

Reminiscences of a Revolutionary

MPT Acharya

July 23 — October 8, 1937

Contents

I. WHY I LEFT INDIA AND HOW	4
TILAK AND PAL	4
TILAK PROVED RIGHT	4
IS IT CIVILISATION?	4
BOMBAY LIFE	5
SURAT CONGRESS	5
PANDEMONIUM	6
SHRINIVAS SHASTRI	6
OFF TO PONDICHERRY	6
II. WHY I LEFT INDIA AND HOW?	8
BITTERNESS AGAINST REFUGEES	8
GOOD-BYE TO PONDICHERRY	8
GOING BUT WHERE	9
JAVA OR EUROPE?	9
SEPARATED FROM INDIA!	9
A JAPANESE PIPE	10
“LAND OF MY DREAM”	10
“VAUNTED FREEDOM”	10
MONEY TALKS	11
CITY OF REVOLUTIONS	11
III. WHY I LEFT INDIA AND HOW	13
IN PARIS	13
COLD WELCOME	13
MEETING S.K.	14
“A MEAN PATRIOT”	15
IV. “HOT BED OF SEDITION-MONGERS”	17
“A LEPER’S HOME”	17
SAVARKAR AND SIKHS	17
MYSTERIOUS WAYS OF THE CID	18
FOOLING THE DETECTIVE	18
SAVARKAR THE FIREBRAND	19
V. INDIA HOUSE AND SAVARKAR	20
“WAR OF INDEPENDENCE”	20
MADAN LAL DHINGRA	20
SCOTLAND YARD IN ACTION	21

ATTACK ON SAVARKAR	21
SAVARKAR'S LETTER TO TIMES	22
VI. ON WAY TO MOROCCO	23
INTERVIEW WITH POLICE CHIEF	23
SCOTLAND YARD'S OFFER	23
POLICE CHIEF'S BUSINESS	23
PASSAGE TO MOROCCO	24
MY IDENTITY	25
AT GIBRALTAR	25
VII. "MY GUIDE BECOMES MY FRIEND AND PHILOSOPHER"	26
AT TANGER- WITHOUT PENNY	26
THE GUIDE AS A FRIEND	26
NEW FRIENDS	27
MY FIRST SMOKE	28
TERRIBLE YET FRANK FRIENDS	28
VIII. DRIVEN FROM LISBON TO PARIS- PORTUGAL – A COLONY OF BRITISH CAPITAL	30
INDIAN CULTURE	30
JUICES OF ROTTEN GRAPES	30
SECRET SERVICEMAN	31
DO YOU KNOW BOMB MAKING?	31
A COLONY OF BRITISH CAPITALS	32

I. WHY I LEFT INDIA AND HOW

(The following is the first instalment of a series of incidents and situations in the life of a revolutionary, selected from a manuscript which is going to appear in book form before the public in the near future. We are thankful to the writer for allowing us to publish interesting portions of his life-story in advance — E.M.)

TILAK AND PAL

During the Bengal Partition days, I was conducting a Tamil nationalist paper with the late Tamil Classic Poet C. Subramania Bharati. The Congress at Surat was coming on. I went to Poona to study under Lokamanya Tilak. He used to recommend me books to read. Tilak was attacking Bepin Chandra Pal in the *Kesari* and the *Mahratta* for the speeches the latter used to deliver asking people to eject Englishmen from India. I asked Tilak why he attacked a nationalist who was probably working for the same end as he. Lok. Tilak answered that there was a fundamental difference between his and Bepin Pal's tactics. He explained that to talk of ejecting the Government was dangerous when the people were not organized to do so. Tilak said it was necessary to organize the people to turn out the British Government before we could ask the people to eject the authorities. We are neglecting the organization by only crying that the British Government should be turned out, and such propaganda as Bepin Pal's makes the people neglect organization.

TILAK PROVED RIGHT

Tilak said we must preach to the people to be strong and organized so that when they are strong enough, 24 hours' notice will be enough to bring the Government to its knees, failing which to fight them out of the country. He considered that it was a very fundamental difference as between seriousness and mischief. Moreover, Tilak said that Bepin Paul would constitute an offense while telling the people to be strong and organized was no offense. In any case, Tilak proved right, for while Bepin's propaganda amounted to frothy talk till he himself went to champion the British authorities towards the end of his life, Tilak at least stood where he was steadily. Asking people to fight without having the means is to ask them to go into defeat and be demoralized. This seems to have a lesson today and tomorrow.

IS IT CIVILISATION?

From Poona, I went to Bombay. The first impression of Bombay was that in spite of the great activity in trade and manufacture, and higher earnings than at Madras, it was inhabited by miserable people. The first question that rose to my mind was: Is it to found large cities with plenty of miserable people barely eking out their existence that we want to have Swaraj? The only symbols

of civilization I met in Bombay were, according to my impression, at that time, hotels, barber-shops, cigarette shops and other dirty shops all along the road. I was living as a guest with one Hindu who was proud of his position in Bombay in spite of poverty. The whole family were sleeping together in one room and they took me in. His boys used to get up early in the morning before daybreak to run a flour mill and after 9 AM used to go away to office like the father and again in the evening the flour mill work went on till 9 PM. In spite of all that, my hosts were not able to eat well or live clean and the father of the family was still proud to belong to the civilization in Bombay. He often told me that unless we Indians were ready to live on canned food, we will not be civilized.

BOMBAY LIFE

I remembered at that time a lecture reported in the Press given by Rambhaji Datt Chaudhury who declared that unless Indians have naked statues at every street crossing, they cannot be considered civilized. Coming from backward parts like Madras where we are not congested, cribbed or cramped for space or food so much as in the Premier city or the Gateway of India, I had an almost nauseating feeling of Bombay life, in spite of collars, ties and boots used by almost every man. Naturally I had to ask my mind is it the object of Swaraj to extend this misery? I consoled myself that the misery was due to a foreign Government but under Indian government, it would all vanish, because our countrymen will be friends of the poor when they come to rule. Later on, however, when I went to Europe and saw misery there, my illusions about "National" rule were shattered.

SURAT CONGRESS

After a few days in Bombay, of which I had enough, I went to Surat for the Congress. Thanks to the kind offices of Khaparde, I was admitted as nationalist delegate from Madras into the Congress.

In Surat, I found the feelings ran high against the nationalists as the people were not only unconcerned with politics, being only interested in business, but they were not friendly to Mahrattas who they considered as mischief-makers and imperialists bringing ruin upon businessmen. It was more of a sleepy hollow than Madras. At least the Gujaratis were good businessmen who went to make their pile as far as Java and Japan in the East, and South Africa in the West of India. But the Madrassis supplied only plantation coolies to the rest of the Empire. As people with chances of earning money, they were glad to have peace and read Ramayan and Bhagavad Gita in their spare time. The Surat Congress was considered misfortune by the Gujaratis for their avocations.

On the opening day of the Congress, the moderates were jubilant because they reckoned with the political ignorance of the Gujaratis. But the nationalists or extremists were looking for trouble as they felt they were in the minority and they were even expecting to be ejected from the Congress. A certain Bengali was distributing lathis among nationalists to prevent being ejected. We, Madras delegates, were placed in the front of dais and only a few of us had any lathis, since most of the Madras delegates were moderates. We were expectant, not knowing whether to run out of the pandal or to fight against being ejected. In my case, it was the first time I had ever

attended a Congress, not having seen a session even as a visitor before. And this year, the tension between the extremists and the moderates was very great.

PANDEMONIUM

Tilak asked for permission to speak after the President had finished his address. The President knew that partisans were at work and refused to contribute to tension growing into a pitch. Tilak insisted upon his right to speak, saying if the President did not want it, he wanted to appeal to the delegates for the permission. Rash Behari Ghose refused even the permission to appeal to the audience. Tilak stood on the dais, saying he would stand there so long as he was not allowed to speak. Meanwhile, some man, said to be a Gujarati, probably a Mahratta moderate, hurled his shoe at Tilak; that was the signal for a pandemonium, and I armed with a lathi and being in the front row, easily jumped on the dais while others ran to the dais soon after. I jumped upon the President's table with the lathi held high up almost ready to beat whoever happened to be below me. When I saw old Surendranath Banerjee trying to rush out behind the pandal, his chair tilting behind him, I was sorry and smiling and prevented the lathi from falling on his head. Meanwhile all the moderates cleared out of the pandal and the police came out to "Restore order." Thus, the Surat Congress ended. After waiting one or two days more to see the resumption of the Congress deliberations, I returned to Bombay.

