

## ANGREZI OF THE BLUE-MOUNTAINS

### CHAPTER ONE

I was one of the workers in the Institute for the study of Pre-nuclear History in London. The objective of the Institute is to study the life, customs and beliefs, attitudes and relationships of our forefathers who lived before the Nuclear Age. Such a study would enable us not only to understand our past, but may also help us in planning our future and to avoid the mistakes of our ancestors. We do this not only by a study and analysis of books, but also by investigating pictures, photographs, movies and recorded voices as well as the physical remnants of the period. Latest methods of analytical psychology are utilized in evaluating words as well as moving pictures in order to arrive at the motivations of individuals and groups and the conflicts of the time. The difficulty is not lack of information (which is available in plenty) but our ability to interpret the evidence, to separate the authentic from the spurious and reconcile conflicting data so that it forms a coherent body of knowledge.

Considerable progress has been made in the recent past, but it has not been possible to publish any of the conclusions. Until recently, it was the policy of the state to discourage, and under certain circumstances, even prohibit the study of pre-nuclear history. It was felt that a recounting of historical conflicts between geographic regions might adversely affect the conditioning process to which the entire population was being subjected and might be the cause of a possible renewal. The risk – however slight – was not worth taking. This decision was backed – in fact, advocated – by the Institute of Post-Nuclear Psychology. As a result, the Institute of Pre-Nuclear History was closed for many years and only started functioning again recently. It is only after the merger of the Eastern and Western hemispheres that the Institute has been permitted to publish some of their findings. Many people, even among the elite, are not aware of its existence.

Some time last year, we at the Institute received a letter from an organisation in Madras, in the Eastern hemisphere.

“We understand that you are interested in the study of pre-nuclear history”, it said. “We have in this region a group of people known locally as the ‘Angrezi’ who have been completely isolated from post-nuclear developments of the last one hundred and fifty years. They occupy a range of hills known as the Nilgiris or the Blue mountains and still live in what might be called the primitive age. To give a few examples, they still reproduce themselves by the biological process of natural conception. Even the elementary principles of selection are unknown to them. Acquiring knowledge, or ‘learning’ as it is called, is still a laborious process of gradual acquisition through memory and consciousness. They are still subject to the conflicts and emotions that beset our ancestors in the pre-nuclear age and which brought them to near extinction.

“Though the original barrier has been removed, we are still keeping them isolated since a sudden exposure to our concepts and way of life might be too great a shock for their egos to bear. They might also cause some disturbance among some sections of our own population who are not yet fully attuned to our new life. But it is inevitable that in course of time, they

will be assimilated by the progress around them. Before that happens, we would like you to study their values, beliefs and social organisation. It would be a valuable contribution to the study of pre-nuclear history since this is the last remnant of a bygone civilization. We ourselves are unable to study them because of an interesting reason. These people claim to belong originally to Great Britain and have an emotional affinity to that country. In fact, the word 'Angrezi' means English in one of the local languages. They have a negative approach to the Eastern hemisphere and any attempt on our part to study them would make their ultimate integration, that much more difficult. Therefore, if you undertake this study, we shall be pleased to extend all the usual facilities..."

A search into the official records connected with the great partition – which had been handed over to the Institute recently – revealed the existence of such a group of people as mentioned in the letter. The invitation was therefore enthusiastically accepted by our Institute and I was chosen for the visit because of my knowledge of pre-nuclear languages and my acquaintance with immediate pre-nuclear history. This is in a way, a report of my visit, not so much for the specialist but for the general reader. In writing this, I realize that I have broken the rules and conventions that have been established during the past hundred years and this is the first work of this kind for a long time. Personal narratives have been considered to be against the policy of sustained ego annihilation and maximizing the collective personality of mankind. My only excuse in breaking that convention is that I have been greatly affected by this unique experience. The artificial conditioning and the suppression of the individual ego has been but a thin film which has been pierced by the depth and reality of my emotional experience and I feel very strongly that there is need to revise and even radically alter our own society. Expression of such an opinion is a crime against the state in the Western hemisphere and it will be attributed not so much to my experience but to some defect in the gene of my origin. It may be that I will suffer for it either in a conditioning unit to undergo further treatment, or that I will be liquidated as an egocentric. Detailing one's experience is a glorification of the self, and I am guilty of it. But in order that my ego shall not be affected by praise or blame, I shall be anonymous.

In view of the changes that have taken place in my mental make-up as a result of this visit, let me say that until the time I left my Institute, I was a loyal member of western society, a sincere follower of PUP (Philosophy of Universal Pragmatism) and an efficient worker in whatever jobs I was allotted. My conditioning was normal and my resistance to it was near to zero. Otherwise, I would not have been chosen for this task.

\*\*\*\*\*

I was met at the Madras heliport by a representative of the society of Psycho-Biology, our host organisation. "My name is Chuck", he said as we shook hands. He came to the point without any preliminaries.

"You will have to live for the next few months under pre-nuclear conditions", he explained. "Your body will be exposed to the varying degrees of the natural atmosphere and you will have to consume all kinds of organic substances and digest them. It has therefore been decided that you should enter an acclimatization clinic".

"But, surely, I can stick to my nutrients!" I asked.

“No, the people you are going to visit will expect you to participate in all their activities. Though you may consider your visit as a matter of scientific curiosity, they look upon it as a social visit of great importance. It is necessary to encourage them in that idea in order to persuade them to take a positive attitude towards post-nuclear developments”.

I felt a little apprehensive over this. But my companion assured me on that point. “Your ego-conditioning will not in any way be disturbed”, he assured me. “On the other hand, it will be strengthened. While in the Nilgiris, your ego will be subjected to all kinds of emotional stresses and strains and it is essential you should be able to withstand them without being affected. I have studied the methods used in London, and I can assure you that our methods are a little more advanced. I suppose you have your EDS (Ego-data-sheet) with you?”

“Of course!”

“Then there is no problem. We shall feed it into our psycho stat computer which will automatically adjust the level of conditioning required”.

So, I entered an ‘acclimatisation clinic’ which was used largely by space travellers who had to get adjusted to different atmospheres or by others who had to be in the outer atmosphere for any length of time. Here my body was subjected to changing conditions of temperature, humidity and altitude. Some of the organic functions which had been slowed down because of the civilized life to which everyone was accustomed were revitalized and reactivated. Since the human body in its exposed state is extremely susceptible to various types of bacterial infection, anti-bacterial fluids were injected into my system to protect me from such attacks. The digestive system was reinforced in order to enable me to consume undigested food as well as alcoholic beverages. After seven days of such treatment, I emerged as being physically fit to stand the climatic as well as the gastronomical rigours of the Angrezi civilization.

In order to ensure that I will not be influenced by the passions and attitudes of the people I was going to visit and in order to ensure my objectivity, my psycho-social conditioning was also strengthened. Finally, I was provided with two kinds of pills, one for my biological upsets and the other for psycho-social imbalances, if any should develop. I was also provided with a micro-wave television set for long distance communication so that if anything should go wrong, I could always get help. Instead of the disposable attire to which we were all used, old fashioned clothing suitable to the traditions and fashions of the Angrezi people were obtained for me and I was educated in their use for different social occasions. I was also provided with an almost unlimited amount of local currency for ‘expenses’. I was now ready for the journey.

The next morning, Chuck met me. He was to be my companion for the journey as well as my contact with the outer world during my sojourn in the Blue Mountains. He had my wave length and I had his. As we set off in the hovercopter – Chuck piloting it – he wanted to know how I felt.

“To use a pre-nuclear expression, I feel fit as a fiddle”, I replied.

He laughed. “I hope you realize what you are getting into”, he said. “It is going to be very different from conducting a study in our own society”.

“I have been protected against all eventualities”, I said. “Both physical as well as mental”.

“This is one of the fallacies of modern science”, mused my companion. “We think we know everything, but we don’t. From this point of view, we are even worse than our predecessors of the pre-nuclear age. The fact is, we still have a long way to go before we fully understand the total relationship between psychological and biological factors and the role that emotion plays in such a relationship”.

“But surely, the conditioning process at any rate has been perfected”, I remarked.

“It has been perfected against known eventualities, against situations that are likely to arise in our own society and within our own experience. But you are going into the unknown. You are going into our historical past. It is like thrusting a baby back into the womb and letting it grow all over again. It is no doubt a unique situation, but I would not like to be the baby”.

His statements were creating a feeling of insecurity in my mind. Why he was doing it, I wondered. Was it because of consideration for me, or was it because of his own inadequate conditioning to our social needs? I said as much.

He laughed. “I have to make sure your conditioning is adequate”, he said. “I have been asked to test you out and find out your reactions. We don’t want anything to go wrong with this study. Our objective is to get the Angrezi population to integrate without any disturbance of an emotional nature and without the use of conditioning. There is a reason for that. If, as a group, they cannot be assimilated, they may have to be annihilated. Though that will fit in with your ‘PUP’, many of us in the Eastern hemisphere have enough prejudices from our historical past, not to want to resort to it. There are still traces of sentiment in our society and any wholesale liquidation might lead to a collective guilt complex”.

Was he still testing me out? I wondered. Whatever the motive, I knew my reply. “PUP is the ultimate reality”, I said.

Then he changed the subject. “I should like to know something about your study”, he said. “Are you going to be an observer or a participant?”

“I am going with an open mind. I shall act as the situation dictates”. I knew PUP had all the answers.

“Social participation, without of course emotional involvement, will yield the best results”.

“Perhaps you are right”.

“If you agree with me, then you should have these”, he handed me a small box of pills. “These are for the activation of sex impulses”, he said.

I was rather surprised. Though I was a guest of the society for psycho-biology, the research project was my responsibility. They were only supposed to provide the necessary facilities and no more. Why should he interfere with these arrangements which had been arrived at, at a higher level? Or, perhaps, there was something about the attitudes of the Eastern hemisphere that I had not learnt. I wish I had studied their philosophy or Thought Control – TC as it was popularly known – a little more carefully.

“One of the advantages of being even an elementary student of TC is that I can read your mind. This is one area where we in the East have progressed much further than you have. You are wondering, ‘Why should Chuck interfere with a purely historical research with his own ideas of social participation without emotional involvement’? You are also thinking about the agreement between the high-ups and this will interfere with that agreement”.

I was amazed at the manner in which he was able to divine my thoughts. It was something we in the western hemisphere had not yet been able to achieve. But as far as sex was concerned, in the post-nuclear age in the western hemisphere, with scientific developments in human reproduction without the aid of the female womb, marriage was no longer necessary. In fact, the Philosophy of Universal Pragmatism – PUP as it has come to be known – actively discouraged it until it was finally banned some thirty years ago. Monogamy, to which pre-nuclear civilizations attached such great importance, was thought of as an out-worn superstition. Because of the conditioning process, it was possible for the state to ensure their ideas were accepted by people very quickly and enthusiastically. As a result of all these factors, sex was only occasionally indulged in between willing partners and rarely discussed.

“In any case, I do not need those pills”, I replied.

“But I assure you they are necessary”, Chuck insisted. Then, he went on to explain. “I do not know if you have noticed, but human beings who have had a natural birth need sex much more often and more intensely than those who are born out of incubators. And these people we are going to visit are all natural born”.

“I do not propose to indulge in sex while I am there”, I replied. “I am here for a scientific purpose and at the conclusion of that work, I propose to return to my institute”.

“But your studies will not be successful or complete unless they include the sexual behavior of these people”, my guide protested. He became so enthusiastic that I began to doubt his intentions. But the trouble was, I did not know his motives while he could read my thoughts. “Listen!” he said. “Please do not think I am asking you to do this with any ulterior motives. As a specialist in reproductive biology, it is my responsibility to test and control the artificial reproductive process and assure the quality as well as the numbers of the future generation. Lately, I have been worried about the number of failures as a result of the sterility of the specimens. And the number of failures tends to increase with the number of incubator generations. The genus of lunar children are more potent because there have only been one or two incubator generations in their case. On the other hand, the genus of the first experimental incubator children are almost completely sterile. In every one of the cases where they have been used for reproductive purposes, I have failed”.

“What does it mean in terms of population control?” I asked anxiously, for I was rather proud of the fact that I could trace my ancestry back to the first incubator children.

“It means that if all children were artificially produced, the human race will die out in a few more generations”, he said. “Already we are finding it very difficult to produce the types we want. It is a staggering thought that reproductive biology whose main objective is to improve the quality of the human race should turn out to be the means of its extinction”.

“But how can that happen?” I asked. “We are the same as our natural born ancestors in every respect; in fact we are superior in many fields because we have eliminated the undesirable”.

“We started experiments with recombinant DNA which is the active substance in the genes of all living things. It was possible to splice together through research technology, cells of bacteria which are normally produced only by animal or human cells. But later, through appropriate computer programming and mathematical techniques, it was made possible for the artificial reproduction of almost any species. In fact, we could produce almost any type of being such as a man with two heads, but by law, we have been restricted to natural species only”.

“Then you will have to do some more programming in your giant computers”.

“It is not as simple as that”, he mused. “It may be because we changed the biological clock by reducing the period of conception from two hundred and seventy days to a mere thirty days. It may be that the natural womb used to supply certain as yet unidentified substances for which we have made no provision in the incubators we have designed; or it may be that these incubators may have a deleterious effect on the reproductive system of the human male. I do not know”.

“Do you think it may have anything to do with the conditioning process?”

“I wish I knew”, he confessed. “Our psychologists on both sides assure me that it is not so. But I have my own doubts”, he paused. “You see, there was a pre-nuclear psychologist named Freud who put forward an interesting theory that sex was the basis of all emotion. If that were so, then, if you abolish or at least suppress all emotion through the conditioning process, then, it may affect your sexual impulses”.

“But then, the descendants of the lunar children have also gone through the conditioning process?” I suggested.

“Not to the same extent”, said my guide. “If you remember, they were brought under the full control of our respective governments at a much later date. But I have no doubt that if the present system continues, it will no longer be possible to replenish the planet Earth in another, let me see, a hundred years”.

“I have not heard about it in the western hemisphere”, I said.

“The problem is the same there”, he said. “I have been in touch with my colleagues and their results confirm mine. They are also worried. But our governments are not; they think we are being unnecessarily pessimistic”.

“You know, as a mere historian, this interests me very much”, I said. “There have been various periods in human history when a small group of insignificant people have saved the human race from utter destruction. If your suspicions are correct, then, the Angrezi of the Blue Mountains may yet come to our aid”.

“That is where these pills come in”, said my companion. I was beginning to feel an affection towards him that was against all codes of behavior and the object of conditioning, since we were told that it was impossible to feel affection without at the same time feeling dislike. And since I felt one, I was likely to feel the other.

“That is where these pills come in”, repeated my companion. “I want to find out whether we people who have been reproduced artificially for three or four generations are still capable of normal means of union and reproduction”.

“If that is so, why don’t you try them yourself?” I asked.

“I have”, he replied. “But you see, the Angrezi people feel an affinity towards you which they don’t have towards me. And according to their concept of sex, such an affinity is a definite pre-requisite. So, you have a much better chance than I have of experimentation. Mind you, if an opportunity should present itself, I shall certainly take advantage of it”.

I quietly accepted the pills he still had in his hand. “The instructions on when and how to take them are inside”, he said.

We were now travelling at full speed and I asked my companion if he could tell me more about these people we were going to visit. “When this community decided to live in isolation”, my companion began. “We permitted them to do so in order to see how they would develop. We have been observing them through psycho-vision which as you know transmits not only pictures and sounds, but feeling and emotions as well. Of course they do not know that they have been so closely and minutely observed. If they had known, there would have been another of their severe protests. They still believe in pre-nuclear ideologies and attitudes. Certain things about an individual or a group are supposed to be private and sacred. They should not be ‘violated’.”

“I know what is meant by ‘sacred’, but what is ‘violated’?”

“It means to break or to destroy something that they hold sacred”, said my companion. “You see, these people cannot be left alone. They have very aggressive tendencies. They have not been conditioned as we have been for generations towards the elimination of emotion and conflict. Without knowing that we have the power to destroy them at a moment’s notice, they are trying to invade the neighbouring lands and take possession of them. They sent protests over imaginary grievances. They threaten us with death and destruction. So, we have only two alternatives. They have to be assimilated or annihilated. But for the reasons I mentioned previously about the problems of reproductive biology, they have to be assimilated”.

“Have you tried to condition them at all?”

“No, they refuse to be conditioned. And as you know, it is extremely difficult to condition people against their will. But because you hail from what they call their home country, they have a very receptive attitude towards your visit and it will help us to assimilate them”.

“Isn’t it possible to leave them alone and continue to watch how they develop further?”

“No, when the barrier was removed, they started disturbing the tranquility of the entire area. First, they came to us with proposals to trade that are exchange goods on a barter system; second, they have been spreading dangerous ideas regarding our organisations. They have succeeded in disturbing the conditioning of people in this area. We have now had to put guards to see that they do not come into our areas except on some legitimate business”.

“I am learning so many new words”. I said. “Sacred, legitimate, violate”.

“They are not new; they are pre-nuclear words which have fallen into disuse because of their superfluity for our advanced culture. But any contact with the Angrezi will make you learn all these words very quickly”.

“Will there be any opposition to our visit?” I enquired.

“I think we are going to be very well received”, said my companion. “You see, these people claim Great Britain as the home of their ancestors. Their ideas and institutions are supposed to have been derived from that Island from the pre-nuclear days. They look upon it as their home and the western hemisphere as their ally and the Eastern hemisphere as their enemy. They know that you are from Great Britain and they look upon you as their blood relation.....”

“Blood relation?” I interrupted.

“Yes; a blood relation in pre-nuclear terminology is one who has a biological affinity through natural conception that can be traced through the institution of birth and marriage. You can be sure not only of a positive attitude towards you, but you will also have to be prepared for a certain amount of personal glorification”.

“But that is forbidden in both hemispheres as being conducive to the building up of loyalties as well as tensions!” I said.

“Yes, but these people are outside our law; we have as yet, no control over either their actions or their laws and institutions. And they believe they are carrying on the traditions of western hemisphere”.

Meanwhile, we were travelling through wilder country which seemed to have been left to the vagaries of nature. As we passed a narrow strip of clearing completely free of vegetation, my guide pointed out, “This is where we had the electrical barrier to ensure the isolation of the Angrezi. We did not need a nuclear one because the area was too small and the technology of these people did not necessitate such precautions. It was merely an electrical fence with an automatic repulsion device and a safety mechanism to prevent accidents”.

From then on, we started to climb. We passed through many mountain gorges and steep rocks. There was thick vegetation and we could see pre-nuclear animals like the elephant roaming freely. To think that we were in an area which had remained more or less unchanged from pre-nuclear times and untouched by modern developments and progress seemed to upset my nervous system. Both my companion and I felt it.

“Do you think that our conditioning is getting disturbed?” I asked.

“Wait till you get there”, commented my companion.

We went up higher and higher and sometimes we could see strips of hard ground which disappeared into the vegetation and appeared again after some distance.

“That is the old road. In pre-nuclear days they had vehicles which depended primarily on ground support against gravity for their stability. And propulsion had to be over a smooth surface. Therefore, the entire planet was covered by strips like that and the whole thing was controlled by a



complicated system of rules and regulations and penalties for their violation. Even in the early years of the nuclear age there was a world-wide controversy as to whether one should drive on the left or the right hand side of these pathways”.

I did not mind listening to my companion on Reproductive Biology or on the habits of the Angrezi about which he knew more than I did. But early history was something which was my professional speciality and I did not like him explaining such simple things to me. So, I said, “I am familiar with these problems. As a matter of fact, those strips of land were not called pathways; they were referred to in the early stages of their development as Macadams and later as Motorways and the vehicles that used them were called Motors.

“I forgot that this was your area”, my companion said.

“And those parallel lines you see were also used for transport of people as well as commodities. They were called mail trains”.

“You should take some of your conditioning pills”, my companion quietly observed. “You are showing egotistical tendencies and as you get to the top of the Blue Mountains and meet these people, your nervous system will be subjected to a much greater strain”.

“But....” I was going to argue, but the very fact that I had that feeling proved my guide to be right. I hastily took some pills and enquired, “But how do you manage? You have not taken any”.

“Since I have had to meet these people very often, I have had to take a special resistance course”, he explained.

Now we had stopped climbing but the land was still undulating. There was no longer any thick vegetation. There were open fields growing crops necessary for nutrients just as I had seen in the moving pictures in the institute. Men were walking and started at us. One man raised what seemed to be a weapon and tried to hit us from a distance. But our hovercopter was proof against such attempts. As we reached their major habitation, we could see crowds of people assembled to receive us. Our communication system told us that they were making a terrific noise, but it was a welcoming noise. As we came to a halt in the open ground and as we got out of our craft, I had a feeling of nervous tension that was strangely disquieting.

## CHAPTER TWO

This narrative so far might be somewhat incomprehensible to most of the readers. That is because, history as a subject had not been taught in schools for many years now and is recorded only by a few people like myself. But we have had to work under very many constraints. Often, it was interrupted either through lack of support or through active prohibition. Therefore, a short explanation of the events of the last two centuries is necessary so that the readers might understand the background of my trip to the Blue Mountains.

\*\*\*\*\*

How is it that a group of people – their population today is less than one hundred thousand – originally belonging to Great Britain happened to be left in India? What is even more surprising is, how is it that they have been isolated from the stream of progress and from their environment? Why is it that no one had even heard of their existence in the western hemisphere? An answer to these questions calls for an explanation in terms of Post-nuclear history. Incidentally, this is the first time that this history is being recorded so that it will come as somewhat of a shock to most people.

The first five decades of the nuclear age (N.A. as it has come to be known) was a period of great confusion and chaos in the whole world. There were ideological conflicts, class struggles and religious bigotry. There were major disputes over the use of the reserves of food and oil over the domination of one group of people over another and over racial segregation and oppression that we would find it difficult to understand. As a result, a number of minor wars broke out in various parts of the world such as the Middle East – which was often referred to as the Middle East – South America, the Far East and between eastern and Western Europe. Suddenly, in the fiftieth year of the nuclear age (corresponding to 1994 A.D. according to the old calendar) it became a general conflagration.

When the second nuclear war broke out and threatened to exterminate mankind from planet earth, the scientists, engineers and other intellectuals on both sides went on strike. That is, they ceased work and refused to contribute their knowledge which their states could use for purposes of mutual annihilation. Economic as well as social life was completely paralysed and the governments on both sides ceased to function effectively. There was confusion and chaos everywhere and what in those days was referred to as anarchy.

A Congress of nations was hastily convened to consider the situation. The leaders of these nations – unlike those in modern times – were not psychologically educated to a state of conflict avoidance. To them, conflict was a law of nature and they knew no other. They also clung desperately to what was known in those days as ‘ideologies’ and ‘ways of life’ and ‘national interests’. These were made a justification for all kinds of tensions and confrontations. Even when there was no organized mass violence, there was verbal violence, mental and psychological cruelty and a desire for domination between individuals and groups which made progress, a slow and haphazard method.

People who had been brought up on these ideas since the birth of humanity on planet Earth could not reconcile themselves to the idea of perpetual peace and planned progress which was what

the writers and the scientists demanded of them. Even the few who believed in it could not trust the others to do so. The congress of nations therefore went on for nearly a year, arguing, bargaining and negotiating while the people waited in anxiety and fear. Finally, it was agreed that the planet would be divided into two hemispheres – Eastern and Western – and an atomic curtain of high intensity was to separate the two halves. There would be no communication, contact or interference between the two sides. The Eastern part consisted of Asia, Africa and the Eastern part of Europe while the Western part consisted of the Americas, Western Europe and Australia. The atomic curtain ran from the North to the South Pole along the Ural Mountains, through the Mediterranean to the Atlantic to the South Pole and through the Pacific, back to the North Pole.

One of the clauses in the deed of 'Great Partition' as it came to be known referred to the minorities. A large number of West Europeans – mostly British were living in the Eastern hemisphere. While most of those living in Africa preferred to return to their respective homelands, those in South East Asia preferred to stay there. But they demanded nevertheless that they should also be permitted to develop independently without interference from the Eastern group of nations. This issue nearly wrecked the entire negotiations at one time. However, the representatives of the Eastern block finally agreed to provide them with adequate facilities for independent development. A region known as the Nilgiris – the Blue Mountains – in the southern part of India was placed at their disposal. The climate was suitable and the land was adequate to sustain the total population of Westerners.

It should be remembered that the Nilgiris have a climate similar to the British summer at its best and was consequently used by the British as a place of play and rest in the nineteenth century of the Christian era. Even after the independence of India, it had a distinctly British flavour and a large number of Englishmen who did not want to return to England for one reason or another, made it their home in the early post-nuclear period. It was therefore natural that that area should have been selected as a home for them after the great partition.

So, the people of British origin were permitted to lead their life in the Blue Mountains. Some facilities were provided for them in the early stages, but after a short time, they were completely isolated. The government of the Eastern hemisphere at that time seems to have respected this clause in the agreement, though there was no provision for its proper enforcement and supervision. So, the British have lived there for the past one hundred and fifty years, practicing their faith, cherishing their beliefs and conforming to their own pattern of social organisation. It is a world in miniature – a pre-nuclear world – set in the midst of the nuclear age. Since the study of history had been abolished in the Western hemisphere until recently, even the existence of these people was unknown before it was brought to our notice by the Society for Psycho-biology at Madras.

\*\*\*\*\*

Now, that I have started recounting the past, I might as well relate the rest of the developments in the post-nuclear age and bring it up-to-date for the benefit of my readers.

The great deed of partition saw the end of a group of people known as politicians who were running the various nations comprising the two hemispheres. The scientists who were entrusted with the responsibility of installing and maintaining the atomic curtain took over the administration of other aspects of life as well, including economic progress and group relationships. The period

before the Great partition was one of constant agitation, instability and hatred with shortages of essential commodities. Disease was uncontrolled, living conditions were appalling even by the primitive standards of the pre-nuclear age. The differences between the various groups were high. There were jealousies, rivalries and quarrels – words which have all but disappeared from our own society.

The first thing that the scientists and engineers did as soon as they took power was to set up two committees, composed only of themselves. The first one was known as the Material Progress Group (MPG) and the second, the Intellectual Progress Group (IPG). The MPG had the responsibility for production and distribution of all commodities for comfortable living. Within a period of five years, they succeeded in ensuring that everyone had adequate nutrients, clothing and accommodation, as well as facilities for recreation and entertainment. They were also responsible for many of the major achievements of the post-nuclear age. Artificial nutrients which eliminated our dependence on agriculture constant temperature plastic clothing, universal temperature control, conveyer transportation and elimination of natural conception. They also laid the foundation for colonization of the moon.

But the public was not satisfied. They wanted more things; what was worse, they wanted others to have less. There were complaints and counter complaints between groups, between regions and between families. This was where the IPG came in.

The IPG consisted mainly of psychologists though a few medical men as well as some other scientists were added later. They defined their major objectives as the elimination of conflict, not only the periodic, organized violence between nations, but all conflict from society. They found that conflicts were caused as a result of a number of socio-psychological factors and set about abolishing these factors systematically. Ideology, loyalty, patriotism, tradition, even family ties, were considered undesirable. Then, there was another set of factors and these were related to the ego of the individual, ambition, aspiration, desire for achievement, altruism, etc. The third and most important factor was emotion. It was felt that emotion was a purely subjective trait. Its presence in an individual tended to prevent a logical approach to problems and to the unpredictability of human behavior in a given situation. And when there was mass emotion, one did not know what might happen.

During the first few years of the formation of the new state of Western hemisphere, there was considerable discussion among the intellectuals as to what should be done. But gradually, even the discussion was found to be irksome by the 'professionals' of the IPG and decisions were taken without any further reference to public debate. It was claimed that even the public debate tended to exaggerate undesirable feelings and men were motivated not so much in solving problems as by a feeling of their own importance. Group therapy for all school going children was the first step in the elimination of conflict. Later, it was extended to adults on a voluntary basis, and finally, made compulsory. All these took many years, of course, and were introduced so gradually that the people did not know what was happening and by the time they did, they were already partly conditioned by group therapy.

Development in other fields also helped this process of conflict elimination. Procreation through artificial wombs and incubation, biological selection of types for different occupations and modern methods of imparting education through the subconscious were all helpful in the process of

conflict annihilation. Finally, a system of conditioning was introduced whereby the consciousness of an individual was fixed – just as the fixing of an image on photographic paper – so that the effect would be permanent. The entire process took nearly fifty years from the date of Great Partition. The conditioning was – and still is to a large extent – not always effective and mistakes led to a permanent damage to the brain cells, but it was felt that the risks were worth taking – particularly as babies could more or less be ‘made to order’.

It would be a mistake to imagine that there was no opposition to these reforms. In the beginning, there was opposition in the name of the sacred religions, in the name of the freedom of thought, and on the basis of a democratic way of life. But the opposition came largely from people who had been discredited in the pre-partition years for having brought the whole world to near extinction and the common people did not take it very seriously. But by the time conditioning was introduced, the scientists had become all powerful and a new generation, already adjusted to the new way of life, was growing up.

As a result of all these measures, the IPG succeeded in producing a population which was hard working, law abiding, uncomplaining, but without initiative, without the capacity or the desire for taking risks, and without imagination. Tears and laughter had both been abolished from society. Discontent was almost completely eliminated. The desire for possession and ownership, the impulse to power, the need for accumulating wealth, had all gone. People led a twilight existence that had no ups and downs of day and night, with no hopes and aspirations and no disappointments.

Side by side with these developments, there was another group within the IPG which, while not opposed to these developments, felt that these reforms were not adequate. They were all negative and were concerned with elimination of vices rather than the promotion of virtues. What was required was a faith to sustain the common people, a belief that would be logical and which would reinforce and strengthen the progressive measures taken by the IPG. Again after considerable public debate in the initial stages, a Philosophy of Universal Pragmatism was evolved. It came to be known as PUP, and the leaders of the movement were called ‘PUPPIES’. They issued a series of edicts – known as pupdicts – to strengthen the executive arm of the IPG. At first they were purely recommendatory but later, they became mandatory and it became the responsibility of the duly constituted authority to ensure that they were followed. Perhaps, a few examples would show the growth and development of PUP.

‘Ideologies create havoc in society; therefore all ideologies are abolished’.

‘Emotion is the root of all conflict. It should therefore be eliminated from public life’.

‘Ego is the basis of all evil. It should be suppressed’.

‘Logic should be the basis of all behavior. Pup logic is the best of all logics’.

‘People who sacrifice themselves will more easily sacrifice others; therefore, all sacrifice is a waste’.

‘There are no ‘causes’, great or small, only effects’.

‘Morality and immorality are both antisocial’.

During the past one hundred years, thousands of pupdicts must have been issued by various generations of PUPPIES, but it was felt that a really universal and all-embracing PUPDICT was still to come. This was enunciated by the last of the PUPPIES about twenty five years ago. It was simple and effective.

‘PUPPY dirt is clean dirt’.

It meant that Puppyism had now become universal, that it was pure and unadulterated and people who followed it can never be wrong. After that, there was obviously no need for further PUPDICTS. One saw it everywhere, on the walls, in offices and workshops, over loud speakers and on the radio and television. It was also implanted in the subconscious through the conditioning process so that it became an integral part of the personality of everyone in the Western hemisphere.

It may be naturally be asked, how I have acquired this power of discrimination if the entire population – including myself – had been subjected to the process of conditioning. And secondly, how this book is going to be published and distributed and who is going to do it? The answer to the first question is simple. It should be remembered that I am writing this account after I have been in Little Britain for some months, after the effects of conditioning have worn off and after I have achieved a certain degree of discrimination. Further, human ingenuity is still a match for the puppies. Conditioning is a standard process, the same procedure and intensity being followed for all people. But people’s capacity is highly variable, particularly where intellectual resistance is concerned. While some are easily conditioned, others are often immune or, at least, not greatly affected. In such cases additional dosage is given. But if the individual concerned pretends that he is fully conditioned both during tests and during his subsequent behavior, then no further action is taken. This of course is a severe strain on the individual concerned, living in a twilight society but experiencing the pains and aches of alternating day and night. Such torment can only be borne by the very strong willed and even they sometimes crack up, confess and are back in the conditioning chamber. I have now reason to believe that there are more such people in the Western hemisphere than is generally realized and it is to them that this account is really addressed. As to how they are going to be reached, it will have to be decided only after I have completed this narrative.

\*\*\*\*\*

Having started on this post-nuclear history, I might as well bring it up-to-date. The policy of isolated development of the two hemispheres continued for many decades, without either side knowing what the other was doing. But with the development of space travel and particularly after both sides started colonizing the Moon, there was some sort of contact. Satellites were established at critical points to direct space traffic and their location had to be by agreement. There was also another agreement regarding which parts of the moon belonged to each side. Here again, the policy of isolated development – or Apartheid as it was known – was followed.

Control of people in outer space was naturally more difficult in spite of the special conditioning they had to undergo before embarking on a journey. A psycho-medical dose of emotional obliteration was also administered on their return. But in spite of these precautions, space travellers from both sides met each other out of curiosity and exchanged ideas and information for many years without either of the governments being aware of it. But when the first Lunar census was taken in the hundredth year of the Nuclear Age, it was noticed for the first time

that there were a large number of unaccounted children. In spite of the complete banning of natural conception and delivery in the ninetieth year, it was known that children continued to be born by the old fashioned method. But the peculiarity about the Lunar children was that there were supposed to be no children at all there and they were all natural born. An even more awkward situation arose when it was discovered that they were the products of inter-hemispherical unions! These children were brought up with no conditioning of their egos and with all the dangerous emotions coming to the surface of their consciousness. They quarreled and fought, laughed and cried, were often destructive and were greatly attached to their mothers.

This was a major embarrassment to both the governments and a ticklish problem in planned progress. In view of the universal acceptance of the conditioning process, there was no need for any kind of law enforcement agencies such as courts, goals, police and so on and all these had been abolished some time ago. Nor was it possible to punish the parents, one of whom was usually on the other side. It was therefore decided to ignore past misdeeds and to tighten control for the future.

It was then discovered that natural born children were more resistant to conditioning than incubator babies. They also proved to be more cunning – probably under instruction from their parents – in that they pretended to be conditioned and after release behaved in an unconditioned manner. This also brought to light the fact that a large number of people were merely conforming to their environment and not really conditioned. To combat these problems, new methods of conditioning were developed which were far more intensive and which sometimes proved to be dangerous in that it destroyed consciousness altogether.

The question of applying the doctrine of partition to outer space was considered. But any nuclear barrier in outer space would have interfered with the free movement of spacecraft and had to be given up. In any case, since the two governments could not officially meet to discuss anything, nothing was done. And outer space remained a clandestine meeting ground for the more adventurous on both sides. There seems to have been some curiosity on the part of the governments also to find out what was going on the other side and these meetings provided the means of such knowledge. In course of time, the governments while frowning on inter hemispherical unions officially, did not object to them so long as the number was kept within reasonable limits. In fact, there even some unofficial visits from one side to the other by couples who had been separated, through the connivance of the space pilots who were perhaps the worst offenders. The confidential records of the period are full of references to these Lunar marriages and their offspring – referred to as ‘unauthorised population escalation’ (UPE).

Finally, the State was forced to act, Laws were specifically enacted against such unions with threats of permanent expulsion into outer space. Conditioning tests, atmospheric exposure tests, identification marks at birth, were employed in order to locate and eliminate people from the other hemisphere, or their children. But these tests were by no means accurate and since they had to be applied to the total population, it led to anxiety neurosis among normally conditioned Westerners. The problem became so serious on both sides that a secret meeting of the population controllers of both hemispheres was held in outer space and it was agreed that limited travel facilities might be permitted between the two sides for such married couples and their children, that all such marriages should be registered on both sides and in future, they should not be allowed to have any offspring.

The population controllers got on so well at that first meeting that it was followed by other meetings to discuss some problem or other. It was discovered that both sides had developed more or less on similar lines, that the desire for power as well as conflict no longer existed. Unification of the two hemispheres was considered a practical possibility, but for obvious reasons, both sides hesitated. After some years, entrances and exits were provided in the atomic curtain for travel so that one did not have to go to the moon in order to get to the other side of the earth. Trade was resumed and currency unification was brought about. Finally the complete removal of the barrier was brought about a few years ago.

