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Autumn Leaves
Kashmiri Reminiscences

Ram Nath Kak

Kashmir has a unique tradition of recording history. This book, in this tradition, presents the intimate life of a Kashmiri in the post-independence era. Such a personal story is a rarity in India. Ram Nath Kak draws compelling vignettes of everyday life; a hard childhood, life as a government official, drama of the war with Pakistan, meetings with mystics, and so on.

The book presents perspectives on Kashmiri society and politics that are helpful in understanding the rise of the recent insurgency there.

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Ram Nath Kak



RAM NATH KAK, who passed away in Honolulu in 1993, was a veterinarian, a scholar and a teacher. He was influential in shaping the attitudes of many young people in Kashmir and in Delhi.

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1 Preface

The pages that follow were written by my father in Baton Rouge, in the fall of 1985 and eight years later again during April and May; some more sections were written in Honolulu, Hawaii. Before he could give the book a final shape, my father passed away suddenly in Honolulu in July 1993. I have edited his notes and used other materials such as his letters.

In Kashmir, autumn leaves are used to make embers for kangris. These are the autumn leaves from one Kashmiri life. This sweep has not captured all, but the golden leaves do carry impressions of many storms, lightning and the balmy warmth of the sun.

Subhash Kak

Editor

2 Foreword

It gives me great pleasure to say a few words about this remarkable autobiography created by a very distinguished scientist and humanist, Shri Ram Nath Kak, who has lived through some of the most momentous events in the history of Kashmir, no less than in the history of India, in the twentieth century.

As I read through this manuscript, a question gradually took shape in my mind: how do we locate memoirs and autobiographies within creative literature as a whole? I am not a literary critic and therefore, I can offer no formal answer to this question. Yet I have no doubt that memoirs, if sensitively created, rate very high in the scale of creative writing. For this mode of literary creation not only provides a glimpse of the inner psyche of the person, it also portrays the 'context', or the 'times', in which an individual pursues his life. Shri Kak's memoir meets all the requirements of a truly distinguished autobiographical piece. It has the additional advantage of having been penned with a poignant sensitivity that captures and constructs the past - no less than the viewpoint of the participant observer - with a faithfulness of extraordinary quality.

Autumn Leaves, as Shri Kak calls his reminiscences, portray with rare elegance the culture of Kashmir and the manner in which sensitive minds located in this beautiful valley interacted over the centuries with creative men in India, on the one hand, and Central Asia, on the other. In the course of this portrayal the composite character of popular religion in Kashmir is sketched with rare grace and understanding. Against the backdrop of a remarkably integrated culture, Shri Kak delineates his life as a growing child in a Pandit household, characterized by intensely close bonding between generations, no less than within generations. Through such a portrayal, he captures the strength of the family as the basic unit of Kashmiri society, which gives great resilience to the individual, no less than to the wider community.

The core of Autumn Leaves is concerned with the professional career of Shri Kak as a distinguished scientist, on the one hand; and the love and affection with which he nurtured his family, in close interaction with the larger kinship community, on the other. This part of the memoir spells out a remarkable success story so far as the Kak household is concerned; but even more telling than material success is the affection and concern which tie different members of the family to each other.

In the concluding sections of the memoir, Shri Kak dwells upon the exterior world in which his life work was located as a Kashmiri and a citizen of India. We see through his eyes the growing politicization of Kashmir prior to 1947; as we also perceive the tragic handling of politics in the state by the Delhi authorities after it had been drawn into the Indian Union. There is much here that would be of interest to those who are reflecting on the Kashmir problem today as well as to those who are responsible for fashioning the destiny of Kashmir.

I trust this autobiography will get the wide circulation it so richly deserves. For it conveys in a way no formal work of scholarship can convey, both the cultural quality of Kashmir and the tragedy which has overtaken it of late. Yet the spirit of the Kashmiri people and their extraordinary ability to refashion lives of dignity and creativity for themselves comes across even more powerfully than the tragedy which has overtaken this beautiful valley in Shri Kak's account of his life and times.

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3 Part I – Growing Up

***I have nothing at all,
and endless is my wealth.
--- Shankara***

***I came straight
and straight I shall return.
Who can bend me
out of my shape?
--- Lalla***

***In my beginning is my end.
--- T.S. Eliot***

Section 1

The allure and beauty of Kashmir is a mixed blessing, bringing our land considerable fame but also adventurers and pillagers. Over centuries, people learnt to cope with the plunder of the nomad from the north and the west. Then there were the cycles of flood and famine. Inspired perhaps by this terrible beauty, Kashmir became a great centre of philosophy, literature, painting, dance and the other arts. While it was often the first to suffer the devastation by the conquerors who cherished the riches of India; it was also the springboard for the missionaries and scholars who set out to spread Sanskrit culture and learning to Central Asia, Tibet and China. Mahayana Buddhism went north and east from here. For about fifteen hundred years until around 1200, Kashmir was one of the great centres of learning in the world. The period of the most brilliant flowering of Kashmiri culture was during the time of Abhinavagupta, the philosopher and critic, who lived about nine hundred years ago. This was also the period when Shaiva philosophy of Kashmir attained its zenith.

But this was also a period of great political turmoil. Kashmir got caught in the vortex of forces let loose by the Mongolian empire of Chingiz Khan and his successors. Powerful feudal lords, displaced from their principalities in Central Asia, took refuge in Kashmir. The Kashmiri political system was not mature enough to deal with these forces.

At the height of its glory, Kashmiri culture suffered violent political defeat. The centuries that followed were full of tribulations. The Turks and the Persians who became the new political masters had no sympathy for the old Kashmiri heritage. The subtle insights of the philosophers and sages were preserved for the common man in the mystical poetry of Lalla and her successors. For my ancestors the struggle was just to preserve the old; there was no time to build afresh. It was in one such family that I was born in Srinagar in October 1917.

My grandmother died of cholera when I was about a year old. My mother (Siddhalakshmi) was informed of her mother's death in Pulwama by her brother Madhav. Reports of the hundreds of deaths in the epidemic were pouring in. I had just starting crawling. Mother was torn between her duty to attend the thirteenth day funeral ceremony and protection of her children. Ultimately, at the persistence of Madhav, she decided to accompany him taking me with her. She asked Lalaji (my father) to bring with him various articles required for the ceremony.

Lalaji left for Pulwama early in the morning of the thirteenth day. Half way down to the village he saw a rider on horseback galloping toward him. On being asked why he was in such a hurry so early in the morning, the rider informed him that he was speeding to Srinagar to inform Pandit Suraj Kak (Lalaji) that his wife was dead and was to be cremated that day.

This was a great blow to my father. After the funeral my father carried me back home and handed me over to Didda (Taravati), the wife of his younger brother Bayaji (Kishan Lal).

Six months earlier, Didda had lost her only son to measles at Khir Bhavani, the famed temple north of Srinagar. To console her in her grief, my mother asked her to consider me as her son and now it had come true. Didda loved me very much. Next summer, in 1919, my uncle Bayaji took Didda and me to Abbotabad, the Cantonment town sixty miles from Rawalpindi, where he then worked for the Gorkha Rifles.

Section 2

In Abbotabad, my health was bad, and I cried constantly. Even though my aunt had dry breasts I would suckle them. Was it because my mother died before I had been weaned? Although my digestion was weak, I would go to the cereal hawker to get toasted grams or corn. In the evenings, Bayaji would take me out to the Parade ground. As time passed, I started improving in my general health and behaviour. After about two years in Abbotabad, a telegram arrived informing us of the death of my other grandmother who was nearly a hundred years old.

Doing twenty to thirty miles a day, our earlier journey to Abbotabad had taken us six days by tonga. There was no motor traffic. By the time we returned, solid rubber tyred motor vehicles had started plying between Rawalpindi and Srinagar and the journey took only two days. We went to Rawalpindi by the night train and in the morning boarded a bus. We stayed at Domel for the night and reached Srinagar next day in the evening.

Bayaji was there till the thirteenth day ceremony and then returned to his job while we stayed back to observe one year of mourning. At Abbotabad, Bayaji developed acute tertiary malaria. Despite treatment in the army hospital, he did not get well. He became very weak and despondent and resigned from the service. On his return to Srinagar he consulted with more doctors but to no avail. Ultimately he was persuaded to see a pandit in Ailakadal who invoked some mantras and astonishingly during the next fifty years of his life, many of which were spent in the plains, he never again suffered from fever.

But the return to Kashmir meant that Bayaji was without a job. On occasion he would tutor a boy. Later Gopi Nath Dhar, a neighbour, who was an accounts officer in the Electricity Department in Jammu, hired him as a typist clerk on daily wages. Due to the temporary nature of the job, Bayaji did not take Didda with him to Jammu. Now that she was by herself in Srinagar, she spent a lot of time with her brothers at Habbakadal, and she was happy doing so. She would sometimes take me with her, and I enjoyed being with her relatives.

My grandfather, Thakur Kak, and his wife Ranim Dyed had four sons and a daughter. My father and his other two younger brothers, Madhavlal and Chandulal, lived in the same house as a joint family. Lalaji and Madhavlal worked for the police, while Chandulal worked at the post office. The police work required long stints away from town, and the household was in reality run by Chandamal, Chandulal's wife. She and her husband prevailed upon Lalaji to let her have a separate kitchen. This was unusual since Lalaji had raised his brothers, educated them, and arranged their marriages. After my mother's death, Chandamal became the matriarch of the joint household. The joint family was quite poor and appearances were very important. On the rare occasions that Lalaji was at home we got decent food.

Not having a mother is a great handicap in a joint family. Normally only Chanamal's children got milk to drink. This in itself was not the end of the world for me, but there was no way to keep the milk from the cats, and when this would happen Chandamal would complain to her husband that I had drunk it. Chandulal would then rain blows on me with his hooked stick, which would cause my nose to bleed. I nursed the weals on my body for days.

Thus I grew up, and one day I was admitted into school. My elder brother was in the fifth grade in the same school then, and so we would walk to school together. We were taught both Urdu and Hindi scripts. In the Urdu script somehow I could not remember the letter {\em pey} and this got me several beatings from my uncle. Chandulal asked me why I could not say {\em pey}, which in Kashmiri means "fall", and since then the letter has remained stuck in my mind. Next year my brother Sarakak moved to a middle school which was across the Tsunth Kol (Apple River), the river that flowed by our house.

Section 3

Lalaji's job in the police kept him out of town most of the time. This was particularly so after Mother's death. Conditions of neglect were so acute that I got infested with mites in the eyelashes. Bhadri (my maternal cousin because of the de-facto adoption) used to demite me with needle and nail.

Our joint family was not being managed very well. Taking advantage of Lalaji's long absences, Chandulal became very autocratic. Bayaji would send money for our clothes and upkeep but Chandulal made no mention of it to anybody.

My eldest brother Babuji (Dina Nath), who had a scholarship, spent most of his time in his room, studying. My cries on being beaten did not put courage into him to come to my aid.

Lalaji was very unhappy with the conditions at home, so he started pressing Babuji to get married, hoping that his wife would take charge of the household. Soon Babuji was married to Indrani (Bibiji). Lalaji built a double storied house, facing the river, for the new couple, at the back of the old house.

We Kashmiris had a custom that a bride would not enter her husband's room unless asked. Many nights, Bibiji ended up sleeping with Chandamal who was then suffering from dry itch. Chandamal's constant scratching would make it impossible for Bibiji to sleep. Somehow this arrangement suited my brother since he did not want his marriage to distract him from his studies.

I was in the second grade and it was autumn. A neighbour came to the school and told the teacher that I was wanted at home. Maybe he told the true reason of the death of my father to the teacher, but all I was told by the teacher was to run home as I had to go somewhere. But from the urgency in the teacher's voice I guessed that something bad had happened.

Lalaji had rejoined his police duties. About six months after the wedding of Babuji, Lalaji was called to investigate a case. An English tourist had been mugged at Ganderbal and the thieves were presumed to belong to the Bakarwal tribe who spend summers in the high mountains. Lalaji was now off tracking the alleged culprits in the high altitudes. On the ninth day after his departure his dead body was brought back. We never found out whether he died of natural cause or was killed.

Section 4

On being told that everybody at home was off, I ran home, whimpering all the way. Entering the lane that led to our house, I found people assembled on the ground floor, and the compound being cleansed and plastered with fresh mud to purify the house. Nobody spoke to me so I ran up to the second floor where I found women wailing and somebody under cover stretched out on the bed opposite the door. I could not understand what the hubbub was all about. Presently our uncle Niranjan Nath Kaul arrived. I attached myself to him. He went and removed the sheet from the face and opened the eyelids. I saw a pair of glassy eyes. Water was poured in the mouth, whereupon red liquid trickled out. The body was quite stiff. I did not understand the significance of all this. This was the first death witnessed by me. I did not cry, even though everyone around me was crying.

A little later Zinda Bayu, the family priest, arrived in the compound wailing loudly. On the step outside the threshold he collapsed on the ground and started striking his head against the stone wall. He was wailing that he had lost his Battabab, the father who sustains. I stood and watched without emotion. I had seen so little of my father that his passing away did not affect me at that time of my life.

Babuji was at college and he reached home somewhat later. Meanwhile, our uncle Chandulal decided to perform the last rites. Babuji was in time for the rites, but Chandulal told him it was best done this way since his studies would preclude him from performing other related rites during the mourning period of one year. This had important repercussions later when Chandulal filed a legal claim on a part of Lalaji's estate. He claimed that his performance of the funeral rites was proof that he was Lalaji's adopted son.

***Dark day--
the birds going to roost
the lotus petal closing
the night-flowering jasmine's opening***

the sun has set.
--- Valmiki

Section 5

After his graduation, Babuji joined the Government College at Lahore, the capital of Punjab. He had stood first in his examination and had been awarded scholarships by the state as well as the college. So his education did not tax the resources of the household. On occasion, in winter, he sent money home for warm clothing for our middle brother Sarakak and me. But Chandulal often found other use for such money.

Although as a child I took things for granted, the beauty of Srinagar, the city of seven bridges and three lakes, was plain to see. Our house in Sathu was barely a mile away from the lock that drains the Dal Lake into the Tsunth Kol that flows into the Vitasta (Jhelum, Veth in Kashmiri) river. Sathu, from the Sanskrit Setu meaning an embankment, goes all the way from the bottom of the Shankaracharya hill to the high bank of Vitasta near Habbakadal, the second bridge. Our house was somewhat closer to Dalgate than to Habbakadal. This meant that we were not very far from the one thousand feet high Shankaracharya hill with the Shiva temple atop.

***On the temple bell
perching, sleeps
the butterfly, oh!***
--- Buson

The great Mughal gardens of Cheshmashahi, Nishat, and Shalimar were not very far by shikaras from the lock at Dalgate. The terraces of these gardens and the water fountains amidst the pools were a delight to behold. In spring, the gardens, with their fountains and flowers in all colours and sizes, were like a symphony heralding rebirth and rejuvenation. This is where the joint family came for picnics on some Sundays. For such trips a doonga, a light and low traditional Kashmiri houseboat, was rented. We would set out early in the morning and also visit Sona Lanka and Rup Lanka, the two artificial islands in the middle of the lake. Beyond Shalimar lay another beautiful garden of Harwan, once the abode of the great Buddhist philosopher Nagarjuna. Here was the reservoir for the water supply to Srinagar and also tanks for trout breeding.

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Just before Nishat was the village of Ishbar, with its site of the goddess Durga-Sureshwari high on a 3000 feet high rock. Here lay the famed springs of Shatadhara and Guptaganga. More recently, Ishbar became known as the site of the ashram of the great Shaivite philosopher Swami Lakshaman Joo.

Beyond the side opposite the Dal Lake was the Hari (from Shari, the mynah bird) Parbat hill and its fort. This is the pilgrimage site of Durga as Sharika (or Shari) goddess. The story goes that Durga, in the guise of the Sharika bird, placed this hill here and closed one of the gates of hell. The wall around the hill was built by the Mughal emperor Akbar.

The city's seven bridges across the river had endured for at least five hundred years. Each bridge had its own unique story and a ride in a boat down the river was always enjoyable. In summer it was common to see boys jump off the railings of the bridges into the river.

Several areas of the town could be reached by the intricate waterways and canals connected to the Dal Lake. Waterways also connected to the Nagin and the Anchar lakes to the west of Dal. And then the city itself had several delightful parks, temples, and mosques. Down the river at Shadipur, the junction of Vitasta and the Sindh rivers, was a delightful park.

Fourteen miles from Srinagar, up the Sindh river, is the town of Ganderbal. A few miles from there is the temple of Khir Bhavani in a village called Tulamula. The spring at Tulamula is sacred to Maharajni, a form of Durga. The water of the spring is believed to change in colour from time to time, foretelling important events. This temple was the site of a popular pilgrimage and festival, as it is even now.

Three miles to the southeast lay the ruins of Pandrethen, the old capital town founded by the emperor Ashoka. Here, on the terraced slopes rising above the river, can be found remains of many old buildings. This was another charming place to visit.

A celebration that all children looked forward to was the arrival of the Maharaja at the end of April into Srinagar, his summer capital. Barges, boats, and shikaras, all gaily decorated, made their way through the river to the cheers of the spectators on the banks. There were exciting boat races.

We spoke Kashmiri at home, but at school the instruction was in Hindustani. We sang the vakh of Lalla, the lilas (bhakti poems) of Parmanand and Krishna Razdan, and the lol lyrics of Habba Khatun.

When I was in the third grade, Bayaji took his family, that included a daughter Kamala born before Babuji's wedding, and me to Jammu. Those days it took three days to complete the 177 miles to Jammu. The bus engines would overheat on the steep inclines of the mountain roads, and so the government had provided water tanks every ten to fifteen miles on the road. The pneumatic tyre was not fully developed and blowouts were a common occurrence. The driver and his assistant, called the cleaner, would repair the flats as they occurred, and this is why the progress was so slow. We spent the first night at Banihal after crossing the 9200 feet pass and having done just fifty miles. In the morning, as we were to board the bus we saw Babuji, who was on his way to Srinagar from Lahore. He took me to a halwai where I ordered a pound of hot milk with a thick layer of cream. It tasted delicious especially since I had not had milk in Srinagar for a long time. Soon we boarded our respective buses.

Ten miles beyond Banihal the winding road took particularly sharp turns. On the left were the rocky cliffs and on the right was the deep ravine. I started feeling nauseous. I could feel the cream at my throat, and soon I threw up everything. The journey then became a nightmare. The memory of that cream stayed with me for years and every year I would throw up on this route. Finally, I was cured of it after I had a severe attack of typhoid in my fifteenth year.

The evening of the third day we reached Ramnagar where Bayaji was waiting for us on the roadside. He joined us on the bus for the remainder of the ride. We got off at the busstop in Jammu and he took us home. The same week I was enrolled in the local primary school known as the Pakki Dakki Government School. My Hindi teacher was a toothless old local whose accent was difficult to understand. The school stressed Urdu, which was then the court language. One day in summer on the way to school, I was confronted by a big monkey. I did not know how to react and panicked, and he bit me on the knee. I was carrying a rock in my hand and I instinctively aimed it into his open mouth whereupon he ran away. My knee wound took quite some time to heal.

My life was carefree but in summer I would often get epistaxis. The heat would dry up my nasal passages and any itching would set off bleeding. This was alleviated by applying butterfat or oil into the nostrils.

Next year, Chandulal held the yagyopavit (mekhala) ceremony for the boys in the joint family. It was a very elaborate ceremony, requiring months of preparation, marking the beginning of formal education for boys. My happy days came to an end when I was sent back to Srinagar for this ceremony. Back in the lion's den, I was admitted to a primary school in Sathu.

The school had a tradition that every Hindu boy contributed two annas for tea and kulchas for their Hindu teachers; the Muslim boys did likewise for the Muslim teachers. In addition, boys bought tea, milk, and coals, rubbed the samovar clean, made tea and served it. I was the only boy who did not contribute because I could not bring myself to ask Chandulal for it, knowing well that instead of money I will get blows.

The wedding of Radha Krishan Mirza, a close friend of Babuji, was approaching. He was also a relative as his sister was married to Dr Zutshi, whose first wife was our sister who died in childbirth. Those days it was believed that the deceased wife had somehow left her trace in the new wife and so we treated Mrs Zutshi as if she was our real sister. Because of this the Mirza and Kak families were very close. The Mirzas wanted Indrani to spend a few days at their home. They sent a servant with the invitation. Chandamal, Indrani, Sarakak, and I were at home. Indrani was keen to go, but Chandamal would not give a clear answer. Finally, the servant left, but then Chandamal asked me to call him back. She told the

servant now that Indrani could go. That evening when Chandulal found that Indrani had left, he asked if she had taken permission to do so. Chandamal now lied that she had left on her own. The rest of us were too scared to tell the truth. Now Indrani was not invited back. Relatives were told that as she had left without asking she should return when she pleased.

Indrani could not stay with the Mirzas beyond a week, and so after that she went to her father's house which was across the river. This was a great shock to the young lady. Ultimately her father swallowed his pride and sent her back to us. The day she came back she was pretty much ignored and left to herself; later she was treated as badly as in the past.

Meanwhile Babuji completed his M.A. and secured a First Class First in the University which earned him a gold medal. He applied for a teaching position in the Kashmir State. The Maharaja of Kashmir returned his application with the following note: "I am happy to see my subjects doing so good in academics and although I would have liked to appoint you in the College, there are no openings now and you must wait for some more time." Babuji did not want to waste his time waiting for a position to open up; he took up a teaching job in a Khalsa College in Punjab. Meanwhile a position of lecturer was advertised by the Government of Kapurthala. Babuji applied for it. The Maharaja of Kapurthala was impressed by his record. Babuji was called for an interview and appointed a lecturer in Randhir College in the year 1927/1928.

Section 6

Babuji, Bibiji and I left for Kapurthala. Unlike my last trip, the vehicular traffic now moved faster, and it took us only two days to reach Jammu. We went straight to the railway station. It was late evening and the railway cars were being shunted. I had never seen a train or a brightly lit train station and I mistook the sight for a shopping complex. I was wide eyed with curiosity and asked Babuji, "Tell me, tell me, how do these shops move?" He told me to wait and see. Before entering the station we ran into one of Babuji's classmates at Srinagar. He insisted that we stay with him for the night. At his home we played indoor games late into the night and had a good meal. We spent the next day also with him. I was shown the railway carriages to satisfy my curiosity about moving shops. Later we boarded our train, changing at Wazirabad on our way to Jalandhar. We got off the train a few stations before Jalandhar at Kartarpur and took a tonga to Kapurthala. We roomed at a Dharmashala for a couple of days before a house was rented. This was a double storey house that belonged to a local doctor.

After a week's rest and acclimatization, I joined the Ghantaghar primary school in the fourth grade. In Kashmir, I had done both Hindi and Urdu, but in Kapurthala I had to choose between the two. Urdu was the court language so it was given more importance. Nobody, including the old man who taught it, was particularly interested in Hindi. Urdu students, unlike their Hindi counterparts, were required to write on wooden slates two or three times a day. Babuji asked me what script I wanted to choose. To escape the tedium of writing on the wooden slates, I expressed a preference for Hindi. In the beginning my pronunciation of certain words was quite sloppy and the class and the teachers would make fun of me, but by the year's end I was one of the best in the language class.

At home, our kitchen was out in the compound under a shelter without a door. Adjacent to it was a bedroom where Bibiji and I slept. This room led to another room which served as the kitchen store as well as the place for the servant to sleep. Babuji was preparing for his M.A. in English literature from Calcutta University and therefore he used a room on the upper floor to study and sleep. A large room on the ground floor that opened on the street served as drawing room as well as guest room.

Here is the story of how we lost our first servant, Mahanand, a big hulk of a man from Garhwal. Bibiji was suspicious the way the kneaded flour used to disappear from the pan. She decided to watch him. It was customary to eat by turn so that everyone could have hot chapaties of which each got four. One day, after I finished my meal, Bibiji noticed that the dough had diminished by half. Bibiji was sure that Mahanand had made more chapaties and hidden them. So, while Mahanand was still in the kitchen, I went to his room and after a search found eight thick chapaties under his pillow. We removed the chapaties without telling him. As was his custom, Mahanand carried a thali with chapaties, vegetables, and dal to

his room for his meal after everyone else had eaten. On discovering that his chapaties had disappeared he began to sulk. After Babuji left for work we showed him the chapaties and reproached him for his behaviour. He said nothing, went to bed and refused to leave his room. In the evening Babuji asked him to forget the whole matter and get back to work. He remained silent, and continued like this for two days without food and water. The third day Babuji told him that if he did not want to work he should leave. Then Mahanand left us.