SHRINIVAS SHASTRI

As soon as I moved into the Sardar Griha, whom should I meet on the stairs but the now Hon. V. Shrinivas Shastri, who had left the school where he was my headmaster in order to join the Servants of India Society in order to get political training under late Gokhale. He was a stern headmaster in our school and prevented every pupil from taking part in politics. I was one of the few hard nuts for him to crack. I told him on the stairs of Sardar Griha, where he saw me limping and with the lathi from Surat that he was no longer my headmaster and the lathi in my hand must be proof of our belonging to opposed camps in politics. He simply smiled and went away. That is the last time I saw him before I left India shores and I could not meet him even in Europe until I returned to India in 1935.

From Bombay, I came straight to Madras to resume the conduct of the Tamil paper, which was left in charge of another editor during my absence. During my absence, the acting editor, who was an old friend and was therefore entrusted to declare himself the owner of the Press and the paper, watered down the tone of the paper and he wanted to keep the paper for himself. I told him to transfer the paper to my name but he thought he was safe in its possession by the very lowering of the tone, and he would not transfer it to me.

OFF TO PONDICHERY

Some days after this quarrel between him and me, I was left word in my office by someone to see that everything is clean. I could not trace the identity of the man who left the word. I thought some raid was planned against the office. Really after two days, the CID began to search the office and arrested the acting editor. Only two days before, I had taken charge of the paper

after persuasion and even slapping the acting editor to part with it. But the counts on which the paper was prosecuted were all for articles which appeared in my absence, although the tone of the paper had been lowered down.

For fear that the acting editor would now denounce me as responsible for his misfortune, I arranged for his defence and provision for his family if he remained steady during the trial. He was finally sentenced to six years' hard labour for the articles during his period. I absented myself in Pondichery with CS Bharati during the course of the trial in order to not be a witness.

II. WHY I LEFT INDIA AND HOW?

BITTERNESS AGAINST REFUGEES

Life in Pondicherry was not safe for refugees. There are many British spots with police stations where one could walk in unawares. Moreover, the Police or Police Chief tried to make the lives of refugees hell by telling people to tell us that we would be extradited. One day having heard this rumour, we went straight to the Secretary to the Governor and asked if we would be extradited. He inquired of the Police Chief who was answering him that nothing of the kind was known to him. Next time, he became very bitter against us, especially as he was Indian. We have also been told that we would be carried away by force into British territory with the help of rowdies for whom Pondicherry was famous. Fortunately nothing of the kind happened as long as we were there, but chicanery did not stop. At that time, there were some born French-men who were patriotic and friendly to Indians, especially towards refugees. The local semi-French and Europeanised Indians were for bad treatment of Indians as in British Territory. Particularly, there was a born French lawyer who told us that we need not worry as refugees. He will see to it that we would not be expelled. A French librarian long resident there became so Indian as to have married an Indian woman. At the time we were there, the Anti-Asiatic and imperialist policy of local, semi-French Europeans was growing. Later on, several French imperialists travelled in British territories and wrote books recommending British “economical” methods of governing French India, and this view has gained upper hand even in French India, although it is not a colonial territory like Indo-China but an ancient department of France, integral part of France.

GOOD-BYE TO PONDICHERRY

Being cooped in Pondicherry almost always threatened with persecution, it was not at all interesting to live there. One night, after long consideration of all these points, I made up my mind to leave the shores of India. I cut off my hair and felt very peculiar. The first Mandayam orthodox Brahmin cut off the *jutteo*. When the sedition case was over, I went to seek my sick father in Shiyali, all of a sudden, so that the CID may not pester him in his sick bed. His illness was enough to convince me that I should leave the home so as not to be [a] burden upon the family which I could be if I stayed at his sick bed. I was nearly going to cry at having to restrict the means by staying with him and also at leaving him sick, most probably not to see him anymore if I went out of India. But economic moments and arguments overcame my weaknesses and I decided to leave the country.

GOING BUT WHERE

I took just a little suitcase and Rs. 300 which I had kept. I did not buy any equipment for foreign travel for I had not [the] money to pay both for the ticket and the equipment and I was not decided whether to go East or West of India. I walked away to the railway station in such a manner that neither I nor my parents were sure whether I would change my mind at the station and return home. I said both to quiet them and my own heart – I shall see if [I] will leave at all. So I went alone to the station with the suitcase and it looked to them and the little brothers as if I was only bluffing and would return if not from the station but atleast from half the journey. I took [a] ticket to Colombo and sat down [on] the train. My heart was being torn asunder on account of the actual journey I undertook under a dream as it were. It was impossible for me to return to be made fun of by all my nearest and dearest even. And if I returned, what shall I do then? I will have no more money to make the journey back, so I sat helplessly tight in the train, almost unable to move under my divided state of mind. I said, if I should return, let me do so from Colombo, not before I take ship at Tuticorin. Thus I travelled as if pushed on against my will, thanks to the money given away to the ticket.

JAVA OR EUROPE?

I landed in Colombo. I had been in Colombo before when the Swadeshi Steam Navigation Company was run by Chidambaram Pillai. He was perhaps there or he was in prison in India, I do not know now, I did not want to meet him or any of his friends since I may be observed and sent back to India by force or persuasion. I put up in a Dharmashala, thinking what to do whether to go forward or to beat retreat. The illness of my father troubled me and would nearly compel me to return home. But it is exactly which decided me to leave home. Why should I return now? So I decided to go further. There were only two directions to go. Either to Java or to Europe. The CID would be after me and would chase me back. Moreover, the people in the Dharmashala were curious who is this morose young fellow who though looking Brahmin had cut [his] hair. The rumour would catch the CID and might lead to my identification if not [my] arrest. So I had to make up my mind to leave soon, one way or [another]. To leave for Europe was out of the question, for I had not sufficient money to land there unless I went by the deck class in winter without winter dress. Europe was also too far away, so that if I had to beat retreat, it would be impossible after paying all my money for crossing over. Java seemed the most distant risk I could take.

SEPARATED FROM INDIA!

I simply went to Carson and Co. to inquire if any ship leaves for Java, although the Dutch of Consul had written to me not to go there not to go there if I had not sufficient money as there was no chance of earning money by work. Still I thought if I went there *on* deck with my Eastern dress, I would have some money left with which to start seeking for help. So my intention was to start for Java. But the agents told me that no ship would leave that direction before a week. Staying in Colombo meant spending part of my money which was already oozing out owing to my ignorance and inexperience in foreign travel. I simply asked the agent which ship leaves for

where. He was no doubt surprised at such a question. It proved that I was compassless traveller and he might have taken me for a crook who is trying to flee for life. But somehow, probably on account of childish [mein?] and question, he did not seem to suspect anything but was only surprised and paralysed in mind. I was told that a Japanese ship was leaving that afternoon for Europe. I asked him to give me third class passage to Marseilles by that ship. It cost me 11 pounds and I paid out Rs. 165 or so out of what was left with me in Colombo. At once, I rushed up to the Dharmashala and fetched my poor “trunk” and got on board ship, as there was only a few hours between my buying the ticket and the ship leaving. Within a few minutes of my catching the ship, the anchor was lifted. Thus I was irrevocably separated from India, partly with my will and partly against my will. No use regretting now.

A JAPANESE PIPE

Among the third class passengers, I found an Indian youth from Bengal who was running away from his uncle New Orleans with no more money than to reach London. He was Muslim by name Abdurrab. He could not speak English nor I Urdu. There was a Japanese lead worker going to an exhibition in London. These were the only passengers and there were only three berths, of which I had the luck or ill luck to get one at the last moment. It was impossible to exchange words with the Japanese at all although he was equipped with a Japanese-English dictionary. He was all the time smoking philosophically a Japanese pipe.

“LAND OF MY DREAM”

Not being accustomed to see meat or even to bear the smell of meat in the markets the food was disagreeable to me, as the Japanese ships served only English fare, mostly boiled beef. The very smell for beef which my companions ate used to make even the coffee and bread unbearable to me. I consumed these last two only as a medicine to keep me alive in the voyage. It was 22 days long voyage upto Marseilles. Naturally I starved and became weaker daily. My sight began to grow dim and my ears began to buzz. I became evidently pale. None could induce me to eat. But one result of my starving seems to have been that I could bear cold owing to want of sensitiveness. One day, nearing Marseilles, our ship passed between Italy and Sicily, the white horses on the rocks of the Italian coast shining under sun made me yarn to fly away to Italy, the country of my dreams as I had read all the writings of Guiseppe Mazzini. But I was going to a colder country. Towards the end of the voyage the steward who knew that I was starving came to me and said I would land only as a corpse in Europe. He asked me if I was a priest. , I said yes (though I meant, by caste). He took pity on me being Japanese and he brought me an apple which is all he could give; since he had no authority to give thrid (third) class passengers, he parted with the apple he took at table.