That is how we at the Institute of Pre-Nuclear History happened to hear about the people of little Britain and how I happened to come here, with all the attendant problems.



### CHAPTER THREE

The hovercopter came to a halt in the middle of a large open space, perhaps the only flat ground in the whole of the mountain range. I learnt later it was called the race course where animals – particularly horses – were ridden in order to determine which was the fastest. People backed their opinions with money and it was considered an entertainment. The door opened and my companion and I got out.

There was a large crowd of about a thousand people, dressed in what were probably pre-nuclear clothes of spun wool and cotton. They seemed to be watching us with eager anticipation from a distance. There was noise and laughter and shouting among them before we landed – as we could gather from our internal communication system – but a hush fell as we emerged for our craft.

As I entered the outer atmosphere of the Blue Mountains, there was bright sunshine, but a cool breeze hit my face. The combination of warm sunshine and cold wind did something to my system that I could not immediately understand. This was the first time I had been exposed to the external atmosphere and it gave me feelings and sensations that were totally strange. It seemed to raise my spirits and at the same time, cause anxieties. Words such as ‘spirits’ and ‘anxieties’ had been totally eliminated from the post-nuclear civilization and but for my knowledge of the past, I would not have been able even to describe my feelings. Chuck whispered, “I understand what you feel, but you will get used to it”.

Meanwhile, a man was walking towards us with a ring of sweet smelling flowers – this, I learnt later was known as a garland and offered to important visitors as a sign of welcome. As he came nearer, I was rather surprised at his features. I had been told that these people were of British origin and I expected a white man with blonde or brown coloured hair. But he was the colour of pale coffee. On his forehead was a cross, etched permanently as it were. There was a slight hesitation as he neared us; evidently, he was not sure which of us had come from the land of his ancestors. But as he recognized my pale face, he came to me.

“On behalf of the people of this lonely outpost of the British Empire, the United Kingdom of Little Britain and Southern Nilgiris, I welcome His Majesty’s Ambassador from our homeland”, he announced in a booming voice as he placed the ring of flowers round my neck. “Perhaps, I should not have used the word ‘Ambassador’, for we are a part of the British Commonwealth of Nations. Therefore, I say, welcome to Your Excellency, Mr. High Commissioner from Great Britain!”

It was perhaps a good thing I was a student of pre-nuclear history and therefore knew what he was talking about. He extended his hand and we shook hands.

“Who have I the honour of addressing?” I enquired. I had prepared myself for this kind of conversation.

“I am Sir Winston Baldwin, the Prime Minister of Little Britain and Southern Nilgiris. May I know your name please?”

I was somewhat surprised, for titles had been abolished in the fiftieth year of the Nuclear Age – N.A. which replaced Christian era at the same time. In my own society, we had codes for individuals for all practical purposes and names were unofficial and not recognized. This was part of

the process of ego annihilation in the Western hemisphere. In the records of our society, I was GB 145 APNH 628. GB referred to what was previously known as Great Britain, A to the London area, PNH for pre-nuclear history and 628 was me. But my colleagues occasionally called me 'George' though not in the presence of the High – Ups.

"I am Smith", I replied.

The Prime Minister of Little Britain looked at me in some surprise. "Surely, the accredited representative of a great nation cannot possibly have such a plebian name!" he exclaimed. "We have Smiths here; they are either Blacksmiths or Goldsmiths. Blacksmiths are usually black and belong to the native population".

Things were getting a little beyond me. I looked at Chuck, but he was smiling. "You may say he is Smithsonian", Chuck replied.

"There must be some mistake", the Prime Minister said with emphasis. "Originally, your name must have been Sonian-Smith, but later corrupted by the passage of time. It happens to all of us. My great-grand mother used to know some Sonian-Smiths from Sussex and she used to talk about them. Anyhow, it is an unusual and dignified name and does you credit. I hope you don't mind if we address you as Sir George Sonian-Smith".

I supposed if the prime minister could call himself a knight, I could do so with equal justification. That was what PUP was all about – the Philosophy of Universal Pragmatism. In any case, it was better than being known as GB 145 APNH 628.

"And your companion... What is your name Mr....."

"I am Chackravarthy", my companion answered. "But you can call me 'Chuck'".

"Ah! You must be a descendant of that famous British Statesman from Madras, Chackravarthy Rajagopalachary", Then he turned to me. "He was the last British Governor-General of India".

"I must be getting back", Chuck said. "In case you need any assistance or if you wish to return after your mission, you know how to get in touch with me". He shook hands and departed. Now, I knew I was really alone among these people who claimed to be my kith and kin, but among whom I felt a total stranger.

"Shall we proceed with the ceremonies?" asked Sir Winston. I had learnt that was how you addressed a knight in the old days.

"Yes, yes", I replied not knowing what the ceremonies were going to be.

We walked towards a small platform on which was spread a red carpet almost threadbare from long usage.

"This carpet belongs to the Government House and was used by the last British Governor, Sir Archibald Nye. It has therefore great sentimental associations for us. It has been brought out specially for this occasion". Then, the prime minister began his speech.

“My Lords, ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the Government and people of Little Britain and Southern Nilgiris, I extend a most hearty welcome to the representative of His Majesty’s Government from across the seas. This is a historic day – I might almost say a red letter day if it wasn’t for the fact that red as a symbol of political despotism has been banned from our society – in the history of our small kingdom. Ever since the day we were forcibly and violently separated from our blood brethren in Great Britain and made to live in these hills, we have looked forward to a reunion with our homeland. After a lapse of fifteen decades, our hopes and aspirations have been fulfilled. We have amidst us the accredited representative of His Majesty’s Government in Great Britain as the first High Commissioner. My Government takes full credit for the achievement of this long-cherished dream”.

He went on like this for about ten minutes.

“I have therefore great pleasure in extending a warm and hearty welcome to Sir George Sonian-Smith and hope that his stay among us will be pleasant and enjoyable. During his visit, he will have an opportunity to learn at first hand, our problems and difficulties and I am sure he will convey them to his Government. Let me hope that this day marks a new era in the history of our little nation”.

There was applause from those assembled when the Prime Minister’s speech was over. I was obviously expected to say a few words by way of reply, but I was not quite sure of what to say. They did not know the changes that had taken place in the Western hemisphere and in the rest of the world during the last two centuries. But to refer to them at this juncture might not be appropriate. I did what PUP would have expected me to do. I behaved as the representative of ‘His Majesty’s Government’.

“Ladies and gentlemen”, I started. “I am happy to be here and to meet you all. In the next few weeks, I hope to get to know you and learn something of your problems as well as achievements. As far as Great Britain is concerned, there have been many changes during the last two centuries. Some of these changes might come as a big surprise to you. But I shall not dwell on them now. Let me just say that during my stay here, I will explore the possibilities of establishing permanent links in the coming years. May I thank you and your prime minister for the warm welcome you have given me and for the love and affection you have shown to a country which was once your home-land”.

There was applause as well as cheers when I finished. I felt that even the greatest Puppy – the men who had developed ‘PUP’ were known as ‘PUPPIES’ – could not have done better.

We then inspected what was known as a guard of honour – a row of uniformed men standing with long poles with spikes at the end. They dipped these poles as we walked past them and I was a little anxious, but they were obviously adept at their job, for the spikes stopped about ten inches above my head.

Then we walked to a coloured tent where the ‘quality’ – the important citizens of the town – had gathered. I was introduced to a large number of people whose names I could not remember. As cups of tea were handed round, one man kept pestering me with questions about the Government

of the Western hemisphere, about Great Britain and her relationship with Europe, about the changes that had taken place and about the relationship between the East and the West. I made short non-committal answers which did not seem to satisfy him.

“Sir George is there or is there not a monarchy in Great Britain? It is a simple enough question for you to give a straight answer”.

“Mr. Shah is the editor of the local newspaper and he has the persistence of his breed”, explained Sir Winston.

“Monarchy was abolished after the reign of Charles the third”, I replied.

“As I understand it, titles were closely associated with the monarchy”, Mr. Shah went on. “It is therefore logical to assume that titles would have been abolished also. How is it then that you call yourself Sir George?”

I realized I was treading on somewhat dangerous ground. I had to resort to PUP again, that is, a counter attacks in order to avoid an awkward situation.

“Is Little Britain a monarchy?” I enquired innocently.

“I wouldn’t say so,” answered the journalist.

“How is it then that your prime minister calls himself Sir Winston?”

That kept him quiet effectively for the time being. My rating in PUP was not very high and I had been warned about it. I wished now that my ‘superiors’ could have seen me handle the situation. But I did not know at that time that my answer had made Shah extremely suspicious of me.

After the ‘reception’ was over, I was led to a vehicle which in pre-nuclear days was known as a ‘motor car’. But the interesting thing was that it was drawn by four horses and seemed to have lost its motive power. The Prime Minister and I got in and it started moving. We drove along a steep road. People on either side stood and waved the Union Jack. One interesting thing that I noticed was that everyone without exception had this cross etched on their foreheads. While it was black in the case of men, women had them in different colours. I made a mental note to find out what it signified. After about ten minutes of slow driving, as we turned a corner to enter a large and dilapidated building, a group of people stood waving black flags. As the car entered the gates, they rushed forward shouting at the same time, “Imperialist Go Back!” and “Down White Imperialism!” and “We want Union with India!”

Sir Winston was embarrassed. “The blessings of democracy!” he sighed. “A small group of people, an ignorant minority, want union with India. That is their platform and they are very vociferous”.

“Forgive me”, he said. “I feel rather strongly on the subject and get carried away. But I have no right to discuss these aspects so soon after your arrival and even before you have had a chance to study the situation. In any case, as the representative of a friendly but neutral country, you would not like to be involved in our local squabbles”.

“But I would like to hear about your problems while I am here and understand your way of life”.

“You will have ample opportunity to do that”, he responded enthusiastically. “We have arranged a series of programmes and entertainments both in your honour and for your edification. You will see something of the social and cultural progress we have made in spite of the constraints under which we have had to live”.

“We are putting you up at Hampton Court”, he continued changing the subject. “It is more comfortable than Buckingham Palace which hasn’t been used for some time. You will also be free to meet people of various persuasions there. You will of course be a state guest during your stay here”.

“Buckingham Palace?” I expressed my surprise.

“You see, we have always been patriotic citizens of Great Britain though that country let us down badly in the big partition”, he spoke nostalgically. “So when we became a Sovereign Democratic State, we had to take a number of decisions. As inheritors of the British culture and the British way of life, we were anxious to preserve our time-honoured institutions. One way of doing it was to name everything here after the old country. Thus Nilgiris became Little Britain. I have learnt from English geography that there are many places which are named ‘Great’ and ‘Little’, like Great Gatsby and Little Gatsby. So, we have our own houses of Parliament, Our west minister Abbey and our Whitehall. I live in Downing Street, of course. We are a monarchy, but the king is permanently in absentia and a viceroy rules in his name. Of course, you will find our geography here is somewhat different from London. But it has given us a sense of continuity as well as a sense of belonging and has made us feel proud of our heritage”.

If only they could see London now! But I merely said, “I understand”.

We had by now got out in the portico of Hampton Court. Half a dozen men – obviously servants to look after me – stood in a row and saluted. At a sign from Sir Winston, the man who was obviously the leader came forward.

“I am Butler Sir, at your service”, he said and proceeded to get my belongings from the back of the car into the building. Sir Winston and I settled down in two chairs which seemed fairly safe, for the others were falling to pieces.

“Well, I will leave you to rest and refresh yourself before the official round of parties and discussions start tomorrow”, the prime minister said. “You will find the place quite comfortable, though perhaps not as modern as what you are used to at home. Now, is there anything you would like before I go?”

“We have been out of touch with each other for more than a hundred and fifty years”, I said. “I am totally ignorant of the progress you have made during this period and the changes that have taken place. I do not want to appear ignorant among your people. So, could you have someone brief me about your history? Or could I go to some library or a museum where I could familiarize myself with the events of the past?”

“A representative of His Majesty’s Government should not have to go to a museum or library to get information in Little Britain! I have already arranged for Mr. Curator to come and brief you. In fact, I shall make him a minister in waiting in view of your special status. That means he will be with you all the time and help you to overcome any awkward or difficult situations. But at the same time, we in Little Britain are naturally anxious to hear about the developments at home. I trust it won’t be too long before you will enlighten us also”.

“Of course”, I answered.

“Then, that is settled”, said the Prime Minister. “Your first engagement tomorrow morning is to lay a wreath on the tomb of the Unknown Warrior. In the afternoon you will be addressing both houses of Parliament”.

“Could the address be postponed for some time?” I asked. “I should learn something about this country before I address such an august body. I should also like to visit your parliament and familiarize myself with your procedures before I address them”.

“As you wish”, said Sir Winston. “The opposition will raise the issue if you do not address them tomorrow, but I suppose it can be managed. But we have planned a number of social events and cultural programmes in honour of your visit and I hope you will participate in them during the next few weeks”.

“Certainly, I shall look forward to them”.

“Then, I shall take leave; Butler will show you to your chambers and look after all your needs”, and the prime minister of Little Britain departed.

## CHAPTER FOUR

Now I had an opportunity to inspect my surroundings. As a student of pre-nuclear history, I was familiar with British colonial architecture and the building I was in was typical of the period. There were tall columns and wide verandahs on three sides of the building. But the paint was peeling on the walls, exposing a different colour underneath, the place was dusty and the chairs – which were made of cane – seemed just about ready to collapse. In the hall which I entered, moth-eaten heads of pre-nuclear animals stared down at me. Many of the glass panels in the windows were broken had been repaired with cardboard. The furniture as well as the curtains showed age as well as neglect.

The man who had introduced himself as 'Butler' came to me now as I surveyed the place. "I am here to look after your comfort and convenience, sir", he announced. "Is there anything you would like?"

"What is your name?" I asked.

"Butler, sir".

"Is that your name or your profession?"

"Both sir. I am called 'Butler' because, being butler is my profession".

"It is rather a coincidence, is it not?"

"No sir. It has always been so. I am Butler because I do a butler's job. If I were a wood worker, I would have been known as 'Carpenter'."

This was a little confusing, but I let it go at that. The sun was going down and there were long shadows across the lawns and the verandahs. I looked round the garden for a few minutes. In contrast to the building, the garden was beautiful with gigantic trees, well-kept lawns and beautiful flower beds. They fascinated me as such things were all too rare in my past life. But I did not know the names of either the trees or the flowers. After all, I was a historian and a pre-nuclear one at that. I was not expected to know anything else. A gentle breeze made the atmosphere rather cool. I who had been living in an artificially conditioned atmosphere found this change both strange and unusual. I had been warned that I should protect myself against changes in climate as we, conditioned people, and were prone to all kinds of illnesses when exposed to natural climatic conditions. So, I went to my 'chambers' as my suite of rooms were called and put on some warm clothes, more suitable for the climate as well as for the environment in which I was to spend the next few months.

Having been used to a small cubicle, three metres by two and artificially ventilated and lighted, I found my chambers enormous by comparison. The roof was high, the windows were large and the view was glorious. I wondered for a moment how nice it would be if we could combine the natural beauty of these hills and buildings with the comforts of a modern society. But PUP immediately came in the way of these thoughts and I told myself that I was here for a specific purpose, not to enjoy myself or to have thoughts of ego boosting.

When I came down, Butler asked, "Would you like a drink sir?"

"A drink?"

"A chota peg, sir", he replied, which was even more incomprehensible. When I looked blank, he tried again. "Would you like a whisky sir? Or perhaps a brandy?"

I remembered that what in our society was called 'stimulants' were known as 'drinks' in the past. But unlike modern stimulants which don't have any side effects such as indigestion or headaches, drinks were supposed to be harmful. Nevertheless, I decided to try them. "Yes, I will have a drink", I said.

"Whisky sir?"

"Yes."

He brought me a tumblerful of a golden brown liquid. I took a gulp. It went down my throat like a ball of fire, burning as it went along and settled in my stomach like a smouldering cinder. I must have made a face for Butler who was watching me with interest remarked, "Perhaps, Sir George would like it diluted".

"Yes," I replied, for I could not have drunk it as it was.

He took the tumbler away and brought it back again with the addition of some water. The next sip was much better. Slowly, I was suffused with a kind of warmth and good feeling I had not felt with any of our own stimulants in the western hemisphere.

Butler was still standing. I was unused to servants and to being addressed as 'Sir George'. I felt lonely in this unusual situation and Butler seemed anxious to talk.

"Is anyone else staying here?" I asked him.

"No sir. Hampton Court has been closed for many years. It was opened specially for your visit. A staff of servants has been engaged for your comfort".

"Then, you are also new here".

"Normally, I serve the Prime Minister," he answered proudly. "My forefathers have all been Butlers to the prime ministers of Little Britain. And before that, my seventh grandfather was Butler to the last viceroy of India, Lord Mount Everest."

"Mount Everest?"

"Yes sir. Being the last as well as the greatest viceroy, he was named after the tallest mountain in the world. His statue stands to this day at Piccadilly Circus, just in front of the Houses of Parliament."

"And you have never wanted to do anything else, other than being a Butler?"

"But sir, it is a form of service to Society!" he replied proudly. "Though the modern generation wants to break away from tradition and do just what they want and not what is



necessary, I think it is only an excuse for laziness. God has said, "By the sweat of thy brow shalt thou earn thy rice and curry".

He was obviously a philosopher, besides being a butler. In the Western hemisphere, he would probably have ended up as a puppy. So, I questioned him a little further. "Are you a Hindu or a Christian?"

"I am of course a Christian, the follower of the first bishop of Canterbury who has proved beyond the shadow of doubt that Hinduism was derived from ancient Christianity when St. Thomas came to preach the sermon on the Mount Thomas. It was, as you know sir, the oldest church in the world." He thought for a little while before he proceeded. "I can give you examples of how Hinduism was derived from our religion. For example, Mariamman, the small-pox goddess, is really Virgin Mary of the bible. Similarly, Krishna the Hindu God is only a linguistic corruption of Christ. So, really, when we worship Krishna, we worship Christ and vice-versa."

"And do the Hindus accept this thesis?"

"It is not a thesis sir," he said, rather hurt. "It is a proven fact. The only difference is whether Hinduism was derived from Christianity or the other way round. In fact, there is a hermit living in the jungle who preaches what he calls 'Christuism' – a combination of the best in both religions. But all of us, including 'Christus' worship the small pox goddess as being the mother of the Son of God."

As a student of pre-nuclear history and as one interested in the evolution of ideas, I was fascinated by what Butler had to say. But I realized that I would not get very far by a discussion with him. I had to look for more reliable sources of information.

My glass was empty by now and Butler refilled it. When he returned, he said. Sir George, May I ask you something?"

"Of course!"

"Are you really from Great Britain?"

"Yes, I was born there and have lived there all my life. But why should you doubt it?"

"There is a rumour in the bazaar that you have been sent by the Indian Government in the guise of a British representative to annex our kingdom."

"There is no truth in that statement," I said. "I am really from Great Britain and I have nothing to do with the Government of the Eastern hemisphere. They merely provided the facilities for me to come here."

"My seventh grandfather went to Great Britain once," Butler changed the subject. "He gave such glowing accounts of life there that it has been remembered in the family ever since. He stayed in the palace of Lord Mount Everest and unlike other Indians, we have been pro-British ever since. We had always wanted to go there, but after the Great Partition, we knew it was impossible and settled down in Little Britain. But now that closed doors have been opened again, perhaps you could take me there. I promise I shall look after you as no other Butler can."

“Great Britain is no longer what it was a hundred and fifty years ago,” I said. “Things have changed a lot and you might not like it there now.”

“I and my family have always cherished the British way of life!” asserted the old man. I felt rather sorry for him.

It was going dark and Butler went and switched the lights on. Two naked bulbs threw a dull light over the rooms. “This is one of the few houses with electricity sir,” he said. “That is why it was allotted to you. Even Buckingham Palace doesn’t have any.”

“Who lives in Buckingham Palace?”

“His Majesty ought to live there. But in his absence, it is kept reserved for him and only formal functions are held there. But our astrologers have prophesied that he will come in the second century. That is why your visit is considered so important – as a preliminary to the second coming.”

One of the servants came in and announced a visitor. “Mr. Curator is here to see you sir,” he said.

A tall man in rather shabby clothes walked in and shook hands with me. “I am Curator. People call me ‘Cur’ for short. You can do the same if you like. But now that I have been made a minister in waiting, I hope they will have more respect. I look after the Museum of British History as well as post-partition history. I have been asked to brief you on the history of Little Britain.”

“I am pleased to meet you,” I responded. “But I wouldn’t like to call you Cur or anything like that. What does your family call you?”

He seemed pleased. “You may call me John,” he said.

He seated himself in front of me and shouted, “Butler! let me have a drink!” He produced some bits of paper when Butler appeared.

“What are those?” I asked him.

“Drinking to excess is becoming a bit of a problem here,” he explained. “In fact, the opposition want to introduce total prohibition and the Indian population is supporting it. But at present we have a system of rationing.”

“We are going to be together quite a bit in the next few weeks,” John said as he took a large gulp of his drink. I noticed it was much stronger than mine. “I am supposed to be your friend, philosopher and guide. Nothing like drink to get to know each other better. So, here’s blood in your eye,” and he drained his glass.

“Yes, let us be friends,” I said as I gulped mine.

“First, I will educate you about Little Britain; then, you tell me all about Great Britain. ‘Exchange is no bribery’, as it says in the bible.”

“Please give me an account of the major developments here since the day of the Great Partition,” I requested.

"It is a long story," he said as he took another gulp of his drink. "I do not know if you are aware of the atmosphere of violence and uncertainty that prevailed in the Eastern world at the time of the great conference."

"I know all about it," I said. "I worked for some years at the Institute of Pre-nuclear History in London." I made it sound as casual as possible.

"Then, we are birds of the same feather. In India, there was great confusion and chaos. Travel was unsafe and staying at home was not much better. But when once the decisions of the Great Conference were announced and the Blue Mountains were made a home for the Britishers living in South East Asia, the Government at New Delhi acted swiftly and decisively. All Britishers – including some Europeans and Americans – were brought here by all available means. Accommodation was found for them in the houses vacated by the Indians. The territory was demarcated by a joint commission, fences were put up to prevent infiltration, food and other necessities to last for one year were provided. Then, the Indians withdrew and left us to our own devices."

"How do you know about all this?"

"We British have a great sense of history whether it is about the Empire or about the founding of the Blue Mountain Club. In the first few months of partition there was a lot of communication between us and the Indian Government. One of the Englishmen who acted as a liaison officer kept a complete record of the news about partition from newspapers as well as correspondence, protocols and agreements of various sorts. When it was decided to set up the Museum of British history, he presented all that material to my predecessor. If you have time, you could go through it all. You will find it fascinating."

"When this place was allotted to the British exclusively, how is it there are Indians here even now?"

"While many Indians were willing to go away, a few small farmers would not," John smiled a quizzical smile. "Further, most of the British wanted to retain their servants and the servants wanted to retain their families. They called themselves the 'sons of the soil' whose rights had to be protected. In the end they were allowed to stay. But their population is hardly twenty percent of the total though they are increasing at a faster rate than we are."

His glass was empty and he shouted 'Butler! Who quietly brought two more glasses for our consumption? By now my head was beginning to feel a little confused though I was able to retain my faculties without any trouble.

"Two things have been bothering me since I came here this afternoon," I said. "One is the colour of the British people here. They all seem brown rather than white. And most of them have dark hair. The second is, all of you including yourself, have a cross on your forehead tattooed. Can you explain these phenomenon's?"

John became animated; the drink was having its effect on him also. "It is clever of you to have noticed it," he said. "Now-a-days, it is rarely talked about. But when we were established as a separate nation, we found there was a shortage of women, particularly women of child-bearing age.

This was a serious matter for our future existence, but nothing would have been done except for the dynamic leadership of a man who later came to be known as Churchill. In fact, his real name has been forgotten and he is known only as Churchill even in the history books. He called a meeting of all men of marriageable age and suggested that they should all take an Indian wife from the neighbouring areas. There was still communication with the rest of the India and it was possible to do so. There was of course some opposition from the European women but patriotism won the day. In the process we have all become somewhat 'coloured'. But this is rarely referred to now-a-days and we all consider ourselves 'pure' British not only from social and emotional points of view, but also from the ethnic point of view."

"And what about the cross?"

"Oh, yes, the cross. You see when our forefathers married Indian women – most of whom were from the lower strata of society – the ladies naturally practiced their religion. One of signs of Hinduism was a spot on the forehead. These ladies not only adorned themselves with a spot every morning, but they decorated their children with it also. This was something that no orthodox Christian could permit and the Bishop of Canterbury called for a meeting of all the priests as well as the laity to consider the situation. It was then decided that all Christian children should be tattooed with the cross on their foreheads to emphasise our religious and ethnic solidarity. The habit has been followed ever since. The only thing is that the Indians, most of whom are atheists anyway, have given up having marks on their foreheads."

John obviously knew the history of Little Britain in every possible detail. He was also objective in his reporting and from my point of view, made a valuable guide. So, I probed him further. "There must have been a lot of confusion during the transition period," I remarked.

"There was surprisingly little," he informed me. "The Indian Government of the time was committed to providing us with a homeland and they carried out their part of the bargain meticulously. Fortunately, our ancestors, thanks to the foresight of men like Churchill, had fire arms which were a help in persuading the local people to do what we wanted."

"But still, there must have been many problems," I persisted.

"Considering everything, we settled down and organized ourselves with little trouble. At least that is what the records say. We British have a genius for rising to the occasion, as in the battle of Dunkirk. We always produce the right man in an emergency. That man was Churchill. He set about organizing things. The police, the civil servants and the judiciary had all been withdrawn by the Indian Government on the appointed date. This man Churchill – more or less single handed – organized everything. He called a meeting of all the residents – only British of course – and got things going. Temporary police and judiciary were appointed, a tax was levied and paper currency introduced. A civil administration was also set up."

"But what laws could they enforce?"

"It was mostly for settlement of disputes and the judiciary was asked to follow the principles of natural justice until laws were enacted. But Churchill made arrangements for the elected representatives to meet as a Constituent Assembly and pass a constitution. The only trouble was that most of the British were planters; a few were engineers or executives. They knew nothing about

enacting a constitution, even a very simple one. The only lawyers were among the Indians, so, they were made advisors to the Constituent Assembly.”

Our glasses were empty and the ever alert Butler replenished them even without being reminded by John. My interest in this ‘birth of a nation’ as one might call it, was growing. “What sort of a constitution did they evolve?” I enquired.

“The founding fathers – as the framers of the constitution came to be known – did not want anything complicated with endless arguments from lawyers. Some wags have since called them the fumbling fathers. There was to be a viceroy representing the king as the head of the state. When once elected, he was to hold office for life. There were to be two houses of Parliament – just as in Great Britain – the House of Commons and the House of Lords. The lower house was to be elected and the upper house was to be filled by nominations, half by the viceroy and the other half by the Prime Minister. In view of the uncertainties and instability in the political life of the time, it was decided that the Prime Minister, when once elected, would hold office for a period of ten years. No confidence motions could be moved against him though this has since been emended. Looking back on it all, I would say that the system has worked fairly well.”

“Was there no representation to the Indian population?”

“In the beginning, no. But later, they were given proportional representation. That is, in a house of one hundred, they have twelve seats at present.”

“What was your relationship with the Indian Government of those days?”

“To start with, it was fairly good. But later, it deteriorated, because, according to the terms of the Big Partition, we were to develop in isolation. The Indian Government – or the Eastern hemisphere government as it came to be known-enforced it rather strictly and would have nothing to do with us. Nor would they permit the people of the adjacent areas to trade with us or have any communication. All trade and commerce came to a standstill. They were of course within their rights to do so. But we in Little Britain did not think it would be enforced so strictly. We thought even the Big Partition was only a temporary phase and would be changed soon. Otherwise, I do not think we would ever have accepted the situation. But I think really, the Eastern hemisphere government was more afraid of the freedom that prevailed in our territory and its effect on their population than in enforcing the terms of the Big Partition.”

“If you had to be completely self-sufficient with no external trade, your economy must have been subjected to a very severe strain.”

“From all accounts, it was a period of great anxiety. The founding fathers did not realize the constraints to which they would be subjected and from which there was no escape. For example, our territory did not contain any metals, except perhaps a little copper. Our agriculture was based on plantation crops such as coffee and tea and not on wheat and rice. We did not grow any cotton and there was hardly any sheep to produce wool. When they accepted a homeland for themselves in the hills, they thought they would sell tea and coffee – which were in short supply – to the rest of the world, make a tidy profit and buy whatever they wanted from outside. They never expected total isolation.”

“But what happened?”

“When the food stocks supplied by the E.H. government were depleted, the first time Prime Minister Churchill sent a message to the regional government in New Delhi for help. Some contacts with the outside world were still open and the officials at Delhi sent a team to find out what was happening. After some bargaining, it was agreed that essential articles like food and clothing, oil and spare parts for industrial equipment were to be supplied for a period of five years in return for tea and coffee in decreasing quantities, and after that, all trade and communication was to stop. That was also the period when the policy of marrying local girls was brought into being.”

“And were you self-sufficient at the end of five years?”

“In women, yes,” he laughed. “In fact, some men took two wives in their patriotic zeal to produce more children. But with regard to other commodities, there must have been some difficulty for there are references to food and clothes rationing. But all communication stopped after that. Even the radio station with which we were in communication with Madras broke down and from then on, we have been completely on our own.”

“It must have been a strange feeling, to be isolated from the rest of the world.”

“Perhaps, for the first generation of Little Britons, for they were used to the larger world. But for the succeeding generations, the entire Universe was circumscribed by the electric fence which they were told never to touch under any circumstances. To them, as to most of modern generation, the outside world was not even a memory. It was something about which they occasionally read in books, but without understanding. It is just a dream, and thanks to you, it is about to come true.”

“Can you tell me how you solved the economic problems in those early days?”

The first Prime Minister Churchill – the Father of the Nation as he is called in the history books – was a ruthless man in many respects. He realized the seriousness of the situation. During the five years of grace granted to us, he took many strong and unpalatable decisions. He prohibited the growing of tea and coffee, except in very small areas, made the growing of food crops compulsory. Sheep-breeding and poultry farming was encouraged and on some of the lower slopes where the climate was hotter, even cotton was grown. Motor cars were banned, horses were encouraged and use of electricity was confined to very essential purposes. Spinning and weaving centres were set up by using a simple machine known as Gandhi Charka. Factories were ruthlessly closed down, and people directed to agriculture. Though we had a lot of electricity in those days, without coal, without metals and without knowledge and skills, it was not possible to maintain even the few industries that existed.”

“I can now understand your problems a little better.”

“So, our factories came to a grinding halt, our motor cars stopped running, our bulbs and electrical fittings began to deteriorate. It was industrial revolution in reverse gear. We became a pre-industrial nation, but with memories, aspirations and in some cases, even a rudimentary knowledge of an industrial civilization.”

I was amazed at the clarity of his thinking and the precise manner in which he had analysed the situation. How did he manage to get such knowledge and power of logical reasoning in the environment in which he lived?

“We had a similar problem in the Western hemisphere too in the early days,” I could not help remarking. “When the oil crisis reached its height as a result of the refusal of the Arab states to supply any more oil in the fiftieth year of the nuclear age, we developed what was known as the management of decline. Fortunately, scientific discoveries soon made it unnecessary.”

“Talking makes me very thirsty,” he said and called for more drinks. But I felt that if I were to consume any more, I would no longer be able to discuss things intelligently. But John waved my objections aside. “The last one,” he said. “Positively the last one and then, I must go.”

My thoughts must have been reflected in my face, for John continued, “You are probably wondering how I know all these things. One of the first things that the Government of Little Britain did was to collect all the books available in the territory and form the National Library. This was particularly true of British history. My fifth grandfather was appointed the first curator and the job has continued in the family ever since. But the history that is taught in schools here is purely romantic stuff, intended to keep alive nostalgia for Great Britain.”

“It is my responsibility to preserve whatever knowledge is available and the politicians don’t interfere with me so long as I don’t interfere with ‘popular’ history. I have made it my business to make a study of past knowledge and to find out why we are where we are.”

“But why should your profession become your name?” I enquired. “It is the same with Butler.”

“In a technologically static society, there is a lot to be said for the hereditary principle in professions,” I had obviously started him off on one of his pet subjects. “With the size of our population and the meagre extent of our resources, it is not possible for us to have training institutions for various skilled occupations. It is cheaper and more efficient to have a universal system of apprenticeships for training the younger generation. And I ask you, which father would train another boy when his own sons were available?”

“Provided the father knows his sons,” I thought to myself, thinking of our own society in the Western hemisphere. But he continued.

“So, we have introduced a system of ‘Gurukul’ as defined in the ancient scriptures. The combination of job specialization with social stratification promotes interdependence and provides stability to the social system. We have found this by experience.”

“This seems to be almost identical to the caste system that the Hindus used to practice,” I could not help remarking.

John smiled. “I see you are also well versed in ancient history. Yes, you might say that we have borrowed it from the Hindus. There seems to be something in the air of this country that leads to social diffusion through the castes rather than social cohesion, through unity on the one hand and competition on the other. You must remember that our ancestors were faced with creating a social

equilibrium from an essentially heterogeneous and multi-racial society. But we haven't gone so far as the Hindus in banning inter-caste marriages."

During our discussion, we must have consumed a full bottle of whisky, my contribution towards its consumption being rather small. John's face had acquired a reddish colour and his eyes were glistening. But his mind was clear. "Fortunately, we have the wherewithal to do all our brewing and distilling. We are getting so good at it that if allowed, we will be able to export the stuff to Scotland. But we have some faddists among us who want to stop all drinking."

Then he looked at his watch, "Good lord!" he exclaimed. "It is very late! I wonder why Butler hasn't ordered dinner yet!"

But Butler was waiting and said dinner was served. We had a meal of soup, roast chicken and vegetables and rice with fruit to follow. This was my first natural meal instead of the nutrients I had been used to. I found it burnt my inside because of the amount of pepper in the dishes.

As John got up to go, I found his legs were a little unsteady as were mine also. "Thank you very much for educating me about your history," I said as we shook hands.

"Next time, it will be your turn," he said.

"But I still have a lot to learn."

"You can count on me. I shall be your friend, philosopher and guide. And I will see you in the morning."

\*\*\*\*\*

I was somewhat unsteady on my feet as I walked to my chambers. The bathroom arrangements were primitive; undressing and getting into bed was cold but when once inside, it was pleasant as Butler had very thoughtfully placed a hot stone inside the bed clothes. But I found I could not sleep. The alcohol as well as the food I had consumed gave me a feeling of discomfort in my stomach. Adjustment from the conditioned to the natural state – I had been warned – would be difficult and dangerous. I had never been used to temperatures other than what was ideal. I had never consumed natural proteins and starches, but had been accustomed to pre-digested nutrients. The stimulant that I had consumed had side-effects such as indigestion as well as headache. Even these words were new to me and I had seen them only in a dictionary. What was worse, I was not used to pain of any sort. The slightest feeling of indisposition – either physical or mental – led one to a conditioning unit where one's problems were quickly solved. I was therefore greatly disturbed by this first meal and wondered how I was going to get on in the future.

Fortunately, these problems had been anticipated before my departure and I had been given appropriate antidotes to the various troubles I might come across. So, I swallowed a tablet which cured my stomach pain almost instantaneously.

But I still could not sleep. I went over the events of the day. To become Sir George Sonian-Smith, representative of Great Britain, instead of being a humble worker at the institute was a unique experience, particularly for one interested in pre-nuclear history. It was almost like becoming a super-puppy in the Western hemisphere. It meant that I was someone important, not just a slot in



the giant computer. Further, it was one thing to read about or even to see moving pictures about the past; it was totally different to experience it first-hand, to mix with people who live in a different age from yours and to get their reactions. All this gave me a sense of exhilaration that I had not experienced before. The difference between moving pictures and my experience was not so much in the knowledge that one acquired, but in a sense of involvement, that one could influence events and that event could influence you!