Punjab is very cold in December and January and occasionally water freezes in shallow open spaces. In winter, we warmed our beds with a Kashmiri kangri, an earthen pot with red hot coals and a wickerwork jacket. One day, Bibiji was fasting until sundown and I well remember the feast that followed. At ten Babuji went up to his room and Bibiji and I retired to our room. Bibiji asked me to make some live coals for the kangri. She warmed her bed with the kangri and then passed it to me. As the bed got warm I fell asleep with the kangri in the bed. Sometime during the night, when I turned in the bed, the kangri spilled live coals on the sheets. The linen caught fire and smoke filled the room. Bibiji woke up and yelled. This awakened me and as I sat up something hot touched my leg. Alarmed, I pushed away from the bed with such force that it broke one of the legs of the charpai. Fortunately, I was unharmed. Bibiji ran up to Babuji for help. Annoyed, he said that we should pour water on the linen to douse the fire and if there was no water then urinate on it. So we spread out the mattress and the linen in the compound and poured water, that we had plenty of, on the smouldering mess which extinguished the fire. We had no spare charpai in the house so I had to share Bibiji's charpai. This continued till the carpenter built a new charpai for me.

Section 7

One evening, in our house on Shalimar Road, Bibiji surreptitiously cooked some hot potatoes for herself. This upset me. Next day, early in the morning, Babuji woke us up for the usual morning walk but I was still sulking and this piqued Babuji who had no inkling of the matter. I was sent back home. I chained the door from the inside and awaited their return. Shortly, the cool breeze in the morning lulled me to sleep and when they returned I was fast asleep. They knocked and banged at the door for a long time. Finally, they went up on the roof of the neighbour's house and threw a bucket of water on me, which awakened me. I was still in a bad mood, and so when I went down to open the door I kept on insisting that I had never fallen asleep. This irritated Babuji and he slapped me and turned me out of the door. My sourness continued and I sat on the street stairs thinking about my future. I thought of suicide by drowning in the river Baeen. My contemplation continued thus for about half an hour. And then I had a sudden flash of understanding that I was destined for something remarkable and cutting out that future would be a sacrilege. I went in, had my meal and left for school and by the evening everything was back to normal.

There is another interesting episode from this period. Babuji bought an expensive china tea set. Washing it was my responsibility as the servant could not be trusted to be careful enough with it. Babuji also told me that if I ever did anything wrong he would excuse me if I told the truth. One day while I was washing the tea kettle it slipped out of my hand and broke. This happened while Babuji was out.

That afternoon walk, I reminded Babuji about his advice and then told him about the broken tea kettle. His face showed clearly how upset he was, but he did not say anything to me. This way I saved myself from certain admonition. We did not get a replacement piece for the set, and had to make do with an ordinary tea kettle.

Section 8

Years passed. Two daughters, Hem and Asha, was born to Babuji and Bibiji. Babuji took his teaching responsibilities very seriously and life went on as before.

Babuji was a follower of Gandhiji. Gandhi was the most admired Indian leader, admired in part for the renunciation in his personal life. Babuji wished us to be strong like Gandhi and so my regimen was very hard. I was not given any pocket money and we were not allowed to eat anything in the bazaar. We had yoghurt and milk everyday but the children were not permitted to drink tea. During the early years rice

and meat were not cooked in the house. I swept my room and washed my clothes; the linen was done by the washerman. I was encouraged to volunteer in the community activities in the town.

Babuji did not do any formal puja. Babuji would sing Sanskrit hymns in the morning. These hymns were set to beautiful ragas and soon I enjoyed this singing myself. The singing of these hymns deepened my knowledge of Sanskrit. The music of these ragas awakened higher aesthetic centres in my mind. My favourite hymn (Sanskrit stotra) began with this stanza:

***na tato na mata na bandhur na data
na putro na putri na bhrityo na bharta
na jaya na vidya na vrittir mamaiva
gatistvam gatistvam tvameka bhavani***

***Father, mother, relatives, master
son, daughter, servant, master
none of these really belong to me
nor wife, or learning, or riches
Bhavani, only you move me!***

This is an old hymn by the great philosopher Shankara. There were others of similar pedigree that touched the core of human aloneness and the power of ones awareness. The Sanskrit hymns emphasized the ephemeral nature of everyday experience and encouraged one to look within for answers to questions of life and meaning. The hymns valued the search for truth over everything else.

Before this my attitude to spiritual life was fashioned by Bayaji who was a deeply religious person, doing puja every morning for several hours. During my childhood I took delight in watching this puja and was moved by his devotion. The Shivaratri (Herath in Kashmiri) puja of the family lasted several days and this was a great celebratory experience.

A classmate named Om Prakash became my good friend. He had lost his father, and his mother Mayadevi was a teacher in the Government Girls School. Om Prakash would come to our house to study with me and I would walk him back home at nine thirty at night. One day on our way to his home we smoked a cigarette. I do not remember whether my friend brought that cigarette with him or whether we picked up a smoking stub from the street. We took turns at it as we walked. By the time I returned home the cigarette was not completely finished and I threw it away before I entered the room. Babuji happened to step out just then and he saw the smouldering stub in the street and no one who could have thrown it anywhere near. He said nothing to me, but next day I overheard him tell a colleague how he had found me smoking. I was so ashamed that I decided never to smoke. In later life I did try the taste of some Indian and imported cigarettes but I found them bitter and not worth the expense.

Sarakak, my other brother, had been studying at Srinagar all these years. During his first year at college (eleventh grade) he came down with pneumonia and could not pass his examination. Babuji now decided to bring him to Kapurthala. The two of us now shared a room, each sweeping half of it and washing our clothes. He completed his F.Sc. from Kapurthala and then he was sent to Banaras Hindu University for further studies (B.Sc. and M.Sc.) in chemistry.

Section 9

After passing my ninth grade examination, I felt feverish. I did not tell anyone and continued attending school and eating, although without appetite. Eventually I became so weak that I was confined to bed. The doctor said that I had typhoid. The treatment was a concoction that released chlorine into the intestines to control the infection. As a patient I was given barley water, light curd water, and orange juice. After being bed-ridden for twenty-one days my temperature came down to normal. While I was convalescing, I got this great urge to eat biscuits which my doctor had forbidden me. I persuaded Kamala to buy me a box from the bazaar. On the third day after I ate the biscuits, I had a relapse. Now I needed a bedpan to pass urine or stool. Bibiji did not like to handle the bedpan. So, if I used it when Babuji was away at college, the bedpan would remain in the bed until he returned and cleaned it. One day I fainted

when Babuji was at home. My condition was so bad that it was presumed that I was dying. Babuji was crying, an emotion he had never shown. Dr Jain was called but I showed signs of coming back to life. It was said that I had a new lease of life that day.

In all, I was bed-ridden for four months. I lost all hair and thick patches of upper skin came off. My feet became very tender and this tenderness continued throughout my life. Even now I cannot walk barefoot; in thin-soled shoes any pebble on the road causes sharp pain to my feet. My muscles were so wasted that I had to learn again how to sit and later to stand up. It took me another month to be strong enough to move about in the room. Meanwhile, the summer break had already started and so I could not attend school for another three months. Dr Jain advised that I should not go through stress and it was best for me to skip the year. But our class teacher argued that I did not need to work very hard for the final examination and there was no need to miss a year. To make the minimum attendance required for the academic year, it was decided that I withdraw from the school and go to Srinagar school where the schools are open in summer. I attended school for two and a half months in Srinagar. I did no homework and was the butt of jokes in the class. However, I improved in general health.

In September, we returned to Kapurthala with the school leaving certificate and attendance sheets and I rejoined my old school. Considering my general condition, it was decided that I should memorize the propositions of geometry, arithmetic, and the first two chapters of algebra which were regarded as the difficult part of the coursework. In the examination I did well in the supposedly difficult material which surprised everybody. I was expected to barely obtain passing marks, but somehow I secured a very high second division.

I was advised to take Sanskrit, biology, philosophy, and English as subjects for my F.Sc. My schedule could not be worked out without conflicts since I was the only student who chose this combination. This choice was based on the expectation that I would go to Banaras for a degree in Ayurvedic medicine.

The conflict in my class schedule remained a problem and so eventually I switched to a full science coursework. I continued to be weak in algebra and trigonometry, two subjects I did not like at all. In chemistry I did very well.

The year was 1937 and we were in the midst of the worldwide depression. There were very few opportunities for professional jobs. After my F.Sc. final examinations we came across an advertisement in the Daily Tribune from the Jammu and Kashmir Government for applications for veterinary science colleges in Punjab, Bombay, and Madras. I had never heard of veterinary doctors, but I applied nevertheless for the course in Punjab and left for Srinagar expecting to be called for an interview. Here I found that the five scholarships reserved for the college had already been awarded. Meanwhile, Babuji also came to Srinagar for his summer vacation. Babuji was told that his friend Lt. Prem Nath Kak of the State Army Veterinary Corps was a friend of Col. Walker, the principal of the college and a letter from him would help in getting admission. Although we shared the same last name, Prem Nath Kak was not related to us. He was an extremely smart man with a promising future.

Lt. Kak gave me the letter for Col. Walker. I was also asked to carry a crate of fruit and tell Walker that it was a gift from him.

I reached Lahore a couple of days before the date for the interview. I went to Col. Walker and handed him the letter and the crate of apples. He read the letter, asked me about Lt. Kak and then returned the letter to me with the instruction that I should give it to him at the time of the interview.

I spent the night at the hostel. Next day, five to six hundred candidates presented themselves before the interviewing committee. When my turn came, the questions were at first irrelevant, but as soon as I presented the letter to Col. Walker, who was the chairman of the committee, the questions became relevant. Eventually eighty candidates, as against the announced opening of fifty, were selected. That was the biggest class in the history of the college. The college had hitherto been residential, but now many students who were from the city of Lahore were taken in as day scholars.

In the hostel, I shared a room, normally meant for three, with another Kashmiri named Jia Lal Pandita and two senior students. These senior students were from Punjab and Rajasthan, and they had a lot of

spending money. The Rajasthani was so used to luxury that he would order to be shaved by the barber, lying in bed. On occasion, these two got drunk. Soon Jia Lal became their drinking companion but I refused to join. But I was scared of them, because I naively thought that a drunk person could, upon such a refusal, strike with the liquor bottle. Meanwhile I got to know the hostel warden. I asked him for a change of room, without telling him the reason. Fortunately, one Sikh boy, who had been nominated by the Kashmir Government, dropped out of the college vacating a place on the ground floor. The warden moved me to this room. Except for the new courses on anatomy and physiology, the other subjects were a rerun of the courses I had done in F.Sc.

Babuji decided that I should spend my winter holidays with Prem Nath Kak's family. On return to college, I was asked to carry a spaniel pup for the daughters of Professor Bhatia, our warden. They were five sisters and they had no brother. I remember the names of the eldest two, Kamini and Sarojini, who were studying in a convent school. Mrs. Bhatia was very motherly and she would show her concern whenever I was unwell.

The tradition at the college was to work hard just one or two months before the examinations. In my second year a man from Haryana joined me for shared study. Due to my friendship with the warden, I was the only student allowed to study on the topmost roof in summer when that was the coolest place in the building. At ten the Haryanvi would say: "Kak Sahib, let me sleep till midnight; I would join you after the midnight tea." At midnight, the bearer would bring us strong tea. I would awaken my friend. He would drink his tea, open a book to give me company, but within five minutes he would doze off. I worked until four in the morning, rested for two hours, took a bath and attended the college hospital at seven. At noon I ate my lunch and left with a spread and pillow for the college, which was then closed, and studied in the cool of the corridors till four. I had a nap after this, and later played some, had dinner and on to the night schedule. The nightly tea affected my nerves so much that, after the examination, I began to suffer from insomnia. Eventually I gave up all drinks with stimulants.

I obtained honours for my performance in the second year and thus qualified for a cubicle in the hostel. In my third year at College, Jeevan Rishi and his wife came to live in Krishna Nagar. Jeevan Rishi had lived with us at Kapurthala. He was from a village in Punjab and Babuji had taken him in as a son. I was invited by Jeevan Rishi to share his residence. I ought not to have agreed but I did. The atmosphere in the house was not congenial to my style of study and the result was that I got a compartment in materia medica which ruined my summer vacations.

I moved back to the hostel in my final year. I cleared the compartmental examination in September before the opening of the college. During my college years, I purchased only one book on anatomy, physiology, and materia medica. My studying was based entirely on the notes dictated by the professors. This continued in the final year. I was embarrassed asking Babuji for money for books. After the first year, I got a scholarship of twenty rupees and I also got twenty rupees from Babuji for my hostel rent for three months. I asked for this money only after receiving a notice from the college authorities. I believe that unavailability of books was a factor in my examination debacle. I never purchased nor could borrow a book on meat and milk inspection, which was supposed to be a subject of no consequence. The result was that I did not pass this course in the annual examination. I received another compartment and had to clear the subject in the biannual. Consequently, my appointment in the Kashmir service was delayed by three months. As soon as my result was out, I left for Srinagar without waiting for the graduation certificate. This small decision had an important bearing on my fortunes later on.

Section 10

I boarded a train in Lahore and I reached Jammu in the morning of September 11, 1941. I planned to stay with a family friend in Jammu for a couple of days. I had only ten rupees with me, barely enough for the trip back to Srinagar. Strolling in Raghunath Bazaar, I met a Kashmiri acquaintance, who was then a superintendent in the home department. When I explained what I was doing in Jammu, he offered to take me to Srinagar by station wagon that very day for ten rupees. I gathered my bags and boarded the station wagon at the bus stand at one in the afternoon. We were in Srinagar at seven that evening. I had no money

for the tonga ride, but I hired one anyway, and reaching home I got a rupee from Didda for the fare. My arrival was unexpected as my telegram had not reached them. Babuji was there too. Everybody was happy to hear my examination results, but they were a bit upset that I had arrived without a paisa in my pocket. The road was not tarred then and one needed to carry extra money for emergencies, such as strandings due to vehicle breakdowns. They were also unhappy that I had not brought the graduation certificate with me.

The next day, I went to the veterinary department office, whose superintendent for the State was Vid Lal Wazir. I handed him my application. The office sought and received a telegraphic confirmation of my result from the Lahore college. But the department did not issue an appointment order even though other appointments were being made. I got to know the reason later: The brother of the head clerk at the office had been sent to Bombay for training and to ensure that I did not become senior in service to him, I was asked to report back with him and another trainee later. So we presented ourselves before Wazir in November 1941. He told us that during our practical training of two months we will work without remuneration. The other two men, who were actually from well-to-do zemindar families, expressed their financial insolvency and asked for some consideration. When it was my turn to speak, I protested that new hires three months ago had been paid. Wazir, who had a very pink face, became livid with rage and he asked us to get out. But as we were leaving the building, a peon came running asking us to wait for the orders that were being written up.

My order came in due course and I was asked to report to the veterinary inspector of Kashmir in Srinagar. I was attached to the veterinary surgeon at the hospital for one month's practical training. Sarakak, my brother, was then posted at the government leather tannery at Shalteng just south of the city, where he was renting a house. This place was about seven miles from my place of work. Babuji had given his old bicycle to Sarakak, and this I rode to my office. It was November and getting quite cold but I did not have warm clothes. Babuji asked Sarakak to give me some money owed to him so that I could be properly outfitted. One hundred rupees got me two woollen suits.

Before the month was out orders of posting were issued. I was sent to Riasi. The language of the order suggested that my seniority was second. Dina Nath Koul, the surgeon at the hospital warned me that my seniority was in jeopardy and that I should make a representation to the Superintendent who had moved with the Darbar to Jammu, the winter capital. It was the middle of December, but the snow had not yet fallen. I went to Jammu at the first opportunity. I was told that Wazir was at the tennis court. I presented myself to him and told him that attempts were being made in the office to place me as junior to one of the other two, which was unfair since he had only done a three years course as against my four years. Wazir replied that seniority would be based on the percentage of marks; I countered that this gentleman had taken four years to complete his shorter course while I had completed mine in the prescribed period. Wazir put my fears to rest by saying that my interests would not be harmed.

Next day, I booked a seat for Riasi and left for it a day later. Our bus was the first, and the last for many years, to cross the Anji River and go up the steep road to the plateau on which Riasi is situated. Soon after our journey floods washed away a part of the causeway and till I was at Riasi this part of the trip had to be done on foot.

Section 11

Capt. Kak had given me an introductory letter for Neel Kanth Hak, the munsif. He was a shy man and my arrival was a godsend to him. His judicial duties would end by two, and almost every evening we would go out for a walk. Riasi is Dogri speaking and so Kashmiri conversation with the urbane Mr Hak was enjoyable.

Meanwhile, learning Dogri was not much of a problem. Dogri is quite close to Hindi and Punjabi, two languages I knew very well. (Kashmiri, my mother tongue, is also an Aryan language, but much harder to learn for the outsider.) I have a natural interest in languages, and the other languages I knew included Urdu, English, and a smattering of Persian. In Riasi now, and before this in Kashmir, I was always interested in finding the original Sanskrit name forms for town and village names. Often the originals can

be seen in Kalhana's Rajatarangini or other ancient chronicles. What is useful to know in such an exercise are the rules which govern the transformation from the Sanskrit to the regional Prakrits. For example, in Kashmiri the Sanskrit "sh" changes into the sound "h". This is why Shari becomes Hari or Shivaratri becomes Herath.

I rented a house from a Kashmiri from Poonch, who owned agricultural land in the area. Soon after my arrival in Riasi, one Dinanath Kaul was posted to the sheep breeding farm. It was decided that he would share my house and his servant would cook for us. That winter we had good time together. With the coming of summer, the sheep moved to higher pastures and the staff shifted to Banihal. Dinanath Kaul and his servant left. I hired a cook who turned out to be very lazy. During the rainy season there were several outbreaks of contagious diseases in the villages. This called for touring several weeks a month and I wanted my cook to accompany me. But he refused and so I dispensed with his services.

Section 12

At Riasi I became a good friend of Vakil Sahib or Jyoti Prakash Kalia, a lawyer, who was a follower of the Aurobindo school of yoga and quite advanced in his path. I spent many evenings with him and learnt about the mysteries of mind.

Sri Aurobindo was a great and original yogi who turned the old interpretations of yoga upside down. In opposition to the talk of bringing down the divine to the human consciousness, he spoke of an ascent to divinity. We read Aurobindo's famed books *The Synthesis of Yoga* and *"The Life Divine"*. In the latter book he says:

"...

The universe and the individual are the two essential appearances into which the Unknowable descends and through which it has to be approached; for other intermediate collectivities are born only of their interaction. This descent of the supreme Reality is in its nature a self-concealing; and in the descent there are successive levels, in the concealing successive veils. Necessarily, the revelation takes the form of an ascent; and necessarily also the ascent and the revelation are both progressive... Our world has yet to climb beyond Mind to a higher principle, a higher status, a higher dynamism in which universe and individual become aware of and possess that which they both are and therefore stand explained to each other, in harmony with each other, unified.

..."

Aurobindo, and Vakil Sahib, believed that every person had the potential to become unified with this inner divine force that turns man into superman. The Vedic rishis were such inspired seers but there was no reason we could not match their marvellous achievements.

In Vakil Sahib's yoga, one tried to raise one's conscious mind centre to the thousand petalled lotus in the seventh chakra at the top of one's head, This was done through breath control and meditation. But before such meditation could be successful, tremendous self-discipline and ethical behaviour was required. According to an ancient Kashmiri book, finding one's true nature may look as difficult as walking on the edge of a sword or holding a lion by the ear.

All this was not really different from the great tradition of Kashmiri Shaivism. There are several ways to self-awareness: "the little way" (anava upaya), "the way of power or knowledge" (shakta upaya), "the way of the will" (shambhava upaya or iccha upaya), and "the way of bliss" (anupaya, or ananda upaya). The little way is the performance of ritual, repeating of mantras, doing breath control; the way of power or knowledge is to realize the non-duality of the universe through scientific reasoning; the way of the will is a focusing of the awareness on the universe as pure consciousness. The fourth way is that stumbling on the highest knowledge without any specific method. So the mystery of life was to be solved by understanding the nature of consciousness. To find the essential self one had to rise beyond the usual attachments. The body itself is the image of the universal being, Shiva, and travelling through this image in meditation would lead us to the heart, where dwells Shakti, the divine energy.

Consciousness is considered divine. One can say consciousness is God and God is consciousness. Desire in itself is not to be condemned; only such desire is bad that makes one lose sight of the infinite potential of knowledge.

Shankara puts it very well in his famous stanzas on Nirvana:

***Mano buddhy ahankara chittani naham
na cha shrotra jihve na cha ghrana netre
na cha vyoma bhumir na tejo na vayuh
chidananda rupa shivoham shivoham***

***I am not mind, soul, ego, thoughts,
not ear, tongue, nose, eye,
sky, earth, wind, fire.
I embody awareness and joy,
I am Shiva, I am Shiva.***

Or we have the great wisdom in the ancient Kashmiri book "Vijnanabhairava":

***na me bandho na moksho me bhitasyaiva vibhishikah
pratibimbam idam buddher jaleshv iva vivasvatah***

***There is neither bondage nor liberation for me;
these are to scare the fearful.
All this is a mere reflection in my mind,
like the image of the sun in water.***

***jnanaprakashakam sarvam sarvenatma prakashakah
ekam ekasvabhavatvat jnanam jneyam vibhavyate***

***Knowledge of self reveals all things;
and the knowledge of things reveals the self.
Nature acts the same so reflect
that knower and the known are one and the same.***

Life was a march to illumination; this illumination was its own power. And this was not a life or world denying philosophy. All phenomena in the world were an embodiment of this illumination, and so a mindful approach to life could open many secrets.

The mystical wisdom of the Shaivite way was balanced by the powerful example of the Rama of the Ramayana epic. We were taught the principle of Rama's family:

***Prana jayen para vachana na jayee
Raghu kula reet yehi chali aayi***

***I might die but I cannot go back on my word
This is the old tradition of the Raghu clan.***

Knowledge could not be sought for its own sake! We had to remember our duties, our obligations. Our search was to be done through whatever our station in life. We could sharpen our perceptions by meditating on perfection.

Rama was now the magical principle of truth. In Mirabai's refrain:

***Rama nama rasa pijai manua, Rama nama rasa pijai
Taja kusanga sanga baith ke, hari charcha suna lijai.***

***O mind, drink the nectar of the name of Rama
Drink the nectar of the name of Rama
Leave bad company, sit next to me***

and hear the word of Hari.

Section 13

Riasi was notorious for its snakes and scorpions and I was cautioned at Srinagar to protect myself with ankle boots and puttees and warm flannels. Vakil Sahib was very amused with my sartorial style. One evening, at dusk, while walking down a winding hill road I heard a sharp hissing sound. I turned to the trees in the forest on the opposite hill to check if there was a strong breeze, but the trees were quite calm. Then I looked at the skyline of the town for signs of any fireworks but found nothing. Then Vakil Sahib pointed towards his feet.

Vakil Sahib had the habit of not touching his shoes after they were bought. The laces were kept loose so that he could just slip them on. He would wear socks only in the courtroom. That evening he was wearing a dhoti which was hanging just below the knees, leaving the shins exposed. There between Vakil Sahib's feet was a menacing adder (gunas in Kashmiri). The snake was making circles with its hood and hissing, but it did not strike. Then Vakil Sahib moved his left foot and the snake slithered off to the edge of the road. Vakil Sahib told me that unless so ordained no snake was going to bite me and I should banish my fears. That day I gave up wearing protective covering on my legs.

I now cooked my own meals, something I had never done before. I found it quite difficult at first. I would boil lentils without adding salt and ghee, and cooked rice and then eat everything by turn. In the mornings, I walked down to the river and ran up the steep slope in order to strengthen my lungs and legs. One day, I received a telegram from Babuji asking me to meet him in Jammu that evening. It was rainy season, and there was only one bus to Jammu that left Katra---a place seventeen miles from Riasi---at one thirty in the afternoon. (These towns are also connected by a shorter route of only thirteen miles but I did not know that route then.) I left my house at ten and started running across hills. I reached Katra by one in the afternoon and boarded the bus. Babuji was renting a room in the Dharmashala at Raghunath Mandir. He was quite surprised to see me so soon. He explained that he had called me to Jammu to give me a Pekinese pet dog that he was finding it difficult to look after. Next day, Babuji left for Srinagar while I returned to Riasi with Moti, the dog.

