

The Boy and the Brothers
by Swami Omananda

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INTRODUCTION

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The writer of this book is an unusual woman who has lived through a remarkable series of events. It is clear that the events themselves are remarkable whatever may be the explanation of them. 'The Boy' was a young working man of little education who, in a trance state, gave teachings which seemed to imply knowledge that he could not have acquired in any normal manner. These teachings were accepted as authoritative by many highly educated and scholarly persons who heard them.

These teachings would, in any case, be of great interest. They become more interesting, however, if we allow ourselves to entertain the idea that, in his trances, the boy was acting as the mouthpiece of personal agencies not belonging to our physical world-the Brothers. This is the author's own view of the matter.

This is not a view to be readily accepted by those who accept the stand-point of modern scientific psychology. They are more inclined to regard such ostensible possession by discarnate entities as due to the activity of dissociated elements of the agent's own personality, perhaps interacting the group within which the phenomena occur.

Yet there are reasons now for not feeling too confident that the latter naturalistic type of explanation must be the right one. There is a considerable body of observations within the field of Psychical Research that should make the modern scientific enquirer less ready than would the generation of his fathers to reject as wholly absurd the idea of non-physical personal agencies. He may still, of course, reasonably feel that it is an unlikely explanation in a particular case.

A few years ago, the Duke Parapsychological Laboratory (now the *Foundation for Research into the Nature of Man*) coined the useful term 'I.P.A. hypothesis'. This stood for the general principle of explanation of certain phenomena by Incorporeal Personal Agencies. Acceptance of this term does not imply that this type of explanation is to be regarded as a likely one in any particular case; it does imply a

readiness to consider this as one of the possible lines of explanation. If the possibility of the I.P.A. type of explanation is not ruled out, it must be admitted that there is much in the events described in this book that **can** be most easily explained in this way. In particular, the normal psychological explanation becomes difficult if we accept the fact that many of the communications indicate a degree of knowledge of the Indian scriptures which the Boy could certainly not have had. This impression may be gathered from the present book but it is more strongly indicated in the further records of the teachings, which the Swami has allowed me to read and which is published under the title: *Towards the Mysteries*.

Every reader of this book must decide for himself what kind of explanation of the events recorded in it seems to him to be the right one. Whatever decision he may make on this question, he will enjoy the spiritual adventure of reading a narrative of both religious and scientific interest that is told with skill and with loving enthusiasm.

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R. H. THOULESS

BACKGROUNDS

PART ONE

A GREAT AWAKENING

CHAPTER ONE

Backgrounds

It has been said of the Irish that they “descend from Heaven to the price of bacon”. I am probably no exception to this, for I inherited the double traits of solid-earthiness and heavenly flights from the old Irish family into which I was born, some of whose members combined to a high degree mystical experience with artistic expression and practical capability. Both my parents were gifted, in addition, with inborn psychism. My father was an M.D., F.R.C.S. of Dublin, and was generally regarded as an all-round genius. His spare time was devoted as an amateur to music, painting and sculpture, and he was even awarded various prizes and honours, including a gold medal for his exhibitions at the first Chicago World Fair. As a volunteer in the Franco-Prussian War, he had been awarded the Legion d’Honneur. Later, as an old man, he was very annoyed because he was not allowed to join up at the outbreak of World War I. I adored him. He was as gentle as an angel. When he was dying, thousands of miles distant from me, he called my name three times and passed away. In London, at the same hour, my room was mysteriously filled with the smell of ether — the best way to let me know, the old surgeon may have thought.

My mother had a most exquisite singing voice and considerable histrionic ability also, but she was far too retiring by nature to take up a professional career. As an amateur, however, she sang many operas and oratorios with true musicianship, and took part as soloist in numerous charitable performances of oratorios. She had a fine memory for words as well as music, and would reel off to me by heart whole pages of her favourite books when I was a small child. I liked the mellow sound of her speaking voice, though I did not always follow the meanings. Her taste lay in literature, rather than in philosophy, social questions and so forth; thus I heard a lot of Walter Pater, Keats, Shelley, Shakespeare and Greek mythology. The latter especially strongly affected me.

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Despite her love of the beautiful, her glorious voice and psychic temperament, my mother was an excellent cook and practical housewife. She worked hard in the house, for my father, owing to his utter indifference to money, allowed a friend to handle his finances and lost everything. On top of that he went in seriously for psychic investigation from the therapeutic angle, photographed ectoplasm — for the first time, I believe — and thus alienated patients who were so intolerant, in those days, of what are now almost commonplaces. My father had the courage of his convictions.

I was the eldest child. The brother next to me had a flair for science, and used to lecture solemnly to us on sunspots, or on ants, bees and wasps, etc. He used the dress up as a professor, and we all attended his lectures in our best clothes. He was only nine then. What might he not have done with his life? But he died of smallpox in India in 1911, shortly after taking honours in history at Balliol, and I never recovered from the pain of it, for he was indeed my twin soul. The other brother died at the age of sixteen, and only I, a creaking door, remained.

One of my earliest recollections is that of sitting alone at the very top of the stairs in our tall town house with a tiny fiddle in my hands, thrumming its strings and listening in ecstasy to the overtones. I could go on at that for hours without tiring of it. I remember, too, sitting on the same top step, while my “adorable little auntie” — as we all called her — tried to stop my floods of tears, brought on by indignation over real or imagined injustice to people or animals. I was altogether too sensitive, passionate and precocious for my three years. I used to feel vast hurts weighing upon me, which naturally I could not explain, and so just wept in childish misery. That auntie was a saint. She was the only one who could mitigate my baby sorrows, and she practically brought me up until the age of seven; for at that period I was more than mother alone could cope with. Auntie planted in me the seeds of the love of God Incarnate in man — devotion to the saints, seers, divine teachers and saviours. At a very early age, she taught me to pray, and to read the New Testament. (Later it was the whole Bible and the *Bhagavadgita*, and a little Plato.)

We were very strictly brought up. We never went to church, or received conventional religious instruction; nevertheless there was an atmosphere of true religion in our home. Religion thrilled me. When I was about nine, I made myself a chapel at the top of the house (no one laughed at me or said me nay) and there

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performed my own rituals of worship, praise, intercession and petition with the utter sincerity of childhood. One day a quantity of dry asparagus fern, which decorated the place, caught fire. Long flames darted up. I believed so simply in God that, in what might have been a moment of panic, I stood quite still and asked Him to tell me what to do. I had never been out on the roof near that garret — but I dashed out immediately as if possessed, and actually found there a cistern full of water and a bucket. The flames were soon extinguished.

There were no taboos in my young life, except idleness, lies, disobedience and reading newspapers. Music was so strong in me that my parents decided that I should study it seriously, and at the age of seven I was allowed to have violin lessons. My mother often told me stories of my infantile warblings when the Irish nurse would carry me to the piano — I had not reached the walking stage — and I would sing operatic tunes in baby tones and follow my father when he transposed from key to key. The same ear for music enabled me, many years later, to sing micro-tones — a word which I coined — twenty-two to the octave, on radio. After some two years study I gave my first recital in London and embarked on a professional career which was the first of its kind in our family. However, I did not play much in public except on important occasions until my late teens. I need not dwell on that career except to say that it was always only a small part of me, hard and unremittingly as I had to work to remain on the top, where I seem to have started. My whole life appeared to be filled with my musical preoccupations; but actually it was palpitating with other things. Even as a child I had a hidden life, which I will presently try to describe.

One recollection of those years of child stardom stands out clearly: I was painfully timid, yet I could not subordinate my will in matters of artistic judgment; so I never played the way my master taught me if I did not agree — and I frequently didn't. I would appear politely to accept the 'bowings' and 'fingerings' he wrote on, my music; then I would go home and practise the concerto, or whatever it was, in my own way. At ensuing lessons, I would play it *his* way; then, at the concert, play it *my* way. And when I had won the audience, he would embrace me, and tell me that I hadn't done a thing he taught me, but that it was marvellous! When, years after, I was playing with the Boston Symphony Orchestra — my second season with it — as a young soloist of about eighteen, he was leading first violin, and bestowed a prim kiss on my forehead after the rehearsal — almost like the old days, except that this time the dear man was leader of that great orchestra for his pupil as soloist.

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An incident of my hidden psychic life occurred on that occasion. At those Boston Symphony Concerts one plays a rehearsal in the morning, a “public rehearsal” (concert) in the afternoon, and the concert proper in the evening. I was playing the Brahms concerto, and three times in one day at concert pitch was too much for me. At the evening performance I was exhausted just before the last movement, when I saw a great Being floating rapidly down from the balcony through the centre of the hall. It ‘coalesced’ with me as I struck the first notes of that movement, and I at once shot up above my body and looked down on the girl playing the fiddle below. I played magnificently and the audience went wild. I didn’t tell anyone, of course, and was quite fresh at the end. There were so many secret happenings like that; indeed, all my life I seem to have been trying to hide my real self from others.

I never went to school nor did I have governesses, and there was little chance to read, because I practised my violin for some six hours a day for fourteen years. Such work tended to develop patience, attention to detail, practical devotion and stubbornness for truth; it bred also, as in the science-trained, a healthy scepticism. A sincere artist learns not to accept anything blindly, but even in the act of supreme intuition, looks for the structure of truth — always trying to get closer to truth.

Ill-health has dogged me all my life. It seems to have been largely due in the first instance to virulent typhoid, which I contracted when a small infant, and was not expected to survive. This ill-health was the outer cause of putting an end to my career as a soloist; but there were other and stronger causes.

From my earliest childhood I saw visions and had wonderful dreams and natural psychic experiences. As a small girl, I used to ascend, seemingly through my head, into a great living beyond. Sometimes the void was not beyond, but my head itself became it. I loved doing that, and only had to close my eyes and, as it were, to wish, and it happened. This went on for years, right on into my twenties, I should say. I used to spend hours, too, looking at exquisite flower-forms which emerged inside the front part of my head, one after another’) endlessly varied and always moving. Such and many other experiences were so normal to me that I thought everyone else had them, and grew up without any sense of being different from others in these things. As I entered my teens, my religious feelings deepened and widened, from Jesus and the Biblical prophets to the Divine Incarnations and prophets of other lands. Again,

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this was a natural growth; I just *felt* these things, without thought. Probably the great music which filled my daily life helped me to go through these stages.

Conventional worship in churches appealed to me for brief periods; but I always went out dissatisfied and restless. Yet religion continued to be my absorbing interest: not a religion, not any study of books; but I longed for alignment with Cosmic Consciousness — a wonderful, romantic opening out, setting one free. When I was about fifteen, a foretaste of that alignment was vouchsafed to me when I least expected it. I was alone in the tiny stuffy drawing room of a girl-acquaintance's London flat. Everything faded out, except the real ME; and then came the realisation which words cannot express, and which gave me certainty and direction for the rest of my life. It was terrifying in its vastness and power. The little personality was almost annihilated. But God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb, and only a few times since then has the Super-conscious revealed Itself to me. The Zen Buddhist calls this *satori*. It is something bestowed, not achieved.

Of course I passed through a phase of Theosophy, but never of spiritualism. As usual, however, I came out by the door I went in. Yet Dr. Annie Besant was my friend, despite my youth. She wanted me to lecture on Theosophy but I refused because, I told her, I could not lecture on something I did not *know* to be true. She smiled and said, "Why not, then, write about something you *do* know, my child?" I answered that that which I had inwardly learned about sound was probably important, but that, as a trained musician, I should put it to the test and not write until I had some certainty to offer. At this she turned to a friend and said, "The child won't write, just because she can't see the colour of the *deva's* eyes".¹ That was true. Scepticism, or rather, reverence for knowledge, prevented me from rushing into print about untested things.

I saw angels, surely enough, and that has always been so; just plain seeing, with my eyes open. Much as I loved reading, life had become too full of the Reality for me to want to go to shadows in books. In any case, mine was too exacting, and, in addition, I was always more or less ill. (Reading did not come, for me, until I was getting on into old age, and then for reasons other than self-development.) Gradually my visions became my friends; and often there arose in them, whether I was sleeping or just closing my eyes, wonderous faces out of which wise and heavenly eyes looked into mine. The more my mind turned outwards, to see the world as it is, where we have so often darkened it, and to ache over it, the oftener came those holy faces, as if

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to say, “Do something! Do your part!” To me, they had no historical or geographical backgrounds: they just came out of the stars that belong to all. I never probed.

I had always longed to study mathematics and physics, but that was out of the question. So I contented myself with lonely flights of imagination on, for example, the nature of numbers: the ‘two-ness’ of two, and so on. Again, I would ponder and try to understand why one note or chord of music produces one psycho-physiological effect, and another, a different one. My mind was a seething *why* about music, not as the art we know, but as a science-art, when suddenly, on Midsummer Day 1907, when I was twenty-five years old, this mood blazed up in a way to describe which would need a book to itself. Here I must be content merely to say that through an unsought-for contact with Glastonbury, a new stream of life came to me, and with it a mystic outpouring of sound, so that I heard much of “the music of the spheres” and especially that which is symbolised in the East as the OM, and for us as the Word, or great Amen. In addition, my holy visitors, now clearer than ever and often accompanied by unearthly perfumes, taught me to sing, and gave me the gift of *conscious* trance, in which teachings were imparted to me by them on the arts and crafts, the revival of the Mysteries through science-arts, the true nature and future of industry, etc. These teachings of the Holy Ones contained little of ethics or philosophy. I want particularly to emphasise that these trances took place in a state of intense psychic and physical awareness. There was nothing unconscious about them.

This development continued for years, and to it was added therapeutic work by sound, in which I did many cures in an ordinary, normal way, some of which were witnessed by doctors. This was pioneer work.

Sometimes there was also natural seership which had to do with scientific, historical or artistic matters, but never with personal affairs. I remember, for instance, sitting up in bed after one of my indispositions, and watching the air open and the whole place become alive with coloured geometric forms, which moved ceaselessly and came up unendingly. The Holy Ones must have brought this off to demonstrate to me the source and true inspiration of geometric arts.

The Glastonbury inspirations revolutionised my whole musical life; and now my heart fixed itself on the thought of my un-named Master, whom I had formerly seen inside my head as I saw the enchanting flowers; but, at the Glastonbury ‘opening’, saw for the first time as a presence, in broad daylight, in my room.

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Between these uprushings, there were the ordinary things of life to attend to, and a livelihood to be earned. I was never a vague dreamer, although I was virtually a recluse. I fed my soul on the New Testament and the *Bhagavadgita*, and learned, somehow, to accept but not to wallow in the gifts of the gods. This non-attachment kept me normal, and my Irish temperament ensured safe “descents to the price of bacon”.

I had no outer links with India so, obviously, contact with India had not made a mystic of me; though it is equally clear that most of the things that happened to me had their roots in a world-tradition which has been so perfectly expressed in India.

There had been no companionship in all this until I met my husband, whom I married rather late in life. He was a great artist, whose output in serious musical composition was unfortunately small, but of superlative quality. The late Sir Donald Tovey wrote of one of his works: “It is a permanent monument . . . true, definite, and masterly . . . I question whether any work of this calibre” (choral and orchestral) “has been more practically devised.” Many others qualified to judge wrote in the same vein; one well-known newspaper editor said that “it will be a national disgrace if this masterpiece of a British composer is allowed to sink into neglect”. We were entirely at one on inner things, and he was truly dedicated in his art. His life was tragically wasted, however, for we were so dreadfully poor that most of his works had to be of the pot-boiler sort.

Here I must break the thread of this sketchy account to answer questions so often put to me since 1946. In that year, when I had been in India just over a decade, and seven years after my husband’s death, I entered *sannyasa* and, assuming *gerrua*, became a *Swami*. By so doing, I broke about two thousand years’ ban on women entering *sannyasa* and opened a vast new field for Indian women — for all women in fact, as I am a Western. Perhaps it will help Western readers to understand more of this vast and very wonderful subject if I give here the meanings of the above and several other Sanskrit words, which really describe, in brief, what a Swami is:

Sannyasi: One who has renounced the world, the family and social ties, and received the *sannyasa* initiation and sacred words (*mantras*).

Yogi: One who practises yoga, remaining in any walk of life.

Sadhu: A holy man, not necessarily one who has renounced the family.

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Swami: Originally, an ‘owner’, such as a landlord; hence used also as a term of high respect, and prefixed to names of holy persons in the sense of ‘lord’ or ‘master’.

Gerrua: A soft ochre stone found in India, which has been used for centuries to dye the garments of *sannyasis*, who ‘assume’ *gerrua* at initiation.

Nearly all Swamis’ names end in ‘*ananda*’, which means ‘Bliss’. In my name, OM may roughly be translated as the WORD: Primordial Sound, which creates all things. “Omananda”, therefore, means “Bliss of the WORD”. ‘*Puri*’ is the name of the first section of the ancient Order of *sannyasis*, which Shri Sankaracharya, the founder, divided, as a matter of convenience, into ten sections—the *puris*, *giris*, *bharatis*, *sarasratis*, etc. Sankaracharya, who is believed to have lived about seven centuries after Christ, did not create the *sannyasis*, but drew them into one All-India Order. They had existed for thousands of years before him.

The Swamis do not belong to any religion. When one takes the solemn initiation which ‘gives’ *sannyasa*, one renounces titles, religion, race, sex, family, political party, etc. A real *sannyasi*, therefore, belongs to no one religion, though he may if he wishes worship in any and give allegiance to any Master or none. If he is born a Hindu or a Western, for instance, he does not extol his own civilisation or religion above others. He is supposed to belong to that body of people out of all religions and races, who have had at least an inkling of the divine awakening which ultimately gives God but subjugates particularity. He is not therefore less zealous but more; not less loving, but endeavouring to be part of the Ocean of Love; not less active, but rather, a veritable dynamo. (“I am the Way, the Truth and the *Life*”. Jesus was of course a supreme *sannyasi*.)

A Swami should not dwell on his life or achievements; therefore I have transgressed against one of our unwritten laws in order to write this preamble, or indeed, some parts of this book. There are times, however, when laws may well be broken, and the story of the Boy and the Brothers is one of them. Here, before I begin to tell that story, I want to make it clear that it is theirs, not mine. My part in it is analogous to that of the *répétiteur* — that is, the first fiddle who sits beside, backs up, and often plays second fiddle to, the leader of the orchestra, and assists the conductor, also.

To return to London: Harassed by our continual poverty, I bethought me of the violin I had not touched for so long; and there for years I led theatre orchestras to help

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to keep us afloat. Thus I continued in a strange double life: theatres, housework, struggling to keep the home together, to bring up our children and back my genius husband; with interludes when I entered my seventh heaven and enjoyed the bliss of the gods. I never dreamed of meeting those holy Beings in any other way but this, or of seeing them more clearly. My heart was full enough; it seemed indeed that it could hold no more when, within a few days, all was changed; my world blazed up again, and I entered with my husband into another existence.

A SLUM ENCOUNTER

CHAPTER TWO

A Slum Encounter

I had always longed to use my artistic knowledge and gifts in wider fields, and before the advent of radio I used to take concert and other parties to East London, where I had assured myself of the innate capacity of the untrained masses to appreciate the finest things in the arts and crafts; but I was bitten by the idea that I must find a house in the East End, and in those slums — the unspeakably awful slums of those days — establish curative and creatively constructive work by means of sound, of the marvellous powers of which I was now at last convinced; and by means of puppet-plays, grave and gay. (But this is not a book on the revival of the Mysteries!)

I was strangely obsessed, in fact, and under strong pressure to carry out my dream without delay, *and to visit the locality in which, I felt certain, it was destined to materialise*. I made up my mind to search for a suitable building in Bow.

So I tramped East London, day after day, in the most depressing November weather and the dreariest imaginable surroundings, amid the soul-killing effluvia of pubs, stench of tanneries, yells of children and adults, the rattling of huge drays on cobblestones. (At night, alone in my silent room, working on the project for my settlement, I was upheld by exquisite, unearthly perfumes, which now, it seemed, were stronger than they had ever been before. I had been accustomed to such things for many years; but now, a superhuman power was in me.) Yet I met with little success, as I tramped those weary, hideous roads, my great dream beating on my mind.

Presently, however, my husband joined me from Paris, and his coming coincided with the fact that, at last, I had seen and was negotiating for a suitable building, while money had been offered for the scheme. I was anxious to consult about that building with the Head of a large settlement in East London, whom I knew slightly, so I asked my husband to accompany me there one evening. My other visits had all been by day and, of course, unescorted.

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When we arrived at the settlement we found a dance in progress and, not seeing the Head, we stood hesitating just inside the dance-hall. There were long buffet tables at each side of the hall, not far from where we were standing.

Presently, a remarkable-looking young man who had been serving at one of these tables walked slowly, with a curious kind of *deliberateness* — that is the only way I can describe his ritual-like movement — towards where we stood. Immaculately turned out, this very distinguished, aristocratic-looking young man came on, courteously, his quite beautiful small head slightly inclined above his very tall, slender figure. Evidently he was the acting host, as the hostess was not to be seen. We took him to be an Oxford or Cambridge undergraduate, ‘doing’ the Settlements, but were quickly disillusioned when he opened his lips, for to our amazement he spoke with an almost incomprehensible Cockney accent. Still, his voice was gentle, and his phrases — slightly hesitating at first, as if he were uncertain how to approach us — were definitely not Cockney. This struck us as being a most unaccountable thing. We were, in fact, mystified, and at once tremendously intrigued; for by his dialect he was an out-and-out East Ender, whereas in all other respects, he was a ‘varsity man and an aristocrat, whose outstanding personal magnetism could not be concealed. As he walked towards us — handsome, fine in bearing, simple, impressive — there was, for both of us, no one else in that crowded hall. We heard and saw nothing but that one man. We, who were accustomed to the vivid personalities of stage and platform, were completely captivated.

He asked what he could do for us, and we explained why we had come. I gave him a rough outline of my project. He said quietly that he would be glad to be of any service, and would we like to take a look round the settlement while we talked things over? We agreed. Of course, we wanted more of him! So he deputed his buffet work and escorted us delicately through the building. He was so *fine*. His manners were perfect, and he was delightfully entertaining in a restrained way. Deeper and deeper we fell under the spell of this mysteryman. We had only been with him for a few minutes; but here was magic, and being musicians, we were trained to intuit enchantment on the instant.

Presently we left the settlement to explore the neighbourhood of the house I had set my heart on. It was a filthy November night of mist and drizzle, and roads deep in black slush; but this did not bother our friend. He sauntered along those wretched

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streets as if they were his ancestral park-lands. He moved with leisurely ease, as one who had spent life in the good places of this earth.

Having escorted us in this lordly fashion to a dim, foul lane running along the backs of factories and the bank of a black, slimy canal, he displayed this Italian Garden with pride, and halted there, in the middle of that stinking, deserted lane, still amiably discoursing of anything he thought might interest us — local young people's clubs, sports, Gandhi, local factories and their workers, and so forth. We continued to be transported.

Suddenly, as he stood there, the grand manner, which had sat upon him so easily and naturally, left him *in an instant*, and he became an exuberant, insouciant *boy*. He laughed infectiously, and then opened his mouth wide to exhibit his excellent teeth, following this by insisting on our closely inspecting his iron muscles. A fine specimen of manhood, certainly. As he stood there, letting out his jolly laughter, it was awfully dismal all around, but the sun shone for my husband and me.

Under a kind of enchantment, we passed along that lane, and to the building we hoped to acquire. As we gazed somewhat disconsolately at its sombre, closed main door, the Boy — for we called him that from the start; my husband found the name that same night — volunteered as a chucker-out in my dream settlement. “Oi’m a fust-class chucker-aht — and yer’ll need ‘em ‘ere.” I gratefully accepted his offer, and we walked across the main road to our bus stop. The Boy was still behaving as though it were a spring day; but I detected a slight hesitance or anxiety in him as we waited on the corner, he standing a little apart, bare-headed, his dark, glossy curls, which had been sleeked back when we met, now tumbling in confusion, and the collar of his jacket turned up. So we waited — and he still looked anxious, but said nothing. Suddenly I remembered that we had not exchanged names or addresses. We gave ours. He gave his name, but for an address only the Settlement where we had found him. I asked if he lived there and was told he did not; he went along to help from time to time. “But Oi dawn’t *belong*, ef yer knaw wot Oi mean?” he said. “Oi dawn’t *belong* now’ere.” That, as time showed, was true enough.

Still with that dignity which was so out of keeping with his accent and surroundings, he asked me if I would send him a postcard when I needed his services for the new venture. I said I would, and asked him to be sure to write to us if he in turn had any reason to do so. A cheery “S’long!” and we left him standing there in the murk. We watched from the bus until we could see him no more. “Strange fellow,

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that, I like him. There's something about him — something *real*," remarked my husband.

(The Boy had given us his name, but I shall not pass it on. To do so would not make this story more readable or credible, and by withholding his name, as he wished, I may perhaps save him from defamation, especially in Christian communities. Believing as I do in reincarnation—having had proof of it—I will not be party to giving people yet another opportunity to acquire demerit. He knew there would have to be publicity, but he begged me to keep him out of it. If he can be reached where he is now, his peace should not be disturbed. The stones of thought sharper than sharp rocks. We are very, very cruel, Not are content with killing bodies, we go in for slaughtering souls.)

After this slum encounter I tried to hasten the business of acquiring that building; but now everything went wrong. All that I had built up fell to pieces. Having, through my artistic career, learned the value of tenacity, I stuck to the fight for that place, month after month, losing all along the line. .. e woman who had offered the money to purchase the building fell under the influence of some 'spirit', who seems to have informed her that I was not nice to know and certainly should not be helped in *any* project. Then a friend who had arranged with my solicitor to donate four hundred pounds a year towards the running of the settlement, and had made a codicil to her will to this effect, died without having been able to sign it!

Some five months after meeting the Boy I was beaten, but not down. One fine late spring day in 1929 my husband came in and told me about a house which, though it was not in the slums, could be used for the same work. He expounded his ideas' which seemed excellent. "It is a perfect place. You must see it. Come along at once!" So off we went. It was a glorious day. The place, I agreed, was ideal: an old, superbly built house, with very thick walls and many arched windows, standing in a huge garden full of lovely old trees. Quiet. Off the beaten tracks. Yet accessible by trains and buses. Not right for the sort of settlement I had had in mind, but for the modified plan he had in mind, perfect, and the wonderful thing was that, with all its beauty and solidity, the big place was going for a song. Within a few days we had acquired it on mortgage and on faith—for all the help which had been proffered had gone.

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As if he had known, within a day or so I received a grimy postcard from the young man of Bow. I wish, now, that I had kept that card, in which he informed me, in the same strangely dignified manner but hopelessly illiterate spelling and handwriting, that he was awaiting my call to him for help, if he was still required; that he was now quite free *all* the time; that he had given up his job! No more. No pressure. I was dismayed about the job. Was he counting on us to give him one? It was out of the question, We had not the funds. Soon afterwards I learned that the job he had thrown over was at one of the biggest works in East London, where his step-father and brother also worked. He had been settled in that job. In later years I got in touch with his former employers and have their letter saying that he was a labourer; they added that he was a good timekeeper. He seemed to have been foreman to his gang, (see photograph at front of book) — a begrimed, rough navvy type yet *the same man we had met at that dance*. It seemed incredible! And now, apparently knowing nothing of the future, he had abruptly left certainty for uncertainty and had penned that fateful postcard addressed to me, an utter stranger in a world which, in those days, was totally removed from his own.

Well, the die had been cast, and secretly I was glad: for the house standing in its big walled gardens was lonely; one of my children was still a little girl, and the other two were teenagers; my husband was out a good deal on his work. Yes, we needed a strong man who could devote himself to the place and be a bodyguard. There was a tremendous amount to be done there, too; the house and garden were lovely but had suffered long neglect. We were all ready to work to put it in order. “It is exactly what we need,” I told my children, and they agreed that his coming would be providential.

Then a further doubt assailed me. The East Ender’s love for his bit of London is proverbial. This young man, had thought we were trying for a place in his part of the world. How would he — how *could* he — react to ours? (All this happened some thirty years ago, when social gulfs were enormous.)

I wrote inviting him to come over to St. John’s Wood and talk it over. He cycled from Bow, and we had tea all together. (His clothes stank most horribly of gas fumes. I had to warn the children not to show that they noticed it.) He was desperately nervous at that first visit to our home, so I sat down beside him on the sofa to try to calm him — I will not say “to put him at his ease”, because he was not ill at ease, but behaved as a man would who was facing a public speech, a sports contest, or an appearance in a law-suit. He was quivering like a race-horse, and I — blind that I

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was! — did not sense the thing that was troubling him. Soon afterwards, I discovered that he had been impelled towards us by a power beyond himself, and I found also that his normal manner with people of all sorts was completely uninhibited—that he could be horrid, even overbearing on occasion, but never nervous. Yet on that afternoon he trembled. He appeared as a painfully anxious, almost helpless, young man, and no wonder! Lives—to be made or marred—were depending on him as he sat there with us, who understood nothing, realised nothing. His great moment had come, and he knew it; but whatever his object, he had to gain it, at that juncture, alone.

I put to him the new situation about the house. He waved aside finance; but in the back of my mind still lay the thought, “How can I recompense this man who has given up his good regular job and his career? I can hardly afford to lodge and feed him, let alone pay him a wage.” So I spoke my thoughts. He took no notice of them, but it was different when I came to the difficulty about uprooting himself. That was quite another matter. “Yus. This must be dealt wiv’. Where is that ‘ouse? Oi’ll gorahn’ there roight nah and ring yer. “He took leave as if he could not get off quick enough. As he tried to fix an awkward parcel on his bicycle, it slipped and I put out my hands to help. “Dahn’ do thet,” he said peremptorily, “yer’ll soil yer ‘ands.” No one had ever said that to me.

Three hours after, the phone rang and an elated Cockney voice came through. No nerves now! “Oi’m stayin’ ‘ere,” he announced. “*What—staying?*” I gasped. “But you have no keys! Do come and fetch them!” “Keys dushn’t bother me! There’s a garden to sleep in. Oi’m stayin’ roight on ‘ere. Dahn’t yer worry! This is orl roight by me.” He laughed hilariously and rang off.

It was a wilderness, and he went into it, just like that. Next day, he fetched the keys and remained alone there, camped in the dirty old kitchen, until he helped us to move in a few weeks later. He was wonderful then. I don’t know what we should have done without him. During all that time he looked like an uninhibited gypsy. Goodness knows what the neighbourhood made of him! The removal men clearly regarded him as a freak. He had undergone another complete metamorphosis, and I was bewildered, wondering what would happen next.

Before going on perhaps we had better pause here to take stock, so to speak, of the Boy. Naturally, I had made it my business to get to know something more about him

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and, in addition, within a few weeks of moving into that house, I elicited information from the Boy himself, which was always freely given.

He was born at the beginning of the century, one of a poor working-class family living in Bow, East London. He told me that his mother was Irish, and gave me her maiden name, but I had no means of proving that this information was true. He said that he had never known his father, but only a brutal stepfather. (I once saw the stepfather, but not his mother.) There seemed no doubt that he was British and a Cockney through and through. He adored his mother. I met his blood-brother, but they bore little resemblance to one another either in appearance or manner. The brother was a true-to-type respectable British working man, whereas the Boy, though a labourer, possessed a rare, magnetic personality; so that one could not put him down as a rough fellow and be done with it; for always, against this, there was that elusive majesty which had so thrilled my husband and me on that first night in Bow. He could be crude, but was never coarse; he was — as I soon discovered — unutterably sensitive, yet could be as hard as granite; he was tender and compassionate, but with no of sentimentality — some people said, of feeling. My solicitor once described him as “a rough diamond — but a diamond all the same”.

He didn't look British; he did not even look European. I do not attempt to account for this, except to say that something in his 'unconscious' may have influenced his outward appearance, and even changed it from time to time; for in some aspects his personality was exceedingly malleable. We had seen him look and behave like a fairy Prince; yet in a photograph of the identical period (see photograph at front of book) he looks every inch a stoker. Nor did he look like a white national of any of the Commonwealth countries. His skin was fine as silk and fair, his face and arms bronzed. He looked, to my mind, exactly like a refined type of Persian. (This was demonstrated during the butcherings which followed the 'freedom' of India; in 1947 he nearly lost his life because he looked like a Muslim, and only when he opened his shirt, revealing his fair skin, was he let go. There were several attempts on his life at that time, but these did not disturb the Boy at all.)

He was dragged up amid coarse, sordid surroundings, and in great poverty too, for his stepfather drank heavily. I have a picture of his good mother, whom he may possibly have slightly resembled. In that photograph she appears as an old-fashioned, over-worked, warm-hearted elderly woman of the slums. She seems to have spent much of her strenuous existence helping her neighbours, and eked out

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the family income by charring, by taking in washing, or helping at confinements. The Boy, who seems to have left school very early, 'did' milk rounds and newspaper rounds while he was still attending school, and took a hand at street barrows, ran errands, and did any odd job that he could scratch up-and I do not doubt that the young urchin was a good scratcher-up of jobs! Later on he seems to have shifted from one job to another, in London sewers, carting, and work in factory yards on the maggoty muck that is made into soap and things. I gleaned that there had been an interval after he left school spent as a stable-boy in a racing-stables. He adored horses and wanted to make horses his career; but the wretched stepfather yanked him back to the slums because he had no one to fetch his beer! The Boy was broken-hearted. He told me that the drunkard stepfather not only treated him with moral and physical cruelty, but treated his mother most brutally, until at last the lad had grown strong and expert enough to assert himself, and gave the wretch the punishment he deserved. After a spell in hospital — to which he had been unceremoniously removed on a barrow by his triumphant stepson — the stepfather apologised to the Boy and never molested the mother again. Trained fists and some jujitsu served him well in those rough times — and even afterwards, as we shall see.

He read and wrote very badly when he came to us, but the years brought some improvement. He seems to have been quite ordinary as a child, and even backward; I have had his school record examined. He told me that he was always in trouble at school, where crass brutes seem to have thrashed him frequently for his wild spirits and strange day-dreaming in class, and that later on his work-mates nicknamed him "Trouble" and "Unconscious". His neighbours, too, often thought him mad and treated him with the special contempt and brutality reserved by such people for the insane — or the genius. He seems to have been kicked about with boots of a thickness in exact inverse ratio to the thinness of his skin. It was these kickings of a helpless boy that spurred him on to devote himself to boxing and ju-jitsu, and in due course to become a holy terror among the young roughs of his slum. Goodness knows what mischief he may have been mixed up in! I never enquired, though I felt it must have been so; yet I am positive that he would not have done anything dishonourable according to his lights at that period. He won peace for his mother and security for his own person by hard fighting. Fighting, in fact, seems to have taken the place of drink, betting and girls. It was one of the greatest joys in his drab, sordid existence to rescue wives and children of the neighbourhood from besotted and

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sadistic menfolk. What a pastime! From what I could glean, the Boy seems to have fought well: he had swiftness, science — and joy. He knew what would be the consequences of his chivalrous interferences — never thought of as chivalrous by him, of course—and seems cheerfully to have faced street assaults by these savages and their supporters. Yet he was free of disfigurements, except for a broken nose and chin (the latter received in childhood from the aforesaid boots) and a spray of scars where some fellows had jabbed the jagged ends of a broken whisky bottle on the back of his neck. These honourable scars did not seriously mar his good looks, but he must have had a most stunning appearance before he acquired them.

When his stepfather first took him to the big works which he ultimately left to come to us, the heavily-built coal-heavers and stokers there laughed at the slender fellow. “Baby” they called him, until they found out that the apparently soft, slender body was made of steel and free muscle. His body was not base in the usual sense; indeed it was a mixture of extreme roughness and preternatural sensitivity; for instance, he would get a pain in his spine on contacting a synthetic scent.

The Boy was an exile from birth. He did not fit his environment, and its coarse brutality tortured him. But then, the mannerisms and complacencies of the middle and upper-middle classes tortured him, too. He did not fit anywhere in this world of ours and, fortunately for us, he never, never tried to fit; by which, I think, he set us an important example.

His great love for his mother and hers for him, upheld him through a miserable childhood and stormy youth. He was never a man of the slums, and people often remarked on this. I can well believe that a strange and lovely paternity may have shone through him; but I could not probe the mystery which, doubtless for his mother’s sake, he would never have explained, even if it existed. He told me, however, that his mother used to shut herself in her room on some unknown anniversary, and that she massaged him as a child with a fragrant oil which “came out of a gold-stoppered bottle with an elephant on”. Did he imagine this? He could and did weave stories about himself, just as a child will do; and he believed them — though I sometimes had doubts, and gradually came to know when he was weaving and when not. I was indeed rather shocked by this over-imaginative life of the Boy’s; but presently I learned on very good authority, as we shall see, that this was his “psychic umbrella”, and then I understood. (Later, he almost entirely dispensed with it). A psychiatrist would call it “compensatory” something — which is the same.

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Had the Boy not kept this psychic umbrella well open in those early slum days, goodness knows what would have become of him. Among other things, his umbrella immunised him against injurious influences, so that he could make vital contacts when the time came.

In any case it is clear that his slum childhood and young manhood, though they were filled with unhappy hardships and low adventures, were largely passed in a rosy heaven of his own making. Or was it of *their* making, to whom we shall come a little later in this astounding tale? As, over years he unfolded that slum existence to me, it was driven in on me that *the* had hovered about this slum boy of London town — that they had been beside him in the streets and gutters, amid the cruelties and sordid preoccupations of his wretched environment. When I write these words, and picture the vast, grey city of London, and the child, the lad, the young man in his lonely dreams amid that desolate waste, a lump comes to my throat and tears start in my eyes. The great trans-Himalayan Adepts over there, in the far mountains — yes, that makes sense. But in Poplar, Bow, Whitechapel, Shoreditch, Stepney — why, it is fantastic! Yet we have been told often enough that “all things are possible” and — heaven knows — the need is great enough to call down the whole Hierarchy into the world’s dismal and soul-swamping cities.

The first things I noticed about the Boy were his swift, light movements, his great height — six feet, two and a half inches — his slenderness, and his extraordinary eyes. His very long neck was muscularly developed, with a small, well-shaped head atop, which, with its brown-black, closely ringleted hair, completed the image of a Roman gladiator. Unusually long and graceful hip lines, long, slender arms and feet, and the long well-bred though rough hands — truly the hands of an artist — made up an arresting figure, despite the fact that he stooped through having done too much coal-heaving before he had come to manhood.

His curious magnetic eyes attracted everybody. They were definitely non-Western, having that stony look — it is the only way I can describe it — which one finds in Persian portraits. I used to say to myself: “He has eyes like dark marbles-but alive!” I have never seen eyes of that type in any other head. They were set fairly far apart under thick, straight brows which could not be called “bushy” because the hair was nearly as silky as that of his head. Their expression was detached but compelling, and he used them modestly but frankly. They were

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unfaltering; they did not hide things, but neither were they giving anything away. His face was longish, with small cheekbones, and the handsome remains of an aquiline nose with wide nostrils, and a firm well-modelled chin which did not show that the bone had been broken in former days. He had a wide, usually smiling mouth, with fleshy but not sensuous lips. He had somewhat large protruding ears. He was beautiful, and without the least vanity.

He was never gauche, shy, impudent or vulgar. He could turn on the puckishness of the Cockney. I knew and lived with him under one roof for the best part of twenty-seven years, and during all that time I did not hear one coarse or suggestive word or story from his lips, nor did anybody else that I know of. *He was absolutely clean-minded*, and seems to have passed almost unscathed through the rough-and-tumble of slum and factory life. I write “almost” because, as I discovered later on, these had left him with two bad legacies—a severe bronchial affection caused by inhaling coal dust and carbon monoxide) and the capacity to swear. But even his swearing was not particularly coarse. I discovered; even in those early days, that he could not stand piety, ‘modernity’, class-consciousness — in any class, the labouring included — ‘culture’, sophistication or pretence in any form. He was dead true.

As I have said, the Boy was already living in the kitchen premises of the big old house we had taken. When we ourselves moved in I was at first honestly afraid of him. He looked wild and weird, and behaved as a delirious savage might have done. I had had no experience of this kind of delirium and was bewildered. I had never lived at close quarters with a slum man, nor seen anything to match the Boy’s strange ways. He lived on the floor of the kitchen — a filthy floor at that time. (I learned afterwards that the Boy was not accustomed to filthy floors, and that his mother was a scrupulously clean woman.) He had unearthed a brazier bucket from somewhere, cooked over it, made tea in an old pail. His food was awful, but he did not try to alter things. (Again, I learned later that his mother was a good cook.) His face was dirty, his masses of dusty curls were piled over his forehead, his nails were black, his clothes indescribable. But he worked like a Trojan; moreover, he had the tact not to inflict himself on us, although he had been used to much company.

He was not afraid of me; but then I am small and unmuscular. I have always had a horror of giant rough men! Yet here I was — with my husband abroad — shut in an empty house with one. The children, of course, did not count here. There was but one

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thing to do: school myself to accept that creature just as God made him. That was all very well in theory, but terror possessed me; for I realised that I was practically alone in that place with the roughest man I had ever encountered. (Forgotten, that first magic evening!) His terrible simplicity shocked even me, who had believed myself accustomed to the unconventional. I forced myself to visit him in that disused kitchen which he had turned into a giant's cave. I tried to be natural. He must have laughed inwardly at me, but he just went on being a savage. On one occasion he had just made black tea in his pail, and offered me a tin of it — a *tin!* There were cups about, but he chose just now to live like a tramp. Trembling, I took the tin and did a thing I had never done before and have not done since: I scrambled up and sat on the work-bench he had rigged up, my legs dangling over the side. I began to sip my poison, and patted the table beside me, inviting him off the floor. 'Friendly loike,' he said, as he smilingly took his place beside me. He was easy and respectful. Thus the first stile was crossed.

Then I summoned up courage to invite him, by devious and tactful ways, to eat with us. That took a lot of doing because I realised instinctively, after that first talk, that there was a racehorse here, and that one wrong move might ruin our friendship. Anyway, it was done without hurt, and from that moment he began to be more normal, though he stuck to his cave for several weeks before moving into a room nearer to us. He came to table clean, anyway — hair still wild, but clean — and wearing a becoming 'collar' consisting of a large coloured handkerchief folded and tied in front, workman style. I may say here that he kept up that habit much of the time, throughout the years to come. He liked, and chose, beautiful handkerchiefs, and treated them with delicate care. He was an exile, and these were, when all was said and done, his one link with his beloved East End. True Cockney that he was, his *personality* could vibrate to but one music: the roar of London, the heavy clatter on her drab pavements. Leaden skies and dingy fog-wrapped street-lamps were rainbow-hued to him.

The smell of gas took some time to wear off his clothes; indeed it had not gone when, as we shall see, it was suddenly *supplanted*.

“PICKLE” AND THE FLOATING KNIGHTS

CHAPTER THREE

“Pickle” and the Floating Knights

A new life began for all of us, though principally for me, from the time we moved to that old London house.

Wherever there was a hard job to do, there was the Boy, actuated by some hidden urge to undertake every kind of heavy chore without sparing himself. Unrequited, wretchedly underfed — we did not understand how to feed a man of the labouring class — he nevertheless became the heart and soul of our little company. Throbbing with life, he was immensely strong, agile and alive in every fibre. There was a luminosity about him.

Memories crowd! Golden memories of those blind, rough beginnings! The Boy leading my little girl up to bed by the light of a candle stuck in a bottle, because she was afraid to go up alone, while the short and long flickering shadows on the stairs wall jumped to the ceiling; the Boy hauling my slightly supercilious adolescent son off to do some job which was most distasteful to him, but good for his soul; the Boy fixing a furnace in the cellar, stoking fires, repairing chimneys. The Boy plunging his long arms deep into filthy drains; working on the slated roof, mending pipes, hauling tree-trunks, washing and distempering what seemed like acres of walls. The Boy — always the Boy! He wrapped himself around that house.

I worked hectically too, all day and often far into the night. There was no reason or logic in it. I could not then have said why the Boy and I slaved at that house and garden as we did. No such hurry appeared to be necessary. We badgered the children into slaving too. They hated it, and very likely hated us, but that could not be helped. On we slogged; and soon, by means of our combined Herculean labours, the whole big place was transformed. It had beauty, character and, above all, essential cleanliness, which with me had always been a first requisite for the magnetic protection of finer work.

Meantime, my husband and I had completely lost sight of the object towards which we were supposed to be working. A great Plan was emerging, and the Settlement project just faded out. Eventually we realised that it had been a sprat to catch a whale; but at the time we didn't know it was a sprat; and we, hadn't yet caught

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the whale. All the same *we both felt quite certain about something we didn't know*, and were quite causelessly happy.

In those early days, the Boy was a cigarette chain smoker. One day he announced, casually: “Oi've given up smokin',” and he never smoked again. Such obedience was natural to him.

We settled to some kind of family life. The young people thrilled to the Boy — willy-nilly; for that was a time in which the outraging of class conventions was particularly hard for British youth to understand or bear. Every meal-time was a riot of fun. From the day he had entered our home the Boy became increasingly possessed of hilarious gaiety and infectious joy. He had an endless stock of comic stories of Cockney slum life which kept us in roars. His hearty, guileless laughter rang through the house. From enjoyment developed affection; he was lovable, and we loved him without knowing why, oblivious to the direction in which he — also unwittingly — was leading us. Because he was a big, wild fellow, his happiness was big and wild too — tumultuous, exuberant, carrying all before it. Such sheer elemental happiness as he showed then I had never seen before and have not seen since. It was dazzling. Naturally, he had his ‘down’ times, which by contrast seemed very down. His moods and tempers were those of a childlike being.

With kittenish enterprise, he hailed everything that promised a merry game, and played with the abandon of a young animal *plus* the repartee and shrewd wit of a true Cockney. After a huge spree of some sort, he would retail the story of it with trimmings, at meals, while we nearly choked with laughter.

His endless pranks and escapades earned for him the nickname “Pickle”, which stuck to him ever after; for throughout his life he was always getting into scrapes. Later it became “Pikey”, alternated with “Poor Pike”. “Poor Pike” was used affectionately at times when, like a hurt child, he was up against the — world “poo', poo' Pike” we would say, or even, “Poor *Baby!*” Another name, dear to us all, came later on: “Our Lamb” or “the Lamb”, because there was just no other name for him when he was transfigured, sometimes for hours or days even, under the holy spell of the Brothers, of whom I have yet to tell. (Or was it his real self we saw then? When his life was drawing to a close, all the other names lost their significance. There only remained the Lamb — this state of angelic innocence, gentleness, and unconcern with mortality.)

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I can see now that his wild joy must have been due to his sudden and complete release from some twenty-nine years of slum existence. And above all else he must have sensed — though none of us, not even he, knew it at the time — that his real destiny, the thing for which he had been born, was about to be realised. And what a destiny! The emotions which possessed the Boy at that time must have been stupendous, as we shall presently see; yet his rough personality had no way of giving vent to these feelings except that of uproarious laughter, jokes and noise. We on our part enjoyed immensely all the fun and novelty of our encounter with this unpredictable fellow, this innocent savage. It was a task beyond us all to keep him in order. He would burst out in new frolics, new tricks and mischief, drolleries and clownings, for which we were always unprepared; yet he was never cynical or unkind. It was pure fun, with all the refreshment of pure fun.

With all this, the Boy had a vein of real gentleness in him which gave rise to a quiet manner and gentle ways for long periods which became more frequent as time went on, particularly when he wandered among or was accosted by strangers, many of whom had heard of his gifts. At such times he spoke little and seemed to shrink into himself; and his eyes would take on an expression of childlike enquiry as he looked, unabashed, from face to face. Then he would shyly utter self-revelation such as, “I don’t understand. You see, I’m only intelligent when I’m asleep!”

In India they say that such joy and fun come out into this world from the state of spiritual Bliss known as *ananda*. One sometimes sees or hears of *yogis* dancing madly, laughing, rolling about in ecstasy. That happens when Bliss touches even the physical life, as it evidently did the Boy’s life during those blessed months. But while we laughed and enjoyed ourselves we did not see what was there before our eyes, proclaiming itself by the age-old way; Bliss, the harbinger of divine manifestations.

There was plenty for us to cope with, however, apart from fun and play. For instance there was the case of The Floating Knights. One morning during those early London days our hilarious Boy failed to turn up at breakfast. Since he was an early riser who never used an alarm-clock or needed knocking up, we wondered if perhaps he was not well, so I went to his room. To my knock came a muffled answer and, on going in, I found that the curtains had not been pulled back, and tripped over the jacket of his best suit which had been flung down near the door. The room was in a worse mess than usual. He seemed to have kicked over anything that straying feet

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could encounter. Horrified, I thought he must have come home drunk; but the Boy did not drink.

Then I saw him, lying on his bed in his shirt sleeves. He had opened his shirt, but his collar and tie still hung on it, and his throat was swollen as if with mumps. Heavens, what could have happened? He had been perfectly well at half-past eleven the night before.

He turned his head painfully and again the muffled voice sounded: “Me froat — they kicked it — ” Yes, kicking might account for that swelling. “Wot’s the toime? Would somebody gimme a cup o’ tea?”

I called for tea, and sat down on his bed. His face was white, his mass of intractable curls wilder than ever, his usual exhilaration gone. After a few mouthfuls of tea — I noticed that he swallowed all right — he grinned faintly, and then I ventured to ask: “How do you think you got that swollen throat?”

“I told yer — they kicked me — they knocked me dahn — took me unawares.”

I wasn’t going to press him then, so I gave him some more tea. He seemed sleepy, exhausted; but this was definitely not a hangover. “Look here, old fellow,” I said, “you’re needing rest — ”

“That’s true! Oi didn’t git back ‘ere till arter dawn,” he muttered, already almost asleep. I gave him a reassuring pat and left him. But he did not sleep for long. In the middle of the morning when I peeped in, I found him getting up. “Oi’m stiff all over — bruised or su’think,” he said wearily, sitting on the side of the bed and looking lost and white. He was very silent. Our roaring Boy!

I sat beside him, considering. He was so proud of his strength. Perhaps his pride had had a nasty jar? I could not hit on anything to say without possibly hurting him, and it was clear that he had been hurt enough. So I remained there, saying nothing, but feeling very sorry for him.

I was thinking, “I do wish you’d tell me what has happened,” when he quietly began to unfold a most extraordinary story which, at that period, I could scarcely believe.

He said that he had been feeling very restless the night before, and so had set off after bedtime for a good quiet walk by himself along one of those long, wide, dreary, tram-lined highways, bordered by slums, gasometers and factories, which were to be found about a mile from our house. The well-lit road was completely empty of people and traffic, for the last trams had passed long before he got there. He told me

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that he walked on in a very dreamy way, not noticing anything, and not on the alert for attackers, as he had always been in the East End. “If Oi ‘adn’t ‘a bin dreamin’, this wouldn’t never’ av’ appened,” he explained in his broad Cockney, but speaking with a curious gentleness such as I had not noticed in him before.

He told me that he was wearing his best blue suit, including the waistcoat. (He loved those best suits, including waistcoats!) He was walking quickly. Suddenly, a young fellow came up from behind him and stood right in his path, bringing him to a halt. This man had probably darted out of a shop doorway he had just passed, but the Boy, lost in dreams, had not been on the look-out. “Got a match, Guv’ner?” The Boy fumbled in both his waistcoat pockets. In an instant, he was on the ground, knocked on the head and back from behind by two more roughs who had, he supposed, slid out from the shadow of the same shop doorway and come up behind him while his hands were engaged. “Blimey, wot a fool Oi was!” he remarked; but curiously enough, he seemed neither troubled nor ashamed. “They dahned me by an old trick Oi’d lamed afore Oi wen’ ter school!”

Three to one, they proceeded to kick him good and hard. Now the Boy was hefty, but he had been knocked nearly unconscious. He lay there with closed eyes, thinking how he could get to his feet. Obviously they had taken him for a toff, as he put it; and now they were bending over him, preparing to strip off that excellent blue suit and share the anticipated roll of notes. He continued to feign unconsciousness. The road was absolutely deserted, so they were not hurrying. They knew they had dealt him several blows, each one of which was sufficient for a knockout.

It was hopeless to expect help in that place and at that hour. They first removed his coat, and the Boy heard them go apart, to search it, he supposed, and plan their next move out of earshot; so he opened his eyes for a quick look round. There was not even a parked car in sight. He realized that he could scarcely move. Sore from head to foot, it would be useless for him to get up, only to be knocked down again, and this time, down and out. He continued anxiously to scan the road.

Oh, if only somebody would come along! . . . Then, suddenly, as from nowhere, he thought he saw two men. Help had arrived. . . . But no, that was impossible: he had not ceased to scrutinise that road . . . Then what was he seeing? For indeed there *were* two men, coming quickly . . . *But how had they arrived, and where from?* He had not taken his eyes off the direction from which they had suddenly appeared. He had been gazing desperately along the empty thoroughfare. Of its emptiness he assured me,

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over and over again. There had been no one on that road when those two men *occurred* — not coming from a side street, but in the centre of the broad highway — and weighed in among the roughs, who were overpowered before they could put up any resistance.

“They wus two real toffs in evenin’ suits — scarfs, pumps, top ’ats ’an all!” There was a lightning tussle, and “in a twinklin’ them toffs ‘ad done somethink” to two of his assailants, who lay prone and, it seemed, really out, while the Boy, safe from their further attentions, raised himself painfully to a sitting posture. The third rough was nowhere in sight. “Oi jist sat there kinder dumbfahndid,” explained the Boy; “but, them toffs, they wussn’t a bit put aht! They ‘adn’t turned an ‘air between ‘em! Uv course they’d used ju-jitsu. I would uv ‘ad a go mesel’ if me ‘ands ‘ad a been free. An’ now, there they wus, cool as yer loike, a-dustin’ uv their posh traziz wiv’ cambric pocket ‘ankerchiefs — stroik me pink if they wusn’t! An’ me sittin’ there, starin’ an’ starin’; an’ them so dainty, shakin’ the dust aht a’ their bee-yutiful ‘ankerchiefs. Proper toffs they wus. But ‘ow did they come ter be on sich a road?”

I agreed with him that it seemed incredible that men of that kind should have turned up in full evening dress in that deserted, slummy place. The Boy went on: “Presently they comes across and looks at me, larfin’ a bit. “Ow do yer feel, Ole Man?” sez one uv ’em, perlite. ‘Well, sir, Oi’m a bit groggy,’ sez Oi, *but not aht yit*, thanks to you gen’elmen.’ ‘Do yer think yer can git ome orl roight?’ the other one arsk, kinder friendly, bringin’ over me coat, an’ ‘elpin’ ter put it on, so gentle, it didn’t ‘urt a bit. Oi tole ‘im Oi thought Oi could; and then, they jus’ kep’ on a-lookin’ at me, an’ smilin’, standin’ there so foine.

“They seemed ter ‘esitate. ‘Oi’ll be ort roight, gen’elmen,’ Oi sez, an’ wi’ that, ‘Roight ‘o!’ they answers, ‘so we’ll be orf na’. Goo’ noight’ they calls aht, a-goin’ orf. ‘Goo’ noight, goo’ noight — and Oi thanks yer vurry koindly, sirs,’ Oi calls aht after ‘em, a-watchin’ ‘em from the wall wer Oi wuz leanin’.”

The Boy paused, looking at me anxiously, lest I should have doubted the truth of his story. He seemed half afraid to go on. I asked him how he had managed to get back, for he must have been a mile and a half or more from the house; but he was withdrawn, absorbed, and did not seem to hear me. Presently he continued slowly, in a low, vibrant voice, which was new to me: “Yus, Oi watched ‘em from that wall — Oi looked ‘ard at ‘em. Some’ow — Oi dunno — Oi wuz sorry for ‘em ter gow! But they walked orf an’ never looked back. Oi didn’t even knaw their noimes . . . But a

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foiner two yer nevver sor! And there they wuz-a-walkin’ away from me! But Oi wuz still lookin’, ard. . . They walks on, an’ Oi wuz lookin’ at ‘em wif orl me oise. But Oi wuz groggy, ‘an Oi thought Oi wuzn’t a-seeing roight . . . *Oi sawd somethink queer . . .* So Oi jes’ looks darn at them two sleepin’ fellas. Yus, Oi wuz seein’ them roight enuf! Then Oi looks strite up agen at the toffs. They wuz still movin’ — but — ” he turned to me with a gesture of passionate eagerness, almost of entreaty — “Mi’ Oi never speak agen if Oi’m not a-tellin’ yer the truf! *Them tofs-wuz glidin’! Their legs wuzzn’t movin’ at all! Glidid, they did — faster’n faster, an’ orl the toime, raisin up a little way inter the air; an’ then — w’y — abaht a ‘undred yards o — they jist melted inter it afore me vurry oise!*”

He had brought this out with startling quiet force; and now sat silent, still abstracted. He seemed to have forgotten me, sitting there beside him.

“Well, finally, how did you get back?” I murmured.

“Ow Oi got back ‘ere, Oi *dawn’t* know! Oi clings onter enyfinck Oi c’d foind. Oi kep’ slippin’ abaht . . . Oi kep’ on a-thinkin’ uv them toffs . . . Oi’ve never seed nuffinck loike ‘em! . . . Gen’elmen Oi calls ‘em . . . Gen’elmen . . . *Gen’elmen.*” He trailed off. He seemed to be nearly asleep again. The room felt very peaceful.

“And so?”

“Orl ri’! Orl ri’! Oi’m comin’,” he shouted, and startled me. He shook himself awake, violently. He was certainly in a strange state. Then, quiet again, he said: “Yus, it took hours. Oi felt orful. Oi fell asleep somw’eres along the road, a-thinkin’ o’ them toffs . . . The dawn came. . .” He shook his head hard, and ran his fingers roughly through his tousled hair, with heavy friction on the front and upper scalp; then shook it again, then hung it low. Quite suddenly, his normal, loud and cheerful voice rang out: “Oh! ‘Eny ‘ow! ‘ere Oi am — ’ome agen! Syfe an’ sahnd, as yer moight sy!”

He sprang to his feet, and threw back his head, laughing and showing his magnificent young throat. There was no trace of swelling on it. *He was completely well!*

That was his story, believe it or not. It was also my first conscious encounter with the real Boy; or rather, my first glimpse, through him, of things that it would take more books than I could ever write to describe and try to explain. At the time I was not so much perplexed by the story itself as by his part in it: why should such a thing have happened to a man of his calibre? Yet I had to admit with amazement his

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dignified, fearless and courteous reactions, showing through the atrocious English and crude mentality; his dreamy absorption; his intense attraction to these two mysterious men; for he was hardly concerned at all with the happening itself or with his own narrow escape, but solely, intently and almost adoringly with them. And then there were his strange, abrupt sleep and awakening, and his astounding, recovery to consider. I was mystified. What sort of a man was this? What might these things portend ?

I had much to learn. Now, as I look back, I believe the Boy spoke the truth that morning early in 1930. He had not been drinking (he was most abstemious); he had been badly shaken, but was astonishingly calm, as if entirely lifted above what had happened. As to his recovery: a swelling like that should have taken several days to subside, with treatment, yet it disappeared completely *without* treatment; while, in addition, he showed no further signs of stiffness, or discomfort. In fact, between about 9 a.m., when I had found him, and midday, he had recovered and was his old jubilant self.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Flower Opens — I

I have always been fond of gardening, and the big old garden of our London home, already beautiful with mature trees of many kinds and with old though long-neglected lawns, lured me out at all hours. I even used to work by moonlight at some of the rougher jobs, and one night, when I thought the rest of the household asleep, I found the Boy sitting against a heap of grass and weeds that I had put ready for burning. Again, he was withdrawn, as it were half-asleep, and seemed hardly aware of my presence. Yet he mumbled something — to me, I thought — and moved his head from side to side against the pile of rubbish as if in pain or anxiety.

I knelt beside him. “*Mai — Mai,*” he muttered, letting forth a long deep sigh. (Extraordinary! I had never heard the Boy sigh.) “*Mai!*” he said again, with a groan, and kept on repeating it, sometimes impatiently, as though trying to convey something which I *would* not understand.

At last he woke out of this trance-like state and turning to me — I had by now sat down beside him, leaning likewise against the weeds — he said simply, “Now I know who you are,” and lapsed into silence. He seemed to think that enough, and I, not wishing to mar some beautiful thing which at the time I could not understand, did not press for explanations. (As concerning the Boy, I never did. Thus he was able to get things out, unobstructed.)

After this, he remained in impenetrable dream and silence for days, working in the garden alone, coming in late to meals, going to bed early. He appeared to have forgotten us. The children thought he was sulking; but *I had seen something else in him*, and kept my own counsel. In place of the vivid playboy, a new Boy had emerged. But it was not only he who had changed. In a subtle way, there was a new atmosphere, too. One felt calm but keyed up. There was a brooding sense of power over all.

The days went by, and still he kept largely to himself. Was he perhaps still living in that garden dream? Meanwhile, had rung up an Indian friend and discovered that “*mai*” means “mother”; but as for who I was, or had been, I felt no curiosity.

I have been a lifelong sufferer from stomach troubles, and used to make myself a warm drink when I was kept awake at night by this chronic malaise. On one such occasion, shortly after the garden episode, I was returning from the kitchen with my drink when I noticed that the Boy's door was open, and that he was lying, apparently asleep, with the light still on. I stopped, watching him, and wondering if I should go in and put out the light, which was beside him. I crossed the threshold and stopped. He was speaking, just as he had done in the garden, and out came the same word — “*Mai! Mai!*” Then he groaned, turning his head from side to side on the pillow. I put the light out and went back to my room, perturbed.

Shortly after that he asked to have his room changed. I was surprised, because it was a nice upstairs room, looking out on to the top of a magnolia tree which was then in full bloom. However, I said nothing when he chose to go back to a queer little boxy place on the ground floor in which he had been lodging when he was so amazingly cured after the ‘knights’ affair. This tiny room had the advantage to him of being away from contacts with the rest of the household. One wall had behind it the end of a little ballroom, rarely used. The other three had, on one side the garden, and on the two remaining sides wide hall passages, cloak-rooms, etc. Nobody lived or slept near this ‘cell’. Above it was his discarded room, which I now kept empty. (He certainly had theurgic sense, that Boy!)

After he had moved happily into his ‘cell’, we saw even less of him than before. Undeterred by his recent experience, he continued taking long nocturnal walks. He would make himself an early breakfast and then remain in his room most mornings, which was very unlike his active self. I told everybody to leave him to his own devices; but one morning I had to see him on some urgent matter or other, and when I knocked on his door and there was no reply, I went in.

He had changed the position of his bed to the centre of the room, so that it touched only one wall — that behind his head. He was asleep, lying on his back, on a low pillow. Going closer to him, to discover the source of the exquisite perfume which pervaded the room, I found that his pillow, pyjamas, bedding — everything about him — exuded it. This was most strange, for the Boy never used anything on his person but a little hair oil and ordinary household soap.

I stood by his bed and he began to mutter confusedly, unhappily, and to roll his head and groan, groan, groan. Our Boy — *groaning!* Was it my presence which caused him to make this effort to speak? Well, this must be investigated, so I stayed

by the bed watching him, though this seemed to perturb him more — or was I just imagining? He began to make great efforts, pitiful efforts. I think it must have been then that I took his hand and spoke to him, and this soothed him. *But somehow his face looked different*; it was austere, brooding, expectant, with a look of patient waiting; and it was very mature. The ‘child’ had gone.

Obviously it might be dangerous to rouse him, so I left him now calmly lying there, though really I was afraid for him to be alone. I had an instinct, born of experience, that whatever was now happening to him, I was there to help, and must not let anything prevent me from doing so. Profound and unutterable feelings surged in me. I was fully aware that something quite abnormal was happening, and that I was dangerously in the dark as to what it was. There was no help from without, so I plunged into the recesses of my being and clung on there, calling for light.

I had had a long personal contact with ‘other worlds’, although I had never attended a séance and, as I have indicated, was not a Spiritualist. I suppose that I was able to adjust myself now to this curious circumstance because I was open-minded, malleable within reason, and to some extent experienced. Anyway, something told me—something which had its own ‘know-how’—that the Boy was going through a crisis, and that I was part of it and had a definite function to perform. I understand now that I was the *shakti*¹ for whatever change was coming upon the Boy, and that I began at once to exercise my function by, as it were, mothering his psychic self. I fixed his room for magnetic cleanliness, of which I had long made a point in my own psychic life. His clothes—goodness! When I came to his clothes, I found that most of them, which before had smelled strongly of gas, were now pervaded by that exquisite, preternatural fragrance which had pervaded my room before I met him in Bow. Such perfumes were already well known to me, usually *in whiffs here and there, now and again*; but *this* was something quite different. The Boy’s things were drenched with it. I observed also that his soiled clothes gave out no stuffy odour; they faintly smelled like fresh flowers. I discovered that this smell was on his hands, face and chest. (The soap he used was still Sunlight or Wright’s Coal Tar!)

