The wooden floor creaked and groaned under the weight of the dancers, and seas of faces swam by me.

"Enjoying yourself?" he shouted above the noise of the accordion.

"I certainly am," I screamed back. "It's just wonderful!"

Suddenly the music stopped, and the abruptness with which the young man let go of me would have sent me reeling across the floor if I had not steadied myself. My partner had vanished into the crowd, and I limped back to the parents' side of the room, determined to sit out the next dance. But the gray-haired master of ceremonies, not having danced, was not in need of a rest.

"Take your partners, everybody, for a waltz! A waltz, ladies and gentlemen!"

It was only a matter of seconds before another very large young man in a shirt of extraordinary color and design presented himself before me and whisked me away into a whirling, dizzying waltz. I might have been made of clay or putty for all the resistance I had.

I came back to my place seeing double and feeling a little lightheaded, this time accompanied by my partner.

"How about a nice cold drink for you?" my cavalier asked.

"Oh, that would be fine," I mumbled.

He fetched me a bottle of Coca-Cola with a straw jutting from it. I had begun to revive myself with a few sips when the relentless gentleman's voice boomed out again.

"Ladies and gentlemen! Take your partners for the square dance!"

The square dance is a type of American folk dance, and I was familiar with it because I had taken part in square dances at Wellesley. But the Putney variety of square dance was unique. It relegated Wellesley's genteel effort to the era of crinolines. If I thought I had had a hectic time during the previous dances, it was nothing compared with the treat in store. I was drawn into one of the groups, and the next half-hour was spent in a series of energetic gymnastics. I was curtsying to my partner, skipping around, and leaping into the air with a lightning rapidity of which I hadn't believed myself capable. The more enthusiastic dancers joined in with whistles and yells.

Feeling battered, I finally found my way to the parents' side of the room and sank exhausted on one of the hard wooden benches. I glanced around for Rita, but she had slipped away to her coffee party long before. It was nearly midnight. The indefatigable orchestra had struck up again, and to my despair I saw yet another sturdy specimen of Putney manhood wending his way toward me through the crowd.

"Oh no!" I breathed, and found I had spoken out loud. I heard someone laugh behind me. Turning around, I found a neatly dressed, pleasant-looking young man smiling down at me.

"Good heavens, are you a parent, too?" I asked, overjoyed to find someone else of my generation on my side of the room.

He nodded sympathetically. "The things that parents have to do nowadays!" We laughed together. "My brother is in the graduating class," he continued, "and I could wring that kid's neck. He has left me here, not knowing a soul, and gone off to a farewell party somewhere."

"My sister, too," I confessed.

"Look, I have an idea," he said. "Let's get out of here before we're carried out on stretchers. We'll go for a drive in my car and I'll drive you to wherever you are spending the night."

We got into his ramshackle old Ford and jolted along the bumpy Vermont hillside. There was a bright yellow moon, and I noticed for the first time that my companion looked different from the young men with whom I had been dancing.

"Why, of course!" It dawned on me. "You're properly dressed."

He gave me a broad grin. "So are you! We're both foreigners in the wilds."

I discovered that he was a student at Harvard, and told him I was at Wellesley. I doubt if Stanley and Livingstone were more delighted to find each other. He took me back to my hostel, where Rita was waiting for me.

"I hope you were all right after I left," she said.

"Oh, of course. I told you not to worry." I yawned sleepily. I was looking forward to my bed.

"You'll have to sleep in a sleeping-bag," she announced. "If you had come earlier, you'd have got a bed, but there are no spare beds now, unless you'd like to sleep in the infirmary."

"Oh no, thanks," I replied hastily. "I'll take the sleeping-bag."

I crawled into it and fell into the soundest sleep I had ever known. I barely heard Rita say: "I'll wake you in time for graduation tomorrow morning."

■

Chapter XVIII

THE UNITED NATIONS

AS I look back on it now, the first session of the United Nations seems fundamentally different from the subsequent sessions. In October 1946 the atmosphere was exuberant and optimistic. The session showed signs of being something more than the biggest international conference in history: it was to be the greatest experiment in human relations ever launched. Political skill and acumen and genuine co-operation would be required to make a success of it, but, like any enterprise involving human beings, it would also need great faith in its essential rightness and its ultimate goal. Although everyone was conscious of the enormousness of the task ahead, it was as though the nations had become fellow magicians banded together in a common effort to work the supreme magic—to secure peace for all time through calm discussion and mutual understanding. Or so it seemed to an idealistic nineteen-year-old college girl who watched the proceedings with wonder and awe.

The room at Flushing Meadows, New York, where the opening session was held was itself awe-inspiring. It was beautiful and comfortably fitted to suit the needs of the delegates. A giant map of the world sprawled across the wall behind the dais, a constant reminder of the oneness of the world. The days of the

Concert of Europe, and rule of the Big Three, or Four, or Five, were over. It did not matter, for the time being, what the Big Number was, because, big or small, everyone was involved in a common fate. Whatever happened would happen to us all. In the midst of the general optimism and enthusiasm was the pride that Rita and I felt in our country's delegation. India, for the first time, was represented abroad at an international conference by delegates of her own Government's choosing. We were even more proud of the fact that Mummie was to lead the delegation. The difficult issue of South Africa's treatment of Indians was to come up before the General Assembly, and we were convinced that Mummie's capacity to work miracles in our lives would be extended to her delegation and to the General Assembly itself.

From a purely personal point of view, that session was a memorable one for Rita and me. It meant week-ends in New York at the beautiful and elegant Hampshire House. It meant colliding with celebrities of all walks of life in the corridors and elevators. And, above all, it gave us the opportunity to meet and talk to the best-known political figures of our time, not as great and famous statesmen, but as ordinary friendly people.

Mr. Bevin, with his boisterous, wonderful sense of humor and outspokenness, refused to be stiff and proper at even the most formal parties. "What am I going to do with all this champagne?" he asked, grimacing, at one of the more lavish receptions. "Give me me whisky any time." Mr. Vishinsky may have roused mixed feelings in the hearts of the delegates, but to us he was a charming, friendly gentleman, with twinkling, laughter-filled blue eyes, who had a daughter

at college in Moscow and who courteously and encouragingly listened to my halting Russian. At a small dinner party that Mummie gave, he was delighted when I sang a Russian national song to him—the only one I knew. Afterwards Rita sang some Indian folk songs, which were a great success, and led to the whole party of distinguished diplomats doing a series of gay European folk dances. One of the ladies present, a member of the Danish delegation, and later Denmark's Minister to Iceland, said to Mummie at a subsequent session: "We haven't had anything so informal or gay as that delightful evening we spent with you and your daughters."

Perhaps the most glamorous figure of the U.N. was Emir Feisal, of Saudi Arabia, with his flowing robes and courtly manner. For a long time Mummie wondered why he always passed her with lowered eyes instead of greeting her as he did other women. Once when she laughingly broached the subject, he gravely explained: "Madame, they are women. You are my sister."

I used to arrive in New York on the Friday-night plane from Boston, while Rita arrived earlier by train from New Hope, Pennsylvania, where she was studying art. Often the train was crowded with week-end passengers, so that people had to squeeze onto the platforms connecting two coaches when there was not enough room in the coaches themselves. On one such occasion Rita and her friend Margaret were seated on their suitcases on a platform where several sailors were standing. A conversation started and soon turned to the U.N. and politics.

Margaret said to one of the sailors: "You know, Jawaharlal Nehru is this girl's uncle."

The sailor exchanged a wink with his companion and replied: "Yeah? Well, you know what? Harry Truman is this guy's pop!"