I realized of course that this feeling of elation was totally anti-PUP. I should have taken some pills immediately to get rid of such feelings and restore my objectivity. But the desire to take the pills seemed to vanish the moment they are most needed. On the other hand, I was very anxious that these sensations should be continued and enhanced. After all, they were a part of one's experience; they threw a new challenge. Somehow, I felt they might make life more meaningful, might make it worth living. Sensation to the mind was like nutrient to the body. If there was one thing that was lacking in my past life, it was sensation. The ability to feel and to act on those feelings gave a new dimension to one's existence.

I was surprised at my own thoughts. I did not even know that such thoughts existed in my mind before. Or did I acquire them after coming into the fresh and free air of these mountains? Even the words to express these thoughts had to be brought out laboriously from some hidden and forgotten recess of my mind. But somehow, I seemed to enjoy the process in spite of the dangers. If I had even remotely suspected that I had such thoughts in my mind earlier, I might not have ventured on this journey. Instead, I would have taken a much shorter one, to the conditioning clinic where my brain would either have been set right or discarded as beyond repair. But I realized for the first time that I was increasingly free of PUP. I could say and do exactly what I wanted and felt, at least for the present. This realization came to me so suddenly that instead of tossing and turning, I sat up as if I had discovered something new and wonderful. In the excitement of the moment, I got out of bed, went to my suitcase, took out the box of psycho-social pills and emptied the whole lot into the lavatory. I felt better after that for a few minutes until realization dawned on me. From now on, I was on my own; I had to take the responsibility as well as the credit and punishment for whatever I did. PUP would not help me. I had to face whatever problems I had with my own mental and physical resources with no aid from the scientists. This gave me a peculiar feeling of independence. As I looked through the curtained window at the cold night and at the stars that twinkled from above, I was seeing the world for the first time. It was almost like a rebirth.

But I told myself I was still a sincere follower of PUP. I had merely discarded it temporarily – just as I had put away my nutrients and my disposable clothing – in order to heighten my experience and to make my study deeper and more meaningful. I would probably spend a few months, complete my work and fly away in Chuck's hovercopter. Sir George Sonian-Smith would be no more and the people of Little Britain would be wondering what had happened to their popular High Commissioner from Great Britain. Any danger that might be involved in this did not bother me; nor did the ethical implications of pretending to be the representative of the British Government worry me. I knew that according to PUP, morality and immorality, right and wrong, were all anti-social. Looking back on it all with the power of discrimination I have since acquired, I realize that the human mind is quite capable of rationalizing its personal desires into social needs of the community or profession.

So, with feelings of excitement and anticipation for the future, I went to sleep.

## CHAPTER FIVE

Next morning, two buckets of hot water were brought by one of the attendants. Though there was a water heater of a primitive type in the bath room, it did not seem to be working. In fact, whether any gadget worked or not at any time seemed highly problematical. I got ready and breakfasted on curried eggs, bread and butter and coffee. Butler was very solicitous about my comfort, so I suggested to him. "Could I not have my food without any curry powder? It doesn't seem to agree with me."

"But sir, curry has been the traditional English dish from the days of the East India Company. I have been asked to serve you only English food."

"Well, things have changed in Great Britain and we no longer eat curry. So, I am not used to it."

"I will discuss the matter with the cook sir."

\*\*\*\*\*

John arrived punctually at 9 a.m. He took one look at me and shook his head. "You can't lay a wreath on the tomb of the Unknown Soldier in that rigout."

I didn't understand him and said so.

"I mean your clothes," he said. "You look as if you are going to watch a cricket match and not participate in an official function. No British diplomat can wear informal clothes for a formal occasion. If you break that tradition, you will not be very popular in Little Britain."

"I am sorry I did not bring any formal clothes," I apologised. "I did not know what the fashions in formal clothes were. Further, in Great Britain itself these things had been given up long ago."

"I can see you need a lot of education in Britain tradition," he replied. "Formal clothes have no fashions. They are eternal. You just wear tails, that's all."

"But why are they so important?"

"Slackness in clothes is the first sign of degradation in an individual, or a nation." I had never seen John so serious. "You start being slipshod in clothes and people tend to take you for granted and they no longer respect you. Then, you don't respect yourself. It is particularly important for people in high positions to keep up appearances."

This was admittedly a difficult situation but Butler came to our rescue and honour was retrieved. Some formal clothes belonging to one of the previous residents were available and I was

attired in them, black striped trousers and a black coat with long tails, so long that one was expected to fold it and carry it on one's arm. I felt uncomfortable as the clothes were on the tight side, but in the interests of good relations and the success of my mission, I had to put up with them.

We were driven in a coach drawn by four horses to Whitehall. There was a guard of honour which I inspected and stood to attention while a gentleman in military uniform read out a short speech.

"Sir George Sonian-Smith, the representative of His Majesty's Government in Great Britain, has favoured us with a visit. He is here to lay a wreath on the tomb of the Unknown Warrior. This tomb represents the valour and sacrifice of the soldiers of Great Britain – and if I may say so, of Little Britain – from the Battle of Hastings to the Battle of Plassey. The Unknown Soldier has fought and died in every continent for the glory and greatness of the Empire. Now that communications have been established with our ancient home again. I am sure the glories of the past will be revived and the greatest empire the world has ever known will rise from its ashes. In that hope, I invite Sir George to lay a wreath on the tomb of the Unknown Soldier."

I walked forward to the base of the monument, received a wreath of flowers from a soldier and laid it ceremoniously. John was by my side and whispered. "A few words would be in order."

"Mr. Prime Minister, Ladies and Gentlemen," I spoke. "This is a solemn and serious moment in the history of our two nations. We remember our past, pay homage to those who died that we might live and pledge ourselves to the future."

As we walked away, John said, "Excellent, but a little short. We are used to a good dose of speech making at every opportunity."

"You should have warned me."

"I thought, as a diplomat you knew the rules of the game," and then he continued. "In Little Britain, any occasion will include a few speeches and a cup of tea."

So we had a cup of tea in the Shamiana and I met the leader of the opposition in Parliament. "I am Sir Clement Wilson," he introduced himself. "I am sorry I was not present to welcome you yesterday. I stayed away to record my protest against the failure of the government to take the opposition into confidence with regard to your visit. The government – and particularly the prime minister – are trying to exploit your visit to strengthen their position. You as the representative of a friendly state should guard yourself against such manoeuvres."

\*\*\*\*\*

Back at Hampton Court, John explained to me the intricacies of Little Britain's politics. "When we became independent, there was only one party, led by Churchill. But after him – and particularly as the constitution had provided for two parties – the Torys got split up. One group, that is, the official government supporters called themselves Conservatorys while the opposition styled themselves as labourtorys. During the last hundred and fifty years, the conservatorys have been in power most of the time, except for a short interlude about ten years ago. And that proved to be a disaster."

“What is the difference in the policies and programmes between the two groups?”

“The conservatorys are for the preservation of the old order, of tradition in economic matters, and so on. The labourtorys want to be realistic. For example, they say, “What is the point of using old motor cars that are falling to pieces if they have to be drawn by horses anyway? What is the use of preserving machines and factories wthey they can’t be run? Why should we call ourselves a monarchy when there is no king? According to them, all this is pretence and make-believe, intended to hoodwink the public. But the conservatorys say that one day – after the second coming of Great Britain to the east – the motor cars and the machines will start running and therefore should be preserved. So, the children are taught in schools about internal combustion engines, about aeroplanes though they have never seen them. All these have become a sort of superstition of the past as well as a hope for the future.”

“It seems to me that the labourtorys are right in their attitude,” I commented. “After all, there is no point in preserving dead technologies. As and when communication with the outside world is possible, you will probably find that all these things that are so carefully preserved are totally out of date.”

“You are probably right, but which nation bases its policies on logic and reason? Further, tradition plays a great role in our life; that is what has sustained us. We are what we are only because of what we were. It is important for you to realize that. The conservatorys are great showmen – play producers and writers. They are able to make people believe that something momentous is about to happen. They have been keeping it up for many years. And your coming is a justification and a vindication of all their efforts. That is what peaves the opposition.”

“Who were the people who showed black flags yesterday?”

“They are the Indians – at least they call themselves so, for biologically, we are all the same. It is impossible to say who is an Indian and who is British today. But for a minority, what matters in such a situation is emotional affinity and not a biological one. As a minority group, they have been demanding separate seats in parliament which was conceded when the labourtorys were in power. The area where they live has been recognized as a separate territory and now our country is known officially as the ‘United Kingdom of Little Britain and Southern Nilgiris’. But now that communication with the rest of the world is possible, they want union with India.”

“You have given me enough information so that I can talk to people without appearing ignorant,” I said. “But I would like to attend a session of parliament just to get to know your procedures and so on. Is that possible?”

“Of course! We can go this afternoon and watch the proceedings from the distinguished visitors’ gallery. It will be purely unofficial of course. I shall make the arrangements.”

\*\*\*\*\*

When John returned after lunch, he asked, “By the way, how are you as a rider?”

“Rider?”

“You know, riding a horse,” he explained. “If you are going to be with us for any length of time, you should get yourself a horse. For official functions, you will be treated as a state guest and provided with a coach and four horses, but for social and personal needs, you should have a tonga which most well-to-do people use as well as a horse.”

“I have never ridden a horse in my life,” I said.

“And yet, the thing to do was to ride in Rotten Row in the old country.”

So, we went to parliament in John’s tonga and seated ourselves in the private balcony of the House of Commons. John told me about its history. “In the old days, it used to be what was known as a picture house where moving pictures were shown. It was called the Assembly Rooms. In fact, our constituent assembly met there under the chairmanship of Churchill.”

As we settled ourselves in our seats, the Prime Minister was making a statement. He kept adjusting the microphone in front of him as if it made any difference. “It is one of his mannerisms,” John whispered. “Everyone knows that the microphones and the loud speakers are dead. But it gives him to gather his thoughts.”

The prime minister continued. “I am happy to announce that the accredited representative of His Majesty’s government in Great Britain has at long last arrived in this country.

I need not explain to the honourable members, the importance and the historic significance of this visit. It was hoped that he would be in a position to address this house this afternoon. But he is somewhat indisposed after the long and tiresome journey and he will address us at an appropriate date.”

The leader of the opposition got up immediately and shouted, “We are quite used to the prevarications of the honourable gentleman on the other side, but this statement is even more blatantly false than usual.”

There were cries of ‘withdraw!’ from the government benches while the opposition members shouted ‘shame!’ But the leader of the opposition continued. “If the Rt.Hon.gentleman would care to look up to the distinguished visitors’ gallery, he would be able to see – even without his glasses – the so called representative of His Majesty’s government there. And we are asked to assume he is unable to be present owing to ‘indisposition!’ .....”

But the prime minister cut him short. “I should like to inform the leader of the opposition that it is possible for a person to be well enough to come to this house as a visitor but not be well enough to address this august body.”

“I bow before the superior medical wisdom of the prime minister,” remarked Sir Clement. There was derisive laughter from the opposition benches. “But I would like to ask the government in all seriousness whether the gentleman who claims to be the representative of His Majesty’s government in Great Britain, is in fact what he claims to be. What if he were a secret agent of New Delhi? Have his bona fides been adequately verified? Has he presented his credentials to our Head of State? Considering the manner of his arrival, the way in which he evaded questions from the Press,

and the reluctance of the government to expose him to the public so that we may judge for ourselves, one is naturally tempted to raise these issues.”

“Answer! Answer!” the cry rose from the opposition benches.

“I must emphatically protest and refuse to answer such insinuations against the representative of a friendly government, a government which is in the nature of a parent to this government to Little Britain.....”

But his words were drowned in a chorus of shouts and further shouts. When the commotion died down, one of the other members got up to speak. He was obviously a representative of the Indian community. “If I may intervene in what seems to be a domestic quarrel between the prime minister and the leader of the opposition, I should like to make it very clear, beyond a shadow of any doubt, that the people who I represent on the floor of this house will not be bound by any agreements, treaties or other arrangements which may be resorted to by the government with the representative of the Western hemisphere. Our stand is clear on the subject. Ethnically, culturally and geographically, we are a part and parcel of India. An accident of history gave birth to this so called independent state. But we are not interested in perpetuating an accident. I wish to warn this government that any attempt to overlook these factors would result in serious consequences.”

“Rubbish!” cried someone from the government benches.

“You may be numerically strong, but you are morally wrong!” cried the Indian member. “We demand union with India or as an alternative, the partition of Southern Nilgiris from Little Britain so that we may lead an independent existence, develop our homeland as well as close relationships with our neighbours. If Little Britain can unite with Great Britain which is ten thousand kilometers away, Southern Nilgiris can more logically unite with India.”

Again there were shouts and counter shouts, the speaker banged the little wooden hammer he had in his hand, but to no avail. Finally, he got up and walked away saying, “The House is adjourned!”

Gradually the noise died down and the members who had been shouting at each other as if they were sworn enemies, started laughing and joking with each other. As we came out of the gallery, I remarked to John, “I am not looking forward to addressing them.”

“They will listen to you alright,” he replied. “They are all curious to know what you would say. In any case, you don’t have to do it for a few weeks now. The summer session is over and the autumn session will not start for some time.”

As he dropped me at Hampton Court, he said, “Everyone is anxious to meet you socially and informally, particularly the ideas. An eligible bachelor from Great Britain doesn’t grow on trees. At least I presume you are a bachelor.”

“I am not married.”

“Not divorced?”

“No, not divorced either; I am just a simple bachelor.”

“Our ladies prefer them that way,” he said. “They like to catch men young and train them.” He hesitated a little. “So I thought, if you agree, I will have a small get-together in my house tomorrow evening. It will enable you to meet some of the local people. Of course, if you feel that your status prevents you from accepting such an invitation, I shall understand.”

“I shall be happy to come to your house,” I replied.

“I am glad; after all, you are the representative of a great government and I am only a curator. My wife and daughter will be very happy when I tell them.”

“I don’t stand on formalities,” I assured him.

“Now, tomorrow and the day after are holidays, being the week-end. There are no official engagements for you, so you can have a good rest and refresh yourself. My tonga will call for you at 7 p.m. tomorrow evening.”

\*\*\*\*\*

The ever faithful Butler was waiting for me when I went in with hot water for a wash. I was not used to this frequent washing in my own society. Our bodies as well as our clothes were disinfected and sterilized merely by passing through a special chamber. The alternate steaming and cooling as well as the vibrations to which you were subjected made you feel refreshed any time you felt like it. But I found this old fashioned method of inefficient purification extremely pleasant and invigorating in this rather cold climate. As I came out of the chamber down to the front hall, Butler was ready with a drink. As he was about to go away, I called him back.

“Butler, you belong to the Indian community here, don’t you?”

“Yes sir,” he replied averting his eyes.

“Now that the partition between the two hemispheres has been abolished, do you think that Little Britain should become a part of India, or of Great Britain?”

“I am surprised you should ask such a question, Sir George!”

“Why, there is nothing surprising about it.”

“Though my colour is dark, my family has always followed the British way of life. We speak English at home, attend Church of England and have thrown in our lot with the British. As Mr. Curator will tell you, the difference between the Indians and the British is emotional and psychological rather than ethnic or biological. If this country is going to be handed over to the Indians, then we should all be repatriated to Great Britain.”

He became quite sentimental. “My family has served the British faithfully for many generations and I never thought that a representative of His Majesty’s government would ever question my loyalty.”

He had obviously the soul of a servant. “Please understand,” I soothed him. “I am not questioning your loyalty or devotion. I am merely considering the various political possibilities. That’s all.”

“Thank you Sir George,” was all he said.

\*\*\*\*\*

It had been arranged between me and Chuck that every night between ten and ten thirty p.m. he would tune into me so that I could give a report of how I was getting on or what problems I had. On the first night, I had taken so much alcohol that it completely escaped my mind. But after an early dinner, when the servants had all gone to bed, I switched on the micro-wave transmitter and gave my code.

“GB 145, OPERATION UNDERCURRENT REPORTING” I repeated three times when Chuck came on the line.

“MD 541 READY TO RECEIVE. OVER”

This was the signal agreed to between us.

“Fire away old boy!” he said. He had a delightfully easy-going manner of expressing himself even about scientific or serious matters which I have never been able to do. Perhaps it had something to do with the conditioning in the Western hemisphere. In the conditioning in the east, logic seemed to be of minor importance and emphasis was laid on what was called the Pleasure Principle (PP).

“A useful day; the Curator of the museum has been made my minister in waiting. He has given me a good background of Little Britain’s history. Laid a wreath on the tomb of the Unknown Warrior in the morning and attended the parliamentary session this afternoon. Rather an acrimonious debate about my arrival. It may lead to complications later on. Food and drink difficult to digest, but not a serious problem.”

“You seem to have been very busy, but remember, all work and no play make George a dull boy.”

“I am having dinner with the curator’s family tomorrow evening.”

“I hope he has some eligible daughters.”

“Yes, he has one daughter.”

“In that case, you had better be careful. With your blonde hair and good looks and innocent face, you would be an easy prey for any scheming female. You don’t want to take a bride with you back to the Western hemisphere. Lunar brides got away with it because there were so many of them, but one from Little Britain would be difficult to account for. It is just not on the cards.”

“I will speak to you again forty eight hours from now, that is, next Sunday night. Over.”

“Don’t forget the pills I gave you; over.” He laughed.



## CHAPTER SIX

I slept much better that night. Perhaps, I was getting used to my surroundings, the food and the drink. I felt very refreshed when Butler knocked on the door at 6.30 a.m. and came in with a pot of strong tea.

“Good morning, Sir George!” he said cheerfully as he drew the faded curtains. “Another beautiful day. Would you like to go for a walk before breakfast, or would you like to ride? A horse has been sent from the prime minister’s stables for your use.”

“I don’t know,” I hesitated. Though I would have liked the experience of riding, I had never been on a horse before in my life and I didn’t like to trust myself to the vagaries of an unpredictable animal. But it was obviously the thing to do and I was eager to conform.

Butler obviously knew my predicament. “It is a very well trained and gentle animal, used by the prime minister’s children,” he assured me.

“I think I will walk this morning,” I said.

“Just as you wish,” replied Butler. “Your bath and breakfast will be ready when you come back.”

So, after drinking my tea, I put on some warm clothes and went out.

It was a glorious morning. The sun was warm, shining through the tall eucalyptus trees. The cool breeze seemed to put fresh life into one’s lungs. As I walked along the rough, gravel path, I could hear the birds singing in the foliage. There were flower beds with bright coloured flowers and gradually sloping lawns on either side of the path. Altogether, I had a strange and unusual feeling in this environment. It was inevitable that I should compare this life to what I was used to in my own home.

It is strange that I should have used the word ‘home’ to my previous place of existence. A home according to pre-nuclear ideas was a place where one lived with one’s family, with wife and children, or parents. It was a place where one had one’s personal belongings, was proud or ashamed of it as the case may be, where there was fun and laughter, tragedy and tears. It was where one belonged. A home implied conformity, stability, even tradition. In post-nuclear society, one did not have a ‘home’ in that sense. I had only a place of residence, a place of work and a place for entertainment, but no home. Any one of these was likely to be changed at any moment and one’s interests or personality had nothing to do with any of them. One lived only in the present, no recollection of the past and no hopes or anticipations for the future. People did not ask you, ‘where do you come from?’ which was a question on everyone’s lips in Little Britain. But where I came from, they took you as you were and if one fine morning you were not there, no one asked, ‘Where has he gone?’ Everyone understood.

In the little cubicle where I had lived before coming here, there was no difference between night and day, between summer and winter. Only a blank wall stared me in the face as I sat in my easy chair or lay on my bunk. The monotony of the wall was broken by a painting of PUP.

Underneath it were a few knobs and dials which recorded my movement and the sounds I made. Perhaps, even feelings – if any – were recorded. I didn't know. The information was fed into the Universal Computer (UCS) which analysed and codified and correlated it with the data supplied from your spot and your place of entertainment. On the basis of all this information, your needs as well as your rating in the PUP scale was determined. And when I slept, PUPDICTS were introduced into my subconscious so that I would wake up feeling loyal and in conformity with my society. When I went to work, there was some times a piece of paper on my desk 'suggesting' what my needs were and how they were to be fulfilled. It might recommend a further dose of conditioning, a different form of entertainment or even sex. At times, it suggested music or drama where one had an opportunity to laugh or cry at the appropriate moments. But the main thing was, one had no responsibility. Everything was taken care of by PUP. But by no stretch of imagination could it be called a 'home'.

But let me be fair to my past. It was far more comfortable. I never felt cold or hot. Here in Little Britain, people seemed to spend a lot of time discussing the climate and what to wear. I had never been ill, never felt indigestion or hunger. To lie on my bunk was like floating on air instead of the lumpy mattress I had at Hampton Court. I was never criticized or reprimanded. No one laughed or joked or quarrelled with me. I was very comfortable.

Absorbed in my own thoughts, I found I had reached what was referred to as 'the main road'. People who passed me smiled and said 'Good Morning'. In a clump of trees, some monkeys were chattering and looked at me suspiciously. One gentleman stopped me. "You must be the representative from Great Britain," he remarked.

"Yes, I am."

"Give my respectful regards to His Majesty, will you?" he said. "I am Lord Windsor. The Royal family used to have a castle near the estate of my ancestors."

When I promised to carry out his request, he continued. "I am too old to travel, but if I were thirty years younger, I would certainly have gone back to the service of the king. My ancestors came with the Conqueror and we have been Royalists ever since. None of this damned republican rot!"

\*\*\*\*\*

When I had my breakfast and was wondering what to do, Butler approached me.

"I hope you don't mind my mentioning it Sir George," he said with a little grin on his face. "It would be appropriate if you were to call on the prime minister this morning' not an official call, just an informal one to express your appreciation of the hospitality extended to you."

"That is a good idea," I could not help remarking.

"You will be surprised sir, how often diplomats depend on their servants for correct behavior," he replied. "There was an ancestor of mine – a spiritual ancestor – by the name of Jeeves who was a gentleman's gentleman. He ensured such things for those whom he served and I try to follow his illustrious example."

"But I don't want to call on him if he is busy or out."

"It has all been arranged sir. A Tonga will be calling for you shortly. You are expected there at 10 a.m."

"Thank you Butler."

"If you don't mind my saying so sir, you should not discuss anything that is serious on this first call. The conversation should be kept at a fairly informal level and you should not stay more than half an hour. You may accept a drink, but not stay for lunch."

Armed with such clear and detailed instructions from Butler, I arrived at the prime minister's house at exactly 10 a.m. His personal private secretary by the name of Pitman received me. He was a young man, thin and tall, with a look of amazement on his face. "We have been expecting you Sir George," he said. "We thought you might be delayed, but we are glad to see you."

I was not sure whether he used the pronoun 'we' to include the prime minister or whether it was like the royal 'we'.

The prime minister and Lady Baldwin were waiting for me in the drawing room. The furniture was very similar to what I had in Hampton Court, but there had been attempts at cleaning and repairing them.

"And how is dear old England?" Lady Baldwin asked me when we were introduced. "Strikes as usual I suppose. I remember my great great grand mother used to call it 'Strike-land'.

"There are no strikes there now," I replied.

"That was what brought the empire down," she continued. "If it weren't for the strikes, the Americans would never have been able to dominate us and make us agree to this ridiculous partition. I am sure the Indians don't want it either. My great great grand mother used to say that it was a conspiracy hatched between the Russians and the Americans to divide the world between themselves."

"Now my dear, Sir George isn't interested in ancient history," Sir Winston tried to mollify her.

"But it isn't 'ancient history'; anyone would think I was talking of 1066 and all that. But Sir George, I do hope your visit would help to set right the wrongs of partition – particularly for those of us in Little Britain."

"I shall do my best," I replied. All instructions from Butler about not discussing serious matters seemed to have been given the go by in the face of this feminine onslaught.

"What we need is a government of women, both here and in England," the lady continued. "We would sort out the problems of the world to everybody's satisfaction within a few days."

"I am sure you would."

"You will more likely start the next world war," her husband commented.

But Lady Baldwin continued ignoring him/ "I do not know if you are familiar with the history of the world before the great partition. We had a movement called the women's lib as a result of which there were a number of women prime ministers in various parts of the world including India. Even England had a woman as prime minister for some time. And of course, we had a queen who ruled for many years. Only the Russians and the Americans had never had women in power. That is why I say that the partition was mainly intended to keep women out of power....."

She would have gone on much longer, but her husband interrupted her. "My dear, Sir George is paying us a visit for the first time. We don't want to dump all our problems on his lap on this very first visit, do we? And you are not being very hospitable."

"I suppose I had better go and see about some refreshments," she said with a sigh. "That is the woman's role, a ministering angel, but never a minister." And she left us abruptly.

The prime minister heaved a sigh of relief. "My wife, as you might have gathered, has political ambitions."

"I suppose, being close to the seat of power, it is only natural," I ventured.

"She often tries to occupy it."

A servant brought a tray of glasses and some bottles. The prime minister helped himself to a glass of beer and I did the same.

"What is the state of cricket these days in England?" he asked. "Is Yorkshire still the champion county as it used to be in the old days?"

I had forgotten for a moment what 'cricket' was. My face must have been a complete blank for he said. "Don't tell me you are not interested in cricket!"

"I am afraid very little cricket is played these days," I said. "Certainly, there are no test matches as the Australians as well as the West Indies have stopped playing and the Indians and Pakistanis have been in the Eastern hemisphere."

"Pity! I was hoping to send a team over as part of a cultural exchange," he said. "England without cricket! English character must have altered radically for them to have given up cricket. If I were to go there, I should feel quite a stranger I suppose."

It was difficult for me to answer these questions. I realized that people had to be exposed to the vast changes that had taken place gradually. Otherwise, 'future shock' as one early post-nuclear writer put it, would be too much to bear.

"But I presume they still drink beer. An Englishman without his pint would be like a kiss without a moustache, as Shakespeare put it. Though what women see in a moustache, I am unable to understand. It is a dam nuisance when you drink your soup," he laughed.

"Yes, we still drink beer," I replied truthfully.

"And I suppose you could always go to a village pub, have a little tot and a friendly game of darts with the locals."

“Coming from the Metropolis, I am not well up on village pubs.”

“Do you think there is any chance of my being invited, you know, on any official visit to Great Britain?”

“I suppose at some later date, it might be possible,” I replied noncommittally.

“This enquiry is purely unofficial, you understand,” Sir Winston hastened to add. “I would not like a rebuff. Nor would I want the opposition to know anything about it. But I would be grateful for any discreet enquiries on your part before we officially move in the matter. Meanwhile, this is just between us.”

“I understand.”

“My ancestors came from a place called Stonehenge in Wiltshire and my original name was Elderton, though I have had to change it for political reasons,” He was almost confidential now. “Yes, it would be nice to visit the old country, visit the ancestral village, see if there are any distant cousins hanging about the place. According to the records – mainly letters – still preserved in the family, there was a pub there called the Crown and Anchor. You don’t know if it is still there, do you?”

“I am afraid I don’t.”

“You chaps must be having a great time in London, I suppose,” he spoke as if he had been there once and was now missing it. “What with the night life in Soho and the round of diplomatic parties and the expense account, there is no telling what you might be up to.”

I thought of the time I had been having there and could only say, “Life in England is very different from what it was in the pre-nuclear age and the early years of the post-nuclear times. You will have some surprises in store for you if you should visit that country.”

“I suppose so,” he said with a sigh. Then he brightened up and changed the subject. “Oh, well, have another drink.”

“No thanks; I think I should be going,” I was thinking of the instructions from Butler.

“I suppose Butler has been briefing you on the local protocol,” he laughed.

“Yes.”

“Life will be more simple without servants,” he said. “If you were not careful, Butler will be fixing up a bride for you. By the way I presume you are not married.”

“No, I am a bachelor; a confirmed one I am afraid.”

“Don’t be too sure, our ladies have their own methods of operation.”

With that last remark, we said goodbye and I asked my regards to be conveyed to Lady Baldwin. Pitman saw me to the tonga.

“I see we are in a very happy mood this morning,” he commented.

“Are we?”

“Yes, we are unusually jovial. We only hope it doesn’t mean we are going to lose our temper later on.”

\*\*\*\*\*

When I was ready to leave for John’s house for dinner that night, I asked Butler how long it would take me to reach there and was given another lesson in proper behavior. “It would take you ten minutes to get there Sir George,” he explained. “You are invited for 7.30 p.m. but you should not reach there on the dot. On the other hand it would be a show of discourtesy to your hosts to be very late. Further, you are the chief guest on this occasion, so you should give a chance for others to assemble to welcome you. I would suggest you may leave at 7.30 so that you will be there by 7.40 p.m.”

“Yes, I shall do that,” I said, looking at my watch.

“I would recommend a chota peg before you leave, just to put you in the mood.”

He brought me a drink and while I sipped it, he continued his lesson in local manners.

“You should leave about half an hour the dinner is over. That would give a chance for the coachman to have some food. The other guests cannot leave before you do, so you should not hand about too long.”

About ten couples were assembled in John’s house when I got there. There was animated conversation in the room but it stopped abruptly as I entered and everyone turned around to stare at me. They all shook hands with me as I was introduced to each one in turn. The silence continued for a few seconds until John shouted. “Come on folks; make Sir George feet at home! After all he is one of us!”

“Ah! The visitor from outer space,” exclaimed the gentleman who had been introduced to me as Prof. Wordsworth. “You have come to see how your third cousins once removed are getting on in the wilds of Little Britain, otherwise known as the Nilgiris.”

“Not quite from outer space,” I replied.

“As far as we are concerned, you might as well be,” said the professor. “We know that the world is round and it goes round the sun, but as far as we are concerned, it is neither flat nor round. It is bloody hilly, cold and wet and miserable in the rainy weather. And that’s all we know. None of us have ever left this thousand odd square miles of God’s acres for the last one hundred and fifty years.”

“Never mind Bill,” one of the ladies who I learnt late was Mrs. Wordsworth interposed. “Sir George will take you in one of these things that fly in the air and you can go round the world and see everything.”

“I don’t want to see ‘everything’, grumbled the professor, “When it comes to the point, I don’t even know if I want to leave this place. But I wish to be able to do so. It is the idea of being

able to leave. Perhaps, a visit to the Lake District, to see the grave of my spiritual ancestor, a short visit to the British Museum to refer to some books, and then back again."

"I suppose that is possible Sir George?" asked Mrs. Wordsworth. "I wouldn't mind accompanying my husband for a little shopping in Regent Street while he spends his time among the musty volumes."

"Perhaps it could be arranged," I said with a little hesitation. "After a while when things settle down."

"The cautious diplomat has spoken," said someone and everybody laughed.

"Perhaps England isn't what you think it is," I said ignoring the laughter. "That country has changed a lot and if you were to go there now, you might be in for some surprises and ..... some disappointments."

"Don't worry Sir George," said a young lady who was introduced to me as Sheila. She was John's daughter, not beautiful, but striking looking and very self-possessed. "We are not trying to wangle a passage to England out of you. We think of England in the same way as we think of heaven, a place to aspire for but never quite reach. And just like heaven, it is probably not as wonderful as it is made out in the history books."

I was surprised at her intelligence as well as intuition and was going to agree wholeheartedly when another man butted into the conversation. "But why should England change?" he asked somewhat aggressively. "I remember a song during the second world war.

'There'll always be an England....'

"I am sorry I didn't get your name," I said more to gain time for a reply than for knowing him.

"He is the poet Laureate of Little Britain. Robert Crook," said John and we shook hands again.

The poet did not seem to expect a reply to his question which was purely rhetorical and he continued. "The more things change, the more they remain the same. We merely go round in circles and come back to the same point and we think it is progress."

"We don't go round in circles," Prof. Wordsworth argued. "Progress is a spiral staircase. Each time we think we have come back to the same point, we have in fact moved a little higher."

Prof. Wordsworth is our philosopher," Sheila who was standing next to me whispered in my ear.

"Talking of going round, how about another round of drinks?" This was from a portly gentleman by the name of Munro who was a planter.

"I keep forgetting I am in charge of drinks," said Sheila and disappeared.

“Servants are so difficult these days,” complained Mrs. Curator. “We let the Indians come and settle in Little Britain only because they used to be such good servants. But now, no one wants to work in a house.”

“Very soon, we will be working for them,” announced Munro.

“Why should they work for us?” asked Robert Crook.

“Very soon, they will be running the show,” one of the others remarked. “Thank God for democracy; we are in a majority.”

“It won’t be for long my dear chap,” said the planter. “The birth rate among them is colossal. Perhaps in another two generations, they would be in a majority.”

“By that time, all this partition business will be over and we will be fully integrated with Great Britain.”

“Well, the Indians work hard; they are intelligent and they don’t waste money on drink and gambling,” said an elderly gentleman by the name of Skinner. “We will probably be better off if they are running the country instead of that buffoon Baldwin.”

“Treason! What you are saying is pure, unadulterated treason!” shouted Mrs. Wordsworth. “We will be swamped by the millions from the plains if we listened to you!”

Fortunately, Sheila arrived with a tray of drinks and everyone was busy helping themselves for the next few minutes.

“Don’t monopolise Sir George; let him circulate,” said John and he took me by the arm to another group.

“What I would like to do is to see a couple of shows at the London Palladium,” Fred Vickers, a member of parliament was saying. “You know, ‘we never closed’ and that sort of thing. And I would like to get a few points clarified at West minister regarding parliamentary procedures. I am sure we are doing it all wrong.”

“You visited parliament yesterday Sir George,” reminded John. “What did you think about it? Do we come up to the standards of West minister?”

“I am not an expert on parliamentary procedures,” I said truthfully. “But if freedom of speech were any guide, then you fully come up to those standards.”

“You can’t get anything positive out of him,” said Robert Crook who had evidently followed me, “He gives noncommittal answers to all our questions and certainly doesn’t part with any information. I might as well have another drink.”

“The universal solution to all our problems,” commented the parliamentarian.

“If I can see even once,” the Member of Parliament went on ignoring the others. “West minister Abbey and the Houses of Parliament, watch the changing of the Guard, walk down White



hall and Downing Street, I can die happily afterwards. They represent to me, everything that is decent and gentlemanly in civilization.”

“Politicians talk a whole lot of rubbish,” intervened the poet. “The ultimate in civilization is to do a theatre in Shaftsbury Avenue, say, a play by Noel Coward, have dinner at an Italian restaurant in Greek Street, just walk round and watch the lovers standing in dark alleyways – that is true civilization and culture.” There was so much longing and despair in his voice as he spoke those words.

“Don’t you two start arguing!” warned Mrs. Wordsworth.

“How do you remember all these things so well, after a lapse of so many generations?” I asked in amazement.

“What else is there to do in this place, but to remember the past?” Sheila countered. “Remember, and to hope, now that you are here.”

The conversation became general. They started to discuss local problems, about the price of tea and coffee, about the exorbitant price of alcohol, about the problems of education and gradually forgot about my presence.

“My students have started a new stunt,” Prof. Wordsworth was saying. “They do not want to write examinations. They demand what is called ‘self-assessment’. If that is accepted we might as well say goodbye to all education.”

Someone mentioned how the Institute of Agriculture had developed a hand operated centrifugal pump without using any metal. The merits of what was called ‘the new industrial approach’ was discussed by one group while someone else mentioned the possibility of getting help from across the border. This led to an argument on ‘international complications’ and the pros and cons of getting such help.

But as alcohol began to flow more freely, there was increasing noise and laughter and someone shouted above the din. “Come on folks, let us have a sing song.”

Two men started a song and soon, the others joined in.

‘Underneath the spreading chestnut tree  
I loved her and she loved me.’

They sang verse after verse, the women taking up the refrain where the men left off and it seemed to go on for a long time.

‘Ten green bottles, hanging on the wall  
If one green bottle should accidentally fall,  
Nine green bottles hanging on the wall.....

Until all the bottles fell one by one and were presumably broken.

“Come on Sir George! Join us!” Shouted the professor. “Surely, diplomacy permits of such innocent pastimes!”