Many things happened in the ensuing days to confirm my view that the Boy was struggling in a sea of new and highly dangerous experiences, and that with God’s help I must get him to shore. *But what shore?* There are many shores. I was alone . . . It might be that terrible things were happening, while those about us, unheeding, carried on with their usual occupations—while they pressed upon us their insistent

personal interests and petty desires and criticisms. My husband, who was an excellent ‘buffer’, was still abroad.

One instance of events at this stage must suffice: I found the Boy one day in my sitting-room — the nearest room to his cell — where he had probably gone, dazed and bewildered, in search of me. He was seated in the centre of the room, his face purple, apparently suffocating and evidently in agony. He could not rise. I don’t know *how* I realised that this was a psychic thing, but I did. I chanted, and made passes. I did everything I knew to rescue him. Obviously, something bad had got him, and he was out of control, or rather, was no longer amenable to the control of his own Self. I called to whatever gods might be around, and asked them to show me what to do. Blindly I worked on him. At last he came to, *totally unconscious of what had happened*. He shook himself and meandered off without a word. I was done in, and wept hysterically from sheer relief. Then I prayed. “When in doubt or difficulty — pray.” I prayed, night and day.

The Boy continued to take his long walks; and continued to forget his work. He was blamed in the household, and I had to carry this with all else. Cataclysmic changes were piling up while the Boy mooned about, or took refuge in his cell, where there were frequent recurrences of the restless, frustrated ‘sleeps’, the moanings and unhappy head-tossings. Now and then he would try to rise, but fall back. He was a tall powerful man, and this sorrowful struggle was hard to witness; but now I stayed with him as much as I possibly could.

Then a new phase began. Apparently unable to rise, he would clench his fists and strike out furiously — at the bedclothes, since there was no wall near; if there had been, he might have cracked his knuckles, so violent were his thrusts.

After a while, peace came upon him, and he would lie for long periods, silent and quiet, breathing in a way I knew and recognised. For years, I had breathed so in waking trance and public singing; I had been taught how to do this, in a darkened room, alone, lying on my back like the ancient Irish bards, *as he now lay*. I began to feel that we were on firm ground at last, for I knew that such breathing could only come from a holy source. The Boy had reached safe waters.

This breathing, of the kind known in India as *pranayam* — as I discovered long after practising it under inner, holy guidance, in London — was put through him while he ‘slept’. I still mistrusted that ‘sleep’ a little, safe waters or no. The *Boy* was unconscious all right. *But what or who was this, operating through him?* In any case

the sensible thing seemed to be to suppose that the Boy had been through some kind of psychic dislocation, and that one of those helpers, whom he evidently had about him, had healed him and was now finishing the cure; for it did not strike me then that he had a psyche capable of being used for any very high purposes. I merely imagined that he had reached the final phase of a grave disturbance, and would soon wake up to resume his normal life.

I was indeed mistaken. The next phase came like a thunderbolt.

One night I had made tea at late bed-time as usual, and was taking it with a friend who was staying with us. She expressed a wish for the Boy's company, so I went down to his cell, where I found him as I had not seen him for weeks — tidily dressed, hair neat, face, hands and *nails* clean, as if he had been expecting me to ask him up. He came along pleasantly and, choosing an upright chair rather fastidiously, sat down between us, nearer to me than to my friend. I handed him a cup of tea and my friend and I went on with our chit-chat. Curiously enough, he did not join in, but sat quietly drinking his tea, not a bit like our exuberant and self-assertive Boy.

Suddenly, the cup and saucer were falling out of his hand! I was near enough to catch them, spilling my own tea in so doing. My friend darted over to relieve me of them and I sat, perfectly still, keyed up, my whole attention riveted on the Boy.

His eyes had closed and he had gone to sleep — real, easy sleep, it seemed. His head hung forward a little, and his body stooped slightly from the shoulders. He was not at all *slumped*; he merely *drooped*. Thus he remained for several minutes, breathing in the way I knew. There was peace in the room . . . Then to our amazement, *he slowly un-drooped*, while we both watched him intently.

It was like a flower raising itself up on its stem, a beautiful, slow, easy, controlled movement, brimful of life. His eyes remained closed. Although outwardly I kept quite still, every nerve in my body seemed to quiver. A wave of exquisite life engulfed me. I felt as if it were the reflection of this flower's opening before us, its vitality. But whence did this originate, and whose was it?

My critical faculty asserted itself. Was I over-excited, self-deluded? Could there be danger here? I turned to my friend. "Catalepsy?" I whispered. She shook her head and laid her finger on her lips. "He is in a deep trance," she breathed. I felt ashamed. He sat thus, most beautiful and majestic; then there was a change. A look of great power and hardness came over his face. An imperious voice commanded:

Bring in the prisoners!

We nearly jumped out of our skins. *It was simply not the Boy!*

Whoever it was next proceeded to 'look' down, as if he were sitting on a platform ten or twelve feet above the ground. He thrust out his right arm and made some curious, and to us unknown, motions with his thumb as, seemingly, the 'prisoners' passed, one by one, that platform on which he was seated. Judging by the movement of his head, they were walking in single file, six or eight feet apart. Evidently by this thumb-movement he condemned some, saved others. Someone seemed to put up a plea, for he rasped out relentlessly, **I have spoken!** One could almost hear the rattle of chains as those wretched men passed, and the condemning thumb continued to move. Presently he addressed himself to a person who seemed to be immediately beneath his platform, but not so far beneath as the prisoners. *Save the Frenchman!* he ordered. His eyes were still closed, but the dramatisation was perfect. We lived that scene; we felt its horror. But behind it all we never lost hold of the peace, the exquisite sense of an enfolding vitality. It was as if a great artist were showing us a picture out of the past.

This went on for ten minutes or so, and then the Boy sank back in his chair. His body sagged. His head dropped. Slowly and normally, he awoke as from a deep sleep, with many yawnings and stretchings.

"Wer's me tea? I bin ter sleep," he said, not yet quite with us.

He smiled with a sweet, child-like look, a little dazed but very content, like a baby on awakening from a healthy sleep. In all the years to come, that smile, that expression, were repeated as often as the people around him would allow, except when he was going through the next two series of trances, which I shall presently describe.

Well, we made fresh tea for the transfigured Pickle, and while he was drinking it, still in a dream, we gently probed him about what had just happened. We drew blank. It was quite obvious that he remembered nothing at all. But he was happy. He had reached his destined shore.

Before leaving the subject of that first trance, let us observe how systematically it was approached. Apart from the preceding weeks of preparation (preparation on my part to some extent also) the boy was evidently expecting it, whether consciously or unconsciously, as he waited, clean and tidy, in his room that evening before I asked

him to join us; and, once he had joined us, he fastidiously selected a suitable chair, near mine. (Afterwards he always did that. In any case he could not sit on magnetically ‘wrong’ chairs, etc., without suffering. I learned this lesson that first day and co-operated ever after, in this as in many other ways.)

From that first trance onwards, a series of events followed with such bewildering rapidity and in such profusion that it would take more than the rest of this book to record them; though the earliest of them were but the continuation of the drama of which we had had the first short instalment that night, and a mere preamble for what was later to come, when there had been, as it were, enough of story-telling and play-acting, and the time had come for the actor-dramatists themselves to appear before us. (Incidentally, the Boy himself was no actor, his power of dramatisation being confined to mimicking the Cockney slum-dweller on appropriate and inappropriate occasions.)

That evening, and in a matter of minutes, he had become the centre and pivot of our household. So far as my husband and I were concerned, he remained so ever after. The children understood to a considerable extent and gave spontaneous loyalty; they accepted what they found. The trouble was that they had found too easily. Naturally, also, they had their own lives to attend to.

That short trance had marked the end of the Boy’s probationary period. Before him there still lay years of marvellous achievement; but we, of course, knew nothing of that then. I will pass as quickly as I can over this preliminary period, so that we may reach the heart of the Boy’s work.

Just as the creative work of a writer or a composer comes in flashes — to be developed at leisure-and at all sorts of times and places, without reference to the comfort or convenience of the scribe or his entourage, so also the Boy, in the trances that now ensued, went through a series of scenes, some long, some short, I but all intensely dramatic. This phase lasted for several months, and to our great astonishment high-lighted the life of Shah Jahan. Moghul scenes were enacted at all hours, often far into the night, in the house, garden, kitchen — anywhere the Boy happened to be; for though he went into subsequent trances in much the same way as he had done that first night, he had now resumed most of his normal life with the family, helping wherever a helping hand was needed, especially in hard, rough jobs. He was jolly, too; but never quite the same wild playboy as before.

We were all so utterly unprepared for the keeping of any kind of records that we lost nearly everything that came through at that time. We simply stood around and gaped, as it were, whilst wonderful opportunities for psychic researchers, historians and others, went by. Indeed, it was almost by accident, after the Jahan trances had been going on for some time, that two or three of us jotted down scraps now and then. These, fortunately, were read over and carefully compared for accuracy, and this simple method stuck for years. In any case we were too poor to employ a shorthand-typist or to buy a dictaphone; while it is more than likely that the presence of such a person or instrument would have stopped the whole thing.

Those few accurate but fragmentary notes of ours exist as *The Shah Jahan Script*, which is a most wonderful document worthy of serious attention. Other accounts of this period are scattered over books and loose sheets in heaven knows how many odd corners. The best record, however, is in my own mind. This sounds like a boast; but I can only state that, almost from the start everything to do with the Boy became incorporated with my being, embedded in my heart.

None of us had ever studied any part of Indian history, least of all the Boy, who did not like reading, except Wild West and simple detective stories, and news of horses or boxing or football matches; his newspaper was always open at the sports pages. When he came to us, he read slowly and with difficulty. His writing and linguistic capacity were always weak. Yet this ignoramus cried out the name Khurram in his trances. None of us could make out what he was saying, knowing nothing of “*Khurram*”, so we wrote it down phonetically. We found out afterwards that Shah Jahan was Prince Khurram before he ascended the *gadi*.

Here is an instance, reported exactly, of part of a Jahan trance:

(The Boy in trance, now apparently Shah Jahan) : **Read to me, Mai!**

O.P. (simulating ‘Mai’): “What shall I read?”

Shah Jahan (gutturally): **Shanumbarrah.**

Mai (*not understanding, repeats*): “What shall I read?”

Shah Jahan: **Jahan Namarr.** (Then very clearly):

Shah Namahah — my forefathers.

No one present had ever heard of the famous book, *Shah Namahah*, about the Moghul line, therefore Shah Jahan’s forefathers. I only learned of it later from my London solicitor, who was keen on Persian poetry, and thought a lot of the Boy. Other words in the Jahan script have since been confirmed by friends in India;

unfortunately, however, I had no time, when later I lived in India, to go carefully into the Jahan script as a whole.

Since the phases followed by the trances overlapped, there were, for instance, occult instructions on healing mixed up with the Jahan drama; and not only instructions, but irrefutable evidence of great powers, as when the entranced Boy drew attention to the lower part of my spine, from which I was not then suffering but in which severe arthritis developed many years later. We managed to get down some of these instructions.

Meanwhile, the first recorded utterance of the teachings which poured out later, and which would fill many volumes, came in one of these trances:

You must be in the pool of life, but not drowned.

(Swim in the pool of life, but do not drown in it.)

And when I was perturbed about what might be the consequences of, and the inevitable struggles and tribulations connected with, our parts in this new life, a voice full of poetry and deep understanding, spoke:

The dust of the desert is like water to the camel.

(One is to be a ship of the desert, and to partake of its dust with joy.)

I have tried these two earliest lines on a dozen or so averagely intelligent Western men and women, but they could not grasp their meanings. Before long, the Brothers (who were speaking in these instances) came down to our average level of the West, though they refused to ‘step-down’ their finest occult and philosophic teachings.

There were vivid descriptions, through the entranced Boy, of Shah Jahan and the people around him. The scene in which, as an older man and in prison, his eyes were gouged out, was too terrible to be endured, I can see the Boy even now, his head forced back, the veins standing out on his forehead, his face purple and contorted, every muscle in his body bursting against the cords that bound him. I shrieked, “Wake up! Oh, wake him up, for God’s sake! Wake him up!” The Boy came to, panting, his eyes bloodshot and streaming tears, his arms still against his sides. He kept asking: “Wot’s wrong with me eyes?”

But I did not tell him. I was crying, too! The Boy shifted his arms painfully and said they felt as if they had been tied up. I have been told that some historians hold that Jahan’s eyes were not put out, but record this trance nevertheless.

All this might seem like the development of ordinary mediumship; but neither the Boy) nor I, nor any member of our family had ever attended a spiritualistic séance, nor ‘sat’ for development. It was of course advanced mediumship, guided by adepts within the veil.

If I write of a Brother who has taken the Boy in trance, that “he put out his hand” or “walked into the dining-room” or, even, “he took the Boy from Kashmir to Lahore” or “drank tea”, I mean, of course, a Brother in complete control of the entranced body of the unconscious Boy. “He held out his hand”, “he roared” and so on, obviously mean that a Brother caused the Boy’s body to hold out its hand, roar, etc. It is really very obvious; yet people of the West constantly exclaim, “What do you mean — ‘he’? Who?” Well, naturally, the Brother who happened to be using the body and other mechanisms of the Boy at the time. One has to get accustomed to the idea that the Boy *was not there* on these occasions. Part of the mechanism only was there. All the rest was the actual living, operating Brother or Brothers — this last) because we often had the impression that it took more than one to hold him.

One day we found the Boy sitting on the kitchen floor, leaning against a wall, in deep trance, apparently having a long consultation with a number of architects over the construction of a building. The action of this slum man, so incongruously dressed in dirty dungarees and in such an unsuitable place, was simply masterly. We seemed to *see* plan after plan being passed up and handed to the Emperor. He examined them as an expert, keeping some, rejecting some, combining and rearranging. For the nonce, he was an artist among artists. There was a sense of finality about his judgments.

When it was over, he clapped his hands, and commanded: **Bring out the elephants!** and presently: **Clear the bazaar!** We could almost see him going forth. After a minute or so, he sat himself cross-legged on that kitchen floor; and now he was going through the movements of a man seated in the *howdah* of a travelling elephant.

Arriving at the ‘site’, he again discussed, animatedly — but always and unmistakably the Emperor — with architects and builders. He gave commands, and conferred, from the *howdah*. It was terrific! There was clear, unhesitating action all the time; even the silences were full, it seemed. Each scene lived before us, or rather, we lived in it.

Once, I entered my room, which had become the centre for all who were permitted to encounter the Boy in his trances. I found him seated on the hearth-rug, a small mirror before him on the ground; that is, the mirror was non-existent, but one saw it all the same. He was in full trance, sitting in what is called in India “the position of royal ease”, the sole of one foot laid full on the sole of the other, toes to toes, heels to heels, the outside of one knee on the ground, the other knee bent and sticking up. (This sounds complicated, but if you sit on the ground and place the soles of your feet together, the knees will *have* to take the position of royal ease, or assuredly it won’t be ease!) He was rapidly tying a long turban on his head, yards and yards of it. There was no turban, of course, but he went through the movements quickly, deftly, both with hands and head, as if he had done it most of his life. This was a particularly astonishing performance as the Boy’s hands, due to years of heavy work with pick and shovel, were stiff, calloused and clumsy. There was an attendant present, holding out the cloth for him to wind and presently helping to robe him (that is, his movements clearly indicated the attendant). I knew how difficult it was to tie a turban, for I had tried hard to do it and failed, even with deft fingers and under the tuition of an Indian friend. When he had tied it to his satisfaction, twisting his head about to judge the effect in the low mirror, and adjusting the angle to suit his features, he took jewels from the unseen attendant’s hand and proceeded to fasten them on the turban. Then again he commanded: **Bring out the elephants!**

Another day I found him on that same hearth-rug, going through Muslim prayers, He was, of course, quite unconscious of my presence on both occasions. Sitting on the sofa, I looked on and was carried into another world.

Going into trances like this at odd times and places was extremely dangerous. Once I happened to come in when he had evidently been sitting on the broad, low fender, and had simply “gone to sleep” there. He was rolling over into the fire. A few seconds more, and I would have been too late. Base metal probably had something to do with that, for it attracts evil entities, who would be out to destroy the Boy. He knew all the risks and, without any word from me, accepted them and did not talk about it. Some people, including myself, discovered that he had courage, wisdom and dignity. He took ultimates in his stride.

The phraseology in the Shah Jahan trances, as evinced in the Jahan script (but especially in the trances themselves) was, I imagine, entirely appropriate to the period and persons, and it was used for those trances only; a fact the correctness of

which I could only estimate years after, when there had been trances of many other kinds. He frequently lapsed into an Indian (Persian?) language with many guttural sounds.

Whenever he entered the Jahan strata of consciousness, our home became Delhi and Agra, except for brief scenes when we seemed to be on campaigns or in the camp where Mumtaz Mahal died. There, in anguished tones, he re-lived his grief. It was heartrending. That grief pervades the Jahan script — high romance, “made in heaven”, full of poetry, love and tragedy.

The Jahan trances went on for many months, and were gradually interspersed with more and more of other kinds, until, early in 1934, they had quite faded out. The first entry in the script is January, 1933, but these trances had begun long before that date.

These early trances occasionally had a peculiarity, which I have not seen since: the Boy would half awaken, or would say when coming out of his trance, “Oi’d a dream”, and at such times anguish was upon him. This showed that for his sake he ought not to remember, even as slight impressions, what went on in trances. Part of the mechanism may also have been faulty at that stage.

During the foregoing and next dramas, a Voice which did not, it seemed, belong in them, would at times come through, giving various important ‘occult’ instructions, mostly concerning physical poise and training, to one or other of us, or to the Boy himself *via* us. Gradually this Voice became more frequent; then another Voice and another, until we found ourselves conversing quite naturally with these Voices when they came through the Boy. That marked the beginning of some twenty-seven years of teaching and ministering.

At this point I must digress to deal with questions about the Brothers, whose voices these were.

One day someone asked one of these Voices, “Who or what are you? What are your names?” The reply was evasive; and this evasive reply was usually given ever after. In due course, however, names were announced to a few close friends, and by these several of the Voices were thenceforth known to us; but many still remained nameless, and somehow this never troubled us. Some years after, in India, I found a number of ancient authorities which spoke on this point. In what is sometimes considered the greatest of the *Upanishads* we read: “The gods have a fondness, as it were, for indirect names, and hate to be called directly.”² Other authorities tell us the

same.³ In the Bible we find that a mysterious Man who wrestled with Jacob would not reveal his name; and again, an Angel of God said to Mansah: “Why askest thou thus after my name, seeing it is secret?”⁴

When this question was pressed, we were still left unsatisfied: **I am but a Voice — the Voice of my Master.** This might mean anything! On another occasion the answer was equally uninformative: **In teaching, names do not matter; it is reactions to the teachings that count.** At last there was a slight concession: **You may call us “Brothers”. We ARE your Brothers.**

That was how we came to call them the Brothers.

Once, I asked:

“Brother, do you come from another planet — are you disincarnate?”

No.

“But some of the Masters do, and are?”

Yes.

“Shall I ever be able to reach the Brothers in person?”

Do not reach after the moon when you have the stars within your grasp!

The simile was perfect, since in normal personal contact one Would most likely encounter only one Master, with the maddening little things of life holding one off from him; whereas with the Boy as fulcrum and reflector, we met a whole galaxy of Masters, concentrated on teaching and actions, with nothing between us and them. It was up to us to grasp or to ignore the stars.

From the beginning it was clear that the Brothers identified themselves with the hierarchy of saviours, prophets and teachers; usually as disciples — lesser or greater — but on occasion were even the supreme Masters themselves. Once, some years later, in a large gathering in Kashmir, I pressed a Brother:

“Please tell us who you are!”

He turned to the crowd, knowing that I was questioning for those people.

No doubt you think that Buddha, Christ and Muhammad are no longer with you? They are with you; but if Muhammad walked along the road here, in a blue serge suit, people would spit at him.

Evasion? It seems that the Masters usually find this necessary.

I quote again from my chronicle of their teachings. Several English visitors to Kashmir were questioning a Brother. It was the usual thing: “Who are you?” ,Why don’t you come out in person?” etc. In the course of that talk, the Brother asked,

What would happen if God in the form of one of the Masters were to walk along the Bund here in a poor garb — in an old coats with perhaps a dirty face. Would anyone recognise him?

Someone said: “If they appeared, they would be stoned.”

The Brother said:

Don’t think that these great Teachers do not want to come — Christ and Buddha and Muhammad and the rest. They do; but society and civilisation have put up barriers, so that it has become impossible for them to come. If they were to come civilisation would run riot. Why? Because civilisation has lost the ability to suffer willingly.

He was not understood.

I said:

“Do you mean that the coming of these teachers would cause great suffering through the struggle to right wrong which would ensue — that it would bring things to a head, as it were, for individuals and nations?”

Yes, he answered, mankind would in their presence realise the degradation, the misery into which it has fallen.

But he was not alluding only to this suffering, but to a more positive, creative suffering; for perhaps the mark which most differentiates the saints from those who are not saints is **the ability to suffer willingly**. The Brothers were pointing here to a law of redemption; they went to the root of the matter., which is that vast numbers of people will have willingly to take on intense suffering in order to re-establish true values in human life. Cheerful endurance — called *titiksha* in India — is one of the steps to God; but *titiksha* is almost unknown in modern civilisation. We do not willingly assume the burden of our own misdeeds, and certainly not that of other people’s. We do not bring up our children to **suffer willingly**, but pamper them, and weaken their moral fibre. We have created rivers of blood and tears, through which, willy-nilly, we must now wade to the farther shore where the Saviours stand. The agony can only be shortened by welcoming pain, by **suffering willingly**.

In the course of this talk, the Brother remarked:

. . . suffering with you people has taken on an egotistical aspect, and is therefore of no value to you — as such; there is no ‘worth’ in it. Suffering which is entirely egotistical has no value to the Impersonal Self.

After further elucidation by the Brother, I remarked:

“I suppose that we should finally identify ourselves with the sufferings of all?”

“Then we should become outcasts!”

I think the quicker humanity becomes the outcast of humanity, the better. False values! False disciplines! Misdirected efforts! What made Buddha such a great man? It was this: He had the ability to stand outside all these disciplines, false values, misdirected efforts, cumbersome organisations. He was at one with Himself. Unless you are at one with Yourself, how can you be at one with others? Yet you talk about identifying yourself with the sufferings of all! Christ was stoned.

Someone said: “He had detachment.”

Yes. He was at one with Himself.

Here the Brother turned to this enquirer with eager kindness:

Now, tell me-how can you become at one with Yourself?

And so we leave them to continue one of the Brothers’ characteristic mountain-top talks with the unwise, the silly, the worldly and the bewildered. During such talks I, for one, loved the Brothers most.

On their own showing, the Brothers’ answer to “Who or what are you?” is that they are Masters — *arhats, rishis, adepts, jivanmuktas*⁵ or high disciples of these.

We had scant information about the names of those who manifested among us.

There was a Brother who explained to us, in the early days in London before we had any contact with India, that he has a dual personality (not in our sense; but one Being and two persons). One of the persons is all fun and frolic. I suspect that that one was behind the Boy’s superb fooling. The other is one of the greatest philosophic teachers among the Brothers. He was known to us as “Little Kardra” and “Big Kardra”. Little Kardra always turned up — occupying the person of the Boy, of course — before a very great manifestation, and usually played such crazy pranks that he made us laugh until our sides ached. For instance, he would clown among the glass dishes on our long kitchen dresser in London, and perform acrobatic feats thereon whilst we struggled between laughing aloud and holding our breath. When

someone expostulated about his dirty feet among the dishes, he would look like a pious crank and explain: **I am PU-ER!**

When I asked a Brother about this mad fellow, we were informed that it was necessary to raise our vibrations and clear the surrounding atmosphere before a Great One could come. Little Kardra certainly created the childlike joy which is the basis of all divine operations. Often when he was bragging inimitably to the assembled company that nothing could possibly dislodge him, that he would go or stay as *he* liked, and drink tea — *tea* — TEA, with plenty of sugar in it (he adored tea, or pretended he did, and drank like a baby when he grabbed the cup, and like a bird when he got a mouthful), he would simply fade out in the middle of a word or noisy sup, and a Great One would as simply occur. It was a transformation without break or pause.⁶

One day, Little Kardra was cracking jokes while we awaited the advent of a Great One. We were in my bedroom. There were two cabinet-sized photographs of me, standing one on either side of my dressing-table. Pointing to them, I said “Kardra, how do you like those photos?” He looked across the room at them, and at once: **I DON’T**, he said — and they both slapped face downwards on to the table with military precision. (There was no one standing near.) That precise slapping down had a most comic effect.

Another time, my solicitor had asked several of us, including the Boy, to join him at a tea-shop near his office. Little Kardra had turned up. (He pretended to be drawn by tea!) As we waited to be served, a tall, pompous-looking man, considerably over-dressed, strutted past our table. He was wearing an immaculate billycock hat. He gave our merry party a contemptuous stare as he passed. “He scorns us,” I said, under my breath. **I’ll soon ‘scorn’ HIM**, said Little Kardra. The strutting one presently brushed back past us rudely, to set his precious headgear upon one of those tall, old-fashioned wooden hat-and-coat stands with crook-like tops. **Oo-oo-oo!** said Kardra, lip-licking; and we had hardly begun our tea when *I noticed that hat gently but firmly rising into the air, slightly titled, up and down, up and down, as if it were a manipulated puppet*. Most others in that crowded city tea shop saw it too.

Kardra gazed innocently earthwards. We were all in suppressed fits.

Now! Watch! whispered our Rogue, breathlessly, and sure enough, the pompous individual had risen from his table about fifteen feet away and was sidling, purple-faced, towards the offending hat-stand. He reached out furiously, rescued the hat, and fled.

The blessed British, who had seen this, went on eating hard. Such things must be stuffed back.

Several years after our London introduction to Kardra, we were living in a houseboat in Kashmir, and I heard a man call out to our sweeper: “Kardra!” I enquired of one Pandit Toshakani, who informed me that Kardra is a *two-faced god*, recognised in Kashmir, and that the name is a very common one in that land.

Another Brother, who watched over the Boy almost continually, called himself “Secundra” or “Sikandra” or “Sikandar”. He told me in those early London days that a village outside Agra had been named after him. I had forgotten this information when, long after, and in India, it was accidentally confirmed. The Boy and I were taken to see Agra, and we stayed in the Government Bungalow in the deer park surrounding Akhbar’s mausoleum a few miles outside the city. I was in the upper part of the mausoleum when I noticed some curious-looking half sunken buildings a little way off. “What is that place?” I asked. “Those,” said my guide, “are the ruins of the village of Sikandar.”

I am not at all convinced that all the Masters or Brothers come from Tibet, India, North Africa, the Andes, etc. When spoken to on such things they showed indifference, always reiterating: **Do not trouble us with such trivialities. We are ONE.** One of them definitely said that he comes from China; and his teaching, with its peculiarly Chinese character, bore that out. He did not give his ‘name’; we simply called him “the Chinese Brother”. He is not only a superb teacher but a magician in the tradition of the adepts.

A very powerful Brother with a great faculty for breaking opposition, and an Oxford accent, called himself “Kundra”. We never believed it to be his true name. A few others have indicated indirectly, through their atmosphere and the angle from which they taught, that they have European affinities, perhaps with Ancient Greece and the Middle Ages. One splendid Brother with a noble sense of English, who is a most exalted teacher, called himself “Pietro”. The three Masters who were known to H.P. Blavatsky and others — “M.”, “K.H. and “the Count” — were often with us in force. Obviously, these are not their real names. Of these K.H. said that he was Pythagoras; but that does not tell us who he is now, or even that he-was Pythagoras. One’s only guides are intuition, atmosphere and — above all — their teachings and actions.

In studying the Brothers' teachings one can easily find passages of Eastern and others of Western flavour. For instance, there is much in this style clearly Western:

Someone said: "I will reach out towards your wisdom."

The Brother answered:

People strive and struggle for the things that are far above them — out of their reach — while the things they really need, they are trampling on. And again, that which you have built up around you will exterminate you.

"Yes," the questioner murmured, "we should be different."

The Brother pulled him up with a roar:

Should! Should! Do you want a definition of "should"?

"You can, but you won't."

The questioner, an English Professor from Lucknow, seemed surprised and rattled by the Brother's intensity, feeling that it was not quite proper. "Well," he said stiffly, "we must hope for the best!" But the Brother drove on:

Hope is [a living in] the future; then added in a tone of disgust: But you don't even trust to hope! You only wish it to happen!

Floundering out of his depth, trying desperately to maintain academic reticence, the Professor answered: "I will trust in God." The Brother again interrupted the speaker with fierce earnestness:

You cannot put your trust in the Lord when your soul is seared. Our work is to heal your soul! The Lord will do the rest!

The Professor was dumbfounded; for the Brother had uncovered his troubles, after which he proceeded to the healing.

While on this topic of salvation, I should mention another occasion when a sincere seeker, a judge, approached a Brother of Eastern type. "Is there not a direct way?" he asked.

The Brother answered gently:

There is no short cut; because you don't have to TRAVEL to liberation at an; it comes to you.

Another Brother of Eastern type was talking with the same Indian judge: **if you become creatively destructive** (thus they describe most of modern civilisation) **you destroy the shakti.** (Shakti is the Cosmic Power. She is regarded as the manifested Cosmos, the Mother. We can destroy our worlds, and ourselves with them.)

He defined simplicity as living in a state of foolishness — foolishness built out of wisdom — the wisdom which insists on go, when everybody is holding on.

Can you live in the last heartbeat? No! It is gone. Can you live in the next heartbeat? No! It has not yet arrived. Drop time! There is only one tomorrow' worth living for, that is: re-birth, liberation.

Another time the judge enquired: “In what way am I religiously inclined?”

While you have ‘inclination’ you have effort; but to path to liberation is effortless. I ask you to drop attachment [at least for] four hours a day. You even take your kali yuga (this Dark Age in which we live) to bed with you! Live outside it.

The Brother also said to that judge:

The ship that carries you across the ocean is without a rudder, without a mast. It is carried over by the power of dynamic drift . . . Drift dynamically!

Very rarely, they would use an expression which I had used — e.g., “drift dynamically,” or “dynamic drifting.”

Whatever may be their own language or languages, for us any rate the Brothers used English; sometimes beautiful, English; at other times, homely or even a little bit halting and inexact. Some would have said that they used the language which was automatic to the Boy. But *good* English was not automatic to the Boy, and even their sometimes halting English was far better than his. (Moreover, one of my daughters and I have known a Brother to speak good German whereas, when ‘awake’, the Boy had no German.) I was always distressed at being unable to make records of the Brothers’ glorious voices.

Many heard the entranced Boy conversing with person in a language sounding a little like Sanskrit as we hear it spoken nowadays; but I never met an Indian who understood it. This would occur when it appeared that the ensouling Brother wished to talk something over with, or enquire of some matter from, another Brother who seemed to be near by — always on his left side, by the way. But at the time when we first noticed this, the Boy had never mixed with Indians (unless perhaps he had met Lascars in dockland) or been to India; and as far as his known mind was concerned, he had so little capacity for any languages that he could not have picked up some Oriental jargon and hoaxed us with it. We subsequently spent twenty-one years in India. For ten of those years I was a *sannyasini*, yet he could never even pronounce my name.

We were moved and astonished by the quality and variety of the Brothers' voices, the sudden electrifying transitions from the Boy's almost incomprehensible Cockney dialect to the Brothers' often choice and generally perfectly spoken English, their flexible, well-modulated, cultured tones, and beautiful articulation. The novelty and magic did not wear off, but were enhanced by the years. I find entries in my records of the Brothers' teachings, describing their voices as "low and vibrant with compassion" — "authoritative" — "serene and comforting" — "emphatic" — "suave" — "good-humoured" — "playful" — "stern" — "gentle" — "courteous", and so on. The thing was all the more astonishing because the Boy's normal voice was a bit thin and chesty, owing to the lung trouble brought on by inhaling carbon monoxide and coal-dust when he was a stoker. It had no fine inflections at all. It was inclined to be sing-song if he spoke for long, and even to give out. But under the Brothers' influence he could speak for hours on end, and I have never known the voice to flag, either during long trances or as a consequence of them.

As was to be expected, some of the Brothers spoke better English than others. One of them once remarked: **You must not expect us to be masters of English. Remember also our difficulties with you [people] and with the Boy.**

Possibly one of the things that made us feel that the Voices belonged to different and distinct persons was the marked differences between them. There were two with old-fashioned Oxford accents; others had a slight clip in their otherwise perfect pronunciation, as if they were Chinese or perhaps Tibetan. Again, there was the honest, good English of the average country gentleman without partiality either to Oxford or local accents. I never heard one of the Brothers speak in a dialect. One spoke in a slightly more nasal tone than the others. Pietro had "a voice like an angel". Kundra had a thundering voice which he had difficulty in modifying. (He did so, however, when he found that it frightened some people.) He was a marvel for putting backbone into us. **Nurth!** he would roar at me in those early days, **of what use are you to us? Sitting about in corners, crying! Stand up, woman! FIGHT!** he thundered. **We want fighters, not jelly fish.** Goodness! — I dropped being a jelly fish at once! That Brother was a very great healer, as well as a smasher! All of them trained me, relentlessly. I am probably their worst pupil.

Curiously enough, though none of them lisped otherwise, my name to all of them was "Nurse", which all of them pronounced "Nurth". Now that I look back, I wonder that I did not ask them about this; but the fact of the matter was that one simply did not

THE FLOWER OPENS — I

think to ask about such things when Brothers were present. They put one into another key. Their usual way was to say: **Ask the Nurth**, or **The Nurth will do this or that**. Later, when I took *sannyasa*, they altered it punctiliously to “Swamiji” and very rarely lapsed into the affectionate “Nurth”. They were so careful about things like that.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Flower Opens — II

To resume our London narrative.

Gently, subtly, as if time were nothing, teaching, healing, help and advice began to be given to us and our more intimate friends. Imperceptibly, the Delhi and Agra trance dramas faded out, and we found ourselves witnessing another drama, this time part of the life of an English doctor who fell deeply in love with somebody else's childless wife. She reciprocated his love, but they mutually decided to go their ways. He was, it seemed, the big man at some London hospital. (I am giving but a digest of this; it should be remembered that the entranced Boy acted or rather, appeared to live through the whole thing in scene after scene, trance after trance: his doctor friends; his comings and goings; the ever-gnawing heartbreak behind his lonely dedication and devotion to duty. As my father was a doctor, I was able to see the hospital and doctor episodes as it were through his eyes. It was a noble performance.)

One of the many incidents in this drama particularly stuck in my mind. The big man was evidently about to perform an operation, and the first intimation of this was when he was being assisted to dress for the theatre. A doctor friend happened to be with us that day, and was thrilled when the entranced Boy, standing or walking about, called for his rubber gloves, specifying number such-and-such. (I forget what the number was.) When he got them and began to put them on, he disgustingly drew them off again saying: **Sister, you have given me the wrong number.** The Boy — as surgeon — now entered the operating theatre — my room — and ordered: **Wheel in the patient.** To make it more realistic, I hurriedly placed a long bolster-cushion from one of the sofas on a dumb-waiter. The bolster was the 'patient'. Meanwhile, the 'surgeon' had been having the big theatre light adjusted to his liking. When the patient was before him (there was no patient, of course, but the perfect acting made it seem that a little fellow of about nine years was present), he spoke just as a kind doctor would to a terrified boy, diverting the little lad's attention elsewhere, whilst he signed to the anaesthetist to proceed. Then, like a shot, he was on his case.

It was a stomach operation. At first our doctor friend took the part of the sister, opposite the surgeon on the other side of the patient, but shortly after ceased to play a

part in the scene, in order to watch the whole thing from outside, as it were. I fitted in wherever I seemed to be needed. As if to the manner born, the surgeon on tip-toe kept the invisible sisters busy. My doctor friend said to me afterwards that no one who had not been a surgeon, or studied surgeons as an actor might, day after day in the operating-theatre, could have done it like that. He went right through from the first incision to the stitches, with all the details of calling for this or that — often wordlessly, as a surgeon will — and the actual motions of operating. Not the least marvellous was his talk, first to the sisters and students on entering the theatre, then to the patient. Then came a changed, quick, low but business-like tone to the anaesthetist, followed by murmurings and underbreath orders during the operation. He was very concentrated, and I noticed that he never took his attention off the patient, but put out a hand for this or that, to be filled by the sister opposite; all actions with the sisters — perfectly natural — were of course made into thin air. Not the least astonishing thing was the way the impression of intense and concentrated seeing was conveyed, and all those movements in the theatre gone through unfalteringly, when all the time *the Boy's eyes were fast closed*.

One day, re-entering this 'doctor' trance, he was apparently called to an emergency case — a confinement — at the hospital. As before, he entered the operating-theatre, but very rapidly, to find that the patient, who appeared to be at the point of death was his beloved,. He operated. Saved her. The child was born dead. All this we learned from his low exclamations and soliloquy in the theatre, and in a later conversation with an intimate friend. Whoever devised that scene is a master dramatist. The talk with his friend was tragic.

Later we overheard another talk between him and this other man. Our doctor had made up his mind. Neither he nor the woman he loved could live any longer in separation. They had decided to go to some distant Eastern Isle, where, with her help, he would devote the remainder of his life to the neglected sick there. His friend tried to dissuade him on the plea of his distinguished career. He answered: **What is a 'career'? Smoke! If there is wrong in what we are going to do, we will right it in suffering and serving.**

For us that was the end of the story. I tried to find out more of it when a Brother next "took" the Boy, but he only remarked that the records of this doctor's life in the last century could be traced in London; then closed up, absolutely.

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We often witnessed the surprise and even indignation of the Boy when persons, who did not realise how completely unconscious he had been during a manifestation, insisted on continuing to question and try to discuss with him after he had regained his normal state. He would say sleepily: “I don’t know wot yer talkin’ abaht” — and he didn’t. His usual procedure when thus harassed was to rise tottering (sometimes supported, but he disliked this, and shook people off), and stagger out of the room. He was not interested. For him, the curtain was down.

In about three months from the day that labouring man had called at our St. John’s Wood house, the Brothers had begun their real ministry of healing and teaching. They had achieved complete trance-control of the Boy, without artificial aids of any kind. No adjuncts, such as music, lowered lights, incense, were needed then, or ever, to assist these trance manifestations. Their method of healing had nothing outwardly in common with the cures I used to do with sound. They did it either without any physical contact, or by gentle passes and manipulations; perhaps, also, by perfumes, some were projected from the within; others were pure essences which were gifted to us by a friend at Yardleys. The source was probably identical with mine; but I had brought down the power through sound, whereas in this case, sound was never used; but nearly always touch, though not necessarily physical contact — one saw them touching and manipulating in the ‘empty’ air — that is, using the Boy’s beautiful though rough and calloused hands. Sometimes they just used *power* without visible movement. Using this power, their seen and unseen, known and unknown, presences and operations were sometimes celebrated in unearthly perfumes, but whether these were *directly* responsible for the hearings I could not be certain. Sometimes it seemed so. When perfumes came when they were healing me, the effect was and still is powerful.

As far as I could ascertain over many years, the Boy himself had no gift of healing, although his entranced body was used for it.

The last thing remaining to be controlled was sight. From the beginning the Boy had been used with eyes tightly closed — seemingly blind. Hence we can truly say that the Brothers see without eyes. They saw without eyes in the drama of the surgical operation; and we took it for granted that they would never open the Boy’s eyes. Yet how I longed to see those so tightly closed lids unsealed! Indeed, I experienced an immense, almost lover-like yearning as the weeks wore on and this

longing of mine went unheeded. But the eyes are the windows of the soul, and who was I to dare ask the Brothers to open those windows? Besides, I realised that there would be a terrific added strain on the Brothers when, or if, they looked out on our world. Perhaps it would be an awful shock, by repercussion, to the Boy also, even though the world of our home was a kind world. Then I remembered that I was a fool! For whoever these Voices belonged to, they were Beings of the sort that would court suffering, not shirk it. Had they not suffered already, guarding their Boy as a slum-dweller? So I tried to possess my soul in patience — to match my patience to the Boy's courage.

Meanwhile, the Brothers continued to give themselves to healing, befriending and teaching. People poured in. The Boy was daily entranced for a considerable part of the time — often late into the night, too, when Brothers taught the family and intimate friends. Those were wonderful hours, when time stood still for some of us. Sometimes it felt like it must have done when Jesus came back and taught his disciples after he had risen. Nothing that I can write could describe those nights.

The Boy thrived on all this. We did not attract the cranky type. The Brothers soon got rid of a few cranks who turned up, usually by ignoring them, for instance, when a doctor brought along a society woman to have a talk with a Brother. The lady was bubbling over with herself, and no wonder, for she believed she was a reincarnation of Cleopatra. "I have come to have your confirmation, Brother," she trilled. "I know *you* will recognise me!" She rattled on, while the Brother, fingers laced and chin on chest, appeared to listen respectfully. His expression was inscrutable. I wondered how he would tackle her, for it seemed impossible to get in a word edgewise. At last, she paused for breath. In that moment, like a shot, out rapped a Voice: **Madam! We are not interested!** The Brother had raised his head to speak but otherwise remained motionless, his face like a benign but quite dead stone. The lady stared, speechless; then poured out another torrent in another tone. She pleaded. Getting no response, she raged; but nought availed to impress that stone. At last I called in the doctor who had brought her, explaining things on the way. He removed her. The Brother, making no comment, asked for the next case.

Weeks flew by. My tasks of organising the healing and teaching increased. (Needless to say, money has not entered into any of this, ever.) In the exercise of their

healing art the Brothers used me as their assistant and, thus occupied, my days were full.

One day we had a bad case, among many, and after the sufferer had gone I was tidying up — just routine daily chores, for one scarcely had time to realise that miracles were being wrought among us almost daily. As I hurried about the room, I happened to turn towards the Brother who was sitting, as usual, silent, relaxed, and patiently awaiting the next case.

I gazed into a pair of kind, seraphic, almost unbearably powerful, star-like eyes, which had evidently been fixed on me as I worked. The Brother was smiling. His look drew me. It seemed to say: **Fear not!** . . . Speechless, I fell on my knees beside him. His hand touched my head.

The Brothers never again withheld the glory of their eyes until, long years afterwards, one came who spoke to me for the last time. **There are no beginnings and no endings**, he murmured. His lids, then, were closed. Perhaps he was too sorrowful to look at me. The Boy was dying . . . We know that Masters can grieve . . .

At that time a Buddhist monk remarked to me that the Boy went into *samadhi* — high trance — as easily as drinking a glass of water; whereas, he said, most monks spend forty years or so trying, and then can't do it. He christened the Boy "He of the Dirty Trousers", and this amusing but usually true appellation always stuck to him. Generally speaking, however, not even the dirty trousers could mar his air of distinction. He could not conceal that outstanding personality which set him apart and compelled attention wherever he went. Thus I remember, for instance, the wife of a retired Dominion Governor-General, Lady — , who knew nothing about the Boy, saw him for the first time in our garden (he was wheeling a barrow, and clothed in the usual ancient, torn and stained dungarees). She asked, "Who is that man? He looks like a man with a destiny." It must have become clear by now that this "man with a destiny" had superseded our madcap; though I will not go so far as to say that he had renounced his scrapes, 'scrapes', and pranks. Indeed — far from it! But the power behind all this had asserted itself; so that our Boy, from now on, became docilely available, at all times and under all circumstances, for the service of his Masters.

Thus I did not feel that it would be inappropriate now to discuss with him the very important matter of his equipment for the grave tasks that obviously lay before him.

At first, the Boy showed no resentment, and he was co-operative; he appreciated that I was only considering what would be best to do. But when I suggested that he might perhaps, for the sake of the Brothers and those whom they wished to serve, improve his English, etc., he asked belligerently, “Owl” and there we came to a dead stop. I suggested tentatively that it would be no disgrace, for instance, to attend a few evening-classes nearby — in fact, that he would very likely enjoy them. He bridled at once. To begin with, he declared that nothing would induce him to become “a narsty ’ipocrite” — that he was a working-man and not ashamed of it. Why *should* he ape another class? He thought that this would be “’orrible, unmanly and ’ipocritical”. He was not agoin’ ter pretend ter be wot’e wusn’t”, and so forth. He put his case so sincerely and convincingly that I had to agree. Then he added that he “couldn’t abear” the people who attended those schools. “Oi knows ‘em; yer dahnt.” Of course he was not entirely fair to them; yet on the whole I had again to agree that many of them were neither “fish nor flesh nor good red ‘errin’”, as he put it. “Their idears abaht evryfink is orl wrong.” He added hotly that, “he wouldn’t a be seen h’associatin’ wiv’ ’em. Oi will never never chinge, not fer no one. Tike me or leave me! An’ that goes for the Brothers, too. Oi’m a workingman and Oi alters wul be. Improve me? ’Ipocrites, Oi sai.” We left it at that. I admired him.

One evening, soon after, I had been dining with some friends at the House of Commons. After dinner, I took one of them aside and told her about the Boy: his astounding gifts; his extraordinary personality; his reactions to my suggestions, and my anxiety that we should get him polished up a bit — but in a real way — for the sake of his great work. She did not agree with me at all. She pointed out that nowadays (this was in 1932) a man is what he *is*, and nobody worth while bothers about *who he is, or how*. Let him speak how he liked. Let him eat how he liked — give him every chance to be himself. “Nothing can deter a great soul. No need ‘to give him chances’. He will find what he wants.”

Pickle, therefore continued, on his way; sometimes, just — Pickle; and at other times, the highly courteous, expert and divine Brothers.

In my amazing folly, it had not struck me that the Brothers themselves would, in course of time, do all the polishing of that “rough diamond” which might prove necessary, and do it without obstructing their work, as my silly plans would have done. This, of course, is exactly what happened. Imperceptibly, cautiously and slowly, through having to speak so often under the impulsion of the Brothers, before

many years had passed, the Boy spoke well — never dropped an aitch even when excited—could read and write fairly easily, and was entirely unaware of these and other changes which the Brothers had wrought. I am certain we had little to do with this. His mentors were within.

It was a long time before the wisdom of this course dawned upon me. I had not perceived, either, that the contrast between the Boy and the Brothers was in itself a help to them, in that it tended strongly to establish them as separate entities, and to demonstrate their powers in being able to control that uncultivated brain, often (as we shall see) under gruelling conditions. (I know that many psychologists will say that this does not prove the existence of separate personalities. I do not dispute; but merely state that I would have liked to learn their views and conclusions after they had spent some twenty-seven years, as I did, in close daily proximity to this phenomenon. Then only might it have been profitably discussed.)

Many other things in connection with the Boy's 'education', I did not perceive until years after. Only then did I clearly see that the Boy's stubbornness and obstinacy had often been the shield of his intuition, which made him know, as an animal knows, what he had to do; and he did it, decisively and directly, out of himself, caring nothing for our views, conventions, prejudices and feelings. He rode roughshod—Cosmic roughshod. When, years later, I reflected on those early London days, I also saw that the Brothers had often used their Boy, with his fun and pranks, in order to ease our tensions, so that they could come nearer to us.

Someone once asked a Brother: "Why have you taken the Boy as your channel, instead of a more refined and cultured person?" The Brother answered: **If you get a very fine material, it can easily be destroyed. What we have done is to put fine material (the 'soul' of the Boy) into what you call a base body. The body, which is the uniform of this soul, does not 'enter into' this soul, but acts as a buffer between this soul and the world.**

"Uniform" was the wrong word. He meant "garment".

By this time the Boy had attained to his full powers, and many were his astounding feats, which I will recount farther on. We did not in any way advertise the Brothers' advent, but from now on people began to hear of them, and there was a steady and ever-increasing stream of visitors. Soon I had to arrange for meetings on Sunday afternoons at five o'clock. The Brothers occupied their usual big chair and I

sat beside them, sometimes taking notes but mostly as a go-between. People forgot the passage of time at those meetings. I often had to remind them that the Boy must be tired — when, for instance, he had been in trance and teaching vigorously for four-and-a-half hours. Then everyone would get up, full of apologies and amazement. But a few would linger round the entranced — and now perhaps very slowly awakening — Boy; for they could not tear themselves away. The enthusiasm of those London audiences was deep and genuine.

We had little money. I took P.Gs to try to keep the wolf from the door. The Brothers and the P.Gs had to be kept separate; the Brothers' visitors had to be kept away from the P.Gs, too. What a life it was! All of us worked to keep the bread in our mouths. We were often desperate. I shall write no more of our struggles to exist at that period. But through it all our Boy was splendid. He often expressed surprise at the poverty and real anxiety of many professional and middle class folk. It was a new experience to him. In his slum life food had been good and plentiful and there were no appearances to keep up.

We saw the Brothers. I see them still. People naturally asked, "How?" "When?" "Where?" I have attempted to answer their questions in Chapters Twelve, Thirteen, *Appearances* I, II! The following account of a great materialisation must suffice here. We did not usually see Brothers' as in this case, but in other ways:

Here I pause to recount several among very many episodes which occurred at this time.

The Brothers loved the Boy dearly and forgave him all his pranks; they would not hear one word against him, and spoke sternly to any who complained. Still, sometimes they took a mild revenge in allowing trances to happen very awkwardly for the Boy. Once, for instance, he had gone off alone to Hyde Park to listen to the Sunday tub-thumpers. He was attracted to a small crowd around a man who was delivering a tirade against Greek culture. Of course, the Boy was quite innocent of Greek culture, his nearest approach to which was his keen interest in sports. On this particular Sunday afternoon he "must'a'bin ter sleep", as he always put it, for the next thing he was aware of was that the now very irate tub-thumper had been pushed aside by a large and interested crowd, which was closely gathered about the Boy instead. Much embarrassed and nonplussed at the intense interest and enthusiastic talk, he

pushed his way out, closely and excitedly followed by an elderly gentleman who “insisted on arskin’ me questions on Greek philosophy”, reported the Boy, indignantly. To the Boy’s horror the old chap pressed him with “What is your view, Sir,” on this and that. Trying to shake him off, the Boy could only mumble, “Oi dawn’t knaw a word uv wot yer a’talkin’ abaht.” The old gentleman must have nearly collapsed when he heard those broad Cockney tones! “But,” he wailed in amazement, “how is this, Sir? You *must* know! You have just been telling us ...” but the Boy did not wait for more. He fled — leapt in consternation on to a passing bus. When he arrived home, he agitatedly poured it all out to us, and was so clearly impressed, and distressed, that we could not but believe his story, especially as knew so many others, which we ourselves had witnessed. He had evidently been suddenly possessed, as he stood listening to the tub-thumper, by a great Brother, who had harangued the crowd, and drawn a large audience. Then, as suddenly, the Brother going had left the Boy to startle and bewilder — probably for life — an old gentleman who should have been allowed to die in peaceful ignorance.

The Brothers could take the Boy wherever they liked. Here is an example which is like “finding a needle in a bundle of hay”, or rather, in a large haystack:

That summer, I had had a letter from a friend abroad, J. Krishnamurti, informing me that he would be passing through London in June and would write me again before his arrival fixing an appointment. He gave me no English address. June was nearly over; I had not heard again, and I was worried, for it was necessary that we should meet. One fine morning the Boy was cleaning the windows of the Brothers’ reception-room, when I noticed him drop his cloth and make a bee-line for his bicycle, mounting which, in great haste, he disappeared down the road. I sighed over the dirty windows and his weird undisciplined ways.

After about two hours the telephone rang. It was the Boy. “Hallo!” (He was speaking in broad Cockney.) “I’m in a garage in the Fulham Road.” (Miles from our place!) “I think I’ve been to sleep. I woke up on the kerb here, with my bike all right; but I don’t remember *coming* here. Yes, I’m all right — don’t worry. I stood on the kerb where I woke up, and I watched the cars passing, one after another — hundreds. Then I saw K’s car coming along. I stepped out in the road and stopped it. He’s just arrived and was going straight down to the country. I’ve got his address. I’m coming right back. Sorry I left the windows. I’ll do them this afternoon.” (And I had thought him *undisciplined!*) His reaction? “Sorry-I’ll do the windows this afternoon.”, *Just*

that! He had been made to catch Krishnamurti within the very hour, and *we* did not know that he was going out of London. How were the Fulham Road picked out — the day, and the time?

Let us now further examine some more of the Boy's own characteristics.

It must take tremendous courage thus to lose consciousness; to know that one is going down into oblivion and may be quite helpless while in that state (for *he* could not feel at these times that the Brothers were with him); to know that, even with the Brothers, *accidents may occur*, as they did actually occur; to plunge into nothingness; to experience daily, sometimes hourly, what amounted to a death; to know, each time, that one might not come back. The Boy was utterly fearless. Never claiming to be spiritual, he yet exhibited many of the perfections of spirituality. (In India, fearlessness is regarded as one of the first qualifications for the *yogi*.)

He had a ferocious instinct to protect me and the work. Here is an instance which amounted almost to second sight — unless, perhaps, he was used by a Brother. The Brothers' room in the old London house was directly over the cellar in which was the furnace, which burned coke. That room had three very large sash-windows opening on the garden. A low divan was sometimes used as an extra bed, and in the day-time I rested there too. One slack afternoon — a rare occurrence — I lay down on that couch. The Boy was gardening at least 180 feet away.

I felt myself drifting into a drowsy state. I realised that I could not rouse out of it, yet did not bother about it. The next thing I knew was that the Boy was thundering in at the doorway and bounding across the room. Even so, I did not rouse up, but heard him yelling as he ran to me: **Wake up! Wake up! You're gassed!** Then he plunged down and pulled me roughly into his arms, and there I lay like a log as he carried me to an open window, propped my head on the ledge, and shouted for milk — which I learned afterwards is an antidote to carbon monoxide. A doctor soon came and found the Boy dragging me back and forth in the hall to keep me awake. It was twenty-four hours before I got over that gassing, with a doctor in attendance most of the time. The Boy had probably saved my life. The fumes from the furnace had leaked through the old floor-boards from the cellar below.

What had made the Boy dash in from the garden as one possessed? I distinctly remember one thing: whoever it was who came thundering in at the door and yelling "You are gassed", did so *before* the Boy had found out what was wrong with me.

In India people are accustomed to the holy man who sheds his clothes: my own great *guru*-initiator in *sannyasa* was one of them. In the West, on the other hand, people are more devastatingly clothes-conscious than they realise; and this, by the way, gives rise to innumerable nervous excitations and muscular tensions, all of which are inimical to poise, ease, health of body and mind.

Now, the Boy definitely had the Eastern attitude of the *yogi* in regard to clothes. (He would not have thanked me for comparing him to a *yogi*, though he was, in effect, a real *yogi*, as some believed, and as this book, and book of the Brothers' teachings, will show.) He was at most times utterly oblivious to and unconscious of their existence. He wandered about the house and garden in a state of dishevelment and near-nudity which later on in India never embarrassed any Oriental, but gave me cause for anxiety when we had Western visitors; for in this, as in most respects, he was totally careless and intractable. On the other hand he could and did sometimes dress as smartly as any clothes-conscious Western. When he possessed the clothes, and had the mind to do it, he could cut a dashing figure. (No, not flashy. He had perfect taste.) It may be that he passed one-tenth of his life in a way which was *artificial*, and the remainder in a way which was *supernatural*, shall we say? The *yogi* is said to treat clothes as a small child does. Certainly the Boy treated clothes that way most of the time!

An exhibitionist? Oh no! Clothes usually didn't exist for him, because *usually he just was not there*. But he could not stand modern women's undress. Once, I took him to a party in London. He was immediately pounced upon by a bevy of smart young women who hauled him off to the buffet. Conversation probably flagged! I was told one of them asked if he liked her new dress — black net, and not much of it. He looked her over coolly and told her that his idea was that she should go home and get some clothes on. Yet the Boy was no prude — had not a scrap of false modesty. He said to me on the way home, "If a girl of mine wore a dress like that, I'd tear it orf'er in the middle of the dance-floor." And he would have done. The girls at the party had greeted his remark with hideous shrieks of laughter (so usual in the Western world that we don't notice it), and had lionised him as a genuine cave-man for the remainder of the evening.

Sometimes at meetings a Brother would open the Boy's shirt and call up a few people to smell his chest, from which, as we knew, unearthly perfumes could exude.

These perfumes were still occurring on his underwear and nightclothes, but wore off or were taken away after a few years — I mean, off *his person*; for they were frequently in my home and on my person, apart from the Boy, then, and had been for years before I met him. Whilst on this I may add that in all the subsequent years he was among us, we never noticed an unpleasant odour about the Boy or his clothes; although he was awfully careless, and always washed himself, as I have said, with Wright's Coal Tar Soap or Sunlight, and usually left the soap half on. He got his clothes into a fearful mess, except when he was the immaculate, the exquisite, with "that quiet but costly look". He had mounds of laundry and needed a valet to keep him decent. Instead, however, he had perforce to sit contritely on the edge of his bed, cobbling socks and knotting on buttons and, in England, where laundry bills were impossible for people like us, to wash his own clothes.

There are *yogis* who take pride in being able to draw their diaphragms inwards and upwards until they seem to touch the insides of their spines. To perform these feats, these men, already born with an inherited capacity for such contortions, practise for long periods. None of us ever saw the Boy practising physical jerks or *yoga* exercises of any kind. Yet he could draw in his diaphragm like an advanced *hathayogin*. He, also, took special pride in this — was, indeed, absurdly happy about it; and when, later, we lived in India, it was not a matter for surprise if he suddenly exhibited his naked diaphragm in the midst of one of our gatherings. It was natural. No one minded. Of course he would not have done it at a formal party. I had registered my protest to a Brother about that first London party, and ever after, when the Boy put in an appearance at such affairs, the Brothers were *always* in charge. Whether he was conscious or unconscious at such functions, there was always at least one Brother in full control. I knew this because there was a noticeable alteration in the Boy's appearance and demeanour. His skin grew clear and glowed. He walked and sat erect. His manners were beautiful, his voice cultured. When the party was over, he would become tired and dreamy, and forgetful of what had transpired; though sometimes he seemed to have been partly 'there', for he would be normal afterwards, talk of events, and say "I think one of the Brothers went with me," or "The Brothers must've bin there."

Perhaps the Brothers deemed it advisable to administer slight shocks in our London meetings. (This was in the early 1930's. I live out of the world, but I imagine

that mere diaphragms in drawing-rooms might not shock today?) Be that as it may, when the Boy suddenly pulled up his shirt to display his “diaphragm feat” in a London drawing-room meeting, people drew in their breaths, if not their diaphragms, and things had to be explained. Explanations, of course, fell to me; and as I am rather a diffident person, brought up in the strictly Victorian tradition, I did not always find explanations easy.

The Brothers, however, spurned artificial standards, and yanked me into a healthier state of mind. To my dismay they also took on the job of showing our astonished London audiences, not only the Boy’s yoga-diaphragm, but also their own indifference to convention — as incorrigible as the Boy’s — by leaving his shirt hanging out, or half out, for the rest of the meeting, while they went on brilliantly to expound philosophical theses. All in vain would be my expostulatory whispers, “Brother! tidy up the Boy,” or “Brother — *please!* The Boy looks indecent.” The Brother would go right on with the meeting, after addressing me sternly and loudly: **keep QUIET, Nurth!**

This reminds me of how the Brothers would also show people correct breathing by inviting audiences to study the entranced Boy whilst one of the Holy Ones would breathe through him. On such occasions they did not put the Boy through complicated exercises as they have often done with me, apart from the Boy; but they showed people how breathing should be done when the adult uses his lungs naturally, as a baby does. They would also partly unclothe the Boy, so that the operation of the diaphragm and lungs might be shown. At such times, his face would take on an expression of great peace. Personally, I had special love for the Brothers when they used him like this, without speech.

Now it sometimes happened that when the Brothers were doing these things, their Boy had gone to sleep in one of his rarer moods of Western convention. So he would not be at all indifferent when he found on awakening that his shirt had been pulled up under his armpits and an interested audience was gaping at his tummy! In haste and clearly embarrassed, he would pull down his shirt and stagger out of the room, to return well clothed before the visitors had dispersed, and even looking positively ‘dandified.’

I have mentioned before the matter of staggering out of the room. If the Boy got up quickly, he was likely to stagger because the operation of the Brothers had been

disturbed; otherwise, he walked off quietly, or sat smiling, with a deprecating expression, and talking to people in a gentle, drawly voice, so different from the Brothers' clear-cut, cultured speech. After trance, the Boy's normally loud voice was invariably soft and sweet.

People would often proffer a hand, to assist him to stand when he 'woke up', and they must sometimes have thought him rude when he shook them off impatiently, not to say roughly. They did not realise that they must not touch him at such times, for he was not properly out of his trance, and in touching him they were touching a Brother.

Once when in this state, lying back, his eyes still closed, inert in his chair, an enthusiastic visitor came forward and, before I could prevent him, laid his hand affectionately on the Boy's shoulder. I asked him to remove his hand as the Boy was not yet back, but he kept it there with a hearty "*He's all right . . . Aren't you?*" But the Boy neither responded *nor came back*, while the silly man (an Indian, who should have known better) continued to shake him gently and talk nonsense. I had to act quickly, as the situation might have become dangerous, so I pushed the man away, and addressed myself to the Boy, who was breathing uneasily and suddenly looked ill. I used passes the Brothers had taught me, which brought him back after an anxious few minutes. The Boy felt the effects of that shoulder-patting for forty-eight hours or so afterwards. He suffered nausea; he was depleted, and "not all there".

A Brother could have prevented these untoward after-effects, but this incident is an example of one of their **little accidents**, as they called them. I conjectured that this time they had all gone off as soon as the Boy was nearly back, instead of leaving one of their number on guard, as was their almost invariable rule. This guarding business was an important part of their work with the Boy; but it is impossible for me to go into all such matters here. Suffice it to say that it takes many offices and officers to produce a drama of the Brothers in this world.

The irascible, over-strung Boy meekly endured all that came to him from the Brothers and for their work. It was much. It was at such times that we who knew something of what he was up against, would call him "the Lamb". That was indeed the only suitable name for our Boy in that aspect. I came to think that his real self was lamb-like, whatever his unreal self, by accident of birth or early environment, could be like on occasion. For in his outer life the Boy was, at this period and always, inclined to be tactless and noisy, to evince an unpleasantly dominant personality — the antithesis to his real self and the Brothers. All this-I realised in later years —

came from his strong inferiority-complex. For the same reason, he would sometimes talk overmuch and foolishly.

Some little time after the night encounter in the garden which was the beginning of the trances, I was again working out of doors in the moonlight, and again I found the Boy, sitting quietly on the grass in the same place. How greatly he had changed since our last meeting there! He was still the playboy but, since the Brothers were using his body nearly all the time, the playboy had had to take second place. Tonight, away from people, he was his real self; a translucent spirit shone through a gentle, grave man, who was emptied, in this hour, of the normal personality.

There were no barriers between us now. Daily activities in connection with the Brothers had given me complete access to the real Boy, who could never again disguise himself from me — indeed, he never tried to. Together, we had been through a series of unimaginably hazardous and astonishing psychic, psychological and physical trials, to say nothing of jointly carrying the weight of a real ministry which had unexpectedly descended upon us and had to be carried on amid the thousand-and-one problems and difficulties inseparable from a life like ours, lived in alien social, and even domestic, conditions. (My children were loyal, and wonderfully helpful; but they could not have been expected entirely to grasp the situation.)

Once more I sat beside the Boy and looked back in mind on the cave-giant of a few short weeks before; then turned to the seraph beside me. He began talking to me as if we had known each other for centuries and were just taking up a subject from where we had left it off last time. An observant onlooker might have said that he addressed, not me, but an image of his imagination, so cool and impersonal were his words. He was telling *me his end of the story of that first night at Bow*. The Cockney speech, softened though it now was, was utterly incongruous, so I give his story in ordinary English.

He said that during the foregoing November he had been on night-shift, part of the time, at the works. One day, when he was supposed to be sleeping, he could not rest, but felt a strong urge to go along the Bow Road to Aldgate. “Now this,” he said, “was a queer thing, because I was not in the habit of going up that way. But the idea worried me so much, and the feeling took me so strongly, that I had to get out my bicycle and ride along Bow Road. After going some way I parked my bike and

walked on towards Aldgate East station. Now, *why* did I park that machine and *walk*? I never did that. There was another queer thing: I don't know, either, why I kept looking across the road as if I were expecting to see someone I knew. Yes, I kept my eyes skinned for the pavement opposite; and so I walked on slowly, watching. At last I saw you! You were dressed in that little red knitted coat and skirt and the little hat to match; and you walked tired. I thought I was out of my mind, but I continued on, following you, keeping to my side of the road. That was another queer thing — I had never watched a woman in all my life. You didn't see me. You never even looked round on *your* side of the road, but pushed on. You were so small among the crowds! They jostled you, but you went right on, determined-like. Then you crossed over and I came up quickly to follow you still, but by the time I got inside Aldgate station you had disappeared. I didn't know which platform to make for.