Moti was a gift to Babuji from his close friend, Dr. Damodar Kaul, who was also a neighbour in Srinagar. Damodar Kaul, who was in the Army, had served for some time in Gilgit. It so happened that Babuji saw him off at Bandipore before he left for Gilgit, and a later year on his return in 1940 received him at the same place. Moti was one of the gifts Dr. Kaul brought for Babuji. At Kapurthala the dog got infested with ticks and dog fleas. Whenever I visited Kapurthala I cleansed him of the infestation, but with my departure the problem reappeared. Eventually Babuji decided that I should keep the dog.

As I could not keep Moti at home, while I was on tours, from now on he was my constant companion. In my march through villages, I would pick him up in my arms to shield him from the powerful street dogs of the villages. One day in the mountains my peon, Hassan Din, Moti and I set out for a village twenty five miles away. We started late in the day on the mountain pony path. It rained heavily that day and darkness fell early. The dark clouds overhead made it pitch dark. Moti was on the leash. In fact I was being led by him while Hassan Din was at my heels. We were marching as fast as possible. Suddenly, Moti swerved away from the path and started climbing uphill. To investigate the reason, I got down on my knees and started feeling the track. To my horror, I realized that the track ahead had been washed away by the rains. Had it not been for Moti, Hassan Din and I would have stepped into the chasm to injury and possible death. So now on hands and knees we made a careful detour around the landslide taking half an hour for what would otherwise have been a five minute walk.

There was a shortage of men in the villages. Government officials on tour would be provided with porters by the village chowkidar upto the next place of halt. In fact, before the rule of Maharaja Hari Singh, Kashmir had the cruel system of "begar", or forced labour without compensation. Persons from certain low castes were compelled to do begar. Later the government started providing funds to pay the porters or coolies. But these officials were often corrupt and they would pocket the money. By my time porters were

actually paid but they did not like this job as this required them to interrupt whatever else they might have been doing, and the compensation was not fair.

One day, we started from Gulabgarh where we hired two coolies. We reached the next village late at night, and the chowkidar, who was quite prosperous, asked us to stay in his house. The mountain house consisted of a very big room with a side partitioned off for grain bins and storage of household goods. This main room was used for sleeping in extreme winter. In milder weather people slept in the outer verandah. With so many people to be put up, the chowkidar decided to sleep in this big room together with Hassan Din and the two coolies. It was decided that his wife, two teenage daughters, and I were to sleep in the verandah. The coolies had spread my bedding on a charpai. Later another charpai was arranged near mine. The mother and the girls took off their blouses and sat, bare-chested, in front of the fire on the verandah for a long time. Moti jumped on my bed and he was sleeping near my feet. After a long time, mother and the daughters came to the next charpai, their bed, and went to sleep.

The next day, the village was supposed to provide its coolies. The chowkidar marked his choice by throwing a wrap (a blanket) on a person. The first person who was thrown the wrap ran away. We had not yet let go of the previous coolies. We now requested them to accompany us to Kund, the next station. Reluctantly, they agreed. Next day, I sent Hassan Din to Jammu to pick up new stock of vaccine and serum. He was to have returned in eight days, but he did not and so I went back to Riasi. From there I sent a telegram to the Jammu office inquiring about his whereabouts. He had received the new stock but then slipped off to his home which was near Jammu. On the fourth day after my telegram he finally showed up. By now the tiredness of the one and a half month long tour caught up with me, and so I decided not to go and sent my compounder for the job.

Section 14

Having heard that a vacancy was expected in the State Army Veterinary Corps, I applied for a position. I got no response, and so I asked Prem Nath Kak, who was the chief veterinarian in the Army, the reason for this. He said that I had been passed over as we shared the same surname, and my appointment could have been misconstrued as nepotism.

I was living alone. Vakil Sahib insisted that I should shift to his house and live with his family. Meanwhile, one Shambhu Nath Kaul joined as accounts officer in the forest office at Riasi. He had a large family: his mother, wife, and two children. He was unable to find a suitable house to rent in the town, and he had a little house with just one room, a kitchen, and a verandah.

My house was one of the largest one could rent in Riasi. So Shambhu Nath Kaul pleaded with me that I switch accommodation with him. I was reluctant to do so. Then one day the problem was solved when Vakil Sahib came and carried my baggage to his home. From that day on until my transfer I lived in his house. I was treated as another son. His eldest son Madan was a bad apple who shirked schoolwork and was a glutton. I ate modestly but if Madan would take a lump of ghee and sugar with his meal, the mother would give me the same. I felt as if I was living in my own home. I started giving my entire salary to Vakil Sahib as my contribution toward running the household. One day Madan stole this money from Vakil Sahib's trunk. Vakil Sahib and Mataji repeated several times that the money belonged to me, which in my opinion I had given them, as a son would, as my share.

Section 15

Some time before this I purchased a muzzle loader. The idea came to me after I was threatened in a village situated in the Gulabgarh area. Cow slaughter is banned in Jammu and Kashmir and those days this rule was strictly enforced. Gulabgarh area is predominantly Muslim and in fact some villages have no non-Muslims. It was common for people there to slaughter cattle made useless by age or injury. One day, the Riasi police came by some dried cattle hides and I was asked to give my technical opinion on them. The police charged some persons for the crime of cow slaughter. While I was examining the hides, the accused party approached me through an intermediary with a bribe of one thousand rupees to give the opinion that the animals had died of natural cause. When I refused to do so, I was threatened with death.

This angered and scared me and so when I saw an elegant muzzle loader in the house of a zaildar, I persuaded him to sell it to me. I challenged the accused party to do their worst, and I went on a tour of their village with this gun on my shoulder. But I encountered no hostility from the members of the accused family.

I used to keep this gun loaded for emergencies and would discharge it on alternate days so that the gunpowder did not get moist and ineffective. One day in September/October 1942, I went to the roof of my house to discharge the gun. Moti was so terrified by the boom of the gunshot that he ran away from the house. I started looking for him in the town. At three in the afternoon, one person told me that such a dog was seen being carried by a yatri on a mule on his way to Katra. After an early dinner, I left for Katra on foot with my loaded gun and my peon Hassan Din. We reached there at about eleven. The station house officer was asleep and had to be awakened. Having heard my story he first wanted a promise that if they nab the thief I would not withdraw my case against him. He did not want me to withdraw charges against the thief if it turned out that he was a Hindu like me. I gave this promise. Now he bestirred himself and began contacting the muleteers to find out which group had come via Riasi. Soon we found this group. Moti, on seeing me, ran up and jumped into my arms. The culprit was a Hindu from Lahore. He was brought to the police station and charged with theft and for damages before a special magistrate who used to be posted at Katra for the yatra season. I appeared as witness a couple of times. Details of the charges were never showed to me. The accused paid a fine. Many years later I came to know that the accused also paid damages which were misappropriated by the police.

Section 16

Vakil Sahib and I spent a lot of time together studying scriptures and books on Hindu philosophy. Sometimes he talked about occult powers and showed his to tempt me to follow him on his path. This is how the winter of 1942/1943 passed. Toward the close of the season I was initiated into yoga. My discipline required me to meditate on my chakras and pierce the heart of my consciousness, if I could. I made rapid progress. I also became a vegetarian.

***Shiva is the horse,
Vishnu the saddle,
Brahma adorns the stirrups,
the yogi knows---
but who rides the horse?
--- Lalla***

***Absorbed in the syllable Om,
I burnt like coals.
Passing six stations,
I seized the seventh.
Then only did, I, Lalla,
reach the abode of light.
--- Lalla***

In the month of March, I received transfer orders to Baramulla. My replacement came almost immediately. The day I was to leave, Vakil Sahib returned me all the money that I had given him without keeping anything for board and lodging. Besides, Vakil Sahib and Mataji gave me some of their own money as an auspicious gift. We all were moved by the parting.

Section 17

When I reached Jammu, I learnt that the Banihal pass was still closed due to heavy snow. I decided not to take the alternate route via Rawalpindi because it was very long, requiring the change of several trains and buses. Expecting that the pass will reopen soon, I decided to wait out at Jammu. After a couple of days, it was heard that the snow had been cleared. Now a bus company announced that it would send a convoy of five or six buses to cross the pass. There were about six of us in our bus; other buses carried even fewer passengers. Most transport companies decided not to send buses.

We reached Ramban in the evening and the convoy halted there for the night. The room I rented had no window panes and it was frightfully cold. The driver asked us not to unload all our baggage, as he intended to leave very early in the morning. I assumed that if I slept fully dressed, just one blanket would be enough for the night. At the hotel where I took my meal I asked the cook to put in a lot of pure ghee in the lentil soup. When I drank cold water my throat became sore. (I ought to have had warm water with my meal because of this ghee.) Now in my room I could not sleep a wink. The cold was penetrating my blanket and dress. To avoid a stomach upset, I held Moti against my belly and so the night passed.

Next day, we started early. At Banihal the driver did not let us eat our lunch saying that the convoy must cross the pass before noon, because avalanches are more likely in the afternoon. So we pressed on and in good time reached the far side of the mountain. We now cleared the highest point of the pass but nearing the second turn we saw an avalanche blocking our path. Strangely, there were no shovels on the bus. After about an hour fifteen to twenty labourers with an overseer appeared on the scene and started shovelling the snow. Within an hour of work one of the labourers ran away. Fearing that more labourers would leave likewise before the passage was cleared, the drivers and cleaners and some passengers surrounded the remaining labourers. The overseer expressed a shortage of hands---the passengers thereupon joined in---and he also wanted to be paid a gratuity at the end of the work. After three hours of very hard work the passage was cleared and we started down the mountain, reaching Qazigund late in the evening. We had tea there, and were in Srinagar just before midnight. My sore throat became worse and it took me several days to recover from the ill effects of this and the fatigue of snow clearance.

Section 18

I joined my duties at Baramulla. The town is called Varahmul in Kashmiri and it is an ancient tirtha of Vishnu celebrating the Varaha (boar) incarnation. The famous temple of Varaha here is noted by Kalhana, and the destruction of its sacred image at the hands of Sikandar by Jonaraja. This temple had stood at the present Kotitirtha temple at the western end of the town down the Vitasta river.

Bayaji was posted at Baramulla, in the Electricity Department and he was renting a grounded double storied houseboat sitting in a fenced lot half an acre in size at the eastern end. I moved in with Bayaji, Didda and their two girls Kamala and Gauri. My hospital was about a two mile walk from the houseboat.

I had been about five months in Baramulla that I fell ill with a bad case of malarial fever. I got well after treatment, but remained weak. My ears buzzed with the slightest exertion. Sometime later, we invited a lawyer friend and his family from Sopore for lunch. Several meat dishes were cooked. Due to some reason they could not come and that evening Didda asked me what was to be done with the meat dishes. Although I had become a vegetarian after accepting Vakil Sahib as my guru, I asked her to serve me some. She thought I was joking but I wasn't and so I started eating meat again. This created a hurdle in my progress in my yogic path, but I was cured of the buzzing in my ears and the general weakness.

Baramulla was on the Kashmir national highway to Rawalpindi and it saw considerable traffic of bullock carts and tongas. We were required to check the animals under the State's prevention of cruelty to animals statute. This was done under the overall jurisdiction of the district revenue administrator. The bullock carts brought in salt and other goods from Punjab and on their way back they would take potatoes, walnuts and fruit to the plains. Every night great convoys of these carts would roll through the town. In order to drive the bulls harder, the drivers used illegal yoke galls. To make the officers look the other way, the drivers paid a bribe which was divided up amongst the staff and officers of the veterinary and revenue departments. Later the responsibility for checking the animals passed exclusively to my department. When I was in Baramulla, I put an end to this practice of cruelty and bribery.

The candidates for veterinary training were selected on a communal/provincial basis before. Unfortunately, this created an imbalance: whereas all the Kashmiri Pandits passed their courses, the results were quite bad for Kashmiri Muslims and the trainees from Jammu. This system of recruitment was now abandoned. For some time the minister would not consent to the appointment of any newly trained Kashmiri Pandits. After six months of pleadings the minister consented to hire them on a pay of seventy five rupees. By the time I joined in 1941, there were still thirteen old hires out of whom only nine

were given a salary grade of 75-5-150 (or 75 rupees with an annual increment of five rupees and a ceiling pay of 150 rupees.). The new hires of 1941 started with 50-5-75. Eventually, after a lot of struggle, the four old hands were appointed to supernumerary posts at 75-5-150. Those of us who had completed a four year course were awarded an extra increment compared to those who had done the shorter course. Things were very inexpensive then and we lived tolerably well on our pay without a care for the future.

In the beginning of my tenure at Baramulla, hardly any cases came to the hospital. I saw a few police cases and some villagers who came to pick up medicines. But the register showed that, before my tenure, fifty to sixty cases would show up daily. This upset me greatly. I went to the tonga stand and insisted that the drivers bring their injured horses to the hospital. They were legally bound to do this under the prevention of cruelty act. I did the dressing of wounds and surgery, whenever that was called for, myself, rather than have the compounder do it, as was customary. All this created a favourable impression on the horse owners and animals came first in a trickle and later in such large numbers that we could not close the hospital at the designated time of four in the afternoon. This made me quite well known in the area and I started getting private referrals also.

The dispensary had five breeding centres attached to it but they were not much used. I was asked to devise means of increasing their effectiveness. My provincial officer was Jia Lal Parimoo, who had earlier been an efficient veterinary officer at Srinagar. He was trying to get me married to the daughter of a lady who was rumoured to be his mistress. Naturally the elders in my family would not agree to it. This made him quite annoyed with me and he started creating problems for me. One day, while on a tour to a breeding centre at Singhpura, he was drawn to a beautiful Karnah blanket. At the end of his tour he gave me ten rupees to buy the blanket for him. On my next visit to Singhpura, I showed the money to the blanket's owner and asked him for it. He said: "I have paid thirty rupees for it, and if you want to rob me then pay me nothing and take it." What I heard upset me, and I assured him that I was not going to do any such thing and he could keep the blanket. On my next visit to Srinagar, I met Parimoo and returned the money. This added to his ill will toward me.

On Sundays and holidays the dispensary was kept open until twelve noon. One Sunday Parimoo, on his way back from a tour to Uri, passed through Baramulla at two in the afternoon. After he got off the bus outside the dispensary, he checked if the chowkidar was on duty. Not finding him, he had his peon scale the wall at the back of the dispensary, open a window, that happened to be unbolted, and remove the stock register lying on the sill. Then he left for Srinagar.

Unaware of his visit the previous day, we began work on Monday, compiling a list of dead stock articles from the previous year and updating our current stock entries. But the register was not to be found. Everyone started blaming the other for the loss, and I put the blame on the compounder who was responsible for the books. On his part, the compounder thought that I might have taken the register home. I sent my report of the loss to the provincial officer. Before my letter could have reached that office, we received a copy of the tour inspection report of Parimoo with an account of his removal of the register and suspension orders for the chowkidar for being absent from duty. I did not pass this order of suspension to the chowkidar and I wrote a lengthy letter to Parimoo absolving the chowkidar of any wrongdoing. I was sent a message that I should not try to protect the chowkidar and, if he had been on leave, destroy any copy of the sanction, so that the person could not defend himself. This mechanism was a source of income to the office since they would take a bribe from the helpless chowkidar to set the record straight. But I remained adamant in my support of the chowkidar.

Another source of irritation from the Srinagar office related to the medical supplies. One part of the supplies was country medicines which were so hopelessly adulterated that I would normally refuse it. When compelled to accept, I would destroy the entire stock the next day and show bulk expenditure. Thus I continued to be a thorn in Parimoo's side. The office longed to involve me in a case of absence from duty, but I was never absent and so they could do nothing.

4 Part II – Householder

**Peacock feathers, canopy, chariot,
throne, theatre, or a soft bed---
Which of these will endure?
--- Lalla**

Section 19

It was now August 1943. We were receiving many proposals for my marriage. Ultimately, the elders decided on Chuni, the fourteen year daughter of Pandit Dama Kaul (Karihaloo) of Fatehkadal in Srinagar. Chuni was the youngest girl in a family of three brothers and three sisters. Mr Karihaloo had made a fortune as a businessman, but he had, more recently, fallen on hard times. The wedding was fixed for the last week of October. Babuji arrived from Kapurthala. It was a gala show. For the wedding feast I purchased six live sheep from Baramulla, and brought them to Srinagar, where they remained tied in the compound until the big day. Chuni and I saw each other for the first time at the wedding ceremony, but before that I had been assured that she was very pretty.

Kashmiris then followed the custom of giving the bride a new name. We chose Sarojini and the formal Satyavati. The third day after the wedding, I left to join duty. Bayaji, Didda, Gauri, and Sarojini stayed back for a fortnight to call on and receive relatives. During our absence the houseboat was burglarized, but we lived so austere that there was not much to be stolen.

I used to give all the extra earnings from my private cases to Didda. And, until my marriage, Bayaji insisted that I should not pay anything towards the running of the house, and as I had no addictions my savings accumulated. This is what was used for the wedding. After the marriage, I paid half of my salary towards the running of the house. Life continued happily. One day Sarojini was called to Srinagar by her parents. She wanted to take Moti with her. Thinking that she may not be able to look after him properly there, I did not let her. While she was away, I went on tour. In the evening, someone passed the home whistling and Moti, presuming that it was me, came out running. There the local pariah dog seized him and badly mauled him before anybody could reach for help. His kidneys were damaged and death came that night. Next day when I returned, everyone was in mourning. Moti was extremely well trained and good looking and all of us had loved him greatly. Thus ended a long association.

Section 20

After three months of marriage Sarojini conceived. In the spring of 1944 we went on a month long leave to Kapurthala and Punjab. We took a bus to Rawalpindi. Our path went through the magnificent scenery beyond Baramulla where the Vitasta river passes through rock passages and other narrow gorges.

Sarojini's sister Aruna then lived in Muzaffarabad, a town 116 miles downstream from Srinagar, where the Vitasta river receives Kishanganga from the north and then sharply turns to the south. Aruna's husband Zinda Lal Kaul was the court inspector. We lunched with them and pressed on to Rawalpindi, where we took a train to Jalandhar, from where we went by tonga to Kapurthala.

For young Sarojini the sights of Punjab represented a new world. Hem and Asha became very fond of her, and for Babuji she was like a daughter-in-law. Later we went to Lahore, where I showed Sarojini my college and the hostel. Sarojini's brother Kashi Nath Karihaloo and a cousin were then in Lahore, undergoing some training in banking. We saw them and my other friends from my student days. We returned to Srinagar via Jammu.

Section 21

During my absence, I had been transferred to the seasonal dispensary at Pahalgam, the tourist town in South Kashmir. I left Sarojini behind at Baramulla. The dispensary at Pahalgam was housed in a new building. The annexe to this building, which consisted of two rooms and a kitchen, was the doctor's

residence. I wrote to Bayaji to send Didda to Pahalgam, hoping that both Didda and Sarojini would come. Bayaji sent only Sarojini.

Pahalgam is situated on the foamy Liddar river and it is two thousand feet higher than Srinagar. Above Pahalgam, the Liddar valley bifurcates, one branch leading to Aru and beyond a pass to the Sindh valley, and the other leading to Sheshnag and the famous cave of Amarnath. In the month of Shravana, pilgrims from all over India congregate in Pahalgam for their pilgrimage to the cave.

There was no piped water at the dispensary, and the chowkidar would get us a couple of buckets from the public tap for cooking and drinking. Early in the morning we went to the stream to wash. Evenings were spent promenading the bazaar or the river banks. We planned a badminton court in the compound but somehow never got to make it.

Shambhu Nath Razdan and his brother Dwarka Nath Bhat served as my compounder and peon respectively. Their last names were different because Dwarka Nath was given in adoption to a maternal uncle. Dwarka Nath was a saintly person and through him we got to know a Mahatma, Swami Anand Ji, who used to room, free of charge, in a hotel owned by Dinanath Wazir, the younger brother of our Director. Often we would go to see him in the evenings.

One day we were invited by Capt. Prem Nath Kak for dinner and there met some lawyer friends of his from Bombay. Sarojini went bedecked in her jewelry. The next morning she realized that she was missing a gold chain. We looked for it everywhere. Finally, we went to Mahatmaji and told him about the loss. He smiled and asked us to come next day promising he would tell us what had happened to it.

Next evening, he told us that Sarojini never had that chain with her in Pahalgam and that the chain was with Didda. He further said that we will get the chain back after a year and that is precisely what happened later.

Sarojini was always careless about her jewelry. At Baramulla, a few months after our marriage, she once went to the river to wash. There her ring, which weighed more than twelve grammes, slipped out of her finger into the water. The river bank was quite steep and she did not try to retrieve it. When she returned she was smiling and nonchalantly she told us of the loss asking us to forget about the ring. I was quite upset. I took a wickerware basket and started sifting through the river mud. Very soon I found the ring. In years that followed Sarojini lost quite a bit of her jewelry to thieves.

Section 22

The Director was planning a tour of the dispensary. On the day of the visit, I sent Sarojini to Dinanath Wazir's house. The Director was displeased that I had not arranged any flower pots around the building, and he did not like my explanation that I had no funds. He wanted to know why the case register showed only eight to ten cases a day, whereas the previous year the doctor, who spent most of his time supervising the construction of the building, used to show about sixty. I argued that the previous doctor's entries could only be fictitious, whereas mine could be checked with the owners in the bazaar. Next he found fault with a particular entry in the register made by my compounder and he angrily suggested that the description of treatment without details could imply embezzlement of drugs. When he would not listen to my explanation, I left the room.

Now Shambhu Nath, my compounder, started pleading with me in the porch that by leaving the room I had insulted the Director and I should apologize to him. Heatedly, I answered that I would not do so since it was the Director who had not listened to my explanation. The Director overheard me, but he said nothing and left for his hotel. Fortunately, the next day he saw me working full speed amongst sick cattle at the nearby village of Ganeshpuri. This must have mollified him because later he complained to my father-in-law that I was quite hardworking but did not know how to behave with my superiors.

Pahalgam has many interesting sites nearby. Across the Liddar is a fine campground on a plateau in a wood of blue pines. Nearby, where the Liddar valley divides into two branches, is the village of Mamal with its spring and a small temple.

South of Pahalgam, down the Liddar, is the village of Hutamar. The mosque here, built on a temple, has in its walls sculptured fragments of great beauty. One mile further down Hutamar, is the town of Bumzu. According to the scholar M.A. Stein, the Ziarat of Bamdin Sahib here is nothing but a well-preserved temple, converted with a liberal use of plaster, into the supposed resting-place of a Muslim saint. He identified the the shrine with the Bhimakeshava temple which Bhima Shahi, king of Kabul, the maternal grandfather of Queen Didda, is said to have erected in the lifetime of her husband Kshemagupta (950-958).

Section 23

Sarojini returned to Srinagar by the middle of September. I occasionally went down there to see her. I was spending a lot of time with Mahatmaji. One day I expressed some anxiety about Sarojini. He asked me to prepare roth at Ganeshbal, a place three miles below Pahalgam, and he said he would then give his blessings. Shambhu Nath, Dwarka Nath, and Mahatma Ji accompanied me to the place. After a bath I put sindur on the rock and prepared the roth. Mahatmaji now blessed the roth and did puja. Then he said that I will have a son who would become a scholar. I took the roth to Srinagar and gave it to Sarojini to eat.

In October, Sarojini was taken to the Diamond Jubilee Zenana Hospital at Nawakadal. By the time I reached the hospital, Avinash was born after a forceps delivery. He had a scratch on the side of the forehead caused by forceps. He weighed ten pounds. I remember that on hearing the sound of the opening of the door, he turned his head. Sarojini and Avinash were at the hospital for a week. Devmali, Sarojini's mother, and Chandrani were the ones who took real care of them. After this she was at her parents home for a fortnight and then returned to our Sathu home.