“I am afraid I do not know these songs,” I apologised.

“Surely, you must know this one; it is about Lambeth Palace, where the archbishop used to live.”

They all linked their arms together in couples and I was dragged into the melee by Sheila who was the only unmarried one present. They began to dance as they sang.

‘Any time you’re Lambeth way,

And evening, any day

You will find us all

Doing the Lambeth Walk.’

In spite of the cool weather outside, the room was getting hot and stuffy, what with the noise and the dancing and the effect of alcohol. As Sheila went off to refill the glasses during the interlude, I quietly walked on to the verandah to get some fresh air. Soon Sheila joined me there.

“You must think we are a set of barbarians,” she sighed. “After all the sophisticated entertainment you have been used to in London.”

“On the contrary, it is extremely pleasant,” I said truthfully, “The spirit of friendship and participation in such co-operative enjoyment is wonderful. We don’t have anything to compare with this in.....er.....England. There, pleasure has become a serious business.”

“But business isn’t pleasure I suppose.”

“How right you are!” I replied admiring her wisdom.

“And we don’t have even an old fashioned gramophone that works!” she sighed. “Our gramophones and radios are mere decorations. Our musical instruments are crude. Our songs and music are two hundred years old. But we manage to enjoy ourselves all the same,” she ended somewhat defiantly.

“You don’t need to feel ashamed because your gramophones do not work,” I replied. “You have been pawns in a game of history. This is not your fault. If I were you, I would be proud of this community who has managed to preserve their sanity and good humour in spite of the problems they have had to face.”

“Do you know, each family has a notebook in which our geneology has been faithfully recorded. It goes back to our origins in England, in one of the countries. And when we changed our names – as you must have noticed – our original names are still preserved in the privacy of our notebooks. So, we try to maintain a continuity with a dead past and revive it in our lives. We were happy and contented in our pretensions, living like silk worms inside a cocoon. We had no

disappointments because we had no hope. The high voltage barbed wire effectively thwarted our ambitions. But we waited for the 'second coming' of the British to the East in the same way as Hindus wait for the next Avatar. We would stand on the cliff at Pykara or Lamb's Rock and gaze at the plains to which we had no access. But your coming has disturbed our peaceful existence and it has given us hopes and aspirations. Frankly, I am apprehensive about our future."

"You can no longer be isolated," I said. "That is certain."

"But don't you see," she cried. "We will lose our isolation but also our identity and our independence. We will lose our game of pretensions and make believe. But to face reality is somewhat frightening."

"How right you are!" I said, thinking of the 'reality' of PUP.

"You have our fate in your hands," she mused. "In a way, you are the second coming of Christ. What happens to us will depend very largely on the kind of impression we make on you, and the kind of suggestions you make to the two governments.

And all we have done so far is to ask you for trips to England without the least concern for our nation."

"You over-estimate the importance of my visit."

"These men in there, each with his own pet desire to visit some corner of England that is probably not there, but about which he has read in his family chronicle, they don't seem to understand or appreciate the importance or the seriousness of your coming. I wonder if even the politicians do."

Her face glowed in the dim light on the verandah and for one insane moment, I had a strong desire to kiss her. Fortunately, the feeling passed away quickly. She was more intelligent than most of the men I had met so far and had analysed the situation with clarity and imagination. I wished I could tell her the truth, tell her I was a mere nobody sent as a result of an accident and that my report would probably never be read, even if I succeed in getting it published. I would have felt better, had I done so. But I dared not.

"I am sure things will work out alright in the end," I said.

"I had better go and see about the dinner," she sighed and departed.

Sheila's remarks had brought home to me, my own predicament. I was thinking about what she had said when the professor came out. "Ah! There you are Sir George. We are trying to persuade our poet Laureate to recite his latest poem. You must come and listen, or he will be very offended."

We went in and Robert Crook began. I remember the first lines.

"My new born lungs received their breath of life  
From rising winds that graze these barren hills;  
My eyes first cast their vacant, childish glance,

On life and all its varied storms and strife  
Among these men who plod their way through life.  
My skin pigmented by the torrid sun,  
The winds, the hills, the silent mass of men,  
All these have shaped my life, so let me dream.

“The torrid sun, my foot!” exclaimed Skinner under his breath. “Why doesn’t he admit he is tarred with the same brush as any of us!” But the poet went on:

“And yet, I know another life; another set of men;  
I feel their feelings deep within my heart.....

“You ought to be honoured; that is distinctly a reference to your visit,” said the planter. “That is his way of saying he too would like to visit England if he had the chance.”

There was sporadic applause when he finished in which I joined. But before the planter could make any more awkward remarks, the professor took him out into the fresh air to sober up.

Dinner was served and we all marched into the dining room. The food as well as knives and spoons were set on a table and we were expected to help ourselves. On the walls were a few plates, carefully mounted and Mrs. Curator took me to show them. “These are genuine Wedgewood and were brought over by my sixth grand mother when she came out before the partition.”

“Yes, they are very precious,” echoed Mrs. Wordsworth. “I don’t think anyone else has any Wedgewood though there are a few pieces of spode.”

“They are a nuisance!” exclaimed Sheila. “And don’t serve any purpose. We are worried all the time that someone might pinch them.”

“But they represent a tradition, a continuity with the past,” said her mother. “They have great sentimental value and they have made us what we are today.”

After the dinner was over, I remembered Butler’s instructions, waited for half an hour and said my goodbyes. As I was leaving, Sheila came to me, “Don’t take anything I said too seriously Sir George,” she whispered.

“I never take women seriously,” I laughed.

“You are just like all the other men!” she pouted.

“I must confess I had a most interesting conversation with you,” I could not help saying.

“I am glad you do not consider me a complete fool.”

“Far from it!” I protested. “I hope we have another chance to continue our conversation.”

“Perhaps, I will see you in church tomorrow,” she said as I drove off.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

Sunday was devoted exclusively to God in Little Britain – almost as exclusively as the anniversary of PUP was in the Western hemisphere. What was lacking in communication and control was made up as a result of tradition and belief. The bars and billiard halls were closed. All forms of entertainment – including games and sports – were banned. Most people went to church twice – once in the morning and again in the evening. It was the weekly social event when you met all your friends, chatted with them on the lawns of the church after the service was over and went home with them, theirs or yours, depending on the lunch arrangements. Under instructions from Butler, I walked to the St. Paul's cathedral, which was frequented by the elite of the town. Everyone from the prime minister downwards was there with their families, in their reserved seats and I was glad to find that one seat had been reserved for me in the second row, neat the Curator's.

The service was long and tedious, but the bishop made a roundabout reference to my arrival. It was a somewhat involved analogy, about Moses leading his people out of Egypt to the freedom of Israel and how I had come to lead the Little Britons from the prison walls of the Blue Mountains to the freedom of their ancestral home.

After it was all over, we stood about and chatted. People came and spoke to me and someone referred to me as the 'New Moses'. I hoped he wasn't being sarcastic.

"I wonder if you have brought a new set of commandments sir George," one man remarked. "We have enough trouble with the old ones."

"If you remember you're Old Testament, you should know," John interposed. "It comes later. They will be handed to you after you reach your homeland."

"In that case, I might prefer to say here."

"Since you have never observed the old ones, I don't see why you should be unduly bothered about any new ones," retorted John and everyone laughed.

As we were moving away, Sheila came to me. "What does it feel like, to have so much power?" she asked.

"What do you mean?"

"It must be nice to feel so important and to have the future of the entire community in your hands."

"Frankly, I have never exercised any power in my life," I confessed. If only they had known what kind of life I led in London, she would pity me instead of talking about my 'power'.

"But we think you do; that is the important thing, isn't it?"

"I hope I haven't given any wrong impression."

“It is not the impression you have given or not given,” she cried. “It is what you are. You have the power to change this community. The old boy wasn’t far wrong when he compared you to Moses.”

“But supposing I am not Moses come to liberate the Israelites, what then?”

“Don’t be silly! We all know that you are the representative of His Majesty’s government in Great Britain. They have probably sent you to make an evaluation of the situation, to see if we are worth rehabilitation or if we should be left to rot in these hills. If you weren’t important, the Indian Government would not have gone to the trouble of sending you here with a special escort.”

“You see Sheila,” I pleaded earnestly. “Things are far more complicated than you make out. Do you think that any of these people would be happy in Great Britain as it is today?”

“Do you think the Israelites were happy when they left Egypt or got to Israel?” she countered. “But it was their destiny just as it is ours to follow you into the unknown future. Oh! I am so proud to know you!” And she placed her hand on my arm as she said it.

At that moment, I felt supremely happy. It was one thing to be flattered by middle aged or elderly men who hoped to wangle a trip to Great Britain as a result of my visit. But it was different when a fresh young girl put so much faith in you and thought so much of you. I tentatively squeezed her hand; the response was warm and reassuring.

“Would you like to take pot luck with us?” she asked with a glowing smile. “I am sure father will be happy if you do.”

“Do you think it is alright?” I asked hesitantly. “Butler will be expecting me to lunch.”

“Don’t let Butler run your life!” she said vehemently. “We will send a message to say that you wouldn’t be in for lunch.”

So I accompanied the Curators in their Tonga, Sheila taking possession of me as if I was her personal property. I could see the others – particularly those with eligible daughters – eyeing us with considerable interest and perhaps envy.

“We don’t normally drink on Sabbath, but I think an exception may be made when important guests are present,” said John as he opened a bottle of beer. I did not care for any stimulant just then, but as usual, was too polite to refuse. One glass led to another and finally, when we had lunch, I found it difficult to keep awake. John said something about the roast beef of old England, but for the life of me, I cannot remember what it was. But I was not to go home yet.

“Perhaps, you young things might want to spend sometime by yourselves,” said Mrs. Curator. “John and I are going to have a little nap. But I am sure you don’t need it.” And the parents retired, leaving Sheila and me alone.

The situation was completely strange to me. It was obvious that Sheila was interested in me and her parents were encouraging her in that direction. In Western hemisphere, it was much more simple. If a man and a woman were interested in each other, they just had sex together. If they like it, they might repeat the performance or they might never see each other again. The elimination of

marriage and family and the separation of sex and childbearing had made things so totally different. But in the society of Little Britain, I realized that my first decision to be a mere observer was impossible and Chuck was right in his Eastern wisdom when he suggested that participation was inevitable. But I wondered, how far could one go without committing oneself? It was one thing to know all about prenuclear customs and relationships from books, but totally different when it came to participation.

"I believe you were interested in prenuclear history before you became a diplomat," Sheila remarked all of a sudden.

"How do you know about that?" I asked her.

"You don't need to be ashamed of it," she laughed. "The man who brought you here had evidently mentioned it to some of his Indian friends. And news gets round pretty fast in a place like this. But if you are interested in history – British history – you ought to read this book," and she handed me a small volume.

I looked at the book. It was called '1066 and all that'.

"I shall read it," I promised.

"Almost everyone in Little Britain has read it. They get their knowledge of British history from that book. The so-called standard works are so boring."

Somehow, we found ourselves sitting on the same sofa. Sheila nuzzled close to me. "Tell me, what is it like in England now?" She asked putting her arm round my shoulders and squeezing me a little. "You have been very quiet about it. But you can tell me. If you so desire, I won't breathe a word to anyone else."

"It is very difficult," I replied. "I don't know where to start even. Things have changed so much that it is impossible for people here, even to imagine it. Certainly, anyone from Little Britain would be completely lost there, might even go crazy."

"But tell me about it," she weedled, getting a little closer. "Do couples still go courting behind the bushes in Regent's Park? Or sit in the back row of the Hippodrome and hold handle while they watch moving pictures? Do they still dance at the Hammersmith Palais de danse?"

Her warm body felt nice and comfortable against my own. The alcohol and the food had introduced a feeling of drowsiness. But Sheila kept talking and asking questions.

"In the first place, Great Britain is not an independent country like it used to be. It is part of the government of Western hemisphere – a rather small part."

I regretted as soon as I had said it, for she could easily have asked, "If Great Britain is not an independent country, how can you represent that country here?" Fortunately, she didn't her mind was working in a different direction.

"So, there is no monarchy, no houses of parliament, no horse guards parade, nothing?"

"That is right."

“But I suppose the technological developments in communication, entertainment and ways of living must have all advanced tremendously.”

I told her about moving platforms, about stereoscopic television, about nutrients and stimulants, about advances in medicine and about the freedom of sex life.

“You mean people just do what they want?” She was scandalized. “There is no sanctity of marriage any longer?”

I nodded. “Not only is there no sanctity of marriage, but there is no marriage at all. People can live together if they wanted to, but there is neither legal nor moral sanction for such a course. And it is certainly not encouraged.”

“But what happens to the children?”

So, I had to explain to her about incubator babies, about population control, about scientific selection and about the new methods of education. I think she was a little scared of the things I said and moved a little away from me. But I did not tell her about PUP, and about conditioning. What I had told her was about as much as she could take psychologically.

She was silent for a little while. Slowly she brightened up. “But you seem alright in spite of everything you have told me,” she said. “You seem to understand and appreciate our life here and adapt yourself to it without any trouble. So, things can’t be so bad.”

“I am able to understand, because I am a student of pre-nuclear history. I can adjust myself to both systems.”

“But which do you like?”

“I like it here,” I said honestly. “For the first time in my life, I have begun to feel like a human being,” but it was not because of the sanctity of marriage.

“Yes, they must all be like super-intelligent tool using animals with no moral sense or social values,” said Sheila vehemently. It was surprising what confidence she had in herself and in that of her people. “But we shall change all that when once we get there.”

I do not remember how long the conversation went on, when I woke up, I had my head on Sheila’s bosom and had evidently been asleep. I apologised, but Sheila laughed. “Poor man! You must have been so tired. You went to sleep in the middle of our conversation. I didn’t have the heart to disturb you. But we must meet again soon and continue our interesting dialogue.”

\*\*\*\*\*

That right, I got in touch with Chuck. “How have you got on?” he enquired after the usual signals were exchanged.

I gave him a concise summary of my activities during the last few days, in particular about my visit to the House of Commons. “Never mind the gas works,” he brushed it aside. “How did you get on with the dames?”



So, I gave him an account of the dinner party, the visit to the church that morning and lunch at the Curators'. I ended my recital by saying, "You have nearly given me away; they seem to know all about my interest in pre-nuclear history."

"I wanted to build you up as a personality, not just a dummy," Chuck replied. "A person with some unusual professional experience is always interesting to others."

"Anyway, Sheila is a very intelligent young lady," I said. "She nearly caught me out, asking about what things were like in England."

Chuck ignored my apprehensions completely and went off at a tangent. "Don't tell me you have fallen for her already!" he exclaimed mischievously.

"No, no, I am a true follower of PUP."

"Is she good looking?"

"I suppose she is."

"Well don't let her get you between the sheets purely on the basis of intellect."

"You have got sex on your brain," I said.

"As I explained to you, it is all in the interests of science and humanity, and perhaps, your own rehabilitation," he said. "In any case don't forget to take the pills I gave you. Otherwise, you might not fare so well."

"I don't think we need to call each other frequently," I said ignoring his remarks. "I will call you every Sunday at the same time."

"You are the boss," he laughed and said. "Over."

As I went to bed that night, I thought over the events of the day, my conversation with Sheila and then with Chuck and wondered what PUP would have to say about it.

\*\*\*\*\*

I spent the next few weeks in inspecting and getting to know my environment. This was possible because, parliament was not in session and the prime minister had gone away to his cottage at Chequers for a short holiday. Consequently, I had no official engagements and I was told that the presentation of my credentials would be postponed by at least a month. Under the gentle and persistent prodding by Butler, I learnt to ride a horse and found special pleasure in doing so. It made me free of the tonga and its driver. Having been used to an almost anonymous life, I found the presence of the driver a little irksome, particularly when I wanted to wander about aimlessly without being watched by anyone. No doubt PUP-vilence and PUP authority was everywhere in the Western hemisphere and one's movements were recorded and analysed by the Universal Computer System (UCS). But there was no physical presence not the simple curiosity exhibited by the Tonga driver. However well intentioned, I found it highly disturbing. Without the conditioning pills and with the need to pretend I was the 'representative of His Majesty's government', my nerves were on edge.

Under these circumstances, wandering about the countryside on my own helped to soothe my feelings.

As I wandered along the hills and dales, I came across closed factories, derelict houses and workshops, pylons that had once carried electricity from the Pykara or the Kundah systems, but were now bent and positively dangerous. But the bright green of the tea gardens on the upper slopes was like a velvet carpet spread over the slopes of the hills. Occasionally, one came across a new house, usually built by a planter that seemed to have a special gaiety in the midst of desolation. And on the lower slopes, the rice fields glistened in the sun and men and women with their trousers rolled up were toiling in the mud and water. It was surprising what a wonderful life the people seemed to have in spite of all the handicaps under which they suffered. They seemed to have not a care in the world. I came across groups of people, laughing and shouting and occasionally quarrelling. Perhaps, the thing that impressed me most was that they had no fear, no suspicion of anything or anybody. Having been used to eternal PUPvulence, orders without questions, conditioning without argument, this freedom struck me with so much force that I was completely stunned. I had been told that freedom was the enemy of progress and order and had been given evidences of it in my own profession, that is, pre-nuclear history. How could a society with so much freedom as these people undoubtedly had survived, I wondered. And yet, they seemed to be thriving! This feeling of freedom was almost a torment and I wished I had not thrown away my conditioning pills. They would have restored my balance and sanity.

Sometimes, I met people who spoke to me. They eyed me suspiciously, perhaps because of my blonde hair and very fair skin.

“Who are you?” a man asked me once rather aggressively. “We have not seen you in these parts before.”

But before I could reply another man said, “Haven’t you heard Fred? He is from Great Britain. He has come to visit his relatives.”

“I thought he had sneaked across the border. I was going to give him one on the head and send him running back.”

“Don’t be silly Fred; does he look like an Indian?”

“Have you brought any gold with you?” a woman who was with them enquired.

“I am afraid not,” I replied.

“What is the use of gold?” Fred who was obviously her husband shouted. Now, if he had brought some spare parts for our turbines, it would have been more useful.”

“I don’t care about electricity, but I would like some ornaments like the Indian women have.”

“They sneak it from across the border.”

“Why don’t you do the same?”

On another occasion, a man asked me, "How much does it cost to go to Great Britain?"

"Travel is still very difficult."

"But I thought they had removed the partition."

"The partition has gone, but there are still a lot of legal formalities."

"I suppose you have to fill in a form in triplicate, or something like that."

"A little more than that."

"You must be very clever to have managed it."

"I was permitted."

"You can do anything in this world if you know the ropes, I suppose," he commented wistfully. "Next you will be hearing about all the nobs in Whitehall cadging trips."

On the whole, they were friendly and hospitable. They offered me tea or coffee, showed me their children and any heirlooms they had from 'the old country' and were proud of their British origin. But they were essentially simple and unsophisticated, used to a rugged independence and always ready to back their opinions with money or with fists.

What I was used to thinking of as elementary conveniences were not available here. 3-D television, intercommunicating stereovision, universal climatic control, sophisticated centres of entertainment where one had a choice of many different kinds of shows in which one had a feeling of participation, the easy going sex life - none of these were available and I felt a bit lost. I had lived in one of the most crowded cities and yet, I had been lonely until I came here. What was worse, I had not even realized it until now. Not only I, but every one in the Western hemisphere was like an island surrounded by water while here, there was a feeling of belonging. But there was a sense of freedom and a sense of community which I was experiencing for the first time in my life. People talked about illness and death as every day occurrences. There were jealousies, quarrels, occasional fights, court proceedings and goals - all of which I had known only by a study of history and not first hand. But there was also affection, loyalty, a sense of right and wrong, a desire to sacrifice for the sake of an individual or a cause - qualities which I found difficult to understand at first, but which were nevertheless strangely exhilarating. Affection and hatred, love and jealousy, selfishness and sacrifice, aspiration and frustration - they seemed to exist side by side, struggling for supremacy.

They seemed to thrive on controversy. It was very vocal, often unrestrained. And after making the most damaging statements about others or their opinions, they laughed and shook hands and forgot all about it soon afterwards. In spite of the small population, or perhaps because of it, they were like one large family, quarrelling and making up all the time.

I would have liked to have walked into the busier parts of the town, mixed with the people in bars and restaurants and talked to them, but John discouraged me. "This is no doubt a free country," he remarked. "We have a saying 'you can swing your arm as much as you like so long as you don't hit your neighbour's nose;' but you can't do just what you like. You are the accredited representative of a great country. You cannot cheapen yourself. Unfortunately, we have people here

who swing their arms just to hit their neighbours' noses. You should mix with people of your own level. Further, he added as an after thought. "You can easily be recognized because of .....er..... your colouring. We would not like you to be involved in any incidents."

In spite of this admonition, I wandered into the town on one or two nights after telling the ever vigilant Butler I was going for a walk in the woods. The centre of the town was crowded, noisy and dirty, with open drains and rubbish thrown about all over the place. It was dark as there was very little street lighting and because of that no one recognized me I suppose. One of the things I noticed almost immediately was the institution of wall newspapers. Because of the scarcity of printing materials, almost everyone who wanted to say something to his fellow men or women had recourse to the wall newspaper. In some areas of the town where crowds of people gathered, certain specially constructed walls had been declared as 'Freedom wall.' Political parties and recognized societies had special places where their bulletins appeared regularly. But anyone who had an opinion to express could do so on the unreserved portions of the Freedom Walls. I could not read any of them because of the light, but I could read the headlines. One said, 'We fight for church and Churchill.' This I learnt later was the slogan of the conservatorys. It was a unique means of communication in an essentially primitive society whose resources were meagre. It was in its own way just as compelling and effective as PUP, but while PUP had a monopoly as well as other means of persuasion at its disposal, here there was a choice of opposing slogans to choose from. The freedom as well as the violence of language was terrific in its effects as far as I was concerned, but other people seemed to take them as a matter of course.

The main entertainment of the people seemed to be the consumption of alcohol. There were a number of bars catering to the people's needs. They had historical sounding names reminiscent of pre-nuclear England such as Crown and Anchor, George and Dragon, Maisie's Arms, Twilight Tavern, Legs Eleven, and so on. There was a theatre called the Prince of Wales giving performances known as Variety shows, but I dared not venture into it.

Only once did I walk into a bar and it proved to be a historic as well as a memorable occasion as far as I was concerned. It was crowded and noisy with rickety wooden tables stained with drink marks. The wall behind the serving counter was decorated with faded pictures that were at least a hundred years old and were interspersed with jars and bottles of various kinds. A group of men were gambling in one corner, with a frayed pack of cards. I surveyed the scene for a minute and decided to leave when a large, fat woman tapped me on the shoulder.

"You are new around here, aren't you?" she demanded.

I admitted that I was.

"Have you got a permit?"

I did not know what she meant and said so.

"What game are you playing at?" she demanded.

By then, I realized that not only did I not have a 'permit' – whatever that was – but I also had not brought any money with me.

"I am sorry, I just came in to have a look," I said.

She eyed me up and down, inspected my clothes and evidently decided that perhaps, I was not a desirable type in her establishment. "And have you seen everything you want to see?" she asked with mock politeness.

"I just thought, I mean..... I wanted to see," I stammered.

"Come to see how the other half lives, have you? Well, we have the same things that you have, but we have a little more, and certainly a little better."

"Throw him out Mary!" A man shouted from behind the counter.

"O.K. friend, here we go!" she gave me a powerful job in the ribs and pushed me to the door.

'Ah! Wait a minute," another, a younger woman came across. "I knew the chap; I will vouch for him."

The fat woman stopped pushing me and released her grip. "What will you have Daddy?" the young woman asked me.

"Look, I haven't brought any money with me," I said. "I just wanted to have a look. It would not be fair to accept a drink without being able to pay for it."

"We are being very correct, aren't we?" the young woman laughed. "Bring two of the usual Mary," she told the proprietress and turned to me again. "Don't worry, I know who you are; I was in the crowd when you arrived."

I felt more uncomfortable at being recognized. The smell, the tobacco smoke and the general atmosphere was making me dizzy and I was sure I wouldn't be able to drink whatever it was she had ordered without being sick.

"Come on! Relax and enjoy yourself. We will have a quickie here. Then we will go to my place and if you are so inclined, we will have a quickie there." She winked at me.

The way she said it, I did not think she meant a second drink and that made me apprehensive.

She was a young woman with a heavily made-up face, but quite attractive with her pale, soft skin and dark hair. The drinks arrived and I sipped mine tentatively. It went down my throat like a flame of fire, much stronger than anything I had tasted so far.

"My name is Joan," she said after taking a big gulp of her drink. "Don't worry; I won't let on who you are. It will be a secret between us."

"Thank you," I said with relief.

"Don't you like the stuff? You have hardly touched it."

"It is a bit strong; I am not used to it."

“You are not one of these milk and water types, are you?”

She went to the serving counter, returned with a glass of water and diluted my drink. “Don’t worry,” she said. “Before you know where you are, you will be putting it down like anyone else.”

I managed to gulp some of it after dilution.

“I heard it said your name was Sir George,” she said. “Are you really a knight of the Garter?”

“No, just a knight.”

“Then I can provide the garter,” she laughed. She lifted the lower part of her dress to expose her thighs and showed me the piece of string that held her stocking up.

I had learnt that among Little Britons, marriage and family were almost universal and married women still wore rings on the third finger of the left hand to indicate their married status. As Joan lifted her glass, I instinctively looked at her fingers and found that she had no ring. So, I knew she wasn’t married.

“Are you going to be here long?” she enquired.

“It has not yet been decided,” I answered. “It depends on so many factors.”

“No doubt the politicians will make it difficult for the likes of me to go to England, even if I could pay for it.”

“There are still a number of restrictions on unlimited travel. But no doubt the problem will be solved in the long run.”

“Come on, drink up. We will go to my place.”

“I think I should be getting back really,” I protested feebly.

“I suppose you don’t want to be seen with the likes of me,” she said. “But no one can recognize you in the dark and you can have a good time.”

“No! No! It’s not that!”

“Then come on!” she gulped her drink, took me by the arm and marched out. I followed her more or less helplessly.

We walked for about five minutes down the road and then, turned up a narrow flight of steps. I found it difficult to see in the dark but Joan had no difficulty at all and guided me. She opened a door in a dark alley and we entered a room where a candle was burning. Even in the dim light, I could see the furniture in the room as well as a large number of knick-knacks. There were a few cane chairs and a bed in one corner. Joan lit a lamp which made the room a lot brighter.

I stood about, wondering what was going to happen. But Joan said, “You look like an unwelcome salesman who has been shown the door. Come on, love; there is no need to be serious. Sit down and make yourself at home while I get you another drink.”

I sat on the edge of a chair and fidgeted while she produced a bottle from the cupboard and two stone mugs.

“Whisky tastes much better from mugs,” she said. “Particularly when you don’t own any glass tumblers. Also, you can’t see how strong it is from the colour. May be next time you come, you will bring me a few cut glass tumblers from England. Cheers!”

We drank. She kicked her shoes off and relaxed on the bed. “Come on, sit by my side,” she said.

As I moved over, she put her arms round me and kissed me. As her hand began to explore the various parts of my anatomy, I felt timid and nervous and was more of a passive spectator than an active participant. After a little while she gave up her amorous attempts.

“I have heard that everything was automated in England,” she said. “I suppose you have machines to do it for you.”

“It is not that,” I replied.

“Or, may be you don’t like me,” she went on. “Perhaps, you only like blondes. Let me tell you there are none like that here. We are British, but we are off white.”

“You don’t understand,” I pleaded.

It was not so much my inability as Joan’s humiliation about which I was concerned. How could I explain to her about incubator children and decreasing sex impulses, about artificial stimulants that were essential before we could enjoy ourselves? Where could I start?

“I thought it would be nice to have a real, true blue Englishman for a change,” Joan continued. “But evidently, there are no such men left in this world if you are anything to go by. But don’t worry; there are plenty here I could choose from, from the prime minister downwards.”

I was rather surprised at her statement and thought she was boasting. After all I had heard about the sanctity of marriage and love of hearths and homes, no man – particularly any one as important as the prime minister – would demean himself by having sex outside wedlock; at least, so I thought.

“You don’t believe me, do you?” she laughed. “Let me tell you that everyone who can afford it has a mistress tucked away in one of the side streets in this area. And they look after us much better than their wives though they might spend more time with them. And we are faithful to them too, and make them forget their troubles. It is a long term arrangement that makes everyone happy, except the wives I suppose if they ever find out. But generally they don’t bother over much. I happened to be free and thought to hook the ambassador of his Majesty’s government. It would be something to boast about to my friends apart from the other advantages. But it hasn’t worked out that way, has it?”

Under the stimulus of alcohol and the easy going manner of Joan, I was losing my shyness and timidity. I told her about the generations of incubator children, about hormone injections, about sex stimulants and entertainment, in fact, everything connected with sex in England. She became my

first confident in Little Britain. Under her gentle persuasion and encouragement, my inhibitions and anxieties slowly vanished and without realizing it, I found myself kissing and fondling her. But she was a little tigress when it came to love making. She pulled my clothes off, massaging, kissing and biting me until we found ourselves in bed, having sex and enjoying it. The violence of her passion took my breath away and we were able to achieve a fairly satisfactory result.

“With a little more training and encouragement, you will be alright,” she said as she put her clothes on.

“It is just that everything is so strange here,” I remarked.

“You know what you remind me of?” she asked. “You are like a little puppy that has been thrashed every time it went near a bowl of milk so that it has become averse to milk. You must all be thoroughly cowed down in England. If that is so, give me Little Britain every time.”

“You are the only person I have met here in the last few days who doesn’t want to go to England.”

“Oh. I don’t say I wouldn’t like a visit, particularly if you take me with you,” she laughed. “I will teach those fellows out there a thing or two about enjoying themselves. But if half of what you say is true, I wouldn’t like to live there.”

I liked talking to her. She made you forget yourself and I had never been able to do it in England without artificial aids. I made up mind to see her again and also to take the pills that Chuck had given me before visiting her again. I wished I had something I could give her as a gift.

“Would you like a permanent arrangement with me?” she asked in a matter-of-fact manner. “We call it the Devadaasi system, after the manner of ancient India where temple dancers became mistresses of wealthy people. Your not being married makes it easy.”

“Yes, I would like that,” I replied.

“I have an income of my own, but I would expect you to look after me,” she said. “But you need not worry I will clean you out. I am just as interested in your prosperity as you are yourself.”

Joan took me to the nearest main road from where I could find my own way and I said goodbye to her. After promising to meet her again I walked to Hampton Court.

“We have been anxious Sir George,” complained Butler. “You should not have gone into the town without an escort. Apart from the risks involved, it is not nice for a person of your status to be seen walking round among the common people.”

“But I thought there was democracy here where everyone was considered equal to his neighbour.”

“Equally is a political catch phrase, not a social necessity.”

“I shall remember your advice,” I said wondering how I was going to see Joan again.



## CHAPTER EIGHT

Two things struck me about Little Britain. One was, of course, the extremely restricted life people were forced to lead. They had been confined to a small area of about one thousand square kilometers for the whole of their life and for the past six generations. They did not know anything about the outside world, but when I thought about it, I realized that even in the Western hemisphere where progress was said to be so rapid, very few people travelled beyond the narrow confines of their environment. We only knew what PUP told us about the rest and we never even questioned it, thanks to our conditioning. We lived under what might be called 'controlled conditions' and there was a monotony that did not vary from place to place even when one had an opportunity to travel. I realized that what was important was not the confinement to a place but the confinement of the mind without an opportunity to think.

Lack of essential materials in Little Britain had brought about a pastoral society. Metals and things made with metals were in such short supply that ordinary objects such as knives, guns, etc. were carefully preserved and guarded. But it was a society that had a knowledge of science – at least pre-nuclear science, which, for lack of use, had become a superstition. Turbines and dynamos were regarded almost as minor deities. Many objects of everyday use, once made of iron and steel, were now made of wood, while the original ones were preserved and cherished. In spite of these handicaps, it was surprising how comfortably most people lived. While their adherence to anything British and their pretensions were pathetic in the extreme, their improvisations in ceramics instead of glass and in wood instead of metal had great artistic merit and aesthetic appeal. They had developed the skills of spinning and weaving into fine arts and restored the historic traditions of India. It seemed to give them a lot more satisfaction than the manufacture of more sophisticated products.

In spite of the lack of physical resources, these people managed to have a good life on the whole. No doubt, there was disease and dirt and poverty. Expectation of life was not controlled, but was left to the vagaries of chance. Many children died at birth or soon afterwards. One was always going to funerals, a waste of resources as PUP would have put it. But the fertility level was obviously high as there was no dearth of children in the streets. There was a total lack of order and discipline, but there was a freedom that was unusually exhilarating, a feeling of confidence and assertiveness that was totally lacking in my own society. There was no one looking over their shoulders to see what they were doing and tell them not to. Disagreement was taken as a matter of course, almost as a matter of right and people did not seem to mind backing their opinions with money (gambling) or occasionally with their fists. Gambling was a universal habit. The moment you expressed an opinion, someone was sure to ask, "Will you back it?" I found it extremely difficult to get used to this situation. I was not used to expressing an opinion, let alone backing it. Obedience – or conformity as it was known in PUP – was the greatest virtue and up till now, I did not know anything else. Perhaps, generations of PUP, frequency of conditioning, a lifetime of conformity, had made me unfit for what might be called a free society.

The freedom that one came across was truly amazing. People stopped work at the slightest provocation; this was known as a strike. Shopkeepers closed their shops, servants did not turn up for work. There were processions for everything, shouting of slogans, catch phrases to beguile the

innocent, and meetings about almost everything. If there was one thing that the Little Britons were fond of, it was making speeches and listening to them. It was perhaps the most popular entertainment and was looked upon as such by most people.

\*\*\*\*\*

The first public event I witnessed in Little Britain – apart from my own arrival – was a rally organized by the opposition to protest against the behavior of the government with regard to their foreign policy. The labourtories with red and white scarves round their necks and red and white flags marched in procession shouting slogans against the government and against the conservatories. But it was a good humoured procession with plenty of noise and laughter. In the intervals of shouting, they sang a song, the burden of which seemed to be,

“Heigh ho! Heigh Ho!

Old Baldwin must go!”

While it was sung as a refrain, others added their own improvised verses in between.

The procession terminated in the Race Course maidan where the protest meeting was held. Speeches were made criticizing the government for their handling of the visit of the representative of Great Britain. The prime minister was accused of keeping it a secret from the nation until the actual arrival, of trying to turn it into a party affair, of planning secret treaties without the knowledge or consent of the opposition and of the Indian minority. There were accusations of corruption and double dealing, of not caring for the interests of the masses and keeping people in the dark. The final peroration was made by the leader of the opposition Sir Clement Wilson.

“We are meeting at a momentous time in the history of our nation,” he said. “For fifteen long decades, we have been isolated from the rest of the world, denied the benefits of international commerce, have had no access to the vast knowledge of science and technology, raw materials, or the growing culture of the modern world. We have been left to the meagre resources of these inhospitable hills. Thanks to the ineptitude of the conservatories, we have been imprisoned by the international community which considered their interests as being paramount. That the barrier could not be lifted and contacts established is solely due to the incompetence of our government who have considered their own narrow, selfish interests as being more important than the welfare and progress of the nation.

“But at long last our trials and tribulations are over, not because of the efforts of our government, but solely due to a turn in the international situation. Prison bars are going to be lifted and we are going to be admitted to the councils of the international community in which we shall be called upon to play a part in keeping with our past. A representative from Great Britain has arrived here – presumably for some long-term negotiations. At least I should presume they are going on unless our government is even more inefficient than we have credited them with so far. Whether this should have been done before the removal of the curtain around us is open to doubt. We, as a small nation, should not do anything to create further misunderstanding between the big powers. But at the same time, we should not ignore our own interests in order that the big powers can have their own way. Unfortunately, we are not in a position to advise the government since we have been kept completely in the dark regarding these historic developments.

“We are living in an extremely critical period in the history of our nation. Not since the big partition have we been given the choice of taking decisions regarding our future for many generations to come. This is not the time to talk of petty differences over policy or for power struggles between the government and the opposition. This is a time of national crisis and only a national government can tackle it effectively and successfully.....