“VAUNTED FREEDOM”

When the ship reached Marseilles my heart began to quake, for my troubles began, the length of voyage being exhausted for the fare. I was going to land on an unknown foreign territory, of which I did not know the language nor I knew anything to do there. “Liberty, Equality and

Fraternity” written on all official papers and on the walls of buildings is not going to help me to earn a living. I had made up my mind that I was going to be buried that very winter on the French Patrie, simply out of sheer starvation and cold. I was unwilling to leave the ship and even felt myself stuck to it owing to the confusion and consternation that prevailed on my mind. Why do the laws allow me to land and not turn me back without expense to me ? But France is a free and hospitable country for all nations and especially for refugees, isn't it? But if only the authorities knew that I was landing there pennyless, all that vaunted freedom and hospitality would have vanished into air, with them all liberty, equality and fraternity. However, they did not ask me, if I had money or not. No, there was no examination in my case.

MONEY TALKS

When the passengers all left, I was sitting tight on the deck shivering and trying to warm myself in the cabin, alternately. I had my Bengali Muslim companion still on board as he wanted to land in England. In the evening, the officers asked me why I did not leave the ship. I said I thought the authorities would ask me to land. It became dark and the officers said if I wanted to sleep in the ship I would be charged for it. That made me hurry up. I asked how can one pass through customs at that time. All offices were closed, of course. As luck would have it, a Thos. Cook guide happened to hear the conversation. He undertook to pass me through customs at that hour. He engaged a porter and I walked with him through customs gate. A soldier challenged, 'who goes there.' The guide answered something in French and was prepared to meet the situation. For he had asked me already to put a two shilling piece in his palm. When he came near the soldier and the coin passed off from his palm into the soldier's. Money talk. The soldier said *Passez*. I never thought such things could happen in an incorruptible country-it looked so Indian but more refined. Anyway, I mention this to thank the two persons for having helped me to come safely out of customs at that late hour. They were more sympathetic to a stranger than the law would have been.

Directly out of customs' barrier (fortunately I had nothing valuable to declare), I thought what I should do. I asked the guide if I could start right away for Paris. There was very little time to reach the next train. He said he could manage to put me into the train. So we rushed to the station in a hackney and he bought the ticket for me and saw me into the train. Of course, he tried to take as much out of me for his extraordinary service and I was willing, especially in my situation, to part with as little as possible. He never saw such a tough customer, for he generally carries rich tourists as baggage and they are ready to pay as much as they can. Meanwhile the train whistled away. Of course, I paid him something for Thos. Cook's kindness. I was very polite to him as a friend and said [if] I pass another time via Marseilles I would do him good. No need to say, he was skeptic[al].

CITY OF REVOLUTIONS

In the train, fortunately after midnight, we were only two. Opposite was a Frenchman. He was looking askance at my peculiar and insufficient dress from tropical climes and exactly that night I saw the snow first in my life. Of course, I felt warm in the heated train. I had seen snow before without going to Ootacamund, but only in a stereoscope.

Anyway, I felt pleased to go to Paris, the city of revolutions, especially because I had a letter of introduction to a Professor of Tamil there, who might take pity upon me and perhaps help, as he was an old gentleman having long lived in Pondicherry.

When the train steamed into Paris, rather there was not steam in the locomotive, as only electric locomotives dragged the train from some distance into the station, the gentleman instead of packing off without saying goodbye, waited for me to get prepared, took me out of the station upto a tram and told the conductor to make me get out at a hotel mentioned by him (for he did not want me to pay dear), a hotel which was just near Mons. Vinson's residence, I don't know if he also paid a tip to tram-conductor.

The conductor showed me the hotel and I walked in with my poor small suitcase, which was half empty. I must have made the impression of being very poor and that must have terrified the lady-owner or manager of the hotel. All the servants were certainly curious and must have asked themselves what manner of church mouse this is.

After breakfast, I went to the house number on the same street where Prof. Vinson was living. I pulled the rope at the entrance after knocking several times. A young man opened the door and tried to inquire from me what I wanted. Before he inquired, I blurted out Prof. Vinsons. He shrugged his shoulders with elbows close to his body and making grimaces. I was about to laugh but did not understand at that time it meant no. I began to repeat the professor's name, again the same attitude, grimaces and shaking of the head to a side. Afterwards I came to know with the help of a bit of school English he used that the Prof. was away and would come in a few days. So, I had nothing but to wait.

III. WHY I LEFT INDIA AND HOW

IN PARIS

At last, when I went to [P]rofessor Vinson's house and pulled the rope, (no electric bells even in those days in Paris), I found him and he received me and I handed the letter of recommendation from his friend. He knew I required help from my shabby appearance, but how long to give it? I told him I wanted to learn at least process work. He said he could recommend me to a process engraver and did send me to him, and that man was ready to take me as an apprentice. But I had no money to live. "but how are you going to live?" "that is exactly my question", I answered. "Sorry I cannot help you to live," he answered me. All the conversation went on in English, he being able only to write and read Tamil but not understand talk. So my good Professor's help could not be availed of. Now what next? I thought he would be glad to make sacrifice to help an Indian to learn something, but he was French man, how can I ask him or even entreat him to pay for my living? Moreover, I was not accustomed to ask even for recommendation in India from my own relatives. How dare I go down on my knees before a stranger? So I gave it up as hopeless.

One morning, however, when I was wandering engrossed within myself as what to do next and fearing falling dead, I saw a tram with a board indicating the direction to "Passy", Passy? Where do I know the name from? Suddenly I remembered that a certain gentleman there was writing some letters to the Tamil paper office in Madras. That led me to remember his name: S. K. I made up my mind to find out if my memories were correct, especially as it was the last hope of seeing any Indian. I knew he was an independent and patriotic man, at least from his ferocious letters. So I walked along the tram line waiting at every crossing for another tram bearing the board 'Passy.' I followed right up to the terminus, it seemed a trip to North Pole.

When I came to the terminus, I found several good houses indicating rich people were living there. In those days Paris has ramparts near there. Now, how to find any such gentleman were living there among any of the several high houses? Finally I made up my mind to ask anyone if he knew an Indian gentleman there. The first man I met was an elderly French bearded gentleman. I asked him in English trying to make French: An Indian gentleman, where? Gentleman, *gentile homme*, Indian? Oh oui, he understood my wants. He pointed out the last house near the rampart.

COLD WELCOME

I went up into this house and looked upstairs upon every door after not being able to get any information from the door keeper except yes to the name S.K. At last I found the sign of the Indian name on the door. I rang the bell thinking that for the first time in the strange land, I would be welcomed by an Indian patriot with open arms. (This house had really an electric bell being a modern one for that time.) an Indian lady opened the door instantly and was probably surprised

to see a shabbily and insufficiently dressed Indian with sunken eyes owing to long involuntary fasting and suffering from cold. It meant no doubt to her that something was wrong with the man. She suspiciously asked me: what do you want? I said I wanted to see Mr. S. K. The lady understood me as she spoke sufficient English. "Who are you?" I said I was a recent arrival from Madras and that I was correspondence with Mr. S.K. That quieted her. Mr. S.K. was not there at the time, she said, and that I should leave my address with her. I scrawled it upon a paper disappointed not to see him. For me, time was everything in my situation as I did not know wherewith to pay my bill and live further. Not even a polite nod to ask me in and sit from an Indian patriot to another. Would he at least answer, when my shabby appearance "made an impression"? I thought I was trying to see an English gentleman and I may not be the fit company for him- in spite of our common patriotism. However, let me wait and see patiently till a day more.

Next morning, however, the waiter gave me a postcard: not even a letter, which could only be from that gentleman. But the reading was disappointing. Instead of calling me to his house, which I could have compiled with only on foot in spite of the long distance, I was surprisingly asked to meet him a 10 a.m. or so in the writing room of Thos, Cook. What a wonderful way for a gentleman to meet a man for the first time on appointment at the house of a firm, I thought, and that a compatriot! It could not be the custom of the country and that it is certainly not Indian and gentlemanly. But in my situation I should go wherever called to.

MEETING S.K.