Section 24

Now I received transfer orders for Jammu. We rented a second storey flat and Sarojini and the baby settled in. The hospital was at the other end of the city by the Tawi bridge and it took me three quarters of an hour to walk downhill to work and one hour to walk back home. I remember an amusing story about our landlady who lived on the ground floor. Many times we got gifts of waterfowl (duck) from Srinagar. When we cooked this delicacy the landlady's children would come up and ask to share the meal. But when the landlady cooked a special meal, she would shut all doors and windows so that we would not know of it. This galled us but Sarojini could not tell a lie when asked what was cooking. One day, when we received another waterfowl, I asked Sarojini to tell the landlady that it was mandook, a word which means frog in Dogri and Sanskrit that Sarojini did not know. When told this, the landlady expressed disgust as frogs are not eaten in India. After this they showed no eagerness to share our meals.

Another incident relates to the then common false sense of dignity of Kashmiris. It was common to look down upon those who admitted eating chapaties, which are made of wheat flour. This was because Kashmiris traditionally ate only rice, which was more expensive, and to eat chapati was to admit poverty. But we ate chapati in the morning and rice only in the evening. When Sarojini told this to some women who had called on us, they sniggered. Sarojini was still quite innocent of the ways of the world and so she asked me later why this had happened. To expose the truth I took leave from office and we set out for the house of the snootiest of the ladies to reach at exactly nine, the time of the morning meal. There in the kitchen we found the two daughter-in-laws making chapaties for the family. Their hypocrisy was thus exposed.

My confrontation with Wazir at Pahalgam was still rankling him. He asked Allah Bakhsh, my senior colleague at the hospital, to keep close watch on me. But Allah Bakhsh assured him that I was one of the best doctors around, because after this Wazir was never rude to me, and neither did he ever ask me to do any unethical thing.

Once it rained heavily for three days in Jammu, and on the third day the roof started leaking everywhere except for one corner in our bedroom. I took Avinash in my lap under a blanket with a kangri. The heat under the blanket caused Avinash to get a bad rash.

Section 25

At the end of winter I was again transferred, this time for six months to the summer health resort of Gulmarg with the dispensary at Tangmarg. Gulmarg is a high flowery hollow at 8500 feet surrounded on all sides by forests of silver fir, blue pine and spruce under a high mountain. One can see a large portion of the valley through these forests and at the far end the stately peak of Nanga Parbat which is 26,260 feet high. Above Gulmarg is Khillanmarg, where one can find slopes covered with snow even in summer. Beyond is the Toshmaidan plateau and pass, which in ancient times provided one route into the valley. Directly below the Gulmarg heights is the town of Tangmarg.

The dispensary was in a shop in the centre of the bazaar; the residential accommodation was at the top and the kitchen was in the basement. Prem Nath was our cook and peon. My job included inspection of meat and milk and so we got the best supplies. Tangmarg was the terminus of vehicular traffic and its bazaar was crowded with riding and pack ponies.

Babuji and family came to stay with us for a month during August 1945. Didda came for two months. September was the month for the overnight Pushkar pilgrimage about ten miles from Tangmarg in the mountains. We invited Kamala and my aunt Bendidi to join the pilgrimage. I carried Avinash and Nannaji (Kamala's son) in my arms by turn. For poor Bendidi it was the only outing and pilgrimage of her life.

In the evenings, I took Avinash on long pram rides. One day an Englishwoman came to the dispensary looking for me after office hours and she was told that I was out with my son. Next day when she met me she said it appeared that I was only showing my baby around rather than attending to my work. I retorted that I did my professional work only during the posted hours.

Avinash had lovely curls and so I did not want to have his hair cut. But he developed boils on the head which covered large areas of the scalp and matted his hair. Reluctantly we applied scissors and soon all his hair was gone.

One day Sarojini was served some sag (greens) brought by some pony owners and cooked by Prem Nath. She was so furious at the poor quality of the sag that she threw the thali with rice and sag, like a frisbee, out of the window. Prem Nath was very scared, but fortunately the thali did not strike anyone. Sarojini had done this playfully, in mock anger. In reality Sarojini was very kind to servants and the episode of the thali thrown out of the window was a solitary one.

All in all we spent six wonderful months in Tangmarg.

Section 26

In October 1945 I was asked to move to Shopian and on tenth November we reached there. I was to establish the new dispensary here. This was done in a shop by the bus stand. The upper flat served as my residence.

Didda and Gauri spent the winter and the next autumn with us. In 1946 Babuji and his family and Jeevan Rishi came. It was then we decided on the name Avinash, having used Kakaji until then. We visited Aharbal falls and other scenic meadows. From a neighbour who cut down a walnut tree we purchased a big sack of walnuts. It did not snow the winter of 1945-1946 and the Banihal pass remained open throughout the year.

I had the charge of a number of breeding centres in the area, the farthest of which was ten miles away. I was expected to inspect each centre at least once a month. I left early in the morning with my lunch in a bag, visiting as many centres as possible on the same day. During this time one Vid Lal introduced himself to us and stayed overnight. He overheard Sarojini talk about the need for fresh supply of rice. The next day, without telling us, he brought several bags of excellent rice. We were impressed by this and we thought that such a responsible man would be invaluable in arranging the marriage of my cousin Prithvi Nath, whose mother Bendidi had asked Sarojini to look for a girl in the Shopian area. We mentioned this to Vid Lal, and he volunteered to help. A couple of days later he informed us that he had arranged a marriage in a very poor but good family. He wanted an advance of one hundred rupees (a considerable sum those days) to make further arrangements. I paid him the money but that was the last we saw of him.

On inquiries we discovered that he was a con-man. Thus our marriage making endeavours came to naught.

The winter of 1946-1947 was very severe. Sarojini was again expecting, so it was decided that she should spend the cold months in Srinagar. I was alone in the house. It was so cold that I lay all the mattresses on the charpai on which I slept under two quilts. In the evening I heated up the room with an iron stove. It had snowed and the roads were frozen hard. One such morning, I heard someone walk in the street on clogged shoes. The sound drew my attention and I opened the window. It was a forest guard who told me that he was walking all the way to Srinagar. I decided to join him and so asked him to wait for me. I dressed hastily and went to the home of the chowkidar to hand over the keys of the dispensary. The two of us lunched at Hawal at the home of a Pandit and then walked on to Pulwama. The buses then came only upto Pulwama in bad weather; the extension on to Shopian was only a fair weather one. Darkness was fast descending and there were more passengers than seats. Eventually a driver, who knew me, offered to take me with him but the forester did not get a seat and had to stay back. I reached Srinagar quite late. In our home at Sathu, everyone was happy to see me.

That night it snowed heavily and all the roads in the valley were blocked by snow by the next morning. Since I had come to Srinagar without permission, I got anxious about how to get back. I went to the bus stand. There I found Dr. Madhusudan Jalali, the veterinarian from Pulwama, and Badri Nath Jalali, Naib Tehsildar of Pulwama making inquiries; these gentlemen had also come to the city without permission. The bus company people had no idea when the traffic would restart and we were very anxious to return. So on the third day we decided to return on foot.

Section 27

The distance from Srinagar to Pulwama is about twenty miles and we decided to do it in two days. Our plan was to proceed to Kakpore, which is fourteen miles away, on the first day. The next day we hoped to reach Pulwama from where Shopian is only ten miles. After morning meals at our homes, we met at the bus stand. I bought four big telwaroos (bagels) from the baker. We chose the bus stand for our meeting in the hope that some bus might take off. On enquiry we were told that none was expected to leave that day. So we marched off. There was some hazy sunlight.

After we crossed Pampore about eight miles away, we heard the hum of approaching vehicles. There being no governmental arrangements for the clearance of snow, a few enterprising bus drivers had arrived with shovels and labourers to clear the road to Anantnag. The lead bus, when it would slide off the road, was pushed back on the road pavement by the labourers after clearing the snow in patches. The caravan proceeded slowly.

The day was sunny. We got a lift to Letapore. but we made a mistake by not getting off at the spot from where the river bank for crossing to Kakpore is nearest. Instead, we got down at Letapore and walked to the riverbank. The boatmen assured us that the village at the other end was Kakpore. By the time we crossed over it became pitch dark. On reaching this village we found that we had been fooled. On that dark snow-covered winter night we found no one who would tell us the direction. We took one of the beaten tracks which we thought was the right way. In that dark the only light was the fluorescence of the snow. In the first half hour of this trek Dr. Jalali had two falls. Being on the heavy side, he now lost his will to walk. The other two of us kept on either side of Dr. Jalali to steady him. After an hour in the dark, knee-deep snow, and on empty stomachs, we reached a village but it was not Kakpore. The Naib Tehsildar knocked at the door of the first house and with the assistance of the houseowner we found the village chowkidar. The chowkidar got us a kerosene lamp and guided us to the Kakpore patwari khana. Fortunately, the patwari, who was a Pandit, was in. He lighted up a big fire in the fire place. We were so exhausted that the removal of the outer clothes was an ordeal. The patwari gave us hot tea and woollen wraps to warm our frozen bodies. After an hour or so we were served hot meals.

The night was restful. Next morning Dr. Jalali expressed his inability to walk the six miles to Pulwama. We summoned several horse owners but they refused to rent horses due to the hard frozen and slippery roads. They insisted on a guarantee of safe return which none of us could give. So after hot meals we

started on foot. The sky was overcast. In Pulwama, I had to choose between staying with the doctor or the Naib Tehsildar. I could have also stayed with my mother's family that was from here, but then leaving early next day would have been rude. The doctor's wife was a consumptive whereas the Naib Tehsildar was alone. This fact, and the Naib Tehsildar's stronger insistence, drew me to his place. But the bed that was made for me had insufficient covers and I froze and kept awake the whole night.

I started in the morning before breakfast for Shopian. The main road looked no better than a footpath because of the heavy snowfall. Three miles down the track forked out and by mistake I took the one which carried me to Aribal, a village which is endemic with goitre. There is a saying about this place that it leads to *{\em dag rostaya rag phyala}*, or a painless tumour. I met a man emerging from his house who directed me back to the fork. But I decided to cross the fields without realizing that they were terraced and uneven. It was hard walking and I sprained some tendon or muscle in the groin on the right side. I reached Hawal by about two in the afternoon. My host there treated me to tea and meals and looking me over advised me to spend that night there. But I decided to press on. In the beginning the going was easy but after crossing a bridge a climb began, and I felt too exhausted to lift my legs. By now I had a shooting pain in the groin and I had to take a long rest. The last mile was steeper. My breathing became very hard and after every two steps I rested to recoup my breath. When at long last I arrived in Shopian, I found a butcher's shop open. I bought meat and went home. There I lit the stove, made the room hot, and cooked rice and meat, and rubbed iodex on my injury.

All this exertion turned out to have been in vain as the election to the assembly seat, which prompted us to hurry back to Shopian, was not held due to the withdrawal of the opposition candidate.

Section 28

The earliest extant Kashmiri history is the Rajatarangini, written by Kalhana around 1150. It appears that the list of kings goes back to the beginning of the second millennium BC. We are on sure ground with the emperor Ashoka who established a new capital. Later, during the reign of the Kushan emperor Kanishka, an important Buddhist council was held here.

One of the greatest of the Kashmiri kings was Lalitaditya, who ruled from 724 to 761. He was a great conqueror and he is believed to have extended his rule to most of north and east India as well as west Tibet. He built a magnificent temple of Martanda at Matan. Another great king was Avantivarman (855-883), during whose reign great building activity continued. These kings were also patrons of the arts and literature.

One of the most fascinating characters of Kashmiri history is Queen Didda who, directly or indirectly, ruled during 950-1003. She was ruthless in her pursuit of power. She began as the powerful queen of a weak king and then she was the queen regent during the nominal reigns of her son and grandsons. The last twenty three years of her reign, she ruled in her own name.

Kashmir passed into Muslim rule in 1339 when a mercenary named Shah Mir, who had come to Kashmir from the south, deposed the widow of the last Hindu king. Fifty years later the iconoclastic king Sikandar ascended the throne. A merciless campaign to destroy temples and convert the Hindu population followed and according to tradition only eleven Hindu families survived this persecution. Sikandar's son Zain-ul-Abidin (1420-1470) was a great ruler, however, and many of those who had fled the valley returned during his reign. The sultans who followed were weak and, under the influence of fanatical Muslim preachers, the persecution of Hindus continued.

In 1589, Akbar's forces incorporated Kashmir into Mughal India. The period that followed saw good administration. During the reigns of Jehangir and Shah Jahan, magnificent gardens in Shalimar, Nishat, Cheshma Shahi, and Achabal were built. Aurangzeb (1658-1707) appointed fourteen governors during his reign. One of these, Iftikhar Khan (1671-75), wished to convert all the remaining Hindus to Islam. The Hindu leaders approached the Sikh Guru Tegh Bahadur. He said they should tell the governor that the Kashmiris will embrace Islam if Tegh Bahadur did. Guru Tegh Bahadur was arrested on orders from Aurangzeb and brought to Delhi. He was given the choice to convert to Islam or death. He chose to be martyred. It was in reaction to this act of Aurangzeb that Sikhs under Govind Singh became militant.

The Afghans seized Kashmir in 1753. What followed was a series of rapacious and cruel governors. The Muslim rule in Kashmir ended in 1819 when the Afghan governor Jabbar Khan was defeated by the Sikh general Dewan Chand. Kashmir became a part of the Punjab State of Ranjit Singh. But the Sikh rule, that lasted twenty seven years, was not much of an improvement on the Afghans. With the defeat of the Sikhs at the hands of the English in 1846, the Jammu and Kashmir State passed under the rule of the Dogras, who themselves belonged to Jammu.

The story of the founding of the Dogra state is a fascinating one. The Dogra kings traced their lineage to Ranjit Deva who ruled in the Jammu region during 1742-1780. Gulab Singh, who belonged to this family, was born in 1792 and he distinguished himself as a sixteen year old soldier defending Jammu against the Sikhs. Maharaja Ranjit Singh now took Gulab Singh in his service. For his services as a soldier and leader, Ranjit Singh rewarded Gulab Singh with the rajaship of Jammu in 1820; his brothers Dhyani Singh and Suchet Singh became rajas of Poonch and Ramnagar. But the brothers remained tributaries to Ranjit Singh and amongst the three Gulab Singh, the eldest, was considered the primary ruler. Dhyani Singh remained in Ranjit Singh's court to protect and advance the interests of their family, advancing to the position of chief minister.

Gulab Singh had maintained neutrality during the wars between the Sikhs and the British. After the Sikhs had lost, the British signed a treaty with Gulab Singh in 1846 ceding Kashmir to him. The Maharajas who followed were Ranbir Singh (1857-1885), Pratap Singh (1885-1925), and Hari Singh (1925-1947).

Sheikh Abdullah became an important political leader in Kashmir in 1932 when he founded a political party called the Muslim Conference. In 1939, an attempt was made to make the party broad based by renaming it the National Conference. But Muslim Conference continued its existence amongst the Muslims of the Jammu province. The National Conference now worked to obtain political reform in the State. Its manifesto was markedly left-wing like the policies of the Congress party.

Politically, events were moving very fast. Ram Chandra Kak was the prime minister of Kashmir in late 1946 when Sheikh Abdullah launched his movement against the Maharaja. Ram Chandra Kak, a distant relative, started his career as an archaeologist. His administrative abilities eventually led to his appointment as the chief secretary of the Maharaja, a position he held for many years. Abdullah and his supporters were arrested. Jawaharlal Nehru, to show his solidarity with Abdullah, entered the State although he had been ordered not to do so. Ram Chandra Kak had him arrested too. Fortunately, the Congress Party prevailed upon Nehru to return to Delhi.

These events made Nehru unremittingly hostile to Ram Chandra Kak and the Maharaja. It appears that Nehru did not understand the political complexities of the Jammu and Kashmir State. His politics in general was determined a great deal by ideas of Russian communism and English socialism. He viewed history in terms of class struggle, so he failed to understand that the ethnic and linguistic diversity of the State required a delicate balance. Sheikh Abdullah was a sectarian leader of the Kashmiri Muslims, who constitute just a third of the population of the State. Nevertheless, Nehru decided to support Abdullah completely. It was the unconditional support of Nehru for Sheikh Abdullah that was responsible for the reluctance of the Maharaja and Ram Chandra Kak to accede to India.

Mahatma Gandhi visited Kashmir now. Soon the pressure from the Abdullah forces and the Congress party in Delhi caused the Maharaja to dismiss Ram Chandra Kak as prime minister on August 10, 1947. Sheikh Abdullah was released from the jail on September 29.

Subhash was born in March 1947 in Sathu at home. I saw Sarojini and him as soon as I was able to return from Shopian, which was two days later. In six weeks Sarojini and the children accompanied me to Shopian. The house by the bus stand was not large enough for the family, so we rented a house in Batapore from one Madho Ram Kichlu. There was plenty of room for Avinash to play and run about.

In summer, Babuji with family arrived from Kapurthala to spend a month with us. We decided to go to Aharbal falls for a picnic. While on the hard granite ledge of the falls I slipped and was saved from a certain death by the arrest of my fall at a crack in the ledge.

I remember the summer as hazy and without cheer. Although the talks for independence were on, there were threats of carnage being made by the Muslim League, which insisted on a partition of India based on religion. It was clear that political freedom would be messy. But in spite of these alarms nobody had an inkling of the holocaust to follow. Perhaps the weather was a foreboding of things to come. The newspapers were full of rumours.

On fifteenth August, India was declared a free sovereign state and holocaust on either side of the Punjab border began. Hindus and Sikhs in Pakistani Punjab, and Muslims in Indian Punjab, were butchered.

Kashmir was linked with the plains via Rawalpindi and Sialkot. Both these cities were now part of Pakistan and so it became easy for Pakistan to pressure Kashmir by stopping the export of essential items such as petrol, salt, sugar, and tea. The Indian Independence Act gave the rulers of the Indian states the freedom to choose either India or Pakistan or to remain independent, if the geography of the area so permitted. The Jammu and Kashmir State borders with the Central Asian nations of the Soviet Union and Tibet on the north and east, on the west it has Pakistan, and on the south it has India. With the lapse of the British overlordship, Kashmir was independent and it could stay independent if Pakistan and India permitted. The Maharaja wished to have time to resolve his predicament. He entered into an agreement with both Pakistan and India for a status quo for the present to enable him to reach a decision.

In spite of this agreement, Pakistan applied its economic blockade on Kashmir. Petrol and salt, two most essential commodities, disappeared. Meanwhile we heard stories about Pakistan sponsored eruptions in Poonch, Kotli, and Mirpur. The State forces were rushed there to quell the uprisings. In late October, Pathan tribals from Pakistan descended on Kashmir massacring Hindus and Sikhs as they advanced. From the border areas, the Kashmiri Hindus started fleeing out of the valley to Jammu. The tribals were guided by Pakistani army officers and mullahs. They could not have easily crossed Domel had not the Muslim soldiers of the State army there gone over to them. Soon they were pillaging northern Kashmir and threatening Srinagar. The Maharaja was compelled by this attack to accede to India. The Indian government flew forces to Srinagar on October 27 and saved it from falling into the hands of the Pakistanis.

As the roads into Kashmir were now blocked and passage through Pakistan was risky, Babuji could not leave for Kapurthala. We went to Srinagar to see him off, but as he was unable to leave we stayed on.

Considering the situation of the stranded tourists and the refugees, the government of India issued orders that the planes bringing in the soldiers could ferry out these people. Actually this decision was taken by Sardar Patel, the deputy prime minister, who was visiting Kashmir, over the objections of the Army who argued that the boarding by the civilians lost them valuable time. Given the possibility of the fragmentation of the family, Babuji suggested that he would take Avinash with him to save at least one of the descendents of my family. Babuji himself had no son and he felt especially drawn to Avinash. We agreed, and on the last day of the arrangements to transport back refugees, Babuji and his family and Avinash were flown to Delhi where they were lodged in a refugee camp for two days. Then they took a passenger train north and they arrived in Kapurthala after a further two days.

As the local administration collapsed, I did not return to duty and joined the militia that was formed to defend the valley. We were provided with three-not-three guns and all the ammunition in my unit was stocked with me. We marched during the day and nightly we kept vigil of sensitive areas.

But I never saw any real action. The only exciting event was when one night I sent a couple of volunteers on the round with a loaded gun. The gun was to be fired in case of danger to alert the rest of the group. After they returned, they relaxed by a bon-fire. Someone was now fiddling with the gun and it fired accidentally. The bullet hit the logs and it splintered, and one of these splinters hit a volunteer in the knee. A make-shift stretcher was made out of a charpai and he was carried to the hospital. There the splinter, which was embedded very superficially, was removed and in half an hour this volunteer was out smiling.

Meanwhile some neighbouring pro-Pakistani Muslims appeared at their windows and hurled curses at the Sheikh and the Indian Army. They were screaming at the accession. Next day we reported the incident at the Militia headquarters set up at the Palladium cinema hall, where I worked during the period of my

leave. When my leave came to an end, I requested to be drafted into the militia for the duration of the war and to be sent to the border. But this was not approved.

So I went back to Shopian. The atmosphere was full of tension. I was alone and I used to attend the National Conference party office daily. When I was at Srinagar, a large number of bakarwals assembled in the mountains across the river and it was rumoured that they planning to raid the town. Mr Trilok Nath Muttoo was the munsif magistrate. He devised a stratagem. He typed out a letter to the garrison commander telling him to visit Shopian in force as the tribals were lurking across the river. He also typed out a reply on a different typewriter detailing what would be coming and how much they would need by way of mules and accommodation for officers. A peon was sent with these letters to Pulwama. The whole day he lay concealed there and when evening came he returned to Shopian and delivered the reply to the munsif. The munsif immediately sent it to the range officer to reserve the forest rest house for the officers and to the Zaildar (a Pakistani sympathizer) to ask the pony owners to assemble in the Shopian town bazaar. This information frightened the Zaildar, who fled the town and the tribals (bakarwals) dispersed and by morning the threat was gone.

Section 29

Since there were no newspapers, nor radio, rumours were aplenty. The town had only one radio receiver that worked on a generator attached to a water mill. I was the only one who knew many languages and could transcribe news in detail. To avoid the tedium of writing out the news reports in Urdu for distribution to villages, I announced that I could only write in Devanagari which could be transcribed into the Urdu script by a number of schoolboys.

There was an acute shortage of salt and it was strictly rationed. Supplies were flown in from Delhi until the road connecting the state with Pathankot was established. My work entitled me to a special quota of salt.

One day, my peon sought my agreement for the staff to announce that all the medicines in the dispensary were used up. He had been asked by my compounder to approach me. I asked them to do as they liked without telling me. In those disturbed conditions no animals were brought to the dispensary. At the same time many tinctures and medicinal salts vanished from the market, and so sale of the dispensary medicines must have been a source of extra money to my staff.

One day while sitting in my dispensary, a neighbour brought me a pair of shoes that fitted me very well and he said that they cost thirty rupees. I told him that I would not pay more than fourteen rupees for the pair, he did not agree and took away the shoes. An hour later he was back and he handed over the shoes to me at my price. I had no money at that time and the compounder paid the man telling me that he would collect it from me when the monthly salary was distributed next. At the next salary distribution the compounder did not ask for the fourteen rupees, nor did I pay him the money. I reasoned that the compounder had made quite a bundle in selling the dispensary supplies and this money would be of no consequence to him. A thief had entered my mind. Then one day I went down to Srinagar in those shoes where on entering the house I saw that Subhash down with an attack of pneumonia and that he had been prescribed medicines worth fourteen rupees. This incident made me superstitious; I left the shoes in Srinagar and never wore them again.

Section 30

Meanwhile, in India, the states were reorganized and as a result Himachal Pradesh was born. It needed to set up its veterinary department. A position of a veterinarian was advertised at the same salary and working conditions as in Punjab, where the salaries were twice as much as in Kashmir. I applied directly and I requested the director for a transfer to Kathua in the Jammu province. I talked to my landlord, Madho Ram Kichlu, about the job in Himachal. He checked my horoscope and told me that I would be unable to accept the offer.

Those days Kathua was considered a difficult posting because during the rainy season the connecting road from Jammu would be unpassable and it was highly malarial and full of snakes. The director was pleased at my offer for this transfer.

The war with Pakistan was going on. Poonch was cut off by the Pakistanis. Now an outbreak of rinderpest occurred in Naushehra, which was the base for military operations against Pakistan in that sector. My transfer order came with the condition that, before joining at Kathua, I should tour Naushehra and immunize the livestock there. After leaving Sarojini and Subhash at Jammu with some relatives, I met the deputy director of the Jammu office (then designated inspector), collected the cases of serum and took them to the transport office. Convoys of trucks and buses were escorted by armoured vehicles since a stretch of the road was within the range of enemy gunfire. On that stretch I stood hanging on the safe side of the vehicle. I finished the vaccinations within a week and sought permission from the garrison commander to return to Jammu. This permission was not granted as the civilian officers wanted more non-military officers in the area. When I promised them that I would return with new stock of medicines to set up a dispensary, I was put on an army vehicle bound for Jammu.