He went on like this for sometime and finally, a resolution was passed demanding a national government before the crowd dispersed.

When I mentioned about the rally to John, he merely laughed. “This is all chicken feed for good old Winston,” he said. “He will say that any national government will have to include the Indian minority and on that issue, the whole thing will collapse.”

\*\*\*\*\*

The Indian community seemed to be the unknown factor in the whole situation and I wanted to meet some of them and get their reactions to the present ‘crisis’. Socially, the British and the Indians hardly mixed with each other, but John assured me that this was not the fault of the British who were only too eager to mix with them, but the Indians wanted to keep a loof. Socially and culturally, they were still poles apart, the Indians, industrious and sober while the British were neither. I was naturally interested in finding out how they lived. The two communities lived separately – more or less isolated from each other, but there was no animosity or friction between them and they got on well whenever they came into contact with each other. So, John arranged for me to meet Mr. Krishna, recognized by all as the unofficial leader of the Indians, though he was not even a member of parliaments.

My visit to the Indian area and to Mr. Krishna’s house was like a visit to another world. The tradition of Great Britain that seemed to weigh so heavily on the rest of the population was completely absent here. On the other hand, the traditions of India were not emphasised either. They were implicit rather than explicit and consequently, all the deeper, perhaps, they were taken for granted. I was not quite sure. The houses in this area were all new, built to a more modern design and taking into account, all the shortages. The furniture, crockery, carpets, and other objects seemed to be the natural growth of their environment and their life. They were simple, functional and could be thrown away without any qualms. There was no emotional attachment or involvement with these things, as in the case of the British. The involvement, if any, was to the country as a whole.

Mr. Krishna received me in his drawing room which had none of the pretentiousness of the British homes but was nevertheless very artistic as well as comfortable. He was extremely kind and hospitable. I was introduced to his wife and children who made a few polite remarks and then withdrew, leaving us to discuss more serious matters.

“I welcome you to the Blue Mountains Sir George,” my host said. “Though I don’t know how you call yourself a knight when royalty as well as titles were abolished in Britain after the great partition. But that is your affair, not mine.”

“As a matter of fact, your prime minister conferred it on me when I landed in your country,” I replied. “I can assure you it was as much a surprise to me as it is to you.”

“Yes, we are great on conferring on ourselves big titles as well as big names.”

“Would you say that it is a form of hypocrisy?” I asked.

“Unfortunately no,” he replied. “Hypocrisy – even sanctimonious hypocrisy – implies a deliberate and conscious intention. But our hypocrisy is completely unconscious. It is a form of national self-delusion if you like. We – or at least the British – believe in it absolutely. The awakening will therefore be all the more catastrophic when it occurs.”

“I hope you don’t mind if I ask you some questions,” I said. “I have come here to learn and you seem more knowledgeable and understanding than anyone I have come across.”

“You don’t need to be complimentary,” he laughed as he ordered some tea. “Your friend John is as knowledgeable as I am though he might not be quite so forthcoming, because of the situation in which he is placed.”

“First of all, I should like to know how it is that all the British people wear a cross on their forehead while the Indians don’t wear anything. If I remember my history rightly, it was the Indians who used to wear religious marks on their foreheads in pre-nuclear days.”

“I think John has told you about the Britishers marrying Indian women in the early days. When these women started wearing a spot on their forehead, they were often mistaken for Hindus. So, their husbands insisted that the spot should be in the form of a cross. And gradually, the men also started having a cross on their foreheads, because they were gradually becoming browner and that was the only way of distinguishing themselves from the Indians. In fact, I am surprised that no one has suggested to you that you should wear one too.”

“But why have you given up the custom?”

The tea arrived and I found it was delicious, much better flavour than anything I had tasted so far I said so and Mr. Krishna laughed. “It comes from the highest ranges in these hills and is specially grown. The British don’t enjoy it any more because of their addiction to strong drink.”

As I drank the tea, he continued. “We call ourselves Hindus but we know there is no difference between one religion and another – particularly between Hinduism and Christianity. They both have a common origin. It is well known for example that Christ spent many years in India both before and after crucifixion. During his stay here, he was known as Krishna – my own name – and was treated as one of the avatars of Vishnu. Similarly, Virgin Mary is known as Mariamman who used to have a shrine in every village. So, we do not attach great importance to mere symbols. What a man is, is more important than what he believes.”

“Tell me Mr. Krishna, what are your views on the preservation of tradition in Little Britain?” I changed the subject. “The government seems to believe that everything should be preserved as they were before partition, but the opposition wants – or claims – to create a new society, what is the Indian view?”

“There is no such thing as ‘an Indian view’ on these matters,” replied my host. “We also have traditionalists and modernists among us. But the main thing is to understand that a tradition, preserved without understanding, becomes a superstition in course of time. This is exactly what

happened to the Hindus; our mythology speaks about flying machines and men able to change their form at will and so on. There might have been a scientific basis for it, but it has been lost. But belief without knowledge degenerates into blind faith and that is what is happening in Little Britain today. We are beginning to worship turbines and motors in the same way as Hindus worshipped six headed gods.”

“I have not been able to understand your rules about prohibition of liquor, except that it seems to be observed only in its breach,” I enquired.

“It is very simple,” Mr. Krishna replied. “The British want to drink without limit and the Indians do not want to drink. Therefore we arrived at a compromise, that anyone wanting to drink should have a certificate, or even a cross on his forehead will do. Otherwise, you will not be served with alcohol.”

“You mean to say that none of the Indians drink?”

“I would not say that, but by and large, we are an abstemious lot. Some of us do take permits, more to entertain our British friends. We work hard while the Britishers are interested in drink and gambling of every form. Consequently, though all the Indians started off as servants or clerks in Little Britain, we are now economically equal to the British community. In fact, many of them are working for us now.”

At Mr. Krishna’s suggestion we went into the garden. “I like to spend as much time in the open air as possible,” he said. “This is a delightful climate for work or play, or just contemplation. I would be sorry to lose this, and of course the freedom that goes with it.”

“You mean when you get absorbed into the rest of the world?”

“If that should happen, we shall lose our identity, as well as our freedom. That is why I am anxious that you should understand our position in the present crisis unambiguously.”

“I shall be most interested in your view,” I responded.

“The first thing to realize about our community – I mean the so-called British community – is that it is based on totally false pretensions and premises,” he sounded as if he was giving a lecture to an audience and not talking to an individual. “They are no more British than I am. Ethnically, there is no difference between the communities. Constant and continuous reference to Great Britain has resulted in a gigantic falsehood. Their dependence on tradition, preservation of useless gadgets that no longer work, has introduced a source of unrealism in our national life. And their hope for the ‘second coming of Great Britain’ to the east amounts to nothing more than a superstition. I am only sorry that your coming has merely encouraged them in their play acting.”

“Isn’t it natural that because of cultural affinities and emotional attachments, the people – irrespective of their ethnic origin – should choose to be united with what they consider their homeland?”

“These people do not know what has been happening in the rest of the world,” was Mr. Krishna’s answer. “They think the world has stood still since the great partition and they can merrily walk into the past. But you and I know what has been happening.”

“How do you know?” I interposed.

“I have my means and resources,” he laughed. “We Indians have not been quite so isolated as the British. We know about the scientific and technological developments as well as about PUP. That one word should indicate to you the extent of our knowledge. If even Sir Winston Baldwin or Sir Clement Wilson were to go to Great Britain – as they fondly hope – they would die of shock within the first few weeks.”

I was astounded at the intimacy of his knowledge.

“We know about the biological problems both in the Western as well as the Eastern hemispheres and how the level of fertility has come down drastically. Unless something is done about it, Mankind will just wither away like plants in the desert.”

“Chuck has been talking to you.”

“It doesn’t matter who has been talking to me. These are incontrovertible facts. So, you see, the only chance for the survival of this community – even of the whole world – depends upon maintaining our identity, getting some help from our neighbours to improve our health, sanitation and economic level, and develop gradually.”

“But I thought you wanted union with India?”

“This is the game of politics. Because, the British want union with Great Britain, we have to counter it by asking for union with India. But our salvation lies in being independent of either. That is the only way of preserving our freedom and sanity as well as biological survival. It is for you to bring this about.”

“But as a representative of Great Britain, you don’t expect me to oppose union with that country, do you?”

“We know why you came here, but we do not know what your plans are. But your secret is safe with us. At some point of time, you will need help and we are here to help you. But it is for you to decide your course of action.”

## CHAPTER NINE

I have no experience or standards of comparison in such matters, but I should imagine that my affair with Sheila proceeded along conventional lines from the point of view of Little Britain. There seemed to be an almost universal conspiracy to throw us together and leave us alone with each other as much as possible. She became my 'escort' for various parties, treasure hunts, picnics, etc. She was my tutor, explaining various things I did not understand, whispering what I should do at certain important moments and generally making sure that I did not make a fool of myself through my ignorance. She even accompanied me to a school function where I was to distribute prizes to the children and where the headmaster assured me that the battle of Plassey was won on the playing fields of the Nilgiris.

Sheila explained to me about cricket, football and racing. Once a week races were held at Ascot and crowds of people – rich and poor – flocked to the race course to watch and even more, to guess which of the horses were going to come first. They backed their opinion with money, got excited over it and shouted and gesticulated all the time. It was like mass hysteria, never seen in the Western hemisphere. Finally, they all went home or to the bars to get drunk on their winnings or to drown their sorrows as was more often the case. It seemed foolish to me to spend time and money on such a pointless and haphazard pastime. I put some money on a horse that Sheila suggested, more to please her than anything else. We promptly lost it. But instead of being discouraged, Sheila said, "Let's double it for the next race. Then we can make up." As I learnt the intricacies of doubles and trebles, jackpot and about odds, I became interested too. It was just as well that I was careful and economical by nature, otherwise, I would have lost my shirt, which was the expression used when a man lost everything on the race course.

Knowing that I was an 'eligible' bachelor who would be a passport to Great Britain (which seemed to be the ambition of almost every person I had come across) I should have thought that other young ladies would have taken an interest in me. But apart from being nice and polite, they gave me a wide berth and left the field clear for Sheila. It was only later that I learnt that it was because, as a student of pre-nuclear history, it was only natural that I should marry the daughter of a historian and keeper of the museum. We belonged to the same 'caste'. The only person who seemed to resent it all was the poet laureate. I learnt from Butler that he had had his eye on Sheila for a long time and that she had encouraged him. But my arrival had effectively scorched that romance and the poet was naturally upset. He came to me at the school function and offered me his reluctant congratulations.

"What for?" I asked in all innocence.

"In love, the best man doesn't always win," he said.

"No, the best man never wins," assured the headmaster who did not know what was being referred to. "It is the groom who wins. The best man is there to produce the ring at the right moment."

"A ring round the neck," mumbled the poet as he walked off.

\*\*\*\*\*

One of the major social events in Little Britain was the annual dance at the Blue Mountain Club. This year, it was organized as a reception to the representative of His Majesty's government from Great Britain. It was to be a historical night which meant that everyone had to come dressed as a character from British history. I was told about it before hand so that I would be attired suitably.

Evidently, special efforts were being made to celebrate the event on a grand scale. John kept telling me about the new decorations, the menu, the floor show that was being organized and the lanterns for illumination. Butler was also taking a very keen interest and kept me informed of the arrangements as well as the various costumes that different people were planning to wear. Evidently, according to Butler, picture books of history were being borrowed en masse from the library in order that they might copy the costumes. I was surprised at his knowledge of British history and told him so.

"That is not surprising sir," he informed me. "Every child, whether Indian or British, has to learn English history at school. My family has always been well acquainted with the kings and queens of England as well as other historical characters. If I may suggest, you should go as St. George, the patron saint of England."

"But St. George is not a historical character," I pointed out.

"As an alternative, you could be dressed as Robert Clive, the man who conquered India. It would be appropriate since your visit might lead to a second conquering of this country. I could easily get the tailor to make the costume."

"I thought I might dress myself as Guy Fox," I said.

Butler looked at me curiously. "You mean the man who tried to set fire to Parliament?"

"Yes."

"Your sense of humour may not be appreciated Sir George," he replied gravely. "Further, we do not have a picture of him, so we do not know how he dressed."

Everyone seemed to be interested in what costume I was going to wear. When I met Sheila, she told me bluntly, "If you go as Prince Albert, I wouldn't mind going as Queen Victoria."

"I thought the costumes were supposed to be secret?" I remarked.

"To all and sundry, yes," she replied. "But not between intimate friends."

"Prince Albert might not be easily recognized. He could be just a Victorian aristocrat."

"If you accompanied Queen Victoria, then everyone would know who you were."

"But I might be mistaken for one of her prime ministers, Disraeli or Gladstone."

"You are too young to be one of those," she said.

"I thought I might go as Charles the Second."

"You don't expect me to go as Nell Gwyn, do you? She asked petulantly.



“Or I might go as Henry the Eighth.”

“Then you will need six wives; where are you going to find them?”

She was evidently determined that the nature of our relationship should be publicly known and recognized without being announced. She was also determined that it should be a ‘respectable’ relationship. I was a bit worried about it and saw no way out. Though I had told her that marriage was not recognized in Great Britain, she had chosen to ignore it. I was getting myself involved and reaching a point of no return from marriage and domesticity. I was sure that PUP would not approve of any such arrangement. Meekly, I allowed events to dictate the course of my actions.

“If you are determined to be unorthodox, you can be William Shakespeare and I don’t mind being Ann Hathaway.”

“What does it matter? It is all in fun, isn’t it?”

“But it would be nice for us to be attached, even in fun,” she assured me.

“How about Lord Nelson and Emma Hamilton?” I asked.

Finally, I offered to be Edward the Eighth and Sheila could then be Mrs. Simpson. Apart from the air of romance that these names generated in most Little British hearts, the costumes would be more comfortable. But even this was objected to on the ground that it was an extra-marital relationship. But there was no objection to our going as the Duke and Duchess of Windsor. This little discussion brought home to me the gulf that existed in our attitudes towards marriage. But having explained the position in the Western hemisphere, I felt reasonably safe; at least I hoped for the best.

People were supposed to assemble for the dance at about 9 p.m. but Butler informed me that I would be taken there at about 9.30 when all the others would already have assembled. Accordingly, the president of the club, Mr. Wagstaff arrived at 9.15 and we proceeded to the club in his coach. Used as I was to the bright illuminations of London when there was hardly any difference between night and day and darkness was often a welcome relief, the flickering candles, the small lanterns and the swinging torches that dotted the lawns and lined the footpaths made the club appear like a land of dreams. One did not notice the shabbiness of the furniture or the peeling wall paper and the decorations added a touch of mystery and romance. Inside the club, there was fun and laughter and noise mingled with music. But as we descended from the coach, a silence fell on the crowd. People formed themselves into a circle and as we entered the hall, sang with full throated voices.

‘He is a jolly good fellow!  
He is a jolly good fellow!  
He is a jolly good felloooow!  
And so say all of us!

For me it was a great moment, from the anonymity of the institute of pre-nuclear history to the spontaneous welcome of Little Britain. It was the greatest welcome they could give and I really felt one of them.

The large hall that we entered was decorated with paper streamers and with greenery as well as flowers. Scenes from British history adorned the walls and the whole place was dominated by two large Union Jacks. Almost every historical British character was there. The prime minister himself had come in the role of his name-sake Baldwin, but with a few Churchillian touches. "When you are yourself part of history, it is difficult to portray another truthfully," he informed us proudly. "Who knows, if I am able to unite Little Britain with Great Britain, I might go down in history as well known as any of the others. But no business tonight; enjoy yourself your Excellency." He patted me on the back and went away to the bar to replenish his glass.

There were at least three John Bulls among the crowd and a Henry the Eighth with all his six wives. I was surprised to find that Joan was one of the six. She winked at me as she passed and I hoped no one noticed the sign of recognition.

There were quite a few Queen Victoria but only one Prince Albert. There was even an 'Unknown' soldier; and Charles the Second and Nell Gwyn, who could be recognized because of the oranges. It was impossible to recognize many of other characters because there were no distinguishing features in their costumes. Mine was one such and Sheila was somewhat disappointed that all her planning did not lead to the publicity that she had expected.

The president brought me a drink and led me to the platform where we stood while everyone filed past. Many had a nice word to say to me and their faces glowed with pleasure as they shook hands with me. It was obviously a great emotional moment for them – a meeting for which they had waited for a hundred and fifty years. When Joan shook hands with me, there was no flicker of recognition. She was dressed as Catherine of Aragon but there was nothing of the meekness and resignation of that poor lady in Joan's make-up. For myself, I was disturbed by mixed feelings for I knew it would all have to end soon, and possibly somewhat ingloriously for myself. But at the same time, I found an affinity with these people. It was an escape from the permanent isolation and the commands of PUP. At last, I seemed to belong to a group who had accepted me and with whom I could share my joys and sorrows and be one with them. Or, could I?

When once the introductions were over, the party became informal and boisterous with some people dancing, others drinking and chatting at the bar. The president brought me another drink and asked if I would care to dance. When I replied I couldn't, he said, "Don't worry Sir George. Have a couple of quick drinks and ask the prettiest girl in the room to dance. And if you should step on her toes, just say, 'sorry'. You will be surprised how soon our maidens adjust themselves to the situation." Just then, Sheila came and took charge of me.

"Now that is over, we can enjoy ourselves," she said. "Shall we dance your Royal Highness?" she asked coyly. "After all, you are the Duke of Windsor for one evening," she whispered.

"And you are the Duchess," I replied in the same vein. She pressed closer to me and dragged me on to the dance floor.

When it came to the point, I found that dancing was not such a difficult accomplishment as I had imagined. All that seemed to be necessary was to keep time to the music. Under Sheila's expert guidance, I was doing extremely well. We did bump into a few people but they usually made way for me and everyone was happy to see me enjoying myself. People whom I had never seen winked at

me in a knowing manner or shook their heads as a sign of recognition. When we are not dancing, people whom I had never met brought me something to drink 'with their compliments' and chatted with me about some part of the 'old country' or about the duration of my visit, about shortages of one sort or another. It was surprising how they could carry on a conversation, jump from one subject to another without any inhibitions or reservations. It was as if a long lost member of the family had come home and everyone was celebrating the event.

I found that dancing couples were changing their partners quite frequently. Perhaps, I too should have danced with someone else, at least with the ladies with whom I was acquainted. But I was not quite sure of the mechanics of such change and a natural shyness and timidity prevented me from taking the initiative. Further, Sheila made it her business to look after me and see that I was not left alone. She introduced me to the others as if she had discovered me or as if I was one of her special possessions, like the pieces of Wedgewood on the walls of her mother's dining room. No one seemed to resent it and other young ladies just smiled and walked away as if they would not like to enter into a competition with Sheila. Or perhaps, all this is a figment of my imagination, the results of anxieties and misgivings of a lonely and tortured mind. I was not sure.

Supper was announced at 11 p.m. and while a lot of people marched into the next room, the younger and the more boisterous ones continued to patronize the bar.

"Would you like to eat now?" Sheila asked me.

"Yes, I am rather hungry. I do hope they have something without chillies."

"You will get used to it," she said as she led me into the dining room.

We filled our plates with food and sat at one of the tables marked 'Reserved'. An elderly couple joined us. The man seemed to have a very brusque manner. "Do you know Bolton?" he shouted at me.

"I am afraid I don't know him," I said.

"My husband is a little deaf," his wife explained. "You will have to shout."

I repeated my statement a little louder.

"Lancashire!" he shouted back. "That is where we come from in the north!"

It was then that Joan joined us. "I know this table is reserved, but do you mind if I sit here?" she asked me as any stranger might have done.

"Please do," I replied. I could tell that Sheila was not all pleased.

"My name is Joan Winter," she introduced herself and shook hands all round before sitting down.

"And which part of England does you come from?" I asked her.

"I have no idea. I suppose we haven't kept up with our traditions."

"You are not a member of the club, are you?" Sheila asked her. Her voice had the coldness of ice.

"No, I came as one of the wives of Henry the Eighth. You might say I was invited."

Sheila became strangely silent after that, but Joan went on chatting. "I saw you on the day you arrived in Little Britain, Sir George. Of course I wasn't introduced to you or anything. I was just one of the crowds. You must find things quite interesting here. Of course, in London where you come from, things must be wonderful I suppose, what with all kinds of gadgets for convenience and comfort. But we just have to put up with things here I'm afraid."

The elderly lady whispered something into her husband's ear. "winter!" he shouted. "The best electrician and turbine mechanic we ever had. After he died, we have never had any electricity. Are you any relation of his, young lady?"

"I am his daughter," replied Joan.

"Fancy meeting you after all these years. We wondered what had happened to you. Don't you remember Uncle Freddy?"

"Of course, I remember you. But I didn't think you would remember me." The old gentleman started talking about cables and turbine blades and what a wonderful man winter was.

When the supper was over, we all went back into the ballroom and it was announced that there was going to be a musical dialogue 'in honour of our chief guest' as the announcer put it. It was to be a duet, sung by two groups of men and women, Sheila informed me though it was supposed to be a secret. It was a war of words between the sexes. And since it was supposed to be a historic night, it would naturally be based on British history. Sheila had to leave me now as she was one of the singers and I was soon joined by Joan. The entire crowd had now gathered in the hall and formed a huge semi-circle round the platform while the singers arranged themselves in two rows on it, men on one side and women on the other. The announcer called for silence and the entertainment began.

Men: From the days of Adam and Eve, it's always been the same,  
The downfall of a fellow is the upkeep of a dame.

Women: From the days of Adam and Eve, it's always been the same,  
The men have had the pleasure and the women have had the shame.

Men: From the days of Adam and Eve, it's always been the same,  
Eve was tempted by the snake and Adam got the blame.

Women: When King Henry ruled the land we were frightened for our lives,  
Every time he changed his mind he disposed of his wives.

Men: In the days of good Queen Bess, we were always in her power,  
But if we failed to please her we were locked up in the tower.

Women: in Queen Victoria's glorious reign the women were badly used,  
In spite of what Disraeli told her, she was not amused!

Men: In Queen Victoria's glorious reign, Britannia ruled the waves,  
We conquering heroes on the ocean found our watery graves.

Both: We manned the outposts of Empire when Britain was truly great,  
Brought law and order and religion too, to many a native state.  
Ever since that day to this, we've lived in this sorry state.  
After long years, we see a silver lining in the sky;  
Now with hope and love and joy, to our homeland we will fly.  
Sir George Sonian-Smith has come to take us by the hand  
And lead each one and all of us towards the Promised Land.

The last four verses were repeated a second time with greater enthusiasm, perhaps to emphasise the point and ensure I got the hang of it. The audience joined in the singing and there was increasing laughter and gaiety, dancing and hugging and shouting as the music proceeded. Everyone was wild and joyful as they sang and danced or laughed and drank. There seemed to be a kind of magnetism passing from one to the other, from couple to couple and group to group. Joan hugged me and dragged me on to the dance floor and everyone clapped. I had a feeling of participation in a common adventure, elation and sense of belonging to something larger than myself.

But that was not the end of the entertainment. The music and dancing went on, but each group started making up their own rhymes to the same tune and verses flowed from different corners of the hall as each group in turn started singing.

Men: In good King Charles's golden days we had a lot of fun;  
The merry monarch proved himself a wonderful son of gun!

Women: They say it was the Helen of Troy who launched a thousand ships

Men: Delilah did a better job by just swinging her hips

Women: Whenever we trusted any man we were always in the soup;

Men: But now your troubles are at an end because you've got the loop!

Women: To please the men we learn to cook and sew and dance and sing

Men: But all the time you've got your eyes fixed on a wedding ring.

And so it went on. There were shouts of 'encore' and the group of singers repeated their performance ending with the verse about myself to the accompaniment of loud cheering and clapping.

"That girl has got her hooks into you good and proper," Joan remarked as we were dancing. I could sense a trace of envy in her voice as she said it though it was followed by a laugh. "But I bet you haven't got very far with her."

"Not as far as I have got with you."

"And you won't; not until she has a ring on the third finger left hand and blessed by the bishop into the bargain."

"But she knows marriages are not allowed in Great Britain."

"Ah! But they are a requirement in Little Britain and they are permitted in heaven. That is the main thing, isn't it?"

"I am not an expert on heaven."

"You are not really an expert on anything, are you?" she asked rather wistfully. I did not know whether to take it as an insult and if so, how to reply to it. "But you are a nice guy and I wouldn't have you any different. When are you coming to see me again?"

I found I could speak to Joan far more freely than I ever could with Sheila. With the latter, there was somehow, a hidden reserve, as unaccountable barrier that stopped us from being truly intimate. We never seemed to be equals; Sheila was always the leader, I the reluctant follower, but I saw no solution to it.

Joan and I were dancing wildly and laughing when I felt a tap on my shoulder. "I have been looking for you everywhere George," said Sheila with a withering expression of scorn at Joan. "The president would like you to come to the platform and say a few words."

Mumbling a 'Thank you' to Joan, I followed Sheila towards the platform where the president was standing. As I went up, the music came to a stop and the dancing ceased. "Ladies and Gentlemen, I give you Sir George Sonian-Smith," and left me to it.

"Ladies and gentlemen," I said, "It is most kind of you to have given me such a wonderful reception. I have enjoyed myself thoroughly tonight and would like to thank your president and all of you for your kindness and hospitality. Looking at you all tonight, I am more than ever convinced that we are going to get on very well together. Thank you again and good night."

There were cheers and applause as I finished. Lots of people shook hands with me and some said, "God bless you!" or "Good old England!" Only slowly was I able to pass through the crowd and come on to the verandah for some fresh air. Soon Sheila joined me.

"You know that girl you were dancing with," she remarked. "You should beware of such types. They gatecrash into parties where they have no business to catch what they can find."

Unfortunately, some of our own men encourage them. But with your position and status, you should be careful.”

“Thank you for telling me,” was all I could say.

“You are so innocent George,” she squeezed my arm affectionately.

With the conclusion of my speech, the ceremonial, or the official part of the celebration might be said to have come to an end. Some of the older people started to leave and the younger ones were getting more noisy. Sheila thought that it would be appropriate for me to leave also and the president’s coach brought me back to Hampton Court.

\*\*\*\*\*

An interesting fact about my relationship with Sheila was that at all these functions, we were seldom alone together. I thought about it a great deal. If Sheila were really interested in me, it seemed somewhat pointless to be carrying on like this creating an impression on everyone, and yet getting no further, Sheila knew – certainly, I had made it very clear to her – that marriage in the conventional, prenuclear sense was impossible. Therefore, her only interest must be in sex. If so, all these parties and functions were getting us nowhere near that goal. Having had an occasional taste of sex with Joan, I was eager to experiment with Sheila. But I was afraid to take the initiative. After all I was in a foreign country, under difficult circumstances and one false step on my part might ruin the whole thing.

In the society in which I was born and reared, such things were much more simple and straight-forward. All you had to do was to go to the amusement area where you met women with the same ideas and inclinations. You had a chat over a cup of stimulant – you could choose the right kind of stimulant – and both of you went to the pleasure pavilion where you could be alone or in groups, as you wished. You could watch the diversionary or participation movies, indulge in whatever form of pleasure you agreed upon and after full satisfaction, you go your separate ways. If you felt particularly attracted to each other, you could fix an engagement and meet again though any permanent or semi-permanent arrangements were frowned upon by PUP as leading to emotional involvements and not conducive to Individual Freedom (IF) as well as Universal Solidarity (US). But in the society in which I was placed, the preliminaries seemed to be extremely complicated as well as time consuming, though Joan was an exception. Of course, a knowledge of prenuclear history had taught me about long courtships, engagements and such like, but when it came to experiencing it, I was naturally confused.

One day Sheila suggested that we should go fishing. I knew of course that ‘fishing’ was not a group activity. It was a ‘sport’ for lazy and contemplative individuals to sit on a river bank in fine weather and doze. On the other hand, it could also be a camouflage for something else, since ‘to go fishing’ meant exploration or even adventure. I did not know which type of fishing Sheila meant, but was soon made wise.

“I don’t know anything about fishing,” I told her.

“I will teach you,” she said enthusiastically. “And we can borrow the tackle from my father. We will take a picnic lunch, just the two of us, go to a lonely spot and be on our own for a change.

Very soon, the weather might break and when once the monsoon sets in, there will be very little outdoor life. So, we must make the best of the sunshine while it lasts.”

With the commencement of fishing, our relationship may be said to have reached the second stage. The parties and the public appearances were all over. Little British society seemed to have run out of receptions and functions in my honour and I was more or less left alone. With fishing and picnicking, Sheila and I spent more time with each other and in surroundings that were congenial for romance and love making.

So we went fishing. Apart from the equipment required for catching fish, Sheila brought two ruck sacks in her tonga, one of which I was expected to carry on my back. We set off on foot early in the morning and walked perhaps for about eight kilometers through the woods. Sheila kept up a running commentary on our environment, pointing out the various trees and flowers, identifying the birds from the calls and what changes would take place when once the rains set in. I was amazed at her knowledge of nature about which I was so completely ignorant. When I expressed my surprise at her wealth of information, she exclaimed, “What else is there to do here except to learn everything about animals, birds and flowers? It is not like London where there must be a thousand interesting things to do, people to meet and great things to achieve.”

At last we reached a stream. I was rather disappointed to find that Sheila took her fishing literally and rather seriously. She explained to me all about the art, what kind of bait to use, how to cast a line and how to pull the fish in. Under her expert guidance, I learnt to do these things and while we waited for the fish, we held hands, rubbed our cheeks but could not talk as that would frighten away the fish. After about three hours of silent effort, we managed to get a few fish. “Butler can cook them for you tonight,” said Sheila as she put them away.

I was beginning to feel quite hungry. Sheila had brought a most gorgeous meal of sandwiches, cakes and pies as well as bottles of fruit juices and alcohol. The sun was rather warm, but we spread a rug in a secluded shady spot and ate our meal. Then we lay on the rug. I was contented and happy. Nature and loneliness were new to me and I was surprised at the soothing effect it had on the mind as well as body. Just to lie and meditate about nothing in particular with Sheila by my side was real fulfillment.

“George?” she whispered.

“Yes?”

“Are you happy?”

“Of course.”

“I mean, just being with me.”

I moved over to her side and kissed her. She responded enthusiastically and we stayed close to each other. I knew there was nothing to prevent me from doing what I wanted to do – nothing except my own inhibitions. Ever since Chuck told me about participation and after my performance with Joan, it had been haunting my mind. But Sheila was not Joan! She did nothing to help. She would not take the initiative; No exploring hands tickled my desire or vanity and I had no confidence



in my own powers. Our love making remained at the level of kissing and embracing and no more. That I was going to disappoint Sheila worried me. It was then that I thought of the pills Chuck had given me. They were still in my bag at Hampton Court, unused and forgotten.

“You know George, you are a wonderful man, so understanding and sympathetic.” I did not know what she meant but was nevertheless pleased by what she said.

“You don’t say much, you are so modest. But though a stranger, you understand us – particularly me – so well. I suppose it is the common British ancestry. After all, breeding does count.”

“If we can breed at all,” I thought to myself.

She stroked my cheek, ruffled my hair and held me closer. Perhaps, I should have made a declaration of love, as in the old romance, in real prenuclear style. But there was nothing I could do. Anyhow, I was glad she was happy.

Soothed by the environment, I fell asleep. When I woke up the sun was going down and there was a gentle breeze. Sheila laughed and said I must have been very tired and hoped that the day would have done me good. We packed up our things and slowly walked back.

“I enjoyed myself thoroughly, didn’t you?” Sheila asked. I didn’t see how she could have, but agreed with her enthusiastically.

“Fishing is the best relaxation one can have,” she continued. “Particularly to someone like yourself who has a lot of responsibilities. Most of the prime ministers of England used to go fishing at weekends. Did you know that?”

“Yes, they were always fishing when there was a crisis brewing,” I replied.

“The prime ministers of Little Britain have always maintained that tradition.”

“Yes, I hear from Butler that Sir Winston is off on a fishing holiday.”

“But I don’t like to go away at weekends; it gets so crowded everywhere. During the week, we have the stream and the woods more or less to ourselves.”

The implication was obvious and I agreed with her.

When Butler saw the result of our combined efforts in the form of three little fish, he smiled. “Sir George is not used to fishing. And Miss Curator is not a good teacher. But we must improve. To be good fisherman is the hall mark of a great statesman.”

“That is the best we could do,” I apologised.

“You should get a book on fishing sir, and learn it properly.”

“If you want me to be a good fisherman, you must buy the book for the fish.”

“But the fish cannot read sir,” Butler announced with a serious face.

When Sheila enquired if I would like to go fishing again after about a week, I agreed enthusiastically. She wanted to know if the food was alright or whether she should bring something else, I told her everything was perfect last time. "You are such an easy man to please," she said. "You don't give any trouble; you will make a good husband."

"May be I will give you a little more trouble this time." I said somewhat mysteriously.

"I shall look forward to that," she smiled and went off to make her preparations. I told myself I wasn't going to be caught unprepared this time.

The actual fishing was much more successful either because of luck or perhaps, I was getting better at it. Sheila patiently explained the various intricacies about which was the right side of the river to fish from and why, about the position of the sun and not casting a shadow. But I am afraid my mind was not on fishing and I was thinking more of the delights to follow afterwards.

"You are not concentrating George," she chided me. "You haven't got your mind on the job."

"But we have caught more fish," I pointed out.

"Yes, but that is not because you have improved. The fish are biting better today."

"Butler will be pleased; he didn't think much of our catch last time."

"That is all you are worried about; what Butler will think. You are letting that man run your life. At this rate you will be letting him decide who will be accompanying you to England when you go back for consultations."

It hadn't struck me that I would be 'returning' for 'consultations', much less that anyone would accompany me on such an errand. When I expressed my surprise, she was quite put out.

"What is surprising about the High Commissioner having a secretary to accompany him on official business?" she retorted. "After all, there has to be someone to maintain notes of your discussions with various ministers, see that your appointments are kept and even to look after your physical comforts, since you are not yet a married man. I was hoping you would ask me, that's all. But of course, I am not going if I am not asked nicely."

Everything seemed to be going wrong. All my careful planning had gone astray. I felt I had to retrieve a situation that was fast deteriorating.

"I was keeping it as a surprise," I said. Since my entire life here was based on a falsehood, one more lie was not going to affect it very much. "But you seem to have anticipated things very well. You must be very clever to have done that."

"Oh! You wonderful man!" she threw her arms round me and kissed me. "To have planned it all by yourself and then kept it a secret from me! But I suppose that is the sign of a successful diplomat. Otherwise, they would not have chosen you for this important assignment, would they?"

Her peevishness at my fishing and discontent were all gone. "You must be famished," she said. "Come on. Let's eat."

She had brought everything I was fond of and had not added any chillies, knowing my taste. We ate cakes and pastries, roast chicken and salad and fruit and quenched our thirst with beer.

“We must get back soon so that I can tell father about your kind offer,” she said.

“There is no hurry. The trip may not come off for some time. Let us rest in the shade for a little while.”

She eyed me curiously. “If you like,” she said.

We spread the blanket and lay down. I held her tight and kissed her passionately. My hands strayed to those parts of her anatomy that I had not explored before. I tried to undo her dress.

“George, you are so passionate! It is so unlike you.”

“Don’t you like it?”

“Of course I like it; but you must be careful.”

I went on kissing and fondling her. Her dress was nearly off, but she had something underneath which I could not remove without her co-operation. Meanwhile, I was undoing my buttons.

“George! George! She moaned. But she pressed me to her closer at the same time. “Do be careful!”

“Don’t worry. I am well prepared,” I assured her.

She pushed me back and looked into my face. “What do you mean? She enquired.

“I have taken SAP,” I assured her.

“SAP? What is that?”

“Sex Activation Pills,” I answered enthusiastically.

I felt a stinging slap on my face. “You Brute!” she cried as she pushed me away violently. I was dumbfounded. She buttoned her dress and got up.

“What is wrong” I pleaded.