“A train was just moving out . . . I watched trains for a while, and then went home. After that I lay abed for a couple of weeks with fever. Mother sent for the doctor. They could not find out what was the matter with me, and all the time I had only one thought, ‘*My God! How can I find her?*’ But there was nothing to be done; there was no clue anywhere.”

(The clue was there all right. *Knowing nothing, I was obediently following the trail from the other end.*) He went on:

“Well, I got better; and one evening I thought I'd pull myself together and go round to the Settlement and give them a hand. There was a dance in full swing and I was serving at a buffet when I saw you and your husband walk in. It was the little red dress that attracted my notice. I saw that, yes, I saw that; but after — *there was nothing!* . . . I remembered nothing, until I woke up in the street by the canal and found you both standing there beside me. I think I must have been asleep; but *how did I get there?*”

Then I fitted my story to his, and we both realised that the Brothers must have taken him the instant he saw “the little red dress” that night. We talked it over as much as he would. He had a characteristic way of accepting all these ‘miracles’ — he didn't accept many ordinary things — and then letting them pass right out of his mind, emptying his mind of them. That, of course, was one aspect of his extraordinary suitability for his job. Yet he did not seem to empty his mind consciously. It emptied itself.

It is hard to conjure up a picture of what must have happened on the Brothers' side of the veil after they had achieved what anyone might pardonably call the impossible: my frequent visits to the one appropriate district of East London; the finding of me there by the Boy; and finally, simultaneous visits by the Boy, my husband and me to that dance hall. One may, however, hazard a guess that, having with great patience engineered our meetings to this point, they realised that, if anything went wrong now, all would be lost. They will have known that little or nothing might accrue from our mere meeting with the Boy; for he was shy and reticent with us, not only because of the wide gulf which separated our lives, but also on account of the torrents of feeling that were dammed back in him. We might easily never have met again.

The Brothers knew also that my husband and I were inured to vivid personalities, and that there was not enough in the Boy alone to impress us sufficiently to warrant our standing by him, on the strength of one meeting, for the years that lay ahead, amid the astounding and hazardous events which were destined to follow.

The Brothers themselves had to speak with us — to catch hold of us as it were, that very night. But how? There must have seemed to be only one way to bring it off, and that was through the instrumentality of the Boy himself. But he was unprepared, untrained; and to throw him into trance there and then would mean taking awful risks.

The stakes were equal either way. If they put him in trance, he might be lost to them for this incarnation; if they refrained, we might be lost to them, too. Conditions for a major psycho-physical operation were the worst possible. Even in a quiet place the risk would have been incalculable; but in the din of a Saturday night East End dance, the experiment must have seemed, even to them, a nightmare project.

Yet it must be now — or never! Their plan could not materialise without us three, therefore even our lives must be risked for it.

If the Brothers gambled that night, their chances of success lay only in the Boy's essential cleanness, his splendid physique, and our long-tested capacities to respond to fine, inner vibrations. On the other hand, anything might have happened. The Boy might have had convulsions. He might have died through their not being able to hold the untrained instrument and bring him safely back to his normal consciousness. He might have been, from the same cause, rendered insane. Again, as we had been seen by a large number of people to go off alone with him — the streets were almost deserted — we, too, might have been dangerously if not disastrously involved.

Thy took the risk. The first operation was to accentuate the Boy's magnetic personality, so that we should be drawn to him through our love of beauty. They got hold of him on the fortunate opportunity which was offered by the shock of seeing me, which had amounted almost to a black-out. They completed that black-out — and it was a mighty Brother, not the Boy, who advanced towards us from the buffet, with, as I noted at the time, a strange “deliberateness” and “ritual-like” walk. It was a supreme moment with what was going to be a supreme instrument. They had risked all, and won the first round.

Many Brothers must have been there to master the Boy that night, and make him do, say, and be — in atmosphere, in allurements — what they wanted him to be in that fateful hour. Only possession could have explained the Boy's strange walk towards us amid the roof-shaking clatter in that dance-hall. He walked like that because it was his first walk in trance, and the Brothers, feeling their way, had to use caution. Once they had brought him within our auras, it was not so difficult to proceed — the courtly manner, the choice phrases, the whole puzzling, phenomenal encounter. One thing they could not then control, however, was his accent. So they had to leave that and, as it turned out, the resulting fantastic contrast in him rendered the whole affair all the more mysterious and intriguing to us.

Once we had been won — it was during the time when he was ‘asleep’ and they were operating in their splendour that we were clamped to the Boy for ever — they left him to continue, as *himself*, which again simply bowled us over. It was a wonderful job, brought off by the finest psychologists, theurgists and actors I ever met.

It will be remembered that on saying goodbye when we caught our bus, I promised to write to the Boy when I was ready for him. “Well,” he now continued, “I did not hear from you, but anyway, I had your address. I could not call; but I could watch you, and I did, for about four months. When you went out to post your letters at night, I often came right up, but you never even glanced at me. That made me happy!

“Then one day, I had that queer feeling again. This time it seemed to mean that I must give up my job. I didn't *want* to — I *had* to. So I did; and then I wrote you that I was ready to come along if you needed me. So now you know. That's all. I was *taken* to you, and you were *taken* down into East London, so that I could find you.”

“But have you known this all the time?” I asked.

“Yes. I’ve known since that day when you asked me to tea in your St. John’s Wood house.”

“But, if you knew, then why — ?”

“I couldn’t tell you then. Now — it’s different.”

I went on gardening and he lent a hand. Scales fell from my eyes. His ghastly nervousness that afternoon! And afterwards., when he went more or less wild in the old house, his irrepressible joy — *his* joy, certainly; but more, far more: an angelic jubilation, pulsing through him, at having brought off this *coup* — this incredibly beautiful working partnership.

A few people from Bow came to see me, horrified over the Boy. They could only repeat, with variations: “But *why* didn’t you choose somebody else? He’s so-so-*unholy*.” As if I could have “chosen”! I did not attempt to contradict them, for according to their lights unholy he was. Moreover these people did not represent Bow; and they were jealous.

As to who or what the Boy really was, the Brothers said on rare occasions when we were alone or with my husband and children, **We are going to let down a part of the REAL Boy. You must be very quiet and gentle while he is here.** Then, without going into trance, but one self, as it were absorbing the other, **the real Boy** would emerge — a being so fine that one felt as though it could be dispelled by a breath. Abstracted and absorbed, he seemed hardly to see us, but would speak in a half-whisper, as in a dream. Usually his subjects were the sciences or the arts, including chemistry, astronomy, physics and medicine. These are nowadays just beginning to be glimpsed, but had not been thought of, broadly speaking, some twenty or more years ago.

He never stayed for more than a few minutes, and after this real self had faded out, the Boy (without having had the usual ‘awakening’) would evince deep content, peace and calm which were usually absent from that agitated emanation, his personality; and he would be astonishingly gentle and sweet for hours after. Pellucid.

W. B. Yeats had a pet theory that the Individuality is always the opposite to the personality. That would not, of course, work in the case of what the Hindus call the *jivanmukta*, which word, we have seen, means, ‘one who is liberated in life’, the personality being completely aligned with the divine Individual. The Boy, however,

was a good illustration of Yeats' theory; for his inner being manifested an ethereal gentleness and lambent perceptivity which were the reverse of his rough, often foolish and overbearing personality.

Those London days were a long crescendo of wonders in healing; in what people call 'miracles'; especially in teaching and the Brothers' beautiful domestic relations with us all.

Compared to the great mass of the Brothers' teachings, our records were always sparse; but probably the fewest were kept at this period, as adequate reporting was a physical impossibility. Whatever was passed, however, is at least accurate. As for the other power-manifestations: we had learned to be comparatively indifferent to these — to be wholly so, of course, would have been entirely beyond us. We lived in another world with the Boy and the Brothers; and in the entire period during which the main teachings were delivered, the exceptional and 'miraculous' were part of our routine and daily round. Thus, some years after her marriage, my eldest daughter wrote to me from Europe (I was then in India): ". . . I never had any doubts — those days were teeming with the miraculous. One just didn't appreciate it enough at the time . . .

It is just as well that nothing happened to boost these events. In any case the Brothers were against publicity, for the Boy's sake, and so were we. Perhaps a book should have been written; but we were all too involved in troubles and harassments to be able to put out an adequate account of this overwhelming affair as, under other circumstances, one or other of us would assuredly have done.

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CHAPTER SIX

Sailing Orders

Our London centre crashed. The Brothers were responsible. It happened like this:

Early in 1933, a Brother announced to us: **A great destruction is coming. You will have to leave here.** He said -it so mildly that at first it did not sink in.

One and then another of them continued in the same vein. Gradually pressure was increased: **the Boy and the group must leave England. We must take our Boy out of Europe.** Month after month we were told that we must pull up our roots (mine and my husband's were very deep) leave all, and wander into the unknown. My husband was an established musician in London; what would become of us all if we just floated off?

It was preposterous, unthinkable. We refused to listen. But the Brothers went relentlessly on. I had always been a homemaker and home-lover; and this disruption seemed indeed impossible to face. Moreover, we were so poor. We could not afford to do it with a bare modicum of comfort or even decencies. But the Brothers went implacably on — plagued us — finally, began to *order* us to go, to hunt us out. They became as angels with flaming swords, and this house of ours was indeed paradise.

After about eighteen months we were wavering, and had almost given in, when from the blue our landlord — we had the place on mortgage-announced that he had had a business reverse which compelled him to call in the mortgage or raise £3,000. We hadn't even £30. Coincidence? I don't know. Anyway, we were *forced* to go. We could of course have moved to another place in London; but curiously enough, that did not occur to any of us at the time.

I broke up the Centre; obeying without strength to obey. I broke up the home which I had laboured half my life to put together; and then — as things always happened where the Brothers were concerned — a way began to open. A friend belonging to the academic world, who loved my husband and me, and the Boy and the Brothers, paid the passage to India for all of us; for it was to India that we had by now been told to go. It had been so like the Brothers to order us to do the apparently impossible (since we had no money), and in addition to choose India for us, where they knew we had no friends and no connections whatsoever.

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It had taken the Brothers over two years to accomplish this matter of breaking up everything my dear husband and I had ever built in this world, and their Boy's life, too, and their beautiful London Centre. (Looking at it from their angle, what an undertaking this must have been!) To the young people it was fun-new experiences. To my husband and me, it was a kind of death. In any case we were quite in the dark. Why should we think that there was **a great destruction coming?** There was no question of war then. On the face of it, this upheaval was insane. We sat together in the old garden on the last evening, among our fruit trees and the dear English crocuses, and grieved helplessly. Yet something beyond ourselves, beyond our own lives and dearest interests, had made us obey. After that hour of shared sorrow we two never looked back. We could not have told why. Only one thing we were certain about: some of the Brothers were high Masters, and it behoved us therefore to try, at least, to trust them.

The Boy, a Cockney of Cockneys, had no wish to leave London either; but being comparatively young and untraveled, there was no pang in it — *then*. Moreover, the Brothers had him in their grip; so, just as he had worked to make that Centre, now he worked to break it and take us away, exhibiting unbelievable 'heartlessness' in the process. I could not help as energetically as I had done before, for I was badly shocked by this change in our lives.

Thus, in the early summer of 1935, we six people set out towards the unknown from which, twenty-one years later, I was to return alone. In 1939, the **great destruction** — the Second World War — broke out. A little while after, a friend wrote to me from London that the house of sacred memories had been badly bombed. Possibly another coincidence? There were so many 'coincidences'. One was no longer certain. The voyage was uneventful. There was no sign of the Brothers on board ship; indeed, they might have deserted us. My husband and I took mock refuge in common sense; we agreed that the Brothers were giving the Boy a rest, though we knew very well that he could not rest, bereft of them. I comforted my husband, whose uprooting had been the hardest of all ("What the devil is — doing in India?" wrote Bernard Shaw on one of his famous post-cards some months after). I said that of course the Brothers would not waste life on overcoming the magnetic conditions of an ocean liner, especially as we were all exhausted. This at least was true enough:

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sea, air, and sky are 'for' the higher beings, but we drag our dirt over the oceans, and it is not to be blown clean even by the hurricanes of heaven. Smart, much-sat-upon upholstery; 'spotless', much-slept-in bedding; 'shining' but magnetically putrid appurtenances of table, cabin or bathroom, used by hundreds of thousands—from the occult point of view, such things are unclean. They block the emergence into this outer world of all finer vibrations. In private life we may sometime perhaps, decide on the kind of cleanliness we prefer; but prevailing unintelligence on such matters obstructs our natural instincts — obstructs savagely, as I have often found when trying, in the Western world, to preserve essential cleanness for the Brothers. (By which I do not necessarily imply that the Eastern world is essentially clean; but at least India has an advanced theory of cleanness.)

As we approached Bombay, sailing in sight of that long dim outline of the coast of India, I gazed out to wards it, and thought of all the homeless beggars and destitutes, many of whom had been and still were, her holy men — the unending line of *gurus* and *arhats*, of Masters, Brothers — in that land of poverty, but of wealth eternal. As I leaned alone on the ship's rail, dream-India seemed to assail me, and with it, the Brothers were inly present again. I looked back, and looked ahead; and my heart was very full. I wrote a few lines then:

Thou has nothing of this world
O *guru!*
A simple mariner art thou —
A cowboy, a shepherd
Or a carpenter.
Thou has nothing of this world.

Thou art one with all priceless things —
Love, truth
Faithfulness and patience:
With all eternal things —
Death, birth,
The tides and seasons,
And fertile space.

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Thou stealest into the unexpected heart
(Only the poor know Poverty).
Like a soft cloud veiling the lovely moon
Thou comest upon the heart that is a light unto itself.

Thou has nought of this world,
But, O *guru!*
Thy wretched rags, thy soiled hands, thy parched skin
Shame its splendours —
Its might and dazzling pomp.

Let us come to thee
Out of poor trivialities.
Quietly, one by one,
With dedication
And with assurance,
For thou, O Beggar among men!
Shalt not ask in vain for our love.

As our ship docked at Bombay, mynah birds cawed loudly in their crow-like voices. (It is curious that they are at enmity with crows, for they talk like first cousins.) There was a great Oriental tree in full flower, blazing away on the sweltering dock. There were spicy, hot smells in the air, and I began to feel faint. My husband and the Boy supported me down to the saloon, where I recovered, but was possessed of such emotion that I panted for breath, and indeed was on the verge of hysteria. *Something* had wrapped itself round me in those sounds, sights and smells — some memory almost too intense for my physical frame to endure.

The passengers had thinned off the ship, while I lay back, our party grouped about me, trying not to drown in the impression I had received. Presently, a gentle voice came to my ears; a quiet hand touched me. The Boy had been bending over me anxiously; and now it was a Brother, who restored me in a matter of seconds. Thus, we landed on Indian soil, with a Holy One in our midst.

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The heat was terrific. We had arrived in the hottest days of the hot season — days most dreaded throughout India — just before the rains. No one, except those who can travel in air-conditioned compartments, would elect to cross India by train — especially long stretches of desert — in a second-class compartment, during those horrible days; or, having arrived at a lower Himalayan Hill Station, to proceed thence into the mountains in a narrow, wooden-seated, rattling, packed lorry, scarcely protected from the sun. But thus we travelled. The journey-unbroken except for meals at Dak Bungalows — took two nights and three days.

The Boy and the children weathered it; but my husband and I more or less collapsed, over and over again. After all, we were elderly, and had never known such heat. Probably our self-constituted exile added to the strain (for we two Western artists hardly belonged here). But we were not in any real sense grumbling. It was only a matter of temperaments kicking against the pricks.

Well, there we were. London was behind us; India, before us.

When, worn out, we reached our first Indian destination — a District in the Lower Himalayas, we possessed not a rupee between us! But somehow we survived from day to day. Our dear London Professor scraped together a few pounds for us now and then, and so did a devoted London school-mistress, who was poor enough herself. My husband's pitifully small royalties and performing fees continued to arrive. The Boy was brilliant at making manage and selling things. Indeed, he was a tower of strength in every way. We had to start our new life from zero. It was awful — but it was also tremendous, for the Brothers backed us by showing great solicitude, and enabled us to overcome, step by step, the obstacles which threatened to crush us.

Our first house had been a home for 'fallen' women, a two-storeyed affair, miles from any amenities. It was now, rather, a home for snakes, rats, bats and spiders, poisonous and otherwise. I wonder the poor women had not fallen (in another sense) through the upstairs floors, between the rotting planks of which one could see the rooms below. We went in fear of these; for our trunks were heavy, and my husband and the Boy were heavy, too. A couple of ancient storm-lamps sufficed for lighting the six of us. There was no furniture, except two or three rickety beds, which had also to serve as chairs and dining tables. The sun poured in by day, and insects poured in by night as well as day, our fresh British blood, no doubt, proving an attraction. Their bites were fierce. We had no mosquito-nets (and there was no cash to buy them) so

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sleep at nights was well-nigh impossible. There was not a curtain in the house, or a sunblind on the narrow verandahs. No fans, of course; and we were more than half starved.

There was no clean water, either, but only a filthy stream oozing along near the fearful kitchen, which formerly had been a small stable, and evidently had not been cleaned for years. Its only window was a rough shutter, and there were no fly-screens. In suffocating heat, my younger daughter set to, and cleaned that place from floor to ceiling. I had warned everybody that water for all drinking purposes, even teeth washing, had to be boiled; but the Boy and the girls doubtless thought me an old fuss-pot. The result of their neglect was that my elder girl went down almost immediately with virulent dysentery. There was no means of nursing her. I cannot remember how we contacted the nearest hospital — a Christian Mission some distance away. The woman doctor who ran it came at once and took away my daughter, who had to be carried a long way to the *katcha* (unmetalled) road, as there was not even a path to that house.

The Mission doctor told me, after my girl had been brought home weak but recovered, that she had not expected her to survive. This good Christian woman had taken her into her own bedroom, so that she might the better nurse her through the nights. The devotion and self-abnegation of these Christian missionaries has to be seen to be believed. There is a tragic shortage of nurses in India; and many of the Christian doctors part-nurse their patients.

Soon after we arrived, we learned that this part of the Kangra Valley was used only to grow tea and study the habits of mosquitoes!

While my girl was in hospital the Boy took to purposeful wandering, daily absenting himself from shortly after dawn to nightfall. Presently he brought us the good tidings that he had found “a better ‘ole” — a bungalow in a tea-garden, connected by a long lane to the main Kulu road. Thither we trekked, and this place proved slightly better. Being a bungalow, there were no floors to fall through. But here too there were no sun-curtains or other tropical safeguards, though there was a kitchen and some rough furniture. The people about us seemed to do their best to make our lives miserable, probably because we were friendless and poor; some of them could speak a little English, yet would not enlighten us as to where we could get cheap mosquito-nets, etc. Everybody, it seemed, was out to fleece us and make us unhappy. The locals, British included, laughed at us.

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Yet while we were in this deplorable place, ill, cut off, almost broken, the Brothers did some of their greatest works (which I will recount later) and showed themselves daily, almost hourly, at their most glorious. The teachings also, which were mainly given among ourselves at that time, were superb. It seemed that the Brothers, realising our plight, could not do enough for us. Sometimes they appeared as Mighty Ones; sometimes they were playful, and again, tender friends. Whatever his personal reactions may have been to the situation, the Boy also rose to his heights. For myself, I broke down physically many times, but each time I went under he pulled me up. (In justice to myself, however, I must add that I was very broken in health when we landed in India, and that it took several years to regain the level of semi-invalidism, which seems to be my *karma* for this life.)

One day I was sitting in an adjoining hut in a vain effort to get away from the broiling heat. I was trying to think out how we could come by *chiks* (sort of rush sun-blinds), mosquito-nets, and other necessities of life. We could not speak Hindustani and we could not afford a *munshi* to coach us. We were simply trapped.

A little old Anglo-Indian lady came towards the hut and sat down beside me. Goodness knows where she hailed from, but she seemed to have taken in our situation. Very gently, and with that loving-kindness which Indian women are able to show to other women, she suggested that she should bestir herself to procure all our immediate needs, at 'native' prices and qualities, in the nearest bazaar. Then without more ado she gathered me in her thin little arms, and wept over me.

I poured out to her, then, about the Brothers and some of our adventures, and she understood. She understood everything! The sun did not seem so hot after I had been with that little woman, and this meeting was the beginning of a beautiful friendship with her and her soldier son, who were both true Christians. Distant relatives of Rudyard Kipling, who used to stay at a family bungalow of theirs in the Madhopur District, they were passing through our District and had heard of the crazy British family staying in a tea-garden. (They were butchered by their own villagers in Freedom Year, 1947.)

Unfortunately, the Boy was unhappy from the day we landed in India. The Brothers had shown us that he had loved India for centuries; and love and sorrow are akin. Later on, I was frequently asked, "If India makes the Boy so unhappy, why do you not all return to England after the war?" We could not have afforded this; but in

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any case we would not return, because we could not have kept up doing what we did — what mainly, the Brothers did — in any Western country. Life with the Boy and the Brothers had taught me, for instance, that in philosophy and religious experience, the average Indian begins where the average Western ends. This is not to compare one at the cost of the other. I will put it another way: the secrets of India's greatness in philosophy and religion are partly old age and long familiarity with seers, saints and sages. We Westerns have not had either of these advantages to such a degree; we are not long matured in acquaintance with such beings and their ways. Notwithstanding these handicaps, however, our capacities for knowing, willing and doing need not remain thwarted merely because the average Western criticises and obstructs trances, non-attachment, relinquishing the mundane mind, and so forth. He objects, "*What's left?*" Whereas the average Indian, accepting the trances (if of the right kind) and taking his basic philosophical and transcendental conduct-patterns for granted, peacefully proceeds onwards, murmuring in effect, "We have found — a Teacher of God." Consequently he receives more of the teaching,

Some aver that it is easier to meditate and philosophise in India because of the climate. On the contrary, it can be very hard to meditate in the heat, under — or even without — a *punkah*. If without, one is devoured by mosquitoes and other pests. If with *punkah*, one may almost be without breath! *Sannyasis* protect themselves by pulling their *chaddars* (shawls) right over their heads and bodies. (It is indeed a feat to achieve meditation while sweltering under a shawl, even a fine muslin one. I have tried it — that is, sweltered, not meditated). Furthermore, bungalows have to be closed against the summer heat from about 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Lack of oxygen can obstruct philosophic thought, not to say mystical realisations.

Despite such drawbacks, we have to admit that something deeply rooted in Indian hearts makes it possible to be aware of the Real, even under such untoward conditions; and so, for the sake of her spiritual background, the Brothers may have wished us to endure the climate for as long as was necessary.

Unhappy as he was, the Boy knew and obeyed; but his personality was outraged (a *karma*, I well knew). He could not, *as a personality*, adapt himself, although his real trend was total self-abnegation. "Through and through," the outer personality seemed to think, "I am British, and a Londoner." Poor Boy! There was war within him.

We did not try to 'solve' anything. We carried on, the Brothers strengthening us.

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We had not been more than a few weeks in India before the Brothers began to attract all sorts of people. We had no organised Centre for them; they taught wherever people, found them. By their holy power I at least began to learn what *home* is, and to have a dim conception of the Home of the Masters, who have no place to lay their heads; to see and condemn my house-pride, which closed their Home against me.

I will make my home where thou art, Beloved —
Where I can never forsake thee —
In the trees and winds and undying waters —
In the earth and stars and the unyielding rocks —
In thoughts of quiet and the desires of humbleness —
I will find thee, perfect and supreme;
In my secret homeless home,
Inly and alone.

There no winter will assail,
No sun will scorch.
The fears of night will flee,
No plunderer will penetrate.
In the calm, cool solitude of my hidden home, I will see thee and rejoice.

Wild things will come about us —
Birds, creatures of the forest,
Timid lizards,
Snakes and stinging creatures,
Made harmless by the Harmless One.¹

O *guru!*
In this my home with thee,
Thou wilt open mine eyes to loveliness
And mine ears to Wisdom's voice.

In this, my home,

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Thou wilt show my hands right doing
And feed me with Truth.
The perfumes of the clouds will be upon us,
And every fruitful flower will comfort our sojourning.

Home is where thou art!
O *guru!* I have found my home with thee.

One evening my husband returned from a walk with the Boy along the Kulu road, and told me that, as they were passing a quiet elderly Indian gentleman, he suddenly gazed hard at the Boy, then joined his palms, and prostrated himself in the dust at the Boy's feet. Neither my husband nor the Boy then knew Indian customs; but in any case, this would have been a most unusual thing to happen on a public road between utter strangers, two of them British, and the third not a beggar. The Boy was very embarrassed; but my husband hastily raised the man and asked him, "Why, Sir, do you do this to a complete stranger?" The man, who spoke good English, replied, "When you overtook me, I could not have told you why I came to this District, I had a great urge to come here, and when I saw him, I knew why. I will now return to my home, for I have seen what I came to see—a Master!" He fell at the Boy's feet again, and then left in silence. No doubt a Brother had possessed the Boy as this man was passing. We had so often seen this kind of thing.

Looking back over the years, I can truly say that the Boy had not one mean trait in his make up—physical or mental. He was moulded on the grand scale. But I thought then and I believe now, that he had been as it were lovingly put together for a purpose beyond our ordinary understanding; and this thought, which began to form in my mind soon after I met him, and which my husband shared, was corroborated from a high occult source during those early days in India, thus:

In a small estate abutting on the main road through our Valley to Kulu and Tibet, not far from the tea-garden in which our bungalow was situated, lived a simple and holy elderly Swami. It was his joy to keep his humble huts and sheds in a large, wild garden, as 'open house' to holy men who might be travelling back and forth along that route. One late afternoon we were walking on that road, and looked, as usual, over his little gate. There was a mild commotion going on in the garden, where a

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crowd of *sadhus* were gathered in great reverence around a big *sadhu*, who was, so to speak, ‘enthroned’ among them. These were not of the usual beggar type. One little monk, who was excitedly dancing attendance, called over to us to come in and join the circle. The rest of our party held back, but the Boy and I went in and sat down opposite the great monk on the mats offered to us, after having duly saluted him and the company. We learned from our host, who spoke English, that his guest had just come down from Lhasa and was on his way to his monastery in Bhutan. He had gone to Lhasa to be rejuvenated, as he was an old man, in his eighties. He now looked a robust forty. (But it must be understood that this monk went to Lhasa for a thing that money cannot buy, and will have earned his rejuvenation in ways we wot not of) The others were lionizing him because of that. Knowing the angle from which these monks view life, I am sure that they do not go in for rejuvenation — the process of which requires outstanding courage and austerity — in order to prolong it, but for the purpose of completing their parts in whatever holy works *karma* has assigned to them.

Masses of lovely rough-cut or uncut precious stones glittered around this great *yogi* in the late sunshine; but no one bothered about them; they were left about carelessly in heaps. I thought of those famous words of Shri Krishna about the *yogi*, “to whom a stone, gold, or a lump of earth, are the same”. The peace and beauty of that scene touched my heart: the unstudied graceful postures of the *sadhus*; their various-fashioned gerrua robes and their gold-brown skins lit up to every shade of flame by the setting sun; the solitary garden with its tiny half hidden dwellings, so small, so chaste, and the tall peaks around, taking up the monks’ ochre shades in the evening glow; it was all exquisite.

Amid this peace, this beauty, the big *sadhu* spoke to us through our host-interpreter. He showed great interest in the Boy, and presently asked if he might examine his body. We were taken aback but, the Boy being willing, the big *sadhu*, with our host and a group of others, took him into a nearby hut. After a time they came back, and when we were all seated again, the big *sadhu* announced to the company that “this man’s body has the marks of a *bara avatar*”² (a “great Incarnation”), but that “this particular life on earth has had and will still have many obstacles, obstructions and set-backs”. We had some talk on this, during which I said that I took it that the Boy would not be able sufficiently to manifest his real nature owing to the sort of lives we had to lead among denizens of the modern world, and so

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on. “Exactly,” he said. Then the big *sadhu* took the Boy aside and conversed with him familiarly, as if they were pals. Despite the tremendous gap which exists between these true *yogis* and the Western world, they talked unconstrainedly, the Bhutan *sadhu* from Lhasa and the inspired Boy from Bow.

We never saw that *sadhu* again. He took the road with his disciples and friends very early next morning, carrying on his person, without the slightest safeguards, a King’s ransom in precious stones — for his monastery temple, I supposed, as such men have no monetary interest except as may concern good works. I was pleased that he had confirmed my own feelings about our Boy. His prophecy about obstacles and obstructions, which seemed to us somewhat exaggerated at the time, was fulfilled to the letter.

At the suggestion of Major — and his mother, we soon left this Himalayan District and went lower down, into a District of the Punjab, where was their home. The tiny bungalow which they secured for us there was not much better than the last one; but at least there were some kindly residents, Indian and Anglo-Indian. The Boy burst the confines of the wee place; so he took a kind of outhouse for his room, while the landlord, a sweet and devout practising Brahmin, hastily built a large mud-and-thatch room in the compound, with a deep verandah, specially for the Brothers. We called it “The Masters’ House”, and here the Brothers taught, while I often stayed in this quiet room, away from the main bungalow. How grateful we were to our landlord! It was easy for the Brothers to manifest in this unspoiled spot. Their teachings here, to all and sundry) were more beautiful than ever, and it was here that my husband took some snapshots of them in possession of the Boy. (See photographs facing page 128).

When the big heat came, we trekked to the high Himalayas,. Here we had more with the idea of returning in the autumn horrible experiences with bungalows. We could not afford decent ones, so had to manage in those that other people would not take. In one, for instance, someone had lived who had died of tuberculosis. Nothing had been cleaned or even fumigated. We fled from there.

And here, too, I fell seriously ill and a Brother cured me of excruciating pain, as I have recounted in Chapter Thirteen (*Appearances — I*) while the Boy, who had refused a mosquito-net, was having recurrent malaria.

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The Brothers' teachings were given in this far mountain place to all sorts of Indian visitors (we were certainly *taboo* among the British!). Government officials, both humble and exalted) poured in, and poured forth an endless stream of questions. Fortunately I was able to get down a few accurate reports, representing minutes among hours of talks. Most of these people were burning with patriotism. No one minded or even saw our poverty-stricken rooms. (This began to be real India.) On one occasion an M.P., moved by thoughts engendered by the Brother, leaned forward and asked in a low earnest voice:

“Could the Great Teachers help to save India?”

The Brother paused. Then quietly said:

India was never lost! Although she has rejected her own laws, her own Prophets, these have never rejected her.

The way these words were spoken is absolutely unforgettable; so splendid was the tone, so gentle withal. Alas! I cannot put those glorious inflections on to paper. The Brother was surrounded by Indians, and the atmosphere suddenly became charged with that white passion of devotion to the Masters which lies so close to the surface in every true Indian heart. Someone asked brokenly:

“But will not the *rishis*³ come back and help India today?”

One cannot come back to where one already is!

At last — the Brother admitted his status. His words came with divine healing.

I cannot describe the feeling that went with this utterance, or the intensity of the response. There was a long silence. Several Indian patriots wept unashamedly. At length someone asked: “Then what must we do to bring you forth?”

The Holy One did not criticise. He had already as good as said: “We are here.” He just continued, softly:

Ask, and ask without attachment. As the bird sings, so your Teachers respond — as the bird responds to the light with its melody. Again if your light is darkened, how can WE sing?

The ancient East was constructively constructive. The modern West is constructively destructive . . . In the world today it is the system not merely to murder bodies, but to murder souls . . .

So it went on. Group after group. Hour after hour. Many times an educational high official called. He was a Muslim. He asked a question (unrecorded) which brought the answer:

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What have you people tried to mould the material of the prophets into? My friend, this artificial education is not only in India . . . Until the whole world can get rid of academicism in every form, your troubles will continue. What are your schools, your churches, mosques and temples doing? They are but blinding you! The Temple should be inside you.

“But some guidance is needed — ”

The guidance is inside you, but you are always fighting it in your mind

“Do you believe in-the transmigration of souls?”

(Speaking with unusually strong emphasis):

I don't believe in it. I tell you, it is true.

“Muhammad promised paradise and hell.”

Well, you have got them! What are you living in now? And what is paradise? [A foretaste of] the real paradise is experienced in the last three minutes you live upon the physical plane, at the time of death of the physical body.

“I do not grasp your meaning. Surely paradise is a state of supreme realisation?”

Yes, but not in the sense you take it to be. At death, man sees his life and relives it as a whole. He then knows the bad and the good; the end and the beginning. (He realises transiency.) This is the realisation which is true; not that other state which you call ‘paradise’. This is OUR idea of paradise; for when a man has full realization of bad and good — of beginnings and endings — it is paradise, because he can see through the pairs of opposites. There is none other. The duration of this true paradise depends upon ourselves. Alas! For most of us it is but a few minutes at the time of death; but were we normally human it would be experienced during this life as well as at death. We should have insight — discriminations — a sense of real values.

“Muhammad did not believe in reincarnation.”

Perhaps he did, and perhaps he did not. His teachings were taken down by illiterate people. And yet one could wish for more people of that kind today. . . . You educate people to want things and then do not supply the want! Then you wonder why there is discontent and unrest. When people are unhappy in themselves, they fight with their fellow men.

I asked, returning to the Prophet:

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“Were those people illiterate in our sense?”

Muhammad was illiterate in the worldly sense; otherwise he could not have done his work. (The Koran was made in high trances.)

“Muhammad was a genius,” I said. “You can’t expect ordinary people’s lives to be run by the same standard.”

There is genius everywhere; only most people stifle their genius.

The Government official:

“Yes — but how to bring out this genius?”

No! Not “how to bring it out.” It is rather, how you should refrain from stopping it coming out.

The visitor was dumbfounded by this quick retort. He said, humbly, prayerfully, with joined palms:

“Brother! We can’t see! We have no direction.”

But the Brother would not be worshipped. He continued on details of modern education, cooling the atmosphere:

You live inside closed walls, hence you have bad sight . . . and so on, and on.

I said we had planned to go back to “The Masters’ House” that autumn, but the Boy’s malaria worsened, and he contracted in addition a severe form of tonsil poisoning. British visitors put the Civil Surgeon under pressure to get us out — they were afraid it was diphtheria — and officialdom insisted that the poor Boy be inoculated. This was done in a brutal and agonising manner, which reflected these people’s attitude towards us, and he collapsed. We nursed him night and day. He was close to death then. Vultures sat on the verandah rails outside his room, but fortunately he was too ill to see them. The Indian doctor said our only hope was to take him to a noted malaria specialist in Lahore. The chance of getting him there alive was slender. Yet it had to be taken. His bed was carried over a mile to the rough lorry; this doctor injected him for the last time with strychnine; I placed myself on a stool beside him, and thus, with all the luggage and the others packed in, we travelled — a nightmare journey — to Lahore, and to an almost empty bungalow in one of its suburbs. The specialist came within half an hour. He took a grave view. There had been no diphtheria, he said. He prescribed a drug, five injections of which saved the Boy’s life, though on account of his strange body it was torture. I settled down to six months’ nursing. We wandered continuously. At a conservative estimate, we must

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have lived in over fifty different places in India; but our wanderings and sufferings were relieved by most beautiful and inspiring episodes. We lived a good deal to ourselves in some of those places; indeed, our neighbours as a rule knew very little of us. Most people thought the Boy mad; many laughed at him; in one hill place children stoned him. Visitors for the Brothers were usually people from outside. Some made special journeys. Most — got what they could and did not give testimony or thanks. The Boy never complained. *He was in good company.*

For the first two years, destiny kept me in a veritable cocoon. The Boy and the girls had meanwhile learned to find their ways about and had become experts at shopping and managing; but I was pretty ignorant of details, having other work to do. One day, for instance, I had to go on a short lorry journey unescorted. The young folk saw me off, and told me the fare, putting money in my hand. (I had forgotten a purse, so seldom did I emerge from my *purdah!*) When the conductor came for the fare, I had to hold out my palm full of small money, as, after some eighteen months there, I did not yet know Indian currency. The children roared when I told them; for they knew that I am practical. “Why unnecessarily burden one’s mind,” said I.

During the first ten years or so we suffered much petty annoyance from being watched by the British C.I.D., or whatever Government Department had charge of strangers and aliens. We are British subjects, and (foolish though it was) I felt much indignation at having my mail tampered with and so on. Perhaps the Government treated us as it did because many Indians of all degrees came to the Brothers. Yet our lives were open for all to know, and anybody could approach the Boy and us and the Brothers, for whose work our home was always open.

(I daresay Investigation Officers went there many times to scoff, and remained to pray.) We were even suspected, I was told, of being Bolshevik spies! These officers were only carrying out their duty; I blame their superiors who ought to have had more sense.

We were generally boycotted by the British too; but, we had gone to India unaccredited, a crime which outcast us amid the unutterable snobbery and ignorance of the majority of the British there. It was beyond the capacity of such people to perceive that we were absorbed in a divine drama in which such things as letters of introduction had no part. Even when, years after our arrival, this covert persecution ceased, we were barely tolerated, and never accepted.

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But whether we stayed in palaces, or rented insanitary places which were little more than hovels, the calm glory of the Brothers shone through all our circumstances, however depressing or catastrophic. It was always the same kind of filth, which we ourselves cleaned. We lived in trunks. Furniture was of the barest — poor beds, hard chairs, large shabby tables. Usually our abodes were insufficiently protected from the sun; water was not laid on; in many places there was no electric light. Fans were a rare luxury. We never had a refrigerator until the last eighteen months in India. The compounds, in general, were bare, frequented by goats, pariah dogs, etc.

Yet, truly in my husband's heart and mine — and in the Boy's, though he never spoke of it — the Brothers' glory and *friendship* supplanted all else. Our private heartbreaks had to go by the board together with all that we suffered under the smothering English atmosphere, as well as from our encounters with some thousands of half-starved, frustrated, often noble and cultured (but nearly always insincere and unreliable) Indians. In any case, from the Brothers' angle, such Indians and English were "six of one and half-a-dozen of the other". They sift people on the basis of real values, without racial prejudice.

From both sides of the Veil, it was a crusade passing description. Yet 'crusade' is the wrong word; for the Brothers neither fought nor proselytised. They simply WERE. **Have no segregation urge**, they would say. **Drop attachment! Become individuals!** They had sublime philosophy; but they were never dull. They kept us on tip-toe. They expounded, entertained — but never forced themselves on anybody.

During those early years in India we used sometimes to amuse ourselves (when we had time for this) with cards or chess. But the Brothers would not allow the Boy to play games in which his mind had to be keenly exercised, and so one day, when he and my husband were well dug into a game of chess, the piece he was about to move suddenly fell out of the Boy's hand. He was in trance! A Brother then sternly addressed my husband (let us call him, 'Smith'): **The Smith Man! We do not wish our Boy to play this game. We cannot use him if he works his mind like this.** He was gone on the instant, and the Boy awoke, pushed back his chair and drifted away from the table without, it seemed, the slightest recollection of what had happened, or of the game or of my astonished husband — who should not have been astonished, seeing that we were accustomed to such things.

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They had to give up playing cards together too, for the *apparent* reason that the Boy always knew his opponent's hand! (My husband laughingly remarked to me "What *is* the use of trying to play cards with a fellow who always knows your hand?") We came to the conclusion that Little Kardra was mixed up in this business. But there was always a serious object behind his fooling, and in this case it undoubtedly was to bring about the cessation of card games. I did not understand the Brothers' reason; unless it was to save the Boy from the occasional bad magnetism of card packs. The games themselves could have put no strain on his mind. They were childish.

My husband wrote an account of one of these queer games, in which the knowledge of his hand might, I thought, merely have been a clever guess. (But against this view, one has to concede that it happened too often to be a guess every time):

"I shuffled the pack. Contrary to strict procedure, I also cut the pack. I then dealt six cards apiece and one to the 'box'. The Boy discarded his two to the 'box', and I followed at once, remarking: 'There's no difficulty in discarding from a hand like this.' He at once asked, 'What have you got then, four nines?' In my hand were four nines! . . . The odds must have been enormous against any hand containing four nines. It was obviously a clear case of thought transference or mind reading . . . I had, of course, in the natural elation at holding such a valuable and rare hand, made a very definite thought form of the four nines."

Finally a Brother ordered: **Our Boy is not to play cards.** The Boy, who loved playing, was as usual unaffected, and dropped cards without another thought. He got up and drifted from the table as in a pleasant dream. Yet if a Brother wanted him to make a dash for something, it would be alertly done; as when one night during an extremely deep trance (in which he was speaking with an English friend, and to wake out of which took twenty minutes or so) the Brother told us that when their Boy woke he would go swiftly to Lahore, which was some miles away. Sure enough, as soon as he was awake, instead of staggering up as usual, he was off like a shot, without a word to any of us, and we had scarcely time to get to the door when we saw him disappearing down the road on his bicycle. The amazed Englishman, for whom the Brother had sent the Boy off on some special errand, was filled with concern because he had not had time to recover, to take his usual big cup of warm milk, and put on a warm sweater. Trances of this kind always left him perspiring heavily, (This

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perspiration is one of the *yoga*-signs, by the way, which is well known in India. It can happen in bitter cold, as on that Punjab wintry night.) The Boy will have been over-shadowed by a Brother and so the business went through. But they pushed the Boy too hard that time. He went down with double pneumonia. His life again hung on a thread. I nursed him at home with the help of my eldest daughter. There was no penicillin, etc., in those days. He recovered. The doctor was astonished. He had tried to get him to hospital because he did not expect him to live.

When we landed in India our group consisted of my husband and me, my son and two daughters, and the Boy. A few months after we arrived, however, my son rightly felt that he must go out into the world; so he got a job in Lahore, and when, later, the Second World War broke out he joined the Army.

After my son had gone there came the necessity for further thinning of our small group. Our financial position was impossible; and my husband had to take a job in Delhi, about eighteen months after we landed, coming to us whenever he could. He was terribly cut up over leaving the Boy and the Brothers, for his life was centred in them, and his concern was for all that appertained to them, and to the Boy and me.

As the group thinned, physical and psychic strain on the Boy increased. With my husband and son both gone, the task of maintaining our domestic conditions — one among many tasks — devolved on the young girls, the Boy and me; *but the Brothers continued as before*. The Boy, however, was bereft, indeed; he had received wounds from which he never recovered, for my husband, particularly, had been a supporting influence; he had ‘fed’ the Boy psychically, yet was not himself depleted. They had been like a couple of schoolboys together. It had done my husband good to play with the Boy, though he was the Boy’s senior by about as many years as I was, while this was an immense help to the Boy himself who, it must be remembered, had practically no outlets.

But in any case, from the day we landed in India, the Boy’s exuberance had begun to abate. He said at once that he was unhappy — that he felt as if a sword were hanging over his head. “I feel as if I would choke,” he cried, “there is a black cloud over us.” He felt a terrible sense of *doom*, and wanted to “go ‘ome”. But the Brothers, at that time, willed otherwise, and (as I found out much later) they were right; though not as we see rightness within our valleys, but as they see it from their peaks.

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CHAPTER SEVEN

In Kashmir

Sometime in 1937 found us in Kashmir, whither we had gone for my benefit, since anxiety over the Boy's malaria and our continual drifting about had played further havoc with my health. The stay in Kashmir turned out to be a long one, broken only by occasional winter visits to Lahore and elsewhere.

We lived some of the time in cheap houseboats, and some of the time in small houses and flats. I remember a rajah coming to see a Brother when we were living in a very small unfurnished boat which someone had lent us. He entered the first compartment, which happened to be mine. "Where is your drawing-room?" he asked. "Here," said I, with as fine a sweep of the arm as the place allowed. "Ah, I see — and your dining-room?" "There," I said, indicating a small wicker table in a corner. "Your bedroom, Mataji?¹ I suppose you have one?" he enquired solicitously. "Of course, your Highness! These wooden boxes on which we are sitting are my bed. My wardrobe is inside them." He had been English trained, so he was rather flustered, but a Brother soon calmed him — for the Brothers taught in that same compartment of the boat too. Yes the story was always the same: coping with chaotic domesticides and diverse personalities against a background of the immutable Brothers. We could not keep pace with them, and adequately to convey their atmosphere is utterly beyond me.

India is a long way from Europe, but distance made no difference to the Brothers, who could bring things off thousands of miles away, or give accounts of distant happenings which we afterwards found to be correct. This aspect of their work ranged from giving help to individuals to helping-or endeavouring to help-nations. One of the most remarkable instances of this last occurred in the tiny house-boat which I have just described. It seemed to be a kind of super-telepathy, *plus* dramatising, *plus* prophecy.

I have said that the Boy was hopeless at languages, which makes the following all the more striking evidence of the power the Brothers had over his mechanisms; for whether or not they telepathically used my daughter, who could speak German (but

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was not in the least interested in politics), they still had to master the vocal apparatus of the Boy, who knew not a word of German. The thing happened some time before the Second World War — I think it was in 1937 or 1938 — and was a prediction of vast import which came true several years after. It was a perfect example of the Brothers' power to transcend space and time — in fact, a serious catastrophe, at a considerable distance in both, was anticipated and warned against, at a moment, too, when we were all being lulled into expectations of a long and fruitful peace.

One day, I was alone with the Boy and my eldest daughter when suddenly he began to speak rapidly in German. He had gone into trance, as so often happened, without our noticing. I asked my daughter to interpret, but the Brother was describing a scene which moved so rapidly that he could not stop for her to translate. My daughter, struggling to keep up with him, began to tell me that he seemed to be speaking at a top-level conference, in the characters of several Secretaries of State and other such persons, who were evidently expecting a bigger man still to address the conference. At this point it was quite impossible for my daughter further to interpret at the Brother's lightning speed, and I got so wound up that I begged whoever was inly present with the Boy to translate into English-whereupon, *without the least break*, English was switched on.

Just then, it seemed, the Big Man was arriving, for the people around the table were making only a few whispered remarks and generally 'hushing down'. (All this, as usual, was so perfectly suggested through the Boy, that the scene and the people lived before one.) Then came silence, followed soon by a long, masterly speech on contemporary European politics, delivered in measured words, in a strange, hard voice — calm, trenchant, yet urgent too. Every argument seemed clear and arresting. If only we had had a dictaphone! Evidently war plans were being discussed at a high-level conference in Germany; and the eminent speaker's anxiety had been aroused over some question, affecting Germany and the rest of Europe, to do with the Ukraine. He punctuated every few sentences with increasing emphasis: **"Gentlemen! Hands off the Ukraine!"** He dinned it in: **"I tell you, gentlemen — nay, I implore you — and I warn you! — hands off the Ukraine!"** Otherwise, he said, all would be over with them; the future for them and others would be jeopardised; the results would be catastrophic. I leave it to historians of the war which came a year or so after this to determine how much hands on the Ukraine

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bedevilled the European situation, both at the time of the invasion of the Ukraine by Germany and after.

We were so taken aback, so thrilled and absorbed, that I could hardly get any of it down; but I *did* get the gist down of the speech in the above short sentences, from which I made the report of the trance, immediately after. (My usage was not to pass a word, a sentence, in any report on the Brothers of which we were not *certain*.) Meanwhile, questions pour into one's mind on an occasion like this: Who was that Big Man? Where was that top conference taking place? Did a Brother influence the Big Man's words; or was a Brother merely giving us a sort of record of the meeting in speech and mime; — or was there no meeting or speaker at all, the whole thing being merely a dramatised prophecy? How did the Brothers manage to get the Boy to speak in fluent German? And how did they contrive to translate into English *as if the man himself were speaking it*?

In the spring of 1937, over two years before the Second World War began, the Brothers prophesied the fall of France and Paris. Indeed, it became a common occurrence for one of us to open the morning paper and exclaim, "Hallo! Do you remember the Brothers telling us such-and-such would happen? Well — here it is!"

The last was a case of knowing at a great distance, combined with high prophecy. The next is of a different kind, though again implying that the Brothers saw something happening at a distance of which none of us had any knowledge. We were still living in the wee houseboat, but this time it was the depths of winter (we had not been able to leave Kashmir that year), and we were ice-bound and buried in snow, which had frequently to be cleared from the roof to prevent the boat from sinking. It was, I was told, the worst winter in living memory.

One early afternoon the Boy, warmly clad but without any baggage whatsoever, and certainly without enough money for a long journey, even in normal weather, just sauntered out of the boat and proceeded miraculously to achieve on foot the crossing of the Banihal pass, which was then closed to all owing to the state of the roads. He got down to Lahore — about two days' journey by lorry — across the mountains and foothills, saved an old woman's life there, and came back none the worse for his adventure, in spite of the fact that his chronic bronchial condition — an industrial disease — laid him open to chills.

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Fantastic as this may seem, I can only explain his feat by what is known in Tibet as *lung-gom-pa* — the racing monks. *Lung-gom-pa* is lightly dismissed by some experts on Tibet; but although many stories about it are doubtless tall tales, it is a fact, as I can testify, for, twice, the Brothers actually put *me* — a small, podgy, semi-invalid — through this amazing, rapidly-bounding ‘walk’, which feels as if one were springing on air, effortless and happy. I was made to do about two miles mostly uphill and much of it through a long stony lane, full of deep, hard ruts. This was witnessed by several responsible persons, and the consensus of opinion was that I took the road at a conservative estimate of 5½ miles an hour. If the Brothers could do that with me, what might they not have done over the Banihal pass with the Boy?

I need not describe what we all went through during his absence of some ten days. (Well, perhaps I should leave out the young people, as they took everything he did for granted.) When at last he strolled in — just as if he had returned to tea from a walk — he was in his vague, half-awake state, and I afterwards suspected that he had had little, if any, of his own consciousness during those perilous journeys through the mountains, though I gathered from him later that he had sometimes wakened just a bit, as a person in restless dreams becomes vaguely conscious and then dreams again. A Brother came immediately on his return, and told the whole story, which I verified from Lahore, from the old lady’s son. That woman was, according to the world’s judgment, an obscure and unimportant person. (Fortunately, the Brothers’ judgments are not as ours! In the East, an *arhat* is said to be “an ocean of mercy without reason.”)²

In the spring of 1939 my husband died suddenly of cholera. To extend the work he was doing he had been sent to Calcutta on the advice of his Director, but against my advice — nay, prayers. I wrote in effect, just before he left: “Life is more important than money. Come home; we will manage somehow. Have we ever been let down?” Ten days after his arrival in Calcutta he was dead. A dear English friend broke the news to us in Lahore, whither we had gone that year for the winter months. His death was a terrible blow, not only to me, but also to the Boy and the work. (Here I must draw a curtain.) Having lost in India, from smallpox and cholera, the two men I had most loved — my brother and my husband — I wondered who would be the next to go; but there was no possibility of being completely crushed by grief when the Brothers were present to take out the worst stings, and they now came to my rescue, as indeed they gave living waters to all mourners who sought them out.

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Soon after my dear husband's death, the Second World War was upon us. Naturally, we all wanted to do our bit; but I trembled over the possible destruction of the Brothers' instrument. The Boy and my son put down their names for the Army, on the British Resident's list in Kashmir. Then my son weighed in by calling privately on the Resident, and telling him frankly about the Boy and the Brothers. "What? — what? — *trances?*" spluttered the Englishman. "Glad you told me — what? Impossible to have a fellah goin' into trances and drivin' lorries off the road — *precipice's*, you know — *what?*" Thus the Boy's name came to be struck off the list. (So much for the vision of the curious English who, it would seem, would sometimes rather appear as stones, clowns or dunderheads than admit themselves to be what they are — the greatest poets and mystics in the Western world.)

The Boy was furious! He never learned what had happened, but thought his application had been turned down for some ordinary reason — because he was the wrong age (he was thirty-seven), or unfit (he had a permanent injury to one of his feet, and very weak sight in his right eye, both due to accidents in his factory days)..He then applied to be admitted to the Army police, but the Resident had done a thorough job and the Boy was met by a blank wall. They wouldn't have him, and he had to swallow his pride and disappointment. At that juncture the grief and strain of my husband's passing asserted itself and a stomach ulcer laid him low for two months. As soon as he mended, he put all the, strength that could be spared from his trances into the war work I had meantime taken on with the girls. My son having joined the Army, there were only the four of us to carry on now. In past days the Boy had always been a labourer, but now he had to be labourer and a boss combined. This went on for some five years, and during those strenuous times I often felt that the Brothers took him in full waking consciousness at the factory I had organised to make woolen garments for the troops, where his work was of the roughest; while at the same time, by his winning personality and kindness, he kept order and enthusiasm among a difficult and much-beset crowd of artisans.

Despite our war work, the Brothers carried on with undiminished power. I knew well, however, that the general strain which my husband's death and my son's leaving had imposed on the Boy, must tell in the long run. For the time being, however, he made himself absolutely indispensable. We had set up the factory on borrowed capital of fifteen hundred rupees; but before long we had some four

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thousand people working for us, including hand spinners, and ran two shops as well, to help keep ourselves and the war work going. Our shops were beautiful and became sort of unofficial clubs; the touch of the Brothers was there, and people used to ask if they might sit there for a while to get refreshed. Sometimes I was asked how I had learned to produce these lovely things; but what would it have availed to tell people that I had never learned — that “*Yoga* is skill in action”?³

The Boy would be both a factory boss and a ‘hand’ for a few days, always doing the hardest jobs with our Muslim workers, and then come along to the shop for a few days as salesman. I always sent for him if sales were slow. He just, as it were, stood around, and sales went up. I spent most of my own time in the factory; in fact, in the early months we all went to live on the factory premises amid the awful filth of that Kashmiri quarter; but we were at the top of the building, where the smells were not so bad, and in spite of the discomforts it was a wonderful experience. One of the divinest Brothers came there.

I said our artisans were “a difficult and much-beset crowd.” The Kashmiri is difficult, anyway; he can’t help it, poor devil; he is a born mischief-maker. Even before we started our war work, I had been deeply moved by the plight of Kashmiri artisans and had tried to organise guilds for their protection. That was the signal for trouble! Among many irritating and frustrating things, poison was somehow administered to me, and my life was only saved by having no servant and my younger daughter doing the cooking and watching every morsel of food we ate, while the Boy did all the marketing. Poisoning having failed, arson was tried. A burning mass floated downstream, close to the bank where our little houseboat was moored. It stopped, of course, against the dry wooden jutting end of our boat, which was soon ablaze. That happened one afternoon when the Governor of Kashmir was with the Brothers at the other end of the boat. The Boy awoke quickly, and he and the Governor extinguished the fire between them, with the aid of a couple of men who had been sitting on the Bund above, and came running to help — though it was curious that these men had not seen the floating mass or the blaze it had started. Had that fire succeeded, all the reports of the Brothers’ teachings would have been lost.

Naturally, when we got down to war work, our difficult Kashmiri workers were further bedevilled by their fellow countrymen from outside the factory — men who, very likely in the pay of politicians, manufacturers and shop-keepers, were out to destroy us. Under the guise of fighting the British and the British war-effort, their

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real motives were to pull down our high standard of craftsmanship, and to prevent us from setting the wretched enslaved Muslim artisans of Kashmir on their feet. Whatever Gandhi might say, to help these Muslim workers was not Congress policy. I came definitely to know this. Heavens! What a time we had behind the scenes of those beautiful shops!

Presently I will give an account of a great occult experience concerning myself, the Boy and an unknown but mighty Brother who had never come before and never did, after. Before giving this, however, I must now show more of the background of wickedness and strife which made the event all the more astounding, as we shall see.

I well remember my dilemma when local Kashmir manufacturers refused to supply me with knitting yarns. This was a political boycott: they were selling to anyone but war workers. I had never engaged in manufacture of any kind, but thought to myself, "Where there's a will there's a way," and sent out to the bazaar forthwith for samples of every available kind of handspun woolen 'thread'. This was not knitting yarn, but just the strands from a combination of which it might be made. For one or two nights I sat up alone, experimenting with these, until I found the right kinds of threads, and their several combinations, wherewith to make knitting wools of different thicknesses. Then we got in workers and taught them. As I have no trouble in sitting cross-legged, I sat on the floor among them, and we worked away together. That, in brief, is how the people of Kashmir learned to make knitting yarn from their own genuine, warm, handspun wools (but I have been told that the standard deteriorated greatly after we left), and the heat engendered by those unadulterated wool yarns gave life to many a soldier. We had to train knitters, too. This was done by my younger daughter. My work became so popular that when Sheikh Abdullah, who was then at his zenith, thundered in one of the mosques that all the British must quit Kashmir forthwith, someone at the back of the crowd shouted: "What about the little old woman at Third Bridge — the Mother of Kashmir?" I appealed personally to him, for the sake of the good we were doing for his Kashmir workers, to leave us alone. He answered that he would crush us. But he didn't succeed!

Our factory work was often bitterly hard, not alone in itself, but because we were constantly plagued by open as well as covert sabotage, moral and physical,

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presumably by Congress people under Abdullah, among others. I remember, for instance, sitting conspicuously in the factory yard, an easy target for brickbat throwers, in order to prevent the men who had to work out there from being stoned; for while I sat there, nobody dared to throw. Still, it was not exactly comfortable for me! The police merely laughed at us. The then Prime Minister of Kashmir, Gopaldaswami Ayyangar, who had had Abdullah in prison, made as if to help us, but actually did nothing. He was keeping in with the Congress, one supposed, while openly supporting the Allies. There was no gauging these political twists and we didn't try to. We found ourselves, in fact, waging a small war in Kashmir, merely in order to get woolen garments made for the Allied troops, many of whom were Indians. But what did these politicians care if their fellow countrymen died from exposure? (The Brothers have said: **Politics are born in the cradle of corruption.**)

On one occasion, when we were on a rush of production, long nails were secretly removed from the roof-supports of our biggest loom-shed, so that gradually all support was taken from the beams which held up the roof. All our looms, in full operation, were in there.

One Friday afternoon — it was the Muslim Sabbath and the shed was empty of workers — one of my daughters, who was working alone in an office in the main building, saw the *entire roof collapse*. She telephoned home and we rushed to the factory. The weather was awful; there was deep slush underfoot, and sleet fell day and night.

It was at a time like this that the Boy showed his mettle. Overshadowed by the Brothers, he worked heroically day and night. He rallied the deeply disheartened and nervous workers, who were constantly being plagued and intimidated, and transformed those cowering Kashmiris into men who slaved as one. They gathered about him eagerly; even the very old, and little boys, would scarcely leave the factory. Fortunately, the factory yard was a large one, so we decided to put up a temporary shed there for our looms. I can see the Boy now, astride the ridge-pole of the rickety skeleton roof, drenched to the skin, pulling and hauling, encouraging the shivering workers. We women were not allowed out; so we spent our time making fires, drying clothes, and providing all and sundry with hot drinks and such food as they would take from us, and incidentally carrying on what we could of the business.

As soon as the big temporary shed was roofed, the damaged looms were extricated from the *débris*. Then one dear old master-weaver, who was too feeble to work at

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building but insisted on remaining on the spot with his men and boys, got busy with a selected group, repairing the looms. This was a cruel task, in poor light, confusion and cold; yet he worked on magnificently, despite our combined efforts to get him to stay warmly at home. When this job was finished, he sat outside in the mud, against a fence, where all could see and be enheartened by him. There he remained in his wet clothes, in the bitter sleet hugging his *kangri*⁴ and praying for us. Dear old man! Within a few days he died of pneumonia. He had laid down his life for the honour of his craft.

Of course, work in Kashmir was not as bad as that all the time; though always gruelling, uphill and exasperating. However, the stuff for the troops went out, whatever happened.

Petty strikes and lock-outs, endless vicious obstructions from every quarter, anxieties and overwork, were scarcely propitious for the great occult experience which then occurred — nothing less than the awakening of the greatest power in the human mechanism, the *kundalini* power, in my spine. In the midst of this turmoil of intrigue and obstruction, libel, mud-slinging and stone-throwing, I suddenly experienced several of the most prominent symptoms of the uncoiling of the Serpent Power, as it is called.⁵ This momentous event began to create serious changes in the balance of both my automatic and cerebro-nervous systems. I was shockingly harassed and incommoded by the utter unexpectedness and stupendous force of the thing. I had never looked for *kundalini* or any other power; and here I was, planted with this super-problem, when I had urgently to deal — daily and hourly — with crowds of workers and troops of villagers and wool merchants. I also had to cope with stocks, dyes, distribution, accounts and what-not. Bales and bales of raw wools passed daily through my fingers, when I sorted it for qualities for spinners. (I could do it with my eyes closed. Here my musician's trained hands were useful.) Besides all this there were soon three packed shops — a necessary side-line if we were to keep afloat, for we were not capitalised.

We had become fashionable — strictly as traders, of course. Besides comforts for the troops, we made exquisite materials for the 'best people' everywhere. We dominated stalls at Viceregal bazaars. The Viceroy's daughters ran a whole stall at Delhi devoted to our manufactures. We clothed the mighty in India and in distant lands — in short we were a roaring success.

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But meanwhile, I would clutch on to my desk, or wool, or counter, reeling with the *kundalini* power, trying to look normal before clerks and customers, merchants and workers. I need not have worried, however, since most of these people were Indians. Had I told them, they would probably have understood — even Muslims would have understood well enough; for there is plenty of soul-pooling between Muslims and Hindus. They would have worked better, for all their ups and downs, than they already did for us. Yes: I might have had the sympathy of these humble folk; but the work had to go on. Telling would only have interrupted it. I knew my people! They would have made this an occasion for a fete. Incense from the Hindus; garlands from all! So. I told no one — not even the Boy.

This state of affairs continued for about ten days. I was not ill — then — but I was nearly crazed by the terrific onset of power within me, and the clash of the two streams of my life⁶ threatened to break me. Every bit of my frail and always rather ill body was tingling. By the end of this time, the *kundalini*, which takes a spiral-feeling path in the spinal region, had risen from the base of my spine to the psychic centre or chakra (wheel) called *vissudhi* in Sanskrit. (This *chakra* is in the region of the spine which controls the throat. The Brothers had taught me this.) I was getting desperate, for I knew that an unguided or premature awakening of *kundalini* is extremely dangerous. When, even under the best conditions, this power begins to rise from the *chakra* in the base of the spine where it has lain dormant for ages, one should be guarded against disturbance; diet should be carefully supervised, and the help of one in whom *kundalini* is functioning, should be at hand. I had none — or thought I had none — of those conditions then. I could not retire for a while from my multifarious activities. We were in it “for the duration”. There was no occultist near, on the physical plane, whose services I could seek. My life was one long rush from morning till night — and one long fight, too, as I have indicated. Food was indifferent, unhealthy and hurriedly eaten. I decided, therefore, that this *kundalini* could not go on. But — *how to stop it?*

Having had quite a lot of training from the Brothers, I did not ask the Boy to call a Brother, but just waited. The Boy had his own burdens at that time. True, he was a temperamental nuisance; but he also took unthinkable strains with impunity. (A Brother had once remarked: **Temperamental people are as a rule one per cent mental and ninety-nine per cent temper;** but the Boy did not come under this category.)

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I had not long to wait. On the very evening of the day on which I took the momentous decision that this *kundalini* must be stopped, for *this* life, a new Brother, of an extremely forceful kind, ‘arrived’ like a thunder-clap in my small sitting-room where I was at my desk at work. There were curtains drawn over a wide arch between that room and my bedroom, and I saw him, huge and tall, flashing through. The Boy was sitting a little distance away, behind me, and within a few seconds, that Brother had him entranced, and I heard a stentorian voice: **Well! What is the matter?** I had already dropped my papers and was with him, pouring out my trouble. I knew that he knew well what was the matter. I entreated him: “Brother! I am breaking up! This simply *must* be stopped!” He was extremely impatient, almost annoyed, it appeared, at my stumbling words; and quite naturally so, since he knew all about it! (This new Brother also seemed to have difficulty in ‘holding’ the Boy, which could have accounted for his seeming impatience and uncontrolled, loud voice.) He barely held himself in check whilst I stumbled on: “O Brother! I don’t know who you are — but — help me! It has come up my spine and has reached —” With a swift movement he clapped his (the Boy’s) right palm on the spine slightly under the back of my neck, which spot is connected with the throat chakra: **THERE — it is THERE — I know. I KNOW! You need not tell ME,** he thundered. **It will be stopped! You will have no more trouble from tonight,** and on the very instant, he was gone! It had happened so quickly that I was out of breath. My younger daughter was present.

That was the end of *kundalini* for me, for which I was indeed thankful. I never asked the Brothers why or how it came then, for common sense told me that it must have been accidentally aroused. Such things have been known to happen. I remember an Indian doctor in London — but that is another story! Anyway, *kundalini* should be left alone. The Brothers are scathing to people who ask them to arouse their *kundalini*, etc. It is a ridiculous desire.

Kashmir is a land of the tourist, and people from all over India, and a few from abroad, sought out the Brothers there. The teachings were as great as ever, the Brothers in magnificent control; and we managed to take down more than at any time before or since. Our visitors were mostly Indian, belonging to academic Government and soldiering classes — Hindus, Muslims, agnostics. A few Indian women also came. Some of their names I know; most were unknown to me. People were introduced, but I was often too occupied to catch their names.