Margaret was indignant at the joke, but Rita giggled all the way home.

We sometimes accompanied Mummie to the meetings, especially if the proceedings were of particular interest to us. At times we stayed in the delegates' lounge to read the papers, have coffee, or chat with friends passing through. The lounge was a hub of activity, discussion, and gossip. Between meetings it was filled to overflowing with delegates, reporters, photographers, interpreters, and secretaries, all concerned with events of world-shaking significance. If Mummie happened to be seated there, I usually stayed within calling distance in case she might need me to run an errand for her. One day I was standing with a group of friends while a French translation was in progress in the Assembly room, when I saw Mummie look up with a frown from the sofa where she was seated talking to a reporter. She beckoned to me.

"Will you tell Rita to stop darting to and fro? That is the second time she has rushed through the lounge."

I saw Rita's back disappearing through the crowd, and followed her. I found her wandering aimlessly in the corridor, looking dejected.

"Do you have to keep charging through the lounge?" I inquired.

"Oh dear, I couldn't help it. Is Mummie angry? I was looking for a telephone."

"Well, you nearly knocked the tomato juice out of General Romulo's hand. And if you'd gone a little faster you'd have stepped on a certain person's corns and he wouldn't have given us a vote."

"How d'you know he has corns?"

"His face looks as if he has corns," I replied.

"Oh," said Rita apologetically. "I'm so worried. Jerry's wife is expecting a baby any moment, and I wanted to telephone the hospital to find out if anything has happened yet. All the telephones are busy, and I thought there might be one in the lounge." Jerry was Mummie's chauffeur.

I was exasperated. "My dear girl, you can't go ruining international relations and endangering world peace just because Jerry's wife is expecting a baby. Do you realize that because of you the Indians in South Africa may never have a better deal? Besides, what are you worrying about? I'm sure he's been through it before. He must have several children."

"Oh no," said Rita earnestly. "It's Fred, Justice Chagla's chauffeur, who has several. Two boys and a girl. Jerry hasn't got any. This is his first, and his wife's third. You see, he's her second husband."

Rita's immense absorption in human beings and their problems, and her endless fund of information about all the people we knew, never failed to astonish me. Jerry appeared at the door.

"Any news, Miss Rita?" he asked anxiously.

"No, not yet. But I'll let you know as soon as I have some."

It was clear that the cause of world peace was less dear to Rita's heart than the belief that Jerry should have immediate news of his firstborn. Tomato juice

would be spilled, corns trodden on, and Mummie's frowns ignored to this end.

It wasn't till we had reached home that news finally came. Rita telephoned the hospital and came back into the drawing-room with her eyes shining.

"It's a girl! Just what Jerry wanted. Six pounds, twelve ounces."

"Good," said Mummie. "Now we can all relax."

"Only till she starts teething," I reminded her, and ducked to avoid the cushion Rita hurled in my direction.

The highlight of the U.N. session was the case that India brought against South Africa. India had protested against the denial of human rights to Indians in that country and against the Asiatic Land Tenure Act and Indian Representation Act, which she claimed impaired friendly relations between herself and South Africa. She asked that the General Assembly advise South Africa to revise both her over-all policy and these legislative and administrative measures, and to report the action she had taken at the next session of the Assembly.

India's victory over South Africa was indicative, I think, of the idealistic tenor of that session. India was not alone in her battle. It was heartening to see how the majority of nations rose to her support to condemn the treatment of Indians in South Africa. The entire question was to be debated in the Joint Committee (a combined session of the important Political and Security Committee and the Legal Committee).

Before the discussion could get under way, the Chairman suggested that the issue be handed over to

a subcommittee for examination. But Mr. Manuilsky, the Ukrainian delegate, protested. It was too vital an issue, he said, to be left to a subcommittee. So it stayed in the Joint Committee. In the debate that followed, the nations rallied to India's defense. Poland asserted that the case was a parallel of the way the Nazis had treated the Poles. China said that the Asiatic Land Tenure Act was a measure of discrimination not only against Indians, but against all Asians. These and other nations not directly involved in the issue had no parallel difficulties of their own and nothing at stake, yet gave their support as a matter of principle, as the only right and honorable attitude possible in the circumstances.

During the debate both Mummie and Field Marshal Smuts spoke calmly and with restraint. But Mr. Heaton Nicholls, of South Africa, brought fire into the discussion. He accused India of treating her own untouchables worse than the Indians in South Africa were being treated. (I do not know whether this was meant to be a justification of South Africa's attitude.) He said that South Africa was upholding Christian civilization in a dark continent inhabited by primitive natives and polygamous races.

Mummie delighted the Middle Eastern delegations by retorting that she was not aware that polygamy, "whether sanctioned by law or not," was confined to the East. As for Christian civilization, she continued, were Jesus Christ himself to visit South Africa, he would be treated as a "prohibited immigrant."

After the debate, Mummie went up to Field Marshal Smuts and said: "I hope I have not said anything of a personal nature to hurt you. My instructions from

Gandhiji before I left home were that I should shake your hand and ask your blessing for my cause."

The Field Marshal gave her a long look. "My child, you may win, but this will be a hollow victory for you."

His words were prophetic. He left the country soon after that debate and was not present when the final voting took place.

At the parties given by the various delegations nearly every evening, Mummie and Field Marshal Smuts frequently stood talking apart from the others. Once, when I was standing near Mummie, she introduced me to him. He was impressive-looking, with his soldier's upright carriage and dignified bearing.

He gave me a sharp look and said: "You think I'm a horrible old man, don't you?" He patted Mummie's hand and went on: "She is like a daughter to me. Can you understand that? It grieves me to have to fight with her."

"Then why do you?" I wondered silently. To my impatient mind, right was right, and wrong was wrong, and there could be no compromise between the two. If he was truly sincere, I thought to myself, how could he defend his country's stand? But even through my adamant attitude I had a faint glimmering of understanding that there was something remotely Gandhian about this soldier. He may have been an enemy over this issue, but he was a sorrowful enemy.

Usually I went back to Wellesley on Sunday evenings, but on Sunday December 7 the final voting was to take place, and I did not want to miss it; so I stayed at the meeting. I sat next to a Filipino friend, both of us tense with anticipation and anxiety for the outcome. The session continued into the night, ending about

two a.m. I hardly stirred in my chair throughout the proceedings. Mummie spoke:

I ask no favor for India . . . no concession for the Indian population of South Africa. I ask for the verdict of this Assembly on a proven violation of the Charter; on an issue which has led to acute dispute between two member states; on an issue which is not confined to India or South Africa; and finally on an issue the decision of which must make or mar the loyalty and confidence which the common people of the world have placed on us. Mine is an appeal to a conscience, the conscience of the world which this Assembly is.

The final voting gave India the required two-thirds majority. I suddenly came to life in my chair and could hardly contain my excitement. I ran to Mummie's table to congratulate her, and my kiss resounded through the room over the microphone. From all over the hall the jubilant supporters of India rushed up to where she was seated to congratulate her and the delegation. But Mummie's happiness was dimmed, perhaps by the remark that Field Marshal Smuts had made, which was to prove so true.

Since that time the South African question has come up before the Assembly again and again. Each time the Assembly has made recommendations that have been ignored by the South African Government. The futility of words, their powerlessness to accomplish what they so gallantly proclaimed, must surely have occurred to every human being. The truth, spoken with conviction, does not save the world from tragedy.