I rushed through my meager breakfast and walked along hastily to Thos, Cook's office which I had seen in my lonesome wanderings through the city. I was fortunately in time as I wanted. But already a gentleman darker than any in the writing room was prowling about with cat's eyes from which I concluded he must be after me. He also maturely recognized me from my colour and asked: Are you Mr. A? For some time he asked me what brought me there and why so suddenly before informing him. That was not the place to tell my story. After making certain that [I] was the man with whom he was in correspondence, (of course I was only writing him in the name of the paper just to acknowledge his fiery letters and pointing out dangers of publishing his articles and photographs). He decided to invite me to his house that afternoon itself. Also some success, I thought. I told him I would have to walk whole miles in the cold before I could reach his home. He at once put a small and a bigger copper coin in my hand saying "That is for your train fair." Shame for the first time to accept only the tramfare as Dakshina to a Brahmin from his own country, even in India, but worse as between patriots in a foreign country, when he saw my insufficient dress and shivering body. However nothing doing till we sit down and at least have a 'chat." In the evening I was readily opened the door and straight away led into his study. For the first time, I saw an Indian living what they call in Europe "decently" and even having a white faced maid servant. But the gentleman himself was dressed like a pastor and pandit, avoiding the necessity to shave daily or trim whiskers to stand on its end either out of desire to avoid expense and trouble or only to look like a serious, unworldly, learned professor.

“A MEAN PATRIOT”

After so many days of starvation, I was served with *keer* spiced in the right Indian fashion. It was a treat to eat in Paris even more than in India. Anyway, he seemed to be impressed with me [in spite] of my Indian habits and poor dress, because he began to pour out all his troubles with local Indians, patriotic or otherwise, and incidentally made propaganda about his daring and sacrifice at the altar of the motherland. Oh, God. If he sacrificed and yet had everything, then what about me who gave up the country and had nothing in Paris? But that does not count. After all, I was a small, meaner sort of patriot. Sacrifice means to give a part of what you have, but not everything. He used to produce letters and papers to prove from the testimonies of the high-placed like himself and even the lowly, as to how perilously he was living, yet how he was working to liberate the country in spite of the ignorance and opposition of still greater patriots. I neither knew one side nor the opposite and had only to nod to whatever he said.

He had written to me he had spent lakhs in helping the persecuted and patriotic from India. Now I wanted to try something for myself. After telling my condition, I put him point blank whether I could not help me either to study or carry some work on behalf of the country. “Sorry, I have paid out all reserved for the purpose”, was the prompt answer, as point blank as my question. That shut my mouth up.

I was sent to another gentleman from India who received me coldly. The next day, he was, however, kind enough to take me out of the city for a flying demonstration with his family. I remember a flight of 500 yards was considered a wonder because even within that distance many accidents happened. Looking backwards to that time, it was too short a time before [the] flying machine was perfected for war purposes. All along the visit, I was exchanging words with him explaining to him who I was. Finally, he said, why don't you write to your countrymen in London, Mr V.S. Aiyar? “Oh, I know gentleman by correspondence,” I said. He gave me his address: India House, Cromwell Avenue, Highgate, London. Mr Aiyar was the London correspondent of our Tamil weekly but I had not thought of him or of remembering to bring his address when I left India. After all he was doing service free as [a] correspondent but I did not know he would take interest in me if I had informed him; I was starting or landed without a penny in the pocket. Now any straw would do for a drowning man. I wrote at once to Mr. Aiyar telling my predicament, asking him to see if he could do something to save me. Promptly I got a reply in two days asking me to go to none other than the giver of the address and saying he requested him to make arrangements for sending me to England and assuring he would be pleased, nay glad, to see me there soon. I never intended to go to the English “home”. I therefore went to the gentleman who suggested to me to write to Mr. Aiyar to avoid being pestered by me. Peasuring to some extent is true in my desperation but only to some extent. I felt shy of asking, but asking didn't help — that became “peasuring.”

He said he received the letter but was still disinclined even to advance the fare to London and my expenses, although it was promised there Mr. Aiyar would repay it. Now he has started some other excuses.

Finally he told me to get ready, as if I was not ready to start for England. He advanced me the hotel bill, but asked me to come with my “baggage” to his house when he would take me to the train and see that I sat in it, ostensibly to be helpful in finding the station, but really to see that I did not use up the fare and again come to him. So, I brought my “luggage” to him and he took me to the station and bought me a ticket via the longest-route, Boulogne-Folkstone in order to

save laying out some shillings. Being a cold winter night, I had to sit up all night shivering on the sea, being a third class passenger on the deck. It was torture to me as I was not provided with a rug and none asked me how I was going to manage in Paris or on the route with my meagre clothing, for asking would redound upon themselves, since I might ask them to supply me warmer necessaries.

So I gladly put with the shivering and chattering in the cold during the long period in which I felt very minute like ages during the voyage to “old England,” knowing well that I’d be better cared for as soon as I reached London. Mr. Aiyar came to the station and fetched me home.

IV. “HOT BED OF SEDITION-MONGERS”

The India House was in the aristocratic villa quarter high up Highgate. It was inhabited by a few students who managed the household co-operatively. Mr V.D. Savarkar was the head. It was like an Indian bachelor [sic] hostel. But there was no English company or even English servants in the house. The only persons to serve was an Indian cook, a Lascar and a Czechish refugee, both of whom spoke very little English. In a way I was very happy to be in purely Indian company. Mr V.D. Savarkar was, of course, introduced to me, rather I to him by Mr. Aiyar. I had a place to sleep and could eat at [the] table. So food and roof worries were over for the time.

In the India House, I had not only my rest after worries but also some support for learning a trade as I wanted to do in France. I soon went into the Trade School of the London County Council to learn Photo-engraving.

“A LEPER’S HOME”

In a few days after my arrival, I found that all the inmates had detectives shadowing us wherever we went in the “land of the free and the brave.” It was considered a, rather the only, “hot-bed of sedition.” Naturally, very few Indian students dared to visit the inmates of the house or even receive them in their homes. There was a barrier between India House residents and all other students. It was like a lepers’ home. Patriotism and sedition were synonymous, as far as Indians are concerned even in England. Naturally, none but the most reckless Indian student would dare to visit India House or have anything to do with the Indian fellow students there, for he may be debarred from institutions on account of even his chance visits. We had meetings every Sunday when usually V.D. Savarkar lectured on some phases of Indian history. He was a very thorough speaker on Indian history, being a gold medallist of the Bombay University and doing research at the Indian Office library and archives. Moreover, his lectures breathed the spirit of patriotism. Even those who did not like his patriotism sometimes dared to come to the lectures, as he was also a very good speaker, full of literary fluency and much learning of Sanskrit.

SAVARKAR AND SIKHS

One day it was the birth anniversary of Guru Nanak Singh. The Sikhs engaged the Caxton Hall for the celebration. But there was no speaker available who could do justice to the subject. The Sikh students wanted to have a speaker but they did not want a marked man like Savarkar. Finally they had no choice but to request Savarkar to address the meeting. Only they asked him to be purely religious in outlook about Guru Nanak and not mix politics with it. Savarkar also undertook to do so. His learning of Nanak’s and Sikh history impressed the audience and Sikhs. No Sikhs could have spoken better on that occasion. Exactly because he showed the patriotic spirit of Sikh History, I heard later, they regretted Savarkar’s speaking in spite of his eulogy of

Sikh Martyrs, for they were afraid that the few Sikh students or at least those who suggested Savarkar as speaker, might be considered to be in “conspiracy” with Savarkar, an “India House” leader, as if it was infested by a gang of subterranean criminals.

MYSTERIOUS WAYS OF THE CID

Every now and then the *Times* and other papers got some story about the activities of the inmates or the India house, this “hotbed of sedition-mongers”. So, we were always expecting a raid, accustomed as Indians were to such possibilities, nay certainties in India. But the Police in London was more circumspect than in India since they were unable to raid unless they had certain evidence that something terrible was being perpetrated. Besides the articles in the Press, occasionally a man used to report himself at the house saying he was a reporter of this or that liberal or labour paper, adding “you know we are sympathetic to Indian aspirations and we want to contradict the statement of the *Times* and other Tory papers”. Naturally, Savarkar used to be interviewed. The interview did not appear in the paper. When asked in the office of the paper, the editors did not know of any such interview and there was no such man in that office as the one indicated on a printed visiting card. Naturally, the conclusion is these interviews were conducted by the CID men. That in free England. Savarkar used to put away interviewers, telling them that he would write if the editor wanted any questions to be answered.

One evening a man named Bhattacharya ran into the India House saying he beat Sir Wm. Lee-Warner and wanted protection for the night. Suspecting that it may be a way of getting the police cause for raiding, Savarkar told him he cannot give the asylum. Naturally, Bhattacharya went away. There was a real case in the court for assault upon Lee-Warner and Bhattacharya was sentenced to a fine for some days’ imprisonment. Bhattacharya bravely chose imprisonment rather than pay the fine, in spite of an Indian lady offering to pay the fine. The next day, Bhattacharya was found going about in London and he said one Mr.Ganguly paid the fine. This Mr Ganguly was known as a man of the Indian Lascars Home and also as a pet of the Indian office minions. Later on, we will meet him without the mask.