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Of the many episodes during our stay in Kashmir, there was one which was an outstanding achievement in the Brothers' control of their Boy.

An American lady who entertained a good deal lived there part of each year. One summer, Professor Drew (that is not his real name) was among the guests staying at her house, where he contacted one or more of the Brothers. He told me that he thought the teachings he had received "Christ-like". Our American friend invited the Boy and me and my two daughters to join her party at an evening *fête* given in aid of charity by the British Resident in Srinagar. The large grounds of the Residency were dotted with grand old illuminated trees, and a dance-floor had been laid in one of the open spaces. The band was as good as one could get in India, the lawns also, and there was an excellent buffet. Scents from wide flowerbeds and flowering trees were in the air; the crowd was large and gaily dressed; there were all sorts of intriguing side-shows; yet there was still room to lose oneself in the wide, softly lit garden beyond the area of the *fête*. The effect was beautiful, but theatrical, as many such shows are.

The Boy was in his 'Lamb' mood. He looked strikingly handsome in evening clothes, and I noticed that many glances were sent his way, for he was easily the best-looking man in the place. But he was not a dancing man, and nothing would induce him to fall in with anything which was not to his liking. He was fierce about ballroom dancing. "Dancing's mucky," he would say. "They know it is, an' they're pretendin', 'cos they *wants* ter be mucky." Instead of 'doing' the *fête*, "the silly old dear" — as we put it to ourselves — was content to sit beside me on a big sofa and watch our girls dancing, with his habitual grim protectiveness, whilst talking abstractedly with our hostess on his other side.

After a while he got up and wandered off to a quiet part of the garden. I glanced over the back of the sofa and saw him, some distance away, standing apart under a vast exotic tree studded with tiny electric lamps, which looked like enchanted fireflies. Then I forgot about him; but evidently my younger dancing daughter had kept an eye on him — force of habit, I suppose. Also 'he' must have beckoned to her; for the next thing I knew was my girl leaning over the back of the sofa, where Professor Drew had joined me. "Mother," she whispered, "a big Brother has arrived over there among the trees, and he's sent me to ask the Professor to go to him."

The *fête* was at its height. No one noticed the Great One. This was indeed a thrill amid the revels!

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I got up at once and walked across the lawn with the Professor to the great tree where the Boy — or rather, a Brother — was standing. He was alone under the dark tree, spangled with its electric fireflies, a tall, still figure, his face shining and majestic. The Professor approached the Brother and they stood together silently, like any two men taking a quiet breather away from the dance. I stayed aside. A pair of lovers emerged from somewhere and flitted across the shadow of the tree. They seemed so much more beautiful because that Brother was there.

The silence was broken only by dance music which reached us etherealised; and then the Brother's voice: **You may go, Nurth!**

Now, there was no seat in that place. The men could scarcely have squatted on the lawn in dress clothes. Besides, at the British Residency, to 'go native' would have been a crime of crimes. Sitting or squatting, the Boy would have been comparatively safe; but I was afraid that something might happen to him when the Brother was leaving him, and that this might create a scene at the fête; but before I could speak the Brother added, **Do not worry about the Boy! He will be perfectly all right.**

A great Brother having said that, I knew all would be well, and strolled back to my sofa; but before I could sit down, I had to gaze once again to where that Brother, looking like a god in dress clothes, was now talking with Professor Drew. Apart from all else, the artist in me was enraptured. I stared, hungry for beauty, my skin tingling, enjoying the sheer sensuous and imaginative appeal of what was going on. It seemed so complete: the revellers, the Indian servants, grave and charming in their Government finery, flitting to and fro with drinks; elder people with their multitudinous preoccupations; the lovely sky; the big mysterious garden, enfolding something so much bigger and more mysterious. I had never seen anything better staged.

I had to come out of my dream and sit down; which meant turning my back on that enchanted tree; but any more staring at those two men might have attracted attention; so I glued my eyes on the dancers.

After a while I whispered to my American friend, "A great Brother is still standing over there under that big tree with the Professor. He's having a private talk with our friend;" but the words were hardly out of my mouth before the Brother, in full possession of our Boy, strode around from the back of the sofa and sat down between us. He had kept his promise. I signed to my friend not to speak, as she might mistake that figure for the Boy, and the Brother could not reply there. Nobody had noticed

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anything yet. I supposed that the Professor was strolling about the garden. The Brother remained calm and withdrawn; but now his atmosphere did not affect me; for my mood of exaltation had given place to one of great anxiety. How on earth was the Boy to 'come back' without being seen by everybody? Our party occupied a central position. We were socially shunned by the British anyway. If this were allowed to happen, it would be a triumph for the shunners. I felt frantic, thinking bitterly that the blessed Brothers never seemed to care what misery they plunged us into. What about those poor girls of mine? They would be 'disgraced', according to British standards, if the Boy awoke from trance on that sofa and in the middle of that party. And what about our hostess? It was unthinkable! Here was something for which I was totally unprepared.

I choked back tears, looking on the ground to hide them. The Brother said nothing. He just waited on, unperturbed; and the suspense coupled with his indifference made things worse. How *callous* they could be, I thought. I wondered, could we somehow get the Brother to take the Boy away? But the Brother remained stony, and somehow I dared not ask him. Had I lost my nerve? That was so unlike me with the holy Brothers. I began to wonder why I could not ask him, as I had done so often before, to take the Boy out of the crowd. I would go too; and the Boy could then 'come back' unobserved. But still I hesitated, miserable, eyes on the ground.

Presently, a favourite dance was at its height, and the Brother nudged my elbow. I looked up at him, and at that moment the Boy began to 'come back'. I held my breath, but — this was extraordinary! He was coming back gradually, *without the usual drooping or subsiding in his seat and falling asleep. The expression of the face and eyes simply altered from that of the Holy One to that of the Boy, as his body sat there, erect, with eyes wide open, in the brilliant light, music and laughter. There was not the slightest sign of an 'awakening' from sleep or trance.* The big change-over took place like a slow transformation. It was like the turning down of the wick of a lamp; the light of the Brother faded, and — there was the Boy. It was terrific! If the Boy was aware of what took place, he spoke no word of it to me or anybody, then or after.

The Brothers — for there must have been several to carry through that evening's operation — could not have chosen a more impressive setting for it. Not only did they stage-manage the Brother's departure in that considerate and unusual way, but amid sounds of jazz-music and revelry and the chaotic criss-cross of worldly minds,

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they had evoked a magic grove for our Professor friend and raised therein a living temple of the Mysteries.

Was it a breath from a past life which touched the Boy one day when we visited the famous Nasim Bagh garden? (“If there is a heaven on earth, it is here — it is here!” Nur Jehan’s uncle, Asif Khan, inscribed in the arch under a bridge through which one approaches the garden from the lake.) The Boy had been well until we got a few hundred feet inside the gates, when he began to faint. “Get me out of here,” he whispered, ashen-faced. We got him out somehow; and he recovered at once after we had gone some paces from the place. He was not a fainting type, Only, years after, when he was really ill, did he go in for collapses, and he was well that day. He could not be induced to revisit that garden.

We closed down our factory and our shops at the end of the War, and in 1946 I was initiated into *sannyasa* and became a Swami. (When this happened my late chief accountant remarked to me: “It does not make any difference anyway! We have always looked upon you as a *sannyasini*.”) I was able to take the formal step because the girls were leaving home, and presently married. Soon after taking *sannyasa* I had therefore found myself alone with the Boy.

Before this happened (in July, 1943), he and I had been married, though for both of us this was only a form, a gesture made in deference to Caesar. This is how it came about: A few days before my beloved husband died in April, 1939, he exacted a promise from me, “I want you to give me a solemn promise,” he said, “that you will never let our Boy out of the house.” This was when he was about to entrain at Delhi for Calcutta, where he died; I had travelled to Delhi to wish him God speed. I gave the promise. But after his death I found myself in a difficult position. The Boy remained with us of course; and here was a glorious opportunity for dirty talk, of which the British were quick to avail themselves. I did not like the situation at all, nor did he. We bore it for about four years, and in the end, it suddenly solved itself.

One afternoon after a stormy interview the Boy, who seemed wild enough to be ready to blow up everything, stalked into his room and locked the door. I went to my own room to pray. I was still on my knees when there came a knock on my door. I opened it. “May I come in?” the Boy asked contritely. He sat on the side of my bed. Then in that abstracted tone of his, which reminded me poignantly of the early days

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when he had talked to me in the old garden in London, he said, “The scales have fallen from my eyes. I don’t know what I’ve been thinking of all this time. You’re the only woman in the world for me.” I protested that ours could be no marriage at all; that I was twenty years older than he was; that in any case I should soon be a Swami. I made every possible objection, but he persisted. “If you were ninety, you’d still be the only woman in the world for me. I intend to look after you until the end of your life. Now — *what about it?*” We talked on for a while, and then I saw that this was the answer to my prayer, and what my dear one would have wished; that it was right as well, since the Boy saw it as right. So four years after my beloved husband’s death the Boy and I were married. (I can’t say that we lived happily ever after; yet I think we achieved even more than that.) In due course I followed my intention and with the full assent of the Boy became a Swami.

But the curious thing was that, whatever we did or did not do, our position still remained irregular to one or other section of society. To Europeans we had done the right thing; but to most Indians it was crazy anyway; and after I became a *sannyasini*, it was wrong — though how they worked that out I never fathomed.

It worried the Boy that I should still be disapproved of. The foolish creature thought it would be the proper thing for him to go away and leave me. It was an altogether absurd idea, in view of the sublime nature of our work together; but in the autumn of 1946, within a few weeks of my taking *sannyasa*, he dashed off to England, and I thought I would never see him again. He managed to get a job cleaning windows and lavatories in a huge block of business premises in London. Of course he broke down; and a friend wrote to me that, had he not collapsed and so been forced to abandon that job, he would probably have died. In one of the coldest winters ever, rationed for coal and food, and largely though not entirely cut off from the Brothers, he went from one dangerous chill to another.

Meanwhile, I had left Kashmir and had wandered into the Punjab, to Lahore, Hardwar, Banaras, Delhi, and a hill place in the Mussoorie District. I became seriously ill. This brought the Boy back to India, and he joined me there in May, 1947, a sadder, wiser man — and a physical wreck. What a mad fellow! By this intolerance of criticism, he had nearly ruined the Brothers’ work. This was all the naughtier on his part, as he had been warned not to leave me, in the following manner:

In the late summer of 1946, before he had left Kashmir, but when he was already talking of going to England, he had gone off to stay by himself in a little flat in the

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Kashmir hills. I was living alone at the time, in a tiny cook-boat, where, because of the aforesaid scruples, he had refused to join me. Away on his own, he of course became indisposed. He was lying on his bed one sunny morning when the door opposite to him opened, and a small, thin, elderly Indian walked gently in, accompanied by me. The Boy, being unwell, remained lying down, while the old man advanced softly, with me, and together we stood by the bedside. This Indian had a thin grey beard and wore a *dhoti* of fine cloth with a narrow red border. Over his shoulders was a skimpy *cheddar* of fine white cotton. The Boy, on telling me about it afterwards, said that he particularly noticed my clothes because, instead of the coarse cotton gerrua which I had worn since my initiation, I had on *dhoti*, shirt and *cheddar* of the finest muslin, which fell in soft folds. (I did not possess such fine garments at the time; but some weeks after, I made the acquaintance of a rich Indian widow who presented me with two lengths of fine muslin, sufficient to make two of each of my garments. Thus the Boy saw something that had not yet happened.)

The old man laid his hand on my shoulder and said in a clear, normal voice: "You must not leave Omananda — ever. She needs you. Do not go away!" The surprised Boy was about to answer, when the little man and I *faded out*.

The Boy rushed to the door; then to the windows. No little man! No Omananda! He sat straight down and wrote to me that he had seen Sri Ramakrishna and me, and was coming to tell me about it at once. He was as excited as he *could* be over such matters, probably because it had happened *to* him, and not *through* him. He described it to me vividly, in detail, and I have here repeated some of his own words. The things that impressed him most were the naturalness of the little grey-haired man, his opening the door and walking up to the bed in full sunlight, and standing there talking, with me beside him.

Remarkable things about this appearance were my clothes, and the scarlet-bordered dhoti which was one of Sri Ramakrishna's characteristics. The Boy *might* have read of it; but I doubt this, because he invariably set his face against reading any scriptures or lives of saints, and turned a deaf ear or left the room if anyone present spoke of such things.⁷

The Brothers, as we have seen, had a valid reason for keeping his mind free of these and other influences, so that their teachings could flow through uncoloured, as it were. But, how hard such deprivations were on the Boy — on me, too! His life, with rare exceptions, was one long unrecognised austerity. Had anybody suggested

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that he was a *tapasvi* — as those who practise spiritual austerities are called in Hinduism—people might have roared with laughter; to keep up the illusion, he would probably have roared with them; but the fact was that by reason of such austerities, he and I were denied companionship in many of the sweetest things of life; for anything that could hamper their work and which they could legitimately stop, was stopped by the Brothers. So the Boy would leave the room, whether I was alone or there with others, or change subjects or occupations brusquely. His ‘holy obedience’ was astonishing in so self-willed and dominating a man.

His departure to England that autumn, ignoring the advice given him in the Ramakrishna visitation, was one of the Boy’s rare exceptions to this holy obedience. And once in London which he had loved so well, he was grievously wounded by the deterioration which he thought he found in its people. “They have become coarse and vulgar,” he wrote. He did not realise that this was probably a phase. Since we had landed in India in 1935 he had dreamed of getting back to London; now, in 1946-7, he found what he saw of it cheapened and degraded, and was too shocked to see farther. But although he wrote in one of his letters to me, “I feel like a sick child without its mother,” he did not suggest returning, and it was not until friends wired to him from Delhi—where I was already very ill—to come back at once and save my life, that he came. He did not leave me again, *that way*.

During his absence I had been through severe persecutions on account of being the first woman Swami and a Western; and it might be asked, “Why didn’t you write to him and let him know of your plight?” I wrote to him of course, but as a Swami I could not make any gesture putting pressure on him to return. We do not interfere in people’s lives. I had done what I legitimately could by trying to explain to him before he left that he was endangering the Brothers’ work. I could not ask for him to be recalled. “Inhuman!” people may say. No—just beginning to be truly human. Swamis, lamas and people of that kind have, if they are sincere, a different set of values from those of some of their well-meaning critics. The Boy, of course, understood my attitude. I never once had to explain anything to that Bow boy! He was ‘there’, all the way. His honest courtesy prompted him never to call me by any name but ‘Swamiji’ (honoured Swami) after I took *sannyasa*.

My private opinion was that when the Brothers found they could do nothing with him, owing to his pride and shame over having (as he supposed) let me down by marrying me, they engineered his illnesses in London and possibly increased mine in

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India too. But the Boy could not get rid of the idea that he was somehow hurting me as a Swami by remaining with me. It rankled. (He had written bitterly to me about “the atmosphere created about me and your *sannyasa*.”) Later on, in January, 1950, when we were in Banaras, it happened that my *guru* in *sannyasa*, Swami Triveni Puri, was the central figure in a huge religious festival at an *ashram* on the Ganges-side. Unknown to me the Boy went to him there and enquired of him whether, he should remain with me. The answer since I was a Swami, was, “Stay with her as long as you feel devotion to her.” The mere formal marriage meant nothing to that saint. He knew our souls, and that the Boy was tied to me by bonds of our joint discipleship and of our partnership in the Brother’s work. After that the Boy had no more qualms, for he had had the assurance of one of the most revered Swamis in India, whose word was law to thousands, especially among the *sannyasis*.⁸

One might truly say that from the day of his first trance, the Boy as a personality, with aims and interests of its own, had almost ceased to exist. His story — if indeed there could be said to be one — thenceforth became a study of the Brothers and their Boy, for his life had become theirs.

The general background of our existences in India was, *personally* speaking, largely one of pain and homelessness, to record much of which would be merely monotonous. I shall therefore return later on in this book to some of the chronological events of those years, especially the last, saddest and most glorious of them all. But for the moment, it seems to me, there are things to say — let us call them “matters arising” from the story so far — about several aspects of this drama; and I propose to include these in the next few chapters. Obviously in a book like this, they cannot be adequately presented.

To deal with these I will have to drop sequence. But we will not therefore lose touch with the chief characters or be turned from the picture of their lives together.

PART THREE

SURVEYING THE FIELD

CHAPTER EIGHT

Telepathy? Hypnotism?

Undoubtedly, the Boy, or the Brothers through him, had outstanding powers of telepathy. Telepathy between the Brothers and members of their audiences — often utter strangers — cropped up at nearly every meeting. The Brothers read the minds before them like open books; they were indeed masters of telepathy.

I remember, for example, a Brother suddenly turning to an utter stranger in the audience, who was nodding in apparently delighted approval, and demanding:

What is the use of having your lips curling in false smiles, and the dull eyes above?

Such remarks uttered, as this one, in the middle of exalted talks on philosophy, were electrifying.

The following typical case is, however, a clearer example of telepathy:

A young Indian visitor, again a stranger of whom and his family we knew absolutely nothing, asked: “When people commit suicide, does it mean that they have realised the futility of life?”

No. It means that they have not gone far enough to accept true things.

“What would be the position of the person who has committed suicide, afterwards?”

The Brother must have seen something, for he remarked, apparently wide of the point: **A departed soul is entirely beyond all physical manipulations.** Did he mean “influences from this world?” He would not be drawn. He just closed down. The Brothers could be very tactful.

The visitor, a young man, persevered: “What about prayers?” he asked.

The Brother made no sign, but enquired casually: **Do you pray for her because you WANT to pray for her? The greatest prayer is to do the next act spontaneously.**

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So it was a woman! There were a number of people at that gathering. The Brother presently spoke in such a way that only the young man would understand to what he referred. (How different from that last instance!) The Brother signified that he would prefer to drop this subject — probably because of the publicity; but the young man would not be silenced:

“This lady was — or should have been-happy.”

The Brother said kindly: **Why camouflage yourselves with half-truths? When a man comes to me and says “I am a happy man,” I ask him, “Why are you not UNhappy?” If you all act all the time, how can any two people know one another? You do not even know yourselves! How, then, can your brothers and sisters know you?**

From this nucleus of a grievous personal sorrow, he proceeded to teach, first the young man, and soon the whole meeting, on the ending of sorrow.

It appears to me, however, that neither such mind-reading or telepathy — nor any kind of hypnotism or telepathy between the Brothers and me and the Boy — are sufficient to reveal and explain the source of the total phenomenon of the Brothers’ manifestations, especially with regard to the sublime teachings which were steadily poured out for some twenty-seven years. (I am not, however, asking the reader to believe my remarks, which only a proper study of the teachings could confirm, unless, of course, one is already satisfied as to the reality of such things.)

People have sometimes insisted, not over-politely, that the Brothers’ teachings were received telepathically from my mind — that the whole manifestation arose, in fact, out of my mind. The marvels of healing? The drama of an abdominal operation? “The Floating Knights”? Bosh! Undoubtedly I played my part in supplying the *shakti* power. I ‘nursed’, but did not instigate. The Boy had many trances far away from me when, later, he left me in India, for instance, and went back to London. (As far as I could make out, though, he had had no established trances before he met me.)

Personally, I am satisfied that the mechanism of his kind of trance should not be confused with telepathy or hypnotism; certainly not with any telepathic power of mine. The fact is that I often had to cudgel my brains in order to understand a Brother’s teaching, not because of its complexity, but because the Brothers frequently did not think as I thought. They used very different words, too, such as I never use, thus: ‘aegis’, ‘orbit’, ‘duress’, ‘ingestion’, ‘unit’, ‘span’, ‘build-up’, etc. If these teachings emanated from me by some sort of telepathy or hypnotism, why did

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my brain and intelligence not respond with the ease one would expect? Moreover, much of the teaching was in direct opposition to what other people or I believed — was, in fact, a revelation to us. We were often contradicted, instructed, put on the right path, as it were; and if that was telepathy from my subliminal consciousness, via the entranced Boy, to my or other listeners' ordinary waking consciousness) then this was a clumsy device which would take a lot of explaining—the more so as, along my own lines, I had had plenty of opportunity to contact the subliminal without need of such external assistance; wherefore, had the Brothers so wished, they could easily have enlightened me, without using such a round-about process. As for it being from others: the audiences were constantly changing, while the teachings were uniform in matter and, broadly speaking, in manner too.

An instance of a Brother going entirely counter to me occurred in 1954 when some gentlemen visiting our *ashram* questioned me — the Boy was absent — as to whether one could move about freely after death. I answered off my own bat, so to speak, that one could only suppose that after leaving the body the soul is not much different from what it was while attached to the body, and that if one were an adventurous spirit, one would probably rove; if not one would “stick around some place”.

On the same evening a Brother came and spoke to the same questioners. One of his first remarks was: **You do not leave the body; the body leaves you.**

(It should be noted that I had not told the Boy of our talk, and that the visitors had not repeated their question.)

Then to my astonishment the Brother went on, **And you are not free to ‘rove’ about.** (Had the Brother read my mind, or the visitors'?)

“What!” said I. “Not able to get about? But that would be a kind of hell!”

Not at all, rejoined the Brother, **you are put in places.**

“How awful!” I exclaimed “just pushed about like a mummy?”

Not a mummy — a chrysalis, he answered; and then with unusual emphasis, **YOU MUST REALISE THAT NOT ONE DIES BUT THERE IS SOMEONE THERE PRESENT TO TAKE CARE OF THAT SOUL. This is a vast work of which you people know nothing. Did not Christ say that not one sparrow can fall without the Father? Not one soul is ever, ever, ever left, at or after death.**

I pressed him. I said: “But, Brother, are not the Masters free to move about?”

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He evaded my question. (It is terribly difficult to get the Masters to speak about their own lives.) **You are bound by effortful desire; and we are also bound — by effortless desire; which is the next step for you, but bondage for us.**¹ Try as I would, he would not move from this, except to say cryptically (when I urged, “But who moves you about? You get about a lot you know!”): **HE moves us.** After pressing him for over half an hour to be more explicit, I gave it up. His teachings seemed to contradict all that I had ever surmised, or read of the subject. He spoke with absolute authority and certainty.²

The Brothers were gorgeously normal about death. I once said to a Brother:

“I love the sunshine. I cannot imagine that I could ever be happy deprived of it. When one dies, does one die out of the sunshine, the lovely light of day, all the beauty and warmth of it? I could not bear to have to face a long twilight.”

He answered, **YOU have the sunlight outside but the moonlight inside; but WE live in the Sunlight inside, and then there is the moonlight outside. In what you call ‘life’, the inner is in twilight, or moonlight.**

Incidentally, the Brothers have stated their views on the usual type of spiritualism, ancient or modern, Eastern or Western:

When a soul leaves the body, it leaves for peace. No person of the lower order should recall it. We do not advocate spiritualism.

Of the lower order: the Masters can and do ‘bring back souls’ on rare occasions and for special purposes. I have witnessed this fairly often. But more often they translate us temporarily to a ‘higher’ state in which we can contact these souls. Such operations are among the prerogatives of the Holy Ones. A Master has said elsewhere:

“... try to break through that great maya (illusion) against which occult students, the world over, have always been warned by their teachers — the hankering after phenomena. Like the thirst for drink and opium, it grows with gratification. The Spiritualists are drunken with it; they are thaumaturgic sots. If you cannot be happy without phenomena you will never learn our philosophy. . . I tell you other things will be added unto it — in time.”³

In this connection it may be as well to give the *avatar* Sri Ramakrishna’s views on the Mahatmas of the Theosophists. One, named Shyam, said to him:

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“The Theosophists believe in the existence of Mahatmas. Do you believe in them, Sir?”

Master: **‘If you believe in my words, I say yes.’**”⁴

Consciously or unconsciously, then, I often held just the opposite to what the Brothers were teaching. Thus, I had always believed, as most people do, that one concentrates the mind for meditation. The Brothers taught the opposite, and I many scriptures and commentaries before I found authoritative verification of their teaching. It is found in Buddhism, Hinduism, Confucianism, Christianity and every other great faith, but has often been overlaid and over-looked.

A Brother asked a ‘holy man’ if he really knew how to meditate.

“Yes,” replied the holy man.

How?

The visitor was silent.

You meditate by concentrating [on what you think are] holy things. But concentration with a view to obtaining spiritual reward is wrong. It is the sure way of driving away all things spiritual. Concentration is the forerunner of discipline, and discipline is the destroyer of spontaneity.

Before going into the Temple, you should leave two things outside: intellect and self-will. One should enter as a shell. Unless you enter the Temple empty, it is impossible to come out full.... I do not disparage the intellect, but your use of it. . . . A holy man is innocent of worldliness because he does not want to hold things unto himself. . . Ownership is the destitution of the world. . . .

The Brothers taught on concentration from as many viewpoints as there were questioners. Thus, for instance, when a *sannyasi* wandering in the far Himalayas was resting with us, a Brother said:

Become as an ocean!

The sannyasi eagerly agreed: “Yes — empty!”

The ocean is not empty! The ocean is full. Empty the MIND — but don’t use effort upon it. PERMIT it to become empty. If you have a bottle full of water, how can you fill it unless you empty it first? . . . Do not ‘become’, or ‘realise’, but ‘look’, and ‘see’. You do not ‘realise’ the soul. You dissolve into it.

Talking to a poet, he dealt with concentration another way:

To be a poet, you should not need to be intellectuals. But you must become one-pointed, by which I mean, single-hearted. In other words, you cannot serve two masters. Look! There are the mountains! Over there is the source of the river! Put no obstacles in its way and there will be a flow. So is human life: take away the obstacles and there is ALWAYS a flow from the Cosmic.

Again I had always imagined — without, indeed, giving any serious thought to the matter or reading any books on the subject — that messages coming through the *chakras*⁵ reached the brain direct from the *chakras* themselves, which function through different parts of the body, such as the heart, throat, solar plexus, etc. A report was made of teaching given by a Brother on this subject during the period 1935-36, in which he said that messages reached the brain from the *chakras* by way of the spinal column. But I forgot all about this until in 1950 I mentioned my belief to an Indian friend, a sage and a saint, affectionately known as “Moni Babu”. He said: “You are wrong. According to our books, the messages of the *chakras* reach the brain through the spinal column”, thus corroborating the Brothers against me. Such verifications of their words, as against crude ideas of mine or others, were very frequent.

The following Indian episode, the description of which is taken from a letter I wrote in 1936 to a friend in London, gives a clear instance of the way in which a Brother, influencing the Boy very strongly on the one hand, would not be disturbed by our personal activities and upheavals on the other. I wrote:

“The other night a Brother had just settled down to teach our group and two outside folk, when the bearer rushed in saying that dacoits had attacked the servants of the bungalow opposite. (Dacoits are armed thieves: often murderers.) S. and N. fled to bolt and bar everything. I sat still beside the Boy, who was entranced. The Brother asked quietly, **What has happened?** I informed him, and as he rapidly left, I asked him to call his Brothers to guard the Boy. As the Boy awoke he jumped up (asking no questions) grabbed a stick (we have no gun) and dashed out, joining my husband, to search for the dacoits! It was pitch dark. This place is in the depths of the jungle. I stayed in with the girls and our Indian guests. The servants had fled out somewhere. After about three-quarters of an hour my husband and the Boy returned, full of excitement. They had encountered ‘nothing but’ three men with swords, whom the Boy had proceeded to attack with his stick,

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but who screamed ‘Me friends!’ I said, ‘The Brother won’t be able to take the Boy again tonight.’ We sat about, feeling a bit frazzled. After a few minutes, the Boy was in trance, easily, and the Brother continued to teach *calmly from exactly where he left off* commencing, **I was saying. . . .** On top of that, he healed me of excruciating pain in the spine and legs! Well, if anyone thinks I control the Boy’s subconscious (whatever that may mean), an episode like this disproves it. I was shocked right through. I was almost certain the Brothers could not return, far less, heal. They returned *in spite of me*, like they do and say many things.”

They returned in spite also of everybody’s fear and the Boy’s fever of excitement; for he dearly loved a dangerous exploit. Incidentally, the Brother must have **put it into his mind** (a favourite expression of theirs) to grab a stick and rush out, for normally, as I have said, he remembered nothing of what went on around him during his trances, and became active only gradually after them.

At meetings I often disagreed with a Brother or tried to interpolate a question or remark and, for my pains, was sharply silenced; the Brother insisted on carrying through the meeting in *his* way. I used to make remarks at times to help people to see for themselves that the Brothers and the boy were not puppets. At times, too, I have hung my head in shame when a Brother felt himself obliged to pull up one of his audience in a cruel, unsparing way, for his or her own good. This method of cruel and biting words *is not one which I use*, except when necessary in these records. Thus there could hardly have been influence from me here. The Brothers, however, could be ruthless when circumstances required.

I remember a meeting organised by a lady who brought together people from long distances and went to infinite trouble mainly in the endeavour to get English people in India to take a more generous view of us. All went well until the Brother arrived. He insisted on spending about two hours battling with a destructively critical, narrow-minded Indian psychiatrist, while most of the guests fretted and fumed. One Indian doctor had given up a sacred family commemoration to attend that meeting. A fine Indian philosopher was also present and wanting to ask questions. The English gloated. Our hostess was miserable. I went hot and cold. **BE QUIET!** the Brother roared at me. (I was saying nothing, but he got my frantic thoughts.)

The meeting was at an end when he gave a few brief asides to the philosopher. Clearly, the theory of my influencing the Boy or the Brothers takes too much explaining to make sense.

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How explain the fact that I frequently begged the Boy *not to allow a Brother to come* or — if a Brother was beginning to manifest — asked him please, not to come? They would come, or not come, as the' thought fit.

On rare occasions a Brother would play at imposing his will on me; but I never did anything at their behest, much as I adored them, unless I conscientiously agreed with their urge or instruction as a practical proposition. ('Practical', of course, is a word with a long meaning.) That, perhaps, is why they trusted me; for they were tender to sceptics. I didn't always agree; often because I thought the Brothers' exquisite simplicity too good for this world, the evils of which they should never have to cope with at close quarters. (But they did, they did.) It was certainly not hypnotism to try to put oneself between them and it. So I held off at times from something they would try to get me to do; I waited to see them again and put the case to them from another angle. The Brothers are angelic; whilst most of us live in a state which is, comparatively, slime. Therefore I deliberately disobeyed them when their compassionate outrush threatened too great harm to them and the Boy. If a protective attitude towards such friends is telepathy or hypnotism, then I am guilty of both.

The Brothers had a highly-developed technique of blotting people out. (I must add parenthetically that their normal 'atmosphere' was so powerful, that people would often forget the questions they were going to ask, and so on. I often did! Then the presiding Brother would smile with a smile that seemed to hold a secret; which was so; for, when the ordinary mind had thus been temporarily annihilated, what they called **the Feeling Principle**, on which the Brothers laid great stress, could emerge, when listeners might experience at least a glimmering of the knowledge which engulfs thought. But here we are considering quite another use of their power to blot people out, which power always appeared to me to be in the category of hypnotism, though never by making people delude themselves.)

In addition to using this power with tremendous effect while teaching, as I have just hinted, they could, it seemed, increase and project it at will-an accomplishment which could have been a dangerous one, had their wills not been truly enlightened, and only for good. Here is an instance:

There was a crowd at our London place one afternoon, and the Brother, contrary to his wont, sat on an improvised platform, a little away from the audience, with me beside him.

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This meeting was constantly held up by an aggressive, self-assured, lawyer-like man in the front row, who kept rising to his feet, and interrupting — not to say almost disrupting — the proceedings; and when this break had happened four or five times, and everyone was getting restive, I whispered to the Brother: “Can *nothing* be done to stop him?” He turned to me so that the audience could not see his face: **Stop WORRYING, Nurth!** he said. **Leave him to US.**

The fellow having sat down to regain breath, the Brother continued to teach as if nothing had happened. After a short interval, up jumped our pugnacious visitor again and, breaking through a sentence of the Brother’s, returned to the assault.

“Ladies and gentlemen,” he began, with heavy belligerence, “this is — *this* — is . . . ahem . . . er . . .”

There was a pause, whilst every drop of blood in his body seemed to have rushed to his head . . . The Brother sat immobile.

“Wel — er — ” he stammered, “I was about — to say . . . ” *He put his hand under his collar and stopped dead; then seemed to go to pieces! The Brother gave me a soft smile.*

“Well, as I was saying, ladies and gentlemen — as a matter of fact . . . ”

He stopped suddenly as if he had been stunned. Then he shouted: “This is most extraordinary! I must really apologise. This is indeed curious. It has never happened to me before. As a matter of fact *I’ve completely forgotten what I was about to say!*” He sat down abruptly, and left the meeting soon after.

One sympathises with people who doubt that the Boy was ignorant, and assert that, despite every appearance to the contrary, he *must* have got these teachings out of books or from somebody else, or under hypnotic suggestion. But the Boy himself, as we know, was scarcely literate, and we among whom he had come to live were more or less recluses. We did not move in religious or academic circles, or go in for spiritualism or belong to any cult. He could scarcely have got ideas from me, since whatever powers I possessed, or aptitude for metaphysical thought, showed themselves in quite other forms. He had no close friends. I was largely unread, though not by choice; in my youth I had had no chance to study, for I had been a family bread-winner from a very tender age, and because of this I received no education. When older, I was a tired, over-worked, often ill, and always poor parent

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of several children and again, a bread-winner. Such were some of the conditions into which the Brothers came as lights from beyond heaven.

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CHAPTER NINE

Trances

I can only give the merest sketch of the Boy's trances, which merit a book. There was a striking similarity between them and trances of the mystics and *avatars*. I will give all-too-brief examples from the *avatars* Sri Ramakrishna and Sri Gouranga (Chaitanya) only, but it should be remembered that the identity runs through all, whether Eastern or Western. The trance record of Christian mystics is august.

Needless to say, the Boy was doing these things for years before I had studied the records and, in most cases, even heard of, the spiritual giants. He, of course, would not have studied them; and I did not until, after I had compiled the Brothers' teachings, I was constrained to do quite a lot of reading in order to edit them.

Now, after this reading and twenty-seven years watching the Boy's trances, I am convinced that they belonged to the tradition of the holy books.

Different types of trance — *samadhi* — have been recognised in the East for ages. A supreme master of trance in all its higher aspects, the *avatar* Sri Ramakrishna declared: "There are many kinds of *samadhi*."¹ The mighty South Indian sage, Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi called all the higher types of *samadhi* (which he experienced) "trance". The actual experiences of these *avatars* and many others all over the world tally with the teachings in the old books, Hindu and Buddhist. (I have not studied the Chinese, but venture to think that their teachings would also tally with the others, since they are identical in most fundamentals.) In these ancient books, the various forms of trance are analysed and tabulated; and all this, of course, is based on the accounts of those who have "been there". Trance as found in the Bible is the same as that of the Oriental sages. But none of these trances seem to have much in common with spiritistic trance as we moderns know it.

Now, in comparing the Boy's trances with those of the highest saints and *avatars*, there is not the slightest intention to claim that the Boy was himself a saint, though he may have been a channel for what one might call a "multiple *avatar*". (Of that, more elsewhere.)² I Let it be clear that I do not compare persons, but mechanisms.

Some experience only one or two out of the several kinds of high trance. In this category came the Boy. Giants like Chaitanya and Ramakrishna seem to have

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experienced the entire range; yet-at the end of this stupendous spiritual achievement Sri Ramakrishna could say to Naren (who became Swami Vivekananda, and had expressed the wish to remain immersed *in samadhi*): “What a small mind you have! Go beyond *samadhi*! *Samadhi* is a very trifling thing!”³ while, centuries before Ramakrishna, the divine sage Astavakra called the practice of *samadhi* “bondage”.⁴

In his rare confiding moods the Boy reiterated to friends and me that his greatest difficulty in life was to keep hold on his ‘normal’ consciousness. He said that he really and truly felt himself as four-fifths conscious in another state — a state outside and interpenetrating the ‘normal’, certainly interpenetrating the physical. “To hang on to consciousness *out here* — to keep awake — that’s my problem.” He would say this, conveying a sense of painful desolation. After all that we had seen of him, we could believe this. (“Poor Boy! Poo’, poo’ Pike! Poo’ *Baby*,” we would declare sympathetically.) I tried to fill the gaps of life for him; but nothing could fill them except *the return to his own*, as he very well knew.

The Boy’s usual trance was of the ‘sleeping’ or unconscious sort; but occasionally it was a full waking trance,⁵ when he would be possessed, yet could behave and talk — except for the changed accent — in such a way that only those ‘in the know’ recognised the presence of trance. He remembered waking trances, but not always clearly. An instance of his waking trance has been given by an English lawyer who knew him very well:

“...I remember on one occasion, at a private dinner party in Calcutta, that the Brothers came through the Boy without a trance. On this particular occasion the Boy’s conversation changed its tone completely, and he (apparently) started to speak about things of which he himself obviously had no knowledge as, in his personal mind, he was quite incapable of talking intelligently on the subject of that conversation. The subject, if I remember rightly, was mainly world affairs. The views expressed by the Brothers at this particular dinner party covered almost the whole of the big questions confronting the world at that time, and most of the views expressed turned into concrete reality after a very few months.”

Now the extraordinary fact is that these two types of trance of the humble Boy who did not evince the spiritual stature of a Ramakrishna or Chaitanya, *were identical with theirs of the same class*. (I shall never forget my excitement when I discovered this.) Our Bow Boy did not have the full category of trances, but those he

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had fitted absolutely with the giants', down to the smallest details, even mannerisms.⁶ The descriptions of their trances might indeed be those of the Boy's, so thrilling is the similarity between them. For example, Swami Durga Chaitanya writes of Sri Gouranga:

“It was not a case of identification of two selves, but of substitution of one by the other. His deeds were unconscious and vicarious. He had absolutely no power over his body which was pressed into service for the time being by some other intelligent force. When his normal condition was restored, that is to say, when that foreign influence left him, he would awake as from a deep slumber and would not be able to tell a word of the tremendous happenings that had just passed through his body. In case of long manifestations, it took him longer to regain his consciousness on the expiration of the abnormal state, when simultaneously with freedom from the foreign control, he would roar in a thunderous voice. . . immediately swoon away, and then slowly come back to himself.”⁷

There could not be a more accurate description of the Boy's trances. He usually awoke “as from a deep slumber”, slowly coming to the surface of sleep's sea, once, twice, thrice. Each time he was drawn back again into the blissful state (“swoons away”); then at last he yawned, stretched, rubbed his head vigorously, and gradually regained his own personality. The final awakening usually came with a rush. He opened his eyes—no longer someone else's — and looked round and spoke sheepishly, with a smile: “Hello!” (“Hello! You here?” said Ramakrishna.) It is really an expression of ease at being safely landed on this shore. We have seen these things, *exactly as described by Swami Durga Chaitanya*, happen to the Boy many hundreds of times. The roar and the swoon are, however, associated with the depth rather than the duration of trance. The Boy's roar, which in later years he rarely emitted, since the Brothers had gained full control of his vocal chords, used often to embody the words, “All right, all right”, or, “Orl ri', orl ri' “, or, “I'm comin' “, or “Leave me alone!” (The reader will remember the end of Chapter III.) Sometimes merely a loud “Hello!” “Leave me alone!” was very important. It was the Brothers in the background trying to prevent people from touching him.

The Boy used to tell people whose questionings when he came out of deep trance were often really insufferable: “I'm only intelligent when I'm asleep.” Sri Ramakrishna, who experienced every sort of trance, ‘sleeping’ and ‘waking’, said of himself, describing his *unconscious* trances, “I do not know anything. Then who is it

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that utters these words?”⁸ At other times, when he was persistently questioned after this type of trance, he told people that he knew absolutely nothing of what had happened.⁹ Sri Chaitanya used to apologise, on being informed of some misdemeanour which had occurred while he was unconscious in trance; but not so the Boy, who was also completely unconscious of the rude things ‘he’ sometimes did, such circumstances.¹⁰

There were many peculiarities of awakening which were exactly the same as between the Boy, Chaitanya and Ramakrishna. (But again, I must impress on the reader that we are looking at trance-types, not persons.) The Boy would ask for some small thing: “Gi’ me a drink uv water,” or “W’ere’s me tea?” Then he would forget that he had asked, or just refuse what was brought. To show the astounding likeness, I allow myself to cite another instance:

“. . . regaining partial consciousness, he (Ramakrishna) said: I think I shall have a drink of water. He often said things like that after *samadhi*, in order to bring down his mind to the ordinary plane of consciousness. Girish was a newcommer and did not know this; so he started to bring some water. Sri Ramakrishna asked him not to, saying: ‘No, my dear Sir, I cannot drink now.’”¹¹ In the same way, this saint would ask for a smoke to be prepared.

In all such trances one finds the possessed one evincing god-like characteristics: teaching, taking action and doing good in the one true way. There are abundant records. The lives of Sai Baba, Ramakrishna and Chaitanya alone, among thousands of Indian saints and seers — to say nothing of the Christian, Buddhist, and other faiths — open up worlds of compassion and divine self-revelations. The likeness to the Boy and the Brothers is closely maintained throughout.

The Brothers, as we have seen, sent us to India because there was **a great destruction coming**. It is pretty clear that they also wanted to avoid the destruction of their instrument by publicity. A Brother had warned me **if you allow this to become a press sensation we will leave the Boy**. As a matter of fact, when that began to threaten, I had already rung up news editors in London and asked them-with as much explanation as I could put over the ‘phone — to keep the matter out of the press. They were extraordinarily nice and understanding. No paragraphs appeared. The Brothers, of course, had nothing against the press and publicity in themselves, but that was not the moment for either. Their reasons in forbidding publicity at that

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juncture were practical. They had to safeguard the supersensitive aura of the Boy against invasion by thought-forms, the vibrations of which would have cluttered up — perhaps rent — the aura, and ruined the instrument. A seer or high medium should keep as much as possible away from external vibrations of this kind. If he or she has to endure them, martyrdom in one form or another is almost inevitable.

In this connection, I once had an extraordinary talk with one of the High Brothers. He asked me: **Nurth! Do you think we should put our teachings through the Boy asleep, or the Boy awake?** I answered without a moment's hesitation, "By all means, asleep, Brother. Why, he can hardly stand some of the vibrations he gets, even while the physical body is unconscious. How could he face it all in full consciousness? More, Brother — as you have asked my advice — you yourselves of course, knowing the answers — he *won't get such a good hearing if he's awake*. People will be rude to him — interrupt — argue — perhaps insult him, since he is only an uneducated simple man — whereas if he is asleep, the mere fact of trance will keep them quiet. As you well know, if the devil himself were speaking during trance, most of them would listen respectfully. Why? Simply because the sleep itself is a *new sensation*."

That Brother assured me (and we already knew it) that they could 'take' the Boy without putting him to sleep; but he fully agreed that for the most part sleeping trance should be used for their work.

I have stated that we were not spiritualists in the accepted sense; but the Boy was humbly devoted to the Brothers, in whom he had implicit faith; and this was all the more praiseworthy since he never witnessed one of these manifestations, though he could on occasion see the Brothers outside himself or intuit them when they controlled him whilst he was awake.

The Boy never made an effort to arrive at trance, or to use any of the amazing powers which he exercised spontaneously in trance and, sometimes, out of trance too (still, of course, under the influence of his Brothers). He never made money out of his gifts, except for a grant of fifty rupees a month from an all-India Society for the helping of worthy scholars, monks or others; for in India he was accepted, by those who knew him and the Brothers, as a seer and teacher, a genuine instrument of great Beings, and a good, dedicated man. He risked and sacrificed everything for them, to the point of extreme personal inconvenience, suffering and death. He never sought

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fame, but took life as it came to him, with many a grumble at the false position which his uncomfortable gifts had thrust upon him. He hated not being quite ordinary and was truly unhappy at being, willy-nilly, 'different'. He and I shared most of these troubles, for we were completely together in the work.

He had the power of silence in things of the Spirit. As the years wore on, and I was alone with him except for the many visitors who could not be treated as confidants, one of my heart-breaks was his habitual uncommunicativeness and almost total lack of response if one tried to converse with him about the Brothers and the work. With rare exceptions, his silence was complete. He could not be drawn by me or anybody else. If I began to tell him about a trance he would say, "I tell you, I don't want to hear ANYTHING about it." The Brothers evidently wanted his mind empty, so his silence was like a shroud — a blackout — a dead wall; and this was all the more striking as he had an open, friendly nature. He was naturally talkative on things that did not matter; but silent as the grave and hard as granite when it was a question of those things that really mattered to him.

The Boy went out of our world into deep trance, and returned, as quickly and easily as walking out of and into a room — quicker, since he sometimes became entranced even in the middle of a word, and finished it when he came back. (Thus also, Ramakrishna and the others.) He "went out and in" in many different ways, but his average trance was as follows:

He became entranced slowly and gently, just as if he were falling into a sweet sleep; and as he fell asleep his expression did not become vacant; rather, the look as of another entity stole over it. According to the nature of the entity would be the change that came upon the face. It would be tender, have a flowerlike beauty, or perhaps a look of untempered, terrific power. One of my daughters once wrote to me of "the beautiful flower-like expression that transformed his face" in the early days. That continued. Even his features seemed to alter. His skin became fairer, and often it shone as if lit from within; his eyes glowed with a deep, strong, inner fire and concentrated willpower. He seemed, then, to be *looking at ideas* — looking inwards, rarely outwards, even when his eyes were directed towards outer objects. My husband and I took a few snapshots of him in trance. One would hardly recognise them as being pictures of the Boy. They were, of course, entirely unworthy of their subjects, though wonderful indeed. (See photograph facing p. 128.)

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While these changes were taking place, the Boy would remain, apparently asleep, for seconds or minutes, breathing calmly, yet ‘differently’. Then his body would straighten up, his eyes open, and they would be the body and eyes of *the new person* who seemed to everyone present *actually to be there*, and who would usually request some small service, such as to have bicycle-clips and other base metals, boots, etc., removed from the Boy’s body and near vicinity, or to have his collar loosened — if he was wearing one, which was rare — and so forth. (I will return to base metals later on.) The Boy — funny fellow! — refused stubbornly to have such things done beforehand or to dress himself with appropriate looseness when he knew there was to be a trance.

Then the Brother who had possessed the Boy would proceed to converse and, by conversing, to teach. That was the usual procedure, from which they departed when necessary. At the end of a normal trance the process was reversed: the *Brother*, by closing the Boy’s eyes, seemed to sink, smiling gently, into sleep — he was not sleeping, of course, but withdrawing — and after a short or long interval, there would be signs of the returning Boy.

The method of teaching by conversing is the ancient one found in all the holy books. I will here digress at some length in order to give a few instances of such teaching:

A certain poet who was present one day began,

“As far as my capacity goes — ”

If you did away with your ‘capacity’ you would understand more.

“Do you mean by ‘capacity’, acquisitiveness — the wish to get something?”

Yes. But you do not get anything! (Loud laughter, cut short by the Brother, who turned sternly to the company). **You people are like a lot of watches. You have to be wound up; and then, when the works run down, there is nothing! The most you are able to do is to wind one another up — and then run down again. And you spend all your time winding each other up. All your civilisation, ‘progress’, has made you into many small pieces of machinery that have to be wound up by others. And so the process goes on.**

I said:

“You mean, most humans are not self-sufficient; they need perpetual stimulation?”

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Yes. That is why I can do nothing with you people. It is folly, this clock-winding. There can be no civilisation until mankind as a whole gets outside the process.

But this does not mean that the Brothers cannot do anything with sincere seekers. Another example:

A saddened elderly woman asked: “If I have wasted my life — or rather, if it has been wasted for me — can I now make up for lost time?”

You can never “make up for lost time”. All that you can do is to reproduce the unblossomed plant.

A student subsequently questioned the Brother on this cryptic phrase, and received the reply that by **reproduce** he had meant reproduce — i.e., that the person would have to be born again. This may refer to physical rebirth (or certain occult operations by means of which bodies may be rejuvenated), or to rebirth (*sannyasa*, ‘conversion’), following non-attachment of heart. This was perhaps a prophecy, for something akin to rebirth happened to this woman years after. She said:

“It is very sad to see the beautiful bloom of youth — of body and mind — blighted, as it so often is.”

The art of retaining bloom is to grow old youthfully. Keep youth perpetually. What do I mean by ‘perpetually’? Do you understand my meaning when I say “in a sea-blue way” Let it be — deep. If you do it like that, the bonds [which bind the] individuality are broken and you no longer are a bloom just unto yourself. Why do you stress the fading of the bloom? It will never fade, never deteriorate., unless you become aware of it as a ‘bloom’ (that is, unless you identify yourself with the fading body and personality).

Old age interests many of us, so here is more about it. A venerable Indian philosopher wrote: “I have always tried to live up to a high ideal, yet I sometimes feel sad in my old age.” A Brother answered:

Although the physical body may age, yet remember that it is with the ageing of that body that the soul is apt to get more truly youthful in its outlook and aspiration. Often, we cannot make contact with the young.

Again: An elderly painter remarked that he was too old to do much in this life. A Brother answered:

There can be an atrophying of the ability of the physical body to respond. That is all. Do not worry about your age. You can do things suitable to your

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age. Become inwardly assimilative. Digest your experiences. Cut off attachments, or rather, dissolve them. There is much to do in old age which you cannot or do not do when young. Do it. Do not try to be middle-aged or young. Accept the limitations of old age and work with Nature. Prepare for death. Get half the done before this body has to go.

The great ancient sage, Vasistha, did not extol youth; and in ancient China the same view obtained. We may measure the stature of a nation by the degree in which it extols youth. I have noticed, however, that many people who go crazy over youth very rarely succour the young, and have little-if any real sympathy for young minds and bodies and hearts. They want only to crown the spring, but would not work on the enabling soil. Such people drag down the young.

We cannot evaluate such things as the Brothers' operations and the Boy's trances by the usual process. The unusual processes are of course more or less common property but are largely submerged. A Brother has said:

If mankind wishes for true life it must alter the axis of its existence.

They taught a tremendous lot about "altering the axis", and thus becoming able to use unusual processes in estimating values. Many people's reactions are "This teaching is far from the point". So it is — very far from *our* point; for we do not understand that we need to approach things from *their* angle. Working from our own, we have not progressed very far.

Here are brief examples of Brothers talking on essential "axis-altering" principles:

A visitor (Governor of an Indian State) said blusteringly: "I want proof of your existence."

I never go out to give proof. You will say: "But one must have proof of these things." We will take, for example, science today. (With friendly criticism): What is the method of scientific research? It is said to be 'proof'. Our method is not proof but practice. You are in the dark. While people are in the dark, they will not put the results of their experiments, of their learning into practice. Until you put [our] learning into practice you can never have proof. But you people, once you have got hold of a working basis, use it first for personal gain, then for 'national destiny'. (In other words, national and international politics are largely mixed up with individual greeds.) That is why

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we, from time to time, come out to show you just what you are doing and what your vaunted institutions are exactly worth.

If there is a physical body [the owner of which] craves for no worldly things — no riches or position — that ultimately becomes a channel for us to work through (and to obtain for its owner, proof. The Brothers always stress the physical; there must be right physical as well as other conditions).

Addressing the Governor benignly: **Tell me, what is it you do not understand?**

“I have grasped the gist — ” began he . . .

— but you have not grasped the depth! If one man — one child — of no matter what age — if that one could but remain a child — never ‘grow up’! Christ said: “Blessed are the meek”. To understand meekness, you must do two things: live in alone-ness and in at-one-ment. (Humility is necessary because pride and complacency obstruct the processes of ‘unusual’ knowledge. *Alone-ness*, need not of course mean living alone.) **Then the individual becomes, not a ‘Master’ — not a ‘pupil’ even — but just a stepping stone across the river of life towards the shore of individual understanding.**

“What is the good of it all-all this teaching of yours?”

With calm conviction: **What is the good of the whole world of intellect that is forced upon you?**

“None!” The Governor’s voice had a catch in it.

I take you back to the words of Christ who, when he was jeered at said: “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.” And he also said: “Having ears, hear ye not?” And as people lacked understanding in those days, so they also lack it today; but that lacking of today has a much deeper quality. It is more cruel and more terrible than in the days of Jesus.

“You mean, misused science?”

Yes. There is only one science in the world: true philosophy — philosophy of religion, philosophy of true politics. (The Brothers’ idea of philosophy is not academic. To them, philosophy must include what, for want of a better word, we must call ‘occult’ science-that knowledge-by-becoming — *jnana* — of which they have taught much.) **Today people do not remember these things . . . A man can only be an enquirer when there are no obstacles within him. I do not**

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mean ‘inquisitiveness’. This is but a waste of time. To enquire truly is to ask with the voice of the soul.

Why do you hide behind a screen?”

We do not ‘hide behind a screen; people have put up a screen between them and us . . .

The Governor suddenly became angry and spoke as if addressing an evil spirit: “You *dare* not come out!”

The Brothers’ serenity shone against this man’s loud resentment. **Why do you ask us to come out from our seclusion?** he asked, unprovoked.

I answered: “Because we love you so much!”

That is one reason why we do not come! Your want’ drives us away. (They distinguish between pure desire, which is *need*, and impure desire, which is *want*. Wanting forges bonds; needing breaks them.)

The axis of existence must shift from the personal to the Impersonal — the ‘soul’ — if the personal is to become perceptive, constructive. For example, a very frank and intelligent Indian School Inspector complained:

“Brother, the whole difficulty about what you are teaching is that just now I am too personal to like being Impersonal! The Impersonal would be the destroyer of the personal — ”

But, said a Brother, is not that the only sphere that the Impersonal has to become aggressive in? To slay the personal — that is the violence of the Impersonal. (“Submit to Me,” said the Sage, Bhagavan Shri Ramana Maharshi, speaking as the Impersonal, “and I will strike down the mind.” The Brothers teach with a view to “striking down” this obstructive thing.)

Your world revolves one way; mine revolves the opposite way. [That is why] **if mankind wishes for a true life, it must alter its axis of existence.**

“You said at the outset that I had destroyed the Impersonal as well as the personal. How have I done this?”

By letting the personal eat into the Impersonal.

“But the personal has been destroyed too” —

Most of it has been. You go on in ignorance, striving for security; and true knowledge (jnana) is [depends on] the ability to pass through life without the crutches of security. If your Impersonal life is to develop and not to be destroyed, throw away those crutches. You have barred the Impersonal from

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functioning, and it has become dormant. When the Impersonal was dormant, the personal ate right into it . . .

Thus we are all more or less handicapped by the selves we have created, and these prevent us from being able to measure and evaluate the Brothers and their operations by some intuitive process, some sort of “unusual standard”.

This reminds me of a long talk between a Brother, this same Governor and School Inspector, and the Principal of a College, in the course of which I asked:

“Brother, how can I get outside this time bondage?” (He had been talking of time. He had taught):

Get out of time! Let time pass about you!

I can only teach you what I have taught for thousands of years: live from moment to moment.

The Principal and Governor simultaneously interrupted with some annoyance: “We do not follow your meaning!”

The Brother answered very deliberately, but not unkindly: **“I call you people fools, because you insist on living in artificiality. Fools and artificiality always go together. You have been ‘civilised’. This is folly.**

The Governor asked, sneering: “You think, then, that civilisation has had a bad effect on us?”

Brother, unperturbed: **Artificial civilisation, yes. Not true civilisation.** (To the Principal): **You, for instance, spend your life in schools — have to standardise young minds. Your mind was destroyed when you were a boy, and you are now destroying other minds. When a boy leaves your school [college] he is supposed to think along the same lines as his masters. Where is his individuality? When the soul enters the body, it is individual, and the mind is — or should be — the reflection of the soul. Unless you get true standards, how can you have any conception of what life is? (or of how minds are to be trained.)**

The Principal said, determined to trip up the Brother: “You were telling us that the great sin we commit against life is standardising it; yet now you say **get true standards.** Are there not different standards for different people?”

Yes. That is what I have said. (Sternly): **I said “true” standards, and you should not quibble over words. You know my meaning.**

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Leaving for the moment the Brothers at their vital philosophisings, let us return to the Brothers' request, on taking the Boy in trance, for the removal of base metals and other things of harmful vibration. The Boy used to suffer if he was in contact with some deleterious vibration or object, as for instance when he got a sharp pain in his spine on smelling an ointment perfumed with some synthetic stuff, which I was rubbing on my hands. The pain only went after I had washed off the ointment in several waters. After that, I never used such things. This sort of thing happened frequently, in unexpected ways.

Here is a story of base metals, indicating how their use assists diabolic interference: Once, towards evening, several of us were walking on a narrow mountain path in the Himalayas. On our right, the rocks fell away in a deadly drop. The Boy was walking in front, carrying a storm-lamp in his right hand, and I was some six feet behind him. Suddenly, to my horror, I saw him sway, and turn sharp right to walk over the precipice. There was only a second between him and almost certain death. I darted forward and caught hold of him; and in my flurry I wrenched the lamp out of his hands. At once came the chiding voice of a Brother: **How many times must I tell you that our Boy is NOT to handle base metal? Have you not yet learned?** The disconcerting part of it was that the Boy himself was exasperatingly careless about all such things.

A Brother would himself remove base metals, or sign to others to do so and have them placed well away from the Boy, together with any other magnetically unclean objects in his vicinity. Sometimes I saw that the Brother was impeded — could not get through — and hastily removed such things. Immediately the Brother would arrive and thank me.

Sometimes, also, as we have already seen, we found signs of interference, as if the Boy were being looked after — piloted along, as it were — by someone who knew what was good for him. He and my husband enjoyed playing cards together; but the Brothers chose an original way of stopping the play. One evening I was standing beside the Boy who, of course, could not view my husband's hand. Suddenly John, feigning a club scene, rose from his seat and threw down his cards. "I will not play with *you*" he thundered. You are looking at my cards, cheating. And he stalked out of the room. A Brother — who *could* see — had caused the Boy to play exactly to the cards in my husband's hand. There was no more card playing. The Boy of course, was quite amiable about being called a cheat. It was a grand game!

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We have seen him taken away from cards; and thus, over and over again things he really wanted to do were stopped. He was taken away when he began eating certain foods, from a game of chess, and so on. The Brother would look in and say: **We do not wish our Boy to do such-and-such**, and the Boy would rub his eyes and amble off, having completely lost all wish to do that thing or to eat that food, and equally completely forgotten all about it. This forgetfulness *continued*. Smoking, for instance: he never smoked again after the Brothers put him off in about 1930. Sometimes, however, he swallowed badly magnetised food when the Brothers were off their guard; and the remarkable thing was that as soon as the wrong vibrations reached them, as one surmises (he was very close to them), he vomited the stuff as easily as would an infant or a dog. The Brothers exacted his obedience to the uttermost and, on the whole, it was unailing.¹²

From some trances — such as the Boy's usual ones — the seer wakes with absolutely no recollection of what has transpired, whether 'inner' or 'outer'. But from others — such as the Boy sometimes had — the seer, who has appeared to be unconscious, comes back and says, in effect, "I have been more conscious than I am now, but I cannot put this thing into words." He has been in *inwardly* awakened trance, body and brain asleep. In such cases the sense of time and space, as it were, recedes or is resolved upon something. We sometimes find him struggling to hold on to time and space:

"As Sri Ramakrishna uttered these words, he was on the point of plunging into *samadhi* and losing consciousness of time and pace. But he was trying with the utmost difficulty to control himself. He said to the devotees in an ecstatic mood: 'I still see you. But I feel as if you had been sitting here for ever. I don't recall when you came or where you are'." ¹³

This half losing of space-time consciousness — rolling up, as it were — is a natural thing when entering or coming out of high trance, whether it be 'conscious' as Ramakrishna's usually was, or 'unconscious, as the Boy's usually was. "Trying to control himself": the point is a nice one. Control himself from himself or from an inroad of some other self?

How often we saw the Boy struggling to hold off those 'inroads'! Someone once remarked that the Divine Mother had Ramakrishna as in the grip of a tigress. Analogously it often seemed as if the Boy were gripped by a divine power which

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could not be withstood, though he also tried hard to withstand it. We have heard him muttering: "I will *not* let the Brother come." On occasion, we have even joined in, begging the Brother not to come. As well might one ask the waves of the sea not to break on the shore!

Occasionally, on the other hand, it was the Brothers who refused to come; but this was very rare. Here I am reminded of a little comedy that took place in the West End of London shortly before we left. A certain doctor asked the Brothers if they would speak through the Boy at a special gathering which was to be attended, among others, by a number of medical men. The Brothers allowed this — the first, and last, full public appearance of the Boy — on condition that I was permitted to be with him on the platform. He must have been nervous, but showed no signs of it, and ascended that platform, amid an excitedly talking crowd, in serene faith, while I was dithering.

Shortly after he had sat down, facing the large audience, now tense, the Boy was 'taken' by a Brother, who taught calmly and in a clear, loud voice. After about eight or ten minutes the Brother turned to me and said in an undertone: **Nurth! I will go now!** whereupon the Boy began to go through the usual slow awakening process, as from deep sleep or anaesthesia.

At once this condition of semi-anaesthesia was noticed by the doctors who were occupying the front seats, and they requested our host to 'call back' the Brother (or waken the Boy, I don't remember which); in fact they were so keen that most of them left their seats and swarmed up to the platform in a rush, a few feet from where the Boy lay back in his chair, breathing deeply and slowly, still fast 'asleep'.

I turned to the doctor who was in charge of the gathering and explained to him within hearing of that audience that a Brother could not be made to return once he had determined to leave; but he brushed me aside and dashed forward, despite my effort to restrain him, loudly contradicting me. Standing over the Boy, he started confidently to make passes. I again expostulated, fearing harm during the delicate operation of the Boy's return. The doctor continued to call imperiously to the Brother to come back; but the Boy slowly woke up and with childlike dignity walked straight off the platform. That doctor didn't like me or the Brothers any more!

The Boy was never well when he was not entering into trances. He became restless and depressed. When he was in the full swing of this, his natural vocation, his health was at its best. His trances vitalised him, because they were of the higher kind.

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True, he underwent the usual psycho-physical sufferings of his type; but he was always the better for a very deep trance with high Brothers — what he used to call a ‘big’ trance — unless, of course, there had been bad cross-currents, which meant wrong vibrations; then he became exhausted instead of vitalised. If these kinds of conditions obtained, the Brothers usually left, and the Boy, waking in the midst of a hostile, noisy crowd, promptly left the room without saying a word. That, of course, was the only thing he could do; for how could he even try to cope with such people when he didn’t even know what the Brother had been teaching about? I, therefore, had to do the usual-stay behind and clear up as much as *could* be cleared up; and when I was absolutely alone with the Boy, in the last ten years of the Brothers’ ministry, this became no mean task.

The Boy would not have been wounded by such happenings, if he had had a dependable and constant group of helpers around him. A high channel of this type should be strongly supported at all times. This is an inviolable occult rule. The Boy knew this and took the risks in infringing it; but not for the sake of any earthly or heavenly reward. He did not bother about the ‘next world’ and he had no solace or prospects in this. His attitude proclaimed his link with the Hierarchy; for disciples seek no rewards, temporal or celestial.

(The foregoing remarks are unconnected with the vicarious sicknesses and tribulations suffered by him when he was used to heal psychological, psychic and physical ills. Whatever these additional trials may have been, the fact remained that — apart from them — he was never really well when he was not having his normal trances.)

These psycho-physical sufferings of mediumistic subjects, such as Ramakrishna, or Teresa of Avila, down to the humblest, exhibit identical symptoms. Although the Boy possessed a strong, resilient constitution, always the better for normal trances, he was no exception. The sufferings of the conscious or ‘waking’ trance-medium are always greater; which is probably one reason why consciousness is sometimes withdrawn, in the ‘sleeping’ type of trance, in order somewhat to spare the medium.

The mighty Ramakrishna said of one of his many illnesses: “It was as if millions of ants were gnawing at my brain.” His amazing trances continued notwithstanding. It was the same with the humble Boy. I have known a Brother to take him when he had a temperature of 103, and teach someone who had travelled far and whose need

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was great. “They called a doctor to see him” (Ramakrishna). “‘What a madman,’ he said. ‘Nothing is left of him but a few bones and still he is reasoning like that!’

None of this gears in with modish religions advocating pacts with the Infinite for health, wealth, beauty, long life and happiness. Were such ideas true, then the suffering saints and prophets, from Milarepa and Jesus down, would have no place in the scheme of things; but if people persist in believing that they can bargain with God, God will no doubt keep His side of these pacts in His Own way — not as the reward of spirituality, but at the cost of it.

The general atmosphere of the modern world — be it Oriental or Occidental — is inimical to exalted trance and such journeyings into the oceans of consciousness, whether taken sleeping or waking. High channel-ship is primarily a matter of natural purity and true values — both now almost forgotten. On the whole conditions are kinder in the East; yet even in India today there exists, as far as I know, no science of mediumship, but mainly superstition, except perhaps among a few scattered *yogis*. There are in fact no fitting conditions maintained anywhere, as a matter of course, for these people. Those who are born with ‘strange gifts’ have usually to fight for even elementary conditions for their use.