What is the use of words? Millions upon millions of

words, forceful and true, passionate and inspired appeals to conscience, have gone unheeded at a time when they should have been heard. It is a commentary on the terrible perversity of man that he will not listen until it is too late. He will go on forging crazily ahead, conscienceless, like a powerful car racing along a dark road without headlights. Is it surprising when an accident results? The victory over South Africa was a victory of words, but did it succeed in improving the lot of our countrymen there? It was indeed a hollow victory, another example of mankind's unheeded conscience.

■

Chapter XIX

GOING HOME

MY final year at college was my happiest, but because I was to leave America at the end of it, it was also a sad year. As each day passed, I realized that soon I would be going home, and the thought aroused in me a feeling of uncertainty, just as leaving India had done in 1943.

Rita and I wondered how to spend our last Christmas vacation and were delighted when our friends Rose and Miguel Covarrubias invited us to spend it with them in Mexico.

Going to Mexico was like a homecoming in more ways than one. We were taken for Mexicans wherever we went, so we did not have the label of tourist on us. We loved living in the Covarrubiases' Spanish-style house, built around a spacious courtyard, and admired the exotic species of cactus in their garden. We loved waking to the early morning sounds we had not heard for so long, the cock's crow, and the brush of the maid María's broom on the gravel outside our room. We loved the lazy, leisurely pace of Mexico, which was like India and gave one time to dream and reflect. Rose and Miguel enveloped us in their warm hospitality, and we were affectionately received in the

homes of their many artistic, literary, and political friends.

Mexico seemed a potent cocktail of contrasts. It was a blend of ancient and modern, Orient and Occident, dark and fair, elegance and simplicity, brooding mystery and surging vitality, calm resignation and passionate rebellion. It was a warring blend of all these, like a sensitive person torn by vigorously conflicting loyalties, and for this very reason a highly exciting and fascinating person. There seemed endless depths to explore in that pulsating country. We barely skimmed the surface. We left for New York in a daze, unhappily tearing ourselves away, for Mexico had cast its secret spell over us.

In the plane, Rita and I were talking to each other in Hindustani. An American lady sitting across the aisle from us leaned over, smiled, and said: "I always said Spanish is a very beautiful language."

The end of the Christmas vacation brought our departure from the United States still closer, and once again I was shadowed by doubt. India would not be the home I had left behind, for Papu would not be there. I was going back to a free India. The struggle into which I had been born and during which I had grown up was over at last, but it had torn my country in two, and it had taken my father with it.

Never again would I see him walking on the dew-wet grass of early morning, as he had loved to do, a brown Kashmir shawl thrown over his white, khadi-clad figure. Never again would I be able to talk to him of books and music, of stars and trees and people, of the thousand things he had taught me to understand. Never again would I be with him in the pine-scented

air of Khali, watching the sunsets on the snow-topped mountain peaks or hearing him sing as he worked in the garden.

It was ironic that he had had to go, my gallant, laughter-loving father, to whom life was adventure, a day-to-day challenge accepted with zest and enthusiasm. His was not the dreary world of politics and prisons to which he had chosen to be confined. He had called himself a "proud pagan." He should have been free and untrammeled, left to think and write creatively, to fulfill his vast talent for living. An independent India could deservedly have flaunted his scholarly genius, hailed him as an ambassador of her culture to foreign lands. But a subject India had chosen him to serve among her martyrs, and a prison, the gray symbol of all that was opposed to his nature, had claimed him in the end. For me, India would be empty without him, every familiar place echoing his gay voice, mirroring his smile. I wanted to run back through time into the security of his presence and his wisdom, canceling the years that had taken him from me, but I had to go forward. Lekha had already gone back to India, and Rita had been there at the time of Papu's death and after. For me, the lonely ordeal still remained.

Bitterness filled me that he had had to die, till I remembered that bitterness had been his most scorned enemy. He had sent us away so that we would grow up free from it, strong and proud, "children of the light," as he had said. To bow before it now would be to deny all he had lived for and the purpose for which he had died.

On hearing the news of Papu's death, Gandhiji had sent a beautiful message to my mother:

People will come to condole with you, but I shall not sorrow for you. How dare I pity you? One does not sorrow for the daughter of a courageous father, the sister of a courageous brother, the wife of a courageous husband. You will find your courage within yourself.

And Mummie had found that courage, left alone though she was, with Mamu in prison, unable to reach her, and no strength but her own on which to rely. I had her example before me.

To which home would I return? The only place that was home to me was locked, for no one lived there any more. Anand Bhawan was a house full of ghosts and memories. Mamu was in Delhi; Mummie was India's Ambassador to Moscow. I would, of course, go to Delhi and live with Mamu, but Delhi was just a name to me, a city where I had never been and which I could never think of as home.

As I thought about going home, I gradually became more accustomed to the idea. So much had happened since I had come to America, and now Mamu was Prime Minister, the first Prime Minister of an independent India! I repeated it over and over again to myself in wonder and awe, not quite believing it. It was a distant, dazzling title. It spelled victory after a long, hard, sad battle. But to me it had no reality. What had reality was Jawaharlal Nehru, the Mamu I had played with, and known, and loved. He was infinitely more inspiring than the Prime Minister of India. And suddenly I was eager and impatient to be with

him again. I had been the ardent little hero-worshipper, trudging solidly behind him in the make-believe processions of our games. Now I was ready to walk beside him toward whatever future the building of a New India would involve.

■

Chapter XX

WITH PRIDE AND PREJUDICE

ON a dark October evening in 1947 my plane landed at Delhi's Palam airport. I had spent a few days in Bombay on my arrival from the United States, so I had had a brief glimpse of free India. Meeting acquaintances of the family after several years, I had felt at a loss to cope with their barrage of questions, which invariably related to political events that had taken place in the country during my absence. In India independence was news, the Partition was news, and nothing short of an invasion from Mars could have diverted attention from these topics.

A crusty old gentleman whom I met at a party vented his criticism of the new Government on me. "What I want to know," he blustered, "is what does Jawaharlal think he's doing? Everybody who co-operated with the British Raj should be locked up. Start with a clean slate, that's what I say. All this compromise—bah!"

He gave me a black scowl, and I hastened to reassure him that everything would work out all right.

"Think so, do you? Such optimism can only be ascribed either to extreme youth or total ignorance of current affairs. In your case, both. Nevertheless, young woman," he continued, unappeased by my meek ac-

ceptance of his rebuke, "you give Jawaharlal my message."

I promised to do so. But no sooner had I slid warily out of the corner into which he had propelled me than I found myself face to face with another irate person, this time one who held me personally responsible for the partition of India and all its consequent ills.

"Business has gone to pot," he asserted angrily, helping himself to a handful of salted nuts.

"Oh, has it?" I murmured apologetically.

"Take a look around you—housing shortages, food shortages, too many people everywhere," he harangued.

I glanced around the tastefully decorated apartment, with the foaming sea framed in one open window, the beautifully groomed guests, and the turbaned bearers decorously winding in and out among them with trays of drinks and hot snacks.

"And what is the Government doing about it, I ask you," my tormentor persisted.

"I really couldn't say," I replied helplessly. "You see, I just arrived in India yesterday."

He was not the least interested in my pathetic appeal to logic.

"Well, *I'll* tell you. Z-e-r-o," he boomed theatrically.

"How interesting," I muttered, unthinking, vainly seeking an escape.

"Interesting?" he exploded. "It's outrageous!"

The righteous indignation in his tone roused me to a new perception. Looking about me at that roomful of self-appointed critics, I suddenly felt a glow of happiness. It was unquestionably a free country, where men could grumble and grouse about the Government.

Why should they not when it was theirs to do with as they chose? This was no land where the opposition spoke in whispers.