At Jammu, I left the crates of empty bottles at a shop near the Inspectorate with a note to the inspector about my return. Next day, I went to Kathua from where I sent my tour diary to the director mentioning that the administration at Naushehra wished for a veterinary doctor.

In Kathua, I converted a portion of the dispensary building into my residence. After about a week I heard from the tehsildar at Basohli about the outbreak of a contagious disease in the hinterland of Billawar. I packed medical supplies and left for Basohli by bus which was the oldest registered in the state with the license plate J&K 1. The bus could not do the curves on the mountain road easily and it took five hours to do the distance of twenty five miles. Next day, I asked the tehsildar to arrange for the transport of the medical supplies and equipment. It took him two days to arrange a pony to carry the load. After I reached the village it took me four days to provide medicinal assistance to all the sick animals and then I returned directly to Kathua by a route which was only twenty miles by foot.

Meanwhile, several towns in the Jammu province had been surrounded by Pakistani troops. The Hindu populations of these towns had been swelled by the refugees from the nearby villages. The outgunned Dogra troops and the citizens sent frantic requests for reinforcements that never arrived. The first to fall was Bhimber, this was followed by Rajauri and Mirpur. Knowing what was to be their fate, many women committed suicide, others were kidnapped with their children. After each of the towns had fallen, the menfolk were put to the sword. Many of the abducted women were sold in the bazaars of Rawalpindi and Peshawar.

The situation was very depressing. I wrote to the Shimla government inquiring about my application. Within a month of this inquiry I received an appointment letter that awarded me six increments in my salary and a posting at Shimla but this appointment required my release by the J&K government. I sought this release but it was declined; I was told that the government could not let technical personnel go at that critical time.

Gopi Nath Qazi's recently wedded daughter and son-in-law came to pay their first visit together to her parents. Qazi asked me to give his son-in-law company. We spent many evenings at the Qazi house. We Kashmiris have an old tradition of drinking kehva at all hours. In Lahore I discovered that caffeine kept me awake but tell that to a Kashmiri host! In the Qazi home I drank a lot of kehva and I was sleepless at nights.

Subhash developed acute and persistent diarrhoea which weakened him so much that he could not even sit. Everyday three doctors, the district medical officer and his wife who the lady doctor, and another junior doctor checked on him trying various medicines with no results. I was worried and felt guilty as everybody had advised me against the transfer. During one kehva induced insomnia, as I was pacing the roof of the house, a voice told me that I should give Subhash simple lime water. I checked with the doctors at the hospital if this would harm him. On their assurance that it would not, I obtained a couple of ounces of lime water and gave one spoonful to Subhash. After this he started getting better and the listless

face started brightening up. Later when I consulted my books I realized that he had developed acute acidity due to teething and the treatment was right.

In spring Pandit Dama Kaul, my father-in-law, came from Shimla to visit us and he stayed for a couple of days. Since the buses did not come to Kathua then it was a lot of trouble for him riding ramshackle tongas from the main road to the town.

Section 31

Babuji wrote now that during the summer vacation his family would be at Dharmashala with Jeevan Rishi, who was a lecturer there. He also asked me to take back Avinash for he was not happy amongst them and that he missed his mother very much. Those days the Kashmir government had put in place a permit system to monitor the entry and exit of people at the border. I obtained this permit without much trouble.

There was no vehicular traffic between Kathua and Pathankot and the road connecting Kathua to the Jammu-Pathankot highway was a fair weather road. I borrowed a cycle from a friend in Kathua and did the seventeen miles to Pathankot in about two and a half hours. There I went to the Kashmir trade agent's office where a friend of Babuji was the accounts officer. He took me home for lunch and then put me on a bus to Dharmashala. We went over the picturesque route along the Ravi ghat and reached Dharmashala in the evening. This town is on a hill and the houses are on sloping terraces and the streets are very clean. Avinash was overjoyed to see me.

Next day Asha told me that she was suffering from tertiary malaria and the doctor had prescribed half a tablet of a certain medicine. I told her that when she next felt the onset of shivering she should take two tablets, instead of the half tablet, and the fever would be gone. She did the same and she got well. The doctor had been coming every alternate day to collect his visiting fees. Next day when the doctor came again he saw Asha was well. When he learnt the reason behind this quick recovery, he beat a hasty retreat.

On the third day I returned to Pathankot with Avinash. After lunch I rolled a blanket around the cycle bar for Avinash to sit on and pedalled off toward Kathua. On the way I took several breaks to allow Avinash to overcome the fatigue of riding on the cycle bar.

Avinash's arrival brought a lot of cheer. Sarojini was very happy to see her son after an absence of more than two years. I remained very busy as I was on tour practically every other day.

Section 32

After some time Sarojini received an invitation from her sister Aruna in Delhi, who was expecting a new baby. We all decided to go. After crossing the Ravi we hired a tonga to Pathankot. There we boarded a very crowded train to Delhi. I asked Sarojini to sit opposite me so that I could keep an eye around her as she was wearing gold jewelry. Next evening, when we arrived in Delhi, Sarojini discovered that her necklace was missing. But later when she was undressing the necklace fell out of her bodice. Evidently the pickpocket on the train had, in spite of my vigilance, managed to snip the chain at the back, but being heavy it slipped into the bodice.

A couple of days later we went to Chandni Chowk for shopping. We were warned about pickpockets here too. One of these followed us very closely as we shopped, and I had to warn him to get off.

In two or three days, I developed a fever in Delhi and I decided to return. From Pathankot I came by tonga to Dinanagar, a town on the bank of Ravi and crossed the river on foot. The cold water of the river brought down my temperature. I had no appetite and at night my temperature rose again. I took anti-malarial medicine but that did not help. I went to the hospital the next day and was told that I had typhoid. I asked a vaid to prepare me a concoction based on barley water. Suraj Khullar, an overseer in the irrigation department, was a good friend. He had heard that I had returned and when he came to visit me he found me in a bad shape. Next day his wife Shanta came to see me and till I recovered she came every day with barley water and other things. My temperature finally came down in the next seven days, but physically I felt very weak.

A week or two later, Maharaja Hari Singh visited Kathua and people from the far corners of the district came for his darshan. Amongst these was a group of carpenters who came from the hills in Jasrota across Ujh river about fifteen miles away. After the darshan they came to me asking to accompany them to control an outbreak of hemorrhagic septicemia in a herd of buffaloes. My legs were not strong enough for this journey. Fortunately, the villagers had brought a pony with them. When I agreed to go with them they purchased some vegetables for me and put me on the pony. We reached the village in the evening and they put me up in a guest house. Next four days we vaccinated the animals in and around the village. With the rest, the ghee, the milk and the care at the village I regained my energy. On the return there was no animal for me to ride so we walked upto Hiranagar in the hope of getting a lift there. But we only saw a stream of army trucks on the road. No civilian vehicles were to be seen and we walked the entire distance to Kathua. Bua Ditta, my peon, was completely exhausted at the end.

My supervisor, A.C. Gupta, came on an inspection tour of twelve days in the rainy season. Those day the custom was for a boss to stay with a family as a guest. But in the absence of Sarojini it was a great inconvenience. I was irritated with his sponging off me for so long. Nature came to my rescue! It rained so hard for the first four days of his trip that Kathua was cut off from the adjacent areas and he did not get the feasts that would have been his on his inspections. On the sixth day, the sun shone and a butcher's shop opened. But Bua Ditta who did the cooking messed up that day. The meat was watery and tasteless and A.C. Gupta thought that this was done deliberately at my behest. After he left I asked Bua Ditta why the meat was so bad. He told me that after he cooked the meat the saucepan spilt over on the stove and he picked up the meat pieces, washed them and cooked them again. After this incident I got a letter weekly from the inspectorate as to why I was living in the dispensary. I did not enter these letters in the correspondence register. These letters continued till the next visit of the director.

The director telephoned me from Hiranagar that he was coming on his annual tour to Kathua and he wanted arrangements to be made for his stay in the rest house. When he arrived, I introduced a couple of the town bigwigs to him and this pleased him. Since I was living in the dispensary, I invited him to have his dinner there. Next day, during the inspection, he was very angry when the compounder was unable to answer some technical questions. And he did not like it when I tried to prompt the compounder. Later on his return from a trip to Basohli, he told me that some people were objecting to my stay in the dispensary. Perhaps he had tried to suggest this by being short with the compounder. In any event, I now rented a house in the centre of the town.

Section 33

Sarojini and the children went from Delhi to Shimla, where her family now lived. Sarojini's brother Kashi Nath Kaul, and his wife Chandrani and daughter Nikki, had moved there some time ago when he began working for a bank there. Now his parents and brothers, who were at college and school, also lived with him. My eldest sister-in-law Kamala and her husband Pushkarnath also lived in Shimla.

When I received a letter from Sarojini in Shimla asking me to bring her back, I took one week's leave and left on the Pathankot-Kalka-Shimla train. The picturesque mountain train ride from Kalka to Shimla went through about one hundred tunnels. The train arrived late at about four thirty in the afternoon. I was wearing very worn pants and a sharp edge of the train seat ripped the bottom and I walked from the station to the house on foot with the shirt out to hide the tear. On the way I saw Kamala and Sarojini walk on a lower road on the hill and, since I was in a hurry to change my trousers, I asked them to shout the instructions to reach the house.

The return was uneventful. Towards the close of that summer, Bayaji informed me that Gauri's marriage was fixed and he wanted clothes, material for suits and other paraphernalia to be purchased. I went to Pathankot to do the shopping. Bayaji wanted me to ask Sarojini to contribute some of her personal gold. Sarojini offered her brand new ten tola gold bangles. At devagun, Sarojini put the bangles on Gauri in the presence of all the relatives and they were dumbfounded that she, a young bride herself, could sacrifice so much of her stridhan. Meanwhile, Didda returned the chain with the locket to Sarojini; this was the piece

that had been presumed lost but had been lying in Didda's safe custody. Sarojini put this around Gauri's neck.

Section 34

Because it was near the highway connecting Punjab and Kashmir, Kathua assumed great importance. Officers and ministers passing through the town stayed with Ghanshyam, the deputy commissioner.

Feeling self-important, Ghanshyam assumed the airs of a feudal lord. He purchased a horse from the Maharaja's stables and he asked me to come to his compound to examine the horse. But when I arrived he tried to order me around and so I asked him to send the animal to the dispensary. Ghanshyam was treating other officers in the district shabbily as well. My friends and I often played badminton in the compound of the subjudge. Whenever we found Ghanshyam wanting to join us, we would pack up and leave.

Afzal Beg, the revenue and animal husbandry minister, paid several visits to Kathua, but I kept away from these functions. The main reason was that I did not wish to invite his attention to me so that he would not think of a subsequent visit to the dispensary and discover that I lived on the premises. Ghanshyam asked me why I had been absent and if I disliked the minister. I gave some excuse.

The director soon wrote about a new visit. I borrowed a nice bed from a friend and got a room ready for him in the dispensary. When he found this arrangement rather than the usual one at the dak bungalow he appeared pleased. He liked my explanation that I had moved from the dispensary on his explicit advice.

He dined at our home. Next day he visited the dispensary and told me that everything was above reproach. In the evening we went out for a walk and he was pleased when he saw most people were greeting me.

A.C. Gupta's telegram arrived one day saying that he would be passing through Kathua that evening. Since the information arrived late, we fixed up the same room in the dispensary for his stay. Fortunately, Sarojini had cooked meat that evening and she put together a few more things. Gupta liked the food. He asked Bua Ditta privately about my income. Bua Ditta explained that my rent was thirty rupees a month (actually it was only ten rupees) and that I was able to maintain my standard of living on the money order of one hundred rupees I received regularly from relatives in Punjab. (Actually I received no such money.) Bua Ditta explained to him that I had moved to this expensive house as desired by him; A.C. Gupta now expressed remorse. The story is to highlight that the palate rules the mind.

Section 35

In October 1949, we went again to Srinagar to participate in the mekhala ceremony of Kamala's sons. I was made the caretaker of the house and so everyone but me had fun.

In April 1950, transfer orders arrived for me to join a travelling unit that would work in Kashmir in summer and in Jammu in winter. There were two such units. My unit operated out of Verinag, which is where the river Vitasta originates from a spring. The emperor Jahangir built a fine stone enclosure around this spring. We were to tour villages and provide medical assistance. I was assigned a Hindu peon, who cooked my food.

Then, in August, I was asked to accompany a VIP group to the Amar Nath yatra. I was provided with a riding pony and three pack ponies for tent and medicines and a cook. Bayaji and Tika Lal (Bayaji's son-in-law and Kamala's husband) accompanied me.

With the start of the yatra I sent my baggage ahead and followed the animals to see if any pony was lagging behind due to any ailment. I did not care to ride the pony myself so I let it be used by any struggling yatri. The first stop was at Chandanwari. Next day, starting early, we crossed a snow bridge and began ascending the steep incline of Pissoo Ghati that took one and a half hours. Next was a relatively flat track, along a stream, to the Sushramnag lake now more popularly known as Sheshnag lake.

Sheshnag is an emerald lake topped by five pinnacles that look like the multiple hoods of the mythical snake on whom Vishnu lies between dissolutions of the universe. Huge chunks of ice float in the lake in which the devotees take a dip.

The plateau on which the camp is placed is called Vavjin, Vayuvarjana in Sanskrit, meaning demonic wind in popular etymology, and it blows very hard there. From Vavjin we went up the Bumsin pass at 13,000 feet and went down on the other side to cross Panchtarni (Panchatarangini), a high valley drained by five streams. This crossing took us to a fine plateau where tents were struck. On the fourth day the yatri went to the Amar Nath cave, bathed in the Amarkantak stream outside the cave and then had darshan. By eleven in the morning we were back at the camp. The next day we returned to Chandanwari. On route my job was to examine the sick animals and register the dead ones for insurance claims.

The sixth day we were back in Pahalgam. Two more days were needed to settle the claims of the pony contractors and tent suppliers. When I returned to Srinagar with my travel bills I was asked to pay a cut to the office staff. As I refused to do so, I never received this money due to me.

The day I arrived in Srinagar, Sarojini was in labour and was admitted to the Rattan Rani hospital where Shakti was born. In October, our camp at Verinag closed for the winter. I was given ten days at Srinagar to join the winter camp in Jammu.

Sri Aurobindo died in 1950. He had foretold a great future for India, a reawakening. But all signs made it clear that the path to such a renaissance would be long and hard. We had hoped that Aurobindo would provide spiritual guidance to a resurgent India. But it was plain to see that Indian politicians had abandoned their oft-repeated ideals and they were behaving like feudal lords.

The passage to political independence had been a journey through rivers of blood. Although partition of India had been done on the insistence of Muslim League, Britain was responsible in not having set up an orderly transition and ensuring the safety of citizens. The Congress party agreed to a division of India without understanding what such a division entailed. Pakistan considered itself as the inheritor to the long lost Mughal empire and the focus of the aspirations of the Muslims of the entire sub-continent. The Congress party was in such a hurry to strike a deal that it sacrificed the interests of the minorities in the region that became Pakistan.

Kashmir soon became a pawn in the larger struggle between the West and the Soviet Union. India was perceived as an ally of the Soviet Union, therefore the West turned a blind eye on the condition of the minorities in the new state of Pakistan. The Congress leaders in India were naive administrators; there was a lot of talk of creating a modern, secular India but the politics of the party encouraged class and religious divides.

Section 36

We arrived in Jammu and, until permanent arrangements could be made, we got a room in the half-built Gandhi House. This was common practice to help the employees who moved to Jammu with the transfer to the winter capital. I reported to the deputy director for my next posting but he kept putting me off. On the fourth day I told him that I had exhausted my rations and that I had no choice but to shift to his house till he issued my posting orders. On hearing this he called the head clerk and issued my posting to Billawar, a very undesirable station. The other party was sent to Katra and Vaishno Devi.

To reach Billawar we had to go through Kathua where we hoped to hire ponies to carry our tent equipment and personal goods and, if possible, ponies to ride. But no saddle ponies were available so Sarojini rode on a pack saddle which was quite painful. Shakti was carried in a backpack by one of my attendants. We had started late and we had to spend the night at a shop front after we had gone just a quarter of the way. Sarojini cooked meals for everyone.

We set out early next morning. On route, while negotiating a boulder strewn riverbed, the girthband of the pack horse carrying Sarojini loosened and started sliding on one side. On a cry from her, the ponyman rushed to help and he broke her fall. She was lucky to escape injury. We reached Billawar in early afternoon. Tents were erected in the Chaugam (open space), meals were cooked, and we went to bed.

Next day the attendants got busy with the cooking out in the open. One was kneading flour when a large monkey alighted on his back and, at the same time, another monkey snatched the whole kneaded flour off the dish. The whole place was swarming with aggressive monkeys. We could not wait and so I went to

the local numberdar who arranged a house for me and a room on top of a shop in the bazaar for my three staff. We hired a woman to wash the dishes and fetch water from the spring.

My frequent visits to the surrounding villages attracted the attention of farmers. The department decided that the animals should be vaccinated, free of cost. I sent the vaccination with two of my staff instructing them to report to me every week. When these fellows failed to return for ten days, I sent the third attendant to look for them. The following day the first two guys returned. Later, that evening, the attendant who went to search for them came back complaining that the first two fellows had sought rice and dal from the farmers for the vaccination and they would not share it with him. When I questioned the staff about it, they explained they were not charging the farmers for vaccination and the rice and dal was each family's gift to them. As there was no way to return the rice and dal to the farmers, Sarojini asked that it be brought to my residence where it was divided among all the staff.

Billawar's monkeys were very bold. One evening Avinash insisted that I buy him fresh semnies from the bazaar. The halwai put these in a big leaf cup. After a few steps a monkey leapt into the middle of the street and grabbed the free end of the cup. Avinash and the monkey pulled at the different ends until the monkey bared his teeth and Avinash let go.

The town dogs were scared of the monkeys. As pups, the monkeys would pull hard at their ears or tails and this memory put a fear in them. Iron grilles on the windows prevented the monkeys from attacking the property of the residents and the shopkeepers.

The farmers guarded their grain with the help of mountain dogs who were not afraid of the monkeys. The monkeys recognized these mountain dogs as being different from the local cowardly breed.

I am reminded of an incident that shows how smart these monkeys were. Our dispensary room, which was above a shop, overlooked a courtyard where corn cobs were spread out to dry. These cobs were being watched by a ferocious looking dog on a leash. Somehow a young monkey strayed within the reach of the dog, who grabbed him and pinned him under his leg. A troop of monkeys started screaming and threatening the dog, who positioned himself against the wall with the young monkey still pinned under. For some time it was a stalemate. Then an older monkey climbed the roof of the building and rolled a log about five feet long and half a foot in circumference. The log fell on the back of the unsuspecting dog, who was so frightened and hurt that he let go of the monkey, who was swooped up by its mother and taken to the safety of the roof.

***First winter rain:
the monkey also seems to wish
for a little straw cloak.
--- Basha***

Section 37

Before the advent of the Dogra rule, Billawar was an independent principality. The town had a high wall around it and, in the middle, on raised ground was an ancient temple to Shiva. The rampart was broken in places. The residents of the town believed that within the ramparts scorpion stings and snakebites, even those of cobras, were harmless. The harmlessness within the enclosed town was attributed to the power of the Shiva temple.

As it got hotter, we were certain snakes were crawling all over our house. We thought they were seen even on the ceilings, which were made of branches pressed down with mud. Sleeping in the rooms was now sheer terror. We were advised that we should pour some milky water at the Shiva temple and collect the run-off and sprinkle it around the house. This is what Sarojini did and, miraculously, for the rest of our stay we never saw a snake in our house.

Once we had an unbroken spell of heavy rains. The town was cut off and the markets, lacking new supplies, shut down. The townspeople believed that rain would stop when the water started flowing from

under the feet of Shiva's battered statue. I think on this occasion the rain did stop as predicted. No wonder, there was great veneration for the temple.

Behind the temple was a wall of chiselled stone blocks. It was said that at the death of the ruler a loosened block would fall out. Because of this there were instructions that any fall of a stone block should be reported to the deputy commissioner at Kathua. I am told that when Maharaja Hari Singh died in Bombay, a stone did fall, although the information of the death had not yet reached Jammu.

On thirteenth April, the Baisakhi day, a great three day festival took place around the temple. Shops and entertainment stalls were set up for dancing and singing. This year the medical unit was without the doctor and the compounder was not skilled. A patient with a case of blocked urine came to the dispensary. The compounder sent for me. I tried to introduce a catheter but the blockage prevented it, and it led to considerable bleeding. The patient had an enlarged prostate caused perhaps by arsenic tonic, popular amongst the villagers as aphrodisiac. It was late at night and drastic action was called for. I told the patient and his attendants that I would take out the urine that night and in the morning, provided he checked in at the Kathua district hospital the next day as soon as possible. When promised so, I introduced a twenty cc record syringe needle into the bladder from the abdominal side and withdrew urine. The patient was greatly relieved. I repeated this operation in the morning. During the procedures the local quacks and lay practitioners were in attendance. I forgot all about the case. But four or five days later I saw the patient loitering in the town and asked him if he had returned from the Kathua hospital. He told me that the quack opposite the dispensary had dissuaded him from going and was treating him with some local medicines. The quack had apparently used a large record syringe with a fractured glass barrel kept together with strings to take out urine a few times until it started coming out spontaneously.

Sarojini became a celebrity when she assisted a neighbour's wife in the safe delivery of a baby. From the next day simple villagers started bringing their ailing children to her for treatment which caused her a lot of embarrassment.

Our stay at Billawar came to an end on May 1, 1951. The tents and the other paraphernalia was taken to Kathua for storage.

Section 38

In Srinagar, Dr Anwar, who was the head of the second travelling unit, accompanied me to pay our respects to the director. On being seated in his office, the director turned to me with a red face and started ranting and raving for having quarrelled and misbehaved in the field. I was piqued because the whole thing was uncalled for and asked for his permission to leave. Next day I learnt that the director actually wished to admonish Anwar but he was such a coward that he could not do it on his face. This was a time when people did not always speak directly!

I was posted to Baramulla and was asked to conduct rinderpest disease vaccination in the Pattan and Tangmarg area. Pattan is a town midway between Srinagar and Baramulla that was founded by King Shankaravarman who ruled during 883-902. It has ruins of old temples.

I kept my camp equipment at Baramulla and toured the area travelling light and fast. I would spend the nights in Pandit villages while my Muslim staff would spend the nights in nearby Muslim villages.

In this area is a cluster of villages inhabited by Shias. They were more prosperous than the Sunni Muslims and they had the reputation of being good hosts. One of my Sunni attendants spent the night in one of these Shia villages. Some celebration was going on in this house and so the attendant was treated to a feast. Now there are some baseless rumours that the Shias torture and kill Sunni Muslims, and this belief was deep rooted in the mind of the attendant. It turned out that this fool believed that the Shias treat their non-Shia guest with great hospitality but during the night they pass stakes into his body. The attendant's fears were magnified by the good dinner so that, at the first opportunity after the meal, he fled the house and hid himself on a tree during the night.

The next morning he came to me with the story of his supposed narrow escape. I was very upset and accompanied him back to the village, where people were already searching for him. The situation became so tense that I reported the matter to the authorities and he was dismissed at the end of the season.

Now I received orders to conduct the vaccination in areas beyond Baramulla and a camp at the dispensary became my base. I directed my staff to work without accepting any money in return. The days I accompanied my staff things would go fine, but the days I remained at the camp the staff would ask for money for early release of the animals to the owners; I was unaware of all this. When the nearest region was covered, I crossed the river and set up another camp eight miles from Baramulla.

One day a messenger arrived from the deputy director asking me to return to Baramulla. As the previous camp had been infested with lice, I decided to go to Srinagar to delouse myself and get a new bedding before doing so.