Reticent though the Boy was about his trances, his relationship with the Brothers, and his inner life, I did manage over the years to glean some information without badgering him. I got it in scraps; but when he *would* speak, he spoke with absolute certainty. He told me — referring to the normal, not the sudden trances — that when he was ‘going out’, he felt drowsy, and often numb in the feet. The numbness spread upward until it reached the shoulders or forehead; which is interesting, since it suggests the heart or head exits, known in the East. Then he knew no more until he was coming back, and usually looking down a sort of long telescope from his forehead: objects at first appearing far away and tiny at the narrow distant end, then becoming larger and getting closer, until finally with a rush they were ‘here’ and of normal size, and he woke up. This procedure was not invariable, however. Sometimes (he told me) he saw a Being, and either this Being ‘coalesced’ with him, or he was drawn into it. The latter, he said, was always bad; but the former happened with high Beings. There may have been other ways, but he did not describe them to me. We noticed that in the ‘telescope’ awakening, during the process of re-focusing, he often fumbled with any near object, trying to focus touch, sight and hearing.

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During these fumbling efforts, his head and eye-balls would roll vaguely, exactly in the manner of an infant's, and — just like a baby — he tried so hard, and looked so silly! — not ludicrous, but truly infantile. Sri Ramakrishna used to say: While coming down from that state I cannot count correctly. Trying to count, I say, 'one, seven, eight', or some such thing. There reason withers away." Conscious or unconscious, the effects of trying to get back were the same, in this type of trance.¹⁴

The Boy did not always go gently and slowly into trances. At those times — and there were many — when he was 'taken' in the twinkling of an eye, perhaps while at meals or during any other occupation — even walking and cycling — there would be no "goin' ter sleep", but the Boy would be abruptly 'blotted out' by a Brother. A Brother has been known to arrive on the crowded moving stairs of a London Underground station. The Brother evidently did not know where the Boy was, for he enquired hurriedly and amazedly, **Where is our Boy? What is this place?** On being told — and that the Boy might stumble getting off when the stairs reached the bottom — they had, in fact, all-but arrived there — the Brother whispered urgently, **I go now!** and *left between the last step of the stairs and the floor under which it was passing — between the raising of the Boy's foot and putting it down.* In that instant the Boy regained full consciousness, and walked off normally to his train.

On another occasion in London, several of us saw the Boy vault playfully over the high old-fashioned rail of a bed. We had all been to the pictures and he arrived home in wild spirits. He vaulted clean over and landed on the mattress with a springy bump — *or rather a Brother landed*, for in that split second in mid-air, the Boy had been superseded. We heard a rueful voice, **Where am I? What IS this AWFUL fellow doing?** We explained. He ignored our utter astonishment and the mad young folk round him; sat the Boy cross-legged in the centre of that bed, and within a few moments was teaching us all superbly. When the Boy awoke, he *also* said, "Where am I?"

As shown in an earlier chapter, he was often 'taken' from one place to another, not having any idea afterwards of how he got there. If the Brothers took him in trance to a distant place, and he awoke there, he would pull himself together, and get back to the place he had come from as best he could, muttering, on arrival, in a childlike, dazed way: "Oi must 'a 'bin ter sleep." At such times, he was always taken for a definite purpose, if only, the Brothers often told me, that of changing his surroundings and magnetically resting him. I was always at my wit's end to know how the Brothers

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managed it all; but they did, under the most difficult — not to say fantastically impossible—conditions.

When we were in India, Professor Daniel Jones wrote to me of the Boy:

“[He] is a truly great man—great in the best sense of the word . . . absolute integrity, firmness of purpose and completely disinterested motives. He is always ready to go to extremes of personal inconvenience and suffering in order to help those who need the assistance that he can give. One of my friends, to whom he was of service when in desperate distress, described him to me as ‘a tower of strength.’ ”

But over against that strength was his helplessness in trance; and here he naturally looked to me. No matter what was going on, I had to stick to him for his protection while in trance, except when the Brothers, at enormous risk, took him on some special mission without his ‘outer guard.’ I saved him from many catastrophes, and of course from endless intruders.

No matter what the Boy achieved by means of his marvellous gift, he was never known to show surprise or elation. Awakening from trances in the midst of spellbound groups, he was the same simple fellow—natural and unconcerned. To me, who knew his background, this was ever a fresh wonder—that is, a manifestation of pure genius.

One might argue, of course, that he could not be proud of something of which he was unconscious. Granted. But the after-effects of these manifestations and of the Brothers’ ‘miracles’ of healing and so forth, frequently reached him. It was not uncommon, for instance, for members of a cultured Indian audience to fall on their faces before him as he woke up. He hated this; *but he witnessed it*. He heard people’s praise and expression of awe and wonder. Such things are apt to turn a man’s head. He even occasionally met people who returned to give thanks. (More often, they didn’t.) But he *heard*, at least, of the ‘miracles’. He heard of all those people and tried to escape them; in all honesty of soul, he wanted to forget his own part, and fasten attention on the Brothers.

Here is an instance of heart-poisoning flattery which left our Boy unscathed: Perhaps no people on earth are prouder than Banaras Pandits; yet I saw a group of these Brahmins compelled to awe before him. It happened at the Banaras mansion of an Indian millionaire, on the banks of the Ganges. We sat in a wide circle. Dr. B. L. Atreya, Head of the Department of Religion, Philosophy and Psychology in one of

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the big Indian Universities (since retired), who interpreted for us, was next to our host, then the Boy, then me. The remainder of the circle was formed of a double row of Banaras Brahmins in all their ‘canonicals.’ A tremendous amount of close talk went on among the Pandits while our interpreter passed on, in Hindi, the Brother’s eloquent philosophic dissertation; his responses to our host’s requests for advice, and answers to the questions of the Pandits. As the Brother made one point after another, Brahmins kept seeking one another’s ears, nodding astonished approval. “*An Englishman — a mere coolie, too — expounding the profundities of our shastras!*” — and they quoted appropriate Sanskrit *shlokas* (verses) which established the authenticity of the Brother’s words.

The Boy was very deeply entranced that day, and the guests were able to observe his gradual return to ordinary consciousness, and then the very innocent and embarrassed Boy (at that time aged about forty-seven, by the way, but still our *Boy* receiving their — to him-quite incomprehensible congratulations and praises. He stood like a dazed child, enjoying the milk and fruit he was given, but aware of little else. He was unaggressively happy, because there were no barriers of unbelief among these people after the Brothers had done with them. Even the Pandits seemed to have melted, and treated him with grave affection.¹⁵

I have always marvelled at the way the Brothers could take the Boy and use him effectively amid alien magnetisms and cross-currents. One night in the Punjab, for example, he rode a bicycle through traffic on the main road between Lahore and Model Town — a confusedly crowded thoroughfare, with the usual Indian mixture of badly driven lorries, bullock carts, and madly driven private cars. On the pillion was my unfortunate younger daughter, who had set off with the *Boy*, and was now imploring a *Brother* to go away. “*Go away!* If you stay here you’ll kill us both.” But of course, the Brother did not “go away”, for (my daughter told me) he was enjoying himself immensely, indulging in outrageous road-manners while she held her breath, expecting each to be the last. The greatest risk, she knew, would be at the change-over; for while it appeared that Little Kardra, the playful Brother, had got the bit between his teeth, Big Kardra, she thought, would be far too ‘fine’ to be able to take hold in this confusion. Meanwhile one wriggle of the wheel while that Brother was leaving the Boy might have meant disaster. My daughter, knowing of this, told me afterwards that she was frantic. He was riding fast, darting in and out between the

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traffic, and carelessly turning his head to shout remarks to her. Impossible to jump off; besides, she was afraid that the jerk might upset the trance and precipitate catastrophe another way. “Oh Brother, *do* look where you’re going!” She was clinging on miserably, when the *Boy* suddenly dismounted. A Brother had managed it! Knowing Little Kardra, we did not think *he* could have done it; but behind him was a very great Brother indeed — Big Kardra — who must have called in another, as this kind of thing was not in his line.

My daughter told me: “We dismounted and finished the conversation on the grass edge of the road, all of which the Brother managed to do while holding the Boy in trance” (the roadside being crowded and noisy).

This reminds me of another trance in the early days, before we left London. The Boy needed a good overcoat. He was a rough fellow then, and I told a Brother that I feared that very on account of this, we should not get good service in the first-rate shop I had in mind. People were very snobbish in those days. The Brother said, **Don’t worry at all. I will take him there. They will serve ME all right!** I had not the remotest idea of what he was going to do, but made arrangements to take the Boy. (In later years, we knew that they could do prodigies and were prepared for anything. We never wondered if things would come off. They just *did*.)

We set out by bus to Oxford Circus. As we were walking down Regent Street, I noticed people turning to look at our poor Boy. He had been ‘taken’ while we walked, and looked superb-six feet two-and-a-half inches of majesty. When we arrived at the shop, assistants crowded to serve him — obsequious, attentive. His bearing was perfection, as it had been at Bow Road on that never-to-be-forgotten night; and this time the speech matched the bearing. But the most astounding thing to my mind was the Brother’s knowledge of details of fitting, choosing material, ordering delivery, etc. He spoke with a slight Oxford drawl. (The Boy wore “the Brothers” coat for twenty-four years after, through all the Indian winters, and I still have it.)

While I give some of these stories of the Brothers crashing their Boy about amid heavy, destructive vibrations, in deep trance, I am again reminded of the almost unbelievable sensitivity of the Boy. Here is an illustration: One day the clowning Little Kardra was teasing and pelting me with tiny rolled up pieces of a torn letter. “Two can play at that game,” said I, and threw one of the tiny pellets back. It glanced

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off the bridge of the entranced Boy's nose. Immediately, there was a crisis! He gasped for breath and turned purple in the face, unable to speak. I was horrified and afraid. The Brother (probably Big Kardra now) managed to sign urgently to me to massage around the Boy's heart and chest. Fortunately I caught his meaning although I had not previously learned to do this. After a most anxious time, the Boy came to. The great Brother was there, and taught, without referring to what had happened, except by a terse **Thank you, Nurth.**

The extreme sensitivity of the Boy that day may have been due to his having been more than usually keyed up just when this great Brother was about to speak through him, the nose being an important centre for occult operations. Also, he was not sufficiently guarded, as only one of my children was with us. The greatest danger, I noticed, was just before or just after a manifestation, at the time of the 'change-over'. We had some close shaves, usually due to the fact that there was always a paucity of friends to protect the Boy; for it takes at least three understanding persons to run a thing like this; whereas I was often alone with him, managing him, meetings and household. I would have been utterly defeated had it not been for the Brothers' unflinching strength and calm, supporting love — miraculously supporting, when one considers, in addition, my semi-invalidism.

Some of the facts I have given as to the Boy being at once both extremely sensitive and insensitive, would seem to be irreconcilable. I got over the difficulty, by assuming that this work was departmentalised among a number of Brothers constituting a branch of the Hierarchy; and that if — as they told me sometimes happened — one of them was called away in an emergency — such as a shipwreck, a train disaster, an international imbroglio, a sudden crisis anywhere — there could be a temporary gap, in which anything might happen. Actually, this was explained to me by a Brother several times, when things had 'reeled'. After all, even such a Hierarchy has its limitations!

Here is another story of clatter and clang: Shortly before leaving for India, the Boy and I were staying some miles outside Hereford. One afternoon we had made an excursion to Hereford Cathedral, and were now on our way home by the last, very crowded bus. Our seat was in about the fourth row from the front. Suddenly, there was a commotion at the front seat in our line. A man there had been taken ill. Unnoticed by the jostling strap-hangers, all apparently too much concerned with getting to their homes to see the sick man. The Boy nudged me. I looked — it was a

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Brother! In that sweltering crowd! It was the last place in which I would have expected a Brother to manifest. He rose up in the lurching bus and took charge at once, pushing vigorously towards the front. The Boy being very tall, everybody saw him and recognised what they believed to be a doctor. “Oh, I’m glad there’s a doctor ‘ere,” said a fat old lady in a crooked hat, giving weight to make way. When the Brother arrived at the front row he promptly ordered the driver to stop the bus, and had the sick man carried out and laid on the grass. By now everyone was ready to help. One heard respectful tones: “Yes, doctor,” “Certainly, doctor.” While the passengers formed a circle of awed onlookers, the ‘doctor’ manipulated the man’s spine and stomach with that sure touch I knew well, and within a few minutes the patient vomited. I was the only one close to the Brother. “Is he drunk?” I whispered.

No. Threatened stroke.

The man rested for a short time, and then the Brother gently supported him back to his seat. “Thank you so much, Doctor! I think I’ll be all right now,” he murmured, leaning — without knowing it — on the magical Holy One. Then, amid murmurs of approbation and sympathy, the country folk made way for the Brother to reach his seat and the bus moved on. He waited until the people had returned to their preoccupations; then gave me a merry look, and a second after, it was again the Boy! “*Wot’s up? I think I must ‘a bin ter sleep,*” came the familiar drowsy tones. Presently the man got out at a stop, calling back, “All right now, Doc! Many thanks to you! Goodnight, sir!” No reply. The Boy was not interested.

(Many such things, grave or gay, happened in the midst of my family and friends. We came to take comparatively little notice of them. More noteworthy — *as, indeed, the Brothers always insisted* — were the countless helpings and hearings of the mindsick through the teachings, which poured out in an unfailing stream.)

When he was going through his early occult training, shortly after we met him, the Brothers taught me, first by signs (before they could speak through him) and then by words, several ways of protecting him against attacks by bad entities or thoughts, and how to drive out such entities if they got possession; though luckily I had some knowledge of such things already. He was on the whole most careless and uncooperative when he was ‘himself’ — a dare-devil, in fact, if ever there was one; so it was only when he was in trance that I could be certain of carrying out the Brothers’ instructions. Even then I often had a good deal of bother, for devils, of course, are

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very wily, and would do all they knew how to obstruct, even by using threats and having a try at physical violence; but the Brothers knew more than the sly devils every time. Still, I cannot say that I had an easy twenty-seven years with them.

In those early days my children used to hurry to me as a matter of course: “Mother, the Boy has got a devil!” and I would cleanse my hands of the washing, or whatever it was, and scurry off to remove the fiend. This knowledge, picked up so naturally by my children, came in handy a long time afterwards, when my son was fighting with the Fourteenth Army in Burma. Towards the end of that campaign his Battery was resting near Toungoo, by an old temple. A Buddhist Festival was in progress, the procession led by a number of young children. In the evening my son was told by villagers that one of the children — a ten years old Burmese boy from a nearby village — was ill. When he went to investigate he recognised from past experience, signs pointing to possession rather than sickness. Remembering the occasional devils of his boyhood, and what he had seen me do to get them out, he volunteered to help the little lad, but was waved off by the relations, who sent for a grandmother. The old woman tried whatever she knew of ‘witchcraft’, but the devil would not budge; so the relations now asked my son to help — if he could. He knelt on the ground beside the obsessed child, went through the well-remembered passes for a few minutes, and the child woke up, normal and well. It certainly must have astonished the Burmese villagers to see a British Army Major successfully performing a magical rite without even sacerdotal trappings!

I hope I have been able to show that the Boy’s work was not spiritualistic in the sense of spiritualism as generally understood in our time; but rather was akin to the spiritistic outlook and events found in the Christian Bible and other scriptures, and in the Mysteries of Egypt and Greece before these suffered degradation.

The teachings were of a consistently high level. (“Words of superb wisdom”; “sublime”; “*upanishadic*”, as they have been severally described by an Indian editor and politician, a savant and M.P., and a University Professor.) There was a normal every-day exercise of occult powers of a high order; and in complete independence of such conditions as are usually thought necessary for spiritualistic seances.

(Here, I am reminded of a sweet little story. Once, in the early days, I began to burn a joss stick when I knew a Brother was coming. He came at once, and addressed me, smiling, as a doctor might speak to a silly patient, explaining some obvious thing:

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You need not use that for us. I questioned: “Then do you perhaps not like incense?” He said gently: **We do our incensing within.** What a fool I was! I might have guessed that the perfume of even the choicest incense would jar them, since the perfumes they can project, or make their presence known by, are of an indescribable quality. No earthly flower can smell like these. Yet the dear Brother did not remind me of them but merely smiled indulgently at my trivial preparations. Incense has its uses, naturally, under coarser conditions. The same applies to music. The Brothers have their own. I have heard it.)

I cannot attempt to define just what constituted the interior, psychic differences between his trances and powers, and spiritualism; yet considerable differences did exist. The humble Boy’s trances — his waking responses to the Brothers’ orders, too — were obviously in the class of the seers, prophets and mystics, and the parallels I have suggested put them in the perspective to which they belong, though it is impossible here to enumerate all the ways in which he was “taken” by many types of teachers, none of whom appeared to be below the level of high chelaship, human and angelic, and some few of whom were manifestly above it.

But with all these trances, we still have not seen the real glory of the Boy and the Brothers; because it was when he sat entranced, teaching hour after hour, year after year, that the heights of his kinship with them, and of their sacredness, were reached and revealed.

Totally unadvertised, here was nothing sensational; and yet it was in truth most sensational that an ordinary human being, in all seeming so untutored, should have been the channel of such rare thought and wisdom-in-action. The greater part of the Boy’s evangel consisted in meeting the doubts and difficulties of all who might come; and beyond that in bestowing, by the sheer potency of the Brothers’ presences and words, gifts of grace without favour. The memory of such outpourings will linger when all the ‘miracles’ have been forgotten. In the most glorious of those outpourings he became absolutely transfigured. Usually the Being who possessed him sat cross-legged in unfathomable ecstasy, in divine compassion. No one present felt able to speak. Everything within one seemed to be suspended; breathing changed — everything changed.

Sometimes the Holy One would utter a few words in a voice as different from our ‘normal’ Brothers’ as their voices were from the Boy’s. It was a still rapt speaking,

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quelling the ache of life; the voice alone would have quelled it, even had there been no words. The eyes were indescribable . . . Myself and Thysel . . . The Image of God . . . Not looking out, just — shining. How could such things happen? I know not; I only know that from the time that I beheld them, all things had other values.

It seemed to us — that is, my husband and me — that there was a double ensouling; that is, first would come Little Kardra to loosen us up for the advent of a big Brother, who arrived and superseded Little Kardra, as usual.¹⁶ Then — sooner or later — that big Brother seemed to fade out, or ‘sleep’, when *without his letting go of the Boy who was still held in deep trance*, a most Glorious One emerged. He was just there. He usually stayed about twenty minutes. When He was about to leave, there was not the customary appearance of a ‘fading out’ followed by the Boy’s awakening; instead, the High Brother was *at once in full possession*. This is what made me think that he had not gone away — that there was an ensouling of the Brother himself, so that when the Glorious One withdrew, the Brother remained, just as the Boy remained when a Brother withdrew. It was so natural and easy! The Boy was in a state of harmony and peace, breathing wonderfully and, as it were, *satisfied* through and through. He looked very beautiful; his face was filled out and irradiated. He looked like a lover with the beloved. Soon, without speaking, the big Brother just faded, and the Boy rested in deep waking sleep. It seemed as if he could not bring himself to open his eyes and come out of this Reality. We never tried to rouse him. He came back when he would or when *they* awakened him.

He was a happy Boy after these trances — never strained, but rather, built up. This was due to the Glorious Ones, of course; and one has to remember the great care with which the Brothers “stepped up” the Boy’s vibrations and ours, beforehand; often even in relays, two of them coming prior to a Glorious One.

Sometimes people fell on their knees in those Presences. I remember a North Country Englishman — a non-churchgoer — doing that. He wept, and whispered, “May I ask who you are?” The Holy Being slowly turned his gaze upon him, but in a manner as if to shield him from its full light looking at him as from a great height, he said: **I am — the Comforter — of the forlorn.**

Surely . . . that profound, tender voice? . . .

The questioner was at a crisis in his life. The burden vanished.

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CHAPTER TEN

Storms and Devils

All forms of trance and seership are fraught with danger; and I have elsewhere said a little of the dangers to the Boy. But then, everything is fraught with danger. All life is dangerous. People risk their lives on all sides to pass exams, to carry on business — at sea, in the air, above the air, in laboratories and so on. Yet no one shrieks about danger, though many pursuits are not worth the risks entailed. Vices are fraught with danger, yet people follow them. In all forms of psychism, too, there is danger to both health and character; not, in the finer forms, to character in the sense of essential goodness, but in the sense of conduct which, in highly sensitive people, and especially amid the provocations of modern life, may become outlandish under the extreme pressure of their gifts, while health may also suffer. Sri Ramakrishna said:

“The ordinary man could not have borne a fraction of that tremendous fervour, his body would have been shattered by a quarter of that emotion. I could forget my indescribable pangs” — that is, pangs of physical reactions which he described elsewhere — “only by seeing the Mother in some form or other for the greater part of the day and night. Otherwise this body could not have survived.”¹

Some seers may not have the comfort of conscious communion with divine Beings, so it is reasonable to expect that their behaviour, if they are subjected to divine visitations in trance, may be abnormal and at times even cause misery to others. (This goes for the lesser as well as the greater ones.)

The Boy’s strange eyes were seraphic in their normal state; seraphic plus when the Brothers were using him; then they lost their stone-like appearance and gleamed with heavenly fire. But they could spurt a very *other* kind of fire when he was angry. Yes — the Boy had a terrific, volcanic, unpredictable temper.

We all took this temper to be a natural concomitant of his appalling sensitivity to every vibration about him. It was of course to be expected that our superlatively sensitive Boy would show unbalance. This took the form of violent and intense rebellion and fury against things and people. He was not a man to do things by halves. When in those states, he appeared to be jealous, tyrannical and cruel. Yet he

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was neither vicious (women, drink, etc.) nor was he dangerously violent. In fact, he was a most tender-hearted man.

These states were analogous to the brain-storms of an unhappy child, and were as apparently causeless; though of course there were many causes. When the sun came out again he often seemed to have forgotten them completely, though others were still smarting from psychological and psychic wounds which, while the storms lasted, he inflicted with cruel ruthlessness.

If he was completely unconscious of some, however, he was acutely conscious of others of his storms — the ‘personal’ ones, if I may so put it. I believe these to have been a kind of despairing indignation against well-nigh everything; for within him there operated what seemed to be an automatic yardstick of real values. This fixed and apparently involuntary awareness of and reaction from his Brothers’ world, produced torture for him in this one. There was Something which he did not pretend to understand but yet accepted, and this Something was at war with the world in which he and we lived our outward lives. He found himself as it were helpless in the toils of the Real. No amount of struggle — of resentment, even — on the part of this man from Bow could stem in him the flood of that Real. He was a fighter, but he could not fight *this*. So he suffered. He raged. And I suffered, looking on.

Taking all the facts into consideration, I came to realise that this Boy was far more sinned against than sinning; and because I believed him to be the soul of gentleness, I stood by him. How many ran away from him! My husband never ran away, nor the girls. The worst flights were by Indian servants. Even so, a very few understood: “The Sahib — makes great noise but does nothing. He is very kind.” The Boy would have suffered anything rather than attempt to use *his powers* to gain ascendancy over those humble people, or indeed over anybody. Let them run away. Let them treat him as a madman. He would not explain or defend. Thus storm and stress were frequently brought into our home. They often entailed sending for a carpenter to repair damage, missing appointments (but, curiously enough, *never* trances), dashing off to apologise to people, or to look for servants — or even sometimes for the Boy, who had been carried away by some destructive demon. I used to feel that the Brothers and I were sharing these *contretemps*. Naturally people not aware of the real situation thought the Boy mad. Meanwhile, living some twenty-seven years with him, I learned a good deal of practical psychology.

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In answer to our pained and anxious enquiries the Brothers informed us that, *among other reasons, they could not use this instrument unless he “let things off”*. They told me over and over again, when he had nearly made a nervous wreck of me’ to **take no notice!** A tall order indeed; but the Brothers were implacable in their training of me. In that particular matter I was expected **not to react** to tornadoes. Of course, one appreciated the soundness of the advice even if one was incapable of following it. In fairness to myself, however, I must say that I did follow it much of the time; or I might not have survived to make this record.

There are, obviously, other ways of “letting things off” for normal people. But we are considering a super-normal person, and after long observation I came to the conclusion that the Boy’s periods of rage and frenzied rebellion were indeed — *among other reasons* — his necessary safety-valve; but I do not suggest that others — normal or super-normal — should follow in his footsteps. It would be unfair to the Boy to present him as a saint. My own View, however, is that he was far holier, far greater, than he appeared. Even his rages had a classic quality.

We often remarked the swing from his apparent weaknesses of character, and his nervous instability, to very gentle moods and exalted trance states, when he served all and sundry in a humble and affectionate way. His powers of love and unrequited service and suffering for the sake of others were indeed astonishing, and it is clear that one cannot pronounce judgment in a case like this. Self-control is important, but not at the cost of greatness. Had the Boy retained any repressions and “complexes”, the Brothers probably could not have used him. It is also possible that they themselves may have had to put him through some process of psychological emptying from time to time. They seem to have suggested this.

There was one thing which they told me they had never been able to deal with, and that was his pride. It was the pride of an Emperor — and a Moghul at that. This may have been his only way of maintaining a grip on things. Yet this bundle of contradictions was absolutely humble about his great gift, as also about his rages. An Indian doctor, one of our dearest friends, once told me that the Boy broke down and wept, saying, “I cannot help it”, when the doctor pointed out that these rages were making me ill. The Boy in tears! Although he must have known the true causes of many of these states — for I had often passed on to him information about them which I had had from the Brothers — *he did not divulge that information to the doctor*

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in self-defence preferring to be condemned by this dear friend rather than to tell what he believed to be his Masters' secrets. Again, although he was so proud, we have seen that he was ill at ease in the presence of admirers, and was incapable of any sort of shamming or pretence. When people were awe-stricken before him, he would often play the fool, tell idiotic stories or be rude. When they insisted on plying him with questions he would say, "Don't ask me. I am one of those brainless chaps." There were times when he could hardly bear the ordeal of his Channelship and sought to avoid it. Surely the Brothers' control of this recalcitrant fellow was an impressive object-lesson in the power of the Unknown; but I never met anyone who could control *them*.

By now I must have made it clear that his utter obedience to the will of the Brothers was a sermon to would-be saints. For here was a rough, proud, self-willed, whirlwind of a man, who yet was like a baby in their hands. There was indeed a haunting beauty in the wild fellow; though his marvellous gifts, his storms and submissions, appeared to be a mass of contradictions unless, as the Brothers helped me to do, one could find a psychology profound enough to unriddle him.

I have already indicated, too, that in addition to his personal storms, there were devils; and here are some instances of the kind of things the Boy did when some demon got hold of him. The first is a particularly good example of the necessity for protection to a man of his calibre, and the trouble which follows on its absence. Naturally, the Brothers could not take the place of a trained protective group in the physical and lower astral worlds. The "Inner Guard" cannot do the work of the "Outer Guard", without possible dislocations. The Brothers also had additional problems of their own arising out of this absence of a permanent group. That he should have had to be almost alone in this outer world, was the Boy's greatest trouble. It could not be helped, so he took stupendous risks — even of insanity or death — and went right ahead.

One hot summer day he and I arrived in Banaras — with mounds of luggage as usual, for we travelled with our house on our backs. The Boy dealt expertly with coolies at such times, whereas I shrank from coping with them. He always took rough things on himself. When we got to our station he would make me stay put until he came for me., when it was only a matter of stepping into some vehicle. But this day, amid the screaming confusion of coolies and irritable passengers scrambling for

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their luggage in the blazing midday heat, the Boy, obviously possessed by a devil, having execrated all and sundry in suitable language, simply lay down, bareheaded and on his back amid the strewn luggage on the broiling open platform, and refused to budge! He was in imminent danger of sunstroke. Some people tripped over him; otherwise the Indian crowd characteristically ignored the prone man. The coolies were throwing trunks out of the luggage van, and one might have hit him. A few British stared disgustedly at their fellow-countryman, and passed on.

I was, then, alone with our mound of goods and a group of yelling coolies. Obviously the Boy was simply *not there*. He had, I supposed, picked up some evil thing in the train. I dashed outside the station to make sure of the vehicle which I had ordered; got all the stuff on to it; and *left him there*. It was a hard move into enormous dirty empty rooms in a palace on the Ganges, and there was no time to waste if bare necessities were to be assembled in these quarters before dark. There were no servants, of course. By the time I had deposited everything and got back to the station, the Boy had recovered sufficiently to join me in a *riksha*. I believe he did not know anything of what had happened. He was like a tired child, pitifully gentle and humble, and helped valiantly for the remainder of the day. I wondered how the poor silky skin had stood the grilling, but said nothing.

There were instances of dark beings trying *to get him away from me*. On one occasion, for example, we were in the far Himalayas, when he announced one morning that he had packed all his things and was going down-country. He was quite calm, but I saw by his red eyes and sunken greenish face that it was a wicked demon. He must have 'taken' the Boy and packed during the night. The Boy would not tell me his destination. The fiend had even ordered coolies to take his baggage, which lay piled in the compound, to the hill lorry.

I was aghast. I was ill at the time, and we were in a very remote district, as usual without a servant. The Boy — or rather, the demon with the Boy in its grip — had gone to his room; so I took my chance, slipped out unseen, and managed to get hold of the head coolie and his fellows, who were squatting in readiness some way down the hill. I bribed them all; I lied that the Sahib, poor man, was at times *pagal* (mad) — with which they grinningly agreed. I undertook that he would not be angry with them; and ultimately they promised faithfully to miss the bus — and kept their promise. When the time came for departure, the Boy was awake. There was no scene with the coolies because he remembered nothing about having summoned them.

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This quick recovery had been possible because the devil had had nothing to feed on, so to speak; by going off I had left him alone, to be dealt with by the Brothers. The Boy went out meekly, collected his luggage, and returned it all to his room as if nothing had happened. "I must 'a bin ter sleep," said he, like a lamb. I said: "Tea's ready, dear. Take it easy — I'll bring you a cup." No epilogue. Silence. Always silence. But I was feeling hysterical then.

Another time, likewise in India, he packed and went off before I even knew anything about it. That experience was the worst I ever had of its kind. I had no idea where he had gone, whether he was in some wretched bazaar hotel (he had no money for a good one) or had left the town; and if the latter, whether he had gone by train or lorry. Scarcely knowing what I was doing, I dashed out to the Railway Station and enquired all along the departure platform, looked in every office and room, and among the waiting crowds, to whom I described him. People were nice to me (I was a Swami then, and in India the ochre robe still holds sway), but no one had seen him. "Have the devils put him under a train?" I thought. At last in the passengers' luggage room, I found someone who had seen him, waiting for the train now due. I fled along the platform, and there I saw the tall, thin, drooping figure, green-faced, standing as if in a dream. He had dropped his luggage in the baggage room and evidently forgotten all about it. (By this, I might have found him afterwards. The Brothers used to trip up devils in these little ways.)

Poor Boy! "*Poo' poo' Pike!*" I took his hand and led him to a *riksha* and home, after collecting his things. The evil thing had dazed him, so that he had little idea of what he was doing. But *some* of him must have been there, or I could not have got him back. The Brothers may have taken him off to the station' so that they could operate on the devil without any immediate reactions of mine. Thus it would be weakened. They did that often, and explained the *modus operandi* to me only when the crises were past. (It was very uncomfortable for me, but, literally, "needs must when the devil drives.") On this occasion they had counted on being able to get me to the station in time, and thanked me in their lovely way. Oh how lovely they were!

We never referred to these attacks afterwards; but he must have sensed *interruptions*. When the storms were of his own making, however, he remembered afterwards, and suffered great remorse. After one of these I would find him sitting on the side of his bed, head in hands, the picture of misery. It was so patent to me, though, that he was not responsible for most of them. I was certain, too, that-suffer as

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he might and did, through the misjudgments of those about him, and the unremitting strain on his whole being — wild horses could not have dragged the truth from him which was that in nine cases out of ten, his conscious storms and aberrations were some kind of vicarious ‘letting off’ — he may have been letting off *my* suppressed angers for all I could tell — or, some deeper theurgic operations of the Brothers, who seemed to use him sometimes as a filter; sometimes a destroying — or, life-giving — vortex; or again, as a fulcrum.

He wrote to an intimate, a most rare expression about those storms. I think it was the only expression in his life. The letter is dated February, 1949. A Brother must have helped over the writing:

“... in the past, I have suffered more than I would like to admit — yes, more than I have ever admitted to anyone — and I have always tried to cover it all up by becoming rough, and hard. If, in the course of that roughness and hardness, I have hurt people, I am awfully ashamed and repentant inside myself. But my devilish pride always steps in the way. Perhaps it is something left over from the . . . Period” (incarnation) “or perhaps I am again attempting to ‘cover up’ behind another excuse — I don’t really know. All I do know is that I am trying to be honest . . . Don’t speak to Swamiji on these matters because she has her own burdens to carry . . .”

— as if I did not carry all this burden with him!

We have been told that devils can be liquidated. The world is full of known and unknown fiends, whose liquidation has apparently to be achieved through physical bodies, as Christ showed us. Be that as it may: his stricken face — he never knew I saw it — told its own story of sorrowful submission to some destiny beyond ordinary understanding. Yet he never complained but kept silence. Always, always silence. It was stupendous!

People talk twaddle. “If the Brothers are Masters,” they say, “why do they allow these things to happen to their chosen instrument?” and so on.

Obviously the Boy, like everyone else, had to suffer the consequences of his personal faults, and develop his own character. Of what value would the Brothers be as guides and teachers, if they spoon-fed us? There was nothing in the Boy which would have submitted to being led by the nose. He preferred to make his own

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mistakes and struggle on. He knew that the Brothers protected him whenever protection was really called for, and for the rest he was a man, not a milksop. (“He’s one hundred per cent a *man*,” an Indian Army friend said to me.)

If there were attacks aimed at the Brothers and their work, it was the Boy’s high honour to suffer them. If a man is saving another from a fire, even to his own hurt, who but an imbecile would insist that he should not go forward? And if the Boy’s storms and demoniac possessions were vicarious sufferings, to bear them was also his high honour under his Brothers. The Brothers *could take him whenever they wanted him*. Often within an hour of a devilish attack, spellbound audiences were taught through him in those simple “words of superb wisdom”. Had he not been able to go through all these stresses, to the very uttermost, he would have been useless to the Brothers. They were all part of his Vow, his Big Undertaking.

Many a time, having been driven nearly crazy by his startling vagaries, which seemed to be the behaviour of a lunatic, I took the first opportunity to appeal to the Brothers for help. However, I rarely got it! They would rebuke me sternly, saying: **It is your job to look after our Boy**, or, on occasion, **We were ‘cleaning up’ such or such a place** (or person) **and using the Boy as a ‘filter’** (or perhaps, I thought, ‘incinerator’ with due repercussions on poor me). Or they would say: **We are doing some work at . . . and we have had to use the Boy. He will be all right soon. Take no notice!** Or again, after taking on a case, **The Boy will be on edge for a while**. At such times he would often lock himself in his room, or go out alone for hours; or would say to me wildly, “Don’t come near me! Keep away, I tell you!”

Rarely, a Brother would come along and explain that they had had to leave the Boy on his own, with me as buffer, owing to pressure of work; but now, the Brother promised, he would see that the Boy behaved properly for a while, so that I might get a little rest. And the Boy became lamb-like on the instant. But that never lasted for long. After all, one could not expect the hard-worked Brothers, who had devils and what-not else to deal with, continually to guard the fellow. As They had told me: it was my job to look after their Boy; and yet I let them down so often! As I pen this, I can hardly bear the recollection of their infinite patience with and trust in me. They understood that what I was going through was, from the wee human angle, often quite dreadful. It was no joke to keep pleasant — really pleasant *inside* — to be cosy and decent in the home, to keep it even *going*, to back the Brothers in the Boy’s trances and keep the records true — on top of an oft-erupting volcano. The hardest trial of all

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to me, I think, was to keep cool and pleasant when some of the people the Brothers had healed, mentally, morally and physically (nearly always by the Boy having their sufferings ‘put through’ him), turned and rent him. Then indeed I saw red! I could then no longer see as the Brothers saw, who never retaliated, never bore malice-though Heaven knows I wanted to see things in their way. To his eternal credit the firebrand Boy *did* see things their way.

Despite the Brothers’ **Take no notice**, my heart would often stand still. I would say to myself: “*Devils? Taking devils off people? Are these people worth it? . . .* The Brothers never entertain such thoughts. . . How *small* I am! . . .” Then I would try and think of Jesus. (The atmosphere of devils is choking. It is difficult to think when one is being choked.) “Yes, Jesus. . . Where is my Bible? Ah, here it is! I search and find the place. . . the unclean spirit had to come out of the man — had to be dispersed somewhere . . . The Gadarene swine . . . *But the Boy must not be destroyed!* I wonder if Jesus knew that the swine would rush down into the sea? . . . Ah! but He had the evil beings bound; and again, he could loose them . . . *bind, or loose*. The Boy is all right! The Masters have power to bind and to loose. Have some faith! Don’t be a fool! The Boy is safe. *Thanks! Jesus!*” In such ways I sustained my courage. Yet each time the attacks recurred, it seemed that the sun would never come out again. And every time, it emerged, lovelier than ever!

It would be difficult to conceive of a sharper contrast than that which appeared to exist between these seemingly uncontrolled aspects of the Boy’s personality and the Brothers whose instrument he was. The question arises: Was he perhaps *always* their instrument, rage times not excepted? Psychologically, the case presents no insuperable difficulty: one might reasonably say, at any rate in the majority of instances, “yes.”

There is an exact parallel to the Boy’s storms and ‘madnesses’ in the life of a magnificent Indian saint and seer, Sai Baba or Sri Sainath, who passed away in 1918. In his case, as in the Boy’s, one could not always know whether the storms were ‘safety valves’, devil emanations, or any other kind of exorcisms or thaumaturgic operations. His was a miraculous existence, testimony to which comes largely from lawyers, magistrates, judges and many others who visited him. When going through their accounts of his life, it is impossible to doubt he was an astonishing being. All such Masters have their characteristic methods of ministering and teaching; his way

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was by sheer human kindness — lifting burdens of sin, sickness and worry. (Here also there was a great likeness to the Boy and the Brothers, who were so often bent on humble ministrations in the ordinary things of life.)

I am introducing this exquisite saint somewhat unfairly, by showing his reverse side. The reader will learn of one of his many other aspects farther on; but meanwhile some will recognise the White Magic also in this ugly looking ‘other side’.

Exactly as the Boy, impelled by the Brothers, used to ‘clean up’ places and persons, so did this saint. His cleansings and healings were often preceded or accompanied by “shouting, towering . . . indescribable rages,” violent “hurtling out” of heavy objects (the Boy broke doors) “shaking” a friend and devotee “by the neck” (the Boy shook me by the shoulders.) The saint’s “reddened eyes” would “glow fiercely, like burning embers,” or sometimes “spurt flames,” as it were. He indulged in fierce shouts, abuse and wild gesticulations, and “most violent fulminations.” (The Boy’s eyes, likewise, became so terrible—red and blazing—that one instinctively avoided looking at them. His shouts and abuse were devastating.) Sri Sainath’s people used to “scatter” in panic. So also, people ran from the Boy! The cases are *almost every respect identical*, as regards temperament, psychology and the miracles. But the Boy was not a saint, I suppose. (Outwardly, no; but-inwardly?) Sainath used to “growl like an infuriated lion,” but always—as the Boy did—melt in compassionate tenderness and good works soon after.²

I must confess that I am proud of never having run away from the Boy! Sometimes I told him that he could kill me if he wanted to, whereat he would shout “Go away, oh go away!” (Sainath used to hunt people away, insult them, etc.)

After many years of close observation, I am convinced that the Brothers used the Boy’s mechanisms to hold back or dissolve evil entities. It was a rare crucible in which vibrations could be altered, in all sorts of circumstances, but *especially*—we came to see—in international affairs, with which some of the Brothers are deeply involved. I am positive that, at stormy times unconnected with his personal self, the Boy was the temporary dwelling—place of demoniacal powers—whether the tortured souls of fellow-humans, or beings of darkness whom the Brothers, for one or other of their high reasons, were either liquidating or temporarily detaching from some sufferer. (Such ‘bad elementals’ are *karmic* and may not, as a rule, be destroyed.) Further, I believe the Brothers sometimes *actually used devils for helping or healing*, even as thorns may be used to remove splinters, or poisons to combat

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poisons. Naturally, these processes were not pretty. In these realms where the Brothers are perhaps at their greatest, are not found prettiness, softness and gloss.

Those who were close to the Boy witnessed countless states — psychological, psychical and physical — which were utterly alien to his essential nature; but behind nearly all, there ran a pattern of divine service. The character of his storms was so varied — unlike his own quick temper — that no other explanation seems possible; especially when one considers that nearly every one of those storms, like Sainath's, could be accounted for, if one had patience, and controlled one's reactions.

Demons may even have been sent now and then to try *me*. They certainly succeeded! (It would not have been beyond the Brothers themselves to act the parts, but I would have discovered that by the eyes. The expression of these can never be concealed.)³ It behoved me to 'do my bit' whenever I could, by not showing fear. This also gave support to the Boy, and how often, when the horror had passed, a Holy One would shine in and say: **Thank you, Nurth, for helping our Boy.** They always alluded to him with great affection. Sometimes they told me exactly what had been going on; and it was all most interesting and instructive; but this cannot be gone into here. They had told me that when the Boy was evilly possessed, his eyes might be blood-shot (Sainath again!), and that he would resist my attempts to touch his spine or other centres; to remove his boots or magnetically unclean objects; to give draughts of fresh water or air or to chant — all of which are cleansing in their effects. As for passes: when in that state he would rarely let me near enough, so that I had to do what I could *when* I could, and try to make the necessary movements in or near the right places. If I could manage this, the devils went; but he would often lock his door and go without food or drink, light or fresh air. This might continue for several days. I repeat: it is of the utmost importance *not to resist* such conditions. (After all, we never know when we may meet devils.)

I must say that many of these attacks tried me to the uttermost. I was 'reduced to pulp', not only by the ghastly, choking atmosphere, but especially at the sight of our radiant Boy looking so fiendish, his face sharp and pinched, his sweet person smelling, eyes furtive, or else blazing. When things got so bad I took refuge in spiritual prayer; for God can and does help when we call from the depths. (All the same, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." We should not call upon God if we can do a job 'ourselves'.)

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Before I met the Boy, I had been taught to say, when attacked by demons: **I take my refuge beneath the banner of the White Cross of Christ.** I had also been taught to try to *feel* love and compassion for all beings, however revolting they might seem. *Same-seeing*. But it is so easy to forget the scriptures when the thing is upon us. To my shame, I often forgot; but God helped me.

I remember, for instance, being so shocked because I had betrayed my trust by disobeying the Brothers' **Take no notice!** that I was nearly broken. At such crises I would go to my dear Indian doctor, who was very fond of the Boy and knew about the storms. "Sit down, Swamiji!" he would say; and wait kindly while I would gasp out; "It's the Boy! I don't think I can hold on much longer! I just can't bear it! Oh, Doctor ji, what *can* we do?" (It was the contrast between the demons and the Holy Ones which so racked one's psyche.) "A psychiatrist?" I would question him; but even as I said the words, I knew that I could not insult the Brothers like that; that the Boy was *not mentally sick but supernormally sane* — a genius, a Python without a temple. Where was the psychiatrist who could cope with this, and with whom the Boy himself would co-operate?

So the doctor sat quietly, sympathetic and wordless; and healing was in his silence. I would go away in tears, ashamed.

And it would happen again. These visits to this good man were my only outlet. He, of course, had been completely understanding of the Boy, and wholly appreciative of all, devils included. But then — he was a true philosopher who intuitively sensed the values, equal and inseparable, of contrasted discord and concord.

Sometimes the doctor would apologetically suggest a drug — Serpentina for instance. The Boy looked contemptuously at it; but if it struck him then that I had failed him, he showed no sign. He took the stuff obediently, but far from calming him, it jangled his nerves and made him thoroughly ill, while there was not the slightest effect on his psychic being, unless perchance that of outrage at having to submit to such things. The doctor knew that drugs would be useless. I knew too; yet there remained in me that vein of scepticism, or — to do myself justice — of desire to pin things down to their true causes, which ever impelled me to "make assurance doubly sure", to seek truth at any cost, and sometimes even to act like a fool, knowing well that the measures I took were farcical.

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In time the Boy's reactions to my attempts to 'cure' him reassured me. After such periods of suffering and defection, the Brothers perhaps would come, and at the sound of their voices I would melt in tears of relief. **Nurth!** they would chide, **If you are going to cry because we come, then we will have to give up coming!** But they went on coming — as I went on weeping. Despite my scepticism I admitted them, as I do still, that they never fail.

Our doctor, who had had many Western contacts, evinced not the slightest incredulity over the Boy and the Brothers. (There are still people in India who understand. For example: I once saw a *yogi* prancing about and barking like a dog in the middle of a bazaar. He was not begging. I asked what on earth he was doing that for, and was informed that he was a holy man who was doing this as part of his training [*sadhana*] for overcoming self-esteem. He could not have chosen a better means in India, where the dog is despised. Everyone took the *yogi's* antics as a matter of course. Imagine that, say, in an American or English village street!)

One learned to distinguish broadly between different types of demoniacal encounters. One asked oneself (with some anxiety), "Are these hellish contacts contagious?" They are — *if one reacts*. On the other hand, they can force on general development of character if one can take them in the right way. For instance, I used to be impatient, hypersensitive and hot-tempered, but some of this has been burned out of me by the fires of hell. By means of these I *began* to find *same-seeing*: "If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there."

On this matter of reacting, the Prophet Muhammad taught, as did the Brothers, that Satan cannot harm where there is *no* reaction.⁴ The Brothers' way of putting it to me was, **Take no notice!** (They taught widely on reaction in all contexts; but I cannot go into this here.)

Just as I might avoid 'catching' the atmosphere if I did not react — and how far this lofty indifference is possible with us average humans is for the reader to determine — so also, inversely, the Boy could 'catch' devils from other people because he did not practise non-reaction (Gandhi's non-violence), as well as a man of his destiny might have done. This may have been part of a design which began in early slum-life; his Karma had given him, in some ways, a belligerent personality; hence — apart from all else — through his own inborn pride and anger he occasionally laid himself open to additional attack or possession by evil entities.

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Devils were easily dislodged, when due merely to the Boy himself. The Brothers could oust them instantaneously. It took me longer but, using the method they had taught me, even I could do it every time. To dislodge the big attacking fiends was a more serious task.

This sort of thing is not easy to envisage. A Christian record may make it clearer.

At the canonisation of Bernadette of Lourdes in 1933, Pope Pius XI is reported to have referred in his sermon to “the confusion of demonic voices which had accompanied the visions of Bernadette.”⁵ It is well authenticated that she, like many other great seers, had been attacked by dark Powers. It seems however to be an accompaniment of all forms of channelship, or of the negative type. (It would often be more exact to call such people “receptive”, for they can be extremely positive in some ways, as was Bernadette herself)

Devilish attacks on and through the Boy took many forms, some of them most insidious. Once, for instance, what purported to be a powerful Brother came and, in the presence of a group of believing enthusiasts, ordered me to write a letter to a certain man and to post it off at once. He dictated the letter. Next day a Brother came, among the same group, and asked me sternly if the letter had been posted, to which I answered: “No, Brother, I have not even written it out, as I considered it mischievous and unsuitable.” At this the others began to look askance at me; but the Brother quietly remarked that that letter had been dictated by a dark Being and was aimed at hurting the Brothers’ work, in fact that no Brother of the Light had been there at all. The real Brother explained that he **had got the affair out of the Nurse’s mind**, but had brought the matter up as a lesson to us all to use judgment, and not to fall on our noses just because *somebody* happened to speak through the entranced Boy. I could cite dozens of such instances. Commonsense and intuition are the only safeguards; but commonsense is unfortunately very uncommon.

Although he never spoke of it, I realised that the Boy suffered deeply in having missed a happy married life, which the exigencies of his vocation did not permit. The Brothers never suggested that a normal sex life would interfere with the exercise of his gift. On the contrary, they deplored his deprivation of it, saying that he needed sex, like any other creature. In his case, however, the difficulties were insuperable. How find the right woman? And how could he support a wife and children and carry on his work? It boiled down to choosing between going back to work as a labourer,

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taking a wife and foregoing the Brothers; or carrying out his destiny with them and foregoing marriage. He did not choose willingly; but, faced with realities, he somehow kept his Inner Vow.

The Brothers must have aided him to rise above his humanity, his thrilling personality, and to hang on, not without rebellion and travail, to the essential conditions required for their ministrations.

One of our trials was the many people who dinned into us that, because of the Brothers, we need not suffer in any way whatsoever — that life for us must always be a bed of roses. But great as are their powers, I never knew the Brothers to use them, even to the slightest extent, to defend themselves or us, or to gain any sort of advantage for us, or even to take the mildest ‘revenge’ on people who treated the Boy and me abominably. Wild-natured as he was, the Boy, too, invariably reflected his Masters’ sublime restraint in all such matters. (How often we who were around him exclaimed, in face of outrage, “The Brothers simply *must* do something!” But there was no response, from him or them.)

Poor Boy! He had not reached that sublime state where he could find joy in sacrifice. Great credit was therefore due to him for going on in the dark. The Brothers often spoke to me of his deprivations and of their tender solicitude for his welfare; but life dealt hardly with him, and he lived it cut off from any life of his own as well as from the glory of their teachings and of their calming voices, their magic presences, eyes and gestures. It all seemed so unjust that I once burst out in the presence of a Brother, and asked him indignantly why our Boy should have to be so desolate. His answer was most extraordinary, and although I could — and do — believe it, I naturally do not expect others to go so far. The Brother told me that the Boy had offered his life, before this birth, to be used in this way. He explained that such service is needed, but that the Masters never exact service, but *accept it from* willing co-workers; and that this service of the Boy’s was of a unique kind. (“Greater love hath no man . . .” Yes; the Masters were his “friends”, and he had “laid down his life” for them, as he did also for many who hated and despised him.)

The Brother went on to tell me that this personality of the Boy’s was **a very small fraction of the whole. More than half of his mind is with us.** I pressed him, “Still, Brother, it is unjust.” He reiterated, **We would not have TAKEN it. HE offered this sacrifice to his Master before he was born, and because he wanted us to have this instrument for our work.**

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“Poverty, Chastity and Obedience.” The Brothers’ Boy kept the three most ancient vows all right, but without the Hierarchical Insignia.⁶ He insisted on remaining what in this life he was — a lad from Bow.

WHAT ARE 'BROTHERS'?

CHAPTER ELEVEN

What are 'Brothers'?

From the unreal lead us to the Real;
From darkness, lead us to the Light;
From death, to Immortality.

Satapatha Brahmana, 14. 4. 1. 30, 31.

It is evident that we cannot really know what the Brothers are until we become as they. Meantime, the best we can do, outside our intimately dynamic urges in respect of this real knowing, is to ponder the opinions of the wise and the experiences of saints and others — the “great cloud of witnesses” of Saint Paul—from which we may gather that supermen exist. Many persons who lay no claim to sainthood or even to psychic powers, have also had encounters significant of the existence and operations of supermen, and other beings both below and above our normal levels. We infer what the Brothers are from their teachings and powers, and glimpse their nature by their effects on us. In their manifestations through the Boy, for instance, we learned that — whatever they may do or say — the Brothers are activated by a single motive: to induce us to claim our heritage; to free us from the sense of ‘I’ — *even in regard to them*; to enable us to be the One Myself — to be in Bliss. I remember a deeply spiritual Quakeress from Philadelphia, who stayed with us in our *ashram*. She summed up her impression, after several talks with Brothers: “I feel shriven.” That exactly expressed their effect on many people. A Brother, then, must be a Saviour; for he delivers us from ourselves.

The renowned Swami Vivekananda asked: “Show me the man who has attained, without the aid of another”; and the *Kathopanishad* speaks for most of the Eastern world, when it declares:

“This knowledge which thou hast obtained by mere argumentation becomes easy of comprehension when taught by another. . . Unless it is taught by another there is no way to it.”¹

I have proved to my own satisfaction that the greatest experiences of life must be passed from one to another; but this, of course, is no matter for dogmatizing. Thus,

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many statements made by the Brothers through the Boy have also been demonstrated to me by them — that is, I have actually lived them, with their help, in accordance with this ancient tradition. How, for instance, could I have written about the Brothers, had I not first been convinced, by *experience*, of the truth of their existence and at least some of their teachings? And where would the Boy have been without them? I take no credit for powers temporarily bestowed on me by them. I have been a natural psychic for as long as I can remember; but what the Brothers have enabled me to go through — to experience — in demonstrations of their teachings, is far beyond the psychic powers I have had, on and off, since infancy. They have bestowed holy gifts upon me from time to time; and so they do for others, always, everywhere. They live, to give.

They are able to impart the stages of knowing-in-reality, or what is called *jnana* in Hindu philosophy: that is, knowledge of things-in-themselves, on all levels of life. Brothers enabled me, for instance, to enter wholly into — to become — a rabbit, a banyan tree, and other objects. They have also taken me into outer space and into conditions far beyond my normal consciousness, having apparently entirely severed me from both physical-body and subtle-body consciousness, up to and beyond the farthest reaches of the mind. I was wrapped in super-consciousness, Is-ness, Whole-ness. (Nothing that I could write could convey this realisation.) I was brought slowly back, stage by stage, when what I most abhorred was *re-entering the mind*. (As for the physical body, I was not aware of it.) On such occasions I was not practising intense meditation. I had tried it, and failed. I had many ordinary preoccupations, always.

The Brothers come to us as it were from out the blue. We cannot approach them from the average 'known', though — as we have seen — they themselves, under certain conditions, constitute lifelines from the unknown to what we elect to call the 'known'. But beside this specious 'known' there exists another — a real Known-which is accessible to all, and substantiates the Brothers' teachings and the ancient scriptures and philosophic, theurgic and religious literatures of the world. In the last resort, however, we are driven back on our own longing, humble inquiry, experience and — above all — intuition. Ultimately, proof is born of these, not of books. This record, for instance, may be accepted as true, or a fabrication, or a great delusion — all matters of opinion. For some, however, there will be strength in the

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knowledge that proof and opinion are of the mind, which is unreliable, being conditioned. They will feel something beyond the mind.

To continue about the 'Known': Some prefer to call the Brothers *mahatmas*. The word is Sanskrit, but the conception is not solely Hindu; for *mahatma* only means 'great spirit', and there are great spirits everywhere. The *Rig Veda* describes them:

"These are they who are conscious of the much falsehood in the world: they grow in the house of Truth; they are the strong and invincible sons of Infinity."²

When they come out to stay in the world they are called *avatars*. *The avatars* manifest themselves when suffering humanity needs them. Each one seems to bring a different message; yet it is always the same: "*Come home!*"

We of the Western world have become more accustomed than of old to the epithet '*mahatma*'. (Mahatma Gandhi, for instance.) Unfortunately the term is now somewhat loosely used in India. I give it its real meaning, which includes the many *mahatmas* of the Western world. Others prefer to think of the Brothers as *rishis* (seers of Truth); or again as *devas* (*angels*, gods) or as saints, prophets, *arhats*. The Egyptian hierophant, the Chaldean mage, the Buddhist *arhat*, the Hindu *jivanmukta*, *rishi* — all these titles carry more or less the same meaning. Humanity has orphaned itself by losing contact with such beings.

Early Chinese literature abounds in lovely passages describing these Brothers, such as

"Because he does not strive, no one finds it possible to strive with him . . . though he has his place above them, men do not feel his weight; nor though he has his place before them, men do not feel it an injury to them . . . The sage desires what other men do not desire, and does not prize things difficult to get' (i.e., got with effort); "he learns what other men do not learn, and turns back to what the multitude of men have passed by. He helps the natural development of all things and does not dare to act with an ulterior purpose of his own."³

The eminent American Orientalist, Dr. W. Y. Evans-Wentz, who has spent years in the far Himalayas, on the borders of Tibet, gives an account of the Brothers and-some of their works in his enthralling book about one of them, *Tibet's Great Yogi Milarepa*. I quote briefly:

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“That men so highly developed now exist, and that there have been others of the same species in every age, is the claim of all the great Rishis who have made India illustrious. The Buddhists hold that Buddha Gautama, Himself one of the great Rishis, is but one of many Buddhas, the beginning of Whose Dynasty is lost in remote antiquity. The Hindus make the same claim concerning their Hindu Rishis; and the modern followers of the great Rishis, who are yogis, some of one Faith, some of another, a few Indian Christians being numbered among them, hold firmly to it.”

Here, for example, are the names of five of these sages or *rishis* who have recently lived and passed away in India: Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Aurobindo, Sri Ramana Maharshi, Sri Sainath of Shirdi and Sri Paramahansa Triveni Puri, of Khanna, Punjab, (India). The last named was little known except to the *sannyasis* who flocked to him from all parts of the country. There must be others now living, although one has not heard of them. Dr. Evans-Wentz writes of India and Tibet, being intimate with their religious histories, but what he says applies elsewhere, under the conditions of other lands.

“The Tibetans . . . maintain that it is quite as feasible to traverse the path to Arhantship to its very end in this age as it has been in any past age and, in justification, assert that there are men now living among them who have done so, as Milarepa, their national Saint, did during the eleventh century A.D. Although the assertion may not be demonstrable to a person who is not an Arhant, or who disbelieves in Arhants, and therefore needs to be accepted, if at all, on faith, it may be literally true. How many of us know by personal realisation that the sun is 93,000,000 miles or so distant, or that any other generally accepted fact of natural science is true? We believe such facts by force of our social psychology and of recently acquired mental predispositions. To have faith about Arhants appears to be, though it ought not to be, much more difficult. Perhaps this is due to our having unconsciously become so dominated by scientific faith, i.e. faith in physical facts, that we have become unfitted to retain our old ancestral faith in facts which are super-physical.

“Nevertheless, the more the writer has examined the Tibetan’s claim to Arhants, the more convinced he has become that it ought not to be lightly set aside . . .” As a result of his enquiries, Dr. Evans-Wentz “has good reason to think that among the Himalayan hermits” (a few of whom he has conversed with in their own

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environments) “there are possibly some — if perchance there be but two or three—who having gone forth into homelessness, as did the Great Arhant, the Truly Enlightened One, have reached the Goal. In other words, the path to Arhantship appears still to be open . . . An Arhant is . . . the link uniting mankind to the Higher Culture. . . . If there be no such Guardians of the Sacred Way of the Greater Evolution, then, indeed, would the path to Arhantship be impassable and the Goal unrealisable for mankind; all escape from the Samsara” (life through repeated births and deaths, the worldly life) “would be cut off.” (pp. 20-3).

“It has been said, although usually not accepted, that the saints of Europe were in the past a lightning-conductor to draw away from the West the wrath of God.” (The same may now be said of all the world.) This, in a manner, is not unlike the belief current among Hindus and Buddhists, that the great Rishis have been and are the guardians of the human race. . . .

“As from, mighty broadcasting stations, dynamically charged with thought-forces, the Great Ones broadcast over the earth that vital spirituality which alone makes human evolution possible; as the sun sustains the physical man, they sustain the psychic man and make possible mankind’s escape from the net of samsaric existence. Linked as they are, with the Chain of Being, with humanity on earth and the Enlightened Ones beyond Nature, they fulfil a function far more important than that of all the kings and rulers among men. This, in short, is the conviction to which the developed Yogi eventually attains . . . The worldly, in their foolish wisdom, regard the Great Yogi, sitting in silent meditation and Samadhi on the Himalayan heights, as a useless member of society, as one who has deserted his duties in the world in order to win for himself a selfish salvation. If this were, perhaps, a criticism to some of the hermits of the Egyptian deserts, it is not applicable to the Kargyuupta hermits, nor to such sincere Indian Yogis as the writer has met.” (The Kargyuupta is an important sect of Tibetan Mahayana Buddhism.) “Nowhere, in the course of his researches among the living saints of the Himalayas and of Hindustan, has the writer encountered a genuine yogi whose ideal was not unselfish preparation for service to the Race. One of them, although by birth a Brahmana, had left behind him all distinctions of caste and creed and, regarding all mankind as his brethren, was looking forward—though it may be that many incarnations were yet to be his lot—to the time when he would be able to return to the World and proclaim Truth Realisable. For to him Renunciation

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must precede Conquest . . . as Jesus, too, proclaimed to the rich young man of the world who asked Him the way to Salvation; the Truth Realised must precede the task of teaching and guiding an unenlightened humanity. If the Teacher has not himself seen the Light, how can he proclaim it to-others?" (pp. 17-19).⁴

The illustrious Indian philosopher, MM. Pandit Gopinath Kaviraj, who is deeply convinced about 'our' Brothers, has sent some learned notes on the subject, which I epitomise. The *arhat*, he tells us, as defined in Jain and Buddhist literature, corresponds to the *vedanta* conception. He goes on to give an account of the stages of *arhat*-ship, as shown in earlier Buddhist and Jain literature (with their counterparts in the Hindu *vedanta*) indicating that the state of *nirvana*, as generally conceived, is not extinction of the human spirit but rather supreme liberation from the bondage of *samsara* (illusory existence) and *therefore* — as the Brothers taught us some twelve years before I received this note — supreme creativity in all the spheres. Among the Jains, the holy stages of *arhat*-ship are also recognised; especially those Masters who give themselves to the spiritual amelioration of mankind, whom they call "*tirthankaras*". The last stage is that of the *siddha* (one in whom all the powers of the spirit are manifesting) who is also, of course, called *jivanmukta* (one who is liberated whilst still living in this world). He who has reached this stage is regarded as being "above all *karma* and immune from any relation with bodily existence".

This last does not mean that the Master will not, if necessary, live a life of outer action. Immunity from relation with (physical) bodily existence only means that he is not bound by it. This subtle distinction is generally overlooked, although participation by the high *yogi* in active affairs, but without attachment, has been extolled in Indian scriptures. For instance, Shri Krishna says in the *Bhagavadgita*: "Yoga is skill in action"; "acting in harmony with Me, let him render all actions attractive"; "at all times think upon Me only, and fight", etc. The whole book is an exhortation to perfect *yoga* coupled with fullest action in this world. India has failed in the past, the Brothers say, because she has not followed these teachings; and they declare that thus she may fail again; for they never separate spirituality from right action.

We may take it, then, that the answer to the question *What are 'Brothers'?* has been given — as I have said in an earlier chapter — as clearly as we can find it among ordinarily 'known' things. They are "high *yogis*, *siddhas*, *rishis*", Holy Ones who in

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varying degree, have attained mastery of themselves and exist to bring others to the same mastery

We are conquering everything but ourselves, therefore we are unredeemed. The Masters' estimate of our advancement is based on how far we have achieved knowledge and mastery of ourselves, in the love of God. To them all else is unimportant. One said: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." Speaking to moderns, the Brothers found it necessary to qualify "things": they explained that wants are in the category of unrighteousness, while needs are righteous. This view of life demands reassessment of nearly all our values. This teaching of theirs is in line with that of all the Masters.

But it must not be forgotten that the Brothers are exquisitely human, simple and sincere. When manifesting through the Boy, they had a way, not merely of descending to our levels, but of *getting underneath* our foibles and follies, and pushing them aside. They are interested in us. One never feels them to be apart. They make us perceive ourselves; and accomplished this through the Boy with a peculiar magic, by which *they* seemed to be doing nothing, whilst we became the active agents — so much so, that people, thinking they *were*, would sometimes even ignore the quiet, smiling Brother in their midst, who treated the human personality as a precious, precious thing:

The personality is like sugar. When you put sugar into milk the sugar dissolves — melts away. Thus, personality is dissolved into the soul. But you must let the sweetness of the personality pervade the soul. Do not let the soul become sour by denying it the sweetness of the personality; and do not hurt the personality by what you think is the soul. The personality and the soul are one, and these, BOTH TOGETHER, are Realisation. Nothing is greater. Nothing is lesser. Personal and Impersonal are the All.⁵

It is said among the *sannyasis* of India that if a man continuously realises supreme God-consciousness he cannot live on in the body of flesh for more than twenty-one days. Be that as it may, the point for us is that those who, of their own power, tap the Storehouse of Divine Being, can only be persons of almost superhuman stature. Ordinary human nature, drowning in the quicksands of good and evil, cannot bear, unaided, Cosmic Revelation. Hence the unimaginable compassion of the freed souls — *mahatmas* — whose eternal travail is by all means to bring so that we may be at one us tenderly into their consciousness, so that we may be at one with them in the Father.

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“Come unto me.” They not only call: they pursue us. The life-line is thrown out to each one of us, as we toss in the ocean of *samsara*. The boat of the Liberated Ones puts out to take us over that sea. (How perfect were the similes on the Sea of Galilee! Many hundreds of years earlier, these had also been used by the *rishis* of the *vedas* and *upanishads*.)