As I stepped down from the plane at Palam a few evenings later, I was filled with a mixture of excitement and apprehension. Indi was waiting for me with her son, a serious-faced little boy of three, with beautiful, dark, expressive eyes and incredibly long, curling lashes like his mother's. He was Rajiva, who had been born while I was in America. We drove home through clean, quiet, tree-lined roads, and home, I discovered, was a modest, two-story house at the corner of one such road. The October air was growing chilly as we left the car, and I was glad I had on a heavy winter coat, my last purchase before leaving New York.

Indi took me to her room to show me ten-month-old Sanjaya, her younger son, in deep, sweet slumber in his cot. His plump, dimpled fists and soft, brown curls gave him the look of a cherub in an Italian painting.

"Just imagine," I said to Indi foolishly, "they hadn't even been thought of when I went away."

Here I was with two little nephews whom I had never seen before, in an unfamiliar house and a strange city. It was not at all like the homecoming I had pictured. It was not Anand Bhawan with all its loved and well-remembered haunts. And then suddenly Hari danced in, breaking the spell of strangeness, and I felt as though I had just come home on vacation from Woodstock. If I had grown older and taller in the four and a half years that had gone by, Hari did not appear to have changed at all. He was just as diminutive, just as rotund, and just as bubbling with breezy non-

sense as on the day of his release from prison, when he had tumbled blithely out of the tonga in the portico of Anand Bhawan. He embraced me fondly and pranced up the stairs ahead of me to show me to my room.

"I have put cigarettes in your room," he announced with pride.

I did not dare show my surprise at his modernity lest his feelings might be hurt.

"Oh, thank you, Hari, but I don't smoke," I said.

"You're a good girl," he said, beaming.

"Where's Mamu?" I inquired impatiently.

"He came home from a Cabinet meeting a little while ago, and now he is having his bath."

Indi had told me we were to dine at Government House, so I hurried into my bath. I wanted to be in Mamu's room before he came out.

He emerged from his dressing-room looking immaculate in a black *achkan* with a red rosebud tucked into a buttonhole. He looked more tired than I had ever seen him before, but as I jumped up from the bed to kiss him, his delighted smile of welcome swept the tiredness from his face. For no reason at all I wanted to cry. Now that he was here I felt I had really come home.

"What d'you mean by growing so tall?" he demanded.

"Oh, it's not me; it's these high heels I've got on," I sniffled unashamedly.

"Those combined with American milk, no doubt," he smiled. "Well, darling, Her Excellency will be getting agitated about you. We had better send her a cable to let her know you arrived safely."

He drew my arm through his and we went into his office across the hall to send the cable. Mummie, who was Ambassador to Moscow, was at that time leading India's delegation to the United Nations. I had left her in New York a week earlier.

A little while later, Indi, Mamu, and I got into the car to go to Government House and I sat holding Mamu's hand while he pointed out the shadowy outlines of Delhi's Secretariat buildings. I thought Delhi resembled Washington, D.C., and told Mamu so. Only, I thought to myself, Washington is more familiar to me than Delhi. And what is strangest of all is this drive through the night to have dinner with the Governor General of India and his lady. Subject India had been governed by a British viceroy whose policies were dictated by Britain. During her first year of freedom, the Government of India was headed by a Governor General who, though British, worked in co-operation with an Indian Prime Minister and his Cabinet.

For the first time I regretted not having been in India to watch the chain of events that had led up to this unbelievable phenomenon. Faced with it abruptly in this fashion, I could hardly grasp its significance. I felt a little like Rip Van Winkle, who woke up from a deep sleep to find that a new king reigned. Not a very long while had passed since the days of jail-going, but what changes had taken place! I found I had arrived in time for the last act of the drama of India's struggle for freedom. The India I had known as a child would now be a chapter in a history book, the yellowing pages of old newspapers, and the conversation of the people who reminisced about it.

We were the only guests at dinner, and as we waited in one of the huge drawing-rooms, I glanced around at the ornate, high-ceilinged room with its solid furniture, its large paintings in their heavy gold frames, at the crystal chandeliers, which tinkled in the mild breeze from the garden, and I wondered at all the magnificence that the British rulers of India had carved out for themselves. But before I had had time to dwell on it, a trim aide-de-camp had sprung to soldierly attention to announce the Earl and Countess Mountbatten. I saw two tall, attractive people enter the room, and my first impression was what a regal-looking pair they made, and how well the splendor of the room became them. No sooner were they beside us, however, than a subtle transformation took place. They were no longer the Governor General and his lady, the last of a haughty procession of viceroys and vicereines who had governed India for two hundred years. They were a host and hostess of infinite charm. Mamu and Indi were calling them by their first names, and the four of them were joking like old friends.

I recalled Mummie's remark before I left New York that the Mountbattens were unlike any former occupants of Government House in their disregard of its Imperial tradition. They had dropped in to see Mamu informally one evening and had eaten strawberry ice cream out on the lawn. They had inaugurated the custom of throwing open the grounds of Government House once a week to the general public. Government House had previously been the exclusive preserve of the British community and those Indians who had chosen to associate themselves with British rule. It

was unheard-of that all and sundry should be permitted to stroll within its precincts. The movements of a viceroy had likewise been hedged about by rigid protocol. A viceroy could no more eat ice cream on a private lawn at a moment's notice than could the King of England. Yet tradition and protocol had been nonchalantly set aside by two people eager to be India's friends and not her rulers.

Charm is a byword among the Nehrus. They have been blessed with more than their sparkling share of it, and I had seen it exercised consciously and unconsciously by them on crowds and on individuals. As a family they had few rivals in the field. Yet here was charm to match theirs. It wove through the Mountbattens' conversation a quality of warmth and sympathy, making them instantly likable.

"This is my young niece, just back from America," Mamu introduced me. "She has been studying at Wellesley College."

"Wellesley?" repeated Lord Mountbatten. "Isn't that somewhere near Harvard University? Is it affiliated to Harvard by any chance?"

"Only socially," I replied without thinking, and grew hot with embarrassment at the burst of laughter which greeted my remark.

I grew more self-conscious as I noticed that both Indi and Lady Mountbatten were dressed in sober colors, while I was in a bright turquoise-colored sari, which gleamed blue-green like a butterfly's wing in the soft light. It was the only uncrumpled sari I had been able to find in my suitcase, but I was more appropriately attired for a ball than for a quiet dinner.

Dinner was announced, and we went into another

high-ceilinged room where a small round table laid for five made a brave attempt to hold its own amid formal surroundings. After the comparatively slow, slurred American speech I had become accustomed to hearing, I had to be very attentive in order to follow the clipped accents around me. I was so engrossed in the conversation that I did not realize that dessert had been placed before us and that our host and hostess, Mamu, and Indi had risen to their feet to toast the King. Never before having dined at Government House, I had no idea that this was customary procedure. Hurriedly I groped for my shoes under the table and, not finding them quickly enough, I sprang up in my bare feet, feeling very foolish.

Lady Mountbatten remarked casually when we were seated: "I always have to remember to slip on my shoes in time for the toast. I have a dreadful habit of taking them off when I sit down at table. Once I was taken completely unawares at an official banquet and it was most awkward."

Inwardly I thanked her for the tact with which she had smoothed over my *faux pas*, but when I went to bed that night it was with the uncomfortable feeling that I had not distinguished myself in the social graces.