FOOLING THE DETECTIVE

Early in the morning, the detectives used to stand or loiter about near the house to follow anyone who went out of the India House. First it was disgusting to me to see their faces. I want to make use of them as my guide. I went out for my walk. About 50 yards behind me one detective followed me like a shadow. I went on walking till I passed a post office. Then I walked back. The detective was waiting before the post office to let me pass. Suddenly, when I came in front of the post office, I asked him, “Where is the post office, please?”. The man answered, “I do not know.” I asked him then, “If you cannot help me to find the post offices and other places I want, why do you follow me?” He was very perturbed, and angry. I used to try the same method upon every new man that was set against me, to show that I knew who he was. Sometimes, Savarkar and other members of the house tried to get rid of the detectives in a peculiar manner. They walked till they came to a lone taxi and suddenly jumped into it and drove away, while the detective used to stand helpless looking for a free taxi.

In those days, there was no Indian meeting centre in London, except for occasional gatherings in the South Kensington Museum Hall. There was of course Indian National Liberal Club supported by Moderates, but the members rarely met. Naturally, the membership was thinning down. We of the India House wanted to use the club platform and finances for patriotic purposes. One day we decided to get all of us registered as members and outvote the other members. We subscribed our fees just before the annual meeting of the club and I got our men elected to office, except the chairman. It was surprise and disappointment to those who thought we were entering the Club only to nod to them. And we were known as "firebrands". So, the chairman resigned.

As the India House residents were followed everywhere and those who made them were also shadowed, it became difficult for many students to obtain admission into the institutions. Naturally, our ranks thinned down, and the house could not be run. Under the cover of advice and help to Indian students, censorship was established by the India office and unless one submitted to it and brought proofs of absolute loyalty, entry into the institution was made impossible. Naturally, as our ranks thinned down and the club could not be run, our members had to disperse.

SAVARKAR THE FIREBRAND

At this point I may mention showing the charm and tactfulness that Savarkar exercised upon others. Mr. V.V. S. Aiyar was a rabid anti-Savarkar. When someone tried to introduce Aiyar to Savarkar, Aiyar is reported to have said: "I will have nothing to do with that firebrand." But in the Inns of Court, accidentally both of them were present and Savarkar's way were observed by Aiyar and he was glad to be introduced. Aiyar was a terrible anti-Hindu till then and cared little for patriotism. In fact, he considered himself a Christian and superior to Indians. But this contact of Savarkar changed the whole being of Aiyar and he became a staunch Hindu and patriot. Savarkar used to be liked by Government of India scholars also.

In those days, in London, one of the prominent Indian politicians was Bepin Chandra Pal who ran there to escape being imprisoned in India. He was good propagandist writer and the Partition of Bengal gave him opportunities for his talents. He settled down in London and made some impression on W. T. Stead, or Stead impressed upon him. He used to say with every bomb thrown in Bengal, the Government will go down on its knees before him. He tried to maintain himself by opening a boarding house for Indians. Niranjana Pal, his son was staying in London. The latter was friendly to Savarkar. Another companion of Niranjana Pal was Sukhasagar Dutt, the brother of the Bengal terrorist who was hanged, Ullashkar Dutt.

Bepin Chandra started a national magazine where he tried to maintain a middle position between terrorism and constitutionalism, defending the latter against the former, and in the absence of the latter, trying to defend the terrorists. The last article of his magazine was "The actiology of the bomb" which broke his back, for he defended the terrorists against the terrorism of the Bengal Government, rather condoned the latter. When he could not maintain himself in London and returned to India, he was sentenced to 6 months prison for that article.

V. INDIA HOUSE AND SAVARKAR

The greatest of dangerous events to India House members was the publication of Savarkar's book "The Indian War of Independence" and the shooting down of Sir Curzon Wylie and Dr. Lalkaka at a function in South Kensington Museum.

"WAR OF INDEPENDENCE"

"The Indian War of Independence" was written out of materials collected by Savarkar in the library and archives of the India Office. Since it could not be published in India in Marathi, Savarkar wanted it to be published abroad even in English. In England no firm would print it, although the materials were culled from books and documents published in England itself. If any Indian undertook to publish it in England or Europe, he was likely-nay, certain – to be prosecuted.

At last, Savarkar collected sufficient money to start printing this historical work. Many of the students who did not sympathize with his views of independence or even were afraid of association with him were willing to contribute funds for the publication. I do not know if some Government scholars or even high officials did not subscribe for a copy of the book. Savarkar knew how to approach them and induce them to subscribe.

The order for printing had to be given and there ought to be some to sign the contract with a printer. All were afraid that their studies and career would be ruined if their names leaked out in that connection. We found a German agent for a continental printing firm and he undertook to get it printed. But when he saw the contents and showed it to a lawyer, he said his business would be ruined if the firm is known to undertake such works. So the agent told us that he would transfer the contract to the printer in Holland who should deal directly with us. The proofs used to come directly per post to us.

MADAN LAL DHINGRA

When the India House was liquidated, I went to put up for sometime in Bepin Pal's boarding house. One morning I was awakened early and told that the papers report that Sir Curzon-Wylie was shot dead the night before by Madan Lal Dhingra who was living in the India House. Only the evening before the act, Dhingra had rung the bell and I had opened the door and he asked where Savarkar was, I told him that he was out of town although he used to put up with Bepin Chandra Pal. Madan Lal Dhingra was the son of a D.S.P. of Punjab, had finished Engineering course, was about to return to India, and his father was a friend of Sir Curzon Wylie. Madan Lal used to go sometimes to Sir Curzon privately and therefore it was bewildering that he should shoot down the friend of his family. And the evening before, when he came to look up Savarkar I found him happy like a bird. He was always of a brooding temperament when he was in India

House but not so that evening. But it is true that he spoke very little so that one could have no inkling of what was going on in his mind.

SCOTLAND YARD IN ACTION

Naturally, when the assassination took place, all the India House inmates would be hunted up by the Scotland Yard to connect as many of them with the act as possible and thus get them punished. They went to every one of them to find out if there was any conspiracy behind it and who were in that conspiracy. They went for example to one Syed Hyder Reza, who has come to England with Asaf Ali and for sometime both were residents of India House. Syed Hyder Reza was considered a nationalist editor and poet and had many interviews with Tilak whom he admired very much. As the Scotland Yard could not prevent movements of any person in the name of preventing crime, they asked Hyder Reza to induce me to leave for America. One day, Hyder came to me and said in the course of the conversation on the situation, "I suggest to you to go to America where you can make yourself self-supporting and also study. Why do you continue here in misery and dependence?" Many of the dangerous characters in England have been shipped off thus to USA simply owing to suspicion that they might give cause to some sensation to the Press even at the risk of their own safety. Some days after the assassinations of Sir Curzon and Dr. Lalca, there was a meeting of Indians to demonstrate their loyalty and their horror at assassination. It was the biggest Indian meeting ever held till then. There were the Aga Khan, Mancherji Bhowndree and Sir Theodore Morrison brought the brother of Dhingra all the way from Edinborough to confess his shame at having such a brother. Naturally, the father of Dhingra sent a cable disowning his son.

ATTACK ON SAVARKAR

It was [a] difficult matter for us India House friends of Dhingra to put up with the meeting and dangerous to protest against the meeting. Finally within the short time, we made up our mind to attend the meeting and, if there was any chance, to protest against the resolution that would be drawn up against him. We distributed ourselves in the hall and patiently heard speech after speech against Dhingra. At last a resolution was drawn up, read and voting was proceeded upon. The chairman said that he hoped that the resolution would be passed unanimously. Who would vote against the resolution in order to become a marked man? When the president asked if all voted for the resolution, there was a chorus of yes and a forest of hands rose up! Unfortunately for the meeting, the president made a mistake in asking if there were any opponents which gave us the chance to speak out and it spoiled the unanimity of the vote. When he asked, if there is anyone against the resolution, naturally Savarkar stood up to say he was against it. Soon, from different corners of the hall about a dozen voices were heard similarly. The surprise was too great for the enthusiasts of the meeting. There was also a large sprinkling of plainclothes men in the hall around the India House residents present there. One Mr Palmer, Barrister, at once turned up his sleeves, went straight at Mr. Savarkar in the centre of the hall, and hexed the latter on the eye. No sooner did the blow fall upon Savarkar, than I who was standing on a chair to see the commotion and happened to have a stick in the hand, instinctively struck him on the head. Naturally, I got into trouble with some of the proud loyalists around me, of whom a Sikh gentleman took me by

my tie and began bravely to strangle me and the plain-clothes-policemen began to remove me out of the hall.