At Srinagar, I found out that my two vaccinators had been suspended for having charged money for their work. I was asked to conduct an inquiry. I toured these places again and met with the numberdars and the chowkidars, but now all these gentlemen gave me in writing that no money had been paid. I sent my report to the deputy director and awaited the revocation of the suspension of the staff. But nothing happened for several days. One of the suspended staff now took matters into his own hands. He sent telegrams on behalf of the village officials (by forging their signatures), claiming no wrong-doing. The reinstatement letter now arrived.

We restarted our work, but not with the same zest. Then, in October, rains came and there was heavy flooding. The river broke through its embankments at many places. The Wular lake swelled up and its waters reached the Pattan area. I saw big paddy stacks float down the swollen rivers. Mercifully, after four days the deluge stopped and people began salvaging what they could of their crops. What remained of the paddy plants was spread on either side of the highway to dry. The prices of vegetables shot up because the vegetable growing area around the Dal lake was submerged.

In November, our unit was closed in Kashmir for the winter. I went to the director and requested a regular appointment reminding him that the second unit had six-monthly changes of the staff. I told him that if my transfer would not come, I would like to take leave for four months to do a course in poultry management techniques outside the state. He promised to transfer me after I took my unit to Jammu. With my hopes up, I went with my family to Jammu and set up camp at Gandhi Bhawan. Within half an hour of our arrival, the director and his wife were also there; they had also been assigned a room there. For two days, Sarojini cooked for both families. On the third day, the director and his wife moved out when they were allotted regular accommodation. We were the only family left in Gandhi Bhawan.

The director now told me that my transfer would need some more time. I was not prepared to take my family to Billawar again, so I left them at a friend's house with instructions that, if they did not hear from me within a week, they should go to Kapurthala.

Section 39

So I was back in Billawar. Sheikh Abdullah was touring the Jammu province. He was scheduled to visit Billawar which had been made into a Naibat, with a Naib Tehsildar in charge. Ram Lal Khajuria was the district vice president of the ruling National Conference party. The Naib Tehsildar and Khajuria approached me for contribution to a fund for the reception of the prime minister of Kashmir. I told them that I could not ask my staff to contribute anything as they were in transit, a hardship appointment, and personally I had no money to spare.

Since the reception expenses were being underwritten by the Tawaza, department of home ministry, I contacted some teachers and encouraged them not to contribute. The National Conference party had no grass roots organization in the area but to make it appear that the high school students were all party volunteers, they were asked to wear red caps at the reception, red being the party colour. I made discreet inquiries and found that the monitor of the student group was not a National Conference worker. I advised

him that they should wear their red caps only until just before the arrival of Sheikh Abdullah. The boys did just this and the organizers were embarrassed.

In his public address, Sheikh Abdullah brought up the question of sectarian killings after partition. But his analysis was one-sided and he only berated the Hindus. His speech did not go very well with the audience.

Sheikh Abdullah set in motion policies that were dividing the population of the State. His politics was based on exploiting class and religious conflict. And he had no vision of a modern, secular government; his policies were transparently motivated to help his constituency of Kashmiri Muslims at the expense of the other communities.

In the suburbs Hindu nationalism was very popular and since I could, unlike most Kashmiris, speak excellent Hindi, Punjabi, and Dogri, I was accorded a warm welcome and my schemes for the welfare of the livestock were immediately successful. After two months, I received word of transfer to Basohli.

After checking my accommodation at Basohli, I crossed the river Ravi by boat to reach the Dalhousie-Pathankot road and caught a bus to Pathankot and Kapurthala. After a week there, we started back accompanied by Asha who wanted to come too. At the road stop where we crossed the Ravi river, people were drying mango juice to make aam paapad (mango juice rolls). Our boat had about forty people on it. The river was quite fast and the crossing was full of boulders. The full boat was tugged a way up and then let loose, the ropes being withdrawn on to the boat. The start was quite good and the boatmen were maneuvering it with long poles as it neared the other end. The ropes were now thrown over to the other end to be caught by the pullers on the bank, so that the boat could be pulled in. The first rope caught by the puller snapped and the boat started drifting down very fast. The boatmen now frantically used the poles to arrest the drift and, miraculously, one of the ropes thrown now was caught and the boat was finally hauled in.

We walked the one and a half mile from the river bank to the town in about an hour because it was all uphill. On the way up we passed a temple dedicated to Kali. It had long been dilapidated until a mahatma, recently arrived, declared that the temple had a Shri Chakra and the decline of the town was to be attributed to the decline of the temple. He repaired the temple and soon it became popular with the townspeople. He started teaching Hindi to students and to prepare them otherwise to pass examinations for admission to the Punjab university. A little ahead was a big gushing spring, which was the source of the drinking water for the town. The town had an old masonry water tank, but this water was used for washing only. Asha got tired of the place in a week and I had to take her back.

Basohli was also an independent state before the Dogra Raj. The ruined palace still showed beautiful frescoes of renowned art that had escaped the ravages of weather. A massive tank of stone masonry used to be the source of water for the town. In its heyday the town was quite big and prosperous and a centre for Pashmina weaving as was evident from scores of weavers' shops. These shops now lay abandoned because the weavers, who were Muslims, had migrated to Pakistan.

I heard the following story about how the migration was precipitated. It appears that some radical Muslims prepared to strike on Dussehra day when the Hindu population of the town and the surrounding areas congregated in the Chaugam for celebrations. Bombs had been made. The peon of the tehsildar was the ringleader. Providentially one day before Dussehra the tehsildar needed him in the office. But the peon was not to be found anywhere. The tehsildar sent another peon to his house to call him. The wife told him that he was on the roof. On the roof he saw many balls being dried which the peon tried quickly to hide. With the discovery of the bombs, the Muslims thought it prudent to emigrate.

Section 40

As Baisakhi came, we started seeing snakes in the town. Our house had three rooms in a line with the living room on one side and the kitchen on the other. Our bedding lay stacked for the day in the middle room on a cross bar. One day, at dusk, as the children and I were sitting on a charpai in the courtyard, a big snake, with vermilion marks, came through the drain and crawled along the wall. Sarojini was

heating milk to make yoghurt in the kitchen. When she saw the snake she rushed out to check if our feet were safely tucked up on the charpai. The wall of the kitchen was very rough and it slanted slightly towards outside. The snake crawled up the wall and Sarojini raised an alarm. This brought our neighbour, a tehsildar, to the courtyard with a torch. He saw the snake enter a hole in the roof and he declared that it was a sinduri and quite harmless and the folks who die of a sinduri bite die of fright and not poison.

Next day when I looked into the drain I saw the same snake in it. I poked it with a stick but it would not budge. Eventually it crawled out. In Basohli snakes are not killed because they control the infestation of rats in the houses and in the fields.

Baisakhi was celebrated on the river Ravi. Everybody went to the river early in the morning. The village women took just a couple of hurried dips in the water, for they believed spending too much of time in the water decreases the sexual urge. The fair at the Chaugam had a lot of fun rides for the children.

Section 41

In May 1952, I was transferred to Udhampur. This is a largish town that was founded by Udham Singh, the eldest son of Maharaja Gulab Singh. The town is on a plateau, 2400 feet above sea level, and the river Tawi flows below. The district hospital was in the back of an old palace and it had four rooms for the dispensary and six or seven stable rooms. The first of the stable rooms housed the breeding bull, and the last was for the chowkidar to keep watch. I used the other stable rooms as the indoor hospital. The official residence of the veterinarian had been recently converted into the inspector's office. So both the inspector and I had to look for private accommodation.

The house I rented had two pucca rooms, a kacha kitchen and a dirt compound. It was near the bus stand which, in turn, stood on an open area of dirt surface because of which there was a great deal of dust in the air. We lived in this house for a year.

In July, Babuji dropped in for a week. It was during this visit that Jaishree was born one evening at home; the lady doctor arrived after the event.

Life was quite hard. There was tension all around. The Praja Parishad party wanted the special provisions of the Article 370 of the constitution to go and it wished for the Jammu and Kashmir state to be completely integrated into India. Its slogan was: EK VIDHAN - EK NISHAN, one constitution and one symbol (flag). In the rest of India the Jan Sangh party was agitating for integration.

The movement of people was regulated by a system where a permit was required to enter the State; this rankled the nationalists. As the Praja Parishad movement strengthened, the government repression was let loose. A battalion of J&K Rifles was stationed in Udhampur. All the entries into the town were sealed and any innocent villager coming on business was beaten and deprived of his valuables. In the town, the leaders were arrested but there were others who went underground continuing the movement, sending parties headed by women. The agitation remained peaceful until the government agent provocateurs initiated violence.

On the first day of the intensive agitation, a procession marched on the Deputy Commissioner's office. The police encircled the marchers and would not let them pass. Mr Kaul, the sub-judge, was the magistrate on duty. Soon there was violence and Mr Kaul was injured by flying rocks. The march was thereupon broken up by the police. Next day when the summary court took evidence, Mr Kaul deposed that the march had been peaceful until a rock was thrown from the side of the police which is when the marchers retaliated. Mr Kaul had a reputation for honesty and fearlessness. The government pressured him to change his account without success. Thereafter this magistrate was never again put on such a duty. He was greatly respected by the public and the people went to his house to express regrets for the rock throwing incident.

Dr Shyama Prasad Mukherjee, the famed nationalist leader, led a march to the J&K border at Lakhanpur and he announced his intention to cross it without a permit. The border was sealed and Dr Mukherjee was arrested and his companions were lathi-charged. He was now whisked away to Srinagar and kept in detention in Gupkar. He had been ailing, but the Kashmir government made no arrangements for his

medical care. It appeared that they let him die so that an inconvenient thorn in the side was removed. The news of his death was suppressed for some time so that security arrangements could be made to forestall riots. Although the death was announced more than twelve hours late, it created an uproar. The central government was forced to drop the system of permits for travel between the two parts of the same country.

Sheikh Abdullah was acting more and more like a Sultan of Kashmir. He spoke with a forked tongue; within the valley he spoke against the central government whereas in Delhi he repeated slogans of Hindu-Muslim brotherhood. Next he began transferring the Kashmiri Hindu government employees to the Jammu area thereby blocking the advancement opportunities of the Dogras. This policy was one of the sources of discontent in the Jammu region. There was tension everywhere in the state. Dreaming no doubt of an independent Kashmir, the Sheikh became strident in his criticism of the accession. Abdullah did not have the temperament to be an enlightened, just administrator. His favourite response to political opposition was to extern the person from the State. Many politicians including Ram Chandra Kak were not allowed to enter the State. Ultimately the government of India was compelled to dismiss him and he was detained in Udhampur.

Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed became the new prime minister of Kashmir in August 1953. After Section 144 was lifted, the movement around the town became normal. Bakshi turned out to be an extremely corrupt politician. Law and order in the valley was now maintained by hoodlums and goons, paid enforcers of the National Conference party.

One wondered how Jawaharlal Nehru viewed the events in the State. We thought that corruption and sectarian politics based on quotas were peculiar to Kashmir; later we discovered that the administration in several other parts of the country was also corrupt. Were Nehru's hands tied due to the hostility of the United States and other Western powers?

And what could I do as an individual? My career was a hostage to the quota politics of the National Conference governments. I could not resign my job. It appeared that my children would not get jobs in the State. But we are patient folks; our ancestors had seen worse oppression. I decided to dedicate myself to the education of my children and other young people. Perhaps all one could hope to do was encourage people to question the new style of government. Perhaps we could only wait till a new generation built a new system based on common sense and universal truths.

Section 42

Meanwhile, I was busy in the cantonment attending on the small animal pets of the officers. My inspector assumed I was making a lot of money in my field practice. He never brought it up in our conversations but he used all the official methods to harrass me.

The ministry issued an order that each veterinarian should be on tour for ten days in a month. Villagers were busy with their own affairs unless their animals were sick; so going from village to village without funds to cover all the expenses made no sense. The ministry would reimburse at a rate that was ridiculously low; when animals were sick the villagers would provide free hospitality so one could afford to do it. Many veterinarians prepared fictitious travel programmes and then drew the travelling allowance which they split with the inspectorate in Jammu and so no questions were asked. This I refused to do. I came up with my own method to beat the ten day rule. As my district was hilly and lacked proper roads excepting for the highway, I needed to show considerable time for travel. I would get travel itineraries approved from the inspectorate that covered trips of about three days each week. The day of departure we would all stay home. The next day we would leave at 4:30 to 5:00 in the morning and visit the village numberdars in our itinerary, giving them medicines for animals, and then set out late in the evening back for Udhampur arriving at night making sure nobody in the staff, that had been left behind, saw us. The third day, the day of supposed return, we would report at work at noon. This system continued for a good number of months.

I toured the hinterland of Chineni that leads to Sudh-Mahadev, where an ancient temple of Shiva exists and a great festival is held on Shivaratri.

In October 1952 we went to Srinagar to attend the wedding of Radha Krishen (RK), my brother-in-law. He was married to Shanta of the Shangloo family; she was a schoolteacher.

On my return to Udhampur, I heard that my staff was harassed by the inspector who had checked the stock register and discovered many shortages in the stock of toxic drugs. To please the inspector, my compounder sent the inspector a gift of almonds, apples and other Kashmiri fruit. This further whetted the appetite of the inspector. Hoping to receive a bribe from us he did not write his report on his finding. When I returned and heard the story, I was able to show the compounder that the books were not balanced because all entries had not been made. Now the inspector arrived for his shakedown of me and he was surprised that the compounder did not appear to be awed by him any more. And he found that the books were actually balanced. Looking sheepish, he lamely argued that I had used the drugs recklessly. I replied that it was my prerogative as a physician to use drugs the way I thought fit.

The inspector now asked the director to send me to Kishtwar for some time to control a cattle epidemic. This was in spite of the fact that Kishtwar was 160 miles from Udhampur, and the doctor at Bhadarwah was a hundred miles nearer. Perhaps the reason was that my little hospital was caring for a sick patient on an indoor basis and he wanted make sure that I did not receive the customary doctor's fee. The inspector said this to the animal's owner, who related the story to me.

The year was 1954 and Sarojini was expecting. The due date was quite near. I boarded the bus to Kishtwar with a heavy heart. These buses took one to Doda and the rest of the distance had to be covered on foot. Our bus reached Doda at noon. On this bus I had struck up a conversation with a Kashmiri Pandit who was an overseer at the construction of the road being built to Kishtwar. We agreed to march together and we spent the night at his campsite half way to Kishtwar. Next day, I accompanied another party and we reached Kishtwar by ten in the morning.

Kishtwar is a charming little place that is often called little Kashmir. It has the same altitude as Srinagar and so its climate is somewhat similar. The town is situated on a plane that is about four miles by two miles. On three side of this plane are mountains, and on the west is a ravine 1300 feet that has been cut by the river Chenab. The Kishwari language is a dialect of Kashmiri.

For a proper diagnosis, I conducted a number of post-mortem examinations. My strategy was to recommend several preventative measures. By the sixth day, I heard no new reports of sick animals. Actually, the disease had almost petered out by the time I arrived and I did not see very many sick animals. I had no work now, but I could not leave because my orders were to stay until I heard from the inspector. I had about decided to defy orders, when on the evening of the tenth day I received a telegram from the higher office at Jammu that I should return. I left at four in the morning and by ten we were half way to Doda. There I got a lift on a bus. By eleven we were in Doda. Two buses were departing, one was almost full and the other was hawking for passengers; I got into the second bus. The driver looked quite flush with liquor. He started ahead of the full bus but within a mile he twice lost control of the steering and then he rammed into the hillside. The bus that was following picked us up and somehow we squeezed in. I got down from the bus at Udhampur at six. The inspector happened to be passing by and when he saw me he was furious. I showed him the telegram and he went on his way without further talk.

On fourth of July 1954 Neeraj was born. It was soon after this that department was reorganized and the post of inspector at Udhampur was abolished. Our pay scales were raised from 150-10-250 to 250-25-500. I was transferred to Kulgam in the valley as the incharge of the dispensary. We were returning to Kashmir after several years in the extreme heat of the Jammu province and now we had five children.

5 PART III – More Travels

**Stopping rain,
levitation,
milking a wooden cow---
all this is deceitful exhibition.
--- Lalla**

Section 43

Kulgam, the seat of the Tehsil, is on the Jammu-Srinagar highway, six miles south of the district seat at Anantnag. In my new position at Kulgam I oversaw staff at various centres. There were three units: Bijbehara, Shopian and Dambal Hanjipora, a place across Vaisho river. Bijbehara, Vijabror in Kashmiri, on the highway and the Vitasta river, has a magnificent park of ancient chinar trees. It was the ancient tirtha to Vijayeshvara, from which it derives its name. The Nehru family traces its ancestry to this town. In the olden times it was an important stage town in the pilgrimages to Amarnath and to the sun temple at Martand.

The block development officer at Kulgam shared supervisory powers on the activities of the staff. The district commissioner had authority over developmental activities also. There was a lot of talk of making plans and checking the progress inspired, no doubt, by theories copied from the Russian and Chinese communists. We met monthly to see how things were going.

I purchased a bicycle and was generally on tour inspecting the work of the field staff. But we were mainly padding numbers to look good on paper with the result that the quality of the work went down.

A big cattle show, at the state level, was held at Tral. I rode there on my bike, a distance of thirty six miles. On the sixth day, I rode to Srinagar twenty three mile on. From there, I rode another twenty six miles to Shopian to conduct an inspection. From Shopian to Kulgam is almost entirely downhill and hardly any pedalling was needed to reach back home.

This was the time that a lot of construction was going on in the veterinary department of the valley. Of the four centres under my supervision, the best buildings came up at Kulgam; the contractor was an old, honest Pandit.

Avinash was now in the middle school, located on the plateau above the town. Subhash was in the fourth grade in the primary school half a mile away. Earlier at Udampur, Subhash got a double promotion by appearing in the second and third grades together. I discovered that the school had no math teacher for the fourth grade and Subhash held these classes for the entire session. When the results of the annual examination came out Subhash was shown as having passed, without any distinction. One day I saw the Headmaster and I questioned him about the result. He replied that if I wished he would privately acknowledge that Subhash had stood first. He explained further that he was advised by his superiors that no Pandit boy be shown as having stood first because that entitled the boy to a scholarship. I suppose this was a result of the thinking amongst the leftist intellectuals, who decided policy throughout India but especially Kashmir, that the children of the poor should be helped; in actual practice, this good thought was perverted in countless ways.

The person supposed to inspect meat and milk was the medical officer. As a result he received free milk and meat and the rest of the townspeople put up with adulterated milk. The tehsildar, being the chairman of the town development committee, was also in league with the medical officer.

The residents of Kulgam were very unhappy with this and their anger boiled over when the milkmen raised their prices. There were complaints and a meeting was called to fix the prices of milk in the classic Soviet style. I argued that this should not be done because the price reflected the increase in the costs of the feed for the cows. I argued that the market should decide the prices but we should be strict with the

quality of the milk. Fortunately, my view prevailed and I became a hero to the milkmen although I had hounded them with my checks on quality with a lactometer.

Section 44

Because of an uproar against the veterinarian in Baramulla, I was posted back there in the middle of 1956. The previous doctor had conducted vaccination against the Ranikhet disease which, instead of protecting the animals, made them sick. Whole flocks perished. Perhaps the vaccine was not properly manufactured and attenuated; now the poor doctor had to pay the price.

The state minister for our department was Harbans Singh Azad and the doctor was related to him. They both belonged to a landowning Sikh business class and the doctor also ran the business of a bus line between Srinagar and Uri. Until he retired, the doctor's postings were at different places on this line. Anyway, after the mishap with the vaccine the villagers were so enraged with him that they wished to lynch him. Thanks to the minister's connection he was whisked away under police protection. This posting for me was supposed to be a stop-gap arrangement as after the winter I was asked to go to Leh. More about that later.

In Baramulla, I moved into an old house attached to the old dispensary. Since my last posting here, a new hospital was built next to the police station. The building was nice looking and modern. The town was still amongst the cleanest in the valley and, during summer, breezes from the gorge cooled it. I had just reached the town with the family that I found a telegram waiting asking me to tour the region of the ceasefire line in Uri to control an epidemic. After the vaccinations in Uri, I sought permission from the Area Commander to enter the prohibited area; this was denied, and so I returned. I alighted from the bus at the old dispensary building where I had left Sarojini and the children. I entered the building and found it abandoned. I was worried and rushed to the new building a mile or so further down and found Sarojini and the children there.

In my absence, Sarojini concluded that the Old Dispensary building, which was isolated and far from the town, was not safe. She took over one room and the adjoining kitchen in the new building and crammed everything into it. This room was meant for the owners of animals brought in for major operations. There was a hall attached to these rooms which had a sandy pit in the middle where the casts on the animals were placed. Two adults and five children in a room and a kitchen was very crowded indeed.

My staff did not like my stay on the premises as it checked their pilferage of the rations meant for the bulls and the chickens. They mailed several anonymous complaints to the deputy director.

We did not have a water tap connection in our kitchen, so the water was brought in buckets from the police buildings. I hired a servant to do so but my staff scared him away. Then I issued orders to the lower staff, the attendants, to take the bulls for exercise six miles by a village road and that I would follow them on a bicycle. Within four days the staff came round and became cooperative, and I let the bulls to be exercised in the compound itself.

Three months later, the director and the deputy director stopped over at Baramulla on return from a tour of Uri. Sarojini cooked many snacks for them. I explained why I was compelled to take up lodgings in the premises. The director decided then to make the building the official residence after the big operation hall had been converted into two liveable rooms. Our stay in Baramulla from that point on became quite pleasant.

Meanwhile, the Jammu and Kashmir Constituent Assembly drafted a Constitution that was to go into effect from the 28th January 1957. Pakistan protested vociferously and rumours circulated that tribals from the Pakistani occupied Kashmir will, in a repeat of 1947, attack to prevent the implementation of the Constitution. These rumours were stoked by very bellicose statements on the Pakistani radio. Businessmen on the route from Uri to Srinagar began to clear their inventories and many folks sent their families to Srinagar or the interior.

The district industries inspector lived across the road with his brother, who worked in the post office. They were considering sending their valuables to Srinagar. Sarojini was also scared and she wished to

send her jewelry to Srinagar. I calmed her by arguing that if all of us were killed the valuables would mean nothing.

The evening of the twenty eighth, the power house at Mohora, near Uri, failed and the town was plunged into darkness. The fear deepened until a convoy of military trucks carrying the Dogra Regiment passed through the bazaar with their war cry of "Jai Durga Ki". This resounding cry dispelled the gloom and it appears the Pakistani agents in the villages slunk back to their bases. We were glued to the radios until the electricity failed. But a friend owned a battery set and we were reassured by the nine o'clock news bulletin that said that everything was normal and there were no border crossings.

Avinash was to appear in his eighth grade examination. I stayed awake with him during his preparation at nights, and he secured good marks. Didda had been laid up in bed with heart trouble. I saw her in Srinagar as often as I could. Tika Lal Vali, her son-in-law, and her daughter Kamala were taking good care of her.

My laboratory officer asked me to select a village where there was no previous vaccination against the rinderpest disease. The Izzat Nagar veterinary institute had developed a new attenuated vaccine that they wished to check out; this was to replace an older vaccine that had caused the epidemic. I chose a village near Uri and the animal owners agreed to the tests. A few of us met the village numberdar and arrangements were made for volunteers to hold the animals. The next day I attended my office until three in the afternoon and then cycled to the village. As the droves of animals were returning from their grazing we made them pass through an open space where I did some very fast vaccinations. The research officer was so impressed that he wished me to join the rinderpest disease control office. I kept around for three days to check for adverse reaction and there was not any. I was again sounded on working in the rinderpest unit but I said I would do so only if I was made the chief of that unit. It appears that position was reserved for some other doctor.

Section 45

LEH.

In April 1957, I received an order from the development commissioner to go to Leh immediately. I was to be at the airport at eight in the morning the next day.

Leh was considered a hardship posting. The capital of Ladakh, this town is situated at an altitude of 11,500 feet. Ladakh district is about half the area of the state; it is very sparsely populated and a majority of the Ladakhis are Buddhists. The political history of Ladakh has been traced back to about 1000. Being situated on the crossroads of the silk and pashmina routes between Central Asia, Tibet, Kashmir, and Punjab, Ladakh has seen its share of drama, romance, and adventure. It is conceivable that the earlier inhabitants of the Ladakh valley were Dards and the Tibetan stock became intrusive later on. The interaction between Ladakh and Kashmir has been seen to go as far back as accounts are available. Buddhism was spread into Tibet by the Indian sage Padmasambhava. A second influence went there through Kashmir in what has been called the second spreading of Buddhism into Ladakh and Tibet about a thousand years ago. Evidence about this spreading is preserved in the wall paintings that have been discovered in the gompa (monastery) of Alchi, about forty two miles downstream the Indus from Leh. These seven or eight hundred year old wall paintings are in a style that is unique and might be the sole representative of the Kashmiri style of its times.