But she did not say a word. Just packed her ruck sack, put it on her shoulders and walked away with as much dignity as she could muster.

I was dumbfounded.

## CHAPTER TEN

The stinging blow from Sheila was more than a temporary hurt. It brought me back to the reality of existence and to reconsider my entire life since I arrived in Little Britain.

I had never been hit before. PUP did not believe in physical punishment. I felt deeply humiliated and tears trickled from my eyes as Sheila departed. But the moment of my greatest humiliation was also the moment of my awakening from a bad dream. I was rapidly shedding my illusions, one after another.

Suddenly, I realized that I had not only begun to behave as Sir George Sonian-Smith, but had even begun to think of myself as the representative of His Majesty's government in Great Britain. I had fallen into the same self delusion as the rest of Little Britain. But while theirs was a collective delusion sustained by a common belief, mine was but a bubble that could easily be burst at any time. I had forgotten that I was only an unimportant member of the institute of pre-nuclear history which in itself was a very minor organisation liable to be shut down by a slight change in the policy of PUP. I was sent on this assignment, not because I was important, but because I was disposable. No one would have noticed my departure and no one would welcome me if I should go back. I was plain George Smith No.GB 145 APNH 628. My departure would have meant a small blank at the computer terminal where the records of all citizens were kept. And it was probably filled up by now by another number, another disposable George Smith.

The slap that Sheila administered with such force also shattered my loyalty to PUP. In spite of throwing away the pills, so far I had behaved according to its tenets. I supposed I believed in them also. I had vaguely imagined that I would participate in everything – including sex – without emotional involvement and return to my institute at the end without any qualm. The fate and fortunes of the people of Little Britain were no concern of mine. Whether they were assimilated or liquidated was a matter of indifference to me. But now I realized, consciously and for the first time, that I had begun to love these people. I wanted to belong to them, to be taken into their fold. In spite of the fact that I had been living under false pretences, they had trusted me and lionized me as a great savior from another world. Whatever happened in the future, I could never go back. I would have to tell the truth and face the consequences. Yes, this life of freedom and confusion, violence, and argument appealed to me. Instead of PUPDICTS and PUPilosophy, I found that I believed in love and hate and jealousy, in ambition, aspiration and initiative, in the desire for possession, and more than all, in moral values. It was in a way, the spiritual regeneration of GB 145 APNH 628, alias Sir George Sonian-Smith into plain, simple, George Smith.

I remembered a PUPDICT 'Loyalty breeds betrayal'. This was very true. While I had acquired all the human emotions of the pre-nuclear age, loyalty seemed to be the foremost in my thoughts; that is loyalty to the people of Little Britain for the way they had contributed to my regeneration. But at the same time, I was betraying my own society, the society of the Western hemisphere where I was born and reared. Did I not owe them a loyalty also? My newly acquired conscience troubled me on this point, for by defecting to the ways of Little Britain, I was betraying my heritage. But I consoled myself with the thought that since I did not ask to be born in the Western hemisphere and asked to be sent here, I had no responsibility towards them. Perhaps providence has a way of

arranging these things and we human beings are merely play things in its hands. Yes; sometimes loyalty does breed betrayal.

These thoughts passed through my mind as I sat rubbing my cheek which was still smarting under the vehemence of Sheila's anger. I knew I had hurt her, but I did not know in what manner. I felt that our relationship, even our friendship was at an end. In a way I was grateful, for I realized that the inevitable rupture – which was bound to come – might have been even worse. At least now, I could review the situation and salvage whatever I could of my life if not my dignity. Nevertheless, I was greatly anxious about the consequences of this quarrel.

I was still sitting on Sheila's rug. Because of the sudden nature of her departure, she had left it and one or two other things behind. Now, I packed these things into a bundle and began to walk back to Hampton Court.

Butler was surprised to see me alone. "Would Sir George like some tea?" he enquired solicitously.

"Yes, I would Butler."

The tea helped to refresh me a little and to consider my next step. But meanwhile, I had a distinctly uncomfortable feeling. The pills I had taken were beginning to work. There was an uncontrollable desire for sex. Suddenly, I wanted a woman, any woman. This was something most unusual in my case. Perhaps I had taken too many pills. Anyhow, it was an overwhelming desire and there was nothing I could do to control it, except to go after a female. I must find Joan at all costs. I decided to go out.

Butler eyed me curiously. "Is master alright?" he asked.

"I am just going for a walk."

"But you have had a very long walk this morning sir!"

"Yes, but I feel like some more."

"Very well sir."

I walked more or less blindly, without knowing where I was going, past the neat lawns and the flower beds of the bungalows, past the shops and the wall posters and into the crowded part of the town. Instinct, as if I were following a scent. I did not know her house and had forgotten the address Joan had given me, but I was sure I was on the right road. Did those pills provide not only biological stimuli but also an uncanny knack of bringing out sub-conscious knowledge, I wondered. I had been to Joan's house only in the dark and yet, my feet seemed to be taking me there in daylight, for I was on the right road.

Soon, I saw the bar where I had a drink and I noticed the fat woman who had served us, standing at the door gossiping with another. I wondered if I should ask her about Joan but decided not to, trusting to my instinct. A few more minutes brought me to a lane where a very faded and broken down board announced that it was 'Wardour Street'. Then I remembered that was the address that Joan had given me and I knew the number as well.

Fortunately for me, Joan was in. "Hello stranger!" she greeted me. "Fancy you turning up at this time of the day!"

"It is rather urgent," I told her.

"There is nothing so urgent that it cannot wait for a drink. Come in and I will give you a tot."

As she closed the door, I caught hold of her and hugged her with all my strength. I kissed her face and mouth and dragged her towards the bed.

"Give me time to breathe," she said as she wriggled out of my grasp. "You weren't in such a hurry last time, were you?"

"But this time it is different."

Our love making was exquisite. I had never known it could be like this. Stars were exploding in my brain and my whole body was convulsed with pleasure. I cried with delight. There seemed to be no end to it. This time, I could match my passion with Joan. The other occasion was pale and anaemic by comparison.

At last, when we were both exhausted and happy, Joan remarked, "We have come up in the world of sex, haven't we? Literally as well as figuratively. To what should I attribute this sudden outburst of passion?"

"Now I would like that drink you offered," I replied.

Sipping the strong drink that Joan had poured out, I could relax. What exquisite, undiluted pleasure it was! If this was what sex was like in the prenuclear age, what a lot we have missed in the last one hundred and fifty years! I felt like a teen ager who had had his first taste of love and sex. For I realized, that apart from anything else, my happiness was due to the fact that I was in love with Joan. It was not mere sex or Chuck's pills that gave me this feeling, but the fact of being in love with a single individual, thinking of her more than of all others in the world, wanting to do things for her, wanting to show how much I loved her by all the means of my disposal. Somehow, I had a sense of achievement, a feeling of fulfillment and at the same time, a desire for repetition. But for the moment, I wanted to relax and enjoy this unique feeling I had. Just to hold Joan's hand was enough; she seemed to understand my mood and wisely kept silent. When my glass was empty, she refilled it.

At last, when I sat up, she said. "You haven't answered my question yet."

"I am sorry I have forgotten the question."

"To what should I attribute this sudden outburst of passion? Is it because you have had a quarrel with Sheila?"

I was amazed at her intuition. And PUP has been telling us that intuition should not be trusted! "How did you know?" I asked.

"It is not surprising, is it? Last time you were here, you were dithering like an old man of eighty. You couldn't make up your mind what you wanted to do. You obviously had some scruples.

They couldn't have been physical since you seem to be alright in that department, particularly today. They could only have been moral or social and if so, they must be related to the other girl. You see, it is all so simple."

Her understanding of the situation was surprising, except for the pills of course. But then, she could not be expected to know about them. Here was a girl to whom I could tell all my troubles, pour my heart out and she would soothe me, perhaps tell me what to do. But how much should I tell her? I was still not sure.

"Joan, if I tell you the truth, will you try to understand?"

"Look, you come from a different country, used to a different way of living. Probably, your values are different from ours. It is only common sense to know that. Under these circumstances, the only thing to do is to be absolutely honest with each other. I have taken a liking to you and whatever trouble you are in, I will try to help you."

So, I told her everything; well, not quite everything. I told her about the pills, about the biological experiments, about the low level of sexual desire as a result and how Chuck had given me the pills to overcome it. I told her about Sheila's encouragement even after knowing that I couldn't marry her and how I had taken the pills and what happened when we went fishing that morning.

"You mean you actually told her about taking those pills?"

"Yes, the previous time, I was not up to the mark so to speak, so this time when Sheila told me to be careful, I told her she needn't worry as I had taken SAP."

Joan burst out laughing and could not stop. She seemed to be almost hysterical. At last when she quietened down, she said, "No wonder she slapped your face! No woman likes to think that a man has to take such stimulants before he could have sex with the woman he is supposed to be in love with. It hurts her pride. Not that she would have let you go on to the end. She would have been afraid you would put her in the family way. That is why she told you to be careful."

"I would have explained it all to her if she had given me the opportunity."

"But how is the poor girl to know about the sexual problems of the Western hemisphere?"

"But aren't you afraid of pregnancy?" I asked her.

"We have our methods."

I was rather disappointed. I would have been happy if Joan had become pregnant. It would have proved that I was still normal. Suddenly, I realized how nice it would be to have a wife and children, to bring them up and watch them grow in your own image, impart your ideas to them and establish continuity with the future.

"I think you ought to send a letter of apology to Sheila," Joan advised me. "It is only fair. But put an end to the affair. You can't marry her to live here permanently. So, there is no point in continuing an unsatisfactory arrangement."

She was so wise and sensible and I was extremely lucky to have stumbled on to her. I wanted to tell her how much I loved her, call her by a thousand endearing names, promise life-long devotion and sacrifice my life for her, but I was too timid to speak. Generations of repression, the subconscious influence of PUP, a life-time of docility stood in the way. But I felt I had to say something.

“Joan, I do not know what the future holds for me, but I want you to know one thing. I have just learnt what love is and I love you. If I possibly can, I would like to marry you. If things should go wrong and I am unable to see you for whatever reason and if you should hear things about me later, I want you to understand and forgive.”

“We are getting emotional, aren’t we?” She laughed and hugged me. “I like you very much too, but I am not sure about marriage, what with you being an ambassador and all that. But I will always be here if you want me.”

I was too emotional to speak. We made love once more, but it struck me that it was getting late. Now that my needs were satisfied, prudence took over. I said goodbye and departed. Joan’s last remark was, “Next time you come visiting, take half the number of pills you took last time.”

\*\*\*\*\*

So I went back to Hampton Court and sent the following note to Sheila.

“I realize I have offended you in some serious and unpardonable manner though I am not sure how I did it. It is perhaps an indication of the social and cultural gulf that separate us. I therefore feel that a permanent relationship between us would only lead to greater and more serious misunderstandings resulting in further estrangement and misery. As I have explained to you already, marriages are illegal in Great Britain and you obviously do not envisage any other kind of relationship. Under these circumstances, it would be better to discontinue our affair that cannot possibly be satisfying to you. But I wish to assure you of my affection and respect always; I should also like to thank you for all the help you have rendered me in order to make my stay in Little Britain enjoyable and useful. Believe me when I say I am sorry.

Yours truly

George

I soon received a reply.

My dear George,

It was kind of you to apologise. I also agree with you that the social and cultural differences – even more, the values – are bound to affect our friendship in the long run. After all, one hundred and fifty years of separate and independent development cannot be overcome quickly or easily. But I thought we were going to be the pioneers in cementing a broken relationship between our two countries. However that may be, I would still like to help you in your professional capacity. The envoy of a great nation cannot function without even a



secretary when once you enter upon your professional duties seriously. And you were kind enough to offer me such a job. I presume it is still open.

Yours

Sheila

\*\*\*\*\*

Lying in bed that night, I tried to sort out the problems and relationship in which I seemed to have got myself entangled. I wanted to get them in some form of order in my mind.

I came here as a minor investigator of a subject about which no one was even aware in the Western hemisphere. Certainly, no one was interested. Only Chuck and his colleagues considered it of any importance. I came here as a scientist, to study and record my observations objectively and reach conclusions that might be useful. But thanks to the meddling by Chuck, I became not an observer, but a participant under false pretences. It was alright for Chuck to say you can participate without involvement, but was that really possible? The first casualty in any such arrangement seemed to be objectivity, particularly when you were emotionally involved.

Perhaps, if I had taken my conditioning pills as I ought to have done, if I had stuck to the rules of PUP, things might have been different. But I had a feeling; it might only have delayed things and not prevented them. Just a few pills could not have altered the realities of existence. Anyhow, according to PUP language, I became a free thinker. From now on, I was on my own. Now I had to sink or swim through my own efforts. While this was exhilarating, even glorious in some ways, it produced its own problems, complications, even tragedies, I found I was afraid of what was in store for me. But now it was too late to think of the past.

I wondered for a moment at what point I became involved with Little Britain emotionally. Was it when I landed and became Sir George Sonian-Smith instead of plain George Smith? I had become a participant in the national self-delusion and became a part and parcel of it. Or was it when Sheila showed an interest in me? Or when Joan took me to her little home and gave me love and affection which I had never known before? I realized that my integration into Little British Society started from the moment I landed and has been proceeding rapidly ever since. The estrangement with Sheila merely brought it to a head, like the bursting of a boil.

The trouble of course was loneliness. In the Western hemisphere, everyone was lonely, because all were part of the great society. There were no groups – permanent or temporary – bound together by common feelings of emotion or ideology. There were no families, no affection between individuals, for all were supposed to love the great society. PUP saw to it. But it had left a void in many hearts – certainly in mine – a vacuum of love, desire, belonging, even sacrifice. And the moment I came across these, I had become an easy ‘victim’ to these emotions. And there was no PUP to retrieve the situation.

The discovery that I was in love with Joan was another complicating factor. The eternal loneliness that I had experienced, the total lack of companionship, perhaps had something to do with it. To be related to an individual on a permanent basis, to share one’s joys and sorrows, to sacrifice something on behalf of another – these were feelings that were totally new to me and I had

all the elation of a great discovery. As a student of pre-nuclear history, I had of course read about them in old books, but had never considered their applicability to modern conditions, least of all to myself. PUP had seen to that. 'Love breeds hatred' was one of its maxims. Joan had given me what she possessed without grudging soothed me when my mind was troubled and had not expected anything in return. This was in contrast to almost everyone I knew in Little Britain who, even while praising me, had other motives at heart. I had not used a single word of affection or endearment (not having been used to it in the Western hemisphere) or even encouragement and she had not expected any. And when I did use such words at parting from her this evening, she frankly accepted it without any fuss. This was love in its purest form, I realized. I also realized that all great ideas had to be rediscovered once every few generations in order to make them relevant. But it had been given to us to make the discovery. It was such an ennobling thought.

Another interesting factor was that I seemed to have developed a conscience, a sense of right and wrong. This was perhaps the one single factor that was totally antagonistic to PUP. I remembered a saying of PUP, 'Conscience is the last resort of cowards'. Now, I felt I had let the people of Little Britain down by pretending I was a representative of His Majesty's government when I was really nothing of the sort. I felt I had abused their hospitality, an emotion that was abhorrent to all the tenets of PUP.

Under these circumstances, what was I to do? I felt a discussion with Chuck was essential. He had told me that in case of emergency, I could call him on a special wave length at any time of day or night. An emergency had obviously arisen after my faux pas with Sheila and the consequent suspicion of my anti-PUP ideas. I took out my trans-receiver, tuned into the emergency wavelength and sent in my code signal.

It was a long time before the signal was answered. After we had identified ourselves, he asked, "What is it old boy? Are you in any serious trouble?"

"Chuck, I want to have a discussion with you."

"Go ahead and have it; I am listening."

"Not like this, but in person."

"You haven't raped or murdered anyone, have you? I am sorry I gave you those pills."

"It is nothing like that, at least not as serious. But I did attempt to make love to Sheila and she rejected me."

"Are you in any danger?"

"No, at least not immediately."

"Then it is not an emergency. Go to sleep and we will talk about it on Sunday."

"No Chuck, I want to speak to you as soon as possible."

“Look George, I can’t leave my work and just walk into the Nilgiris when I feel like it. It is a foreign country and there are many formalities to be gone through and it will all take time. But what is so important?”

“To put it bluntly, it is a crisis of conscience.”

“What happened to your conditioning pills?”

“I threw them away.”

“Then you are in trouble alright. But it is your responsibility, not mine.”

“Never mind the responsibility, can you come?”

He thought for a little while.

“I suppose I had better come and sort it out,” he said at last and I heaved a sigh of relief.

“Do you know Mr. Krishna?”

“Yes, I have met him.”

“Well, as soon as you get a message from him, come to his house. Can you do that?”

“Yes, I will. And Chuck, thank you.”

“You have had an attack of conscience alright if you start thanking me. Over.”

\*\*\*\*\*

The next morning, John came to see me. He had a worried and perplexed look on his face.

Without any preliminaries, he came straight to the point. “I don’t know what has gone wrong between you and Sheila,” he said rubbing his chin. “But she says she won’t have anything more to do with you.”

I felt sorry for him. He had been nice to me and made my life in Little Britain pleasant and enjoyable. If I could, I would have liked to have told him everything. Not doing so bothered my newly acquired conscience. But as things were, I had to be careful, at least for a little longer. Further, I did not know how much Sheila had told him.

“I am sorry about it John, but I think Sheila is right,” I said.

“As you can imagine, I am very fond of my daughter. I would not like to see her hurt in any way.” There was grim determination in his voice. But he softened a bit. “I am of course fond of you also and I hoped something might come of your friendship. But I am in the dark as to what has happened.”

“Hasn’t Sheila said anything?” I queried to make sure.

“Nothing, except the bare statement that it is all over.”

Obviously, she felt too humiliated by my behavior to mention it even to her parents. I was glad.

"It is a little difficult and embarrassing for me to explain," I said tentatively. "You see John, there is a great gulf between your country and mine in certain matters. Apart from anything else, marriages are illegal and banned in the Western hemisphere. Most people there would not even know what a marriage was. I happen to know about it only because I am a student of prenuclear history. In our society there is complete permissiveness and total anonymity in these matters. Marriage, children and sex have been completely dissociated from each other for many years."

"Pardon me, but you must be a whole lot of immoral bastards over there," he said vehemently.

"From the point of view of your society, you are perfectly right."

Somehow, that seemed to please him. His face cleared. "I am glad you told me, and please do not take my remark as a personal one. I just couldn't help it, it was such a surprise. And it does you credit that you told her about it before anything serious developed. Sheila is a good and well-brought up girl and would not consider sex outside the realm of matrimony. No wonder she was upset. It is such a shock to any normal human being. But I hope that so long as you are here, you will respect our values and our institutions."

"Of course I will!"

John thought for a while. He was switching over from the personal to the general implication of the information I had given him. "I am glad you told me before it was too late," he said. "But tell me, if sex has been divorced from marriage and children, how do you replenish the earth?"

"We have baby farms where the required numbers of children are produced every year, with a small allowance for wastage. Population control is no longer a matter of chance as it used to be in the old days, left to the individual idiosyncrasies of millions of ignorant men and women," I suppose I sounded just like PUP, but John wouldn't know that. "This way we have a hundred per cent control of the population and the time spent in child bearing, rearing and looking after them is made available for production of other commodities. I am myself a product from a baby farm."

"And these babies are brought up as orphans, without the love and affection of parents?"

"Not as orphans; the State loves them all and they in turn learn to love the state."

"What happens if you hate the State?"

"That is just the point John. When there is no individual love, there is no individual hate either. When one doesn't belong to a group, even a family group, and when there are no groups, then there is no conflict between groups. Society is in a state of permanent equilibrium. At this point I explained to him about PUP and about conditioning.

"My God!" he exclaimed in disgust and horror. "No wonder you have been keeping quiet about all this and evading questions. You have made all men into a set of robots, automatons. Man

is supposed to make machines human so that they might think, but all you have succeeded in doing is to convert men into machines. Do you subscribe to this ideology?"

"Whether I subscribe to it or not is beside the point."

"I am glad to see that you have enough sense at least not to be an enthusiastic supporter."

"But don't you see John, there is no alternative. There are no choices, no options open to people to express an opinion as to whether they subscribe to anything. The control is total."

"I am glad I don't have to live there George."

"But John, the point is this. Ever since I came to your country, almost everyone I have met wants to go to England. You have created a picture of England in your own imagination based on a knowledge that is at least a hundred and fifty years out of date, invested it with your own longings and desires until it is not even the England of the prenuclear age. But reality is very different. Would anyone from here like to go there, or have anything to do with it if the truth were known?"

"I think I would like a drink after all that."

I apologised for my poor hospitality, called Butler and ordered some whisky.

"Leave the bottle here Butler," asked John.

John helped himself to a large gulp of whisky before he spoke. "No wonder you have been evasive whenever we asked you questions about England. But we didn't think it was going to be like this."

"I knew it would shock you and I was not sure at what point of time I should tell you about it. As it happens, thanks to Sheila, it has come out a little before I intended. But when it should be made public knowledge, I have not decided yet. But I would be guided by you and other friends."

John thought for a little while. The drink seemed to have calmed him down a little. "Yes, the timing has to be right for making it public. The information you have given is a national disaster as far as Little Britain is concerned. We have looked forward to a reunion with England for so many generations that it has become a national mania. And now, it will turn into a national calamity. Some people may not even believe you."

"I hope you believe me at least."

"I believe you alright. I don't think you could have made up all this and you only told me because of what happened between you and Sheila. Yes, I believe you."

"If you believe me, you could make others believe it too, for you are respected by all."

But John went off at a tangent. "You could easily cook Sir Winston's goose by your disclosures. He has been the architect of the policy of union with England. He has even suggested the possibility of a mass migration. The opposition will make capital out of it. I wouldn't be surprised if it leads to a complete realignment of forces in this country."

“That is of course your affair. But I hope that you will keep what I have told you as strictly confidential until the time I choose to reveal it.”

“Naturally,” he assured me. And then, he laughed; a sort of bitter, helpless laughs. “You know, looking at it purely philosophically, love and hatred, good and evil right and wrong, logic and emotion, have always existed from the time of Adam and Eve, at least, ever since Eve bit into that apple. Dash it all, even animals exhibit them. You can’t have Abel without Cain. The mythology of the Hindus illustrates it beautifully. In the beginning of the world, using the Himalayas as a churner and a great snake for a rope, angels and monsters churned the milky ocean. Out of it was born good and evil. Ever since, mankind’s efforts have always been directed towards keeping down evil and hatred and promoting the good and love. But to abolish both! It is impossible.”

“Well, I can assure you we have gone a long way towards it.”

“But you will never be able to go all the way. You will see, before that time comes, something will happen to upset the whole system.”

“It already has.”

“What!” he cried. “What has happened? Tell me.”

So, I told him about the fall in the birth rate, about Chuck’s fears of a gradually diminishing population and the possible disappearance of Mankind from planet Earth.

“For heaven’s sake, are you serious?” he shouted at me as he took another large gulp of his drink. “If you go on like this, you will drive me mad. What is going to happen to us all?”

“Nothing will happen to you since you are continuing to be fruitful and to multiply, unless of course you get absorbed by the rest of mankind.”

The idea slowly sank in and the possibilities were gradually revealed to him. “What are you trying to say? That we in Little Britain will be the only people...?”

“Well, something like that I suppose.”

He found his glass empty and refilled it and took a sip. “Look, you are not trying to pull my leg, are you?” he asked suspiciously. “With your weird stories and gloomy forebodings, you will send us all round the bend. Just because you don’t want to marry Sheila, you are not trying to build a whole edifice of fiction about the rest of the world, are you?”

“Believe me John, I have never been more serious or truthful in all my life.”

“I came here as a worried parent anxious about the future of my daughter. But you have heaped the burdens of humanity on my shoulder. Frankly, I can’t bear it. It will drive me mad.”

“I am sorry John; I have been carrying that burden for some time now. I had to share it with someone else. And I couldn’t think of anyone but you.”

We were silent for a while as John finished his second drink. Then he started again. “Look George, there are certain developments here in Little Britain which I think you ought to know.

People are beginning to ask questions about you. Why you have not so far presented your credentials, why you have not brought any staff with you, why you have never said a word about the present situation and conditions in Great Britain, and so on. There is even a suggestion that you are merely a spy planted by the Indian government to watch and report.”

“I do hope you don’t believe that.”

“I don’t of course, but I am sorry to say that some do. On the other hand, some others want you to grant entry certificates to go to Great Britain. As you know, before the great partition, people from the Indian sub-continent who had relatives in Great Britain could get such documents from the British High Commissioner in New Delhi to emigrate to Britain. In fact, single women who wished to marry British subjects had to undergo virginity tests.”

“But John, you know going to Britain is not as simple as all that! There are no regular services yet and in any case, the government of the Eastern hemisphere has to give clearance.”

“I know,” John interrupted. “And after what you have told me this morning, they should not be allowed to go. But they don’t know it. They think they are going home.”

I had told John everything, everything except the truth about myself. I wondered if I should confess to that also, but if I were to do that, I felt that the credibility of what I had told him would all be questioned. After it had all sunk in, if I were to tell the truth about myself, then it would not matter so much. I was sorry about not being fair with him, but the final humiliation was still to come.

“You know George, if what you say is true and the birth rate in the rest of the world is going down because of the sterility of the incubator population, we could always export potent males and you can issue entry certificates on the basis of potency tests.”

“I don’t think I could do that.”

“I am sorry PUP has killed your sense of humour,” John complained. “I believe in looking at the bright side of things. If Little Britain is going to be the savior of Mankind in the biological sense, my suggestion is a very feasible one.”

“Perhaps, but it will have to be on the basis of an International agreement I suppose.”

“I think I had better go before you tell me any more terrible news. As it is, you have said enough to keep me awake all night. But I shall not say a word. On the other hand you should do something to stop all these rumours. You must establish your bona fides soon. Then, and only then, people will believe you.”

So John departed.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

After John left, I wondered if I had done the right thing in confiding in him. When your mental processes are vastly different, it is extremely difficult to judge the reactions of people who come from a different environment, to a set of ideas. But my instinct – PUP would have said that instinct was the most unreliable of all human feelings but I was beginning to believe in it – told me that John was understanding and sympathetic and if I had to trust anyone in Little Britain – apart from Joan – it was John. I was also beginning to realize that I was acquiring the attitudes and values of a pre-PUPPIAN society and PUP was receding into the background. It seemed like a bad dream now.

But while I had confided in John, I also realized that I had kept some vital factors, a secret from him. I had exhibited a certain cunning and discrimination in what I told him. This was in the true tradition of PUP. For example, I had not told him about the real nature of my quarrel with Sheila. Nor had I revealed who I really was. I was a bit worried about these factors. Apart from the adverse reaction it might have in our relationships in the future when once the truth was known, it was the ethics of the situation that worried me; that I had not been completely fair and open with a person who trusted me and wanted to help. This feeling of mine was totally anti-PUP. A sense of guilt had no place in PUP philosophy.

Anyhow, I felt better for having talked to John. How that the problem of Sheila was sorted out more or less satisfactorily, I wondered whether I had not been in a bit of unnecessary panic in calling Chuck on the emergency line and asking to meet him. A lifetime of PUP makes you precise and logical, good at receiving instructions and carrying them out, but it doesn't make you good either in taking decisions or in discrimination. Considering the situation in its totality, I came to the conclusion that I was right in wanting to meet Chuck urgently. Being the representative of His Majesty's government was proving to be an increasing strain and I felt the sooner I got out of it, the better for all concerned, certainly better for me. But what would happen after that, I did not know and did not dare contemplate.

The fact that some people did not believe that I was the envoy from Great Britain also worried me. If they should prove that in some manner before I was ready to reveal it, it would be all the worse for me. I would no longer have even the advantage of a voluntary confession. I might be treated as an unrepentant cheat. But I did not have to wait long for a public controversy to break out on the issue.

The next day, Butler brought me a copy of the wall poster which had appeared that morning.

"Little Britons!

We have a 'British' High Commissioner in our country now.

We would like answers to the following questions from him.

Why has he not so far presented his credentials?

What work does he do besides flirting with innocent girls?



Has he any staff to assist him?

Is he the British High Commissioner?

Or, is he a spy of a foreign power?"

Butler stood there while I studied it. He was misery personified. "I am sorry sir," he said. "I apologise on behalf of all Little Britons – both Indian and British, for this dastardly attack on your person."

"Do you know who is responsible for this?" I asked him.

"I have made enquiries sir; as far as I can gather, it is the work of two people, one an Indian and another an Englishman. I understand they both have something against you."

"I don't see why anyone should have anything against me," I wondered. "Who are they?"

"The Indian is Mr. Shah, a journalist whose paper has been on strike for the last two months. He was annoyed with you because, on the first day of your arrival, you snubbed him. It is perhaps a good thing his paper has been on strike; otherwise, he would have written a lot more."

"And the other?"

"The other is no less a person than Mr. Crook, the poet. He feels that you have alienated Miss Sheila's affections. He had every hope of marrying her before you arrived."

"I did not know that such trivial private grievances would be allowed to interfere with public issues in this country."

"These are the blessings of democracy sir," Butler philosophized. "Anyone can say anything and get away with it. I hope that in Great Britain, such irresponsible freedom has been rightly curbed."

"Well, the system is somewhat different there," I said non-committally.

"I am sure it is sir. Here in Little Britain, freedom has been taken to ridiculous extremes. There is no respect for position or status and anyone can say anything he likes so long as he says it in Hyde Park or on the Freedom wall. It is protected under the fundamental rights of the constitution."

"I suppose one has to put up with such attacks in public life."

"You are very generous sir, truly magnanimous. But I feel ashamed for my countrymen."

What he would say if the truth were known, I shuddered to think.

I did not have long to wait before I had a visit from Pitman, the private secretary to the prime minister. He came to me with profuse apologies on behalf of his government and a kind message from Sir Winston to ignore the incident as being not worthy of notice.

“The P.M. has authorized us to express our sincere regrets,” he announced somewhat pompously. “But we are unable to do anything about it. The only newspaper has been on strike for the past few months and even government communications have to be issued through wall posters. There is a special corner in the freedom wall for government notifications, but I am afraid it is not very effective as they are usually obliterated by vandals with rude slogans.”

“I would not like you to contradict it,” I suggested.

“But we must,” he insisted immediately. “The reputation of your government as well as ours is involved.”

“If you do, you do it on your own responsibility and not because I asked you to do it. I would not like to be involved in a domestic controversy in your country.”

“Naturally,” he agreed. “Your name will not come into it at all.”

Never for a moment did it strike him to ask why I did not want him to contradict that statement.

“We have also asked our intelligence people to look into the situation,” Pitman continued. “No doubt in a few days time we will be able to locate the persons responsible. Then we can tackle them.”

“I am told that the poet Laureate Crook is responsible.”

Pitman gave a low whistle and winked at me. “The result of unrequited love, I presume,” he said. It was apparently general knowledge that Sheila had given Crook up after I came on the scene. “Anyhow, your intelligence service seems to be more efficient than ours.”

“Just a rumour I happened to hear.”

“Take it from me Sir George,” Pitman assured me seriously. “Most rumours you hear in Little Britain can be taken as gospel truth. It is only the official authenticated version that is likely to be wrong.”

“Thank you for the information.”

“You could, if you wished, sue the people responsible for damages. But they have been very clever; they have merely asked a few questions ‘in the public interest’ as it were. In any case, there are so many disputes pending before the Privy Council that it will be at least five years before it will be taken up.”

“But I am not interested in suing them for damages.”

“I think you are wise,” said Pitman. “Now that we have conveyed the official view of our government, we would like to tell you our personal opinion. It is that the whole thing is foolish and should be ignored.”

“Is that your personal opinion or that of the P.M.?”

“Sir Winston has no personal opinions on any subject. It is our personal view.”

I thanked him both for his official apologies as well as for his personal attitude and he departed happily saying, “We will take leave now.”

\*\*\*\*\*

My next visitor was an elderly gentleman. “I am Prof. Toynbee,” he introduced himself. “I retired as professor of History from the Oxbridge University last year.”

“Is that your real name?” I asked him.

“As you must have realized by now, all names in Little Britain are assumed, or should I say, derived,” he explained. “If you want to be a politician, you assume a political name. If you want to be a professor of History, you assume the name of a famous historian, British of course! Or, you could assume a professional name like carpenter or mason, or even Butler like your servant here. My original name was Thurston. But because I became a professor of History, I assumed the name of Toynbee.”

“It is rather confusing for me,” I said.

“There is nothing confusing about it Sir George,” he cried. “We are essentially British Patriots and we wish to preserve British heritage. Consequently, we carry on the traditions of the old country and keep alive its famous names by assuming them ourselves. If I remember my history correctly, there used to be at least a hundred Victoria Roads, Crescents, Avenues, Streets and so on in London alone. If the names of famous people can be used as street names in order to perpetuate them, I don’t see why individuals should not assume them for the same reason. Living in an ocean of Asian horde, one might say it has become a historical necessity.”

“I understand,” I said in order to avoid further argument.

“Now, I will come directly to the purpose of my visit,” he smiled. “Like most people in Little Britain, I would like to visit the old country. I have proof here that I am a British subject by birth. Here is the passport of my seventh grand father which was issued by no less a person than Sir Antony Eden when he was foreign minister.” And he produced a torn but still recognizable document of the prenuclear era.

“But has the government of Little Britain issued you with a passport?”

“Strange as it may seem to you, they have not even heard of a passport in Whitehall. I was astonished to find that one had not been issued since this government came into existence. But as a British subject, I am entitled to claim a passport from you. Or some equivalent document that will entitle me to go back to the land of my ancestors.”

“But why do you want to go back?”

“I thought you would ask me that,” the professor said. “As a British subject, it is my right to return home when I feel like it. I can quote you a number of constitutional authorities on the subject.”

“The difficulty is that journey to Great Britain is not yet possible. There are still a number of formalities to be completed, not only with the government of Great Britain, but also with the government of the Eastern hemisphere.”

“I understand all that. I also understand that if there are too many applications, you many have to impose some sort of quota restrictions. You will have to open a register and will have to allot passages in the order in which they are registered. That is why I have come to you first, so that as and when travel becomes possible, I shall be the first to go.”

“Tell me professor, how do you expect to live there?” I asked him. “It is a very expensive place you know.”

“You don’t want me to go on the dole as soon as I get there I suppose,” laughed the old gentleman. “That was what a lot of foreigners used to do in the old days. Get to England in order to have their teeth or glasses fixed under health insurance. But I have some money saved up which will do to start with. I might be able to get a visiting professorship in one of the smaller universities. People consider me an authority on the history of Little Britain. I have also written a book on the subject and hope to find a publisher there. It should bring me in some royalties. On the whole, I don’t think I will do badly.”

“Well, thank you very much for coming to see me professor. I shall keep your request in mind and we will see what we can do when the time comes.”

“But that is not good enough Mr. High Commissioner,” the professor argued. “I want to register my name and I want proof of such registration. I want to make sure that the applicants are called strictly in the order of registration. Otherwise, all the political fellows will be off on a jaunt and leave people like me behind.”

“My office is not yet organized for making such a registration. In fact, I have no authority at present for making any such move.”

“I see it is the same old run around,” grumbled the professor. He was quite annoyed. “But I should have thought that the envoy of the British government would be beyond reproach.”

“I will tell you what I will do,” I tried to assure him. “If travel documents are to be granted and if I am in charge of them, I shall see that your name is entered first on the list.”

That seemed to satisfy him. “Thank you for your assurance,” he shook hands with me. “I have been able to save up money by not drinking and not gambling or indulging in any of the other vices to which most Englishmen are subject. Surely, such abstinence entitles me to be the first one to enter heaven.”

“I think heaven is a highly overrated place, don’t you?”

“But still, most people want to go there,” he said as he departed.

Another elderly gentleman related a bit of pre-nuclear history. It was surprising how much they remembered of the old days. “Just before the great partition, a lot of Indians went and settled

in Great Britain," he said. "I am now suggesting that they be repatriated to India and we who are true British should be taken back to our homeland."