One who is reckoned among the greatest of living Indian *shastris* (learned in the *shastras* — scriptures) whose knowledge of Sanskrit and of world religions was described to me by several cultured Indians as “encyclopaedic”, has written of our Brothers and their teachings, after long and careful examination of the records, as well as numerous talks with them:

“. . . If from no other evidence than the utterances themselves — and that evidence is impressive — I am convinced that these teachings come from a high source.” He continues:

“We in India regard such holy One . . . as high *yogis*, *siddhas*, *rishis*...”

Referring to the script of the teachings, he said many times to me: “It is *wonderful!*” and when the Boy visited him he would arise from where, squatting on an immense mattress, he was enthroned among his books and innumerable callers, and embrace him. Several other Indian philosophers pronounced the teachings as coming from the heights — “*upanishadic*”, (I will return to this word). Notable among them was Dr. B. L. Atreya, who wrote of the Brothers’ teachings to Professor Daniel Jones that “the thoughts in this work are as deep and as high as those of the *Upanishads* and the *Bhagavadgita*”. (He referred to the quality, not the number, of those thoughts.)

What did these Indian philosophers mean when they called the teachings “*upanishadic*”, thereby implying the vastly expanded consciousness of the Brothers? This account of the Boy and the Brothers would not be complete if we did not here turn aside to explore the meaning and significance of that word; though to do so entails a few paragraphs which will take us into the realm of Indian religio-philosophic principles and literature.

Certain portions of the *vedas* are known as ‘*upanishads*’. Schopenhauer wrote of these last that they are the “fruit of the highest human knowledge and wisdom” and that they contain “almost superhuman conceptions ... whose originators can hardly

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be regarded as mere men.”⁶ Beethoven copied out and kept constantly before him, words from these sublime books of which. there are said to be over a hundred

The Sanskrit word '*upanishad*' means: '*upa*' near by; '*ni*' devotedly; '*shad*' sitting — suggesting people gathered round a teacher. This exactly describes what usually happened when a Brother spoke. The original sense was that the talk was confidential, hence, “secret doctrine”.⁷ (The Brothers are not concerned, however, over this 'secrecy'. The secret doctrine is sufficiently protected nowadays by most people's inability to realise what is going on under their noses.)

I have seen another definition of '*upanishad*', i.e., '*up*', near (the *guru*); '*ni-shad*', to destroy (ignorance) completely. The *upanishads* are also known as '*vedanta*' because they are found near the end of each *veda*. They embody the essence of the *vedas*, which are collections of ancient verses embodying the experience of *rishis* or sages. The word '*veda*' comes from '*vid*', to know by experiencing; and thus *veda* has come to mean “knowledge of God”. The *vedas* and *upanishads* then, together constitute authoritative literature embodying the Cosmic experience of God-realised seers and sages. *The vedas are based on direct 'revelation' and are eternal, inexhaustible.* That the Brothers' teachings are upanishadic does not therefore necessarily imply that the Brothers are Indian or Hindus. The *vedas* belong to all countries and irradiate all religions.

The nearest Christian equivalent to *veda* is “the Word”. It is metaphysically but not theologically identical (but I will not here confuse by hair-splitting). We have no expression in English which wholly conveys the meaning of this word '*veda*'. One could say '*the knowledge par excellence*' and hence, 'directly revealed knowledge of God.' It is Universal. It reveals itself and is re-enunciated from age to age. It is the Source of mysticism and occultism which are older than the oldest East and belong to the whole world. It is not merely an idea, but the Self as Word — dynamic, living, everywhere.

Obviously, therefore, this *veda* is not only for “chosen people” in our sense; though — in a far greater sense — *It chooses and reveals Itself* to us, and so the world gets as much of God-knowledge as its condition permits; for *veda* is there all the time like supernal radio, and only needs to be tuned in to. At the present time, *veda*-revelation could for the most part only be most elementary, judged by the standards of Masters, since our general capacity for Cosmic awareness is in inverse ratio to our material achievements. ‘The ancient conception of the *avatar* being that

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he is not only the few but for the whole of the people to whom he comes, it follows that comparatively little of *veda* can be given out today. (In the case of the Brothers, for instance, I noticed that whenever they tried to go farther than what to them are mere rudiments, they met closed doors. So they had to hold back, and give in the main only up to the limit of what people could take. As a pledge to the future, as it were, they sometimes gave just a little of their treasure: priceless teachings on the mechanisms of our consciousness and bodies, the procreation of children, and so on. Such teachings usually fell on deaf ears, but I managed to write down a few accurately.)

Veda is sometimes called '*shruti*', in the sense of something which is heard by the sage. (This name more closely resembles the Word.) Dr. M. Winternitz remarks in the Introduction to his *A History of Indian Literature* that the "revealed texts were not written and read, but only spoken and heard" — heard inwardly by the teacher as well as outwardly by the disciple. Because it has often been falsified, if for no other reason, *veda* has to be re-heard and re-spoken. Its literary aspects are enthralling; but we are not here dealing with literature, but with the idea of the still living, pulsating, manifesting Word or *veda* and its instruments or channels. The Brothers are channels. The *rishis* were also channels and, at a lower level, so was the Boy. If it is true that the Brothers' teachings are *upanishadic*, then they, also, are hearers of *shruti* and transmitters of *veda*, they know-by experience. This, applied to *veda*, or *vid*; generally, applied, it is *anubhava*.

Vedic or *upanishadic* knowledge-by-becoming, is Wisdom attained by feeling and experiencing. The Brothers also call it **the Feeling Principle**. It is the kind of knowledge by which the Brothers are known, and by which they know. When the teaching was given we knew nothing of its link with *veda*; I found that years later, and that this conception of knowing is found in Plato and also that Whitehead describes it as "an inward ferment, an activity of subjective feeling, which is at once immediate enjoyment, and also an appetition which melts into action." The Brothers stressed **the Feeling Principle** long, before I had seen Whitehead's *Adventures of Ideas*. Teaching about it, they even alluded to Plato, of whom my only knowledge was his *Republic*, read when I was about twelve. They taught:

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Plato (says) that truth is not made in the mind (etc.). Therefore it is impossible for man to conceive of Truth through a mental activity, because Truth . . . can only be FELT.

It is an immense subject, which the Brothers have enlarged upon in considerable detail, none of which has, as far as I know, reached the Western world, and most of which is lost, for all practical ends, in the available Eastern books, though hinted at in most ancient religions and philosophic literatures. I cannot do justice to Professor Whitehead or the Brothers here. The former writes:

“When Descartes, Locke and Hume undertake the analysis of experience, they utilise those elements in their own experience which lie clear and distinct. It is tacitly assumed, except by Plato, that the more fundamental factors will ever lend themselves for discrimination with peculiar clarity. This assumption is here directly challenged . . . I contend that the notion of mere knowledge is a high abstraction, and that conscious discrimination itself is a variable factor only present in the more elaborate examples of occasions of experience. The basis of experience is emotional. Stated more generally, the basic fact is the rise of an affective tone originating from things whose relevance is given.”⁸

The Brothers have summed up the general world-position in regard to *anubhava* — knowledge-by-becoming — by saying:

IGNORANCE AND LEARNING KEEP WISDOM IN BONDAGE.

Their teachings, then, are called *upanishadic*, because they have attained this knowledge-by-becoming; and because they teach the same eternal Word in a new guise; by this also confirming their source; for the tradition is that *veda* emerges again and again, *taking on new aspects* (according to the ‘receiving sets’) suitable for the world at any stage; it becomes, then, novel as well as being perennial. Who is there, among the supreme religions geniuses who have appeared from age to age, of whom it has not been said that he is an iconoclast? In the present instance, the Bow Boy was, so to say, a super-iconoclast; for he was the very contrary to a religious genius, and in many aspects a typical Cockney of the old London slums, from whose lips, in trance, there yet emerged the wisdom of the ages. No typical *avatar*, this; and yet — fruits of an *avatar*! Here is a mystery, to which I will return.

We glimpse something of the *rishis* by considering our personal relations with them, and further, their expressions of themselves to us. We have seen much of both

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in this book yet that is but a tiny bubble in their ocean. Let us glance at these two-way relationships.

In his *The Perennial Philosophy*, Aldous Huxley has written of

“those influences from the eternal order into the temporal, which are called graces or inspiration.

“Grace and inspiration,” he continues, “are given when, and to the extent to which, a human being gives up self-will and abandons himself, . . . through constant recollectedness and non-attachment, to the will of God.” (1946. Chap. 21, p. 290.)

Sri Ramakrishna also said: “The wind of God’s grace is always blowing; we have but to unfurl our sails.” It is true that “we have but to unfurl our sails”; but it is equally true that the great One or Its messengers sometimes does the unfurling, so to speak, not necessarily for recollected or even non-attached subjects, but just ordinary folk; making the wind of grace and inspiration to blow upon them, albeit they may seem totally unworthy. (What, after all, constitutes worthiness? Even the saint is unworthy.) The advent of grace therefore, does not at all times depend upon “the extent to which a human being . . . abandons himself . . . through constant recollectedness and non-attachment, to the will of God.” This is but one aspect of the matter. The other is the fact of *the action of God, or God-realised beings, apart from our preparedness*. St. Paul expressed our utter dependence, in the last analysis:

“So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.”⁹

(God — the — Word — eternal *veda*.)

The Brothers, to quote an Indian scripture, are “oceans of compassion without reason”. Compassion is the *mahatma*’s conception of love. They explained to us that

. . . in an Enlightened One, “faith, hope and charity” become: Faith — wisdom of the Self; Hope — at-one-ment; Charity — compassion (born of the Bliss — *ananda*.)

Of this Bliss they taught some Muslim spiritual aspirants:

You can always let go of happiness; whereas once you are in Bliss (beyond pain-pleasure) **you are always in the thrall of it.**

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They — Exalted Ones, whose powers and realisations are vast — show “compassion without reason” in every situation.

One of them, for instance, said to a worried little man:

There is nothing in your world, either alive or dead, that is worth being agitated about, except the alleviation of suffering.

The little man needed just that to restore him to himself, so for the moment they even dropped their philosophy. They alleviate suffering always: even, sometimes, by creating it, as a doctor or a surgeon may. Again, I once saw tears in the eyes of a sick-souled man to whom, amid a Babel of fools, a Brother spoke with melting tenderness. I got down one sentence:

The divine Spark within you will help to make the Universe universal to you.

These words, also, were exactly what that man needed, for he had lost faith in himself.

The Brothers are everything to everybody. Speaking to a group of self-opinionated young men who were noisily talking him down, a Brother remarked judiciously, after letting them run on for a considerable time:

If you are attempting to develop free minds, first develop free reactions. They became so busy thinking of the meaning that they stopped talking.

A young soldier in the last World War said to one of the Brothers what many others, in war or out of it, would say: “My heart is not in this work. I fear to become deadened — to lose my individuality.”

This need not occur. Remember that it is not what your heart is in but what is in your heart that matters; and what is will remain, if you do not forget it — if you do not deny it. It is not necessary for it to manifest under these conditions. All that we ask of you is that you should not forget or deny.

Thus to all, “without reason”, a Master pours out love and understanding. In those few sweet words, that young man was made to feel that the Brothers would never desert him if he but remembered them; the Brother stilled his sense of time and fear; and seeds of true discipleship were sown. In India they say that the Master “unties the knot of the heart.”

How very differently they showed “compassion without reason” in instances such as the following:

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Four Professors who were visiting our town came to see us. I had met the one who made the following note on part of the talk; but he had never met the Brothers. I also knew his friend, Principal R., slightly. The other two were younger men and strangers. We did not even know their names. When a Brother arrived they all four “sat on the fence”, as it were, and rightly so. (Presumably they were sincere men, but how could they *know*?) The Brother, alive to the situation, took his own way and talked desultorily about this and that. It seemed that he made no attempt to justify himself. I fretted. Presently, as if to make talk, he turned to one of the strangers:

(Professor's note)

Brother: **What's your language?**

Thakur: You ought to know!

Brother: **It's Hindi.**

Thakur: It's not. It's Maithili.

Brother: **Maithili is a dialect, not a language.** (The Professor wrote “dialect of Hindi” but I am almost certain the Brother added “not a language”. The answer also shows this.)

Thakur: It *is* a language.

Principal R.: *It's a dialect all right!*

(End of Professor's note)

After that, Thakur subsided, and they all came off the fence. Professor — said to me in an excited aside that “the Brother had displayed a remarkable knowledge of something known to very few people in this country. As it happens,” he continued, “the Principal, who confirmed what the Brother said, is an expert on this question — an old local dispute in the Maithila District about their ‘language’.” It seemed to me to be a clear case of mind-reading; for, as I have said, the Brothers read minds like books. The intriguing thing is, what made him start this off by asking that question? It was exactly the kind of episode that would help them to believe. Always, they said the necessary thing, no matter how irrelevant it might seem.

The Brother appeared to show no further interest; the meeting petered out and the Professors departed; but he sat on. **Nurth**, said he, **I want you to go round to Professor — at once, and bring him back to me.** The Professor who had written the note was staying near by, and returned eagerly within a few minutes, full of enthusiasm about the incident. The Brother ignored this and said: **I wanted to see you about that young man. He has heart trouble. His career is threatened.**

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Professor — was now even more astounded, and told the Brother that the young man, his colleague, who had been at the meeting, had recently had to abandon an important step in his career on the advice of doctors, because he had heart trouble. I had thought he looked normal. The Professor and the others **knew** that there had been no private talk with the young man before the Brother came.

The Exalted Ones are so keen about our countries—always eager (yes, that's the word) to help. A Minister of one of the Indian States consulted a Brother on the outlook for India. He came several times. On one occasion the Brother said emphatically:

India as a democracy under the present system is bound to fail. THIS sort of democracy is alien to her nature. You will have to evolve a type of autocracy which is a development from the old sort. Not until then can India really be herself.

They conversed a good deal about the condition of contemporary India. (These talks took place in 1949.) The Brother said:

There is a disease in the world which is travelling from one man to another. It is lack of moral courage. Here in India, too, it is eating you up.

Apropos of **the creation of destruction** (a favourite theme of theirs) :

ALL creativity which is unproductive (in the real sense) is destructive. You are now carefully planning and laying foundations for the destruction of your country.

When the Minister talked rather wildly about 'freedom', this gave the Holy One a slight rift through which he could let in some of his sunlight:

You cannot have freedom where there is bondage, even if it is the bonds of love.

The Minister enlarged on that in his own way, but the Brother gently interrupted with

You cannot have spirituality through a mental process.

These are such obvious truths; *but people have to be taught where they are.*

One day two Banaras Muslim gentlemen sought the Brothers. They were earnest, unworldly men. In the course of a long talk a Brother remarked:

The personality is [like] a decayed raft on which you are floating over the ocean of life Mankind can never suffer loss if mankind never 'holds.'

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One of the visitors asked, in reference to some matter which was troubling him, "What is to be done?"

You ask "What is to be done?" I say: STOP DOING. Let go of life, and LET GOD.

"But if I go to [such-and-such a place] I shall be lost!"

Unless a man is 'lost', he never finds himself.

That day, spiritual teachings flowed in an unending stream. The Brother was entirely unconstrained with those two Muslims.

A Brother once said: —

You moderns are only too keen to get out, of the rut you are in; but you do not realise that unless you approach things differently, you will only get into another rut.

It had been a long talk: the Brother, utterly cool and swiftly intelligent amid an excited crowd.

Someone exclaimed: "The Boy is phenomenal — abnormal!" The Brother took him up quickly:

There is nothing 'abnormal' in the world — there is only the lack of understanding of the normal.

The millionth part of the moment is their way of expressing the emergence into our consciousness of the Eternal. To "live in the Eternal" is not as accurate an expression as **to live in millionth parts of moments**. One of their most characteristic teachings is about living in the Eternal. They call it **moment-to-moment** and say, **To realise Eternity in time means living with intensity from moment to moment.**

It is, in the words of Boethius, "the completely simultaneous and perfect possession of unlimited life at a single moment."

Do what all the Masters have done-live from moment to moment, and sorrow will not exist. It can only exist in a time-unit longer than the moment. Live out of time! Let time pass about you! There will be no attachment in sorrow or in joy.

To **live from moment to moment** is to be free of memory and anticipation; to use them but not to be dominated by them. It is, in fact, to have inhibited the activities of the mind, which is one of the main steps in *yoga*, or in any path on which it is sought to liberate one's being. This moment-to-momentness in Now-ness takes the jarring

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elements out of life. All the teachings are of the same ancient Way; the approach and words only are different. It is as if from much hearing our ears had ceased to register the ancient rules about non-attachment, inhibition of thought, etc., so that it had become necessary, by using new phrases, to shock them into awareness. But it is hard for us to see the practical value of this teaching on **living from moment to moment!** It conjures up fears of insecurity, a haphazard existence and so forth.

A Brother realised our difficulties, and met them in the Brothers' way:

Live from moment to moment. In such a living, there is no room for fear, which belongs with memory and anticipation when these are coupled with effortful attachment (ego-consciousness. Freud wrote somewhere that the ego is "the true seat of anxiety.") **You must not seek security! Live in insecurity and WELCOME insecurity, as I have told you before.**

I objected: "But in this life, which is so agonising for so many people, it is impossible — just humanly impossible — to welcome its pains, anxieties and insecurities —" The Brother interrupted:

Do not confuse the avoidance of security with the struggle for survival. YOU are thinking now of the struggle for survival which is born of NEED — effortless desire. The struggle for security is born of WANT — effortful desire. This is what should be abandoned.

The struggle for survival is not only for the survival of existence, but the survival of true values and all that stands for. This struggle for survival must be carried out in a moment-to-moment life.

Do the Great Ones take disciples? Some take them, formally; some do not. It depends on circumstances. Many high *yogis* in India refuse disciples. This is in accordance with tradition.¹⁰ Our Brothers did not accept disciples, probably for one reason, because they had most strenuous work to do through the Boy, and in giving out their teachings for the world. (There are, I inferred, disciples and gurus among them.) Clearly, no Master can help being a teacher, in one way or another, but that does not necessarily imply the formal acceptance of pupils. An Indian whose *guru* had passed on complained to a Brother how unhappy he was because he could not contact her (a woman *guru* — rare, but sometimes found in India). There ensued a great talk on *gurus* and discipleship, lasting two-and-a-half hours, of which I got down only a few short sentences:

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Brother: **Guru is a bridge, not a prop. . . . You feel lost because spiritually you have not taken root.**

The mourning disciple asked: "What to do?"

What would your guru have done? She would have let go! But you haven't the courage to let go! This is the difference between you and your guru. If you are incapable of stilling the mind, how can your guru reach you?

One sure sign of a Master is that he makes people answer their own questions, solve their own problems. So, the Brother drew this man on until, without realising that he had departed from the mood in which he came, he asked:

"When one has taken root spiritually, what is the good of a guru at all?"

Gurus are not necessary! There can be no separation — no sense of guru and chela in at-one-ment. (He expiated on this at length.) **The guru must come from within, not from without. I do not advocate [what you call] discipleship.**

He immediately plunged into the depths of real discipleship, veils down. It was breath-taking; for rarely, rarely, do the Brothers speak about their own lives hid with God in the communion of the blest.

When you go to the guru, you have to take ALL the guru . . . When you go to a river, you only take what satisfies your thirst. When you go to the guru you can only SWIM, because it is an ocean of many currents. You have to [that is, you *must*] SWIM, not float; and you can only abide in that ocean so long as you can struggle EFFORTLESSLY.

Someone objected to the Brother being against discipleship. He said:

I am against discipleship in the sense in which most of you interpret it (a kind of slavish hanging-on), but I FOR letting go by the individual and letting the guru take hold.

There are Sisters, or '*devis*' (goddesses), as the Brothers call them. These exquisite Beings come seldom among us. I never knew them to manifest at an outside meeting, though they may have been in the background, of course. They are too sensitive for the comparatively rough contacts endured — even courted by — the Brothers. Nevertheless, *they seem to be the immediate force behind or power within the Brothers*. They often came to me and a few intimates. At such times the Boy was unutterably keyed-up, and sensitive beyond even his normal trance sensitivity. The *devis* could scarcely speak, but wrote their messages through the entranced Boy's hand (not automatic writing). We have learned to recognise several of them; and I

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think I may truly say that much of what I have written about the Brothers applies to them. Sometimes when I have been ill the Brothers have asked a *devi* to remain with me and help or cure me. One particularly powerful *devi* I always recognise by the perfume she brings. It is like the intensified and rarefied smell of newly-baked bread (not the rubbish we get nowadays) — extraordinarily soothing — and heals as it comes. There is no doubt that this has cured me over and over again, right up to the present day.

On the whole, the *devis* keep to their divine *purdah*. The Brothers told me that they have sometimes come out at great sacrifice. Joan of Arc, for instance. There seems to be no reason why they should not come oftener, when humanity can arrange to live among vibrations fit to be shared with them.

For the most part, the Brothers have to live behind the scenes. It is believed in India that every epoch had its *avatars*; and I have often wondered whether the *avatar* for this blackest of times in the blackest of epochs (called in India the *kali yuga*) has to keep behind the veil, in order to be able to get in touch with us at all. This simple expedient would enable it to speak with many voices — a *multiple avatar*, in fact. The idea of teachers from behind the veil has always been accepted in India and Tibet, and it was accepted in ancient Egypt and Greece, and among the early Christians too; and of course it has been recognised by mystics in all ages and climes. Many Holy Ones have spoken and acted through the Boy, showing diverse powers and individualities, yet *but one teaching, one aim*. Who, what divine Being, their Head is, it would be idle to conjecture; but whoever he is, the Brothers obey him as the light of their lives.

It is fairly obvious that they would not have had a hearing unless there had been something at once sensational and protected about their advent; for this is an age of non-listening. Too much listening-in has weakened the ability to hear. The thinkers of our time proclaim with one voice that humanity has destroyed, or is rapidly destroying, the little that remains of itself. How, then, can an *avatar* reach this world? It seems that it would have to be done by a sort of divine subterfuge. After many years I have come to regard the Boy's trances as such a necessary expedient, and the advent of the Brothers, speaking and acting from behind the Veil, as a *multiple avatar*. Moreover, according to tradition, the influence of an *avatar* need not be of

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vast range in a geographical sense, or even as to subject-matter. What is important is the quality of the manifestation.

What I meant when I wrote earlier in this chapter that the Boy “was not a typical *avatar*” and yet that “the fruits of an *avatar* were in him,” was this: That he was a channel for this multiple *avatar* and — in my opinion — the best kind of person the Holy Ones could have picked for their purpose. Like individuals hidden in the upsurging masses everywhere, he had greatness in him; and the Brothers made him to be an example of the vast potentialities of unsophisticated humanity.

From time to time I noted down impressions of the Brothers, just after I had been with them. Those notes, which I will give now, have at least the freshness of immediate experience, and may throw a little more light on the question: “What are they?”

“Their certainty, authority, assurance, are magnificent: and this makes them particularly precious for our time. One of them has just said in answer to a question: ‘Do you think reincarnation is true?’

We do not “THINK reincarnation is true”. We KNOW it.

“Their utter simplicity! There is nothing pompous about their delivery, even when they have occasionally to say the heaviest, hardest things. Half the time, people do not realise the value of what is being said, for the Masters very rarely use our kind of force; the limpid purity of their stream of words is often mistaken for banality or weakness. But see what will happen if we try to put them into practice!

“Crushing conditions cannot deter the Masters. They cannot be discouraged. They are never weary. Oh they *go on*, despite everything! This stupendous activation of theirs amid the maelstrom of modern existence shows clearly that they are still capable of being with mankind, whatever the rebuffs — they work with the peoples — their immortality is a fact — their power is a fact. If things have gone wrong, the fault is ours.

“Some people got very angry with them, without apparent provocation; but for the most part even critical groups melt under the spell of their gentle courtesy and utter sincerity. The Boy is often a rude fellow; so it is all the more delightful to note the Brothers’ well-mannered ways. How often have I heard a Brother say, on his arrival, to an eagerly expectant audience, **Do I intrude, please?** (The “please”, used like that,

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is very characteristic of several of them.) Such a start, with head gravely bowed and hands joined, is certainly disarming.

“How diverse they are! On the other side of the picture, we have seen Brothers manifesting terrible anger. Withering. They were merely acting. For no one has ever remarked that they are unfeeling: I must say that I have often thought them non-feeling, unsympathetic; but it has always turned out that they had something better to give.

“Their normal mood — if it can be called a mood — is one of serene joy — childlike but ageless. Their manner when teaching is striking: they are absolutely impervious to criticism, ‘fidgets’, interruptions, etc.

“They are real teachers; so if anyone thinks he will get sentimentality from them, he is much mistaken. They rarely respond to any appeal of the personal self but on the contrary, people who come to them must be prepared — if they deserve it and are ready for it — to have their selves ‘dissolved’. However, if people visit an *ashram*, they must be ready to receive shocks; for the true *ashram* does not consist of persons sitting around trying to look holy, but of ordinary people, trying to scrap sham and hypocrisy and delusions — to face up to life-as-it-is. The Brothers do not tolerate the shammer or soft dreamer, and it is astonishing how expertly they unmask the self-deluded. But to sinners and sufferers they are the incarnations of kindness.

“I have seen many people — men as well as women — display strong emotion in the presence of these holy beings, but never hysteria. This seems to be impossible in the presence of the Brothers. Indeed, no matter how distraught their visitors may be on arrival, with very rare exceptions they gain composure in the Brothers’ company. On the other hand, I have never seen the Brothers themselves moved to ordinary emotion; they cannot be hurt or angered, no matter how rude people are; although, on rare occasions, I have seen in them manifestations of profound feeling, even to the point of tears running down the Boy’s checks.

“They are devoid of sentimental religious devotion, slush or sloppiness of any kind. They are intriguingly cool and collected (some would say, “cold and unresponsive”). Some of them have, on the whole, homely ways; stately. All have great dignity (except the one who acts buffoon) and show extraordinary courage and expertness in tackling the passions and prejudices of all kinds of people. The main impression that many people get from them is an accession of *life*. Things ‘drop away’. We feel revitalised, satisfied.

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“Just because of their essential unattachment, perhaps, and their utter lack of ordinary emotion, they have power to support and soothe. They can also, if need be, irritate or even infuriate. They seem bent on getting people’s reactions right to the surface. Yet everything is accomplished with a sort of comfortable impersonality — warm without scorching; rich without possessiveness. Recalling some of my personal contacts with them, I have never met anything to equal their sublime sweetness, which savours of an enchanted garden — but of an enchantment that cannot die. This is rarely shown in public. Even to think of it as I write, brings tears . . . but I cannot adequately describe the Brothers! In the midst of this world, we live with them in another world.

“Ever since they commenced to teach through the Boy, the Brothers have urged us to realise that the first steps in the ancient Way must be taken by multitudes, in all lands, if the world is to be saved from chaos. Some will object that such teachings are counsels of perfection, not meant for average people. That is where they are entirely mistaken. There are no average people to the all-seeing Masters. If millions of average people do not get down seriously to attempt to *practise* such teachings — there can be no hope for the world. For *it is not at all certain that we can take our ultimate salvation or our ultimate goal of progress for granted*. Thus it becomes our inescapable destiny to realise *just these things*. It is now a question of life and death for each one of us to ‘do — or die’, as Gandhi used to say; since the fate of humanity hangs on the spiritual stature of individuals, which no amount of learning or intellectual brilliance or achievement in the realm of action can bring about; for it depends on the culture of the Own-Self. For this reason the Brothers address themselves exclusively to individuals — usually quite ‘ordinary’ ones.

“We suffer from ‘universitis’, and universitis and the path of individual greatness don’t go together. A Brother once taught me, **The local way is the vital way**. We must therefore try to roll up space and time, to turn within, *become what we are* or, as they put it: **Become individual without being individualistic**. The Brothers say that most of us **have not yet become human**. One trouble is that our mockery of civilisation with its false values and dangerous achievements has taken us so far from reality that we have lost the sense of it — and missed the nearness of it. We are ashamed to be real, confused as to vital issues; in a word — insane, and living in the madhouse of our own making. Writing of the position of man in modern life, Dr. Albert Schweitzer has said: ‘The spirit of the age never lets him come to himself.’¹¹

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“There is a real world. A *mahatma* sets it over-against our unreal world of the effortful mind and will. He tells us, in so many words, that our unreal world simply isn't worthwhile. It has let us down all along the line, and will continue to do so until we give rein to that intuitive faculty which picks out the Real, and bases life on it.”

CHAPTER TWELVE

Appearances — I

The Boy and I did not see, and I still do not see, the Brothers in the ordinary way; although there have been rare appearances which seemed like — and probably were — beings of the inner cosmos materialised in what we call physical matter.’

We were often asked whether — or how — we saw Brothers; so I will here give some of my experiences as accurately as I can.¹

It was clear from many talks we had over a number of years, that the Boy ‘saw’ mainly interiorly, through the third eye; whereas most of my seeing was and still is, it seems, external.

If there is an occult Brotherhood, whether it be in the Himalayas, the Andes, Tibet, Timbuctoo, or out in space, matters not; for its members seem to be able to operate anywhere, provided there are attuned ‘receiving sets’. If not, according to their own accounts, they still operate, though not consciously to us. Thus for instance, I am certain from experience, that time and space can cease to be, for us as for them, when we are, as it were tuned-in to them. We can lose one aspect of consciousness — in time and space — to gain another, beyond both. Obviously the more ‘receiving sets’ there are, the greater will be the number of persons with the capacity to tune in; and many who are opening to the inner worlds could make our outer world more fit to live in — and the next, to depart to.

Thus, the Brothers’ media for their operations seem to be analogous to the wireless waves which are all about us. Through these, we could develop subtle perceptions, but we only ‘get’ what we are tuned to. Moreover, the Brothers can and do assist in tuning our ‘wireless sets.’ If we have the will — the attitude — they will help, *karma* permitting.

The Boy became intensely attuned and developed subtle perceptions in a natural way. Some at ‘Headquarters’ seem to have watched over him — “our Boy”, as they affectionately called him — in his slum childhood, full of cruelties and hardships and the sordid preoccupations enforced by his wretched environment. When that slum life was over and he was safe with us, I once asked a Brother how they had managed to keep him unscarred through his wild young manhood. He was so clean and

buoyant. That Brother said that one of them was particularly told off to watch over him — in fact, to father him, since the lad had only known a drunken stepfather — and that there was no difficulty in keeping him away from women, drink, gambling and so forth, as the Brother in charge kept him fully occupied with sports. Boxing, and even — as we have seen — free fights of one kind or another provided considerable outlets.

Brothers guided us to our astonishing meeting — the heavenly perfumes in my room; my obsession over acquiring a house in the slums; making the Boy to walk the road where he first saw me, and so on. All this could not have been fortuitous. Our side of the matter was an instinctive readiness to respond; and with ‘seeing’ it has to be the same.

Who but some divine Intervener could have brought about the sudden flowering of the Boy’s inner nature? It is true, as I have indicated, that I was the Boy’s *shakti* or igniting-power.² But then, they guided me also in this, else how could I have managed the whole amazing operating of supervising, controlling and guarding his early efforts in trance? *This* sort of trance was not in my line. Here, I was a tyro, utterly inexperienced; yet the great opening was accomplished with my co-operation in a few weeks.

We were often asked whether, or how, we saw Brothers; so I will give here some of my experiences as accurately as I can, as illustrations of seeing Brothers.

Once, in South India, many years before I met the Boy, I was walking alone in a sandy palm grove during the rainy season. My bare feet were shod in flimsy sandals, consisting of a thin sole and just a thong to hold the big toe, with a tiny band. One walked loose-footed; not much use when it rained, of course; but why bother? They dried quickly in the sun, and one went bare-footed the while. But, to my story! As I walked along, my mind was far away, occupied with some metaphysical problem. It may have been mathematical for all I knew (I never had any schooling, not even a governess at home). I was trying to get at the two-ness of two, and so on. That was my problem!

Like a flash, a word broke into my mind. *Snake*. I brushed aside the interruption, and walked slowly on. Very soon, disturbingly, SNAKE, again. I continued to walk, taking no notice., abstracted and inwardly deep-focussed. Something, however, now disturbed the vision of my lowered eyes, and made me raise the lids, annoyed. There,

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about two yards off, was a lightsome cloud, about eighteen inches from the ground! It seemed that I saw it with my eyes of flesh, in the full light of the late afternoon sun. (I cannot attempt to explain this). Sitting on that cloud, looking like a Leonardo angel, was a Being. The vision flashed out was gone. SNAKE! SNAKE! The words seem to be bellowed into my mind.

I lowered my eyes again. (In those days, I thought I was going to be a saint; hence in my folly, I upbraided myself because my mind had been so easily drawn off a line of thought by a mere psychic happening.) Within a split second, however, *someone violently slapped the inside of my right knee*, so that I half fell over sideways to the right, landing on my right foot, my left leg in the air. Now, at last, I looked down to see what was happening. *Just under where my left foot would surely have trod, was a death-dealing krait*, wriggling away as fast as it could go. The krait is one of the deadliest snakes in India.

During the same period, I was once travelling alone by a Calcutta express. My compartment, like most Indian second class compartments, had no communication with the other carriages — not even a door for staff. The train was moving at full speed, for India. Suddenly, I felt faint. I staggered towards the water bottle beside my bed, but could not manage to drink. I fell over on to the bed and began to swoon.

The next thing I knew was the pressure of what seemed to be a strong, firm, thin hand holding a wad of cloth over my nostrils. It was saturated with an indescribable, penetrating, unearthly perfume. I gasped, inhaling with all my strength, as if I could never be satiated of that smell. The pressure came and went, several times; then I awoke and *sat right up*. The hand was gone. There was no one in the carriage. The train jolted on through the hot Indian night.

Many such things happened to me; but I did not tell people about them in those days, except they were saint-like, as was Dr. Annie Besant, to whom I confided the event as soon as I reached Banaras. She put her arms about my shoulders and said, “it was your Master, my Child.”

The Boy often told me of narrow escapes he had had as a labourer, before he met me, when he was aware of some unseen person touching him and guiding him to safety. He must have needed such assistance, for he appears—from what I could glean of him from inhabitants of his slum — to have been a young dare — devil at the works

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where he was employed for some time, and left to come to us. His fellow workers bestowed two nicknames on him: “Unconscious” and “Trouble”. I can vouch for the accuracy of both! Incidentally, he told me that he never knew what happened during the spells of ‘sleep’ that sometimes came upon him when he was on the top of dangerous machinery, working on church steeples, sliding about the high-up, sloping roofs of ice-bound gasometers, etc. All he could say was that when he went to sleep in a dangerous position, he would “wake up somewhere else.” He must have received strong help.

His accounts of works, factories, machines — of setting great piles for bridges into river beds, working cranes, driving lorries up and down England and so forth — were too precisely detailed and circumstantial to form any part of his vivid imagination which Brothers called his ‘psychic umbrella’. We could question him and probe: he always had a prompt and clear answer or explanation, except, of course, for the sleep and ‘rescues’. He worked occasionally on underground jobs in the London sewers; but he never told me of going to sleep down there! It must have been awfully punishing to him, and for the Holy Ones. How patient and longsuffering they had to be during all those years, before they could get him to comparative safety and under cover, as it were, with me and my people. They must have put out a prodigious effort to bring us together and get him away from his slum. When at last their task was accomplished, it was I who had to share the guarding with them. They called me “Nurse”, and I became thenceforth their very willing “general Jack and bottle washer”. For some twenty-seven years I spent much of my time picking up bits and clearing up messes. Well, if the Brothers could put up with him, so could I. I loved him dearly; and as for them, I would have laid down my life in their service.

One of the most thrilling things that ever happened to me in the way of encounters with living Brothers was in Banaras, where I was making a short unaccompanied stay in the early days of my *sannyasa*. One morning, I was returning in a *riksha* from the city when, going along a hot, dusty road near my lodging, my *riksha* man swerved in order to pass a naked holy man, who squatted in the dust towards the middle of the road, writing something there with his finger, at which a youth appeared to be gazing without comprehension. As the *riksha* swerved, the holy man, who was in a crouching squat — I took him to be one of the usual low beggars of Banaras —

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straightened his back, still squatting, and, turning his head around and up, looked me full in the face—an unexpected and extraordinary gesture. I returned the look, for I was suddenly stupified. That man was not a low beggar! It was the head and face and *expression* of a Master!

The riksha passed quickly; but I could not let *this* pass. At the risk of being thought crazy—for we were arriving at my place, which the riksha man knew—I ordered him to turn back and drive slowly along past the holy man, who was still at his writing, crouched in the hot dirty dust. The boy had not moved . . . I made the *riksha* stop. Now, however, the *sadhu* did not raise himself as before but, bending low, twisted his neck half round so as to look up at me again—this time, a brutish, cowering beggar!

That was not the end of it. I felt that I knew my man; for the image of that noble face remained with me. I supposed that he would wander away and that I should never see him again. Some days after, however, I came across him, near my lodging, lying on his back asleep on the broiling stone parapet of a deep well. He was clothless except for a rag, lying beautifully relaxed, the pitiless Indian midday summer sun pouring down on the stone where he lay, and on his bare head and body. He suffered no anxiety, of course, that he might turn over in his sleep and fall into the well. He was an Adept all right. Not only because of this. His eyes had told me so.

This brings up a very interesting subject, to which I cannot do justice here. Indeed, in any case, I could not throw light on it. It is, however, part of this narrative and should not be omitted. I have often been asked: “Have the Brothers ever materialised?” Well, of course, that question covers a wide field. Materialisations have occurred, and still do occur, in several degrees, as it were.

When the Boy and I have on occasion felt a hand restraining or guiding us—as when my knee was pushed violently aside by the impact of an unseen hand, to save me from being bitten by a deadly snake, or when I had my back pressed gently inwards between the shoulder blades in order to give me a correct posture, and in many other ways; or when the Boy had been gripped by the elbow and steered across a dangerous road—all these were and are at any rate partial materialisations, else how could my knee have been slapped and jerked violently on one side, or how could I have felt a hand pressing on my nose or back? I must pass over such happenings, and we come to the next type: apparitions seen by some but not by others; full or nearly

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full figures which flash out and are gone, or which appear as steady, and fairly enduring, but unclear ‘shades’. I have seen the Brothers many hundreds — nay, thousands — of times in both these ways, and so did the Boy, in addition to his third-eye seeing. This seeing, apparently by means of our eyes of flesh — but obviously functioning abnormally — can take place under every conceivable condition. I had it for many years before meeting the Boy, and I found it a great help, then and afterwards. Thus, I nearly always knew when the Boy would be going into trance, for a Brother, or Brothers, would flash into a tree near by — provided it was one of the right magnetic quality — or show out in some part of our verandah or inside our rooms. How often I remarked to the Boy or a visitor: “The Brothers are about,” and, as often, he’d be half entranced before I could count ten! Again, we might be among friends or enquirers, and as we sat talking of this and that, Brothers would come through the roof, perhaps, or rise up through the floor, and I would probably say in a low voice to someone near: “The Brothers are here. He won’t be long going off, now.” How rarely people believed me! They would often address themselves to the Boy, even after I had warned them. Sure enough, within a few seconds, he would begin to ‘go off’. It happened so naturally! The reader will realise that I had plenty to do, and had to be on the alert to protect the Boy from some people — Indians or Europeans — who were without understanding. Such people would be more considerate of a machine.

Such materialisations were clear — as far as they went — to me and to the Boy — when he bothered to take notice — but nobody else saw them. Yet I am constrained to call them part-materialisations, since I did not see them with astral sight, but with my eyes wide open and looking about at the physical scene. (That, of course, may be a form of second sight based on a subtler vibration of *physical* sight; but we did not waste life on futile speculations.)

When I say, “I — or we — have seen the Brothers,” referring to this kind of seeing, I do not mean that they appear and appeared in full and clear physical substance, though I have seen wonderful faces in dreams — and in daydreams, too — which might be theirs. Figures flash out, and are gone. They flash several times, sometimes in the same place and at other times moving rapidly from one place to another. The flash is so quick — and usually in some unexpected place — that it is impossible clearly to distinguish figures and faces. In a general way, some are

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“moon-faced” and “lotus-eyed”; some seem to have long, thin, bearded faces, usually, dark hair and deep-set eyes; but I have — oh yes! — just once seen a great blue-eyed golden haired Brother very clearly indeed. That was a complete and apparently solid, steady materialisation. Of him, I cannot write fully here. I could not do justice to that vision, which came in full glory and apparently solid materiality, and at the height of a normal tall man. (Our Brothers are usually taller.) He came before me, sitting on a magnificent white charger; both of them were dazzlingly beautiful. It happened years before I met the Boy, and in the most unexpected of places — a dark, damp, filthy basement room of an old London house into which we had just moved. I was feeling particularly weary, worn and disheartened; but I always insisted on doing the big cleansing jobs myself — even when we could afford a servant, which was not often — because I loved the Holy Ones and knew that they came to me, even then. How could I do less than make the place as pure as possible for them?

That day, I was at the end of my tether. It must have been the slimy filth that affected me so much — pail after pail of it; and this had been the breakfast room of civilised Europeans! I scrubbed on, very depressed, probably crying, when a light made me look up. There he was, seated on his charger, within less than two yards of me — a complete materialisation from the head to the toes. He was clad all over in shining — apparently silver — armour. The hands and feet were covered by it, but the visor was raised, and that fair, glorious face turned downwards towards me as I knelt, perspiring and exhausted, beside the dirty scrubbing pail. Long, shining, golden curls showed at either side. I sat, speechless and gazing, perhaps for many seconds; but time stood still . . . Then darkness again; yet what did I care now? My burden had gone!

Returning to our more usual Brothers; as to *the appearance* of the flashes: I sometimes get a vivid impression of full figures and voluminous draperies, and sometimes of but little drapery, and lean figures with long, fine, sinewy arms and hands, and thin, straight shoulders of moderate width. It *is* definitely a ‘seeing’ but it is just as much, a mental impression, which is nearly always clear. The first time it happened to me I nearly fainted, not from fear, but from exaltation. (But that is another story, needing another book, not about the Boy, but about Glastonbury.)

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Before giving more about full materialisations, here are some other partial ones. Perhaps these are experienced by some people, but they do not perceive them clearly. I saw these several times before and after I met the Boy. They resembled rather wide, high, luminous golden or silvery shafts which appeared by my bedside, close to me, just as I was about to settle off to sleep.

My wide open eyes would see this mass of glowing light for a few seconds. Then it would go, suddenly and completely, like an electric light switched off.

Manifestations similar in feeling but more like human forms, in wore the forms of shaven-headed monks in russet draperies glowing gold in the light of sunset — or were they self-luminous? These were often seen by the Boy and me in our London garden. We used to go out to meet them at sundown, with my husband, who saw them too. It was beautiful and awe-inspiring. They seemed to drift in and out, as it were — vaporous, yet distinctly human forms. The grass glowed gold under their naked feet.

I never saw them again after we left London.

Did they come, perhaps, because the Boy was at the start of his glorious work, and many holy beings gathered round to help? They brought an atmosphere of Bliss, which in India is called, '*ananda*,' and added to every Swami's name, (mine for instance: 'Omananda' means 'bliss of the Word,' the Eternal Sound, Om.)

Let it not be thought that I externalise a thought-form and imagine I see. How could I have made thought-forms of people I had never seen, to begin with? I *do actually see* these forms flashing out, and in other ways, often when I least expect to. I don't see so much now (1958). I am old. Death comes gently along.²

The Boy and I have clearly seen what appear to be full materialisations, in our ordinary waking consciousness and in broad daylight. In addition I *was* the materialisation on several occasions. The sudden advent of two men who saved the Boy on a deserted London highway, has already been described in Chapter Three. Clearly, they were two Brothers, guarding their beloved Boy, hence the prodigious impression they made on him.

The Boy often told me of certain experiences he had had as a young lad, which I came to regard as being minor initiations. He told me that he used frequently to go to a certain tree in Epping Forest, and that in the branches of that tree he made his imaginary home. As boys will, he fashioned a kind of platform and bower up there, in which he could rest, take meals, and observe without being seen. It was in that

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spot, he told me, that the Brothers first appeared to him, and came to him many times. He loved the place.

I recognised this characteristic of theirs. It seems that the Brothers will do their job wherever their Lord puts them; but that they are happiest among flowers, in loved and tended gardens or near to or resting in beautiful trees. They have explained this at length to me. I always tried to keep a garden for them in which they could rest or at least, live near to good trees. There, the Boy and I would see their shadowy outlines — I often thought he saw more, but would not say — and I almost always saw them arrive, preferably in a tree or garden, when about to ‘take’ the Boy.

He took it for granted that there was nothing special or peculiar in seeing these beings, just as I had done as a child, when I thought that I was only seeing what everybody saw. When he told me of his boyish experiences in Epping Forest, there was always an expression on his face which made me certain that he was giving me the simple truth. “They were just as they are now,” he would say, “only clearer. They used to stay with me for hours. The folks at home used to ask me where I went, but I kept that place secret, and they never found out! I was often punished because I would not tell, and for coming home late; but mother never punished me. She used to say, ‘Let the lad alone! He’s not been up to mischief!’”

The Boy had many of such strange encounters, whilst in comparison I had few, the affects of which were, however, impressive enough to last for life.

Here is an account of the fullest materialisation I ever saw, which seems to have been definitely connected with the Brothers and the Boy. Psychologists will doubtless appreciate that both the physical and emotional conditions of this one provided no nuclei, as it were, for what might be termed “projections” or whatever they are called.

It was a lovely sunny summer afternoon. The Brothers and I had been busy on their hearings, since lunch, in a quiet, matter-of-fact way. The atmosphere was just peaceful. I was longing for my tea. Nothing could have been more inopportune for a ghost with materialising ambitions.

It was on this wise: In the early thirties before we left for India, the Brothers, through the entranced Boy, used to heal many people. The work was all done “for love.” A large room had been set apart for interviews and healing, and I was

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receptionist, attendant on the sick, general helper and go-between. There was no one else to do this work. No wonder I wanted my tea!

The room was approached by a long, narrow, window-less, electrically lit passage. This passage had no outlets except the door to the Brothers' room at the far end, the open entrance to the passage at the other end, leading out of the vestibule, and a cellar door in the passage which door was always kept locked. I kept the key. Our entrance hall was broad and lightsome. The double hall door was always wide open when there were patients about, but one could not see them coming along the drive, which turned abruptly away from the front door; thus they would appear suddenly in the doorway. Along the wall facing that door was a bench, where people waited their turn to go to the Brothers. It was impossible for them to miss seeing people coming in the front door, and such people — unless they belonged to the household — if they did not sit on the bench, walked down the passage towards the Brothers' room, or stood chatting in the hall. That afternoon, the hall was empty, except for one lady waiting her turn. There was an elderly couple with the Brother and, as their treatment was over, I went out into the hall to see if the next patient had arrived. There she sat, on the bench opposite the hall door. I sat down tired, beside her. I did not know her name. (There were so many people, and no secretary. How *could* I get down their names? I managed a few. How I wish I had that lady's name and address now! On the other hand, she might refuse to come forward! Such is our civilised life.) I must stress, we were alone in the hall.

As we waited for the old couple to emerge from the Brothers' room, a gentleman appeared at the hall door and, without pausing to make any enquiry or to take my permission — which on the very moment, I thought strange in a man of his calibre and obvious good breeding — walked, *with long, rapid and determined strides*, a distance of some twenty-five feet, to and into and then, on along the passage-way to the Brothers' room, arrived at which, I presume, he entered (we could not see the room door from where we sat). I was struck by his appearance. He was a man several years under thirty, I imagined. Beautifully set up; immaculately garbed. His dark suit fitted with exquisite perfection. He was about six feet tall, slender hipped and broad shouldered. Full of energy, he sprang along as if the ground could not irk him. As he passed within five or six feet of us, I noticed the slightly tanned fair skin, and that his well-shaped head of dark hair was perfectly cut and discreetly glossy. As for

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the etceteras of his attire: they were too ‘right’ to be noticed. He was the impeccable man-about-town with the athlete peeping out.

I thought rather vaguely that this must be a son of the old people, and I wished they would come out . . . Time passed and nothing happened . . . At last, impatient, I went through to the Brothers’ room. The elderly patients were just about to leave, but *the young man was not there*. In some surprise, I asked them where he had gone. They looked blank. “Who? The Brother? He is still here.” “But — ?” I gasped. They took their leave.

I was so flabbergasted that I let them go un-escorted, following on their heels to examine the cellar door just outside the room on the right. Locked. No one could have entered. All the same, I rushed upstairs and fetched the key, and flew down into the cellar. It was a small place — empty. Had he got out the window of the Brothers’ room? Two patients and the very sharp-sighted Brother could not have missed seeing him.

I returned to the Brother — it was not my way to leave a Brother like this. He was sitting very quietly just as I had left him, with the Boy deeply entranced. He was singularly silent. But I was simply frightened — frightened about that handsome young man.

“Brother, tell me — what has happened?”

The Brother, actually shamefaced, hung his head! It was the queerest thing to see one of our noble Brothers hanging his head . . . I was puzzled. Silence . . .

“What on earth has happened, Brother?” I insisted. “Where did that man go? You *must* tell me — *you really must tell me!*”

I spoke urgently, whereat the Brother’s head went lower; and I went, too — onto my knees — close up to him — and looked right into his now averted face.

A broad enigmatic smile was upon it! With eyes still averted, it seemed that he could not make up his mind to tell me whatever he quite obviously knew. Was it some mystery? — something I was not to be brought into? . . . The silence hung on. Still on my knees, I urged:

“Come, come, dear Brother! You can’t treat me like this! I have a right to know — don’t you think I have a right to hear — just what this means? You were in the room — those patients would not tell. But they *must* have seen him . . .”

Another long pause; and by this time I was trembling. Then in slow-coming words, and a charming, pleadingly-modulated tone:

“Well . . . the truth is, dear Nurth . . . that there has been — a — ss — light — mistake!”

He waited for this announcement to sink in, and then, at last, raised his head, smiling with a large, boyish grin — should I rather say, the nearest to a grin that a Brother could manage? He spoke confidently, not to say wheedlingly:

“You see, Nurth, one of my Brothers had just come over from Paris where he had been doing some work, and — er — well — he forgot to de-materialise!”

Now that he had got it off his chest, as it were, his eyes shone merrily. I think he had not been sure of how I would react; for this happened in the early days before I had been ‘seasoned’. As I made no comment, he seemed relieved, and turned to talk to the new de-materialised Brother in that occult language of theirs.

Interrupting — for, to my way of thinking, the occasion justified slight discourtesy — I asked the Brother to ‘hold’ the Boy whilst I went around the house and grounds making enquiries. I rushed out and accosted everybody in the place. Nobody, except me, and the one waiting patient, had seen that exquisite young man.

After making the full round, I returned to the hall by way of the front door, and casually mentioned the young man to the poor lady whom I had left sitting there. “No. He had not come back that way,” she said, not for a moment suspecting that anything more abnormal than the usual had happened. I already knew that of course; for he would have had to pass me in the passage or hall as I was going to the Brothers’ room. There was no other way out.

I took her to the Brother and her long wait was well rewarded.

We were poor — often deadly poor — overworked and understaffed people. If I could have had a dictaphone and a cinecamera and at least two secretarial helpers, during the extraordinary events in which we were involved, I would perhaps have presented a more satisfying narrative. But those things could not be. The result is that I lack proofs at almost every turn; for instance, that lady’s name and address, which might have provided me with a reliable witness. Over-against this, however, one has to put several obstacles. The worst, perhaps, would have been the mechanism of the thing. How could I have put a dictaphone containing base metals near to the Boy? The Brothers often told us that base metals assist the purpose of and therefore attract evil ‘spirits.’ Negligence about such matters would increase the

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necessity for the Brothers to combat forces of darkness who aim to destroy the Brothers, their holy work, and their friends.

They had to hold together a considerable undertaking; also, to control often silly and nearly always troubled, perplexed, critical or just emotional people; to give orders to — and control — me; and-last but not least-to attend to their teaching. As for a cine-camera: of what use would it have been, for instance, in the case last given? We did not realise that the young man was ‘abnormal’. The fact is that ‘abnormal’ things slipped in, and still slip in, taking us unawares and unprepared. In addition, I myself was sometimes an obstacle to the getting of supporting records, for I had to be concentrated on what was happening, and the reactions all round, and at such times — that is, *all* the time where the Boy and the Brothers were concerned — I could not divide my mind. But in any case, I have always been the sort of person who asks someone to tea and forgets to pass the cakes! (But I don’t forget a hot water bottle, an electric kettle, and everything *en suite*, in the guest room).

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Appearances — II

The following stories of apparently solid, physical appearances, are well-nigh incredible; but what interest could I have in telling them? In the world of today, self interest should make one blind and dumb — especially, dumb.

Well, during my twenty-one years in India, I saw the image — form — call it what you will — of the great god, the Lord *Shiva*, four times, perfectly distinctly and looking like a living, physically corporeal man.

Shiva is always represented as a *yogi*. He is the lord and patron of *swamis*, *sannyasis*, *yogis*. The popular idea is that he is smeared from head to feet with holy ashes from sacrificial fires. Actually, however, the god seems to be covered in the essence of those ashes, so that his colour is of a strange misty moony grey but full of soft light, self-luminous. It is particularly significant that this god appeared to me three times shortly before I entered into *sannyasa* and once after, always when I was in difficulties of one kind or another about my *sannyasa*. This was not a result of my prayers! I never had a flair for worshipping gods of any nationality. I could love the supreme Masters, the Brothers and their friends, and try to love God.

The first time I saw the god was during war-work days in Kashmir. One afternoon, I was feeling particularly weary and jagged, so I decided that as it was impossible to go on working, I would knock off, and take a breather, alone, for an hour or two. It was after factory hours, and the sun was just about to set over the lakes. I took the factory car to an unfrequented part of the road which skirts the Takht Hill — a high hill which dominates the landscape for miles around, with a temple to *Shiva* on the summit. Leaving the car, I strolled a little way up the hillside on a secluded path, which was partly hidden from the adjacent hillside by low jutting boulders. Thus I felt there was a chance that I might not be seen and might get some sorely needed privacy. About a third of the way up, I selected a grassy spot just off the path, but well out of sight, from which I could enjoy the gorgeous panorama of the sun setting over the lakes. Here, even people coming up the path, would miss me.

I sat down on the grass in the lotus posture — cross-legged — but without closing my eyes, and abandoned myself to Nature's all-embracing loveliness. The hour, the

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day and the spot were propitious for enchantment, and enchantment stole over me. My Mind quietened. Thoughts about *sannyasa* came to me with great yearning as they had done for years past, and the glow of the sacred ochre mixed with the glow of sunset.

Suddenly, breaking the spell, a small thin man emerged from behind an adjacent rock. This was the rock which sheltered me from the path, and I took it that some wretch was now going to pester me. Couldn't tranquillity be had *anywhere*, I thought miserably.

The man stood quietly erect between me and the sunset, thinking about the best line of approach, I supposed. Yes, he was a beggar, and I had come here to get away from the harassing confidences of such fellows. I was startled, and annoyed that my dream, my mood of enchantment, had turned to bitterness.

The creature was dressed — or rather, undressed — in the usual get-up of a fake *sadhu* or wandering holy man: the hair tightly coiled high up about his head, the dangling rosary of imitation skulls, the staff with trident atop, the bare body smeared all over with ashes. Strangely enough, he did not move, beg, or entreat . . . Surprising, this . . .

The sun was almost at its last blaze of glory. Darkness comes quickly in the East. I wondered how I should pass him and get down to the car, before dark came upon us . . . But why did he stand there like a stone, like one of those rocks, saying nothing? . . . Suddenly I felt apprehension of the coming dark on that hill, far out of earshot, alone with that man. I was beautifully dressed in valuable *pashmina* clothes. Our business existed to help Kashmiri craftsmen, especially in woolen textiles. My purse lay on the grass beside me; but he did not speak, or move, but remained there so stilly that I now began to be really afraid . . . What *could* he want? . . . Terror gripped me; but I knew that I must not show fear.

Remaining in the lotus attitude, immobile, I fixed my eyes on him. I had not dared to look at him closely before now for I feared his impudence. As the light was behind him I could not discern his features; but I could see that his face was long and narrow. His shoulders I saw clearly . . . Curious — the *ash was not of the usual colour*. It had a moony lustre . . . his body — no! — *impossible!* . . . *I was looking at the sunset right through his body!*

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Then my heart gave a great leap. Tears gushed into my eyes. Oh how could I have been such a blind fool? Thus madly had I treated the divine Lord Shiva, the Everlasting Beggar, the Supreme Yogi, who had come out to meet me on his own hill.

The slim, silvery figure faded into the evening sunshine. There was a great peace. My body tingled from head to feet. My breath went free. The ache of things had left Me.

Thanking and adoring Him in my heart, I returned to the factory.

The second time I saw the Lord *Shiva* was when, towards the end of the second World War, I wanted to make a pilgrimage to the celebrated Cave of Amarnath. The pilgrims, with friends seeing them off and the usual crowds of people seeking *darshan* (blessing) of the holy men, were assembled at Pahlgam, Kashmir, the point of departure. I too was there, living with my family and the Boy in tents. He had accompanied us only in order to look after us, for this kind of thing bored him to distraction, and he was restless and troublesome, as always on such occasions — the funny Boy, who could be so lovable or maddening when ‘off duty.’ None of my folk wanted to do the pilgrimage. For them, it was just a matter of sightseeing, and respite from war work.

As it came near the time to set out, I sickened, and went down with a sort of general collapse. A doctor was called, ordered complete rest, and the pilgrimage was of course out of the question for me. After the procession of holy men, starting off on their journey, had passed my tent, I lay back, feeling unhappy, frustrated nearly always by this weak body of mine. After awhile, the thought came to me: “Why should you desire to visit a cave, a shrine, a holy man? If god *Shiva* is real, He is here, He is everywhere.” Thus musing and enheartened, I pulled back the flap of my tent, and gazed out on the now deserted road. The crowds had melted as if they had never been. There was not a soul in sight. Possibly my people were off on a picnic.

There is a beautiful steep, sheer, thickly fir-covered hill running parallel to that road, and my tent by the roadside was exactly opposite to it. On that particular day, it stood out almost blackly silhouetted against an intense blue sky. The sky was cloudless. The hill loomed stark.

“Yes, he is here,” I thought and, with a rush, I *felt* . . . and lo! over-across the way, from that black hill as from a shrine, there emerged my figure of Supernal Moonlight — Lord *Shiva* Himself!

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How could that strong moon glow mix with the summer sun? Yet it did; and he was so clear, statuesque. The outline matched all other outlines of that clear day. It was intense, moony marble.

Before I could join my raised palms, He was gone.

The third time I saw Him was in the spring of 1946, before my *sannyasa*, when I stayed at a well-known Bengal Math (monastery) by the kindness of the good Swamis of the Sri Ramakrishna Mission there, for several months of retreat. They had given me the top floor of their Dispensary, close to the gates, where, as a woman, I was suitably apart. It was a wonderful visit in every way and I was very, very grateful to those good men. That was a time of heavy oppositions and responsibilities and difficult decisions for me. I had been aching to take the step which would make me a *sannyasini* — a *swami*. One by one, my family was dispersing. Every tie with ‘the world’ was breaking, naturally, not through any effort of mine. But I was troubled about the Boy. Would he stand by me? I could not force him; I could not importune him. My health suffered through anxiety; for I was indissolubly linked with him in all that is holy and dear. Although we had been nominally married in 1943 (before I took *gerrua*) in order to satisfy convention, there was no reason why he should not remain with me to the end, working for the Brothers. Ramakrishna was a *sannyasi* but his wife remained with him. Why should we then, trouble ourselves about monastic rules which under exceptional circumstances, should be set aside? I did not trouble; but what might the Boy, twenty years my junior, feel about this if I took *sannyasa*? If he left me because of it, I could not and would not lift a finger to recall him, for his judgment and decision must be his own. Knowing his sensitivity, I could scarcely allow myself to *think* of this painful matter, lest I should unduly influence him.

In addition, there was violent and what seemed to be insuperable opposition from the very ancient and entrenched all-India Order of the *sannyasis*. I could not find anyone to adroit me. “What — a woman, and a Western! Impossible! Outrageous! Women are banned! Westerns — anathema!” Thus was I hedged about. Yet I knew that some of India’s greatest modern thinkers believed that this high path should be open to women and, in fact, be without barriers of race, creed or sex, since it is universal. But there is sectarianism everywhere, and the *sannyasis* of India today,

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taken by and large, are a petty, ignorant, hidebound crowd. Oh well, I had to leave things on the knees of the gods!

One hot afternoon, I was sitting on my bed on the floor — an Eastern bed, that is, not a bedstead, but only the bedding. I was feeling faint and oppressed by the sultry heat. (March can be hot in Bengal.) There was no fan in that place. In addition to physical distress, I was cruelly undecided and troubled in mind. I tried to think of “the knees of the gods” — to rise above anxieties — but all was leaden, and I felt defeated.

Just then, something made me lift my eyes and look across the small room. There was nothing — nothing except my blank mind and a blank wall, and the deadness of siesta time. The whole place was darkened against the sun; even the whitewashed walls were dim. I saw nothing clearly until . . . a portion *of the wall opposite, about ten feet away opened*, and in that opening, seated in the lotus posture, in great power and radiance and in dazzling light, there appeared the most beautiful life-sized figure of *Shiva*, wearing the traditional emblems of the lord of *sannyasa!* Light shone all about him, and from within him, but not in the room. About that light there was no flickering or flashing. It was still light.

He sat there, a magic picture framed by the wall, full of strength, resplendent; his moony glow suffused with gold and ochre and red. It was magnificent!

He was looking intently at me. As that look challenged me, power and insight came — power, spiritual resolve — infinitely daring, certain, unconquerable. His look said, “Go forward!” It said more, but I have not the gift to put that ‘more’ on paper.

Unlike the statuesque figure on the hill, this time the manifestation communicated a sense of unconquerable might. The vision almost hurt in its strength. It remained for perhaps six or eight seconds, then, abruptly, was gone. But my problems were no more! I went forward from that hour and won through. Within four months I was a *Swami*.

The fourth time was in Banaras, in the winter of 1946-7. I was a guest, again, of a branch of the same Math, but this time, there was more rudeness and ill-will from many of the monks, both inside and out, than I care to record; for I was then a *Swami*, an usurper — or so many of them seemed to think. Within a few years they changed round completely; but in the meantime, they made life very wretched indeed for me.

They did not spare me, in public or private. Their lay followers boycotted and insulated me in public and kept away from me in private. I was boycotted and loudly execrated on the roads almost everywhere.

One hot afternoon, I was walking along that same dusty road where I had met the beggar with the face of a Master. Banaras is full of *swamis* and beggars and ‘holy’ men, and as a rule one takes no notice of them. As I padded along through thick dust and in blazing sun, I saw coming towards me a typical Banaras *sadhu*, holding the trident — a Shaivite beggar. I looked at him absentmindedly as he approached. “A very clever representation of the god,” I mused.

As I looked at him again whilst he was striding towards me, *I saw through his body and he melted away!* I nearly melted away, too; for the Lord of *sannyasis* had upheld me once more at a time of terrible strain, heartbreak and lonely anguish.

My destination that afternoon was the cell of a very holy and learned old monk whom I loved and with whom I sometimes talked about the Brothers. As I entered tears were running down my cheeks. I bowed to the dear old man sat down, and then, he made me pour it all out. I gave vent to my pent-up wretchedness over the monks who gave me the impression that they were setting all Banaras against me, (this subsequently turned out to be largely true.) Being a refuge-less -and sick woman and in a minority of one in all India, the thing was indeed hard to bear; and what with the sight of Lord *Shiva*, and my grief, I just broke down. The old monk comforted me with sweet, holy words, then exclaimed, “Oh well, Sister, all the same, you surely belong to Banaras!” (Banaras is the city of Shiva, the Destroyer and Regenerator.) “I know I should spend some time here, Brother,” I answered, “but I can’t get a room anywhere, and the Math invitation is only for a very short time. Anyway, I am leaving within a day or two if I possibly can.” “Why don’t you ask Lord Shiva?” he suggested. I promised him I would. But I was never much good at this sort of thing — asking for help, supplication.