For a long time I looked at Delhi as a stranger might, alive to the newness of it, but without the stranger's detachment, for everything I saw and heard affected me deeply. Here I wanted to be part of the surging activity I saw all around me, not merely a spectator. I had come from the academic seclusion of college, where all learning was contained in books. I had had a glimpse of the "outside world" too, a select

world of highly polished diplomats and statesmen, a milieu of brilliant discussion and debate, the whole fascinating design of the United Nations. But for me that, too, had been in the nature of an intellectual exercise. It had been the verbal sparring of one scissor-sharp brain against another. In the prosperous setting of New York it had been dispute about problems in faraway places. Whatever battles of wits may have gone on in the debating-rooms of the United Nations, the life of New York City had rolled on undisturbed. In Delhi there was a battle of another kind altogether, one involving the whole human being, his mind, his physical welfare, and his emotions, or perhaps I thought so because I was an Indian myself and eager to contribute to it my own small share in some way. I spoke to Mamu about it, complaining to him about my lack of any specific talent.

"How old are you, Taru?" he asked me.

"Twenty," I replied.

"Well," he said, smiling, "I shouldn't worry too much if I were you. There is time ahead of you to make decisions. When I was your age I was still a student. There is so much that is new for you to get used to. Why not take this opportunity to look around?"

"I wonder if I shall ever do anything worth while," I said discontentedly.

Mamu looked up from his desk in surprise. It was late at night, and I had as usual come to his office to distract him, so that he would be forced to leave his work and go to bed. My ruse never worked, but I persisted.

"Do you feel so pessimistic about yourself?" he

asked. "I had no idea of that. Personally, I like you enormously and I have no doubt that you will do a great deal that is worth while. But there is no hurrying these things, you know."

In the end I found that the most obvious and natural occupation for me was to try to make Mamu's house a home for him. When Indi went to Lucknow, I was left alone to do what I could for Mamu's comfort.

Mamu had made his discovery of India by traveling the length and breadth of the country over a period of many years, by re-creating her past in his imagination and building upon it his vision of her future. I discovered India in a different way, through him, watching day by day his conversion of that vision into a living reality. I watched some demon of energy at work within him which scorned rest, some fathomless well of compassion which found time and inspiration when there appeared to be none. And through these qualities he functioned like an army of men instead of an individual. I thought of Sir Galahad's lovely lines: "My strength is as the strength of ten, because my heart is pure," and of how well they applied to Mamu. There is a confining sound about the label of Prime Minister, as there is, for that matter, about any label. It suggests specific duties. In Mamu the human being seemed always ascendant to the label. He was a sensitive person passionately devoted to certain humane ideals before he was anything else. To me he resembled a knight in quest of the Grail, or an artist dedicated to the completion of his task, much more than he did a prime minister. On the night of August 14, the eve of India's independence, Mamu had be-

gun his broadcast to the nation with the eloquent words: "Long years ago we made a tryst with destiny, and now the time comes when we shall redeem our pledge. . . . At the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom. . . ." It was as if he had taken upon himself the entire burden of the new freedom and the entire responsibility, fiercely and proudly borne, of India's treading the path of the Mahatma's teachings and no other.

To each person his country signifies something in particular, some outstanding idea or attribute that makes him especially proud to be what he is. It may be the place where he spent his happy childhood, it may be his country's constitution, or some admirable trait of his countrymen which has made them rise above their troubles. The marine whom I had met on the boat going to America in 1943 had said he was fighting the war for apple pie à la mode. It was his way of expressing what his country meant to him. My country was for me inextricably bound up with my uncle's ideal of it. I had sensed this as a child. Now I was convinced of it. His was the India with which I wanted to associate myself, and in which I wanted to live.

The day was dominated by Mamu's program. In the morning, crowds of homeless refugees, the legacy of the Partition, swarmed around the house, seeking to voice their complaints to him. Every European must have seen just such hopeless, hungry faces during and after the war, but I had never seen any, for I had been in the safe haven of America. Listening to them was the first item on Mamu's schedule. Lunch was usually

a late and hurried meal. There were frequently people waiting to see Mamu even during that short interval, and quite often they stayed on to eat, so that Indi and I would at times have to wind up with omelets in the kitchen. This, at least, was not very different from the old days at Anand Bhawan.

At night the light shone in Mamu's office till long past midnight, while more files and papers awaited him on his bedside table. One night I was reading in bed when, seeing my lamp on when he left his office, Mamu came into my room.

"Here we are in the same house, and yet I hardly see you." He spoke tiredly, and his face was drawn. "There are so many things I want to talk to you about, darling, now that you have come back—but when? Personal matters have to wait. There is so much work to do and so little time."

I thought back to the day when I had cried out to Papu: "There are so many things I want to talk to you about." And another day when Lekha, Rita, and I had asked Mamu in the library at Anand Bhawan: "When will things be normal?" I knew now that there had been more time in the past for family matters than there would be in the future and that "normal living" was no nearer to us.

Mamu smiled and momentarily his fatigue vanished. "You might come along with me when I go to see Bapu tomorrow. You haven't been to him since your return."

It was as if going to see Bapu was the solution to his dilemma of time and his weariness, as if the presence of Bapu would in itself answer questions and heal wounds.

The following day I accompanied Mamu on his daily visit to Birla House, where Gandhiji was staying. We went to a room at the end of a corridor, where he was seated on a mat on the floor, with a number of people around him. I took my shoes off at the door, and on entering touched Bapu's feet. I felt a smart slap on my cheek as he pulled me down beside him, and I heard his chuckle, so infectious that it brought smiles to the faces of the others in the room, as grown-ups smile at a child's spontaneous peal of laughter.

"So!" he said in Hindi, his eyes twinkling. "You have come home! What are you going to do now? Not too grown up to talk to me about it, I hope."

Gandhiji had recently seen his countrymen engaged in bitter fighting against one another, ignoring the lesson of non-violence he had sought to teach them, for the Partition had brought much tragedy and bloodshed in its wake. Yet in spite of his profound hurt and disappointment, he had not forgotten the little girl who had gone away to America. Despite the many demands made daily on him for guidance, he showed an interest in her future.

"I want to talk to you, Bapu," I said earnestly, "when you are not too busy."

"Busy? I am never too busy. Let me know when you are coming."

In the clamor that was Delhi in 1947 Bapu remained a sanctuary of calm thought. During the riots that had broken out in some parts of India both before and after the Partition, he had, whenever he could, gone fearlessly among the rioters exhorting them to give up their madness. Yet though he had been in the turmoil and

danger, he had somehow remained unperturbed by it. Now he was back in Delhi, holding prayer meetings in the garden of Birla House every evening. As before, *bhajans* and hymns were sung at these gatherings and passages were read from the *Bhagavad-Gita,* followed by talks by him.

To those who listened, they were unlike any talks they had heard before, for Bapu thought out loud rather than spoke with the desire to have any effect on his audience. Gandhiji was not a politician. He was not afraid to change his mind or to contradict himself if he believed he had made a mistake. He was not ashamed to proclaim that his religion was his guide. And, as always, his concern was with the suffering of his fellow men and how he could best alleviate it. Independence had come to India, but no one in India could have been less impressed by it than the man who had made its achievement possible for his country. It had never been his chief concern. His preoccupation had been with morality. So while Indian statesmen drew up elaborate plans for the country's development and welfare, Bapu's quiet voice was content to preach his moral code: that right means must be employed to attain right ends, that nothing great and good can be built up on a soiled foundation.

A number of foreign visitors used to attend those prayer meetings, and I wondered what they thought of the unimpressive-looking, sparsely clad little man who seemed to charm such adoration out of the people around him. Did they treat what they saw as an interesting phenomenon but one that could not possibly happen in England, or America, or Holland, or wherever they happened to hail from? What did it all mean

to them, I wondered. My own reaction was awe mingled with reverence. Could it be true that a man could talk of love and truth and goodness, and apply these religious terms to politics, and not be laughed at? Could it be true that such sentiments could actually guide a nation's policy? Yet in India all these things were true. I felt wonderfully elated that I was an Indian and that to be an Indian in Gandhi's India would forever be associated with this eminently sane way of thinking.