"I doubt if that would be possible," I explained. "At this distance of time, it would be almost impossible to trace anyone's ancestry. In any case, most of them had British passports when they were allowed to settle in Great Britain."

"You mean a piece of paper is more important than blood relationship?"

After some discussion, he remarked, "Evidently, it is easier for a camel to enter the eye of a needle than for us to enter the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. At least I presume it is still united, unless the IRA have got the better of you chaps."

During the next two days, I had a number of visits from various people. They were all new to me, quite ordinary men and women who wished to go to Great Britain either on a visit or as emigrants. I gave them all the same non-committal answers that I had given the first two visitors. Some of them accepted it, others argued over it and one or two were positively aggressive and threatened to make things awkward for me if their wish was not granted.

On the third day, another poster appeared.

"We demand;  
The right to travel to our homeland,  
Travel documents,  
The Right to transfer property,  
These fundamental freedoms cannot be denied.  
What is the government doing about it?  
What is Sir George Sonian-Smith here for?  
We demand an answer!"

\*\*\*\*\*

Now, I was completely isolated. Sheila and John had stopped seeing me. The parties, receptions and functions of various sorts were all over. The Prime Minister was still on holiday. I could not go out and meet people in the present tense atmosphere that prevailed. I was not used to such situations. Obeying orders, carrying out instructions or going to the conditioning clinics to get my mind adjusted was my routine. In short, the situation was beyond me.

Butler was my only means of contact with the outside world. I depended on him for information and advice. And he was generous with both. He not only brought me a copy of the above poster, but gave me some more information as well.

"There are two groups of people involved in this sir," he informed me. "One group is a small one; they claim you are a spy of the Indian government. But they themselves do not believe it and if you were to offer them passages to Great Britain, they would forget all about it. The other groups are people who have saved some money and are eager to travel and are afraid that the high-ups might persuade you to send them and not the common people. The two groups nearly came to

blows in a bar last night. If you could make some announcement that the whole matter of emigration to Great Britain is under the consideration of the British government, the situation will blow over and everyone will forget about it in a few days.”

“But I am not in a position to make such a statement Butler.”

“If you don’t mind my saying so sir, a strict adherence to truth and integrity can be a great handicap in public life.”

And there the matter rested.

Soon after this conversation was over, Pitman called on me. “We have a letter for Sir George and we thought it better to deliver it in person, in view of its importance.” And he produced an official looking envelope with the seal of the prime minister on the flap.

“But I thought Sir Winston was still on holiday.”

“He is; in fact, in view of the developments here, he is extending it by a few more days. He is a firm believer in the dictum that if you are absent for a sufficiently long time, almost all problems will solve themselves. But of course, he keeps in touch with the office and takes such decisions as are necessary.”

I opened the letter. It was written in long hand. “The last typewriter in the country went out of order some years ago and Mr. Remington died without any issues,” Pitman informed me. “But I hope you will have no difficulty in reading our hand writing.”

‘My dear Sir George,

I have been deeply distressed at the developments that have taken place during the last few days. Kindly accept my regrets and apologies on behalf of the people and government of Little Britain as well as my own personal sympathy at this unfortunate turn of events. Needless to say, the government will do everything to stem the tide and set things right.

‘However, we need not be unduly pessimistic. The moment you present your credentials and become the duly accredited envoy of Great Britain, one aspect of the criticism will be silenced. As far as the demand for passports, entry certificates and other travel documents are concerned. I propose to appoint a commission to look into various aspects of the problem, carry on negotiations with the British government as well as the Indian government and submit a report in the course of the next six months. Needless to say, the time of the commission can always be extended if necessary. Though it is a purely domestic problem, I hope you agree with this idea in view of the fact that your government will also be involved in the future.

‘I propose to return to the capital next week. Arrangements can be made for the presentation of your credentials before the monsoon session of parliament.

Meanwhile, my regards and good wishes,

Yours, etc.,

“We shall make a big show of the presentation of credentials of course,” Pitman assured me when I had finished reading the letter. “After all, nothing like this has happened during the last one hundred and fifty years. It shall be the show of the century, with processions, illuminations, fireworks, the lot. When it comes to putting on a show, you can’t beat Sir Winston. After all, he was an actor-manager before he became a prime minister. He knows what the public wants and makes them believe that something momentous is about to happen. And then, all this will be forgotten.”

I felt miserable. I had nothing to present, neither credentials nor anything else. It was perhaps a good thing that Sir Winston was still on holiday and the ordeal was not going to be for another week. I hoped to goodness that Chuck would be here before then to advise me what to do.

“In view of the developments here, perhaps I should return to my government, for consultations,” I remarked.

“Oh! We certainly would not advise that,” replied Pitman. “In fact it would be most inadvisable to do so, particularly because of the developments. It would strengthen the No-changers who are at present in a minority.”

“No-changers?”

“Those who profess to believe you are a foreign spy call themselves no-changers. That is, they do not want any changes as a result of your visit. The others call themselves pro-changers, meaning that they want union with Great Britain and travel facilities to that country.”

“But I thought the first bulletin was the result of a private grudge?”

“That is how it started, but now some other people have started supporting it and the poet who is as keen to get to Great Britain as anyone else, is in a dilemma. He has lost his chance of reciting his verses at the poet’s corner in Westminster Abbey, London.”

“But they don’t recite verses there. They only bury the poets there if they are sufficiently famous.”

“In that case, you may conclude that our poet has lost any chance he had of being buried in Westminster Abbey.”

“Do you need an immediate reply to your communication?” I asked him finally.

“There is no hurry, but we would like an answer so that we may make arrangements for the ceremony.”

That afternoon, there was evidently a procession of people demanding free travel facilities to Great Britain. They held placards and went round the streets shouting slogans, singing patriotic songs such as ‘Rule Britannia’ and ‘There will always be an England.’ At one point, there was a poster which proclaimed ‘Don’t fall into the imperialist trap!’ According to Butler, this was an oblique reference to me as the imperialist spy, presumably India. The crowd naturally tore the poster down and a scuffle ensued between the rival factions. Finally, the police were summoned. They evidently tried to arbitrate between the two groups on the rights and wrongs of the situation which led to further squabbles.

Butler was my only source of information as to what was happening in the town. Other people seemed to take things lightly. The Prime Minister has said that when once credentials were presented, everything would be alright. John was understandingly reserved after what had happened between me and Sheila. Chuck who promised to come had not turned up and left me in the lurch. I was completely alone. I felt totally isolated and hemmed in on all sides. Slowly, the ring seemed to be closing round me. I was powerless and helpless. I could stand it no longer. I wanted to speak to someone, anyone, freely and openly so that the burden of guilt as well as anxiety that I felt could be shared. There was only one such person; Joan.

As it was getting dark, I decided to risk going out. "I am going for a walk," I told the ever watchful Butler.

"Is that wise Sir George?" he sounded very worried. "The situation is not all conducive for an outgoing. If you wish to call on someone, I can arrange for the Tonga to be brought round."

"I do not wish to call on anyone. I just need some fresh air. And I don't think anyone would recognize me."

"The greater the danger, the greater the courage of an Englishman," Butler intoned.

Fortunately, Joan was at home and pleased to see me. She hugged and kissed me and stroked my hair. I told her how much I had missed her in the last few days.

"You have stirred the hornet's nest, haven't you?" she asked.

"But I haven't done a thing!"

"That is the trouble; if you had gone round telling everyone how wonderful it was over there and promised all sorts of things to anyone who came to see you, you would have been a very popular figure. But your reserve, your reluctance to talk suspicious. You are not cut out to be a diplomat or a politician. Usually, an unsuccessful politician becomes a diplomat provided his party is in power. I don't know how you became one, but obviously not by the usual route, or you would have managed things much better."

This was a new aspect of Joan's character that I had not suspected before. "I did not know you were such a shrewd political observer," I remarked.

"I may not come from the same social class as your girl friend, but I have to be intelligent in my profession if I am to be of any use to my friends."

"You know it is all over with Sheila," I told her. "I am actually ashamed of it all now."

"Yes, and if it wasn't for her, none of this fuss might have happened. The versifier would have married her and they would have lived happily ever after. You got yourself into some needless trouble there."

"I need your assistance now Joan; I need it desperately."

She smiled. "You have obviously not taken any pills this evening, so the assistance must be purely intellectual."



Just then, something snapped inside me. The floodgates of emotion, which had been barred and bolted for a life time because of the conditioning process, suddenly burst forth and overwhelmed me. I suddenly caught hold of Joan, placed my head on her gentle shoulders and cried and cried. I gave in to the luxury of tears. The experience of intense emotion for the first time in one's life is a strange occurrence. Uptill now, I had been denied even this basic birth right. Now I was able to feel the soothing effects of tears and laughter, for though I was not laughing, some undefinable happiness and contentment was spreading over me. I shed tears of longing, longing for a childhood and youth that had been wasted and bitterness for the generations that had lived and died without love and affection. Perhaps, I was like a child crying for a mother it had never had, crying for solace and consolation. But Joan was mother and lover rolled into one and I shed my tears on her mature bosom. She petted me, soothed and comforted me just as if I were her child.

When at long last, I had got over my outburst and was thoroughly exhausted and relieved, Joan kissed me. "My poor baby!" she said. "You must be in a real bad way to have given in like that. Whatever it is that has made you cry, tell me; I shall try to understand and help you. And if I can't, at least you will feel better for having shared it with another human being."

"I am sorry dear, but this is the first time I have ever cried," I apologised. "An Englishman is traditionally supposed to exhibit a stiff upper lip to the rest of the world, never give way to emotion and take it on the chin every time. I am not a very good example I am afraid."

"Look, you don't have to apologise for anything with me so long as it is nothing disgraceful," Joan assured me. "I know you have been under a great strain. May be in your society, such breakdowns are taken for granted. After all, one cannot go by the manners and rules of good society. I would like to help you if only you tell me what it is all about."

"You already know some of it," I said. "But not the whole truth. I shall tell you everything now and let you decide my fate."

"Don't use such big words. No one is going to decide your fate except yourself, unless of course you had committed murder or rape. And I know you haven't done either."

"Tell me, what is the punishment in Little Britain for impersonation?"

I think she was surprised at the question. She thought for a minute before replying. "I am not sure," she said. "I suppose it depends upon whom you tried to impersonate and how much you gained by it. But whom can you impersonate except yourself?"

"That is just the point," I told her the whole story of my arrival, how I was surprised to be received as Sir George Sonian-Smith instead of plain George Smith and how I had been carrying on ever since.

"So, you see Joan, I am not the person you thought I was. I am just plain George Smith, a junior worker at the institute of prenuclear history. No.GB 145 APNH 628 according to my identification card. I will probably be liquidated if I were to go back for having made a mess of things here and probably sent to gaol if I stayed on here. I am sorry for having misled you. I deserve any punishment you give me."

She looked at me without speaking for some time while I waited for my fate to be decided. "Yes, it is a disappointment for me," she said at last. "But not a big one. I was hoping to be Lady Sonian-Smith which was rather far-fetched but now, I can certainly be plain Mrs. Smith, and no one is going to stop me."

"You mean you are not going to throw me over?"

"Of course not, you silly boy," she laughed. "You are like a baby; you even cry like a baby. I suppose with all these pills and conditioning devices, you have never really grown up. You just said 'yes' to anything anyone said to you. I would say you were not responsible for your actions."

"You don't know what you have done for me Joan," I cried as I squeezed her hand. "Now, I can face anything. Now that I have shed my childish tears, I am more of a man now. I am a human being, not a conditioned automaton."

"Don't go and do anything foolish," Joan advised me soberly. "Don't just confess and face the consequences out of bravado. Consult your friends if you have any and make your moves carefully. I will also make enquiries discreetly."

"The only friend I have is Chuck who brought me here. He is more a colleague than a friend. And then, there is Krishna."

"If Krishna is on your side, you won't come to any harm. You can trust him."

"I do not want to go back to Great Britain Joan," I told her. "Whatever happens, my future is here, not at the institute of pre-nuclear history or anywhere else. Having tasted freedom, the saltiness of tears and the sweetness of love, I will not go back to the grey monotony of a twilight existence."

"I am sure something can be arranged when once you get out of the present trouble."

"If so, after all the troubles are over, will you marry me?"

"Why do you think I have been taking so much interest in you? For international understanding?"

With that assurance, I parted from her.

## CHAPTER TWELVE

When I returned to Hampton Court rather late, I was surprised to see John waiting for me. Butler had made him comfortable by offering him a drink. His face was flushed and he seemed rather nervous and anxious.

“Nice to see you John,” I said with a show of gaiety I did not really feel. “But what makes you pay a visit at this time of night?”

“I have been given a somewhat unusual message,” John replied seriously. “It is to bring you to Krishna’s house tonight. I want to know what it means.”

“Perhaps we will find out if we go there,” I said innocently. I knew then that Chuck must have arrived.

“That is just the point. I do not understand it. And what I do not understand, I do not trust. Why should Krishna want to see you under cover of night, all of a sudden?”

I sipped the drink that Butler had brought me while I considered the answer. I felt that I should deal fairly with John, but found it difficult to do so. Finally, I said, “Look, do you think that there is anything underhand or unfair in this request? If so, do you think Krishna would have asked you? It would have been so easy for him to have sent an Indian”.

“That is what puzzle me,” remarked John. “Why should I be dragged into the mess of International politics? Ever since the posters and the processions started about your visit, I have kept aloof from you.”

“Presumably because you don’t trust me.”

“Look George,” he spoke earnestly. “Ever since you came here, I have been a good friend to you. But the fact remains that you have not presented your credentials; you don’t have an office; you don’t have even a letter head with your name on it. These little things tend to make one suspicious. On top of all this comes this strange message. Krishna is a friend of mine, but I know he has his contacts with the Indian government. Under these circumstances, it does make one wonder, doesn’t it?”

“Wonder what John?”

“Whether there isn’t some truth in what the posters say.”

“That I am a spy of the Indian government?”

John fidgeted in an embarrassed manner and finally came out with it somewhat defiantly. “Well, something like that,” he cried.

“It is true I haven’t told you the whole truth, John and I haven’t felt very happy about it. But I have had my reasons for doing so. On the other hand I wish to assure you that I am not a spy of the Indian government.”

"I am glad to have that assurance."

"What is there to spy here John?" I asked. "Don't you realize that technology is so advanced in the outside world that they can get whatever information they want through various types of remote sensing devices? They can even have your feelings recorded and analysed without setting foot in this place. And if they wanted to create disaffection among the people here, don't you think there are enough Indians who can do the job much better than a stranger like myself?"

"I know all that," John agreed with me. "At least I have heard about it. And we have been peculiar flying objects hovering over our hills and our rusty guns have been totally ineffective against them. I also know that Krishna is not the sort of man who would do anything against the interests of Little Britain. That is why the whole thing is so puzzling.

"Take me there John without further loss of time and I promise you the whole truth before long."

\*\*\*\*\*

Krishna received us and offered us refreshments. I was surprised to see a bottle of whisky in these somewhat austere surroundings and said as much.

"I keep it for my British friends," said Krishna.

While we were sipping our drinks, John explained our delay. "Sorry we were delayed; Sir George had gone out and I had to wait for him."

"That is alright John," said Krishna. "Thank you for bringing him."

"I have brought him here on one condition. That is, that I am told the whole truth about this."

"I was not aware of any conditions," said Krishna.

"But Sir George has agreed that I should be told the truth."

Krishna looked at me. "Yes, I promised him. I felt I hadn't dealt fairly with him and he deserved to know the truth."

"After all, I could have asked someone else to bring him here."

"Yes, an Indian going to Hampton Court to bring Sir George to Krishna's residence would have given something for the poster writers to shout about."

"This puts a slightly different complexion on the whole situation," remarked Krishna. "If you are going to be in the know of things John, then I must have your assurance that you will keep the whole matter confidential until we choose to reveal it."

"Is there anything in the situation that is likely to affect the interests of Little Britain adversely?" enquired John. "If so, I cannot promise anything. But otherwise, you have my word."

"You know me John," was all that Krishna said. But he looked straight into John's eyes with such concentration. It was as if his mind was pouring some information into John's soul and some communication that I could not understand had taken place. John merely said, "Yes, I understand."

After that John did not say much for some time. I could feel that Krishna had exercised some kind of Thought Control (TC) about which I had heard.

Our host then went and opened a door and in walked Chuck. He had obviously been waiting with a glass of whisky in his hands. He was introduced to John and he recognized him as my guide when I first arrived. But he did not seem surprised at seeing him there. I was informed later that any negotiations with the Indian government or the government of the Eastern hemisphere were carried on by Krishna on behalf of Little Britain and it was quite common for officials to visit him.

"I thought Indians didn't consume any alcohol," I commented to Chuck. Though the situation was serious for me, I could not help the professional habit of trying to gather information for the original objective of my visit.

"Only Indians in Little Britain do not drink as a rule," said Chuck. "They observe our ancient customs much better, like true expatriates. But Indians in India have no qualms about drinking." And he replenished our glasses as well as his own.

Chuck had evidently not expected John to stay and looked at him curiously. So Krishna explained. "John as you know is a friend and he has brought Sir George here. We have agreed to tell him the truth about the situation and he in turn has agreed to respect our confidence."

"Yes, of course," John agreed.

"Well John, this is the situation," Krishna was obviously 'taking the chair' and directing the proceedings. I was glad he was doing so for I wouldn't have known where to begin. "Sir George Sonian-Smith is plain George Smith and was a junior member of the staff of the Institute of Prenuclear History in London."

"I knew he was at the institute, but I thought it was some time ago," responded John.

"Let me give you the whole picture," Krishna continued. "He does not represent the British government – for such a government does not exist – and came here in the interests of science, to study the habits and customs, values and relationships of the people of Little Britain. It was a worthwhile objective and from a long term point of view, perhaps more important than being a mere government representative. I am told we are the only community in the whole world who has stuck to prenuclear life. As a Curator, I am sure you will agree that to record and preserve our way of life before it disappears is an important function."

"But is there any chance of it disappearing?"

"If most of the Little Britons migrate to Great Britain – and they seem to want to – there will be very little of your life here left. However that may be, you might say that he has been here under false pretences."

“Not quite,” interposed Chuck. “His appointment as a representative of the government of Western hemisphere has been regularized. I have here a document authorizing him to act as such until further orders.”

“So, you might call it only a technical violation,” Krishna suggested. “But the fact remains that there was a violation.”

“He has no right to call himself Sir George,” John asserted.

I felt I ought to intervene at this point. “Believe me John, until I landed in your country, I had no intention either of calling myself Sir George or of pretending to be the envoy of Great Britain. Circumstances conspired against me and I was powerless. But the idea was not mine.”

“Let me get to the more important aspects of the situation,” Krishna continued his narration. “I think you know the situation that exists in the Western hemisphere as well as in the East though things are slightly better in this part of the world. Freedom as we understand and cherish it is dead, except in Little Britain. Men have become slaves of the machine age, machines dictate with logical precision and men obey. With mass conditioning from birth, people are in no position to protest, let alone rebel. Only the confusion and quarrels of democracy have kept us human in spite of our technological backwardness. I think you know all that.”

“Yes, George has told me. But how do you know that I know it all?”

“I know what is in your conscious mind; I can read it like a book, because my mind acts as a receiving and transmitting station with yours so long as you are near me. I know everything that you know.”

“Thought control, I suppose.”

“Yes.”

“This is the first time I have seen it demonstrated.”

“It is nothing new. This is how our astrologers in the days gained the confidence of their clients, but it is now more scientific of course. For example, I know you are worried about the relationship between Sir George and your daughter Sheila. He has told her he can’t marry her as marriages are forbidden in the Western hemisphere. You are now wondering if this will make a change and if Sheila would still want to marry him.”

“Amazing!” cried John. I too wondered how much about me Krishna already knew without my telling him.

“But unfortunately – or should I say, fortunately – I can only read what is in your conscious mind and that too, only if you happened to think about it in my presence. I have as yet, no way of reaching your subconscious. Nor have I the power to make you change your mind.”

“Where is all this leading to anyway?” asked John.

“Another aspect of the problem is the decreasing fertility rate in both hemispheres. This has been so since the abolition of natural conception and the production of incubator babies. If this

trend continues, the Earth will become less and less crowded. From both points of view, that is, the interest of Little Britain as well as the interests of the rest of the world can be best served if Little Britain can be kept isolated for some more time.”

“I certainly don’t want to be conditioned and lead the kind of life that George has been describing to me.”

“That is exactly what will happen if we become a part of the Western hemisphere, or even the Eastern half,” Krishna pointed out. “I should imagine most of us would die of shock. The change would be far too great for our minds to bear.”

“Mr. Curator,” Chuck seemed to take over from Krishna from then on. “Pardon me for butting into what is essentially a discussion about Little Britain. But I would like to place before you a much bigger problem, the problem of humanity. If the present decrease in the rate of fertility continues, perhaps, in two or three generations, the birth of a child would be sufficiently unusual for it to be mentioned in the mass media. Can you imagine the fate of the world then? In the beginning, less and less young people will be entering the production line. Retirement age will have to be increased in order to make up for it, but after a time inessential activities will have to be severely curtailed. The young ones will grow old and the old ones will die. The average age will go on increasing until only the old people will be left, perhaps a few in each town. Slowly, government would cease to function, authority would no longer be exercised, production will come to a standstill, things would not be put right and rubbish will gather in the streets; and the last few to die would not even have a burial. That is how the world would come to an end and Mankind who have peopled this earth for a million years, who have built great institutions and monuments, produced music and art and philosophy, will be no more. Only a few ghost like buildings that can withstand the elements will stand as mute witnesses to what was past until they too fall victims to the ravages of time.” Chuck paused, exhausted by his own rhetoric. “I ask you Mr. Curator, do you want such a fate to befall humanity?”

“You paint a very grim picture indeed,” admitted John slowly. “But what evidence is there that this will in fact happen? What are the chances and what can we do about it?”

“I am sorry I can’t give you all the proof,” replied Chuck. “You will have to take my word on trust. But don’t you see, even if there is one per cent chance of this grim possibility, the hope of avoiding it rests with Little Britain, for you still have natural methods of conception and your fertility rate is fairly high. And the only way of retaining that is by keeping Little Britain isolated for some more time.”

“What do you suggest we do about all this?” asked John.

“I am told that most people of Britain origin wish to go back to Great Britain,” Chuck resumed. “I also understand that they want Little Britain to be politically united with the Western hemisphere. I consider it as nothing short of suicide for the whole community. Here we have someone,” and he pointed to me. “Who has experienced life at first hand in Great Britain? I suggest he should tell them all about it. He should also tell them about the biological problem and persuade them to remain isolated.”

John was silent for a while as he considered the statement. When he spoke, he sounded sad and tired. "We have waited for one hundred and fifty years to go back to what we thought was home. After the big curtain was removed, it had become a national mania for us. And when George arrived with all the fanfare, there was jubilation in every British heart. And now it turns out the whole thing is phoney and we would be treated like Guinea pigs if we should ever get there. Don't you think the shock of all this would be as great as the shock of what may be in store for us over there?"

"No John, the choice before Little Britain is not between two disappointments, but between a disappointment and a challenge," Krishna spoke after a long time.

"In any case, you are asking me to take a lot of things on trust," John continued. "Frankly, I do not know whether to believe you or not. How do I know that all this is not a plan by the Eastern hemisphere government to annex us?"

"If that was the intention of our government, don't you think they have had ample opportunity in the last one and a half centuries?" asked Chuck.

"You have known me John for a long time," Krishna spoke. "Have you ever known me do a mean thing?"

"No, I must say you have been very fair and helpful."

"Then, I must tell you I agree with Chuck whole heartedly. At this juncture, we have a duty to ourselves as well as to history and we cannot disregard it. Little Britain might yet be the savior of the world."

"What do you want me to do about all this?" asked John in the end.

"Nothing," replied Krishna. "At least, nothing at present except a promise of co-operation and to keep all this knowledge to yourself. If you remember, it was you who insisted on knowing the truth. So, we have told you."

"It is a big shock and a big burden," was John's response.

"With what George told me and what you have said now, I feel anxious and sad. For how long do you want me to carry this burden?"

"Not for a long time we hope," Krishna assured him. "And when we do decide to make it public, I hope we can depend on your co-operation and support."

"The way you have presented it, I haven't any choice left, have I?"

"George will need all the support you can give him."

"Yes, he is in enough trouble already," John turned and looked at me. "I was angry with you George, to start with. But now I see you are a pawn in this game of international chess. I am sorry for you, but you can count on me."



“Please, don’t think of it as a game John,” Krishna pleaded with him. “Think of it rather as a service to humanity.”

“Perhaps,” John muttered. Then he abruptly took his leave. “If you don’t mind, I want to be by myself and think things out. Could your tonga drop George at Hampton Court? At this time of the night, no one would notice whose Tonga it is.”

“Of course John,” said Krishna and went to see him off.

So far, I had been a silent spectator to the conversation between Krishna and Chuck on the one hand and John on the other. They – particularly the Indians – had talked as if I had no views on the matter and as if what happened to me didn’t count. I felt that if I had to be sacrificed in the interests of what they called ‘Humanity’, they would gladly do it.

As soon as John had left, Chuck turned to me. “Well George, I hope you have left the ladies well alone after what happened last time.”

“More or less,” I replied. There were so many things wanted to say to him, but I found I was tongue-tied.

“You wanted me to come and I am here; what is next on the programme?”

“You seemed to have made up your mind about things in your own way,” I complained. “Have I no say in the matter?”

“Don’t say that George,” said Krishna who had just joined us. “We had to brief John since you had promised it to him. But what you wish to do is to be discussed now. I only hope you will take our anxieties into account.”

So, I told them briefly about the developments in the town since I last spoke to Chuck over the emergency line.

But of course, they knew all about it. “It is obvious,” I concluded. “I cannot carry on as the British High Commissioner any longer. As far as I am concerned, the question is how to get out of an impossible situation.”

“You have three alternatives George,” Chuck explained. “I have documents to show that you are in fact the British High Commissioner. With these, you can present your credentials and carry on.”

“I couldn’t do that,” I told him. “I am not cut out to be a high powered diplomat. In any case, I have no wish to perpetuate a lie.”

“What if it will achieve our objective?” enquired Chuck.

“If you remember Chuck, our objective was to study the habits ad customs of the Angrezi population of the Nilgiris. That I have nearly completed.”

“Then we can come to the second alternative,” Chuck was logical and precise, in fact relentless. “It is for you to return to your institute in London and submit your report. Would you like to do that?”

“No, I have no desire to do that. I do not wish to go back to the grey monotony of PUP and all that it implies. Having tasted the fruits of freedom for a while and having had options of one sort or another to choose from, I would rather suffer the agonies of disappointment and frustration than the ministering process of conditioning all over again. No, I will not go back.”

Chuck and Krishna looked at each other and smiled. “George has quickly acquired a moral sense,” remarked Chuck. “He doesn’t want to partake in a lie and he does want to have options.” Then he turned to me. “You see George; while you have been studying the people of Little Britain, I have been studying you.”

“And what are your conclusions?” asked Krishna.

“Only that our conditioning methods, even after so much research and experimentation are purely superficial. When once the psychological environment and the effect of the conditioning pills are removed, the subject will return to a state of free will. It is a valuable finding.”

“It can be a valuable finding from your point of view, but the process is extremely painful from the point of view of the subject,” I assured them both.

“Any change is painful my dear chap,” Chuck informed me. Then, he turned to Krishna again. “It also proves that even prolonged conditioning does not have an adverse effect on the human mind.”

“Except in terms of decision making,” I said.

“I don’t agree with you there,” interposed Chuck. “You are quite successfully resisting our efforts to influence you and are trying to take your own decisions.”

“Perhaps the emotional and moral dilemma it poses when the subject passes from one state to another is also an important factor,” suggested Krishna.

“You are talking as if I were a specimen under a microscope and not a human being,” I ventured to remark.

“Sorry George,” apologised Chuck. “It is just that I did not envisage your losing the effects of conditioning as quickly as this. One of my objectives in sending you here was to study how long the effects of conditioning would last in a free society. Now we can go on to the third option that you have. It is that you make public that you are not the envoy from Great Britain and face the consequences. It will make you a martyr or a hero, I am not sure which.”

“It is true that I have acquired an ethical sense since I came here,” I said. “I would rather do right than wrong, but I have no wish either to be a martyr or a hero, I just want to lead a normal life, marry a girl.....”

“Ah! Joan! Exclaimed Krishna.

"How the devil do you know that?" I shouted.

"You forget George, that if anything comes into your conscious mind, I can read it."

"Yes, Joan," I said rather aggressively. "Have you any objection to it?"

"The reactions are absolutely normal," remarked Chuck. "He becomes aggressive when he thinks his vital interests are threatened!"

"I want to marry Joan and lead a quiet life," I went on ignoring his remark. "I may believe in right and wrong, but I do not want to carry the burden of humanity on my shoulders. If Mankind were to be wiped out from the face of the earth in a few generations, I suppose I would be sorry, but please do not sacrifice me in order to save Mankind."

"Of course not," assured Chuck. "It is just that I cannot help observing your reactions. But you have to face the consequences of your confession. There is no escape from that. I hope you understand it; also that it might not be very pleasant."

"Rather than go back, I will take my chances here."

"Then you are a hero," said Chuck.

"If you like, but a reluctant one," I admitted.

"Just as a matter of academic interest, why do you prefer to stay here, apart from the attractiveness of Joan," asked Krishna.

"I prefer, I suppose, the violence here mixed with sympathy and understanding and pity to the cold logic of a computer which is programmed to carry out PUP edicts."

"You are now human to the very core, George," exclaimed Chuck. "I can't tell you how happy I am. If you who have had a few generations of conditioning can behave as normally as this, then there is hope for humanity from the emotional and intellectual points of view. Only the biological problem needs to be solved now."

"Can you come to such a conclusion on the basis of one subject?" enquired Krishna. "Don't you think more exposures would be needed?"

"Yes, some more experiments would be needed before one can be absolutely positive, but I would say the results are most encouraging."

"Never mind humanity," I cried. "Tell me, what is our next move?"

"Humanity is important George," exclaimed Chuck, "In conducting these psycho-biological experiments, humanity has to be our first objective since it has been ignored for a hundred and fifty years. But that does not mean you will be ignored, since you are part of that humanity."

"Thank you very much," I cried sarcastically.

"I am sorry if you feel that way," apologised Chuck. "I tend to get carried away by my enthusiasms and academic interests. What I would suggest is this. You should address a meeting of

the important citizens of Little Britain when you should describe the life in present day Great Britain, refer to the falling birth rate and the crucial importance of Little Britain in this context. This will get you the sympathy of the audience and in the end, reveal how you happened to come here.”

“In this way, you will be serving the interests of Little Britain as well as the world, and at the same time, reveal your true identity. So, your conscience will also be satisfied,” Krishna supported Chuck.

“Couldn’t I just go to the prime minister and say,” I am sorry Sir Winston; I am just plain George Smith and represent nobody. I have been enjoying your hospitality under false pretences and I am sorry about the whole thing.”

“That wouldn’t get you very far,” except perhaps to the local gaol,” said Krishna. “Further, these people have to be enlightened about the conditions in the outside world and you are the only one who can do it.”

“What sort of credibility will I have with the public when my bona fides are in question?” I wanted to know.

Chuck assured me on that point. “I shall provide you with ample historical evidence to convince them.”

“And I shall arrange protection for you in case there is any disturbance at the end of the meeting,” said Krishna. “It is quite likely that the moment you announce you are not the British High Commissioner, there may be a violent reaction. But we shall be prepared for it.”

I had no alternative but to agree.

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

My lecture was to be delivered under the auspicious of the Royal Geographical Society of Little Britain which, I was told, was the most prestigious organisation in the country. I was careful to avoid any reference in the publicity, either to my 'Knighthood' or to my status as the envoy of Great Britain. The posters merely said, 'A Talk by George Sonian-Smith on the Life and Times in Great Britain today'. The posters were exhibited on the Freedom Walls and also advertised in the weekly newspaper which had just commenced publication after a long strike by the workers.

The meeting was organized by John in his capacity as the secretary of the society. While he was somewhat hostile to me in the beginning, he softened later. "I realise you were under the influence of PUP and not really responsible for your actions. But I am glad you have decided to come out into the open and expose the life in Western hemisphere. It shows you are a true gentleman. And if I may say so, it is a moral victory for Little Britain." He had evidently had a few more talks with Krishna and had been completely converted to his point of view.

The Times wrote an editorial about my proposed talk. After referring to 'the enigmatic gentleman in our midst' the paper said, "At last the High Commissioner from Great Britain who has been silent so far in spite of many opportunities and even provocations, has chosen to speak. Perhaps, he wanted a big audience. If so, he has succeeded admirably. We shall wait for his narration of events in Great Britain with eagerness and anticipation. We only hope it will be worth it."

Normally, I was told that very few people attended these lectures, but in view of the nature of the subject, a very large crowd of Englishmen as well as Indians were expected. Invitations had been sent out to all the important personages in Little Britain and seats had been reserved in the name of prime minister, various members of parliament and other leading citizens. The hall was expected to be overflowing.

The organisation of the lecture also led to a further controversy between the no-changers and the pro-changers, the no-changers wanting to boycott the meeting since they claimed the whole thing was bogus and the pro-changers wanting to attend in large numbers. But the no-changers were in a hopeless minority. Further, the curiosity of the entire nation was roused. They wanted to know everything about their ancestral home before they made preparations for getting there. There were a few skirmishes between the two groups and after a few ineffective posters, the no-changers retired to the background. But the controversy had merely kindled greater interest in the talk. Butler informed me that it was the only topic of conversation in bars and billiard parlours. Even gambling went into the background. Instead, bets were being taken on what I was going to say.

Chuck was busy organizing projection facilities as well as a speaker system so that I would be heard throughout the hall. He had been permitted to bring all the equipment in view of the nature of the occasion. We had to work in close cooperation since my talk was to be illustrated by moving and talking pictures about life in the western hemisphere. I was more than a little nervous about my speech. Public speaking was not one of the accomplishments one learnt in my part of the world and I was anxious about facing a large and possibly hostile audience.

I expressed my fears to Chuck. "Should I write out my entire speech and read it?" I asked him.

"No, that would fall flat," he said. "I want you to sound honest and sincere. Even if you falter, it doesn't matter so long as you put some emotion into it. Do not be afraid of making mistakes. They would make it all the more natural."

Nevertheless, I made detailed notes of what I was going to say and in what order. Chuck went over it and suggested modifications. Since each moving picture was going to take a certain number of minutes, the timing had to be fairly accurate. We went over it again until we had both got it right.

On the day of the lecture, I made my preparations very carefully. My things were all packed for I was sure I would not be returning to Hampton Court. Krishna had offered me hospitality and tentatively, it was agreed that I should stay with him.

"I hope you are not leaving us sir," said Butler. "Perhaps, you are going to open the official premises of the High Commission."

"This talk I am going to deliver is going to be a turning point in my life Butler," I told him. "Perhaps, a turning point for Little Britain also. It is difficult to say what will happen afterwards."

"It would be a pleasure for me to serve you at the High Commission, Sir George," he offered.

"I shall keep that in mind," I told him.

The announcement of the lecture also happened to coincide with the return of the prime minister from his long holiday. There was a message from him requesting me to call on him, which I did immediately.

"I see you have decided to go after some publicity sir George," he laughed. "I am a great believer in it myself. Now, I also understand your reticence about parting with information. You have managed to arouse everyone's curiosity and so will have a record audience. It is a master-stroke of publicity."

"I felt it only fair that I should tell the people here, the kind of life they could expect if they ever went to Great Britain. As you know, a large number of people have expressed such a desire."

"Yes, but don't you think it would have been better to have presented your credentials before your lecture?" he asked. "We could have organized a jolly good show. In fact, they could have been combined and you could come straight back from Buckingham Palace to deliver your speech. It would have given it an official blessing."

"I would rather postpone the ceremony for the present."

"As you wish," he conceded. But I had a feeling that he was rather disappointed.

"I hope to have the honour of your presence at the lecture."

“Of course!” he cried. “Not only I, but the entire cabinet will be there. None of us would like to miss the speech of the century.”