When I and Savarkar and several protesters were removed from the hall, Barrister Palmer, appeared with his head bandaged and from the platform he vociferated "See, how I defended the Empire with blood from my own head".

SAVARKAR'S LETTER TO TIMES

I was taken to a separate room by secret police and I thought they were going to take me into a lock-up that night. But they simply asked for my name and address and let me go. I was surprised and learned that in England beating a man is a private civil affair and the aggrieved party had to go to court. Naturally, I had no mind to sleep in Bepin Pal's house and face him in his excited state. So I went and slept that night elsewhere.

On the road, Savarkar and I argued about the consequences of the disorder in the meeting. He said that Palmer is likely to bring a case against me for using the stick on his head and the only way to prevent him was for him (Savarkar) to threaten him with [a] case for using his fist, the first in a public meeting. He wrote a letter to the Times explaining that the disorder was not due to the protesters since they were justified in protesting against a resolution which called Dhingra the assassin while the matter was still sub judice, and incidentally stating that he (Savarkar) was going to file a suit against Palmer for using illegal violence against him. The Times published the letter for the opportunity of commenting against Savarkar. It said that if Chitpawan Brahmins used their brains for "better purposes" (meaning of course the Empire) then their arguments could be considered honest or to some such effect. Probably this letter of Savarkar prevented Palmer from going to court against me, for nothing of the kind happened.

VI. ON WAY TO MOROCCO

INTERVIEW WITH POLICE CHIEF

The Scotland Yard became interested in me after the beating in the Caxton HaU, especially as my friend Hyder Reza had told them that I was a desperado. They went to Bepin to bring me to the Chief of Scotland Yard. Mr Ral Sent word to me to see him. Thinking that every storm is over I [acceded] to Mr. Pal's request and went up to him. (In those days there was no registration system as the British Police introduced during and after the War, learning from the Germans). HE had ordered the plain clothes men to wait outside till I entered his house. When I went in, he told me that the Scotland Yard Chief wanted me and he was unable to refuse to help them and therefore I should go with the detectives. Meanwhile, the plain clothes men came in and I had no go but to face the Police Chief, Superintendent Mr. Quinn.

SCOTLAND YARD'S OFFER

As soon as I went into Mr. Quinn's room all persons cleared out, except one young man at a table. Mr. Quinn he was pleased to see me and as if I came there to ask for help as from a pastor. After inquiring when I came to London and what I was going to do (to the latter question I answered I was studying in the London County Council School of Process Engraving) he asked me if I thought there was any conspiracy behind the assassination of Sir Curzon Wylie. As I believed there was no conspiracy, I told him so. The man at the table with his back towards us was pretending to do some scribbling but was really taking stenogram of our conversation. "What do you know about Dhingra?" he asked. I told him, "He was quite a silent man." Then he came down to business. He asked me how I was paying my way. I said my friends were helping me to study. Naturally, he asked who were those friends. I told him the names of Savarkar and Aiyar. Then he told me that if I cared. I could have help for study if I found out if there was any conspiracy and who were in it. I flatly declines to do such a job as it was neither of my liking nor in my interests. 'No, no, please consider it and let me know, Mr. Quinn said. Another question he put in the course of the conversation was, why I didn't go away from the country? I said since I was not a criminal, I do not need to run away or take his suggestion. I simply wanted to get away from his presence taking advantage of his suggestion "to consider his offer."

POLICE CHIEF'S BUSINESS

Some days later I went to Mr. Quinn to tell him I would stick to my decision. During the course of his conversation this time I asked him if he considered if Indians were criminals. "No, no, I have myself been in India with King Edward the Seventh when he was Prince of Wales and found that Indians were the quietest of people on earth." Then I asked him why he followed up Indians

then. "Oh, my business is only to prevent crime," he said. I asked him, "Do you mean to say that the nationalists mean to perpetrate crime?" Mr. Quinn answered: "I am not against views, for in England you are free, but my business is to prevent crime!" "Do you mean then that holding nationalist views are alright but acting up to them is crime", I asked. Mr. Quinn answered again, "My business is only to see that no crime is committed." Inspector McCarthy, the next in position to Mr. Quinn, I believe, said during our conversation that it is easier to police all India than to rule London City. He was also another personal guard of King Edward VII.

From all this, I found out that staying in England would mean further persecution, since I was not made an amenable tool. Further with the breakup of the India House, I could not maintain myself. So I decided to go anywhere where I could live cheaply and also do some nationalist work. I was also nauseated with the "freedom in the freest of all countries". I would have returned to India already if I was sure no persecution would take place. But after the actions in England, persecution was more certain than ever in India. To go to find work in another country and to eke out a mere existence and vegetate there was repugnant to my wish, since I left India not for that purpose; but to do something useful either for myself or for the country was really my objective.

PASSAGE TO MOROCCO

While I was thinking what to do next, news came in the papers of a rebellion of the Moors against Spaniards in Morocco. I consulted Mr. Aiyar whether it is not worthwhile to join the Riffs in their struggle for freedom. An excellent idea, no doubt it was. My passage was assured if I went there. Moreover, Sukhsagar Dutt was ready to give up studies and go there. So I could have also companion to share my fate there. Sukhsagar had a regular passport but I had none. If I applied for one, they might refuse it. However, I tried to get a passport through the mediary of Thos. Cook and Son, Uncle Cook of Indian tourists with well-lined purse – as they promised to get one for one shilling for their services. I filled a form and they sent it to India Office. The reply was that as I was an Indian, I should apply personally to the India Office; so I went to the India Office and wanted to speak to the chief of the Passport Dept. London was still in hubbub about the Dhingra affair as the newspapers kept up the story and even prophesied that further murders were expected and all ministers were guarded. Naturally, they asked me at the entrance what I wanted from the chief of the Passport Dept. I of course said that I have come to get a passport. The man went inside and came back to say that I should come next day at a particular hour. I felt they were under fear that I wanted to find this pretext for shooting down another official. Next day when I went there, and mentioned the appointment, two persons came to take me to Sir Leslie Probyn. I told them they were detectives but they need not fear since I come for no other purpose than declared. They smiled. One went on each side of me always looking askance at my hands. I was given a seat and the two persons stood guard over me.

Sir Leslie Probyn asked me why I wanted a passport. I said I wanted to go to Morocco. What did I want to go there for? I said I wanted to join the Riffs in their rebellion. "Why do you want to go exactly to the Riffs and not to join the Spanish Legion?" I said that I did not want to help invaders but those who were defending themselves against them. "If you want, I can give you a recommendation to the Spanish Legion and I am sure you would be able to get into the Spanish

Legion.” “No, thanks, I am not also fit for a regular army but may be able to take part with irregulars.”

MY IDENTITY

After asking all these questions, he asked what papers I have got to prove my identity. I said I have none, but there are enough people in London to prove my statements and will stand witness to them. “Oh, if a man came to me and said, he was the Emperor of China and wanted a passport, is that enough to issue a passport to him?” I pointed out to him the example does not hold good, since I do not claim to be Emperor of any country and the Emperor of China would not come to him to ask for a passport. He did not even smile. I felt the authorities did not want to leave this opportunity go to get rid of me. “All right, I shall issue you a passport as an exception.”

I told him passport or no passport, exception or not, I am going to Tangier although I had an inkling that without a passport I would not be allowed to tranship in Gibraltar [*sic*] for a boat to Tangier.

So, we bought the tickets on the German Far East Liner “Luetzow”. Sukhsagar Dutt would not leave unless he had a Mauser rifle and a Browning revolver. In England at that time, one could purchase firearms by paying a shilling to a post office for license. I did not like the bombast of holding the long rifle, of which we did not know the use, but had to put up with it although I felt its carrying in civil dress might raise ridicule and suspicion. We got on top of bus to take train and held the rifle. Our detectives sat next to us as they said “to wish us good bye and good luck”. One of them asked us to be writing to him. “Of course” I said. We slept in a hotel in Southampton and got on board, on the day on which Dhingra was hanged in Pentonville prison, just 8 weeks after the murder. We reached Gibraltar. The customs authorities asked us to deposit the arms, and gave a receipt with which we could recover them on leaving.

AT GIBRALTAR

Gibraltar was sultry and arid. After taking room in a Spanish hotel we went out to walk. There were 6 Sindhi shops, all dealing in the same article, silks, curious [*sic*] from Far East, and India. I tried to enter into a conversation with the owners but as soon as they found we had not come to buy, they went back to their desks and were looking askance whether we did not come to lift their goods. The same scene was repeated in every shop. So we went on without the pleasure of meeting them.

We could cross over to Tangier every day but my friend Sukhsagar would not; saying let us go tomorrow. Thus nearly a week passed and our hotel bills rose up so that there would be nothing left if we stayed there further, I found that my companion was not willing to go to a country and for a purpose which would not give the comforts of London student life. I was not willing to retreat, even if we had money to go back.