Ladakh's last independent king was defeated by Zorawar Singh, the famous Dogra general, in 1834. Ladakh was the only direction that Ranjit Singh's Sikh empire could expand by virtue of a treaty he had signed with the British in 1809. Under this treaty, the Sikhs were free to do as they wished north of the Satluj river.

In spite of its bleak mountainous terrain, Ladakh was an attractive conquest, because it lay on important trade route connecting Tibet, through which pashmina wool was imported into Kashmir.

Zorawar Singh took the route of Kishtwar and Zanskar to invade Ladakh. He spent the winter midway to Leh. The Ladakhis attacked in the spring, but were routed. Next, Zorawar Singh annexed Baltistan.

The Ladakh kingdom had an old claim on west Tibet. Zorawar Singh was now ordered by his king Gulab Singh to seize this region. He set out in 1841 and was soon in control of Mansarovar and Kailas. But that winter his force was challenged by a much larger army of the Tibetans and the Dogras were defeated. Thus ended the dream of a greater Jammu and Kashmir.

Leh was not yet connected by road to Kashmir; this road had been under construction for years and many engineers and ministers had made fortunes by showing fictitious work. (The road was later built by the army.)

We received double salary at Leh, and under rules a person was given twenty four days as joining time on transfer. The order to leave for Leh at such short notice was not fair. Perhaps because of this I overslept and then, instead of going to the airport, I went to the development commissioner's residence. I explained to him that I was unable to reach the airport as I did not find transportation. He was very angry; I returned home very dejected.

Sarojini and the children at Baramulla were overjoyed to see me return. But with the mishap I was prepared for the worst. I obtained school leaving certificates for the children and then came to Srinagar to see if I could get my order cancelled. Didda was in a very bad state and horoscope readers said that if she survived till October she will live another five years. Avinash and Subhash said they would accompany me to Leh while Sarojini and the other children would wait out the period of prediction. The whole family could not have come back from Leh in the event of Didda's death.

Those days the state government chartered Dakota planes to transport supplies to Leh. The planes also carried government passengers. I started making rounds of the various offices to secure seats for Avinash, Subhash and me.

I still remember the grand view of the glacier clad mountains from the plane; to the left of the flight route was Nanga Parbat. We arrived in Leh in two hours. The town presents a sight very different from any in Jammu or Kashmir provinces. For both men and women the standard dress is that of a goncha, which is a woollen coat that goes around the body. In earlier times no underclothing was worn beneath the goncha, but when we were in Leh the goncha was worn as an overcoat over normal set of clothing.

At the airport I hired pack yaks to carry our baggage and we walked. We entered the town by the main gate that opens on the bazaar and on the left was the building that housed the veterinary dispensary, the inspectorate and my office; the back side of this building had the residential units. Gopi Nath Safaya, the inspector, was an excellent host while we were settling in. The next day I spent in securing ration cards and the setting up of the kitchen.

The first things I did was to order gonchas for all of us. The boys were admitted into the school which was just behind the dispensary. Since there was not much work at the dispensary I was asked to supervise the cattle farm at Murtse.

The children and I did the cooking while the cleaning was done by an attendant. A Kashmiri captain of the Leh Garrison was very helpful when it was the turn of the rest of the family to come. He declared the Sarojini was related to her; this allowed her and the children and the baggage to come by the army Dakota free of charge. I went to the airport with some pack animals for the baggage and a military jeep for the passengers.

I was invited to a party that evening and I returned late. Sarojini was very upset at my going to a party on the first day of her arrival. I begged her to forgive me.

Now we settled into a routine. We asked Gopi Nath Safaya to eat with us until his family joined him.

The rice from the ration shop ran out and we were now issued wheat flour. Sarojini was very unhappy that we had to eat chapaties both times. Shivaratri was nearing. The government now sent one full bag of rice to be distributed amongst the Kashmiri Pandits. The distribution was to be done by the Pandits themselves. I volunteered and paid for the whole bag in full. I was to distribute the rice at five kilos a person. I could sell only one fourth of the bag. Most of the Kashmiri Pandits worked for the public works department and they did not come to receive their share, perhaps because they did not need it.

Sarojini ate her lunch between twelve and one; Avinash would smell the cooking from the school and run over to eat with her. Our rice lasted till the mountain passes opened in the spring and the regular supply of rations resumed.

The climate of Leh is very dry and healthful. But once the flu virus was brought there on an airplane. In our family everyone except Neeraj were laid up in bed for days.

In the spring Gopi Nath Safaya's wife and son Deep arrived. We had great company; the children had another friend.

I took up the project of improving the quality of the livestock in the Ladakh area. My first project was to remove from breeding all the decrepit bulls in the town. I went to the grazing ground and with the help of the people in attendance had the weak bulls castrated. After a week, the president of the local National Conference party complained to Gopi Nath Safaya that since I had castrated the animals without permission I was liable to pay for the injury to any animal, adding that a bull was dead. I agreed to pay if the post mortem report proved that castration was responsible for the death. I assumed this complaint was a phoney one to make me slacken off and to get some money off me. Sure enough, they were not able to produce the allegedly dead animal.

In the villages the dzo, a hybrid of the male yak and the common cow, is used to draw the plough. The dzomo, the female dzo, is not sterile but its offspring does not survive. The common drink is chang, best described a fermented barley water.

To keep its population in check, Ladakhis devised a system of fraternal polyandry. The eldest brother in a family was accepted as the heir to the property, and one or more of the others was packed off to a gompa to train as a lama. The brothers who chose to remain in the family house were all considered to be married to the wife of the eldest brother. All the children from such a marriage were taken to belong to the eldest brother, who was addressed as the 'big father', the other brothers being 'little fathers.'

In Ladakh, the Buddhists do not kill animals but they eat dead animal flesh. On the high plateau of Changthang the shepherds skin the dead sheep and goats and hang the cleaned meat to dry in the frigid air. When there is no dead animal around and they need meat, they bind up the muzzle and the legs of the animals and leave it in the open to starve and choke to death, but they do not draw blood. It is possible that a bull had died and its meat was already cooked and eaten.

Next I selected a village in the marsh about eight miles from Leh for liverfluke control. This disease was rampant in the area but the villagers were quite reconciled to the dying of their animals. I selected a few shaggy, decrepit sheep and asked the owners for their prognosis for these animals to survive the winter. I told them further that they must have seen worms in the livers amongst such dead sheep in the past. They now agreed to my medicating ten of the worst sheep, which we later marked. In early spring I returned to the village and found people happy that their animals were still alive. Now all the villagers wanted their flocks to be given preventive medication and this was done routinely as long as I was in Leh.

Gopi Nath Safaya went on leave in the autumn of 1958 to arrange for his transfer back to the valley. He was unsuccessful and returned in the spring.

Avinash took and passed his matriculation examination. It was decided to send him to Babuji in Kapurthala for his junior college. I could not arrange for him to join college in Srinagar; Leh had no college. Subhash did his middle school; in Sanskrit and other subjects he secured hundred percent marks.

The government approved the setting up of a Pashmina goat farm at Murtse. Rooms were built at the farm to house them. The goats did fine in winter but as the summer advanced the goats, who were used to grazing in the open at thirteen to fifteen thousand feet, were affected badly by the closed air of the rooms and the lack of exercise and they started dying. The farm manager was unable to develop a proper administrative system for the animals. The area was infested by wolves and without proper security the goats were liable to be killed by the wolves. Also the attendants could steal the goats and claim that the wolves had lifted them. Because of the high mortality the project was declared unviable.

The Ladakhi gompas provide a window on the religious life of the region. Unfortunately, in 1600 or so Ali Mir, the Muslim ruler of Skardo overran Ladakh and destroyed most of its religious treasures, one place that escaped being Alchi. Most of the old Ladakhi gompas are thus only about four centuries old. Ladakhis follow Vajrayana Buddhism which in some ways is similar to Kashmiri tantrism. Two gompas very close to Leh include Sankar where Kushak Bakula, the chief Lama of Ladakh resides, and his formal seat at Spituk, five miles down the Indus from Leh. Up the Indus, about nine miles from Leh, is Shey, the ancient capital of Ladakh, with its gompa. The most famous one, and the richest, is Hemis gompa, where an annual two-day festival is held.

The traditional summer pastimes in Ladakh are archery and polo. The archery meets are a great party, with interludes of dancing, where chang is consumed in great quantities. Polo is indigenous to Baltistan and the greater Himalayan region; the British learnt it in India and introduced new rules. In Leh, polo was played according to traditional rules. The biggest games were played in the Leh bazaar.

I got my transfer to Anantnag in early 1959. I missed leaving Leh where I saw much camaraderie and people showed concern for each other.

Section 46

ANANTNAG.

This town gets its name from its great spring and temple to be found at its southern end. At the northern end of the town, on the way to Bhavan or Mattan, is the temple of Gautamnag. Mattan is a famous tirtha and up the plateau behind it are the famous ruins of Martand, the magnificent sun temple built by Lalitaditya.

The Anantnag dispensary had a stud bull and chicken. The tradition here was for the owner of a sick animal to report the symptoms of the disease and receive medication. The entries in the outdoor register were generally false just to show a great number of cases. The poultry demonstration unit had ten Rhode Island Red hens and one cock. The idea was to sell the eggs to the farmers at nominal rates so that when hatched these would improve the genetic quality of the local chicken. I asked the compounder to show me the records of the eggs produced and the sales. All he had was a notebook showing the feed given to the chicken but no record of the eggs. Upon further questioning, he revealed that no farmers came to buy the eggs and so he had written to the deputy director for permission to sell the eggs in the open market. Instead of replying, the deputy director arrived in person and took all the eggs for himself without giving any receipt.

I now wrote to the deputy director that the hens had lost all vitality and they should be sold to the farmers. This proposal was accepted. The sale of the chicken eliminated the corruption in the feed arrangement. The contractor had never sent the full quota of the greens and grain and so the chicken were ill fed. Everyone from the contractor down was in the scheme to defraud the government and starve the animals. The contractor's supplies for the breeding bull were erratic, but he had the audacity to submit bills for the missed deliveries as well. I refused to pay him for what was not delivered and this irritated him. He sent several feelers to me about giving me a share as was the custom. The deputy director was also a part of this rotten system. I wrote many letters to the deputy director arguing for the dismissal of the contractor but I did not receive any reply.

In the breeding programme, it was customary for the owner to pay one rupee of which the veterinarian would keep fifty paise, the senior compounder twenty five paise, and the rest was shared by the attendants. I issued instructions that I did not need my share and the staff could divide the money amongst themselves provided the bull was fed properly and exercised. The staff liked this and the condition of the bull improved.

In the month of September 1959, I was walking on the road outside our hospital that I saw a flock of sheep that had come down from the highland pastures. There were some very weak animals in the flock. To catch the attention of the farmer, I told him that, by looking into the eyes of the sheep, I could see worms in their livers and death within four months. This interested him and he wanted to hear the

pathological symptoms at death. When I recounted these he was very excited and he agreed to let me treat the animals. I took the sheep into the compound and dosed them myself. That winter all these sheep survived. The word of my magical diagnosis spread. My work in the hospital and in the field increased tremendously.

The dispensary at Pahalgam had been under the control of the officer in Anantnag in the past; now the deputy director assumed direct control of it. Pahalgam is a famous summer resort and the deputy director used the dispensary building to house his friends and relatives.

In the summer of 1960, a big fire gutted hundreds of houses and shops in the heart of Anantnag. Sarojini's cousin Manohar Nath Kaul (Manakak), who was the president of the district National Conference party, also lost his house. I had vacant space in the veterinary complex and I offered him one apartment.

We now received a telegram from Babuji saying that Avinash had passed his intermediate examination. Sarojini spoke to Manakak and he offered to help him get admission into an engineering college. We thought this would be much better than the geology course at Jammu, that he wished to join. After a couple of months, he received a letter that he had been admitted in the engineering college in Madras. We were in Srinagar attending the marriage of a niece of Sarojini. Sarojini took a loan of two thousand rupees from her sister and we packed Avinash off. The money was paid back to her by pawning our gold with the State Bank.

The deputy director was unhappy with me because he stopped getting his cut from the contractors supplying the dispensaries under my supervision. He was unhappy on another account as well. One of my responsibilities was to check and approve the tour programmes of the staff in my sub-units. Since I had toured the whole region extensively, I could not be fooled about the distances. The rules allowed a special allowance for trips that were beyond eight miles. There was no allowance if the trip was less than this distance. The staff had, in the past, shown nearby trips less than eight miles away as ten day tours; on such trips the staff stayed on at their homes and shared a part of their allowance with the deputy director's staff. I sanctioned such tours but disallowed any allowance for the middle eight days. This caused a lot of unhappiness amongst many people, not least the deputy director.

Now the deputy director made several surprise visits to catch me off guard but he always found me on duty. One day, he came early in the morning and he found the compound full of animals. I was checking the animals and writing prescriptions to be purchased in the market. He asked why I was working so early in the morning. I was then advised that I should not write prescriptions for them to purchase. But the medicines in our stores were generally adulterated country drugs and besides our stocks ran less than a hundred rupees. There was an old order of the director that the animals should be given drugs free from the dispensary store, but this order lost all relevance in view of the corruption in the department.

A cattle show was held in Anantnag. It was all fun until the prize distribution. Many prizes were given to people who were absent and these the deputy director pocketed. The farmers began to threaten violence. I escorted the deputy director to my residence where he rested till late evening by which time the people dispersed.

We had two breeding units: one for mules and the other for cattle. The studs were cared for by a prosperous Kashmiri Pandit farmer. It was a large joint family, some in government service, others in business and yet others worked on the land. The family would also host any officer from our department who happened to be visiting. The units were working quite satisfactorily. One day the elder Pandit expressed his wish to bid for the supply of fodder and feed for the centre as the sanctioned rates were very high. He told me that the rate for grass alone was fifteen rupees to a quintal, when he could buy this amount for three or four rupees. I asked him to research the market for seasonal fluctuations and bid five rupees higher than what he had to pay. The family now sent Ram Krishen, one of the family, with their bid in a sealed envelope to Srinagar where instead of getting it entered into the receipt register, he handed it over to the deputy director, who was also paid two hundred rupees as advance for sanctioning the contract.

When the contract was awarded, the family did not get it. Instead, it went to someone whose bid was much higher. While I was on tour in their area, they asked me about it. When told that the bid papers had been given personally to the deputy director, it was clear that nothing could be done. They wanted their two hundred rupees back but Ram Krishen was too embarrassed to ask for the return of the money. So one day, the elder Pandit went to Srinagar. He spoke to the deputy director in generalities hoping that the money would be returned to him without his having to ask for it. When this did not happen, he told him that he was short of funds and he needed some help. The deputy director immediately put his hand in his inner coat pocket and took out the money. When the old Pandit had his money, he told the deputy director that he had finally met a man who had all the three attributes of {*kalam, halam, nalam*}, which translated means pen of authority, accepting bribes, and dodging responsibility.

I investigated this affair further and learned that the deputy director had carried the sealed envelope in his pocket and, on the day of opening of the tenders, flaunted it before the contending suppliers to arouse their curiosity. They requested to be shown the rates in this bid and he would do so if they paid him in advance. Each supplier paid him a bribe to see the contents of the envelope. The old Pandit's bid was the lowest and his competitors were about three times higher. The deputy director persuaded the contender to reduce his bid to two times higher than the Pandit's. So he played a double game: one for showing the bid and second in the regular commission the contractor paid on approval of his bid.

The demands to supply the concentrates in full was irking the supplier and he was tardy, missing deliveries, and so I black-listed him. Imagine my surprise, therefore, when come new year, I saw the same contractor supplying us fodder. I banned his entry into the hospital premises. The attendants came to intercede on his behalf. But I would not budge. The deputy director also came to intercede. When I did not listen he wished to check the ration register as one of the complaints against me was that we did not buy any hay during winter.

The purchase of dry hay was done by weight. When the supply came, the loops of hay were counted and the weight estimated by weighing one loop. In this method the store keeper took the thinnest loop to estimate the total weight. Since feeding was done by actual weight a surplus was created if the animals were fed concentrates properly. At the end of March, the store keeper told me that he had a surplus of hay. I asked him to show twenty quintals as surplus and entered this amount in the books. Without my knowledge, the store keeper showed the surplus beyond this as having been purchased from the villages. He prepared all the receipts of the carriers and the octroi paid to make a foolproof case of having purchased the hay.

One attendant in the hospital was sympathetic to the contractor and he whispered into the deputy director's ears that nothing had been purchased that winter. But the staff had prepared receipts in such a fashion so as to show delivery on dates when this attendant was absent. The contractor's complaint was that since no grass had been purchased and there was a surplus at the end of the winter he should be paid for it. When the deputy director and the contractor saw the re-entry of twenty quintals in the books they realized the battle was lost. The deputy director had no choice but to approve the bills that were submitted by my office.

Since the deputy director failed to dislodge me from my job, he now advised one of his agents to lodge another complaint against me. I was accused of charging exorbitant fees for private visits after office hours. The complainant in the letter was allegedly from Sagam, a place ten miles away. I insisted that the deputy director accompany me to Sagam so that we could confront the complainant to find the truth. He did not agree to this and the case was closed.

Section 47

Meanwhile, political events were moving fast. There were border clashes between China and India in Ladakh when we were in Leh. Several Indian soldiers were killed when they tried to reclaim the border posts that were illegally occupied by the Chinese. In India Nehru was praised in the fifties as the leader of the non-aligned nations of the world. He had tried to articulate positions independent of the two power blocks in the Cold War years. But the Western nations saw him as an ally of the Russians whereas to the

Communists he was a foolish idealist who could be pushed around. In the 1950s, while Nehru was toasting China as an ally with shared ancient history, the Chinese were secretly building a road through Aksai Chin, an unpopulated high plateau in Ladakh. Nehru's geo-political thinking was based on woolly analysis and he had no real support amongst the international powers.

By the time it was commonly known that China seized large chunks of land in Ladakh and elsewhere, other issues had also become important. Before this, when China seized Tibet, we did not protest in spite of the historical ties between the Tibetans and us and our strategic interest in securing the north. But India gave refuge to the Dalai Lama and other Tibetans when China brutally put down their attempts to win self-rule. The Chinese, as an aggressive imperialist power, armed with the self-righteous rhetoric of Marxism, considered this a great affront. The relations between India and China became frigid and there were several border skirmishes. A regular war began with large scale invasion by the Chinese in September 1962. India was unprepared for this war and, abandoning its high horse of non-alignment, it turned to the U.S. for military assistance.

The Chinese declared cease-fire in late November and they withdrew from the parts of northeast India that they had overrun. However they maintained their possession of a large chunk of Aksai Chin.

Assistance from the U.S. came with a price. There was considerable pressure for India to reach a settlement with Pakistan on Kashmir. Nehru's prestige took a great dive.

During the autumn of 1963, Nehru fashioned a plan to get rid of long serving corrupt Chief Ministers and rival politicians. It was announced that the plan was an idea of the Tamil politician Kamaraj, but it was clearly a copy of tactics often employed in the Soviet Union. Under the Kamaraj plan all ministers were to submit their resignations to Nehru. Morarji Desai, the person most thought would succeed Nehru, lost his position in the cabinet. Desai was a conservative in the Congress party and Nehru wanted someone else, perhaps his own daughter Indira, to succeed him.

Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad lost his job but the replacement was his own man, Shamasuddin. Sarojini's cousin Manakak became the revenue minister.

To build a political base for himself, Shamasuddin tried a few populist things such as dismissing some of the most notoriously corrupt officials in the state. Bakshi's hold on the administration was beginning to wane and it is believed that he and his henchmen created the next crisis. A hair, believed to be of prophet Muhammad, kept in a glass tube in the Hazratbal mosque was stolen.

The Hazratbal shrine is one of the most important in Kashmir. The scholar Aurel Stein informs us that before the Islamic rule it was a popular Hindu-Buddhist pilgrimage centre. Demonstrations and strikes by the Muslims in the valley followed. Intense feelings against the state government and the centre built up. People would parade in towns and villages carrying bundles of grass to keep them warm during the nightly vigils. Kashmiri Hindus were not directly threatened but there was always the possibility that riots against them would be engineered as had occurred in East Pakistan where Hindu homes and shops had been attacked and many people killed. We lived in a government building close to a major mosque and menacing crowds would mill around that area the entire day.

The hair remained missing for several weeks. Pakistan was using this incident for its anti-Indian propaganda. Nehru now sent Lal Bahadur Shastri to Srinagar to find a way to recover the hair. It was clear that the situation had gone out of control and the thieves wished for the episode to be over. Shastri let it be known that the thief could return the glass tube with the hair by packing it in a bag of rice. As many such bags were donated to the shrine daily, this would protect the identity of the thief. Soon enough the tube with the hair was recovered from one such bag. The crisis was over. But the bungling during the whole episode meant that Shamasuddin---and Manakak---were out of job; the leftist Ghulam Muhammad Sadiq became the next prime minister.

Nehru now released Sheikh Abdullah from his long imprisonment. Abdullah travelled to Pakistan to hold discussions with President Ayub. We did not know what political deals were in the works. Some newspapers were suggesting that the valley might be given some autonomy; others spoke of a federation

between India and Pakistan so that the Kashmir question would become moot. But before anything could happen Nehru died in May 1964.

Shastri succeeded him as prime minister. He was perceived as a weak leader so Pakistan tried to wrest Kashmir by force. Large number of irregular troops were sent into the valley to start an insurrection. Most of them were promptly captured. This led to the Indo-Pakistan war of 1965 which ended in stalemate on ground. India and Pakistan, under intense international pressure, signed an agreement in Tashkent to return to the pre-War positions. It was seen as a sell-out in both countries and Shastri suffered a heart attack and died before he could return to India. Indira Gandhi became the next prime minister.

Section 48

During the last year of Bakshi's government, the government of India gave funds to open a Merino sheep breeding farm. It was planned that rams would be imported and mated with the local stock. The farm was to purchase ewes in the open market. The minister of animal husbandry did not wish to share the commission expected in this large purchase with the well entrenched director of the department. So he created a new Sheep department. I was transferred to this new department and my new office was in Bijbehara five miles away in Anantnag. I cycled to my office.

We were called by the new director to his office in Srinagar. He spoke to me separately and said that he wished for me to hire three shepherds in my unit and he raised two fingers. I asked him the meaning of the sign with the two fingers. He replied that I should charge two hundred rupees from each appointee and give the money to him. I said that I could not do this and would send the shepherds to him to make the payment. Other officers were likewise told to raise money for him and I believe that most obliged. When Shamasuddin dismissed one hundred officers, this chap was amongst them.

Section 49

Meanwhile, Subhash also left home and joined the engineering college at Srinagar. I returned to my parent department in 1965; this was followed by my appointment as the manager of the cattle farm at Cheshmashahi, the magnificent Mughal garden, above the Dal Lake, in Srinagar. In 1967, I was transferred to Jammu, first as manager of the cattle farm and then I did various stints as director of the department's various divisions.

Avinash finished his engineering in 1966 and that summer, while awaiting results, he taught as a visiting lecturer at the engineering college. As soon as his results came out, he was awarded a fellowship at the Indian Institute of Technology in Delhi to do his doctorate. Subhash followed him one year later.

With a few exceptions, my colleagues and superiors were corrupt and venal. The years when Bakshi Ghulam Muhammad headed the government corruption was pervasive. And the later administration of the self-professed leftist Ghulam Muhammad Sadiq brought no relief. The attitudes of the highest officials of the state were reflected in the behaviour down the line. Professors earned favours by ensuring that the children of the politicians got high marks; this was done by substituting for the answer papers of the politician's son or daughter the paper of one of the best students in the college. To get hired in the state departments the hiree usually paid a bribe to the officer. In engineering departments all the engineers got a share of the total purchase budget.