On a lovely January afternoon Indi, Rajiva, and I went to see Bapu. Masi and Padmasi, Mrs. Naidu's daughter, who had come to Delhi for a few days, went with us. We found him in the garden enjoying a sunbath. The cold weather was well under way, making a treat of sunshine, and the garden was a mass of flowers, for in Delhi winter is the season of flowers. Rajiva chased butterflies on the lawn while we sat in basket chairs around the low wooden *takht* on which Bapu was seated. He was in a carefree mood, and we spent a happy hour with him, teasing him for taking such excellent care of himself and availing himself of vitamin D whenever he had the chance.

As we were leaving him he remarked: "It is good you came to see me today, because the next time you see me will be in a crowd."

We looked at each other nonplused. Wasn't Bapu always in a crowd? It was hardly necessary for him to mention the fact; we took it for granted. His casual remark gave us no premonition that we would never again see him alive. The next time would indeed be in a crowd, the gigantic mourning throng through which his funeral procession would make its way. There in

the sun-dappled afternoon had Bapu prophesied his approaching death?

Delhi was people in agony after a cruel Partition, but it was also a vital new capital waking to life. Tourists from abroad flocked to the city, and the diplomatic corps expanded rapidly. The world was curious about this India of Gandhi, curious about the manner in which she had achieved her freedom, and still more curious to see whether such a policy could continue. Mamu's residence, 17 York Road, became India's 10 Downing Street, White House, and Kremlin rolled into one. Breathlessly I rushed about the house in a vain attempt to keep up with Mamu's appointments and visitors. Dr. Shahriar, Indonesia's then Foreign Minister at Djakarta, whom I had met earlier in New York in more leisurely circumstances and who was staying with us, gave me an amused look from his armchair in the drawing-room.

"So the tempo is different from New York," he twinkled. "You find it faster here!"

At 17 York Road I met some of the first diplomatic representatives to free India.

Mme Novikov, the wife of the Russian Ambassador, shivered as she huddled closer to the electric heater the first time she and her husband came to dinner. The doors leading to the veranda had been closed and the curtains drawn, but she could not bring herself to take off her fur coat.

"But surely, madame," I said, "the cold here can't affect you so much when you are used to the Moscow winter."

"That is quite a different matter," she laughed.

"There our houses are centrally heated, and indoors it is quite pleasant. This Delhi winter is terrible. One cannot get warm."

Mrs. Win, the Burmese Ambassador's wife, could endure the cold no better. In her light, summery Burmese clothes she did not look at all suitably equipped to face Delhi's drafty weather. She and her husband had come to dinner by themselves one night; afterwards, seeing Mamu and the Ambassador in low-toned conversation on the sofa, I invited Mrs. Win to my bedroom upstairs. I made her comfortable in an armchair with a blanket tucked around her, and there we sat cosily while the Indo-Burmese situation was discussed below. She spoke scarcely any English and I spoke no Burmese, but that did not prevent us from stumblingly and laughingly making friends.

I went with Indi one morning to call on Mrs. Grady, the American Ambassador's wife. We found her in her drawing-room attending to some electric-light fixtures. She had already met Mummie, and welcomed me with open arms.

"Mr. Singh!" she called, beckoning delightedly to the tall Sikh electrician across the room. "Come here and meet the daughter of our beloved across the seas!"

If this unorthodox introduction took Mr. Singh unawares and left him completely in the dark as to my identity, he showed no sign of it, but politely said: "*Namaste*" ("How do you do?"), and went back to his work.

"Now you must treat this Embassy like home. After all, you belong to us too, you know," said Mrs. Grady in her warm, spontaneous way, and then, suddenly: "Darling, you must knit for us."

I gathered that her second "us" referred to one of the several homes for displaced persons in the city. Mrs. Grady was a generous, largehearted person who espoused the cause of everyone in distress.

"I should love to," I offered, and went home armed with several skeins of green wool.

Will anyone ever understand the reason why Gandhiji was shot, or, for that matter, Christ crucified or Socrates condemned to death? Can madness of this sort have been dictated by sanity? Can it have had any meaning except to make those who lived after them bitterly repent the crimes of their fellow human beings? Who stood to gain by Gandhiji's death? Not the assassin, because he was caught, tried, and eventually hanged. Not the enemies of Gandhiji's teachings, because his death threw the searchlight on his message more powerfully than ever before. In his lifetime he had been called a saint. His martyrdom crowned him with an even more glorious immortality. To ask the reason why he was killed is to probe a mystery that has no beginning. The whys of history are seldom answered.

Indi and I were having tea at home on the evening of January 30, 1948, when we were summoned to Birla House by an urgent telephone call saying that Gandhiji had been shot on his way to a prayer meeting. Shock numbed us to all sensation as we got into the car and hurried to him; the others, his relatives and followers gathered around his body in his room at Birla House, seemed to be affected the same way. There was silence in the room as Gandhiji breathed his last.

Mamu received the news at a meeting and arrived at the scene soon after us. I do not think that as he strode into the room, tense with anxiety at the news he had been given, he realized that Gandhiji had passed away. I do not think he believed that Gandhiji could die so suddenly, so wordlessly, leaving him alone at the time when he needed advice and help more than ever before. The group of people in the room who had stood aside to let Mamu stride in watched without a sound as he knelt beside the beloved body and forgot himself in his grief for a brief moment. But what had happened was too colossal a phenomenon to permit the luxury of grief. When Mamu rose to his feet, he had regained complete self-control, and through the ordeal of loneliness and personal loss which was to follow in the days to come he was never again to show a vestige of it. Those who could bear to look at his face during those days saw a strained white mask through which only the eyes revealed stark anguish.

Word of the assassination had leaped through Delhi like a flame fanned by wind, for soon dumb, stricken hordes of men and women had collected like sentinels around Birla House, and out of every window one could see a brown blur of faces. They did not make a sound, and an unnatural silence reigned. It was as if the earth and time stood still for those few minutes. That was in the beginning, when they were too stunned to speak. Later they clamored wildly, shouting, crying, and jostling one another in a stampede to break into the house. They became a little calmer when it was announced that they would be allowed to file past Gandhiji's body and see it before the funeral

on the following day. Some officials were in favor of embalming the body so that it would be preserved for at least a few days and people from all over India might have the opportunity to pay their last respects to it before it was cremated. But Gandhiji, foreseeing the possibility of some such occurrence, had always said that he did not wish his body to be preserved after his death for any reason at all.

It is significant that when one is faced with the shock of a loved one's death, one's first question is not: "Where has he gone? What has become of him?" This thought dawns later with the pain. But first one whimpers: "What will become of me now that he has left me?" This was surely the question uppermost in the hearts of the mourning multitudes, for their expressions were those of lost children. It was the question in many of our hearts as we sat, still shocked, still unbelieving, listening to Mamu's broadcast telling the people of India that their Bapu was no more.

Into that climate of fear and uncertainty Mrs. Naidu came the next morning from the U.P., where she was Governor. Her face was haggard and her eyes glassy with unshed tears, but her spirit was as indomitable as ever.

"What is all the sniveling about?" she demanded harshly. "Would you rather he had died of decrepit old age or indigestion? This was the only death great enough for him."

Gandhiji's funeral was to take place the day after his death, and hours in advance people lined the route his procession was to follow, for it had been announced over the radio by Mamu. It was a route that would require innumerable arrangements, and Mamu and

others had sat up nearly all night to make them. In the morning we were told that there would be a few conveyances for those among us who felt they could not walk the entire distance.