When I got back to the Math Guest House, however, I kept my word and said a queer kind of prayer aloud whilst I was eating supper alone in my little room. At the least, I said it sincerely. “*Lord Shiva! You are my Host here in Banaras! Thank you, Oh thank you for all the help you have given me! If I have Your permission, I would like to make a stay here. It is for you to decide. I leave this matter entirely to You.*”

Next afternoon, I was making myself a cup of tea, when a sharp rap came on my door. I welcomed in an authoritative looking Indian gentleman of early middle age,

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who was a stranger to me. In India, people call on *swamis* without introductions, so I was not surprised at his visit. “I am Atreya,” he announced, in a hearty voice, and then over a cup of tea, proceeded to tell me that at that time he was profoundly interested in abnormal psychology. “If that is so,” I said, “I have a case for you such as you have never seen or heard or read of as being possible in the world of today,” and with that we plunged into a long, keen talk about the Boy and I told him about the Brothers. Dr. B. L. Atreya was then the Head of the Department for Religion, Philosophy and Psychology at the Hindu University of Banaras. He is now retired. We became friendly, especially over the Boy. Unfortunately, as the silly Boy, contrary to advice given by Sri Ramakrishna, had gone off, I was unable to get them together at that time, but did so after his return in May, 1947, when Dr. Atreya saw very much of the Brothers in the winter of 1948. He often used to walk round to our place from the University at about 6:30 a.m. and propound questions by the dozen. He was the first to recognise and state in writing, that the Brothers’ teachings are of the highest order, which means to the Hindu, *Upanishadic*, as I have already explained.¹

However, on this particular day we only laid plans for those later eventful contacts and finally, on rising to go, he said: “Swamiji! I was evidently destined to come here and to learn about this wonderful thing. It is most extraordinary — and not a mere coincidence, surely, that this morning I had an unaccountably strong urge to come over and see you *this very day*. I had no idea why! I had heard of you of course! Everybody in Banaras has heard of the European woman who has been initiated into *sannyasa*, but why didn’t I come before? Why this hurry to do it *today*, of all my busy days, the busiest? My family could not understand it. I knew of no reason at all to come here. Will you believe me when I tell you that I was *obsessed* by the idea that I MUST COME TODAY? He turned on the steps: “Well, Swamiji, after this talk I can only press you and the Boy to come over and make a stay in Banaras.”

At those words, remembrance came to me. My prayer to Lord Shiva! I had completely forgotten it! But in my prayer I had not told the Lord of Banaras that I intended to leave the Guest House very soon—that there was urgency about finding some place to stay in, *in Banaras*. *Yet he had known*.

I made the good Professor come in again and sit down, and told him the whole amazing episode of the day before. He soon arranged lengthy visits and important contacts for the Boy and me, and the Brothers, in Banaras; in fact, from his

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“unaccountable urge” to visit me that day, we were not only given excellent hospitality in Banaras, but we made there some of the most important contacts for the Brothers’ work during our whole twenty-one years in India.

At about this period I saw what seemed to be physical manifestations of one of the great Indian goddesses. I will not linger to describe her splendid visitations, but only note in passing that these gods and goddesses fulfil important functions in Hindu life. Some contact with them can leave an indelible impression, even on an outsider like myself.

Although their forms may last a million years, they are still but bubbles on the Ocean of Life. Nevertheless, we may honour the gods and goddesses, and they, protect us.

Let us take a look at ‘appearances’ reversed — that is, not someone appearing to us, but one of us appearing to others. In the following cases *I* was materialised!

An American artist from California, Miss H. C., who was on tour in India, was staying at Government House, Naini Tal, as the guest of Her Excellency the late Sarojini Naidu, then Governor of Uttar Pradesh. Naini Tal was some fifty miles from the tiny cottage secluded in the mountains, where we were spending some months at that time. Miss H. C. visited a few people in the Almora District during her sojourn at Government House, among them a Danish Holy Man — Alfred Sorensen, not a swami-who lived some distance from our cottage. He brought her to see the Brothers, tramping for miles on the rough stony paths. (I noticed, by the way, that her shoes were wholly unsuited to this kind of thing! She probably had not realised about the roadless — sometimes pathless — places that her wanderings would take her to). It gave me quite a thrill to see that dainty American girl coming up our hillside.

She had a long and uplifting talk with one of the Brothers. I only got down a few sentences, as I was too interested in observing how the Brother dealt with this charming young woman out of the blue, whose Californian ‘vibrations’ were so different to anything we had yet contacted. “Brother, I am lost!” she exclaimed, in course of their talk. She referred to the state of her mind as to belief, faith.

It is a fine thing to be lost; because only when you are lost can the real You be found! . . . A man only attains liberation when he is unconscious of himself, (i.e., loses himself in the greater Self).

They got on to the time plague, by which Americans are so beset. He said:

While in the mundane world you are in that vortex of tomorrow and yesterday — tomorrow and yesterday — tomorrow and yesterday. Get rid of ‘tomorrow and yesterday’! Live in the moment!

She spoke about mistakes.

Yes. You go through life making mistakes. but see to it that you make the same mistake only once; else experience is wasted.

We had a thrilling talk with that Brother and the attractive, unspoiled young woman, who wrote to me afterwards that she went away “on air” — that the jagged stones of the mountain paths which had hurt her, coming, were scarcely felt by her, returning.

What seemed to be an interesting experiment carried out by a Brother on me, occurred after this lady’s visit. She had returned to Government House at Naini Tal, but I, of course, knew nothing of her whereabouts at the time of the experiment. For all I knew, she might have left Naini Tal; for she and her colleagues were touring. If I thought about the matter at all, I might have imagined that she would stay on for a few days with friends at Almora. I, however, was buried in writing out and commenting on the Brothers’ teachings, and had forgotten about her; for there had also been a wandering *sannyasi* to visit us, talk with Brothers, and stay overnight, after she left. These wanderers are called ‘*pariprajaka*’.² There are a few genuine ones.

Some days had elapsed, and then the Danish friend who had escorted Miss H. C. to our retreat, visited us again and told me that he had since been to an afternoon party given by her Excellency at Naini Tal. He asked me if I had gone there. As he knew that I was living in almost complete seclusion at that time, I was surprised at his question and said, no, of course we had not left the cottage; that in any case, Naini Tal was far off over the mountains; our cottage almost inaccessible to the main road, down a pathless rocky hillside; and that, moreover, I was quite incapable of doing the rough journey there and back in a day — we could not afford a car or to stay at an hotel. “Well,” said my friend, you were definitely seen by several people, including the Governor, at the party. It could only have been you, with your fair skin, white hair and gerrua robes, so bright, and worn by no one else there. Sarojini Naidu was emphatic to me about it. As we are neighbours,” (a little matter of six or eight miles *walk*, over rough mountain paths, separated us!) “people thought we had gone there

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together and were amazed when I told them that I had not even seen you at that party! I couldn't have missed you, I told them; but *they insisted that they had seen you there.*"

In due course I received the following letter from Miss H. C., dated Government House, Naini Tal, 7th July, 1948:

"Dearest Swamiji and . . . (the Boy), .

A strange thing happened. The day after I arrived back in Naini Tal there was to be a big reception in the Government House at 5 p.m. I slept until five; a servant came up and asked or told me something which I didn't understand. I thought he was telling me the reception had started and hurriedly dressed and went in. Her Excellency met me and asked if I had seen my two visitors, "an English *mataji*" (*sannyasini*. 'Holy Women' are sometimes called '*mataji*' in India) 'and a Danish sadhu.'

"Of course not understanding the servant's Hindustani, I didn't know I had visitors."

He had been sent up, to fetch her to *us*, that is, to Alfred Sørensen and me.

"I went into the office and there was A. S., I asked him where the other person was and he said he had come alone and had seen no one else for me. At least three people were insistent that an English *mataji* had come, but A. was the only one I could find. Now the question is, did you come to Government House? Is it not strange you and A. did not see each other if you came?"

I would love to know if you came and if you did I am most sorry to have missed you. "We" (the three artists) "were most excited at the idea of you and . . ." (the Boy) "being in town but you did not materialise. . ."

Didn't I? There was then no other *sannyasini* of my Order — to say nothing of a European one — throughout the whole of India. My fair skin and white hair might have passed, but there was no other woman in the entire subcontinent who combined these with the vivid flame-colour of a *sannyasini* of the Order of Shri Sankaracharya. One thing also seems certain: I could not have got out of Government House without servants seeing me and reporting to my young friend, who was looking for me. These men are trained to that kind of thing. Under the circumstances, both materialisation and *de-materialisation whilst still inside Government House*, seem to be the only explanation.

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During the time of this party my physical body was lying in deep sleep at our cottage. I had no impression of the affair. I never bothered to enquire further. Whatever happened was not my business, it seemed.

Since I have that American lady's letter before me, I may as well put in some more of it; for it conveys the impression of an utter stranger on meeting a Brother. She continues:

"I'm sure I need not tell you the spiritual lift I received from contacting the Masters. I was full of life and happiness and surety. Life seemed worth while again." (She had laid her problems before the Brother, as most people did). "How I hope we meet again, I had such help spiritually going home the night I left your Ashram.³ I fairly flew up the hill without even being breathless."

Those hills with their boulders take some "flying up!" But she "arrived with such a happy heart . . . My joyous thanks to you both . . ."

In the year 1954 the Brothers and I made contact with the Hon. Justice and Shrimati P. B. Mukharji. He is an eminent judge of the Calcutta High Court. There were some noteworthy meetings at their home, to which he invited several legal friends. We returned to our ashram at . . . and I buried myself as usual in work at the book of the Brothers' teachings. After some time a curious thing began to happen to me on and off, at night. I am a night bird and always work best after midnight. However, whilst writing at my desk, alone in my room, I would, from time to time, *unconsciously* and very suddenly fall into sleep. I would awake, I had no idea how long afterwards — it might be minutes or hours — my pen, still in my hand, my head on the paper. I thought I was suffering from over-fatigue, until I remembered that this would have attacked me in the mornings! In due course the matter was explained by letters I received from the judge and his wife. In these they told me that I had been appearing at Shrimati Mukharji's bedside night after night, after midnight, clearly seen by her, and had been passing on Brothers' teachings to her. She wrote me that the apparitions wakened her out of sleep. The dates coincided as nearly as I could tell. Anyway, after the nocturnal visits ceased, I had no return of those queer sudden sleeps. I seem to have had nothing to do with it, but was unceremoniously, as it were, whisked out of the physical body and taken for an astral ride.'

In a letter to me dated . . . Justice Mukharji referred to your power of projection and making yourself visible before my wife across a distance of about three hundred miles from Calcutta. You not only appeared across the distance but delivered

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messages which were taken down by my wife correctly. This incident was authenticated and confirmed by you subsequently through correspondence. Visibility and audibility defeating the barriers of long distances are the dominant features . . . ”

His mistake here was to attribute the powers to *me*.

SUNSHINE AND SHADOW

PART FOUR

“THERE ARE NO BEGINNINGS AND NO ENDINGS”

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Sunshine and Shadow

Here, in the summer of 1947, we pick up the thread of our Boy's humble personal story when, after having chased off to London in disobedience to a higher voice, he rejoined my younger daughter and me at a place below Mussoorie (where Dr. Atreya had first pronounced the Brothers' teachings "*upanishadic*"). The pattern of our wanderings had always been the same — variations on the theme of the Brothers' words and works; much homelessness, suffering, and for me, at any rate, often intense inner joy.

In the autumn of that year we moved lower down, to the Dehra Dun District; and now, at last, we three seemed to be entering a final phase, and going slowly towards a place of rest. But we were mistaken.

The butcherings over the division of Pakistan and India were on, and although statements to the contrary were given in the Indian press the Dehra Dun District was severely affected. Murder broke out soon after we got there, with a thousand added horrors, in and about our particular village, though it was the same for miles around. From our little house which lay on the main road to Dehra Dun, we saw murderous Sikhs marching up and down. We heard: "When we've killed all the Muslims, we'll start on the English." They were killing the Muslims all right! One most holy *Faqir* who had spent his life healing all without exception was cut to pieces on the roadside. That was typical. We could hear the shrieks of men, women and children being burned alive in their cottages, and see neighbours who had joined in with the Sikhs in doing it, come and sit like stones on piles of stones just outside our cottage windows. Just stark stones, within a few feet of us. To see men look like that was a dreadful sight.

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The Sikh who had been my doctor (a charming man, we had thought) walked unconcernedly into our *ashram* with his arms covered in blood. “I’ve had to stop and rest a bit,” he almost apologised. “My arms are *too* tired!” Our lives might have depended on our hospitality: we didn’t offer tea.

How hard I prayed the good Brothers to protect their Boy from the hellish atmosphere all around! He was perfectly calm. We had no weapons, no telephone. There were no public vehicles except lorries full of soldiers. We waited *our* turn in the pogrom. I packed secretly. One afternoon there was a loud rapping on the door, and we thought it was the end. The Boy strode to the door; but it was help, not murder — a British Colonel with several officers. “Give me *your* account,” he said. “How long have you got, Colonel?” “As long as you need.” I told him briefly of what we had seen and heard. “Yes — all true. When can you be ready to leave?” “We are ready now.” “All right. I’ll send — *as soon as I can*”, and they were gone.

Early next afternoon we were taken away by soldiers in an armoured truck. On the way to the station, we had to pass the local *ashram* of the Ramakrishna monks, and I begged the soldiers to let us say goodbye to our friends there. Aghast and distressed, the Swamis came around our ‘cage’, too shocked for words; and through the wires, soldiers and guns, we waved farewell to those saintly men whom we were never to see again.

Somehow, with the Boy’s help, we got down to Bombay. The trains were full of fear. Murder was being done in them. We arrived with exactly two annas between us, and even this, only because the Boy, at the risk of his life, had sneaked out to sell things, while we had waited twenty-two hours for that armoured truck to fetch us. Had he not done this, we would not have been able to leave the Dehra Dun district.

At Bombay the refugee camps were not open to Europeans. The station master broke the Railway Company’s rules and allowed us to spend the night in a waiting-room. I felt very happy — *light*. I slept soundly. In the morning we called on a man whose name had been given me in the train, by a gentle Hindu who was ashamed of the way we were being treated. We were given food and fifty rupees to help us on our way. I am sorry to say that I have forgotten the names of these two kind men; but surely the Brothers have not forgotten them, or that station master!

Sallying forth again, and knowing not which way to turn, we suddenly ran into someone we knew — a poor young Scotswoman, who promptly took my girl and me into a tiny room which she shared with a friend and several most stinking cats. There

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we thankfully remained for a few days, while the Boy, equally thankfully, slept on the tiny ‘verandah’ (just a platform a foot or so off the road) in front of a dirty little shop in one of Bombay’s poor Colaba streets, right up against a latrine. Thereafter we went into a squalid Colaba boarding-house, full of doubtful people; but our host and his great Alsatian dog were very nice indeed. There my daughter suddenly decided that she must leave India. I could not blame her!

The Boy and I were now alone. We decided that the Brothers’ work must go on. The Brothers had often told people who wanted to be their disciples:

The only people we want to work with us are those who are willing to be pushed through a stone wall; and, when they get through one, to be pushed through others beyond.

After a few weeks a wire arrived from Dr. Atreya, inviting us to go to Banaras at once. He had secured “palatial premises” for us on the Banks of the Ganges. I can’t remember how we raised the money to go; but I *do* remember that the Boy ran a high temperature throughout the long train journey, and I have already told how he was well and truly seized by devils at Banaras station. We stayed in Banaras some six months, and the Brothers were more sublime than ever — the Boy, naughtier! His load, of course, had become almost intolerable; for we now had to carry on without the personal help so urgently needed by us both. The Boy did domestic chores, including cooking and shopping. He was a good cook and an excellent shopper, though he never could speak the language. I coped with the chronicle of the Brothers’ multifarious contacts and their teachings. There was endless research to be done, and I had no library. Owing to my frail health, there was little chance of getting about and studying in libraries, and, moreover, I could not go far from the Boy. However, books of the kind I needed had a habit of turning up at the right moment! The days were too short. (Years sped by on it.) One had, in addition, to look after visitors for the Brothers, and the Boy in his trances; do jobs ordered by the Brothers, and cope with the Boy’s health which was being harmed by the unnatural strain of his life among pots and pans, shopping in bazaars, etc., and which had already suffered the setbacks of severe malaria, double pneumonia, stomach ulcers, and that mad winter cleaning windows in London.

We were blessed in having a glorious task; but this thought did not help the Boy as it did me. He had some compensations, however, for our needs were simple, and he got out a good deal; in fact, his habit which he maintained throughout our lives

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together, in those years from 1947, was to wander off daily at about 5:30 until 9 or 10 p.m. during which time I was nearly always quite alone. (People rarely called when they knew that the Boy was out!) In addition, he would take a long time over daily morning shopping which could have been done in three hours twice a week. (I heard that 'he' used to spend hours on discussions with all sorts of people, in the shops, and bazaars, and on the roads. I suspected the Brothers, who probably wanted to teach more, as well as to keep the tempestuous creature off me; but I also had a hunch that much of this was the outcome of his craving for his London slum which — even had he returned to it — could never again have satisfied him).

In his personal life, the Boy had always been a lonely exile; and my company did not relieve his loneliness, for one reason, because he would not share his burdens with me. On the contrary, he constituted himself my prop and stay as when, for instance, during our sojourn in Banaras, many die-hard monks tried to make out that I was an impostor. They spread the story that Swami Triveni Puri had not initiated me into *sannyasa*. MM. Pandit Gopi Nath Kaviraj went to the saint in person to get this contradicted from his lips. The saint told him that he had given me *sannyasa* with the sacred *presa mantra*, without which the ceremony is not valid. The well-known Swami Durga Chaitanya Bharati also went to enquire from Triveni Puri, with the same result. I then asked the saint if he would give me a written statement about the validity of my *sannyasa*, for the sake of the records of the Brothers' teachings, on which I was working, and which he used to call *The Book of God*. He asked me to bring the statement for his perusal and signature.

Paper in hand, the Boy and I repaired to a great Festival on the banks of the Ganges, of which the saint was the central figure among the guests. As the Boy and I pushed through the throng, we were surrounded by hostile monks, which of course set the crowds against us. The monks piled into the saint's little room after us, and shouted impudently at the old man that he was not to sign that paper — they would not allow it. They yelled; they were menacing. They would not have dared to touch the great Swami, but I was in real danger. Some of his disciples had instigated this, and the young one who sat nearest to him was one of the ring-leaders in Banaras. The aged saint insisted that I should tell him who was responsible for this scandal, but I did not want to disgrace his young disciple, who had obviously been intimidated, and so I refused.

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Here we must bear in mind that the Boy had never lost his love of fighting; so it was but natural (and indeed, on this occasion proper) that his instinct both to protect me and to champion the Brothers' teachings, should have enabled him easily — not to say joyously! — to disperse that large undignified crowd. This he accomplished by assuming an attitude of lion-like belligerence, which produced a sudden silence among the yelling monks, as he said, softly: "Gentlemen, this is none of your business. Would you kindly leave the room? *You will not leave?* Then — I am sorry — but I will have to escort you." And so, a little *ju-jitsu* expertly administered cooled those 'holy' men's ardour to prevent a woman and a Western from getting the document signed which would scotch their lies.

Episodes of great variety and intensity were scattered over our lives together during the next nine and a half years which, as I look back on them, I see as a pattern of sunshine and shadow. I had a bitter fight for women in *sannyasa* and won it, thus opening many new ways to Indian women, who are now obtaining admission into the ancient Order. Among other blessings which should accrue in due course, is the development of a strong body of nursing Sisters who are dedicated to God in suffering humanity. The lay nursing profession is still looked down upon in India, though the need for nurses there is dire, on account of which great agonies are widespread.

By this time (1947-8) the Boy had altered considerably. He had never lost his essential boyishness and a capacity at times to look years younger than his age, but the ever-increasing strain of the Brothers' work (to say nothing of lack of nourishment and necessities, and the aftermath of his illnesses) had made him the shadow of his former self. His beautiful mouth was tense with the sufferings of the years. His eyes were as lovely as ever. When we started out alone he still possessed great muscular strength (and would amuse me by cracking apples in his palms or nuts between his thumb and forefinger), and he was still slender; but his body was bent and, when the Brothers were not with him, he often looked worn. Despite all this, he was "Pickle," our Pikey, who never grew old.

Before he had malaria, his silken dark hair had been a riot of curls. The colour and texture were still beautiful; and even now, it sometimes curled, when he would fiercely stalk off to some atrocious little barber and get a close cut, high above the

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ears. On such occasions I would tell him that he had a head like a pigeon; but my motherly exaggerations had no effect. He'd say he had "tried to paste them down," but the "the d—d things were obstinate and anyway the Brothers did not like pastes!" I did not believe him. I believed it to be a kind of anger against himself — a pitiful thing, certainly, but not vanity; for he was not aware of his person, except to be unkind to it.

He was as absent-minded as ever. One day when shaving, he dipped his brush into a pot of green paint and proceeded to administer a bright green lather' nearly up to his eyes! He had it well and truly laid on when some strangers called to pay their respects to the Brothers. The Boy went to let them in — a large Indian family dressed in their best for the auspicious event. They saw — a beanstalk in pyjama-legs, wearing a vivid green mask, with large protruding green ears, topped by a shock of wild hair, and a pair of unearthly, stony eyes! They fled.

Somebody gave him an execrable old radio set which afforded him 'relaxation' as he took it to pieces and put it together again (many hours of happy exasperation), or as he listened to, mostly, loud grinding noises whilst he twiddled the knobs with zest. Sweat would then burst out all over me. It was torture!

Thus it is no surprise that in the matter of music the Boy was a puzzle. He was not upset by those fearsome radio noises, yet he sang — badly, but in tune-in a moderately light baritone voice, and immensely enjoyed simple melodies. A Muslim boy singing a sweet old melody on our verandah moved him so profoundly that he could not bear the emotion that song aroused, and left the verandah. Pure sounds and chants sent him into trance at once; but not radio or gramophone sounds, however beautiful. The Brothers recommended me to chant sometimes in his hearing: but I refrained from doing it, fearing to gain an ascendancy over him. I realise now that I was wrong in disobeying the Brothers; I wish they had pressed me; but that is not their way.

The Brothers have an unflagging zeal for the promulgation of all true arts. This was reflected in the Boy, or perhaps was of him, anyway, he was thoroughly artistic, noises not withstanding. Put before a work of art, he gave sound criticism; especially on architecture. When, in our *ashram*, I was busy and expecting visitors, I often asked him to fix up our rooms, and he did it beautifully — except his own room, which was always chaotic. But his trunks were always tidy. (I will return to these.)

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I got to know the things that would upset him — such as synthetic smells, stale foods, effluvia of drinking places, public conveyances — and tried to avoid them; even so, difficulties cropped up, as when a Brother gave strict orders that the Boy was not to touch saucepans (base metal) for five hours before a trance and — the Boy being the cook — how could we get meals if this were carried out and how, anyway, were we to reckon the hours, since people and the Brothers came at any odd times. In such cases, I *had* to disobey and take the often devilish consequences!

The Boy had a horror of public conveyances; and I realised that, among other things, their upholsteries often adversely affected him. In addition, there was the prevalence of base metals.

He had a particular horror of tricycle rikshas. I could not make it out, until I had ridden in one several times with him — another thing he hated and often positively refused to do. Well, I noticed each time that he had a powerful effect on the *riksha wallah*. These men seemed to lose their heads when he was sitting behind them. Did they feel the power of the Brothers? Or was it superstitious fear — or merely, fear of the big, rude Englishman? For he was almost invariably rude to *riksha wallahs*, which rudeness, I further observed, seemed to be his only armour against the auric inroads of low types. (Not that all *riksha wallahs* are low. I had many friends among them, and in one town they called me “the queen of the *riksha wallahs*”, which I regarded as an honour.) For two reasons, I surmised, he would not have me with him: one was that their fear and consequent mad pace might lead to accidents; the other, his delicacy — knowing Indian customs — about riding in close contact with a woman Swami. This extreme delicacy was always present in his relations with me, public and private — except when devils intervened. (But that was *not the Boy*.)

Mention of upholstery reminds me of a devil story. During our wanderings in the Punjab, an Indian friend, unused to the ways of Westerners, even such as ours—which most Westerners regarded as of the East — invited us to make a short stay at his typical village home. We landed up in a real village; not one of those places decked out for foreign visitors in India. Despite what seemed to me as excruciating discomfort and even indecencies, I could have been happy there but for an event which made me into one big ache.

The Boy expressed a wish to go riding, and our kindly host, who on account of the Brothers, held him in high esteem, arranged for a horse. The Boy rode off into the

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jungle happily, alone. Goodness knows how he got back! One can only suppose that the nag was a paragon of discretion; for he arrived home still mounted, but no longer the Boy — just a flaming devil. I do not remember a worse one.

There we were, the cynosure of all eyes, the holy Swami and miraculous seer, whom the simple villagers were doing themselves honour to entertain. The ‘seer’ pounded upstairs — we were on the first floor — and threw himself into a corner of a flat rooftop, where he glowered at everybody, red-eyed, threatening and terrible, sitting there like an enraged baboon — a horrid spectacle and certainly one for sightseers, of which the villagers took advantage, crowding up.

I racked my brains to discover the cause. My host, ashamed before his village and now probably doubting my integrity, remained apart, silent and distressed. All through that night, the Boy roared and ramped. I begged the host to offer no resistance — to let the thing wear itself out. I tried (without much success) to curb my own feelings, remembering “that ye resist not evil” . . . Before dawn, he dropped into a natural sleep, colour returned, expression seraphic. At last, a Brother had got him!

My host — up before dawn like a true Brahmin — took my word for it that all would soon be well and, sure enough, as we watched him, the Boy awoke after a short sleep: “W’ere’s me horse?” Before I could answer, a Brother was there:

Nurth! You should not have allowed him to use a strange saddle. NEVER do such a thing again! I go now. Let him sleep.

My host understood. The entire village understood. Bless those Indian villagers!

The Boy was uncannily fearless about wild animals. Without realising it, his attitude was that of a real *yogi*. At one place where we were more or less settled for some five years, floods and deforestation had driven wild animals from the forests a few miles away, and they occasionally skirted the town in their search for new feeding-grounds. Several times we had dangerous animals in our garden, and a doctor friend shot a leopard who appeared in front of his car, some ten miles out. Yet the Boy took his cycle and rode off into the jungle, fifteen, or even twenty miles, nearly every evening at sunset, when danger may be great. Our coolie went home at five, so I was alone with my anxiety for him, but he would not be deterred. One evening, contrary to our wont, it was he who stayed at home, while I went to the local hotel to see a sick friend. I had to return just after dusk, by *riksha*, along a lonely road circling the town. As we came to a little bridge over a stream, a man who had been

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sitting there on his bicycle with one leg supported on the low parapet detached himself from the shadow and walked in front of us, so that we had to pull up suddenly. “Okay, Swamiji!” the Boy said, and added, “I saw a big animal go down towards this stream as I was riding out to meet you, so I thought I’d better not go farther, but *hang around here* until you came.”

He adored animals, with a close intimacy which drew them to him. It was his way to maul them comfortingly. He mixed his hands in our dog’s food, for instance, if they were off their feed, and put it into their mouths undaintily, which is how they like it. (He explained to me that “animals like you to be intimate about their mouths”.) To him, nothing animal was ‘dirty’. Although I had thought myself an animal lover, I realised that I was squeamish until I met the Boy, whose example cured me. White-faced, with tears in his eyes, he would tell me of some cruelty he had seen. I have known him, even when ill, to cycle around the bazaars for hours in the Indian summer sun, looking for some unhappy dog, and wretched if he missed it. (I don’t know how some British could have left their dogs in India. They knew what their fates would be.) His animal anecdotes were a joy — so fresh and ‘inside’ — mostly about animals he had known. We spent many happy hours talking about creatures, horses especially, and also boxing. These had been the two great enthusiasms of his youth.

He loved racehorses, for their own sakes, though nothing could induce him to bet. He told me that, when as a lad he worked in a racing-stable, he would go to a mare and curl up and sleep beside her and her foal whenever he felt “fed up” as he put it. Once when strolling outside Lahore racecourse, he saw a syce, inside, who had tied a racehorse to a tree and was flogging it. The Boy scrambled over the high rails, wrenched the whip out of the fellow’s hand, and avenged the poor animal. Indeed, he derived keen satisfaction from what he called “beating up” people he found ill-treating animals; and his habit was to leave the criminal incapable of inflicting further brutalities for the time being. This went on into the last suffering months of his life, when he was still going to the rescue of helpless, tortured animals on the Indian roads. It was a dangerous thing to do, for it drew angry, anti-British crowds but at such moments he reeked not of danger. Indians in cars would rescue him from the threatening people. Then he would stride in, his face pale and his eyes moist, and sit on my bed and mutter brokenly, “*I can’t bear this much longer.*” (He spoke quite good English now.)

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Sometimes our dogs wandered in when a Brother was receiving visitors; more than once our huge Alsatian put his paws on the entranced Boy's shoulders, to the horror of Indians present. The Brother quietly set him down, and when I enquired if I should send the dogs away, said, with tender dignity, **Oh no. Let them remain here.** While the teaching continued, the dogs would sit at the Boy's feet, gazing fixedly up at him, not quite fathoming the situation; for here, obviously, was their master — yet, somehow, he was not their master!

I could waste chapters telling of our efforts to find food and shelter during the years between 1947 and 1952. We not only suffered heat — but also, cold. We both felt the cold one winter in Banaras, living in a crude cottage there, more than we had ever felt it before, anywhere. There were frosts; the cottage was very damp and sunless, and there was no way of heating it. But always, amid exposure, uncertainty and exhaustion, the divine work of the Brothers went on. Packing — unpacking — living in palaces — living on floors in filthy cottages — plagued by insects and vermin — always, always, the Brothers, whose power was overwhelming. During the years from 1947 onwards they did some of their greatest 'miracles'; the greatest of all, perhaps, was keeping us alive, and the Boy — at any rate in the work — at full power.

In the early spring of 1950, we left the damp cottage, and landed up in a great well-furnished and equipped old Indian house standing in a dream-garden surrounded with towering walls. This house turned out to be situated in the heart of the celebrated brothel quarter of the Holy City which is a place of violent contrasts between the most holy and most depraved. There the Boy first showed signs of an illness which slowly gained on him — weeping eczema of both feet and ankles. We both became so weak, in fact, that we would sit and look at one another, unable to drag around and get ourselves a meal; unable to digest our food; unable even to sleep. The situation of the house, perhaps? But there are worse things . . .

Still, the Brothers taught. But I would ask them: "Hold on to us! We can't go on much more!" They held on.

Such excursions to Banaras and elsewhere had been made in the winter months, from 1949 onward. In June of that year we had been given hospitality in an *ashram* in a small town situated in a comparatively cool summer climate. By the following October our anchorless existences came to an end for a while, for we found a little

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cottage, the only one available at our price, in that little town in a comparatively good climate. The cottage was at the bottom of a long, steep hill, up which the Boy had to bicycle every time he went to market. It was close to two large churchyards; and this proximity of burial-places was more than hard on the Boy and the Brothers; yet — as if to complete the test — the town abattoir and its foul environs and unspeakable effluvia abutted on the nearer of the churchyards, so that we found ourselves in the company of death and worse than death. Old, sick animals were driven past our cottage every day, to the pitiless horde of butchers at the village around that abattoir. But despite its being regarded as the criminal *mohalla* of the town, we never suffered any external inconvenience from the proximity of those poor wretches. They were never impolite to the Boy or me. It was not *their* fault that birds of a feather were flocking together.

The tiny cottage was made of mud bricks and so unhealthy that our doctor spoke to me about it each time he called, which, alas, was often. In fact, we went from one indisposition to another but could not find anywhere else to live. Our healths were permanently impaired. I had an attack of virulent malaria. The Boy had lung haemorrhages. Yet in the place the Brothers were — if possible — greater than ever before, and the bulk of my work on the records of their teachings was done there. My tiny low room was bedroom-study and also the sole passage between the kitchen and the postage-stamp verandah, which was our dining and reception room. I was working ten hours a days while through my room tramped the Boy at all hours, back and forth, noisily, with and without devils. (There were lots of devils in that *mohalla*!)

To this hovel came Ministers of State, Professors, and others. What a crush it was — how hot! — how drenched with monsoon rain, according to the season! But nobody noticed. It was there that a Brother told a Minister to **Watch the Middle East — the uprising of the Muslim power throughout the world — not Communism. Communism is NOT the present danger. It will die out.**

This was before the Abadan oil business. The Minister, himself particularly interested in Middle Eastern affairs, disputed the Brothers' words, which he said were groundless. It was there that in the presence of the same Minister, in 1951, I got very unhappy about the annexation of Tibet by the Chinese, and a Brother said emphatically: **Do not worry over Tibet! Tibet will conquer China!** Did he mean this literally, actually, or by spiritual penetration?¹

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It is said in India that a true *sannyasi* should preferably remain in his own *ashram* but that when he wanders, he goes indifferently from hovel to palace. Without claiming to be “true *sannyasis*”, we certainly went from hovels to palaces. The latter were not necessarily better than the former. In one town, for instance, we were housed by the State Government in a vast, disused Government House. As there were no servants, and the summer sun beat upon the vast stone verandahs (there were no blinds, either), we suffered a lot there, and, for the second time, I saw the Boy collapse. My heart stood still. However, when we had finished with the highly unsatisfactory people in that town, a friend — an M.P. of the Central Government, who had witnessed our plight, and the way we had been let down in regard to the Brothers’ work there, so that we were actually stranded in that horrible ‘palace’ — paid our fares and expenses so that we could get out of it. (I wonder if the Brothers keep a golden book?) He visited us in our cottage later, with fellow M.P.’s, and told them indignantly of what we had been subjected to.

It was in this wee cottage, as I have said, that the Boy began to spit blood. I nursed him day and night. The Indian doctor was wonderful. An Indian gentleman sent some money for the Boy’s illness, and thereafter arranged for him to have fifty rupees a month. This same Indian gentleman had previously been giving me seventy-five rupees a month on account of the work I was doing on the Brothers’ teachings, and he presently arranged for me to receive this for life. Had it not been for him, we should have gone under at this time.

Very different was our ‘palatial’ experience in Calcutta, whither we went in the cool season of 1950-1 in order that I might have two or three months near libraries. We had not been able to secure a room, so the Minister of State who had often called at our cottage for talks with the Brothers arranged for us to make a short stay at Government House as guests of Dr. K. N. Katju, then Governor of West Bengal, late a Minister of the Central Government at Delhi. He put us in a large suite of rooms occupying most of the ground floor of the South-West wing, and made us very happy there. The Boy was given a big bedroom which, in the days when this had been the official residence of the Viceroys of India, had been half of a much larger room directly beneath the Viceroys’ study.

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Whilst we were at Government House, Brothers saw, among others, several of the philosophers from the United States who were attending a special Session at the University of Calcutta. I was going to say that no ‘miracles’ were done there; but the following was astonishing enough:

When we first went there I asked the Boy how he was sleeping, as I knew that he suffered in large rooms. “Pretty well,” he answered. “Only Kitchener keeps on coming to my bedside and waking me up.” “Heavens, Pikey! *Kitchener?* Do you see him, right there in the room?” “Of course I see him,” said the Boy, “and who could it be but Kitchener, with his long heavy moustache and his wooden stare?” I thought the description fitted: I had met Lord Kitchener of Khartoum many years before in London, and that had been my impression, too, especially the “wooden stare”. “But, dear,” I objected, “what on earth would bring Kitchener *here!* He’s been dead for years and he wasn’t concerned with India.” “I don’t know anything about that,” the Boy answered, “but I *do* know *there he is*, worrying me and keeping me awake every night; and I’m fed up with him.” “But what does he want, anyway?” I asked, and the Boy said disgustedly, “The fellow stands there stock still and doesn’t say a word.” (That was exactly as he had stood before me when I met him in my youth — rigid and silent as a block.) Well, that was *that*. For the time being I forgot all about Kitchener. But he turned up again later, in a most extraordinary and unexpected way, as we shall presently see.

We were worried because we had only come to Government House for a week’s stay while we looked for lodging in Calcutta; but search as we would, we could not find even a couple of tiny rooms in one of the innumerable Calcutta lanes. I was particularly upset, as if we failed, it would mean having to wait for the next cool season to carry on my research. On the other hand, I knew that there were strict rules about how long guests could stay. We had so many papers and things with us — our goods and chattels, so to speak, on our shoulders — as we had not known, when we started out, where we should land up after our week at Government House; perhaps in two empty rooms, in a sort of slum. Here we were lodged in three splendid rooms, with all meals brought to us and everything done for us by kind old British-trained servants who regarded our small Alsatian puppy as the pet of the family, and carried him about from one to another, ruining his character. *He* had no respect for Government House carpets; so at my request the enormous carpet in the Boy’s room

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had been removed, and Master Pup was put in charge of two sweepers, whom he bossed.

Meanwhile, my nerves were on edge over our situation, and I was preparing to return to our *ashram*, my work unfinished, when, towards the end of our scheduled time, the Governor sent his P.A. to our apartment, ostensibly to enquire if we were comfortable. The dilemma, and my decision to leave Calcutta, came out under his tactful questioning. He had evidently come prepared for this. “But — Mother! Why must you leave us? Are you perhaps not quite comfortable here — would you have any objection to staying on? Please tell me! I regard you as my own Mother.” I can see his fine face again as I write, and Dr. Katju, who obviously had sent him. “Objection!” I was speechless!

So it was arranged that that winter we should remain on at Government House until my Calcutta work was accomplished. “Supposing it takes weeks — ?” He interrupted me. “Well — we hope you both would not mind, and that everything will be to your liking.” So we stayed on for seven weeks. (Another entry in the Golden Book.)

During those weeks the Comptroller of the Household, the late Sir Bibhuti Mukherji, gave me a most interesting illustrated History of Government House and, to my astonishment (and I must say, extreme satisfaction) I came across passages in it which could ‘explain’ the visitations of Lord Kitchener. I determined to check on this, on the spot. I said nothing of my discovery to the Boy or anybody, but questioned the Comptroller, who told me that both halves of the partitioned room occupied by the Boy had been directly underneath the Viceroy’s study in the days when Lord Kitchener visited India. He also remarked that the Viceroy’s desk had probably stood just over where the Boy’s bed had been, and that he might even have had a desk where the bed now stood in the Boy’s room — which was then part of a private, garden room. The Boy was unaware of all this; but he was very agitated. Kitchener apart, no wonder his sleep had been disturbed; for of the desk in the room immediately above, I found later that Lord Curzon wrote, “From the same desk in that house all these men (the Viceroys of India up to 1912) issued the orders that first created and then consolidated an Empire.”²

As we were about to end our visit to Government House, I had to leave the matter to be dealt with when we got home. But there was much else to do on our return, the book was put on a shelf and again Lord Kitchener was forgotten. Only in 1956, after

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the passing of deep waters, did I look for it again and find that, together with other books of mine, it had apparently been stolen, while the waters were upon me.

In the summer of 1958, I bethought me of my friend Professor Nirmal Kumar Bose, who used to visit us at Government House, and wrote to him, asking him if he would look up the book there and post me the relevant passages. He was informed that Her Excellency the present Governor would have another copy of the presentation volume sent to me. It came in due course, but to my dismay I found that the references to Lord Kitchener were not in it! I concluded that this was perhaps a later edition; but in it I found what was also in the first copy I had seen, the statement that the book is based on the late Lord Curzon's two-volume work on *British Government in India*. I wrote off at once to the Times Bookshop, asking them to get me, if possible, a first edition copy of the work. They did. I consulted the index. *All was confirmed.*

Here are the facts, culled from Lord Curzon's book. He says that the South-west wing (on the ground floor of which we had been lodged) was always occupied by the Governor-General and his wife (Vol. I, p. 93), and that what he calls "the Viceroy's work room . . . has witnessed discussions as agitated and decisions as heavily charged with fate as any private apartment in the wide circumference of the British Empire." (Vol. I, p. 118.)

Plans of the house are before me as I write, and this is the room exactly above the bedroom which was occupied by the Boy. Writing of the Viceroyalty, Lord Curzon remarks (Vol. II, p. 52): ". . . it is well known that Lord Kitchener, who greatly desired it, was passed over in 1910, in the main for that reason" (that he was a military man) and later he says (Vol. II, p. 95):

"When the late Lord Minto retired in 1911, it is well known . . . that Lord Kitchener desired greatly to fill the vacancy. His appointment was said to be favoured in the highest quarters, and not to be looked upon unfavourably by the head of the then Government. But the Secretary of State, Lord Morley, based not on personal grounds but on the broadest considerations of political expediency, was invincible) and Lord Kitchener was denied his supreme ambition."

Perhaps the dead Kitchener was still dreaming that he was with Lord Minto in his study, sounding the Viceroy about his chances for the Viceroyalty? We cannot know. But one of the Brothers' jobs is to give rest to restless spirits; and in this instance the Boy suffered as usual: sleep almost deserted him; he had curious sicknesses which I

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did not recognise and which H.E.'s doctor could not help, and he was simply *not there* most of the time. I was glad to get him back to the *ashram*.

Was Kitchener perchance trying to tell the Boy, whom he had apparently found to be a seer, something about the mystery surrounding his death? I can only surmise that) if he was, the Brothers will have blotted it out for the Boy, as a disturbing factor, and at the same time freed Kitchener from his restless dreams. (There is another interesting point: the Boy was *seeing* and not entranced; he had his eyes wide open, just as when he saw Ramakrishna and me.)

We had a dangerous break before getting home; it was also an illustration of the vicissitudes experienced by the Brothers' people. We found ourselves in a small house in one of those lifeless wastes which sometimes pollute the environs of cities. A friend had lent us two rooms there, to which, when obtained, we repaired with all urgency. While we were there, the Kitchener experience was repeated, but this time the apparition was a different man, and spoke. The Boy told me that Gandhi appeared beside his bed at night and poured out his feelings about India since his death.

Our rooms in that house measured about ten feet square or less, and opened on a narrow verandah where we cooked on a brazier. Several other tiny rooms opened on that tiny verandah. Mine first; then the Boy's; then a room in which lived someone who was down with smallpox (the husband or brother admitted it). I forget the rest — except that each room opened into the next, with wide-gaping chinky doors. There was absolutely no protection from infection. (We were not vaccinated.) The Boy's bed was within a few feet of the woman's chinky door. Even her washing and bedding hung along the narrow verandah, and everyone knows what *that* means in a smallpox case! We were only a few feet from this, germs flapping at us. I got out my homeopathic box and we dosed ourselves with smallpox prophylactic. It was several days before we could leave; but we escaped infection.

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CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Deep Waters

In about 1951 I made a few notes on our daily lives, which I now transcribe:

“Outwardly, we lead narrow, thwarted lives, without leisure and the physical calm which this kind of work demands, to be denied which is to court breakdown.

“There are plenty of people about us but no companions in the work. Who can know what this hard, circumscribed, monotonous life, means to servants of the divine Brothers? We feel frustrated in their work; we reach people, but not often those who most need the Brothers. (Once a Sikh friend, sitting on our verandah with its long vistas to the horizon, opened wide his arms and exclaimed: ‘Out there — far out there — should be full of a vast crowd, listening to this! And the Holy One has poured it all on me — *on me.*’)

“I am weary of being preached at by people who grasp all they can from the Boy but would not give him a cup of water.

“ ‘Why don’t the Brothers protect their instruments?’ they ask; but the fact is that these preachers cannot realise how much we are protected, as evidenced by the mere facts that we live on and are not out of our minds! Most people have fantastic ideas about the powers and limitations of the Brothers. The Brothers, for instance, cannot be expected to alter the vibrations of modern life just to accommodate their servants. The Brothers have to take first things first: they must not deflect the *karma* of the world without mankind’s consent, though they may teach and exhort. The force needed by them to control the Boy; to and get these teachings out, by the help of an invalid, is stupendous. In addition to this — apart from us — *they have vast works to do*. There must be a limit to the powers of even great Brothers. (Even Jesus ‘did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief’.)¹ They do works mighty enough, under the circumstances. Moreover, they are not actuated by sentimentality, even over those they love, and so the preservation of the Boy — or of me, for that matter — becomes a secondary thing when it is clear that the world has no use for such as he — would even harass, afflict and malign, him, as recent public utterances of a celebrated Indian statesman against seers and the like have shown. Would it, then, be proper for the Brothers to turn aside from their general work for the world in

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order to save their Boy for such a world? This ‘saving’, against overwhelming odds, is not their province.

“If people don’t want the Boy, he will die. Up to a point, the Brothers have attempted to save him. But the strains and hardships he has suffered, in addition to long years in the East, are slowly breaking that unique instrument. Looking over this life of his up till now, I can see that even the ‘coarse’ uniform — the ‘base’ body as someone suggested it is — has not proved a strong enough **buffer between this soul and the world**. I bow my head before that holy Power which enables the Boy to continue to teach at a high level, and to succour the needy and suffering, while he himself is both needy and suffering.

“How well he works to help me! It is all against the grain, but he keeps on, unremittingly. All the meals ‘arrive’; the animals are fed; fires, kitchen work, washing, marketing and a thousand other services are done so that my researches on the Brothers’ teachings can go on. Our help is a rough coolie for garden and sometimes a woman for a few days. But they all run away sooner or later, and when they do, the Boy has to draw the water, etc. The well is a long, long way off . . . Oh! the unrelieved strain on him! Drip, drip, drip, wearing down body and soul. Watching this — helpless — wears me, too. But I have the teachings; the beauty of ancient and some modern books always before me, and the living voices of our Brothers. I have memories, too; but *what has he?*

“He is getting more and more wonderful, on the one hand; and seems to be breaking up, on the other. The effects of malaria linger. His nerves are going to pieces; his stomach ulcer troubles him; that wretched eczema is spreading up his shins. He *will* go on cycling — his only outlet, I suppose.

“This cottage is not right for the Brothers’ work . . . God grant we find another place! How many more places?

“The Boy is meticulously honest about money. He has never drawn upon our joint account, though I’ve often begged him to., but asks for a few rupees pocket money from me now and then. Five rupees, perhaps. He will not let me make him an allowance. If he gets any money, he puts it in the joint purse. Yet dependence is agony to him. People who’ve been sponging on the Brothers plague me to ‘make him go out to work’. Apart from the insult — as if I could ‘make him’ do anything! — it is outrageous. My problem, on the contrary, is to *prevent* him from such folly. These people torture the Boy with their cruel advice; it will kill him if it continues; for he is a

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hundred times more sensitive than the normal man, whom it would nevertheless torture.

“Alas! He imagines that he still possesses his old strength, and I do not disillusion him; but this is pitiful . . .

“We are under strict orders from the Brothers to keep our real work unnoticed, as far as we can, and to appear as ordinary as possible. (Yet they permit me to work on their book. I suppose they know their own plans.)

“All these years he has kept his trunks packed for England, poor Lamb! He leaves out a few days’ necessities; and when he is extra homesick he takes out clothes, paws them over, and re-packs them. I pretend not to see . . . This nostalgia for England is mixed up with his wish to get a job, and ‘not be dependent on you’. Of course he is not dependent on anybody. I weary of telling him that there is no other man in the world today who can do what he is doing — that if he takes a job he will not be able to go on with the work, and will betray the Brothers and unknown millions, perhaps, for whom their teachings are a vital necessity. I tell him: ‘Are you not looking after me, a semi-invalid? Paid people could not do what *you* do. Pike, I owe my life to you, and yet you go on talking this nonsense. You have nothing that makes life endurable. Please consider: it is *we* who are dependent on *you*.’ But he will not listen. This has become an obsession. *Something besides devils has got into the Boy. What are the Brothers trying to do with him?*”

While I was writing those notes, my heart often missed a beat. We Swamis are not stones, as the great Vivekananda said when people were astonished because he wept bitterly over his sister’s death.

The Boy often assured me that sex did not bother him. That was probably true; but sex is not just a physical thing, and my view was that, humanly speaking, he was starved and repressed. Of course, against this one had to put the fact that his bodies were the Brothers’ much of the time, and hence often impervious to the trials of ordinary mortals; but the Brothers often warned me: **Unless he has some personal life, the strain may be too great for him.**

I was some twenty years older than the Boy. Our love was that of two lonely pilgrims whose feeling for the goal of their adventure and for one another was one and the same. He told me several times, speaking of that love in his straight, reserved way: “Swamiji, this is the real thing.” My rejoinder could only be a poor “Yes — I

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know”, but I secretly prayed that he might leave this cruel world before I did, and thus be spared the agony of trying to carry the burden of his holy gift alone. Had we met under other conditions, we might have been outwardly — as indeed we were inwardly — great lovers.

The Boy was not an emasculated creature. One aspect of him, as least, was thoroughly virile, pugnacious, violent, passionate. And my own personality is thoroughly feminine. Though old, and often ill, I was at this time still extraordinarily young in body and mind, to the oft-expressed surprise of my doctor. It was the Brothers’ doing, of course. They bouyed me up. I had come to love the Boy with all my being. He was the most wonderful thing that life had ever brought to me or that I might hope to meet again in lives to come. Our souls were wholly united, and our disparities were effaced in our ineffable love. I would have given *all* to give him — health and peace of mind; but something beyond me held me back, I think I felt that I could not give him what — despite his denials — I knew he so desperately needed, without dishonour; though there was nothing “goody-goody” in this attitude. I had no qualms about sex, but only — strongly — about sex in this or any context which defames essential chastity; and he was a truly chaste man. He never made demands, though we lived in close proximity, without even a servant in the house, for nearly ten years. I never told the Boy why I had decided against sex; *but he knew* and understood. His silence was unbroken, except for those few words about “the real thing, Swamiji”; and our intimate daily relationship was perfect.

Did this man who had no hope of the fulfilment of his great love find solace in other contacts? He did not. To satisfy my heart I kept watch on him. People told me of his exploits during his long outings. They were just innocent outlets.

When we were staying in Calcutta in February, 1949, he left a letter for me when he went out one day, which gives a picture of his personal struggle:

“Dear Swamiji . . . I know that your outlook on these matters is of the very widest and soundest. . . . Please do try to see what I am up against in myself” (of course I saw!) “besides having to stand veiled jibes from all sorts of people.

“I have had it tough, and you have had it tougher still. . . . Why does Nature play such havoc with us when we do our very best to hold on to true values? . . . You have your mental and spiritual domain . . . but I? — I have only the town to go to, to sink my unhappiness into . . .

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“Sometimes I get so very tired of it, of people, of their lack of understanding. . . . Your unhappy. . . .”

We were in Calcutta, hence his reference to “the town”; but he led a blameless life, as everybody knew. After such spells of misery, he always returned to his valiant fight. But at the time of which I am writing — the early fifties — his chronic complaints, bronchitis, stomach ulcer and eczema, were plaguing him, besides which he had frequent attacks of fever, the cause of which we could not trace. Nevertheless, there were memorable meetings in Calcutta and Banaras, and the usual hearings, etc.; but I did not like his looks.

At last, in the autumn of 1953, we found an ideally beautiful large cottage, standing in some three acres of ground, with far rural views on three sides. My younger daughter and her husband promptly rented it for the Brothers’ work, which was and is dear to them. A friend gave us some furniture and *khas-khas* blinds for our big windows. Another provided fans. Soon we purchased a small refrigerator — our first in India. The place was full of peace: wild doves (which soon got tame); lovely birds, which also got tame; great blossoming trees — *champak*, *asoka*, acacia, jacaranda and many others; gorgeous liches and mangoes. With the help of a coolie, I soon had the garden shipshape and a riot of flowers. The place was perfect! After all our vicissitudes, the Brothers must have been glad in that heavenly spot; for they love Nature, and in gardens made with love they can rest. So they rested there; and many people must have felt their presence, for they would ask me: “May we come and sit in your garden? When we get inside the gate, our burdens fall off our shoulders; our troubles become as broken cobwebs.”

The one drawback to this *ashram* was that it was isolated, so that the Boy’s ministry was to a great extent curtailed. Notwithstanding this, I thought we had at last found our corner, and so did the Boy; he told me that he found peace there. Yet this was illusory, for soon he was fretting, fuming, and his health steadily deteriorated. Now, at last, trances tired him, so the Brothers came rarely, and hardly ever to me alone, except to give an occasional brief order. The Boy’s storms increased to frequent hurricanes, but he kept on with all his chores.

Apart from his usual attacks of bronchitis and stomach ulcer, he was suffering badly with varicose veins; but he refused doctors, refused *rikshas* instead of cycling, and refused vitamin injections, or any other help, on the plea of economy. “Money

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must be found for getting to England,” he would mutter. At the same time, he was deeply agitated by the thought that I would not be able to get on with my part in the Brothers’ work, if he “gave in”.

Eventually, with the help of a young Indian doctor, I got him to go to an American Hospital some eight miles away, where in September, 1954, he submitted cheerfully to having nine portions of veins removed from his legs, with only a local anaesthetic, watching the operations with keen interest. He was soon home again and to our relief the eczema cleared up, as the young doctor had said it would. But the mysterious daily fever which he had had since the beginning of 1954 went on. His strength failed. He became a mere shadow. Our own dear doctor anxiously pleaded with him to submit to two weeks of tests at the best-equipped hospital in Calcutta, but he turned a deaf ear, and we were helpless, for such tests as he required were not available nearer. *It now looked almost as if he wanted to die.* There had never been a doubt, since we landed in India in 1935, that he was desperately homesick. Yet at this stage of his life, when he thought he was pining for England, I knew that he was sick for “the land of Beulah beyond the delectable mountains”.

While he was in this state, after his operation, and still in bed (on and off, because he kept up his household chores), he astounded a Scottish businessman who used to spend a weekend with us now and then. He came several times before he actually met the Brothers. I remember his first exclamation when the Boy, a weak, sick one, suddenly turned into a strong, resilient Brother before his astonished eyes. There was a pause. Then the quiet, authoritative voice: **Well, my Boy, have you any questions?** “God bless my soul!” breathed our friend. **You need not ASK for this** was the quick rejoinder; and then followed two great talks on the world situation, embracing especially China and Africa. We forgot the sick Boy!

This gentleman, who is the Managing Director of the Indian branch of a well-known British firm, wrote to me after that week-end:

“. . . I was most profoundly impressed by my two meetings with the Brothers, and have been thinking a great deal about what they said and about the manner in which we few are privileged to hear them. It was, as you know, my first experience of any tangible communication with anyone not firmly planted in this mortal world. Perhaps I am wrong even in saying this, for the Brothers I heard

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were certainly there, speaking before me, though I could not, like you, see them. . . .”

Some weeks later, amid the ever-increasing illness of our Boy, the Brothers brought a difficult business meeting of this gentleman’s firm to a triumphant issue.

Now I began to be haunted by a black cloud which I could not reason away. A sense of doom hung over me. There was nothing in our lives, it seemed, to warrant this; yet, amid the radiant beauty of the place in which we lived, amid the Brothers’ continuing — if less frequent — ministrations, there it was, a dark foreboding of calamity. I often asked the Boy if he felt it, but he always answered: “I feel nothing.” Month followed month. It held me inescapably.

I was too busy to brood, nor did I try to throw it off. The winter of 1954 found us in Calcutta and elsewhere. By this time the Boy had been through a horrible attack of shingles in the head. He *bore the attack alone*, rather than distress me. He would not see any doctor. He endured such acute agony that the scars left on his forehead were immediately reproduced on mine, where they have remained ever since. When at last I called in our doctor, he exclaimed: “He should have been under morphia.” His recovery was astoundingly quick (the Brothers, I supposed), and he went straight on with their work and his chores. His storms’ naturally, were further increased in frequency and fury at this time. I suppose he rebelled when it seemed he could bear no more. He had too great a capacity for suffering! I was accustomed to it: I won’t say ‘hardened’. I tried to remind both him and myself of the Brothers’ teaching for the bewildered and suffering. I only had an intuition of doom. Well, I would try to endure all, **from moment to moment**.

The Boy never remained worked up without a reason. He was now battering at me to do something the meaning of which was found by me only three years later. He would rage at me for not sending him back to London at once, terrifying everyone within earshot (with some exceptions mentioned before).

“What can we do? Walk through the sea?” I would plead. “We have no money for the trek; no place to live in, if we got there, and no way of earning money there.”

“If you don’t get me out,” he would say, “I’ll be carried out feet first. I tell you, this place is killing me. But you don’t see it — you *won’t* see it!” I saw it, right enough, but he was unreasonable: we were marooned in our lovely cottage and garden. London might have been on another planet. There was nothing for it but to

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“keep on keeping on”. I told him so a hundred times; but it was as if he, too, would not see it.

Apart from this obsession that we should return to England, there is no doubt that the world had entered into our Boy’s soul and hurt him beyond curing in this life. Help given; lives, perhaps, and souls saved; families re-united; students successful; artists inspired — all, unknown to him, the living tool for this worthy labour in the Masters’ field. He would not have been the simple human creature he was, had he remained unmoved by this sustained obliteration of his being. Surely he had offered this sacrifice with all his generous heart, and as surely, when inevitable pain came, he cried out. Now in his early fifties, he was a very unhappy man. He had begun to feel the backwash of mistrust, greed, cynicism, treachery, jealousy, hate, scorn, ingratitude and ridicule which had poured on him for years. I had tried to hold off these currents; but when his superb physique had become weakened by illnesses and long hardship, the strain began to tell; with pain I realised that he was beyond my helping. Who could have suffered more exquisite tortures than such a one, whose mechanisms were super-receptive? As with most of us, the comfort of his friends, who — though mostly unknown by name — were many, was obliterated by the darts of his enemies. His soul was so ardent and sincere, his mind so childlike, that he was unable to cope with the physical and mental pain which lay upon him. Nor could he fight with his Masters’ weapons; nor could the Brothers fight, for that would have infringed the Law. Nor would they, it seemed, obliterate his suffering; for that honour was part of his discipleship.

The climax came early in 1955 over a case, the moral suffering of which broke him. (It is unfortunate that I am not at liberty to publish the details of this case; the day may come when the facts can be published — facts which would reveal the Boy in a very high light. At present I can say nothing, except that it did not concern any act of the Brothers, or anything which could possibly be construed as discreditable to the Boy’s character or mine.)

He wilted. Deep melancholy settled on him. His will was immense, but he had received *what appeared to be* a mortal blow, and from now on that will turned away from this life, though not from me, for whom his love increased with his affliction. He shunned me, though, and became morose and taciturn, except for tragic outbursts — moments when he changed his plea and implored *me* to go back to England alone,

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and leave *him* to whatever Fate had in store for him: “*Go home! Leave me! Get on with your part of the work. My work is done. I have nothing to live for. I want to die!*” Such outbursts would be accompanied by spells of unutterable anguish, as if he were being torn to pieces, his vast love for the Brothers shining out withal, though he would not speak of them. What he suffered, I suffered, too.

Of course I refused to leave him, even for the sake of the work which, perhaps, I still had to do. In this, at least, I saw clearly, and felt the Brothers’ approval.

At times he was so profoundly depressed that I feared his mind would give way; but I learned from our Indian doctor that the Boy’s body was full of poisons, and that much of this depression was pathological. It was a vicious circle! World-weariness, home-sickness — and now this false shock which, alas, he took too deeply to heart. His was the wholeness of a child’s grief. The tragedy lay in that this thing turned out to be largely false — a shot in the dark of ignorance, not really blameworthy, which had found his heart, so that he became suddenly aimless, stranded and wrecked. It did not find mine; so I laid my heart on the shelf, so to speak, until such time as life, perchance, would allow me to pick it up again. (That time came; but too late for my Boy.)

I had nursed him on and off for a year or so. From now on, I nursed him, without help, practically day and night, besides doing many of his chores.

If only I could have taken him out of himself! The old radio set was broken. We had no car. He had no interests except in Bow; which he had re-visited, and had struck blank where old Bow should have been; at any rate, he had not had time during his short visit to understand the new London. So he brooded on memories of his people as he had known them — memories of shades, which but increased his nostalgia for England, and rendered unbearable the grief of his idea that he had wasted all those years of sacrifice in India, in order that I might compile the Brothers’ teachings and now that I — whose life might end soon — would not even go to England and complete the job he had lived for. Poor child! Poor me, too — for now I could see plain sense in his sorrows. He saw clearly that there were no openings in India for my part of this work; and yet I refused to leave him! He had faced the fact that even if by a miracle we could have obtained our fares, we could not have maintained our two selves in England. So he made up his mind that I must go — alone.

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One mood led to another. He now believed that his whole life had been in vain. He was inconsolable.

Half of him wanted to live in order to help me: the other half, to die. Either way — as he saw it — England was impossible. So, then, we were failing the Brothers! About this last he became desperate. He tried to get help from England, but none came. His letters, “written in blood”, were not answered. He watched for answers like a stricken animal, and never ceased to hope for them until he ceased to breathe.

He scarcely spoke of his torn heart even to me, his nearest and dearest. Professor Jones had once written that the Boy was “truly great”. That greatness showed more than ever now. He was, in addition, obsessed with the idea of saving me from suffering. He agonised over me. He was broken. . . I was filled with dismay. I could no longer speak, as of old, with the Brothers; for I had gleaned that they were saving his strength, though to what purpose I knew not. One thing I *knew*: they would surely help both of us when or if necessary; but they had rarely spared us when it came to doing their work. He acquiesced in that attitude, wholeheartedly, to the end.

It was awesome. With my Christian background, I felt that this long-drawn agony of the Boy was his crown.

The following summer he developed a painful swelling in the right knee, but refused to have the knee drained, or to go to Calcutta for a thorough overhaul. Was there a plan behind these refusals to take any help? The Brothers continued to teach and help others, but gave me no hint about him. As their humble disciple, I concluded that this test had to be faced alone by both of us. We had to learn to walk in the spirit of *their* world.

His outbursts were terrible, and often, alone in our *ashram* with him at night, I thought he would kill me. Always those dreadful words: “*I want to die!*” (No, he was not mad. just good Indian suffering as only great souls can.) I had only our doctor to turn to. Even my younger daughter and her husband were now at the opposite end of India, preparing to go to Africa, and anyway my letters made no impression on them. It was clear that nobody would believe that anything could go wrong with the Boy! My other children were absorbed in their own affairs.

The garden was my solace. I went there often, alone, and called aloud to him who had once come and told us that he was the Comforter of the forlorn. Daily, nightly, I lifted wide my arms and prayed aloud, in our heavenly garden, ablaze with thousands

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of flowers and warm, rich scents and fruits; among the wild doves and creatures of perfect faith; and again, in the moonlight, among myriads of dazzling white, perfumed night-flowers, with tears running down, I called to him and to all the Lovely Ones to put an end — if it *might* be — to the Boy's misery and my sorrow — and returned into the house to find him with his poor head in his arms, weeping: "*Leave me! Leave me! MY work is done — I do not want to live!*"

I would tell him that God would find a way: "Our work and our lives all end when the hour strikes. Let us not fight Destiny, darling! We are ever in God's keeping." But I got no response. He was sick, sick . . . My beloved Boy would shut himself away whilst I carried on with endless work and continued to cry aloud my lonely prayers.

Thus, time passed. The Brothers came seldom; *but taught at the same level; wrought as be fore.*

In the midst of all this, some pleasant things happened in our *ashram*, as when a car packed full of monks from a big Tuberculosis Sanatorium, some miles distant, appeared unexpectedly at our gate one evening. The Boy's illness had reached the stage when cycling was no longer possible, so his evening excursions had long since been given up. The friendly visit of these disinterested men cheered him no end; so, as I hustled to find food and drink for the Swamis, it was almost the old 'Pike' in his Pikey glory, with more than a touch of the playboy of yore, who cleared the big verandah with their help and gave a display of our dogs' feats of skill with the ball, to the delight of our visitors, who might have been a pack of schoolboys, instead of a company of dedicated and austere men, given over to uttermost renunciation, who were daily offering their lives in nursing the dread disease which is still rampant in India. Their ochre robes wrapped about their thin bodies, their bare feet and shaven heads, their merry laughter and innocent fun, made us happy. Here was joy amid death and disaster — true joy, not escapism. The Boy thrilled to it.

The dogs were thrilled too, playing with their master once again; his hands had not caressed them for so long. They knew that something special was expected of them, and rose to the occasion. Tea, ambrosial garden fruits and bread and butter were then consumed, whilst we talked, as a matter of course, on subjects which would have provoked from average intelligent Westerns, had they been present, enough waves of blank amazement and blind incredulity to sink a ship-load of Apostles! This blissful

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converse of those who are trying for the real life is called in India ‘*satsang*’ — the society or company (*sangha*) of those who live in the harmony of the Self, the Divine Ground (*sat*).

The Boy’s illness was no better in the late autumn of 1955; the weakness of the fever and the torturing pain in his knee went on; but it seemed to me that at last there was some answer to my prayers. His spirits revived considerably. He faced life again. The emblem or symbol of this was—chickens ! He became fired with the idea that we—together—could earn our way home. (I was careful not to remind him of the problem of how to exist when we got there.)

His maternal grandfather had been a farmer, and from him the Boy had picked up considerable knowledge of poultry and livestock. We bought a small incubator and between us (I did the heavy work, as he was now lame) started a chicken farm. There was plenty of space there for it. Of course, this was an outrageous thing for a Swami to be mixed up in; for it was in the nature of business. However, ends do sometimes justify means, and my conscience was not troubled, though some Hindus held up their hands in horror. Soon, most of the farm was in my care, under the Boy’s guidance, as he was too weak even for light work. My funny business trait came to our aid, and quite soon I had created a creditable chicken-farm, and secured enough advance orders for eggs to make the future hold passages for two to London a real possibility. It was a strange and—for me—strenuous interlude, for I was nursing the Boy as well as the chicks.