When I became the provincial director of my department, I was sent messages to collect bribes for the director, Ghulam Mohiyuddin. This particular director was building a mansion in Srinagar and he expected the costs to be partly borne by his staff. Once his assistant asked me directly to contribute to the purchase of glazed windows for the house. Amongst the bizzare things he did was to steal tens of thousands of eggs of specially imported hens which were meant to improve the breeds in the valley. He had these eggs added to the concrete for better finish of the floors in his mansion. This director as well as other officers were periodically suspended by the government and then reinstated when they returned to their rapacious ways with a vengeance. The suspensions provided leverage to the ministers to exact their own bribes from the officers.

When I was the manager at the Cheshmashahi farm, the minister called me to his residence. He said that the National Conference was holding a convention and I would have to pay 20,000 rupees. When I expressed my inability, he advised that I should get that money out of the store purchases. I remained uncooperative and he now asked me to send to him the stores supplier.

I told the contractor what had transpired. I also warned him that, while bargaining with the minister, he should not consider any reduction in the quality and the quantity of the supplies. The contractor took some time in meeting with the minister and after much haggling they settled on a bribe of five hundred rupees.

Certainly, things were no better elsewhere in India. Indira Gandhi and her minions were neck deep in their own scandals. This was the time that there was much talk of setting up poultry farms and the like. Powerful politicians like Durga Prasad Dhar also set up such farms. We saw how corrupt and immoral these leaders were in their business dealings. Nevertheless they acted superior to the earlier figures like Bakshi Ghulam Muhammad whom they derided for backwardness. D.P. Dhar and other leftist politicians must have rationalized their ways as being a necessary evil in the larger fight for world revolution.

The politicians demanded money to fill up their coffers to fight elections. Because of my reputation I was generally left alone. I could not be wished away owing to my seniority in the department, but the ministers were always looking for excuses to transfer me.

Didda passed away in 1961. She had been a loving mother to me. Bayaji, on his retirement, moved in with us for some time. Later he went to Ghaziabad to live with the family of his daughter, Kamala. During the war with Pakistan in 1971, he was in the hospital for prostate surgery. He died of post-operation complications. He was a real saint.

Babuji, on his retirement from the Kapurthala college, served successively as principal of new colleges in Haryana. Hem's husband died in a scooter accident and Babuji and Bibiji started living with her soon afterward.

The Indo-Pakistan war of 1971 had been fought over what became Bangladesh. In Jammu, we were just a few miles from the border where some fierce battles took place. Pakistan was soundly defeated, its armies surrendered in the east. Near Jammu also the Indian armies made strategic gains.

The gains on the battlefield were lost by the diplomats in just a few months. India was prepared to accept the de facto partition of Kashmir that had taken place in 1949, if Pakistan would drop any claim to the rest of the state, and accept the line of control as the international boundary. Indira's envoy D.P. Dhar, who travelled to Pakistan to prepare ground for talks between the two countries, believed that he had Pakistan's agreement to it. But when Indira Gandhi and the Pakistani Prime Minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, met in Shimla in July 1972, Bhutto balked. Indira Gandhi's advisors were not experienced diplomats; they had risen by virtue of their sycophancy. Having raised the expectations of the public, they felt compelled to strike an agreement to return the seventy thousand odd Pakistani prisoners of war for a mere acknowledgement by Pakistan that the two countries would decide the issue bilaterally at a future date.

Pakistan was a decisive victor at the bargaining table. For India, it was worse than Neville Chamberlain's sellout in Munich. But Indira Gandhi's indirect control over the media was so strong that the significance of the Shimla agreement was not generally recognized.

In 1975, Indira Gandhi reached an agreement with Sheikh Abdullah and he returned to power. Abdullah was no doubt impressed by the apparent demise of the two-nation theory after the secession of Bangladesh from Pakistan. Overnight, the Pakistan radio, to which he had been a hero for more than twenty years, declared him an Indian stooge.

I retired from the service in 1976. Then I joined the State Bank as a consultant to advise on agricultural loans. All our children had left home by now. Avinash was a professor in America; Subhash was a professor at the Indian Institute of Technology in Delhi; Shakti, Jaishree, and Neeraj were studying at Nehru University in Delhi. In 1978, Jaishree left for New York for her higher studies in German literature and the following year we celebrated the weddings of two of our children. Subhash married Navnidhi

(Naumi), a Garhwali girl from Dehra Dun, and Shakti married Valsan, a Keralite from Bombay. Later that year Subhash accepted a professorship in America.

6 Part IV - Reflections

**Traversing six forests,
I awakened the orb of moon.
Controlling my breath,
I rose above the world.
--- Lalla**

**I came by highway.
Now, in the middle of the embankment,
by the small bridge,
the day is coming to close!
--- Lalla**

Section 50

We now decided to live in Delhi because that is where many of our relatives had retired. We bought an apartment in Saket, in south Delhi, in 1981; the next year my last tenure with the State Bank in Jammu ended. Since then my life has consisted of reflection and meditation. By early eighties all my children had completed their education and married. Neeraj married an Assamese girl named Lily, who was his classmate, and Jaishree married Steve, an American who was doing his doctorate in philosophy at her university. Valsan went to Nigeria for a couple of years to teach and Shakti was also there for several months. On their return, they settled down in Delhi, very close to our apartment. Soon they had two girls, Madhavi and Divya. Abhinav and Arushi, the children of Subhash and Naumi, were also in India frequently. Watching the children grow, reminded me of the childhoods of my children, and of my own childhood. How much we forget, until reminded by the innocent antics of the young!

The political situation in Kashmir got progressively worse in the eighties. After the death of Sheikh Abdullah in 1982, his playboy son Farooq succeeded him and he turned out to be a bad administrator. He was dismissed by Indira Gandhi and replaced by his brother-in-law G.M. Shah, who had long been in favour of Kashmir's accession to Pakistan. This government did not last very long; Kashmir was placed under governor's rule for some time and then Farooq returned to power. Politics had become a family drama not only in Delhi, but also in Srinagar.

This musical chairs took its toll on the administration. The Islamic parties were meanwhile strengthening themselves through indoctrination, that began in government funded Islamic schools. The Iranian revolution and its defiance of the West had also galvanized the Muslims. Some of the American arms and funds for the Afghanistani mujahedeens, sent through the Pakistani intermediaries, found its way into Kashmir. President Zia-ul-Haq of Pakistan could hope to wrest Kashmir by fighting a proxy war there and in Punjab.

The political theatre in Delhi and Srinagar was fascinating and it was easy to lose sight of the basic issues. During her years, Indira Gandhi ruled by patronage and intrigue. She was laying the groundwork for her son to succeed her.

Although I had long felt that the policies of Nehru and Indira were wrong, India seemed so beleaguered by problems that often, at the time of elections, one felt there was no alternative to their leadership. Even if Nehru had not been enamoured of socialism, the stand of the West on Kashmir was bound to push India into the Soviet camp. American support of the brutal repression by Pakistan in Bangladesh before the 1971 war was hard to understand, considering that ten million refugees had fled to India.

India needed Soviet Union for support in the Security Council. In turn, we lent voice to the Russian positions in the assemblies of the poorer nations. We were being buffeted by strong forces of history. The rebirth, prophesied for India by Aurobindo, would not occur very soon. We could only hope that we had prepared the next generation to have the moral strength to lead India into its renaissance.

Section 51

During 1985-6, we were for a year in America. Neeraj and Lily, after their doctorates in anthropology, decided to get into the health care profession. Neeraj joined a post-doctoral programme at the Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore. They had a boy, Rahul, and a daughter, Manisha, arrived while we were there. After a lapse of fifteen years, we saw Avinash, together with his wife Dianne, and their girls Carina and Maura.

It was on this visit that I found that Subhash was deep into research on ancient India. He had shown how Panini's three thousand year old Sanskrit grammar had important lessons for modern day computer scientists. Next he analyzed the ancient Indus script (later renamed Sarasvati script by him) and showed that the Brahmi script of the Mauryan times was derived from it. I was not surprised, but this work ran against the prevailing orthodoxy.

Subhash's Indian research has led to astonishing new meanings for Vedic ritual and the Rigveda. It appears that these findings will lead to a revision of the history of the ancient world. When Subhash explained some of these discoveries, I suggested that the lake of Kashmir might have drained in the same tectonic event that led to the drying up of the Sarasvati river around 1900 BC. The Sarasvati evidence suggests that Rigveda is at least four thousand years old and therefore the core of the Mahabharata must also be at least that old. As far as I remember, there is no mention of any Kashmiri king fighting in the Mahabharata war. It should be possible to obtain new insights on the earliest Kashmir by a review of old texts.

Meanwhile, there have been several sad departures from amongst our relatives and friends. In 1982, I went to Kashmir to spend a couple of months there to savour the air and the fruit of the season. I wanted to visit the places of my childhood. Promila, the daughter of my brother-in-law Radha Krishen, was getting married there. Zind Lal was taken ill there and he and Aruna returned to Delhi in a hurry so that he could have his prostate surgery. The prostate surgery went well but later, when he was given a glucose drip, he had a fatal heart attack. Sub-standard glucose drip had caused several deaths in Indian hospitals those days and we don't know if that was the reason here. Since then, Sarojini has lost her oldest brother Kashi Nath and her oldest sister Kamala. Bayaji's daughter Kamala and her husband Tika Lal are also gone.

For Babuji, the evening years of his life have been full of pain. Bibiji had been bed ridden for years and after we returned from one of our trips abroad she died. We took the ashes to Haridwar for immersion in Ganga. Two years ago Sarakak died of a heart attack in Ludhiana. There have been other departures that I shall not recount here.

Jaishree and her family came to India on a brief visit in 1989. They wished to visit the temples in Puri and see Swami Lakshman Joo, the great Shaivite philosopher, in Srinagar. Jaishree and her son Vajra were back again in 1991 and 1992, the second time when she was researching her book on Lalla. I had innumerable discussions with Jaishree regarding the texts of Lalla's Vakhs. It was in the context of her Shaivite researches that I accompanied her to the ancient city of Kashi. We roamed the city, visited temples, and took the famous boat ride down the Ganga along its legendary ghats. We also went to Sarnath.

Our travels also took us to Indonesia when Neeraj was there. Indonesia is a fascinating country, where Hinduism has been around for more than two thousand years. Ramayana and Mahabharata are very popular there, and like other southeast Asian countries, it has its own version of the Indian classical dance. Hindus are now a small minority on the island of Java, but they are the predominant religion on the island of Bali. Hinduism remains a strong presence amongst the intellectuals in all parts of Indonesia. Buddhism is often viewed as being complementary to Shaivite thought. In certain ceremonies, the Shaivite and the Buddhist priests operate together in the numerical proportion of four to one.

We saw several old temples in Java. At a Hindu temple in Bali, I was gladdened by the recitation of the gayatri mantra by the priest. I am told that during the centuries that Indians and Indonesians lost contact, a

considerable part of the Sanskrit tradition was lost in Indonesia. A century ago the Balinese remembered only a fragment of the gayatri mantra.

In September 1992, Sarojini and I again came to the United States. We are now in Honolulu with Jaishree on our way back to India. Although, it has been an enjoyable stay, Sarojini is very keen to be back in Delhi. She and her friends have built a temple to Durga in Saket, and she is the secretary.

Section 52

The news has been full of stories of sectarian strife in India. Of the most shameful episodes of modern history are the dozens of massacres of train and bus passengers by terrorists, allegedly in the pay of the ISI, the Pakistani secret service, that have occurred from time to time in the past decade. The West paid no attention because Pakistan was its ally in the struggle against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan; in fact ISI was getting billions of dollars to train terrorists against the Russians. The struggle against communism may have been justified as a fight between the ideologies of capitalism and communism, but to have remained allied to such a murderous state for years makes the West an accessory to horrible crimes. Those in power do not always separate questions of ends and means.

The past two decades have witnessed a resurgence of Islamic fundamentalism all over the world. Islamists acknowledge no history but their own. They seek an ideal state, a utopia, based on religious laws. But they are also driven by a rage against all non-believers. They hate the Western civilization but, nevertheless, they want more of the goods coming out of the factories of the developed world. Pakistan, an area where some of the greatest scholars, artists, scientists, doctors, and poets of the ancient world lived, considers its history before the conquest of Sindh by Arabs to be a blank. will not acknowledge Panini, the Punjabi grammarian and one of the greatest geniuses of all time. Imagine a movement in Europe that rejects Shakespeare, Newton, Einstein, and all its writers and philosophers!

Actually the problem is even worse since all non-believers are painted by the clerics as some kind of monsters. Their sermons repeat this message endlessly. I remember an incident from my student days at Lahore. On the train, returning after vacations in the valley, poor Kashmiri Muslim labourers boarded the train at a small station. There were empty benches on the train but the Punjabis would not let them take these seats. During those days, the Kashmiri labourers would come seasonally for work to the Punjab and they were considered dirty and stupid, and forced to travel hunched up on the train compartment floors. This inhuman treatment was meted out to them by Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs alike. I spoke up for the labourers in my faultless Punjabi and this had an effect and they were allowed to take seats. A middle-aged Punjabi woman, who was watching this scene intently, struck up a conversation with me and she tried to match make me with an eligible niece until she got to know my name. She could not believe that I, in spite of my faith, had pleaded for the labourers.

I foresee years of conflict around the world as followers of exclusivist world views face the inexorable march of science. I foresee a triumph of those ideas that value experiential knowledge and universality. New religions will have to learn to respect the old and also respect the right of the individual to choose. Eventually there can be only one religion, that of truth and humanity.

It is fascinating how people justify their situation even if they must side with their oppressors. In India this has happened countless times. Some of the worst tyranny on the Hindus was imposed by new converts. In Kashmir, Sikandar's minister Suha Bhatta, a new Muslim, abetted his king in the forcible conversion of the Hindus. According to the historian Ferishta, Sikandar ordered that only Muslims be allowed to reside in Kashmir. Those who tried to flee the valley were cut down by armed soldiers at mountain passes.

Another interesting case of a different type is that of Muhammad Iqbal, the poet and originator of the idea of Pakistan. His grandfather Sahaj Ram Sapru, a revenue collector, embezzled funds and when discovered the Afghan governor, Azim Khan, gave him the choice of death or conversion to Islam. Sahaj Ram Sapru chose life and, assuming new names, he and his family moved to Sialkot in the Punjab. Later Iqbal never acknowledged his native Kashmiri and Indian tradition that his grandfather had been so cruelly forced to renounce.

Perhaps this reveals that terror wins. The victims wish to be like their tormentors. Which is why the descendents of the American Indians, who were treated with such monumental barbarity by the Spaniards, wish to forget their native heritage. But such amnesia leads to a weakening of the spirit, a loss of purpose, confusion about ends and means. To progress all are alike; it recognizes no religion, only a search for truth. Those who would not be true to their past will not be able to recognize the truth about the future.

Section 53

There has been some progress in India in the past half century but we have also taken many wrong turns. Perhaps the worst was the bureaucratization of Indian life that was started by Nehru in imitation of the Soviet Union. An official like me was a prisoner of this system, unable to do anything on my own, even resign and take up another job, as I had wished to do once.

But worst of all the Nehruvian system reduced all Indian issues to that of class and caste conflict. The media and the government were harnessed to indoctrinate the public. Undoubtedly, such demagoguery laid the foundations of useful electoral alliances which won the Congress party many victories. But it also led to a progressive deterioration of the quality of Indian public life and government.

In Kashmir, the Hindus were declared to be the exploitative class. New burdens, in terms of quotas, that worked against them in admission to colleges and in promotions in job, were instituted. The same process has been repeated in many variations against different communities in other parts of the country.

The result of all this is that India has not created institutions for a modern state where all citizens are treated equally, irrespective of their private faiths. Not surprisingly, those who speak the most about class struggle are the ones who wish the class differences to become sharper.

It is astonishing how much of damage has been wrought by modern ideologues who do not understand India and whose interpretations have been the basis of public policy in India for the past half century. They speak of higher and lower castes when there is no such permanent divide; these labels reflect economic and political power that are forever changing. They analyze Indian culture and traditions in terms of categories, obtained from Western setting, that confuse more than clarify.

It is sad to see that the Westernized elites in India do not even understand the reasons for the greatness of the West. Paying homage to the symbols, rather than the essence, they have subverted our independence. The English left almost fifty years ago but the minds of the bureaucratic elites in the media, government, and business are prisoners of the colonial mentality.

Those who are now separated from the Indian culture, have such animosity to their own heritage that they are bent on creating discord. According to our belief there is a single truth and one can seek it in different ways. In contrast, Western religions insist on the acknowledgement of the prophethood of some figure, which talk is meaningless in the Indian tradition. Talk of truth being somehow dependent on acknowledgement of some person who lived long ago is also meaningless as far as science is concerned.

Section 54

I have often thought about the great 'mad' sages of recent Kashmir. In my travels I met many such sages.

One of the most famous of these sages was Kashakak of the village of Manigam, fifteen miles north of Srinagar. He dressed like a peasant and ploughed his own fields. He had meditated for several years in the icy cold waters of the Sindh river in Ganderbal. He accepted no gifts and made uncanny predictions. Once, when Babuji and I took our families up to Ganderbal in a doonga on a memorable trip of several days through Vitasta and Sindh rivers, we went to see him and he had wise things to say to us. Kashakak passed away in 1961.

Another great saint was Nanda Bab, whom we met many times when we were in Anantnag. High and low came to him for blessings and advice. In our case he assured us that Avinash will get admission in an engineering college. Another time, before the India-Pakistan war of 1971, he is said to have foretold the Pakistani loss. When people would visit him he would speak in riddles and write on chits of paper what would be answers to unasked personal questions.

This also reminds me that Swami Anand Ji said many times that Kashmir would be devastated in not so distant future. Pointing to the new blocks of buildings that had come up on the Residency Road, near Pratap Park, he said that they will burn down before long. Are we witnessing that now?

In my extensive tours of the valley, I ran into other such mystics who have made remarkable predictions. These people did not follow the conventions of society and they had their own quirks and oddities. There was one who reputedly swallowed rocks. There was another near Kulgam who invited the local mullahs and other prominent folks to a feast. When everyone had eaten, he showed the guests that dog meat had been served. The guests were so scared of the powers of this sage that they went quietly home, a bit wiser perhaps regarding the arbitrariness of eating taboos.

Section 55

America also has many problems that include the breakdown of the family and urban violence. Ivan Illich explains it: "In a consumer society there are inevitably two kinds of slaves: the prisoners of addiction and the prisoners of envy." But it is reassuring that the society is organized to solve problems using science. People are also very open to the wisdom of India. These ideas of universality and of perennial philosophy are the foundations on which a multicultural, new world order will emerge.

The past four years have been a nightmare for Kashmir. Pakistan has used its agents and other Muslim militants to randomly kill Kashmiri Hindus. Riots against the Hindus were engineered in 1986, but more systematic killings began in 1989. One of the first to die was Nil Kanth Ganju, a retired judge, who had been a good friend and neighbour for several years in Anantnag. Most Hindus had to flee the valley and now they are living in refugee camps in various places in Jammu and Delhi. Meanwhile, their houses have been burnt down. Having done as much as possible to destroy the heritage of Kashmir, the militants now want no evidence of people who have a different faith. The world has taken no note of this holocaust.

I cannot return to Kashmir to smell its air, to walk its bazaars. I recall that last time we were there I took Babuji on a shikara ride on the Dal Lake in moonlight and the beauty of the moment brought such a flood of memories to Babuji that he could not restrain his tears.

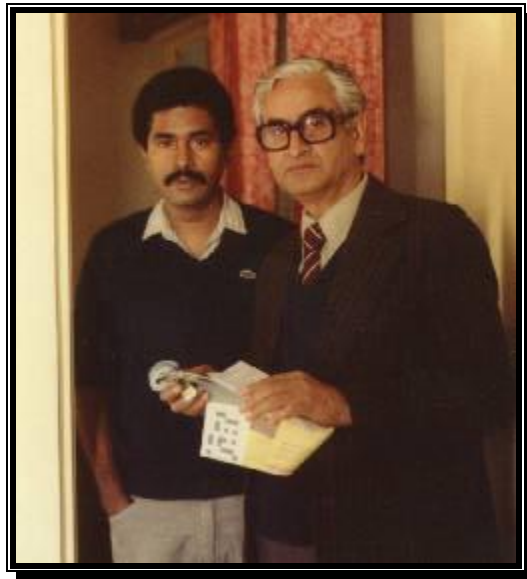
Hawaii, in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, is beautiful with its lush green foliage and blue sky. I spend mornings in the balcony which overlooks a bubbling stream and tall green trees in the foreground and the Honolulu skyline of towering highrise buildings in the background. I look out and see the water flowing downstream in ever-renewing patterns. Evenings, I can see the glowing ball of sun slowly moving towards the horizon and gently disappear leaving a soft reddish glow behind. Last night I went to the Hawaii State Fair with Sarojini, Jaishree, and Vajra. The fair grounds were all lit up, the rides were in full swing, and we watched a circus show in which the children in the audience were asked to participate. Vajra got to put on the costume of a forest ranger and catch a lion who was another child dressed as a lion. All of us had a good laugh. I sat in the circus tent while the others went to take a round of the fair grounds. Soon the tent was closed for the night, and I had to move on to the dairy exhibit that had huge stacks of grass. I sat on a bundle of grass for a long time.

Life seems to have come full circle. I have returned to the discipline of mantra yoga that I had received from my guru, Vakil Sahib. The climate in Honolulu is magnificent; it reminds me of that other paradise, Kashmir.

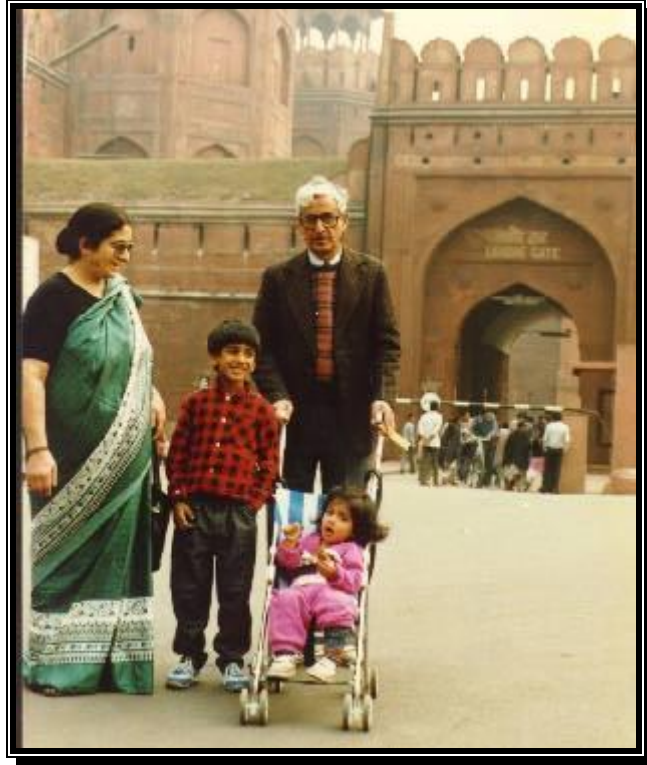
7 Family Pictures



With Sarojini in Delhi



In Delhi, with son-in-law Valsan



With Sarojini and two grandchildren (Abhinav and Arushi) at Lal Kila in Delhi



Sarojini with Jaishree and Shakti in Honolulu



**Sarojini in Honolulu with Naumi, Neeraj, Lily (top row);
Jaishree and Subhash (middle row); Avinash (sitting)**

8 Comments from Critics

'*Autumn Leaves: Kashmiri Reminiscences* is the autobiography of Ram Nath Kak. Set against the changing times of Kashmir this book provides a rare glimpse into a relatively unknown segment of modern history.... Ram Nath Kak entices the reader with his candid writing style into a melange of personal and public experience as he moves from one station of life to the next, never failing to introduce an intriguing array of authentic characters along the way.... This book will be rewarding to students of modern history and religion....'

GUY L. BECK

Loyola University
New Orleans

'... a lovely book ... would be of great interest to historians of religions...'

WENDY DONIGER

University of Chicago

'I trust this autobiography will get the wide circulation it so richly deserves. For it conveys in a way no formal work of scholarship can convey, both the cultural quality of Kashmir and the tragedy which has overtaken it of late. Yet the spirit of the Kashmiri people and their extraordinary ability to refashion lives of dignity and creativity for themselves comes across even more powerfully than the tragedy which has overtaken this beautiful valley in Shri Kak's account of his life and times.'

RAVINDER KUMAR

Nehru Memorial Museum and Library
New Delhi