VII. “MY GUIDE BECOMES MY FRIEND AND PHILOSOPHER”

I took up the last shilling or two and made up my mind to cross the Tanger landing there without a penny. Sukhasagar had made up his mind to return to London somehow. (I heard afterwards, that in Marseilles he borrowed some money from an unknown person to reach from Paris and after borrowing there some Indian reached London. That was the last I saw or heard of him.)

After crossing the water, I was accosted by a guide: “Hotel, Guide, Sir?”. Not knowing where to put up for the night, I asked him to take me to a hotel. Thinking I was a gentleman fit enough to pay, he took me to the best hotel in Tanger at that time, Hotel Bristol. Room four shillings I did not protest, for he would suspect that [I] was short of money or stingy.

AT TANGER- WITHOUT PENNY

Tanger of those days was international administration, the chief being taken over by the French, and Spanish Governments. It has no roads, all the paths of any breadth being strewn with stones. Therefore, there were also no carriages, the chief conveyance for man and goods being donkeys. It was however, a picturesque town, for which reason tourist ships used to stop there.

The evening of my arrival was sultry. After failing to enter into talk with “my countrymen, “ I went dispondent [sic] to the beach and sat down. My head was reeling with thoughts as to what I should do to hold out till at least such time as I could write to my friends in London and see what assistance they could give me. Meanwhile, how to stay and live in Tanger, before I could even attempt to go the Riffs ? While brooding over these thoughts, my guide passed taking a walk alone. He was not only curious what I was thinking sitting alone, but also knew from my face that I was melancholy, and he greeted me. Soon, he asked me what I was unhappy about. I told him that I was not at all unhappy, which he said, he would not believe in spite of my attempt to impress upon him that I was alright. At last, knowing as he did that I was from India, therefore an Oriental, he said point blank extending his hand “I am an oriental and so you are, tell me as a brother, what troubles you. Perhaps, I can be of assistance to you and if I can I shall assist you.” Now, to give up this opportunity of unburdening my heart would be suicidal. My situation was desperate as the reader knows. So I started my story.

THE GUIDE AS A FRIEND

I told him, I came to Tanger to join the Riffians in their fight against Spain. I had no money. I had no friend who would be able to assist me to go there. I did not know any language except

English. I was a Hindu and did not know Muslim habits and customs. I was therefore cudgeling my brains not only how to achieve my objects but also how to maintain myself till I could go there. To be at retreat was also impossible. I had asked him to take me to the hotel without having a penny in the pocket and I did not know how to pay even that night's lodging. What shall I do? Doing nothing was also impossible!

My friend, as he now was, was a young tall man with just growing beard made his face still longer than it was and pondered seriously heaving sigh. But there was a smile emerging at the corner of his mouth. I felt he sympathized with me, for being a non-Muslim and coming to join the Riffian all the way from India and landing for that purpose without penny. He did not ask as my Parisian Indian sympathizers in good circumstances bombarded me, "Why did you come here at all if you had no money." For the first time somehow, and a non-Indian with whom I had nothing in common as interest, tried to break his head as to how to relieve me from my predicament, the same afternoon as I met him.

He told me like this: You come in wrong time. If you had come some months ago, I could have helped you to any amount. Just now my business is bad, very bad. I have no money. You being a stranger, I cannot put you up in my house where my people are orthodox keepers of harem. Wait a minute, I have an idea which may solve the problem temporarily at least. I know a Spanish family and I shall ask them to give you bed and breakfast till we can make other arrangements. All right let us go to the hotel and take your baggage and I shall take you there.

At once, we left the shore, went into the hotel, he paid my bill for the night, lodging, and took out the baggage. Thus I went out as gentleman like as I entered it, led by my "guide" who became also friend and philosopher.

NEW FRIENDS

He took me to a Spanish family, who readily gave me a room and a promise of breakfast. What agreement he made with them, I did not know. After this, we went out together. He took me to an Arab, rather Moorish singing Cafe, introduced me to the proprietor whom he told to give me whatever I wanted, and also introduced me to an old Moor, a singer and a middle aged blond eyed riff with a twirled moustache and a French beard both well trimmed. If this man was found instead of an Arab Fez only in a European suit, he could have passed for a northern European, so European his skin, and manners were. I understood he spoke excellent French having been in France and educated in French schools. But there he was also a guide among the darker and orthodoxically dressed Moors, all just eking their existence. My guide's name was Selim Atyyeh.

In those days Morocco was the only North African country not yet completely swallowed up by some Western Power. There was at least nominally a Sultan in Fez, though the French upset one Sultan and offered him pension to replace him by one more subservient to themselves. But my Moorish friend told me, pointing to the coast of Spain which is clearly visible from Tanger: "You see we had once conquered and ruled that country for centuries and now the turn comes to us to be ruled and conquered by them. Probably, we deserve it and in any case we are going to be swallowed up by France. In fact in temperament and features, there is very slight difference between the Moors and the Spaniards and whom they mix together in Tanger, they are scarcely indistinguishable except by dress: The Moors being able to handle some Moorish pieces

on Moorish instruments. Only when politics interfere we see they are ferociously against each other.

That very same evening when I was introduced to the Riflian (called trouble or Kabyle), we three went into a European restaurant, European in the sense kept for Europeans.

From next day on, I was meeting them in their cafe daily, and I even stayed long than they there [sic], observing what was going on in the cafe. Whole day, there were waiting for some tourist ships so that they may conduct the tourists into the town and earn some money. Very often tourist ships did come and they lived by the earning

MY FIRST SMOKE

I was spending most of my time in the Arab cafe, One thing I observed was that all the Arabs there at least were smoking Hashish (Hemp) whenever they were idle. Even a young boy of barely 12 years smoked Hashish, which is a poisonous narcotic. I did not know at that time to be poisonous, but which I thought was only like cigarette smoking. I took one or two puffs, soon had my head reeling with headache, and I lost consciousness. Only after several hours, I could recollect what had happened. I was lying at the time lying dazed on the ground. But the boy was not affected and was doing everything as if he was free from the habit. That was the first and last time I tried Hashish, it was so awful.

By and bye [sic], I came to my friend upon my plan to go to the Riffs. He said he would try to approach the ex-sultan of Morocco through, a friend of his. Later on he told me that the ex-Sultan Abdul Aziz, who was pensioned by the French Government was willing to give a recommendation to Riff Chief but he could not help me with money to go there. Upon inquiry I found it would cost me £ 10 at least to reach the Riff country, if I got permission from Fez. So my going to the Riffs was a hopeless affair and my attempt failed.

Being penniless [sic], I had to get out of the country as soon as possible. My friend told me that if he had money he would have helped me to smuggle myself into the Riffian country, but his business was bad. What was his business? He himself explained to me he got to know me more chummily. He said that the guide profession was only a camouflage. His chief business was bank and jewel shop robbery in Spain. He was a member of a Spanish gang. In Morocco also he stripped off travellers of their all after taking them for an 'outing.' Some women travellers played frolick with them when they were in company or alone with them. He said all the active members of his gang in Spain were caught and sentenced to long-term imprisonments. So his business did not "go." He further told me that as there were some enemies among the police, he "removed" them and thrusting the dagger through the slits at the side of his overcoat. One night, he asked me to wait in a cafe in the interior of town. I waited long and at last he came back. He told me he had slipped into the harem of a house where a woman loved him and she had kept the door for him to enter. He said it would have cost him his life as such escapades are generally punished by death.

TERRIBLE YET FRANK FRIENDS

We introduced me to a man — Bu-Homara, who was plundering all the villages of a province. Bu-Homara showed me some places where he had buried the heads of his enemies. All terrible

fellows but they were open-hearted with me. The Homara's ambition was to become the Governor of a province and then live off the people like a lord. He sent an ultimatum to the Sultan saying that unless he was made Governor, he would lay waste to all that province. He was more powerful with his band than the actual Governor with his troops. He carried out his raids so perfectly that the troops could not hold out.

After the failure, rather impossibility to reach the Riffs, for want to a big sum there was nothing left but to quit the country. Where to go? It was dependent upon money. Anyway, I had to get money to go away. I wrote to my friends in London about the expenses required to reach the Riffs, knowing well that they cannot afford that sum. I asked to make arrangements to enable me to shift to any other country, even India. I knew only a few pounds would be available with great difficulty. And it would take weeks before they could gather that sum. There was also suspicion that would take months before I got any money. After some weeks, I got a letter and money order telling me that they could send me only enough money to land in Portugal. Where a friend would meet me and see what can be done.