He would sit among his birds for hours. Only once was there a *contretemps*, when he came to me agitatedly, holding out his hand with a tiny dead ball of fluff in the palm. “I have killed one of the chicks,” he groaned. “What happened, Pickle?” “I stood on it. My bad foot gave way. Oh, I’ve killed the poor baby,” and he shut himself in his room for the rest of the day.

I can see now that in that winter and spring of 1955-6 the Brothers made a last bid to save their Boy. His life hung on our returning to London. But it was not to be. I did not tell him, but—apart from the chickens—not one avenue had opened up, that we might go back, singly or together.

DEATH OF THE BOY

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Death of the Boy

By the autumn of 1955 the Boy was incredibly ill. It was indeed a case of “he healed others, himself he could not heal”. For it was at about that time that one of the greatest of the healing ‘miracles’ was done: I refer to the case of the Indian student in the United States. His malady wore him from some fourteen stone to ten stone eight. There were times when I had to nurse him on the floor where he had fallen; he was unable to get to his bed, unable even to be moved on to a mattress on the floor.

Just after one of these attacks, a lawyer, who had met the Brothers some months before at Justice P. B. Mukharji’s house in Calcutta, arrived one morning at the *ashram* and asked to see a Brother. Things had reached a point where I sent people away without consulting either the Boy or the Brothers. (In those months I never requested a Brother to speak to me on any matter, however urgent.) I told the visitor that the Boy was ill and must not be disturbed, but he was insistent. He said that he had come all the way from Calcutta, about thirteen hours’ journey; but I explained again that the Boy was very ill and refused to inform him of the visitor. Yet he would not be put off. He said he was in great trouble about a friend, who had been staying with people in our vicinity, and had gone with them on an excursion on which he had simply disappeared. The lawyer thought it inadvisable to go to the police, since the missing man was a brother of one of the Ministers of a State Government, and his family wanted to avoid publicity.

I managed to send him away; but he turned up again next morning, and pleaded with me for two hours or so. I told him that this case was no more urgent than many others, and that we could not sacrifice the Boy. I was utterly weary; for the Law Minister of the Government of our State was also on our door step day after day, with his bodyguard and friends. He would wave in before breakfast, and harass me to let him see the Boy.

That lawyer came yet again the next morning. I like him much; he is a true seeker, able and gentle-minded. Still, I could not help him, and I implored him to desist.

While he continued to importune me, there was a noise in the doorway — someone had fallen against it. Then the Boy, wasted and wan, staggered on to the

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verandah, entranced. I ran to support him to his chair, and a Brother spoke briefly: **We must not hold the Boy. I have come out for the sake of our Nurth, the Swami. We have been looking into this matter. Your friend is all right. He will arrive back here in four or five days' time. He is now on his way, taking it by stages. Do not worry. Do not disturb the Boy. I go!** He was gone on the instant, and the Boy limped away without noticing us.

I forgot all about this business, but some days later, when I was busy preparing for our weekly distribution of milk powder and *ghee* to about a hundred families of underpaid clerks and others — "a gift from the people of the USA to the people of India" — the garden coolie announced that several ladies had arrived and wanted to speak to the Boy and me. I asked someone to inform them that we were not available. The ladies understood, but sent back a message to explain that they were of the family with whom the lost man had been staying, and had come to offer thanks (how few did that!). He had returned to them, safe and sound, exactly as the Brother had predicted.

The Boy was so sensitive that his physical body seemed to be dying under the impact of his mistaken grieving and real anxieties. As he became more ill, his chicken-farm was no longer an anchor, and his anxiety as to what would happen to me if he died consumed him. He had become such a mass of hurt and bewilderment that my prayers were stronger than ever: "If it be the holy Will, let him be taken into peace! O good Brothers, save him from more pain. Christ! Refuge! Take his life, if that be permitted." For myself, in grievous sorrow, I asked for patience, and it was given me. (Perhaps, deep down, I believed that a miracle would yet happen; but doctors told me that if the Boy recovered he would need nursing for about two years and would possibly be on crutches.) Rarely did anyone who visited the *ashram* care to serve the stricken Boy or the Holy Ones. He was dying: they went on grabbing. Naturally, we told nobody of our personal position; but true affection finds things out. Being a Swami I had no social connections, nor could I assert my personal claims. How I longed to be able to talk with some friend who had known the Boy from the beginning! No such friend was at hand but only, in the main, a troubling crowd that sneered at the waking Boy, and fawned on him, sleeping.

Owing to my almost total preoccupation with nursing and domesticities, my part of the Brothers' work was in jeopardy, and it became plainer than ever that whatever chance there might be for the teachings of the Brothers to reach the general public now lay in my getting away from my Boy. He continued to rage against my

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determination not to leave him when he was in such straits; clearly, in this supreme test, he valued the Brothers' work more than my feelings or his own survival.

Meanwhile, I tried all means to cure him, but everything failed; the worst obstacle being the Boy himself, who steadfastly, and even savagely, refused all offers of help from doctors, and all attempts to nurse him. In any case, the doctors told me that, unless he would consent to go to the Calcutta hospital, they would be working in the dark, especially about the agonising and swollen knee which defied all treatment.

I began to feel that he was deliberately courting death. The wild elephant was shattering its house, and the Brothers did not stop it. I am sure they *could* have stopped it. Did they, then, want to take him off the stage? Were they allowing things to drift on, in order by such delay the better to school our hearts? It would be in their nature thus to deal with our situation. They would preserve what they could, and thereafter go forward in their sureness and mercy, with what remained — if anything.

It dawned on me, moreover, that the Brothers intended to let him go through this *kama* of love and suffering alone, for his own benefit; for beneath the tornado was the soul of a disciple. This thought comforted me; for it is good to pay debts, and behind these black shadows perhaps lay sunshine. Fortified from some inner source, I hung on from day to day, from chicken feed to chicken feed, from crisis to crisis — perplexity to perplexity — with a strength beyond my own.

One afternoon towards the end of March, 1956, the saintly lady surgeon from the American Mission Hospital, eight miles outside our town, who had operated on the Boy in 1954 for varicose veins, came to see me. I put the medical case before her and begged her to join me in my prayers that if it were God's will the Boy might decide to go into her hospital. She is a Christian of great power, and she promised; and I knew that if he went to their poor little hospital, she and her doctor husband would do all they could, although without the necessary apparatus. "Here is a hospital," my Indian Brahmin doctor had told me, "which is run in the right spirit."

Next morning the Boy had that peculiar glint in his eyes which denoted the presence of a Brother, though he was not entranced. Without preamble 'he' calmly announced that he was going straight off to the American Hospital. I knew that calm, and that changed voice. He had even packed his bedding and suit-case before I put in an appearance, and would not wait (the Brother was obviously pushing him), but sent the coolie for a *riksha* and left at once.

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I went back into the *ashram*. It was like a vacuum. My mind was too numb even to feel relief. For days I tidied things mechanically.

The stage had been set for a new Act, but I did not realise this at the time. (A new lot of chicks, too, were coming joyfully out of their eggs — looking at me with their bright beady eyes, as if to say, “We rely entirely on you.” They were very beautiful. The Boy would rejoice over them.)

I was not able to visit the Boy for weeks, because there was no responsible person to look after the chickens in my absence; besides, I was too weak to do some sixteen miles there and back, in a shaky *riksha* over much unmetalled road. But he was in good hands, and it would be no fault of those doctors if they failed.

At the time, he wrote to a friend in England:

“Weight has gone down to 7 stone 7 from 10 stone 8 Yes Not so good. It is certainly time I lef India for good If that is, the financial situation will ever permit — I feel that it is the only solution to my survival.”

(I have given the errors, which show the stage he had then reached in literacy.)

He was now receiving every assistance that that poor little place could offer, and when I talked to him on the telephone he was always enraptured by the goodness of the hospital people. Twice daily, he rang me, but the weary, sick voice on the phone told its own tale. I begged him only to send or take messages; but so long as he could drag himself out of bed he did so, and the doctor said that she thought he would worsen if he could not speak to me. The doctors both said he was “forever worrying” about me, his main anxiety being “Is she getting enough to eat?” and fear that I would fall ill there, with no one to assist me. About his illness they were like our Indian doctor, utterly baffled.

He gave me daily accounts of the weird and distressing effects of modern drugs which were being tried on him, one after another, in the hope of discovering the cause of his breakdown. Each one brought him its own psychic hell and its own miserable pathological reactions. The doctors told me that he bore all these additional sufferings with fortitude and great gentleness. (They knew nothing of the devils! The Brothers had often said that modern surgery is splendid but modern medicine is, on the whole, **on the wrong track**. Our constitutions, at any rate, could not stand many of the Western drugs.)

One morning at about eleven o’clock, in the heat of the summer, I was horrified to see him arrive on a *riksha*, a bag of food slung over his shoulder. He struggled in,

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with a feeble, "I've come to cook you some lunch, Swamiji," but he was glad to be put down on the nearest bed — mine. Then, when he saw where he was he tried feebly to protest. He was keenly sensitive about the proprieties; but gave in now, and thankfully drank the brandy I brought him. When that had taken effect, he told me that the good doctor's car had not been available for a lift that morning, so he "made them" get him a *riksha*. (I pictured him "making them"!) *Riksha* seats were hard and their springs bad. At the best of times, his long body was acutely uncomfortable in *rikshas*, and he must have suffered agonies to reach me that day, for his septic knee was so painful that he could hardly bear to be moved, even in bed, with the help of nurses; and deadly weakness was on him as well. He was worn to a skeleton from the fever of many months (here indeed was the Boy himself, and no upholding Brother), and yet he had dressed, climbed into that *riksha*, and taken that eight miles jolting, in the scorching heat, without even a companion. In addition, he had got off at the bazaar and limped on its cruel cobblestones, to fill his bag with food. "I'll leave you enough for several days," he said.

It was anxiety as to whether I was getting enough to eat that had driven him home; and when I peeped in a little later he had betaken himself to the kitchen, where the lunch was cooking, and he was crumpled over the table. I led him to his own room, and finished the cooking. When I went in with his tray, his eyes were closed. I fancied he was hiding tears. "Oh, Swamiji, this is super-heaven," he murmured. Truly it was agony to him to be away from the Brothers' home. Also the little hospital was noisy, rough and desperately hot. The doctor called for him that afternoon, and she again assured me that he *had* to come over, dangerous as she knew it might be. He came like that, always unexpectedly, two or three times during his stay of some two months at that hospital.

On his last visit he spent the day in bed. In the evening he asked to sit in the garden, and I put him under the great *champak* tree near our main door, from where he could gaze at flowers and birds. It was sunset and the place was an enchantment. "This is indeed heaven," he whispered again. He looked on it as if his eyes could never be satiated. It was his last sunset in the Brothers' garden. He fainted.

They fetched him back to hospital, but try as they would they could not master his fever and weakness, his terribly swollen and agonising knee, and his general deterioration.

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I now perceived, during those tragic visits, that he was undergoing *a second great transformation*, far greater than the one when he had left Bow years before. Something was falling away from him; and something had invaded him too. But what? The “Lamb” was uppermost, but there was more. Broken as he was, with spells of physical anguish which made him cry out, he yet now gave an overall impression of superhuman strength, kindness and calm — and such *certainly*. Was he himself then — his real, great, hidden self? Or was he a Brother? *What was he?* The old Pickle was gone. The scapegrace, the wild fellow, were no more. He had become — how shall I describe it? — *stately, majestic*. His dignity, which had always been innate, now shone out, and in those last weeks he remained for most of the time in a state of steady exaltation, far beyond the mundane impacts which had always tortured him. Not for an instant did fear touch him. He fought hard for life; but behind that fight there was, it seemed, indifference. He was more than ever *unfathomable*. I was lonely and often desolate, because I was still in the dark.

Soon after this his last visit to the *ashram* I went down with virulent flu, and there was no one to get tea or anything else. The coolie dealt somehow with the chickens but he could not do anything for me. My best friend was my bull terrier who, finding me in a queer state, jumped on the bed, laid her stomach along my spine and, with her arms about my neck, licked my ear good and hard as if to say, “Cheer up!” Sure enough, I had cause to take heart before long, as a young doctor who, with his wife, were friendly neighbours, called in on the chance of news of the Boy, and found me there alone, and very ill. He quickly fetched his wife, who bent over me. “Dear Swamiji! Why did you not send round for me at once? I am going home now to get you food, and I will send round food twice daily for a month,” She fluttered round the bed, so sweet, so womanly and pretty, in her silken *sari* and jewels. But she did more than flutter. Very soon a perfect meal came, carried by her own little hands. (What exquisite hands Indian women have, which no amount of hard house-work seems to spoil!) Wonderful soups; delicious milky puddings; ambrosial nourishment. I felt sure that she and her good husband had saved my life, if only because next evening several Indian doctors dropped in and sat about in the garden, exuding that peculiar atmosphere that doctors have when they are uneasy about someone. “You *must* rest, Swamiji.” (‘Aha!’ thought I.)

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The telephone had been out of order, but when it came on, the Boy rang up. I did not tell him how ill I had been, and still was. He had to leave the phone, too weak to speak.

Soon after, I crawled out and made two *riksha* journeys to the hospital. I found him greatly deteriorated. The knee pain was at times almost beyond bearing, and the fever unabated. Yet, exhausted as he was, he had agreed to have all his teeth extracted, in the search for whatever was poisoning him. In due course I had a letter from him — the last he ever wrote — the first part of it written, as it says, at “9 o’clock after operation”. Here it is:

“Dear Swami,

“All my teeth are out for good!!! Now we will see what will happen. Tempture down to 99-0 I have taken 3 cups of tea and eight Biscuits and one Glass of Cows milk with beaten up Egg, and one chicken ampule. I feel much better, but verry verry weak indeed No doubt that will go with food. Indigestion has disappeared. Marvelous to be able to breathe for the first time in months . . . ”

The remainder must have been written next morning:

“Slept all night through waking up twice to clean my Mouth. (No bleeding at all) Dentist and Dr. and Sister were splendid I could not have had better treatment for £20,000 Anywhere no pain before or after. What can one do to repay such devotion and Attention A nurse sat up with me all night, after being on, duty since 2. PM ie i6 hours After my teeth operation there come in unexpected 3 delivery cases, and Sister and Mrs ‘(the doctor)’ got to bed at about 4 A.M. What power is behind them?

I am leaving on Monday for *sure* so please arrange accordingly *at your own Convenient time* and Phone Doctor to let me know. So that I can be ready to leave as soon as you come.

I will be very glad to get home in our own athosmophe (atmosphere) But I must take it verry quietly for some time. I can do further arrangements with-(the dentist) by Phone.

Love, and Blessings,
Old Pike.”

‘Old Pike’ had never before sent or given blessings.

The “further arrangements” were never made. On receipt of his letter I went off to the bazaar, some two miles distant, to do shopping in preparation for his arrival. I did

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not expect him for several days. I had been so ill myself that I had not prepared his room, and things at the *ashram* were in confusion. I had just turned towards home when I was accosted by a friend coming from that direction. “Do you know that the Boy is back?” he said. I was horrified. “Yes, I met him on the road in a *riksha*; no one with him. Looks awfully ill.” There was no one in the *ashram*, either, and no bed ready for him. When I arrived back there, his luggage and a pair of long crutches lay outside the front door, and I found him crumpled on his bare bedstead, looking deathly. I gave restoratives, telephoned my doctor, and flew around. He said he had crawled in; he could not walk.

While waiting for the doctor, I rang the American Hospital and spoke to the sister in charge. Apparently the Boy had suddenly gone into one of his rages, for which they were utterly unprepared (in all those weeks of great suffering he had not once lost patience); the doctors had just gone on holiday; owing to extra work the sister was absent, and the terrified Indian nurse had simply run away! The sister said that there had seemed to be no immediate cause for the outburst; but I knew better. What *could* these people understand of his strange nature? Yet they were saintly — full of God’s power to help the miserable, cure the stricken. I guessed that though there were opportunities for devils, such as the poison from his gums, the Boy was not in contact with them any longer. *His work was over*. I believe that the main reason for this sudden homecoming was that the Brothers had to get him back somehow, and the only way was to get him to lose his temper with the kind nurse and, filled with shame, to rush out while his blood was up. Typically, he appeared to have no recollection of this rage. It was the “Lamb” who had returned.

Within an hour of his arrival ‘his’ action was justified.

Our Indian doctor who for some six years had wrought with me for the Boy took me aside after examining him. “He hasn’t a white corpuscle in his body,” he announced, with pardonable exaggeration. “Anti-biotics — so much over-used nowadays.” In fairness to the doctors at the American hospital it must be said, however, that they were dealing with a *yoga*-body, whilst they could only prescribe the remedies they knew. I worked night and day. The doctor came twice daily. We pulled him round. The mysterious fever continued, however, and as usual we were at our wits’ end, when a solution seemed to present itself in the person of a young Indian surgeon who had recently removed to the District to become head of the hospital in our town. My doctor, who had had enormous bedside experience but was over

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modest — and possibly over-anxious, too, about the Boy—asked me if he might bring his friend along to have a look at his patient. They came next day. The young surgeon pronounced the knee to be septic arthritis—a rare disease. *Our doctor handed over his patient.* Since the Boy had refused to go to Calcutta, he thought this was his (the Boy's) only chance. There was no other way, but to hand him over.

It was decided to draw out the pus, but, remembering the reputation of the hospital, I insisted that it be done at home, and the following Sunday, May 19th, 1956, the surgeon arrived with an anaesthetist and assistants, and my doctor, of course, kept away. The Boy went through the business without any sign of anxiety. An enormous quantity of pus was drawn off and then the knee was injected with hydrocortisoni acetate and the surgeon prescribed cortisone tablets, three a day. No tests for cortisone reactions were proposed, or taken, except for the heart.

The operation over, the surgeon and assistants departed, leaving the anaesthetist behind. We were in the sick-room together and the Boy began to mutter, rolling his head unhappily from side to side, *exactly as in those first London days.* (It looked as if the Brothers had already almost abandoned the trance mechanism and were in difficulties with him, as they had been then.) Something made me lean over him just as I had done twenty-seven years before. The anaesthetist came across: "Don't bother about him. He's only talking nonsense. They all do. You'd best come out on the verandah and leave him to it." He meant well, but "Please leave me, Doctor," said I. "You don't know about this man. *He's different.*" The doctor went out, sneering.

The Boy was still muttering incoherently. I bent closer. Then over his wan face stole that radiant peace which is as it were the hall-mark of Brothers; but alas! his eyes were closed—those eyes that had shed their light upon us for so long; yet I knew that a Brother was there.

I gulped down the pain in my throat . . . memories . . .

Then, a low, compassionate tone broke from him. Very gravely, very slowly, with sorrowful emphasis, the one who appeared to be a Brother in the guise or person of a Buddhist monk, spoke: **THERE ARE NO BEGINNINGS, AND NO ENDINGS . . .** and, with those last words to me through their Boy, faded away.¹

I stood on in that spot. I could hear the doctor fidgeting outside. Then came another sound—the Boy's weak voice, now a high wailing falsetto, but his own. It was his poignant awakening from his last trance. Tears dripped from under his eyelids. They, too, were closed as if loath to open again on a world from which his

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Brothers' eyes were now sealed. He cried out: "*Swamiji! I love you — more than anyone or anything in heaven or on earth!*"

He paused. A long sigh came, then a high, trembling sob, and again, he cried aloud, as if tortured by some unbearable thought: "*Swamiji! Swamiji! I will never, never leave you.*"

Even then I could not believe the end was near, but clearly the Brothers knew, and had tried to comfort me. I shall never know what passed in the Boy's mind after this, because his silence descended, and remained. From that day, he was heroic.

The surgeon said that the knee would have to be drained again, possibly several times. We were to persevere with the cortisone. As my doctor had handed over his patient to a man whom he considered as his superior, he must have presumed that cortisone tests were being made. I knew nothing then about the dangers of cortisone and the need for tests. After all, that terrible fever had been stopped within an hour or so of the draining and cortisone injection; and knowing the Brothers, to say nothing of the Boy's strength and resilience, everyone felt that the corner had perhaps been turned, though my doctor warned me to be very careful not to let him go forward too fast. Each day, the Boy took a little more nourishment, was more alive. This went on for several days, until about the 24th, when the pain and fever returned. The surgeon arranged to operate again on Sunday, June 3rd. It seemed to me wrong to let the Boy suffer unnecessarily, so I asked for an earlier date, but he refused. He had to go out of town. He was caught up in many business distractions connected with his transference.

The Boy continued to pull round, despite the return of the fever. He asked anxiously when he would be allowed to wear his shoes, and looked for my doctor's friendly visits like a child, begging some small concession each time. Might he be carried into the garden tomorrow? Would the doctor please ask the dentist to come along and put his mouth right? The doctor—no longer in charge—gently fobbed him off.

He wanted to see his beautiful white leghorn chicks, and the gardener and I had to bring them to his bed in armfuls. He enquired if I had kept his precious special tools locked away in their bag. I brought it out and he tried to use them, but his poor hands (the hands that had cracked walnuts and apples not so long ago) could not manage them. Then he wanted to clean my shoes, saying, "I can't abear to see you doin' it."

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By the 28th he was looking as if a cloud lay on him and suffering greater pain than ever in the septic knee, besides a general deep malaise. I found him in the evening, trying to get out of bed. He turned his tortured face towards me. "Why do I have to suffer like this?" "If there is a God of Love, dear," I said, "then this is payment for debts incurred in a past life. You and I must have done some dreadful things, and we must go through the retribution now. We will go through it, and then it will be over." He was well comforted by those hard words, and no suggestion of complaint passed his lips again, though his agonies increased.

The next day, he was in severe abdominal pain. I noticed some unusual symptoms and I did not like the look of him. I rang up my own doctor in alarm. He came at once, on a 'friendly' visit; then called the surgeon. Both of them examined the Boy, but found that peristaltic action was unimpaired. My doctor left. "But," I said to the surgeon, "what about these other unusual symptoms? They look serious to me." "Oh, those are nothing," he answered.

I could not advise with my doctor, and the other would not help; so without telling my doctor or anybody, and on my own responsibility, I discontinued the cortisone that evening. I told the surgeon next day and he said, "Quite right." But I had acted too late. The Boy had already had over thirty tablets of cortisone, 25 mgm, in addition to the big injection. Next day, the Boy was much worse. I rang the surgeon and begged my doctor to come in on a friendly visit. The two men, after long examination, *assured me that there was no peritonitis*. The surgeon then prescribed charcoal and a simple digestive as for a chill and stomach upset. But the pelvic and abdominal pains hourly increased. By mid-night of the 30th-31st, I tried to get a little rest, but my head was hardly on my pillow, before the Boy's bell rang.

He was hunched in a sitting posture, knees drawn up, face gaunt and grey. I bent down close to hear him. The pains had taken the entire pelvic and abdominal region and his agony was mortal. He whispered to me in a perfectly steady, fearless voice, "I am not afraid to die." I *was* afraid, not of death, but of this agony, and we two alone in the night. I telephoned my doctor; but he had seen the Boy only a few hours before, and probably thought I was overstrung, there in that small house, alone with the sufferer; for I had said, "Doctor, I think he is dying." (He and I had had so many crises with the Boy.) He told me not to worry, and that he would come next morning. I rang the surgeon, but there was no reply. I rang again and again. No answer.

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I ministered to the Boy as best I could. He was deadly cold. Hot bottles. Nourishing warm drinks. This done, I went out into the garden. It was a divine moonlight night after a very hot day. There, pacing the drive, I called aloud for guidance. Our *ashram* was so isolated! What *could* I do? I was quite alone, and exhausted. My brain refused to work. I walked backwards and forwards, distractedly. At last, I stood quite still, and looked up to the great sky that had never failed me; I looked — and looked — and then — remembered the friendly young doctor, living fairly near, who, with his sweet wife, had come to my rescue a month ago. How could I have forgotten him?

I rang him. My heart nearly burst, it seemed, when there was no reply. But it was about 1:30 a.m. and he was doubtless fast asleep and the phone some way off. At last the doctor came to the phone, and within a few minutes he was with me. He told me that in his opinion and without stethoscopic examination, the Boy appeared to be in the actual crisis of peritonitis. “What are the chances?” I asked, and he told me “Fifty-fifty in normal cases. Who is the doctor in charge? He should be called.” I told him the situation. He said: “But he **MUST** come. I will go and fetch him here.” He drove off for the surgeon, leaving something to alleviate the pain; but it did not help the Boy. After an interminable hour he rang me from his home. The surgeon had refused to come.

The Boy said nothing. He was superb, although pain made him cry out. We could not speak. He was too weak to speak, yet *he sustained me*. If only I had had something to ease the pain! The bazaar was too far away; there was no one to send, and I could not leave him. Thus we were trapped; yet though he was in moral and physical agony, there was not one moment when he went under. He was unconquered.

My own doctor came at ten o'clock the next morning, and was horrified at the sight of us both. He threw professional etiquette to the winds. He telephoned the surgeon to come at once; then he examined the patient and muttered about peristalsis having been all right yesterday afternoon. That, I supposed, was why he had not come in the night. (Anyway I had had no right to ask him, since the Boy was no longer his patient.) The surgeon brought an injection to ease the pain. Then my doctor tackled me: “Swamiji, you can do no more. We cannot have *you* go down too, and you are on the brink. You simply must **STOP**. He is desperately ill, and must be taken to hospital at once.” I had to consent, because I knew the doctor was right.

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“But, Doctor, he was getting on so well,” I said. “I *believe* this has been caused by the cortisone tablets, of which he has had over thirty.”² I don’t know if he heard me — his car was starting just then — and of course it went out of my head after this.

I had always heard bad accounts of this hospital, “where the poor went to die”, and where ineptitude, apathy and worse prevailed: and at another time my doctor and I would have refused to allow the Boy to be taken to such a place; but I was now too far gone to fight my doctor. “How on earth,” I thought “will that good young surgeon — a newcomer — cope with such a place? I had heard him mention to the doctor that he did not yet even know the capabilities of his staff; and I pitied him. Therefore I want to say here that in spite of what I may have to tell of him, I exonerate him absolutely from blame for the suffering, the martyrdom, of our Boy; because this young surgeon was submerged in circumstances which he could not at that moment control and must have been living in a state of high tension. Doctors are human. My doctor was outside all this.

By two o’clock the same day the Boy was on the way to the local Government Hospital. As we proceeded in the ambulance, by the well-known flicker in his eyes, that I was certain, Brother was there and using him without trance. Thus influenced, the Boy said urgently to me, in a strengthened voice: “Swamiji! Do this as soon as we get there! Tell the surgeon that I want him to draw off this pus *at once. It must be done at once — today —* and I will keep going all right with glucose and things.”

I sought out the surgeon immediately on arrival, and begged him to do as the Boy wished, at our risk — in writing, if necessary. He refused, saying that the Boy was too weak; but I did not believe him, because I knew the Brothers wanted it.

The shock of Hospital — and *what* a hospital! — seemed to make the Boy forget. I did not mention that refusal to him. When we got there, there was no available room, so he was put in a small emergency ward near the operating theatre, “where it would be convenient to remain until, after he had recovered from this set-back, he could have his knee seen to, and then go to a better room.” Thus his surgeon; but I did not see so early a recovery, if indeed there was to be recovery at all.

Meanwhile, emergency cases came in and out of the ward. The passage outside, opening on to the operating theatre, was always full of people. The heat was intense. There was no proper protection against it. Dirt. Flies. The Brothers’ precious casket lay amid all this, a wasted frame, naked most of the time, an utterly incongruous figure. The hospital beds were too short for him, so they put him on a long camp-bed

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which sagged deeply; and this they placed in the only available space, along the airless, baking hot outer wall under the window. He did not complain. I slept in the ward. He begged me not to do it, but I told him not to waste his breath: I would sleep near to him so long as he remained in that dreadful place. Meanwhile, he often lost consciousness. Once on awakening — alas, not as from his heavenly trances — he found strength to say to me, “If I have any comfort here, I know to whom I owe it.”

What seemed to be a venereal case in the next bed objected to the fan; and the temperature was about 110! I insisted relentlessly on keeping it going, against his round-the-clock complaints. I seemed to be insisting and battling about something or other most of the time. The nursing being totally inadequate to a case like this, I brought in two women, half-trained or not trained at all, both incapable of adjusting a pillow or moving the patient. The poor nuns who served in this hospital from a nearby convent were terribly overworked. I was told on the highest authority that there were, in that full hospital with “a capacity for 200-250 patients, only some six trained European Nursing sisters, four or five trained Indian (staff) nurses and about a score of probationers.” The nuns were kind and expert but overwhelmed. I did not contact any of the other nurses.

The surgeon did not seem interested. I waylaid him outside the theatre next day (June 3rd), for the Boy was going down. He was bloodless, as an experienced Sister had remarked; he could not keep anything down and was practically existing on injections. His knee was terrible, and the fever continued unabated. With joined palms, and very politely, I asked the doctor if he did not think the Boy might have something to keep him going — a blood transfusion, perhaps, or oxygen. The doctor looked at me as if I were a worm and replied coldly, “He is having everything he needs. *He is not anything like as ill as you think he is.*” He appeared thoroughly annoyed and turned on his heel.

I went back to the ward and found the Boy feebly trying to read a Sunday paper. He was not making much headway, and as I bent near him to pick up the fallen pages, he said, “I’m doing it to keep my mind off *this*” — indicating his body — with an inflection of aloof disgust. He never lost his bigness through it all. The radiant Cockney was invincible, and communicated his buoyancy to me. How he shone in that place!

That Sunday I went off to the *ashram* at midday, to see about the feeding of the livestock, get a meal, and collect some things to take back to the hospital. Our

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ashram was some two miles away, and the return journeys on slow *rikshas* each day ate into time; so I was not back in hospital until about four o'clock when I heard the Boy howling. Immediately after I had left, the terrible abdominal pains had taken him again, and a pill for deadening the pain could not be given, as the surgeon was absent and *there was no one else in that hospital of about two hundred and fifty patients who could take the responsibility*. I raged. Just then the surgeon returned, the pill was given, and the Boy lost consciousness soon after.

Things like this were happening all the time. I determined to take the Boy home; but when, next morning, his quick ears caught something of my conversation with a friend to this effect, he sent for me. "Do not make a fuss. They are doing their best. I will remain here." I believe he made that decision only for my sake; for he must have known that almost everything in that place was against his recovery.

There is a general belief in India that a Swami is never moved to joy or grief. He is supposed to be a person who can endure all and feel nothing. This is based on a misinterpretation of the scriptures, in which such passages are found as "he is not shaken, even by heavy sorrow."³

"Jesus wept."

The Brothers never taught that we should dam back grief or let them flow through us until they we should naturally stop flowing. That is the pure teaching of non-attachment, which has been confused in India; but it is not confused in the *shastras* (scriptures). Neither accept nor reject; *experience* the "pairs of opposites". The Centre is unmoved; the Reality is for ever, and we are established therein, whether we know it or not. Remember this, and let the Universe revolve.

I had no tears then. I suppose people thought me therefore to be a good Swami. (Could they but have seen the river of salt within! Tears take time, and there was no time.)

We dragged through the next day's bouts of agony and spells of drugged unconsciousness. People were beginning to come in to look at the Boy, for when conscious, he lay as one transfigured; his wondrous, innocent eyes gazing inward, as it were on some heavenly vision. His eyes were revealing his secret — that he was, as an Indian lawyer wrote of him later, "a Master in deep disguise". My own doctor marvelled with the others. "I have never seen a man face death like that," he said. He and a good Jesuit Father from the adjacent mission were calling twice a day; but my doctor, of course, could not prescribe treatment.

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The 'venereal' case continued to argue about the fan.

That afternoon, June 4th, I went over to the *ashram*. I wanted to have an undisturbed telephone talk with my doctor and friend. He knew that the Boy was sinking. I talked to him about blood plasma, and he said that in his state it might prove fatal, but he added, "there is an antidote which can be used with it, which renders it safe. He should be having oxygen too". I poured out my mind to him about the situation: the cortisone (about which he was, it seemed, unaware), neglect at the hospital, where no extreme measures were being taken to save that precious life, where my pleas went in vain.

Back at the hospital I again interviewed the surgeon, but he refused my requests. Neither oxygen nor plasma would be used now, he said. There was no call for such measures, since in a few days the Boy would be well enough to have his knee drained, and to be moved to a better room. It was clear that the surgeon, plagued as he was on every hand, had not grasped the situation. My heart sank.

Notwithstanding his assurance, I wired my son-in-law in Calcutta that the Boy was sinking, and asked him to send money; I had paid the surgeon with the last of our money, and received the only smile he ever gave me. I had been too pressed for time to call at our bank and get an overdraft; but before I could hear from Calcutta the kind Father came to the rescue, without my having told him anything. I was sitting on the long bench outside the operating-theatre that evening when he arrived and sat down beside me. "You must not be worried over money, Swamiji. I will furnish you with what you need to carry on," and with that he pressed notes into my hand. The tears nearly came then. "Swamiji, why did you not call on me before?" I suppose the good monk will not thank me for writing this, for his soul is humble, although he is a brilliant administrator, having much power in his Order in India. We counted him as one of our best friends. He had not even implied that we were of Satan, as a good Jesuit might have been excused for doing! We had never discussed the Brothers, yet he must have known about them.

I had no time to inform my family and friends of the Boy's illness. The *ashram* was deserted, since the Boy and the Brothers were not there. There was nobody to take small duties off me or get me a meal. It was quite two miles to the hospital in the blazing sun. Our telephone was continually going dead — the office was a long way off — the officials corrupt; but the Boy's patience never failed during my enforced absences, when his sufferings invariable increased.

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That night the Lamb complained: "I cannot see the stars" and again, "Please take this moth off me." A large moth had fluttered in and, instead of making for the glaring central light which, by the way, was never shaded — it remained crawling over his naked diaphragm. However often I brushed it away, it flew back again. I only got rid of it by taking it out of the room. The Sister and I exchanged glances. There is a superstition about moths and death; but I regarded this little creature as a message from the Brothers. They had often sent me help and messages by furred and feathered creatures, so why not now, when I was so bereft? After that I obtained help to put the Boy, propped up, on one of the hospital beds, so that he could see the sky and get more air. But he had already ceased to look outward. He was without seeing, except for that heaven he was always gazing into.

It was quite clear now that the Boy believed that his life's work had failed. He was without the comfort of hope. He knew that he was dying, though he did not tell me, and was at times acutely aware of what this would mean to me; for though there was no way for us, except that I should carry on without him, yet in this companionship of the Brothers it seemed that we only had one another in all the world, so what would I do without him? His wondrous eyes never sought mine: so deep was his suffering over my possible fate that he seemed afraid to let me see it. They had not once shown fear of death, but now they were infinitely sorrowful; indeed, I never saw such sorrow in a pair of eyes. The Brothers again? It seemed so; for they loved their Boy in a special way, and me too, and our hurt must have wounded them. Above all they love their work in this world; so this was more cruel than a mere goodbye. It was grief for all their wonderful work which — it seemed then — might be lost; all our combined sacrifices, wasted — thrown away in that filthy hospital by the pitiless humans who could produce such places (though they, too, had their parts, as instruments of destiny). The grief of the Great Ones is beyond our knowing.

His voice was always steady, except when agony forced out screams. (Why did they ever let him *get* to that?) Even then, once the agony had passed, he would sink back, forgetting the pain, and deep calm would return. Surely it must have been the Brothers; for he never evinced a moment's anxiety, except when sorrowing over me. But I — I could not forget the pain! I was too old and unaccustomed, I had never seen the dying or dead, and he was dying, horribly.

Next day his mind must have wandered on to speculation about my fate and so flickered back for a few minutes to this world. He had no *personal* matters to attend

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to. These had gone long ago. His mind turned towards certain persons over whom he still yearned in the Brothers' work. "Swamiji — has there been any letter from — ?" (mentioning one who seemed to have forgotten us). I said — and meant it — "My Angel! Don't bother about those people! There has been no letter; but why, oh why do you still bother about them? There is a God, and we will do the purpose, whatever it is. *Please*, dear, drop them." He made no answer but faded out.

My doctor, whose position, as I have said, was helpless, came in twice that day (June 5th), looking grave. In the evening I went over to the *ashram* to attend to the livestock and get some things for the Boy. It was about half-past eight when I wearily turned in to the hospital, and met my doctor just leaving the Boy's bedside.

"Oh, Swamiji," he said, "I was just about to go. I am very glad you have come. I simply *had* to call in again this evening to have a look at him. I have thrown aside all professional etiquette. *I have just been to the surgeon.* Now they have put the Boy under oxygen, and he is having blood plasma, and the surgeon has ordered the Sister to stay with him all night."

I breathed relief. "But," I enquired, "who can we call if a doctor is wanted in the night? They won't listen to me, you know!"

"I will drive you out now to Dr. So-and-So, and we will fix up for him to see the Boy if necessary. Come along!"

We drove out to the doctor's bungalow. (I did not hear his name.) He was having his supper, so we had to wait, and when at last he came in my heart sank again; for on the evening of the day the Boy had been brought to this place, he had seen this man standing outside his door. Ill as he was, his uncanny power of summing people up had not deserted him. He had called me over and spoken urgently: "Swamiji! Promise me you will not let that man come near me. He is awful." And now, here he was, and what was I to do?

His oily face was wreathed in smiles. He belched apologies and flattery at my doctor. Of *course* he himself would look after the patient — if need be he would stay with him all night. Swamiji and the doctor need not have the slightest anxiety, etc., etc. We took our leave smothered in smiles, bows and palm-joinings.

My doctor got into his car and went away on his endless errands of mercy. As I returned to the ward, after being with this good man, my heart echoed the words of Christ: *God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.* Over and over, they echoed.

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There lay the Boy, with the plasma apparatus fixed to his outstretched arm. Drip . . . drip . . . (“Drops of life,” I thought. “*The God of the living*” . . . I was a bit confused.) The day nurse had left, and the Sister was in and out. My little aboriginal ‘nurse’ came in. She was not much use, poor child, but at any rate she was decent and willing. Time passed. The good Sister’s visits continued. Drip . . . drip . . . The Boy looked like a shadow. There was an electric stove in the service room next door. I don’t know what I should have done without this. I made tea.

Presently a young fellow came in to adjust the apparatus as the ‘nurse’ knew nothing about it. He seemed a nice boy and smiled kindly at me, enjoyed his apparatus, but would not be particularly interested in the human apparatus, I thought. He hip-walked off, and we saw no more of him.

The Boy was becoming cold; so I got out my hot-bottle and went around to the service room. It was locked. Sister must have the key, I thought, and went to look for her. No Sister! So I trundled back to the ward. The little aboriginal, who spoke fair English, told me that the Sister had gone off for the night at eleven o’clock; the other Sister would not be on duty until six or seven o’clock next morning. The key was probably with the *chowkidar*. (So much for the surgeon’s orders! He had evidently not been informed of these timings or — struggling with some 250 patients and a monstrously inadequate nursing staff — had simply overlooked them.)

I went out into the compound and found the night watchman fast asleep on his verandah. He put up stubborn resistance to my efforts to get the keys, which were my only means to procure heat for the dying man. “The Sister always takes away the keys,” he insisted, “and the gate of the convent is locked.” “But I will call to them through the window,” I said. “There is no window,” answered the gorm. “The gate is in the garden wall.”

I was frantic — torn between the calls to be near the dying Boy and to get the hot-bottle. I went to that gate and found all as the watchman had said. Then I went from ward to ward, and saw not a Sister or nurse anywhere, nor any means of getting hot water, and by now I was in despair. I kept thinking of the other patients in their desolation. Finally I gave up the search and returned to the Boy.

Another young person had come in to help; but of course she was just — another young person. Still, kind. How gentle and kind Indian women are! The soft creature led me to a bed, saying: “Get some sleep, Swamiji.” Of course I could not sleep; but I

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lay down near the Boy and watched. Drip . . . drip . . . drip . . . Cold sweat was pouring from him, the beads shone out on his glassy forehead. Presently he moved his head towards where I lay, and I got up and bent very close to his mouth. “If this — continues — it — will — kill me,” he said, judicially, of the transfusion. His mood seemed to be “I do not *want* — or *not want* — to die”.

I looked at the blue, sweat-bedewed face, and decided to get hold of that doctor, whether the Boy liked it or no; for no responsible person had been near him since the Sister went off duty at eleven o’clock, and it was now about three. “My Lamb, I’ll be back in a few minutes.” His eyes sped me. I ran through the deserted hospital grounds and stumbled out to the doctor’s bungalow. He had told me to knock up his watchman, who would then call him; but there was no watchman to be found; or perhaps he too was fast asleep in some corner. I called “*Chowkidar! Chowkidar!*” I went up to an open window. Inside, several children were sleeping, sprawled together on a big bed. I woke the nearest, but he refused to call his father. Still thinking desperately of that blue face, I rushed to the next window; but when that boy saw that I meant business, he did as I asked.

The doctor came out, yawning and tousled. I told him about the Boy’s condition as we walked — that the plasma *seemed to be too strong* or something, and that I would not have disturbed him if I had not thought the patient in a very bad way. I spoke oilily. There is no one more touchy than an inept doctor — but *he* was not oily now; he was nasty.

When we reached the hospital, the fellow did not speak to the ‘nurse’ or even glance at the plasma apparatus or use the stethoscope. He had not even brought one. He touched the poor Boy’s pulse lightly for a second or two — certainly not enough to test it. I implored him to inform the surgeon; but he refused. Now, every doctor of even moderate experience knows something of the reactions to cortisone and to blood plasma, but I doubt if he knew the Boy’s case. If there was a chart there, he did not consult it. But he could see the Boy’s condition and must have known that *if he was not having the antidote the plasma might kill*. Yet he did nothing. He stood there for less than a minute, yawning loudly. Then he turned and patted my shoulder with his hot, fat hand. “*He’s* all right. Don’t you worry,” he said, and ambled off.

I was sorry I had fetched him. His presence there had been a sacrilege.

We went on . . . Drip . . . drip . . . I felt that the drops were killing him; but it struck me that *the plasma most probably contained the antidote* so that there was nothing that

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could now be done. (In any case I was helpless.) He was so cold! I cursed those people whose place of healing was a house of torture. My heart raged over every suffering being there. (I was far from the Brothers then.) I stood at the foot of the bed, and when I saw the Boy's heavenly eyes, the glistening sweat clotting the soft strands of dark hair on his forehead, I clutched his feet, which hung over the end of the bed, and pressed both the soles to my warm body. I massaged his legs gently, imparting through feet, and legs all the fire of my body and soul. This I continued for a long time while he watched me — or rather while his eyes drew me into his paradise.

One big toe pressed again and again into my abdomen. I was distraught but *his* pressure was steady, affectionate, contented, and *as full of vital magnetism as ever*. The Brothers must have helped him. No ordinary man could have done that unaided in those circumstances. All that he and I and they had been to one another in the work was there in that simple touch of the Boy's toe. Nothing of the wretched present was there. That toe had no part in that racked body and in the mind that had been tortured for so long. Though I did not know it then, this quiet pressure was his last message to me.

When the Sister came on duty in the morning (June 6th), I told her he was dying, and asked for the chief. "He will see him on his rounds," she said, resignedly. I hung about the passage till ten o'clock, but somehow missed him; he had already been to the Boy when I caught him in a doorway. "Doctor, will you *please* see me? I *must* speak to you." Now he was kind, so I knew. He took me into his little office next to the theatre in an attempt to shut out the wretched crowd; but even so, a man burst in, shouting excitedly about injustices and injuries within that miserable hospital. The surgeon said what he could to this man, but what *could* he, a newcomer, effectively say? When the angry fellow had departed, I asked: "Is there any chance of recovery?" "Practically none," he answered. The truth at last! I said: "I suppose, doctor, that he has been having the plasma antidote?" "*I have just ordered it!*" he replied, fourteen hours too late. What could one do in such a situation? Only two days before he had retorted, annoyed, when I begged for blood transfusion: "He is not nearly so ill as you think he is" — a stock phrase, I imagined, with this driven man; for I was only one of the crowd of agitated relatives who clamoured ceaselessly about him, impeding his work, impairing his judgment. I had seen this, as I sat, daily, outside the operating theatre, a few feet away from the precious Boy; and when I had visited the surgeon's

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bungalow, I had found the same harassment but in another context. Callers from morn till night: a stream of people with axes to grind, influences to exert on the new Head, obstructions to set up.

Such situations often arise in India, and the plight of the helpless sick there defies description. (A few exceptions merely prove the rule.) Many fine doctors there have to work against appalling odds. My own, for instance, although not burdened with one of these dreadful institutions, systematically overworks, yet can never stem the tides of suffering and sorrow that encompass him.

Thinking on these terrible things that darken the land of the *rishis* I went back to the Boy. There was nothing that we could do now. Drip . . . drip . . . drip . . . drip . . . How could he bear the irritation of it, hour after hour, added to the agony of his knee, and of the terrible break up in his internal organs which had affected the entire torso? His patience was sublime! People continued to come in and look, and steal away, I whispered, close, then: "Darling Boy — my Angel — tell me, do you want anything — anything — that I can do for you?" "Yes," he panted, "I want — peace." I believed he was referring to the horror of being in that hospital, but I only said, "You shall have peace soon, my Lamb."

The divine Brothers were crucified in him there. All their perfect love and compassion, knowledge of life, wisdom, philosophy, infinite power to serve, were being crucified in that Cockney Boy, there.

They brought food to the room for me, but I could not eat. The Sister came to me and asked me to get a special medicine, outside the hospital, and to fetch some clean clothes and bedding from the *ashram*. Nothing could have been harder than to have had to leave him when perhaps he most needed me; but there was no help for it, for I had no one to send.

When I got back, I found him in great wretchedness, fully conscious, but at the point of death. He was wailing feebly as he attempted to push off some people who were fumbling with his bedclothes. He was fighting to be allowed the mere physical peace which is the inalienable right of every dying creature. I sent them away and comforted him. "My darling," I whispered, knowing it was the end, "you are very ill, brave heart. You are splendid; but please try not to fight. You need all your strength. I will not leave you again. *I will do the fighting*. Try to rest now!"

But alas! I had to leave him once more; yet if I suffered then, at least he did not; for as I finished speaking his eyes fixed, and death began to take him.

DEATH OF THE BOY

At that moment the surgeon came on his late afternoon rounds. He glanced at the Boy. "Give him strong coffee," he said over his shoulder, as he strode out of the room.

Coffee? But why? Water is given to the dying. I looked wildly round for the Sister, but she was nowhere to be seen. I dashed out into the compound, flung on to a *riksha*, and had that coffee back and made within twenty minutes; but it fell from his mouth.

He was putting up a terrific fight for breath. (For all I know, the supply of oxygen had given out. Anything might have happened in that dreadful place). I was so inexperienced in this hospital world that I had to assure myself — for there was no one there to assure me — that he was unconscious and beyond these prolonged and horrible death throes.

It was then that I saw a tall form like a deep black shadow behind the bed on his left-hand side. It was not a Brother, as *we* had known them. It did not flash in and out like the Brothers I had seen, and see, but was still and constant. "Of course," I mused as I worked, clearing up, with a strange quiet on me, "there *might* be a Brother like that — the Shadow of Death — the Angel of Death?"

I looked at my Boy. Suddenly a great change came upon his face. Though I had never seen anyone die, I knew then that he was beyond our help.

As he lay there, propped up, still making his last fight for breath, I turned to him; and though I knew he could not hear me in the flesh, I began to intone the great OM, the AMEN, calling him by his real name and saying things which cannot be put in a book. I was thankful that we were alone.

Soon the good Jesuit Father came in and stood by me. He prayed without orthodoxy, calling the Boy by name. Then, in an urgent aside, "*Pack quickly, Swamiji!*" He continued to stand by him, whilst I awoke, as it were, and packed blindly, even before the Boy had gasped out his last breath. I saw nuns surrounding the bed. Those overworked nuns must be forgiven for tearing off his clothes and bedding as if they were late for a train, and calling for clean things to put on him without washing him properly after that fearful and filthy illness.

I packed on frantically. The mortuary trolley was already by the bedside; but I would not have that body whisked away to their death-house. *God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.* I whispered to the Father, "We will take his body home." "You are right, Swamiji, Leave it to me," and he exerted his authority, which was necessary in that place.

DEATH OF THE BOY

The good Father and I took him home in an ambulance. In the solemn time following death, the body of that blessed Boy was rattled through the bazaar — the nearest equivalent to his own slum.

At the *ashram* I gave him sacred hibiscus, lilies and roses from our garden. His eyes had not been closed, and they were still exquisite. His dark wavy hair lay softly on his temples.

He had died at half-past six in the evening, and it was now about seven o'clock. The Father and an Indian friend undertook to arrange for the Church of England funeral to take place next afternoon. My doctor came, and said he was very sorry I had brought the body away, since we were in the height of summer and the funeral would not be for some twenty hours after death. "Besides," he said, "our dear friend has died a terrible death, tragic and poignant. You will not be able to bear the vicinity of the body, Swamiji." I said that that did not matter, that he must be in his own *ashram* now. So I spent the night alone with that sacred body, except for our dogs and a coolie sleeping on the verandah. How well I slept!

The doctor had not reckoned with the Brothers. The Boy's body was as sweet when the Jesuit Father and the English Padre and I together laid it in the coffin at two o'clock the next afternoon as it had been when the Holy Ones possessed it.

Earlier that day, I had compelled myself to perform a dreadful task. When the ambulance had arrived the evening before, they had dumped the roll of clothes and bedding, which the Boy had used in hospital, on to the verandah. I saw them lying there in the morning, and my courage failed. Nevertheless, I called the coolie and ordered him to light a big bonfire, and I took the things to it myself, one by one. The last thing was the vest they had taken from his dead body. I hesitated. Something would not let me burn that vest. Yet I must burn it, I thought, and looked at it miserably . . . The death sweats had gone into it. I stood irresolute; then an impulse came to smell this dreadful thing. In horror, I began to lift it to my nose, then stopped, drawing a deep breath. I brought the vest right up quickly and breathed through it deeply. O God! *It smelt of heather honey!*

I argued to myself that my nerves were overwrought by all I had been through, so I rang up my doctor and told him what I thought I had experienced. He came at once. Together we went into the Boy's room. Standing by the dead, I handed him the little vest. "Do you mind smelling this?" I asked. The saintly man took it from me and

DEATH OF THE BOY

smelled it, at first a little way off. Then he *inhaled it!* “A sweet smell which I do not know, Swamiji,” he said. By what impulse of tender magic had the Brothers evoked this from the moorlands of our Isles — a perfume they had never given before, so that it had been unnecessary to bathe and anoint that pure body?

I kept that vest, which reminded me of the Sweet Essence of my companion of many lives — here — still here. After some months, the perfume faded.

The good Father brought a coffin with a large white cross on it. “It is what we bury our Jesuit Fathers in, Swamiji. I hope you don’t mind?”

He and the Protestant Padre did everything together, even to screwing down the lid of the coffin and bearing it out of the *ashram* and through the cemetery in the hot sun. The Father stood at the graveside. I was alone with them there, except for two friends whom he had brought, and a kind unknown English-woman who put her arms about me.

As we left the cemetery an Indian friend, who had just heard that the funeral had taken place, hurried towards me: “*They have buried the body of a god,*” he said.

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ENVOI

The Boy was fifty-four when he died of peritonitis complicating septic arthritis of the knee joint.

People may be shocked at his end, questioning, “What were the Brothers doing?” It is, I think, a case of “He saved others, himself he could not save”. In view of our position, the Brothers knew that the Boy would have to die, as a last chance to get a small part of their teaching out through me. Being Masters, they could not attempt to use influence amounting to force on anyone, regarding our destinies. That is the Law; but — “Render unto Caesar” — the Boy and I had to fight for his life, and play out the losing game, possibly to higher ends. The Brothers did the only thing they could do, by giving us ghostly strength in so far as we were able to receive it.

I felt that even the most credulous might find it hard to accept the last part of this narrative; so I asked the doctor friend who witnessed it if he would make a statement. This he did, and wrote: “The information I supply is, to the best of my knowledge, true to the letter.” Here it is:

“I asked the Mother Superior of the hospital about their using any kind of scent on patients after death. They do not use any except spirit and dusting powder. The spirit smells of spirit and the dusting powder is unscented. The scent of Heather Honey is unknown in our country. I smelt the vest which had been taken off the body at death. It had a most sweet scent not known to me. The Boy was having severe haematemesis and his bed clothes and vest were smeared with blood, and he was having a profuse cold clammy sweat pouring out of his body, drenching him through and through. At this stage he could not be moved even slightly for the purpose of cleaning. He died in this state, and a ghastly feter was what one could expect after death in a case like this. It was most surprising that, on the contrary, the vest taken off at his death emitted a most delicate scent, the like of which I never smelt before. I never saw or smelt any cosmetic, perfume, or even perfumed soap in their *ashram* where I had been a constant visitor.” (He had been our doctor, whenever we were at our *ashram*, for six years.)

“Swamiji, I told you that on account of his protracted illness the body would putrefy much quicker than usual. But to my surprise, when I called the next day at

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about midday I went close to the body and bent over it, but there was not the slightest stench and I could still smell the faint perfume of the scent I smelt the day before and which you termed the scent of Heather Honey.

“I watched the Boy from day to day in his last illness. He went through his agonising ordeal with rare courage and bore his suffering without a murmur. He knew he was dying for days before. I thought his behaviour really heroic at that time.

(Signed) M.B., B.Sc.”

I made no plans, but a couple of evenings after the funeral, I was sitting by myself before the *ashram* door when my younger daughter and her husband appeared in their car at the end of the drive. Someone had informed them. They insisted that I must leave for England as soon as possible.

I agreed to go out from my earthly paradise. We broke up everything in ten days. My daughter took me to Bombay. We waited for a short time there and I sailed alone for London on July 17th, 1956, arriving on August 6th. The Boy had achieved his purpose.

When winding up his humble affairs, we found that the total of his earthly possessions consisted of about twenty pounds deposited with a friend in London, three battered trunks containing some paper-covered story-books and a workman's tools, two unworn suits, which he had been saving to wear in England, a few old clothes, and a bicycle.

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CHAPTER ONE

Backgrounds

¹ *Deva* (Sanskrit), Lit , ‘Shining one’. A god, an angel.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Flower Opens — I

¹ Sanskrit, meaning Power. Generally: the creative Power of God. Particularly: a goddess (*devi*) or woman who is this creative Power in relation to a god (*deva*) or man is called his *shakti*.

² (*Brhadaranyakopanisad*, with Sankaracharya’s Commentary, trans. by Swami Madhavananda, IV, 2, III.)

³ *Ait-Brahmana*, III, 43, 1; *Satapatha*, VI, 1, 2, & VII, 5, 1, 22.

⁴ Genesis, 32, XIX and *Judges*, 13, XVIII.

⁵ Literally those who are ‘liberated while living.’

⁶ See photographs facing p. 128.

CHAPTER SIX

Sailing Orders

¹ It is an attested fact that true *yogis* are not affected by heat or cold, or attacked by snakes, insects, and savage beasts.

² *An avatar* is a divine incarnation, having power to guide many along the spiritual path.

³ A *rishi* is a seer who has experienced his identity with transcendental Reality. The *rishis* through whom the holy books—the *vedas* — were given are probably meant here.

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CHAPTER SEVEN

In Kashmir

¹ Revered .

² *December, 1958.* Unlooked-for confirmation of this episode has just readied me from the son, Sardar B.P.L. Bedi, a well-known literary and social worker who writes from Delhi: “. . . The dear old mother, whom (the Boy) nursed so miraculously, died this year. . . It seems that she survived about twenty-one years.

³ *Bhagavadgita, II, 50.*

⁴ A *Kangri* is a portable charcoal fire held in an earthen pot, which last is covered in woven straw or grass. The top is open, with handles made of the same materials. It is placed under the loose robe when sitting on the ground. (It is also taken to bed, and sometimes sets people on fire.)

⁵ *Kundalini* (Sanskrit) is the *shakti* (Power, often called “the Great Mother”, because it is feminine). it is represented as being in the form of a coiled serpent at the base of the spine. This Power is dormant in most mortals. The subject can scarcely be dealt with here. Briefly: *Kundalini*, as it rises in the spine, vivifies what are called in Hindu philosophy — or, more accurately, psychic science — the *chakras* (see note, page 147); in Tibet and elsewhere there are probably other names for these *chakras* or psychic centres. Like *kundalini*, the *chakras* are also more or less dormant in most of us; but they form an integral part of our total make up, just as nerve centres and the senses are integral parts of it. *The chakras are not the nervous system*; but affect it after being vivified by *kundalini* which, the Brothers teach, *never acts directly upon the nerves*, but has to be stepped down, transformed by means of the *chakras*. *Kundalini* rises up the spine and touches, one after another, these dormant psychic wheels or *chakras*, six or seven principal ones of which are situated in the spine and brain. The action of these vitalized *chakras* reorients and stimulates the entire nervous system, which is connected with them at certain points. But even these junctions do not function in most of us, until the Great Mother brings them to life and birth, when we get, ‘down here’, new responses and undreamed-of functions. At its present stage, the Brothers say, humanity is less than half alive. From the Masters’ angle, true human life begins with the awakening of the Serpent Power. (These and allied matters are disclosed by the Brothers in their teachings. The above remarks refer to the cerebro-spinal system, not the automatic, for which the Brothers give

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information which has been left out in most of the holy books, as they have come down to us.)

⁶ This requires the Brothers' elucidation, for which there is not space here.

⁷ Ramakrishna is one of the great *avatars*. He died in Calcutta in 1886 and has an enormous following in India.

⁸ For the sake of Indians I may have shocked, I must point out that there have been many exceptions to the *sannyasa* unwritten law about not sojourning with relatives, etc. The late Sri Aurobindo, for instance, sent for his wife after nine years separation — tragic business, for she died on her way to him; and the divine Sri Ramakrishna had his mother living close to him, and never put away his dearly-treasured young wife, whom he saw every day. Such companionships are tolerated when lesser attachments have been sublimated.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Telepathy? Hypnotism?

¹ Effortful and effortless desire are a big part of the Brothers' teachings which I have dealt with in the chronicle of those teachings.

² This appears to be pure Lamaistic doctrine. I have recently see *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, 'according to Lama Kazi Dawa-Samdub's English rendering, edited by Dr. W. Y. Evans-Wentz. This teaching by a Brother about death and after seems to tally with that found in the *Bardo Thödal or Tibetan Book of the Dead*.

³ *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*, translated and compiled by A. T. Barker. 2nd Ed., 7th impression, p. 262.

⁴ *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishan*, unabridged ed., Mylapore, Madras, 1944; p. 832.

⁵ Literally, "wheels". Centres in subtle matter which interpenetrate the physical body and are in the finer parts of our make-up. They are analogous to the chief nerve ganglia of the physical body.

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CHAPTER NINE

Trances

¹ *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, p. 160.

² Referred to in *Towards the Mysteries*.

³ *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, p. 916.

⁴ *Astavakra Samhita*, I, 13.

⁵ See photograph facing p. 129.

⁶ See, for instances, *Sri Gouranga — the Man*, by Swami Durga Chaitanya Bharati. M. L. Dey, Calcutta, 1933, p. 175 et seq.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, pp. 819-20.

⁹ *Life of Sri Ramakrishna*, 1943, Pp. 109-10; *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, p. 834.

¹⁰ *Sri Gouranga — the Man*, by Swami Durga Chaitanya Bharati. M.L. Dey, Calcutta, 1933.

¹¹ *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, p. 673.

¹² Space does not permit me to quote the exact parallels in the life of Ramakrishna; but I refer the reader to the *Gospel*, p. 649, and elsewhere regarding base metals. References to Divine interference are scattered through the *Gospel*; see, for instance, p. 75. For interference about his food, p. 917, etc.

¹³ *Gospel*, p. 92.

¹⁴ *Life of Sri Ramakrishna*, compiled from various authentic sources, 5th ed., 1943, p. 673.

¹⁵ Of this and other meetings, Dr. Atreya has written: “Swami Omananda Puri’s account of the meeting between the Brothers, Banaras Pandits and others at a Ganges-side house is correct. I was present and translated from English to Hindi. I would like to add that I had many talks with the Brothers through the entranced Boy; these confirmed my opinion that their teachings emanated from a high source. The Boy was dear to those who knew him.”

¹⁶ *Ibid.* p. 64.

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CHAPTER TEN

Storms and Devils

¹ *Life of Sri Ramakrishna*, p. 107. “The Mother” is the Cosmic Mother, the Feminine Aspect of the First Person of the Hindu Trinity, with manifestations of Whom he appeared to be in almost continuous communion.

² These descriptions are taken from Chapters 2 and 4 of a little book on the saint, written in flowery language by an Indian lawyer, Saheb H. B. Mehta, and published in 1952. He calls it *The Spiritual Symphony of Shree Sainath*. It abounds in references to other lawyers, judges, etc. There are several of such modest books which are especially valuable as having been written by people who knew the saint.

³ The Lord sends angels to tempt and try, as well as to succour. This is taught in the Bible and many other holy books.

⁴ *Prophet Muhammad* by Ahmad Shafi, and *His Teachings*, by Moulana Yakub Hasan, p. 78.

⁵ Franz Werfel, *The Song of Bernadette*, Bk. V, Chap. 10

⁶ Readers might be interested to learn that in ancient India the spiritual importance of insignia — shaven head (or wild locks), ochre robe, staff, *kamandalu* (begging bowl), etc., is held by many almost to equal that of the vows.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

What are ‘Brothers’?

¹ Sri Aurobindo’s translation in his *The Life Divine*, Vol. II, VII, 6, 5.

² Sri Aurobindo’s translation.

³ *The Tao Teh King*, from *Texts of Taoism*, trans. from the Chinese by James Legge. *Sacred Books of the East*, ed. by Max Müller, Vol. XXXIX, Part II, 66, i, ii, iii; 64, iii, iv.

⁴ Oxford University Press, 1928.

⁵ His words **what you think** are too philosophically involved to go into here.

⁶ M. F. Hecker, *Schopenhauer Und Die Indische Philosophie*, Cologne, 1897.

⁷ Winternitz, *History of Indian Literature*, Vol. I, p. 243.

⁸ Chapter XI.

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⁹ The Epistle of Paul to the Romans, ix, 16.

¹⁰ See the *Jivan-Mukti-Viveka*, an ancient authoritative treatise for *sannyasis*, by Sri Vidyanaranya.

¹¹ *My Life and Thought*.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Appearances — I

¹ An instance will be found in Chapter III, “*Pickle and the Floating Knights*”.

² *Ibid.* see footnote ¹ p. 49

³ 1967, aged 84. I see a lot more now! I saw our Lord after communion in hospital, sitting on the end of my bed. I see Brothers — day and night, with rare exceptions. They flash out as of old. No change.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Appearances — II

¹ See p. 208.

² Sanskrit. Derived from *pari*, meaning ‘ground,’ and *praj*, meaning ‘to go,’ wander. ‘One who goes around’ or ‘a wandering mendicant’; ‘an ascetic in the fourth stage of life, who has renounced home.’

³ I have explained the word elsewhere. The Brothers’ definition is best: **An ashram may be a hole in the ground or it may be a palace. It is the combined vibrations — that is the resultant of the combined vibrations — of people who are trying to gain understanding. An ashram should have for its foundation the stones of tolerance. An ashram should be the perfect expression of stiffness in at one ment.**

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CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Sunshine and Shadow

¹ Was the Brother looking into the future, for a *physical* mingling is already occurring? It appears that, through Chinese action, masses of able-bodied Tibetans have been forced into China and what is tantamount to slave labour. We read that millions of Chinese are or will be compelled to marry Tibetans. Thus the pure Tibetan race may be wiped out. But one thing has not been reckoned with — the unconquerable spirit of the Tibetans, which is of the quality that strengthens on obstacles.

² *British Government in India*, Vol. I, p. xvi.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Deep Waters

¹ *St. Matthew* 13, 58

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Death of the Boy

¹ Years after, I read of this in Mr. Suzuki's *Introduction to Zen Buddhism* (p. 50) “. . . considered to be the most concise of all the *Prajna sutras*, is daily recited in the Zen monasteries; in fact, it is the first thing the monks recite in the morning, as well as before each meal.”

² Cortisone, I have since learned, may ‘explode’ a peptic ulcer and the intestine be perforated. The Boy had had peptic ulcers for years. See Copeman, *Cortisone and ACTH* (Butterworth, 1953), pp. 53-4, 159, 161-2. Dr. Copeman remarks that tests must be many and thorough, that “peritonitis and septicaemia have all arisen during treatment”, etc.; see also Glyn, *Cortisone Therapy* (Heinemann, 1957), pp. 10, 28.

³ *Bhagavadgita*, VI, 22.