Padmasi spoke for us all when she said simply: "We will walk. It is the last time we shall be walking with Bapu."

It was an agonizing walk. For all the thousands who silently watched the procession go by, many thousands more frantically besieged the open truck carrying the flower-wreathed body, weeping bitterly, trying once again to touch Bapu's feet. It was impossible to take even a short step forward without being crushed from all sides. The procession left Birla House in the morning. It was evening when it reached the cremation ground, a distance of about three miles.

I realized as we inched our way along with difficulty that I was in the midst of something more than a grieving multitude. This was more even than the funeral procession of India's most beloved leader. I was among human beings for whom walking with Bapu had had a profound significance, for they had walked with him over the rough and smooth of much of India's recent history. They could not now resign themselves to the fact that he who had led them over many arduous paths was never going to walk with them again. Bapu's slight figure had walked, staff in hand, over a large part of India. To walk is to make slow progress. It is to think with clarity and to notice with heightened awareness all that is around you, from the small insects that cross your path to the horizon in the distance. To walk is the way of the pilgrim, and for Bapu every walk had been a pilgrimage, the dedication of the body

in preparation for the spirit's sacrifice. It was no accident that he had chosen to walk. To walk, moreover, was often the only way open to the average Indian. It required no vehicle but his own body and cost him nothing but his energy. Gandhiji took this simple necessity and sublimated it, as he took so much that was obvious and commonplace and translated it into a joyful effort.

As the flames of the funeral pyre consumed Bapu's body, we sat around it at some distance on the ground. Members of the diplomatic corps were there, and in front of them all the Earl and Countess Mountbatten, seated cross-legged on the ground like the rest of us. Gandhiji had inspired heartfelt homage from the people whose Government had so often made a prisoner of him.

Some days after the funeral a special train took Gandhiji's ashes to Allahabad, where, in accordance with Hindu practice, they were to be immersed in the Ganges. Mamu and other members of the family, together with the Mountbattens, were to fly to Allahabad to receive the train, and I was among those privileged to travel on it. The compartment containing the ashes was flower-bedecked and fragrant. The people in it, Gandhiji's relatives and the close followers who had served him all his life, sang *bhajans* most of the way. There was no weeping any more, for his presence seemed to be among them amid the flowers, the songs, and the verses from the *Gita* which he had loved best. At every station huge lamenting crowds filled the platform and at times tried to storm the compartment containing the urn of ashes. And so, amid song and prayer and the homage of millions

of his countrymen, the train reached Allahabad. It was a city that had seen the performance of the last rites of many members of my family; it seemed fitting that Bapu's ashes, too, should be brought here, for he had ruled their lives.

The ashes were immersed in the Ganges, where a mammoth crowd had gathered on the bank, and afterwards we all went back to Delhi. From that time onward it seemed to me that Mamu's devotion to his work was almost religious in nature, though he did not like the word "religion" and did not consider that it could ever apply to him. His face took on a spiritual transparency, like that of a monk. So must an apostle of Jesus have looked after his Master's crucifixion, and so must he have taken upon himself the burden of the cross.

Back in Delhi I felt at sea. It was true that I had not worked with Gandhiji, gone to prison at his call, or made any sacrifice for my country's sake. That had been the work of a different generation. My sisters and I, and other young people like me, had been merely onlookers. But still I felt at sea, and I think the reason was that my feeling of loss went deeper than consciousness. It was as if the continuity of a long process begun before my birth had suddenly snapped like a dry twig, leaving me entirely without a sense of direction. I had grown up within a magic circle, which now had melted away, leaving me unprotected.

With an effort I roused myself from my imaginings. Was I, after all, going to relegate my childhood and all that it represented to the realm of a dream I had dreamed? Were my values so fragile—had Bapu lived

and died for nothing?—that I could so easily lose courage when he was no longer there? Millions of people would have been ordinary folk, living their humdrum lives unperturbed but for him. He had come to disturb them profoundly, to jolt them out of indifference, to awaken them to one another's suffering, and in so doing to make them reach for the stars. Those stars still beckoned luminously. Bapu's ashes had been scattered over the Ganges, but what if he had gone? We were still there, young, strong, and proud, to bear his banner before us. Who among us dared lose heart when there was this work to be done? The curtain had rung down over a great drama, but another one was about to begin. Gandhi was dead, but his India would live on in his children.

■

GLOSSARY

achkan, knee-length coat with a high, Russian-type collar buttoned all the way down.
Allah, the Muslim name for God.
ashrama, a colony, usually founded for a religious purpose, where people live in austerity, dedicated to certain ideals.
bhajan, hymn, religious song.
charkha, spinning wheel.
chokidar, watchman.
churidar-pajama, trousers close-fitting below the knees and loose above.
dahi-baras, dumplings made of lentils soaked in peppery curds.
darshan, sight, interview, audience.
dhoti, a piece of cloth several yards long and about four feet wide. It is wound around the waist, then taken between the legs and tucked into the waist at the back.
ghee, clarified butter.
girafter, arrest.
guru, teacher; actually the word implies a blend of teacher, guide, and philosopher.
hookah, a waterpipe, and an elegant smoke of leisure.
Ishvara, the Hindu name for God.
jaimal, garland of flowers.
ji, suffix commonly added to a name to indicate respect.
Kanya Dan, the giving away in marriage of a daughter by her father.
katori, a small bowl in which food is served.
khadi, hand-spun, hand-woven cloth. It had a special significance in India because it was used by all members of the Congress, in preference to mill-made and foreign cloth, as a means of encouraging Indian cottage industries.
kurta, a long, loose, collarless shirt with long sleeves. It is worn over the *dhoti.*

kurta-pajama, the dress of men in northern India, consisting of a long, loose shirt and loosely cut trousers.
maniharin, bangle-seller.
mukadma, trial.
palla, the portion of a sari which falls over the left shoulder.
pandit, a Brahmin, a learned man versed in the Scriptures.
puri, a puff made of wheat flour and fried in *ghee* (clarified butter). When ready, *puris* are golden-brown and crisp. They are eaten with vegetables.
safa, a headgear made of a length of material wound around the head at an angle. It does not fit the head squarely like the Indian turban.
Santsahitya, a holy book of the Sikhs.
sarota, an instrument used for chopping areca nuts. It is shaped somewhat like a pair of scissors with a blade-like edge for chopping.
satyagraha, fight for truth. The word was applied to Gandhi's non-co-operation campaigns.
shahanai, a musical instrument resembling a bagpipe.
suttee (*sati*), self-cremation of a widow on her husband's funeral pyre.
swayamvara, the ceremony of choosing a husband.
tanpura, a stringed instrument. Its sound box is globular and rests on the floor, while the seated musician holds the attached stringboard against his shoulder, enabling him to pluck the strings.
thali, a round tray on which food is served.
tika, a red mark on the forehead, formerly used by Hindu women. It is now considered a beauty mark rather than one having religious significance.
tissue, a fine Benares cloth of gold or silver thread.
tonga, a two-wheeled carriage drawn by a horse.