One day the postman brought a money order to the cafe but he would not deliver the amount without witnesses. Passport was not enough, for in these days the passports had no identity photographs, that was an invention of Germans. So I had to take my friend to get the money. Now it surged in my mind that my friend would surely expect to be paid for the two months and off he kept me alive so generously. If I paid anything I could not reach Lisbon, for there were only a few shillings left behind passage money. If I do not pay, my friend might think I would be unjust and God knows what other consequences he would draw therefrom about my mentality. When I got the money from the post-official, I told him to keep it for me till the ship for Lisbon came. He told me to keep it with myself. Very reluctantly, he safeguarded the money for me. I told him to buy of ticket of Lisbon [sic]. But he said it is better to wait till the ship came; for he said, some British informers were asking who this fellow (myself) who was ubiquitous with him, what I was about and wither I intended to go. How right my friend's information was will be known in my description about Lisbon.

The ship came. My friend at once went to a Dutch steamship office and bought a ticket for Lisbon asking me to be in readiness to board the ship and then he took me into the ship. He not only have me my ticket but also the rest of the money. He asked me to write to him as often as possible and if I could afford, he had only one wish: He wanted a small bottle of some French perfume. I never expected he would not ask for one penny for all the expenses he went through on my account during months. He did not ask me to send money if I could at any time. This as the man I had to engage once as my "guide". From guide, he became my benefactor without any reward.

VIII. DRIVEN FROM LISBON TO PARIS- PORTUGAL – A COLONY OF BRITISH CAPITAL

At last I sailed away to Lisbon with a few shillings to land. My acquaintances on board were a pastor couple and mechanic both English. During the travel they were different from the “high brow” Englishmen we are accustomed to deal with in India. Who is not a “high brow” Englishman in India?

INDIAN CULTURE

When I landed in Lisbon, I was informed that I had to pay a head-tax upon landing and it amounted to £1. I had not a penny again. I would not be allowed to pass the bar unless I paid. The English mechanic volunteered to lay the money out if I repaid. I agreed and gave him my Friend’s address in Cascaes near Lisbon, where all people who can afford rent or own a villa for residence in summer. It was King Manuel’s time. I thought I would somehow settle down in Portugal with the help of my friend. I was too tired already within a year of continuous wandering without a penny, tossed as it were by every wind and wave. I was first put up in my friend’s villa but the very next day after my arrival, I was transferred to the house of a Member of Parliament—a very nice elderly gentleman—Dr. Lacorda. He was interested in Indian culture and used to point out that Indians had calculated the age of the earth more exactly than any and that their invention of the decimal system had revolutionised mathematics and thus all sciences.

JUICES OF ROTTEN GRAPES

When I first landed, my dress was very shabby and I could not introduce me to any in that town. So my friend kindly gave me the suit of a brother of his who had died some months earlier. I was only sleeping in Dr. Lacorda’s villa, eating in my friend’s house nearby. I made acquaintance with wine for the first time. When table wine was served and I tried it, I could not understand what pleasure there was in drinking the juice which nearly smelled of rotten grapes. I did not think it had alcohol in it, however little, nor was it considered medicinal in properties. For the first time, I was living in a European family and had to learn to use knife and fork properly at table, especially as my hosts were aristocrats. Except my friend, none in the family understood any English. But my friend was most of the time away on duty and it devolved upon the other members to keep me engaged. So gradually, I tried and could understand what was being said at table, which they thought was a great progress.

The English mechanic companion on board steamer came to me and my friend generously paid what I owed him.

I was living like a well-to-do tourist thanks to the good position of my friend's family, and it is considered a great honour done to me when people knew I was also guest of the Dr. M.P.

SECRET SERVICEMAN

I was also taken into the Casino there and introduced to several people. My dreams of settling down in Portugal were shaken in a couple of days when one morning my friend rushed into my room in Dr. Lacorda's house, asking me to dress up quick as I was summoned to the Ministry of the Interior. He said that in the dead of night, Secret Servicemen had come to his house and wanted to remove me at once, but when they were told I was sleeping in the M.P.'s house, they could not do so, as he was immune as a parliamentarian. Thus I was spared the misery of sleeping in the lock-up. So there was nothing to do but to rush to Lisbon and face the very Ministry of the Interior. In those days, if anyone was denounced even anonymously as an anarchist (bomb-thrower or terrorist), he was at once spirited away to the Island of Macao in China to die a slow death there, unless some warder killed the accused quickly. Not only the man accused but all his relations and friends had to be prepared to be deported. Yet in the streets of Lisbon, there was no sign of revolt and all the "devil-may-care" went about drinking and dancing night after night. "All was quiet in Portugal." I was not so much worried about my fate as that of my friend and his family, who were also terror-stricken since the visit of the Secret Servicemen in the dead of night. I had not been two days since the trouble started although I entered the part legally and was not travelling like a lord observed by all. It was mystery to me how and why especially the latter. The Government considered me so dangerous as to be heard by none lower than the Minister of the Interior. Such an honour is very much to be avoided by a man in the ordinary, below the ordinary, walk of life.

We went to Lisbon early in the morning to the Ministry of the Interior in Lisbon as it was an urgent and dangerous business to the State. But hours passed till the gentleman entered his office in the afternoon past 3 P.M. If any office-worker came some minutes late, he will be warned. But the important ministers who save the State, can come anyhours late. So we were waiting, thinking every minute now he comes—perhaps.

DO YOU KNOW BOMB MAKING?

At last, the Minister entered into the room dressed in impeccable style. After a few minutes, I, the potential enemy of the State, law and order was asked asked to come in. The Minister was kind enough to give me seat in spite of my criminal position.

There was a letter before him which he read first. While reading he asked me where I came from last. I told him I came from Tanger. Why did you go there? — 'I wanted to join the Ruffians.' What did you want to do with them? — 'I liked to help them in fighting'; "Oh, you wanted to become — what is his name — the bandit chieftain of S. India — yes,- Shivaji?" He remarked, adding "you want to found an empire like him!" I told him in answer: I am not a great man nor would like to be one like Shivaji: "Yes yes, I know" he retorted.

The next question was: Do you know bomb-making? — "Sorry, no." He kept quiet instead of putting further questions on that point, as I thought, he would.

The third question was: What do you intend to do here? "I only want to settle down and naturalise myself in Portugal." "I have no objection to staying here but you must place yourself under police supervision and cannot change your residence without police permission. I answered: No, I don't want to stay in this country under these conditions, since I wanted to live as a free man. "Sorry, I cannot do otherwise." "Then I am going away from this country." "Where do you want to go?" "I will leave for France" "All right: When are you leaving? I have to send a man to see that you leave." I fixed a day right on the spot and informed him that he can send his man at a particular hour to "see me off."

He asked me to write my answers to the three questions on a paper and sign it. Why? I saw that the questions came from the British Minister in Lisbon, and he had to send a signed paper to him from me. I saw the heading of the letter on the table.

This "minister" of an independent country was formerly chief justice of Portuguese India and he "studied" Indian history to the effect that "Shivaji was a bandit." Every school-child "knows" that in India. If Shivaji was European, history might be written otherwise, as a wise, clement ruler, whether he failed or succeeded, to found an Empire.

A COLONY OF BRITISH CAPITALS

I suspected that Portugal was a colony of British capital, for all the municipal work were concessioned British companies, such as tram, gas, electricity, and I was told by a man from Portuguese East Africa, that Portugal holds "her colonies" only with the benignness of the British authorities in the adjacent British territory. If someone escaped to Portuguese East Africa, the British authorities sent British policemen to catch him and the action was ratified later by the Portuguese "authorities." I have known a case before I went away from India where an Indian refugee was fetched away from Goa with only a semblance of formality. But I never thought till I had to answer the Minister of the Interior in Portugal that Portugal itself was [a] colony in spite of a different colour painted on the map of Europe. No wonder, Portugal had to enter the war on the side of the allies during the Great War.

On the appointed morning, the plain clothes-man came to the house, saw that I was ready to start and accompanied and observed me till I got into the train for Paris with a real ticket in my hand. I was also glad to lift the anxiety of my friend's family about deportation to Macao by leaving the land, although one was never sure they would not be deported for giving me refuge. Dr. Lacorda himself would have been deported if it was not for his high and respected position.

The Anarchist Library
Anti-Copyright



MPT Acharya
Reminiscences of a Revolutionary
July 23 – October 8, 1937

[https://olebirklaursen.files.wordpress.com/2019/09/
m.p.t.-acharya-reminiscences-of-a-revolutionary-1937.pdf](https://olebirklaursen.files.wordpress.com/2019/09/m.p.t.-acharya-reminiscences-of-a-revolutionary-1937.pdf)

theanarchistlibrary.org