INDEX

All-India Congress Committee, 89–90
Allahabad, vii, ix, 25, 27–8, 38, 40, 56, 76, 99, 105–6, 107, 115, 138, 232–3
Almora, 35, 106, 107, 109–10
Anand Bhawan, vii, ix, 25–6, 39–43, 77, 83, 86–7, 93, 95, 100–4, 117–19, 127–8, 138–9, 145–7, 209
Ariel, Maurois, 149
Azad, Maulana, 139

Bambuli, 32
Bansi, 77
Benares, 133
Bevin, Ernest, 197
Bhagavad-Gita, 144–5, 224, 232
Bibima, 42–8, 62, 64, 77, 83, 86, 100, 152
Bombay, 3–4, 115, 211
Bose, Sir Jagdish Chandra, 72
Boston, Mass., 164
Buck, Pearl, *see* Walsh, Mrs.
Buddhi, 28
Byron, Maurois, 149

Collins, Miss, 47
Congress Party, *see* Indian National Congress
Congress Working Committee, 89, 92, 115
Covarrubias, Miguel, 206–7
Covarrubias, Rose, 206–7
Crawford, Joan, 183
Cripps, Sir Stafford, 147

Datadin, 42
Delhi, 85, 209, 211, 213, 215, 218–19, 223–4, 225, 226–7, 229–32

Feisal, Emir, 198
Flushing Meadows, N. Y., 196

Gandhi, Feroze, 96, 101, 103–4, 117, 118
Gandhi, Mohandas Karamchand, vii, 15–16, 18–20, 22, 25–6, 34, 37–8, 55–6, 63, 67, 91–2, 109, 118, 143–7, 170–2, 178, 209, 222–6, 228–34
Gandhi, Rajiva, 213, 225
Gandhi, Sanjaya, 213
Ganges River, 27, 63, 76, 232–3
Glimpses of World History, Nehru, 152
Grady, Mrs., 227–8
Gunther, Frances, 121, 130

Hari, 78–82, 213–14
Hussein, Mohammed, 76–7
Hutheesingh, Krishna, 3–4, 95, 98–9, 150, 225
Hutheesingh, Raja, 99

Indian National Congress, 19, 23, 24, 35, 36, 38, 60–4, 81, 91–2, 115, 117, 141
Isabella Thoburn College, 93

Jhelum River, 32
Johnson, Col. Louis, 130

Jumna Mission, ix
Jumna River, ix, 27, 76
Jumna-par, 60

Kalidasa, 168
Kanpur, 60
Kashmir, 32, 37
Kathiawar, 32, 33–4
Kaye, Danny, 182–3
Keller, Helen, 153–4
Khali, 35–8, 107–8, 208
Kumaon, 35

Lachmania, 73–5
Linlithgow, Lord, 37
Los Angeles, 121–5, 181–5
Lucknow, 65, 93
Lucknow District Jail, 22–3

Mahabharata, 43
Maharashtra, the, 32
Malaviya, Pandit Madan Mohan, 38
Manuilsky, Dimitri Z., 202
Maurois, André, 149
Melbourne, 10
Mexico, 206–7
Mountbatten, Countess, 216–18, 232
Mountbatten, Earl, 216–18, 232
Murshidabad, 133
Mussoorie, 13, 36, 71, 106

Naidu, Padmaja, 142–3, 225, 231
Naidu, Sarojini, 76, 140–1, 143–4, 230
Naini, ix
Naini Central Prison, ix–xiii, 81
Nehru, Indira, 95, 96, 99, 101, 103–4, 117, 118, 176, 213–18, 220, 225, 227, 228
Nehru, Jawaharlal, 18–19, 29, 39–41, 81, 89, 92–4, 95, 99–101, 103, 109, 118, 126–30, 137, 147–53, 209–10, 214–23, 226, 229–33
Nehru, Kamala, 101
Nehru, Motilal, 19, 38–9, 52–3, 78, 80–1, 97–8, 141, 172
Nehru, Sarup Kumari, *see* Pandit, Vijaya Lakshmi
Nehru, Swarup Rani, 41–2, 62, 64, 77–8, 99
New York City, 128–33, 175, 179–81
Nicholls, Heaton, 202
Norman, Dorothy, 155–7
Novikov, Mme, 226–7

Ornsholt, Anna, 70–2, 93

Pageant of the Seasons, The, see *Ritusamhar*
Pandit, Chandralekha, vii–xiii, 4–10, 13–16, 21–3, 28, 32, 39, 44, 49–52, 56–7, 64, 74, 81, 93, 107, 108, 116–19, 122–3, 127, 129–31, 150–3, 155–6, 163–4, 168, 170, 175–8, 180–1, 187, 208
Pandit, Gopika, 33
Pandit, Ranjit Sitaram, ix–xiv, 3, 19, 21–3, 26, 28, 30–2, 34–8, 50, 54–5, 57–8, 60–4, 74, 75, 82–3, 87–94, 98, 100, 103, 107–9, 126, 128, 129, 136, 147, 159, 168, 173, 207–9
Pandit, Rita, vii, ix, xiii–xiv, 23, 28, 32, 50, 56–8, 69–72, 81, 86, 93, 95, 107–9, 112, 116–19, 126–7, 128, 136, 142, 147, 150–1, 156, 179–95, 197–201, 206–8
Pandit, Rukhmini, 33–4
Pandit, Sitaram, 19, 33–4
Pandit, Vijaya Lakshmi, ix, xiv, 3, 13, 21–6, 28–30, 34, 36, 38–9, 41, 51–3, 57–8, 60, 64–8, 70, 75, 84, 91, 93–4, 95, 97–8, 102–3, 115–19, 127–8, 129, 137, 139–41, 148–9, 150, 173–4, 177, 179–81,

Pandit, Vijaya Lakshmi (*continued*)
187, 197–9, 201–4, 209, 215, 216
Pant, Pandit Govind Vallabh, 65
Paul Robeson, Negro, Robeson, 136
Prayag, 28. *See also* Allahabad
Putney School, 187–95

Quetta, 37

Raghupati Raghava Raja Rama, 22, 146–7
Rajkot, 32
Rajtarangini, 32
Ram Lila, 110
Rama, 82–3
Ramakrishna Mission, 184–5
Ramayana, 27–8, 36, 43, 64, 110, 177
Ratnagiri, 32, 33
Ritusamhar, Kalidasa, 168
Robeson, Eslanda Goode, 136–7
Robeson, Paul, 136–8, 153
Robeson, Paul, Jr, 137
Romulo, Gen. Carlos, 200

San Francisco, 186
San Francisco Conference, 179
San Pedro, Calif., 16, 120–1
Sanger, Margaret, 147
Santsahitya, 144
Sapru, Sir Tej Bahadur, 38, 99
Shahnar, Dr., 226
Shankar, Uday, 107, 109–12
Smuts, Field Marshal Jan Christiaan, 202–4
Sundar, 75, 153
Swadeshi, 52
Swaraj Bhawan, 38–9, 95, 102

Tante Anna, *see* Ornsholt, Anna
Time, 129

United Nations, 196–205, 215
United Provinces, *see* U.P., the
U P, the, 27*n*, 31–2, 34, 60, 64–7, 81, 106, 112, 230
Uttar Pradesh, *see* U P, the

Vishinsky, Andrei, 197–8
Vitasta River, *see* Jhelum River

Walsh, Mrs. (Pearl Buck), 153–5
Wardha, 144
Wellesley College, 160–9, 191, 217
Wellington, 13
Win, Mrs., 227
Woodstock, 56–9

Yosemite National Park, 186

A NOTE ON THE TYPE

This book was set on the Linotype in Electra, *designed by W. A. Dwiggins. The Electra face is a simple and readable type suitable for printing books by present-day processes. It is not based on any historical model, and hence does not echo any particular time or fashion. It is without eccentricities to catch the eye and interfere with reading—in general, its aim is to perform the function of a good book printing-type: to be read, and not seen.*

The typographic and binding designs are by W. A. Dwiggins.

The book was composed, printed, and bound by The Plimpton Press, Norwood, Massachusetts.