\*\*\*\*\*

The meeting had been scheduled for 4 p.m. I dressed myself carefully, not in the attire of a diplomat, but as an upper class gentleman of Little Britain. Krishna and John accompanied me to the meeting hall. They had a feeling I think that I might not have the course to face the situation, but they need not have worried. During the last few weeks, I had grown up fast, emotionally and psychologically and was quite ready to face the elite of Little Britain as well as what was in store for me afterwards. I would not say I had acquired dignity and self-respect and a feeling that some things in life were more important than mere safety and security. But at the same time, I was a little anxious about how things were going to turn out.

Except for the reserved seats, the hall had been full for some time. There was also a crowd waiting outside, holding placards and shouting rival slogans. There was a lot of noise and confusion, the shouts of ‘God save the king’ mingling with the calls for chasing imperialist spies out of the country. The police were making ineffective attempt to keep some semblance of order and we had literally to force our way in.

Professor Dudley-Stamp, the president of the Royal Geographical Society, received us and conducted us to the platform. He had been briefed by John and the president introduced me, not by my recently acquired title but merely as George Sonian-Smith, a distinguished citizen from Great Britain and an authority on pre-nuclear history. As he finished his introduction, a hush fell on the people. Everyone seemed to be aware of the historic significance of the occasion and I could feel a suppressed excitement running through the crowd. Even the slogan shouters became silent. For myself, I was happy to see almost everyone I knew in Little Britain including Sheila and Joan as well as a large number of Indians. Chuck was seated just below the platform from where he would be operating the various pieces of equipment. The most momentous occasion in my life began.

“Ladies and gentlemen,” I began in a somewhat nervous and hesitant manner. I was anxious to get the audience on my side before bursting my bomb shells, so I wanted to be complimentary to them. “I have been in your beautiful country for nearly three months. During this period, every single person I have come across has been most friendly, kind and hospitable. I cannot tell you how much I appreciate it.”

I could see the smiling faces of the audience and it gave me encouragement. I continued.

“During this period, I have been asked a lot of questions about life in Great Britain. I must confess that I have avoided giving direct answers to these questions deliberately, not because I wanted to be evasive, but because I just did not know where to begin. There have also been a number of requests from people from all walks of life about the possibility of migrating to Great Britain, or at least going there for a visit. In fact, there seems to be an almost universal desire on the part of everyone to go there. In view of these factors, I felt it was my duty to tell all of you about life and conditions there so that you will have a clear idea of what to look forward to if you should get there. That is the least I can do in return for all the wonderful hospitality I have received from you all.

“My talk will be illustrated by moving and talking picture which will give you a realistic idea of life there and I am grateful to my friend Chuck for making the necessary arrangements to show them to you at the appropriate time. My speech is perhaps only a commentary on what you see and hear from these pictures.”

The Audience Reaction Indicator (ARI) showed that the introduction had been well received and I proceeded to describe the technological developments of the last one hundred and fifty years. I talked about Universal Atmospheric Control (UAC), public transport through moving platforms at different levels, disposable clothing for men and women, predigested foods which had removed our dependence on agriculture and developments in the fields of music, art and entertainment. I described the giant factories that were run by computers through remote control. The Universal Distribution System (UDS) that enabled everyone to have everything they wanted. I explained how disease had been eliminated through the development of preventive medicines on the one hand and the use of tonics, enzymes and anti-bacterial serums on the other. As I went on talking, appropriate pictures came on the scene, pictures that were so realistic and so dramatic that the audience gasped, for they were not just three dimensional movies as in pre-nuclear times, but could convey feelings and emotions as well through subtle, suggestive impressions on the minds of people. The audience had a sense of participation and involvement that was more than anything anyone had dreamt of in Little Britain. Such conveyance of feelings and emotions were to stand me in good stead when we went on to the ‘other’ aspects of life.

Yes, ladies and gentlemen, we have reached near perfection in terms of technological progress. We have created a Utopia that we have been dreaming about for a thousand years.

I concluded this portion of my speech and looked at the ARI meter. The audience reaction was totally positive. I had lost my nervousness now. I could speak more freely, with greater emphasis and with increased confidence. This was essential since I was coming to the more difficult part of my speech. The next half-an-hour was going to decide my future and I was conscious of this fact.

I then passed on to the developments in reproductive biology and explained how a womb was no longer necessary for human reproduction. As the pictures came on the scene, the audience could see the slow and gradual formation of the foetus, pass through a series of containers with fluids until ultimately, they went into incubators and out on to what looked like an assembly line. As the babies moved along the line, they were inspected not by human beings, but by computer arms, those with any congenital defects being eliminated and the rest passed on to baby farms. There were gasps in the audience, one or two screamed and someone shouted, “A lady has fainted!” It was Sheila.

“There you are my friends,” I said. “That is how babies are produced in Great Britain and throughout the Western hemisphere. I am myself a fourth generation incubator baby. As John put it the other day when I told him about it, we are a whole lot of illegitimate bastards!

“There is one other piece of information I should like to give you in this connection. For the future of Humanity, it may be the most important. It is this. Lately, it has been found that as the number of incubator generations increase, it has become more and more difficult to



produce the required number of children. Whether it is due to the sterility of the males or because of some fault in the incubator system, we do not know. But if the present trend continues, the entire population of the world – except perhaps for Little Britain – would diminish and disappear in the course of the next hundred years. According to the biblical saying, “We (in Little Britain) shall inherit the earth.” I leave you to consider the various implications of this situation. In this particular aspect, there is no difference between the Eastern and the Western hemispheres. They are both in the same boat, more or less.”

There was a violent fluctuation of the needle in the ARI meter as I said these words and the audience were visibly excited by the news.

Then I passed on to how the children were reared, to ‘sub-conscious’ learning, to the conditioning chambers and to psycho-biology. I described the tests that were used both for evaluation and control, the determination of I.Q. in order to decide what type of work was to be allotted to the different groups of boys and girls. As the pictures came on, audience could hear the screams of the children as psycho-electrical shocks were administered to them. They could hear the pupdicts being implanted into the minds of the children, but as yet, they did not know what it was all about, only that babies were being subjected to some kind of mechanized torture. The audience watched with a sense of dreadful fascination as the ARI meter indicated. In spite of their horror, we were not asked to stop. The people were glued to their seats as their eyes were glued to what seemed to be happening around them and their ears to what they could hear and see. But more than all, they could feel, feel to some extent what those children were feeling and what I hoped they would feel.

“It is just like vaccination against the small pox about which you all know,” I said measuring my words deliberately. “Conditioning makes them immune to emotion, to a sense of right and wrong, to feelings of aggression and revolt and makes them obey orders without question, but at the same time, enables them to use their intellect to the maximum possible extent.

“You might wonder how all this has been achieved without protest and without rebellion. It is because of PUP – the Philosophy of Universal Pragmatism, which you might say is the religion of the Western hemisphere. I shall give you a few pupmandments to illustrate what I mean.

“‘The only way of eliminating hatred is to eliminate love’ “

“Loyalty to the family is treachery to the State.”

“Ideas lead to ideologies; therefore both are abolished.”

“‘Wisdom of Man is fallible; the wisdom of a computer is infallible’ “.

As I intoned each of these pupdicts, they came over the loud speakers in the hall screaming at the audience and were dramatised through loving couples being forcibly separated, families broken up, books burnt, churches desecrated and groups disbanded.

“So, the computers take over,” I went on. “And direct men and women what to do, how to behave for twenty four hours of the day. Everything about everyone is recorded, codified

and analysed with logical precision and cures prescribed through the Universal computer System (UCS) which is the all powerful, self perpetuating controller of the State. No one is exempt from its purview. It is not biological; therefore, it does not grow old and die. UCS is eternal; only Man is discarded after he has outlived his usefulness. Only Man originates in the baby farms and ends in the mortuaries. The relentless logic of the computer dictates the terms under which they shall live and die.”

“Is UCS (Universal Computer System) the end of the line? Are we going to be under the control permanently of a soulless machine or is there a master-mind behind the computer? What has happened to the Material Progress Group (MPG) and the Intellectual Progress Group (IPG) – the groups of scientists who controlled everything in the beginning? Do they still exist?” I paused for the information to sink into the minds of the audience. “Frankly, I do not know. Till I came here, I could not even think this far, for I was under the influence of PUP. Only coming here has given me the power of discrimination.”

The pictures and the voices were still now. There was an uneasy silence in the hall. The ARI meter indicated a totally negative reaction. The audience was dumbfounded; scared. The people in the hall now – everyone including Sir Winston – were wiping their brows with rough, handspun cotton hand kerchiefs. But I had not finished. As far as I was concerned, the worst part was still to come.

“There you are, my friends; if I have unsettled you by this exhibition of life in the Western hemisphere, if I have destroyed your dreams of a hundred and fifty years, I am sorry. But it is much better that your illusions should be shattered here and now rather than that you should be subjected to the ministrations of a conditioning chamber and then discarded as ‘unsuitable material’.

“I have nearly finished, except for one piece of information. From a purely personal point of view, it is perhaps the most important news that I should be giving you.”

I paused and looked at the A.R.I. meter. It indicated a neutral level. At least, they weren’t against me so far. They were waiting, expectant. One could almost hear them breathing.

“You must wonder why I, as a representative of Great Britain, have chosen to present this grim picture of my country to you. A diplomat is supposed to present as favourable a picture of his country as possible. And yet, I have chosen to depict the naked truth. The reason is simple. I am not a representative either of Great Britain or the Western hemisphere government or of anyone else, though I am a citizen of Great Britain. I represent no one but myself and I am here to study your way of life.....”

Suddenly, pandemonium broke out in the hall. There was noise and shouting, people waving their fists and trying to rush towards the Dias. Chuck, with sufficient forethought, had protected the platform with an electric fence of sufficient intensity which repelled people without injuring them. Shoes and sticks were thrown at me and at poor Professor Dudley-stamp. There were cries of ‘Imposter!’, ‘Imperialist spy!’, ‘Traitor!’, ‘Quisling!’ and so on. But at the same time there were other shouts led by John and Krishna. ‘Saviour of Little Britain!’, ‘Protector of Human Rights!’ and ‘Honest George!’ The people in the front row, Sir Winston, Sir Clement Wilson and others had a hurried

consultation as the brickbats flew and the shouting continued. Finally, Sir Winston came to Chuck. They had a whispered conversation and the prime minister took the microphone.

“Little Britons!” he shouted above the din. “I can assure you that this occasion has been as much a surprise to me as it has been to all of you. But we have such a thing as the ‘rule of law’ in this country, though it seems not in other places. If you could keep quiet for a little while, I shall be in a position to announce what the government proposes to do in this unusual situation.”

There were shouts of ‘Yes! Yes!’ and ‘No! No!’ but on the whole it had the effect of quietening the audience.

“May I complete my speech Sir Winston?” I asked him.

He glared at me. “You have made me the laughing stock of the whole world and you shall pay for it!” he shouted but he handed me the microphone. Whatever else Little Britain might lack, the spirit of democracy was not one of them.

“Ladies and gentleman,” I shouted above the din. Strangely enough, silence descended on the audience when I spoke again. Perhaps they thought there were going to be some more revelations. “When I came here, I was a PUPPY.” There was derisive laughter when someone shouted, “An ungrateful Puppy!” I ignored the remark and continued. “I was under the influence of conditioning. You might say I was not responsible for my actions. But thanks to being here for the past three months and breathing the free and fresh air of these mountains as well as absorbing the atmosphere of your country, I have become human again, with normal human emotions and the ability to distinguish between right and wrong. So, I have made a voluntary confession, not only about my role, but also about my place of birth. Consequently I can never go back. I have the unpleasant alternative of going to gaol here or to a conditioning chamber in Great Britain. I am choosing the former alternative and I demand political asylum, to become a citizen of Little Britain and to live and work here permanently.”

The pandemonium broke out again, but this time Krishna took the mike. “You know me,” he said. “You know me as your well wisher. Now, I want you to listen to me.” There was immediate silence. Was he hypnotizing them, I wondered. “Whatever crime this young man has committed will be dealt with according to the laws of Little Britain. But we can never be sufficiently grateful for his revelations about the Western hemisphere. Even if a man confesses to a crime, he is not held guilty until a competent judge has heard the evidence and sentenced him. You cannot take the law into your own hands. I suggest that George Smith be remanded to custody and you should all go home and ruminate on what he has told us, instead of giving way to passions and prejudices.”

His words had a soothing effect on the crowd. The voices died down. They looked at one another somewhat sheepishly and slowly started moving towards the exits.

“That was a good solution you found there,” said Sir Winston to Krishna. “When something gets into the heads of these people, you never know where it will end.” Then he turned to me. “As for you, young man, you have made a monkey out of us all. I hope the law will teach you a lesson that you will not forget.”

“It will be a small price to pay if I have been able to convince your people about the folly of hoping to go to Great Britain or uniting with it.”

“You have shaken the roots of our existence as a nation, destroyed our identity and made us orphans,” shouted Sir Winston. “No punishment is too heavy for such a penalty.”

“Even when I have spoken the truth?” I asked.

But the prime minister was silent on that point.

“You have your roots here Sir Winston,” I continued, “In these beautiful hills where you have lived for a hundred and fifty years. You will wither and die in the Western hemisphere. Here, you have a choice of saving mankind from extinction.”

“You mean the biological stuff?” enquired Sir Winston.

“Yes,” I replied.

“Of course, Little Britain and its government have always considered the interests of humanity as being paramount and have not hesitated to sacrifice their own interest for a larger international cause. And if it should become the responsibility of Little Britain to populate the Earth. I am confident that our young men and women would rise to the occasion and perform their duty with no thought of reward.”

I could already see his mind working on new policies to gain greater importance to Little Britain. It was also surprising how I found the courage to say these things to the prime minister. The editor of the Times, Mr. Shah was listening and taking down everything. Chuck and Krishna watched me fascinated, for they had not expected me to be so forthright in my statements. My asking for political asylum was a surprise even to them.

Meanwhile, the police had arrived. “This is where we part,” said Krishna. “But don’t worry George; you have done a great service to our society and it shall not be forgotten. Meanwhile, you will have to accompany these gentlemen to be remanded to custody, but I will see you soon.”

“Me too,” echoed Chuck.

And the police of Little Britain took me away.

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Though I had read about prisons and lock-ups in pre-nuclear history as well as in old literature, nothing had prepared me for the experience I was to undergo for the next twelve hours. I was taken into a dingy, narrow cell that was full of dirt and filth with a mattress at one end and a bucket at the other. From the smell emanating from it, I knew the purpose for which the bucket was provided. The only light in the cell was from a ventilator about three metres from the ground and as it was going dark outside, I knew I would be in complete darkness very soon. I also realised I was not the only occupant in the room. I had to share it with a large number of insects as well as a few rodents which made their appearance periodically to see what they could find to eat.

I had never been so tired in my life, not so much physically, but exhausted mentally and emotionally. Reviewing the events of the recent past, particularly the events of the day, I realised I could not have done any better, or any different, I had tried to follow my newly acquired conscience; I had attempted to serve Mankind as I saw fit. What more could one do? I felt relieved I had got through the meeting without losing my self-respect and whatever I faced now would not matter so much. The overall feeling was one of relief that I had done my best, and thankfulness that further decision making had been taken away from me. This feeling of relaxation was so great that I lay on the mattress and was soon fast asleep in spite of the loathsome environment.

I was woken up by the guard who came in with a candle and some food, some dry bread and meat curry. I consumed it while he waited and swallowed some tablets so that the food would not give me indigestion.

“Can I have this place cleaned up a little?” I asked the guard.

“Newgate doesn’t come up to the standards of Hampton Court, does it?” he laughed.

“It doesn’t come up to anything,” I said.

“If you didn’t want to come here, you should have kept your mouth shut and pretended to be ‘His Excellency, the high commissioner’ until you pushed off to your own country.”

“But you see, I don’t want to go to my country. I want to stay here.”

“If half of what you said were true, I am not surprised you don’t want to go back. But the question is, are they all true?” Then, he went off at a tangent. “It is alright you saying you don’t want to go there, but what if they deport you? Have you thought of that?”

The guard took away the candle he had brought with him and I was again in total darkness. That I might be deported was something that had not occurred to me or to anyone else. The idea frightened me and it was perhaps the most agonizing twelve hours I had ever spent in my life. Even my surroundings ceased to worry me against this terrible fate which might befall. I could not sleep for long time thinking about it and when I did doze off, I had nightmares for the first time in my life. In the past conditioning had ensured freedom from such disturbances during the hours of rest.

The next morning, Krishna came to see me. He took one look at my face and the dirt and filth on my clothes and apologised for the condition of prisons in Little Britain. "I am sorry you have had to put up with it," he said. "But I hope it won't be for long. John and I are working hard to get you transferred to a private house where you will be under restraint, but where the conditions of living will be better. Of course, if you are sentenced, you will have to come back here."

"Tell me, Mr. Krishna," I asked. "Am I likely to be deported?"

He laughed. "That is most unlikely," he assured me. "But if any such attempt should be made and in the unlikely event of it succeeding, I will see to it that you will not be sent back to the Western hemisphere."

The relief was so great that I started to cry. But soon I controlled myself.

"What about my sentence?"

"It is difficult to forecast anything now. You have stirred a hornet's nest. The ideas and the preconceived notions of most people have been upset by your talk. One cannot predict which way they will jump. It is also difficult to say how much of what you said will be believed. It is quite likely that there may be a realignment of forces and Sir Winston may not last as prime minister. The situation will become clearer in a few days."

"How did I do Mr. Krishna?" I could not help asking him. "Did I come up to your expectations as a speaker?"

"I see you are angling for a compliment," he laughed. "You did extremely well and the idea of asking for political asylum was excellent when everyone wanted to go in the opposite direction. It is a great compliment to Little Britain and people will realise it when they begin to think. Psychologically, it will work in your favour. I am applying to the Old Bailey that you should be let out on bail pending trial and it is likely to come up for hearing in the next few days. Then, we shall see."

Evidently, visiting under-trials was a fairly simple matter in Little Britain for my next visitor was Joan. When she saw the state I was in, she cried, "You poor man! Used to so much hygiene and cleanliness in your country and look at you now! I shall do something about it."

I did not know what she did; perhaps some money changed hands, may be she knew some senior officer, but soon, someone came to clean my cell, empty the bucket, change the mattress and light some scented sticks to get rid of the foul smell.

"Where are your other clothes?" Joan asked.

"I don't know; Chuck must have them I suppose."

"I shall see that they are sent to you," she said. "You won't get anything here by just doing what they say. Insist on your rights; demand a bath and the right to go to the lavatory. It is a right guaranteed under the constitution for all citizens. Nothing will get done unless you make a fuss."

"What is going to happen to me Joan?" I asked anxiously.

"I don't know yet," she said. "You have become a martyr and a hero in the eyes of some. They think you have saved them from a fate worse than death at considerable risk to yourself and you ought to be rewarded. Others think you are a clever imposter, probably in the pay of the Indian government, who after having enjoyed the hospitality of Little Britain and after having been lionized by everyone, proved to be a fraud. We don't know yet which of these is going to win."

"I hope at least you believe in me."

"Yes, I believe in you alright, but I think you have been foolish. It doesn't do to come out with the truth like you did. Truth has been the cause of as much misery in this world as falsehood. It does no good to anybody and does you a lot of harm."

I wanted to take her in my arms and kiss her, but in the presence of the guard, I thought it inadvisable. "But you are on my side, aren't you?" I pleaded. Her approbation was more important than anything else just then.

"Why do you think I am here?" she smiled and squeezed my arm. "I will see you before long, but look after yourself," she said by way of goodbye.

After Joan went, I was left to my own devices and I spent the time ruminating on what had happened, how far I had travelled from the days I had spent at the Institute of pre-nuclear history. From being anonymity, a number in the Universal Computer System (UCS), I had become an individual in my own right, even a person of importance, participating and influencing world events. I had been a PUP with neither hope nor disappointment while now I had experienced both in ample measure. This was not of my own choosing and had happened as a result of a series of accidents, but nevertheless, I was an instrument of history in the shaping of events. In spite of the acute anxiety and discomfort I felt, I could not escape a feeling of excitement at the same time.

My meals were brought by the guard who was noticeably polite after Joan's visit. I was permitted to use the outhouse as a lavatory and allowed to wash myself at a well in the yard. I had to draw the water myself and I found it an interesting experience. I could also walk in the yard at certain hours of the day.

When he brought my lunch, the guard seemed to be eager to talk. "It looks as if you have cooked Sir Winston's goose," he commented.

"How is that?" I asked him.

"His own party members seem to be turning against him. Then say he should have known, or ought to have investigated about life outside – particularly in the western hemisphere – before encouraging people to emigrate there. They feel he has been completely fooled by you and your friend Krishna."

"But the prime minister could not have known anything about the outside world until I came here."

"Politics is something I don't understand, but all the same, it is a dirty game," philosophized the guard.

\*\*\*\*\*

The application by Mr. Krishna asking that I should be released on bail came up for hearing before Judge Higgins at the Old Bailey, the next day. I was taken to the court room which was very near Newgate prison. I went almost unnoticed, only a few fellow prisoners in the yard gave me a wink as I passed. The court room was a fairly large hall at one end of which was a platform for the judge. A piece of red cloth, torn and rather dirty in places, covered the sides of the platform. Above the judge's seat was the portrait of a lady, blind-folded and holding the scales of Justice in her hands. In front of the platform was an open space with benches on either side for lawyers or their clients. There was a separate entrance at the side for the accused through which I was taken. A number of lawyers in black coats and white wigs were talking and arguing with each other and looked at me curiously as I went in. I almost didn't recognize Krishna in his white wig.

"This is only a preliminary hearing," he told me. "The judge may not release you on bail today, but will surely do so the next time I approach him. I hope you will be satisfied with the way I propose to defend you."

"Krishna is the best defence lawyer in the country," one of the lawyers spoke for him. "Particularly if you have committed a crime."

"I am glad you are going to defend me," I assured him.

The judge came in and we all stood up. He took his seat, adjusted his glasses, looked at the papers in front of him and shouted, "State Versus George Sonian-Smith!"

The public prosecutor got up and addressed the judge. "My Lord! My learned friend Mr. Krishna is moving a bail application on behalf of his client. I have been instructed to oppose it."

"My Lord!" Mr. Krishna stood up and addressed the judge. "I should like to draw the attention of your Lordship to a few pertinent factors with regard to this somewhat unusual case. It is not a case of murder or anything involving violence. The case is one of alleged impersonation and is based purely on the voluntary confession of the accused in public. The release of the accused on bail is not going to interfere with any investigation that the prosecution might like to undertake though I don't see how they are going to do it....."

"On the contrary....." the public prosecutor interrupted him.

"May I be permitted to complete my statement my lord without interruption?" said Krishna.

"Please proceed Mr. Krishna," said Judge Higgins, ignoring the prosecutor.

"Your Lordship! The accused comes from a country where the standards of living are very different from our own. He is used to certain standards of food and hygiene which, if I may say so, are absent in our own country. You are aware of the conditions in Newgate and have had opportunity to comment on them on occasions. Staying there for any length of time is likely to cause permanent damage to the health of my client. As far as his guilt is concerned, he could easily have continued as the British High Commissioner without being questioned or suspected by anyone. But he has made a confession out of the highest motive and for the regard he has for the people of this country. He should be rewarded instead of being punished. I therefore request that he be released on bail or housed in conditions that are tolerable, say in a private house, under house arrest."



“You may now have your say Mr. Prosecutor,” intoned the judge.

“My Lord! this case is one of the most important to have come before this court or any court in Little Britain for many years. It has aroused considerable interest among all sections of the population and is likely to have international repercussions. There is reason to believe that a conspiracy is afoot to deprive Little Britain of its cherished independence and make it a part of the Eastern hemisphere. This is sought to be achieved by undertaking false propaganda against the Western hemisphere with whom this country has longstanding historical and cultural associations. The accused is the prime mover in such propaganda and to let him out at the present time would be to jeopardize, not only our investigation, but the future of our country.”

“If my learned friend is concerned about the future of this country,” shouted Mr. Krishna, “and considers my client responsible for endangering it then, he should have been arrested under totally different sections and not for impersonation which is a minor offence. I challenge the prosecution to prove nay conspiracy with which my client is concerned.”

“This is only a preliminary hearing and I don’t have to adduce all the evidence,” countered the prosecutor.

“I think that is the correct legal position,” ruled the judge. “I would suggest that the prosecution should complete their investigation as soon as possible so that the accused can be set at liberty until the trial. I do not propose to keep him in gaol for ever.” Then he turned to Krishna. “If you have any apprehensions with regard to the health of your client, or if his health should deteriorate, you may make another application in a few days and I shall consider it. Meanwhile, the accused is remanded to custody. The next case.”

I was taken back to my cell in Newgate. The whole thing had taken hardly fifteen minutes.

\*\*\*\*\*

Chuck came to see me to two days later. I had been wondering what had happened to him and if he had left the country and said as much to him.

“I won’t let you down,” he said. “I started the whole thing by making you the British High Commissioner and I have to finish it, see that you are safe and free.”

“Then you are not a follower of PUP.”

“No, we in the Eastern hemisphere have developed on slightly different lines. We still retain a sense of right and wrong, but we have concentrated on Thought Control (TC) and the Pleasure Principle. So, don’t worry; I will see you through.”

“What have you been doing Chuck, these last few days”

He gave me a lot of information on what was happening outside.

“The whole thing hinges round on one and only one factor. That is, do people believe what you said? The immediate reaction to your speech was one of outrage, a feeling of having been fooled. But that initial reaction is slowly giving place to a consideration of what you said. They are

also beginning to realise that in speaking out, you have voluntarily taken a great risk which you need not have done. Therefore, they are more and more inclined to believe you about the Western hemisphere.”

“That is a good sign I suppose,” I remarked.

“Yes and the longer it goes on, the more people will believe you. In order to strengthen this feeling, I have made arrangements for a repeat performance of your speech which I took the precaution of recording. So, though you are in gaol, people will see you and hear your voice again and realise the absolute sincerity with which you spoke. I expect an even bigger audience but more from among the common people to whom going to Great Britain is not such an emotional need.”

“Thank you Chuck for all you are doing. I hope you won’t be in any danger.”

“I come and go so often that I am almost a local. In any case, I am getting a lot of support from our friends who are increasing day by day.”

Then he continued to explain the situation to me. “You see, this has a direct bearing on Sir Winston’s premiership, because people in his own party are questioning how you were accepted as envoy of Great Britain without knowing anything of your background and without knowing what was happening in the Western hemisphere. Therefore, the more people believe you, the less, the chances of his continuing as prime minister. He is therefore trying to rush your trial and see that you are convicted. In fact, there is a rumour that he wants to establish a special court to try you as your case may not come up for hearing for months if the usual course were followed. In that case, they would have to let you out on bail and you will be free to talk. On the other hand, the establishment of a special court needs parliamentary sanction and it is doubtful if he will get it. One thing he doesn’t know is that your speech has been recorded and will be repeated. That is going to provide him with a shock. The broadcast of your speech is fixed for tomorrow and Krishna is going to introduce it. After knowing the audience reaction, I will be able to comment on the future.”

Then he handed me an ARI (Audience Reaction Indicator) meter and a transreceiver. “These will enable you to know what is going on. You can also get in touch with me on the usual wave length,” he said as he bade goodbye.

At the time fixed, I switched on the instruments. Krishna introduced me, “Ladies and gentlemen,” he said. “The speech that George Sonian-Smith delivered at the Royal Geographical society the other day was epoch-making. It has stopped us from dreaming and play-acting and opened our eyes once and for all. Many of us have had a change over of ideas radically about our future. It has brought disappointment to many perhaps, heartaches to some, but it has at the same time brought a sense of honest realism into our thinking. In view of the importance of that speech to our nation and to the future of humanity, we have decided that more people – in fact, all people of Little Britain – should hear and see and feel what some of us have already experienced. So, I present to you, George Sonian-Smith.”

It was most interesting to hear my own voice and to see myself on the miniature screen of the transreceiver. I could almost see it as on outside and judge my own reactions to it. A factor that impressed me was the sincerity of my own voice that came through in spite of the slight hesitation

and nervousness in speaking. If I could feel it, perhaps others would too. And while I spoke with greater confidence after a few minutes, the sincerity was not lost on the audience.

But I was far more concerned with reading the ARI meter for that gave me an idea of what the audience was feeling. So, as the speech and the moving pictures went on, I watched the meter. The feelings of the audience were almost the same as on the first occasion – if any a little greater - the anticipation and the excitement followed by a sense of revulsion and horror. But at the end, when I made my confession about not being the High Commissioner for Great Britain, there was no surprise, no shouting and cursing as at the first time, since it did not come as a surprise, but was already known to them. The ARI meter showed a neutral response.

“There you are, my friends,” said Krishna at the end. “You have seen George Sonian-Smith and heard him speak. Does he seem to you like a clever trickster who deserves to go to gaol? Or does he look like a man dedicated to the service of humanity in general and Little Britain in particular? If you cannot make up your minds, at least think about it.”

And then the shouting started

‘Krishna Sastri Ki Jai!’

‘Krishna Sastri Ki Jai!’

Someone shouted and the others took it up as a chorus. The strange thing was that the people who shouted were not Indians. They all had crosses on their foreheads. It showed how much they respected Krishna and that I had hope of getting released.

\*\*\*\*\*

The next few days were quiet ones. Joan came to see me and gave me encouraging news about public opinion swinging in my favour. My speech was repeated in various parts and to various groups and each time, the reaction was more favourable than the last. In fact, at one of the meetings, they shouted

‘Sir George Ki Jai!’

They also sang ‘For he is a jolly good fellow!’ I was happy about all this but could not escape the fact that I was an accused and in gaol.

Meanwhile, there was a sudden change in the climate; the beautiful, warm and sunny days were suddenly replaced by a cold wind with gathering mists and rain. People started wearing thick woollen clothes. My cell, which had been hot and stuffy so far, had suddenly become cold and damp and miserable. I had developed a cold and fever and was feeling very ill. It frightened a cold and fever and was feeling very ill. It frightened me for my resistance was very poor. I called Chuck on the emergency wave-length and told him about it.

He came immediately and gave me some medicines and also some news.

“Our little affair is moving to a climax,” he said. “The monsoon session of parliament is commencing on Monday and the Prime minister is moving the ‘Special Courts Bill’. He evidently wants to make a big show of your trial as a conspiracy by the Eastern hemisphere government to

take over Little Britain. If he should succeed in getting the bill passed, the trial will be a prolonged affair. But I have a few surprises for good old Winston that he doesn't know about. So, you needn't worry. On the other hand, if he should fail, then, you will soon be a free man. Krishna has arranged a special repeat of your speech for members of parliament on Sunday."

"What are the chances of the bill being passed?"

"If the conservatory vote as a block, it will be approved since they have a clear majority. But I believe many of them are dissatisfied with the prime minister for various reasons and have been waiting for an opportunity to get rid of him. Sir Robert Peel in particular hates Winston. If his group could be persuaded to vote against the bill on the grounds of conscience, then, it will be defeated. Krishna is arranging a private meeting between Peel and Wilson for a possible alternative coalition government. They both want to be prime ministers. If one of them can be persuaded to be the deputy prime minister, then Sir Winston is out."

"It all seems rather sordid," I remarked.

"Would you have the sordidness of democracy or the logical precision of the computer?" chuck asked me. I had no answer.

"Is it possible for me to listen to the debate on Monday?" I asked him.

"Yes, I will be in the visitors' gallery and broadcast the proceedings. You can hear it all."

That was how I was able to hear and see the momentous debate in the House of Commons which was to decide my fate.

Excitement was running high as the members assembled for what came later to be known as 'the great debate'. At the appointed time the sergeant at arms brought the mace and the speaker followed him and took his seat.

The prime minister stood up, bowed to the speaker and addressed the house. "Mr. Speaker sir, honourable members of this house," he paused and adjusted the microphone that did not work. Even at such a serious moment, he could not help his mannerisms. "A grave crisis has overtaken our nation for one hundred and fifty years, we have been able to maintain our independence against overwhelming odds and in the face of being threatened and surrounded on all sides by a relentless foe. But today, the enemy is in our midst, threatening our very existence, subverting our innocent people, undermining our morale and doing everything to weaken our determination. To the enemies in our midst, I say, 'you will be exposed, condemned and destroyed'. To our enemies outside, I proclaim 'We shall fight on the hills, but we shall never surrender'. To our people, to the honest, cross bearing Little Britons, I promise, 'I offer you nothing but blood, sweat, toil and tears, and glory at the end of it all....'

There was sporadic applause from the government benches and hoots and hisses from the opposition. But Sir Winston continued.

"A gentleman – I use the word with reference to his sex and not to his manners – passing himself off as the High Commissioner for Great Britain has hoodwinked us all and has made

wild allegations about our ancient home and historically in an attempt to convert the people of this country. But he stands exposed by his own actions and words.....”

“On a point of order Mr. Speaker,” Sir Clement Wilson, the leader of the opposition, interrupted. “We understand that the gentleman in question has been arrested and charged before the Old Bailey. Under such circumstances, the case is sub-judice. I would remind the prime minister that he should not refer to it in a manner prejudicial to the interests of justice.”

“I am as well aware of the laws and traditions of this country as the right honourable member on the opposition side,” thundered the prime minister. “But there is a special reason why I have chosen to refer to it.”

“Then, please come to the point!” shouted someone from the opposition.

“If the opposition were to exercise a little patience in addition to their other virtues,” the prime minister continued in a rather sarcastic vein. “Perhaps, I will be able to convince them.” But he went on without saying anything for another ten minutes until his own party men were feeling fidgety. In the end he came to the point at issue. “This is not a matter of parliamentary cock-fighting that we all indulge in and enjoy at times. It is a matter of life and death to our nation, to our civilization and to our way of life. The gentleman in question has been transferred from Hampton Court to Newgate. But the poison that he has tried to spread is still being purveyed by his friends, thanks to some gadgetry that has been illegally imported. Because of the liberal laws of this country, the government is unable to take any action in the matter. The only way of preventing further erosion of our life and liberties is to bring him to trial quickly. Knowing the inordinate delay that occurs in our courts, and knowing that this is a matter that should be quickly settled, I propose that a special court should be created to try George Sonian-Smith on a charge of impersonation.”

When he had finished, the leader of the opposition Sir Clement Wilson got up to speak. “It was on the last day of the summer session of parliament that the prime minister announced about the arrival of the accredited representative of His Majesty’s government from Great Britain. We on this side of the House were completely taken aback, but our doubts were brushed aside by the prime minister. We were therefore looking forward to hearing his address as the prime minister had promised us.”

There was derisive laughter from the opposition benches while the supporters of the government sat silent.

But Sir Clement went on, “I am told on reliable authority that it was the prime minister who ‘conferred’ a knighthood on the gentleman on the day of his arrival. It was the prime minister who housed him in Hampton Court at government expense and appointed a minister in waiting. It was also the prime minister who lionized him at every opportunity and ridiculed us when we cast some doubts the bona fides of the gentleman concerned. It was with the prime minister’s blessings that the lecture at the Royal Geographic society was organized. It was with his connivance that the necessary gadgets and equipment were imported,” he paused for the

points to sink in before continuing. "And yet, it is the very same prime minister who today wants to set up a special court to try that individual on the plea of national security."

There was applause and shouting from the opposition benches and after detailing some of my activities in Little Britain which were officially blessed, the leader of the opposition continued,

"What is in doubt today is not the security and safety of this country. We are not concerned with the impersonation of an unimportant individual to gain some minor advantages for himself and what sort of a punishment he is to be given. What is in grave doubt is the ability of the prime minister to handle the affairs of a great nation in a manner that we have a right to expect....."

"It is obvious that this government in general and the prime minister in particular have lost the confidence of the people of this country. They have lost the moral right to govern irrespective of the legal majority they may have in this house."

Many people spoke after the leader of the opposition from both sides of the house and they followed their leaders in supporting or opposing the motion for special court. Strangely enough, none of the Indians spoke. Everyone was eagerly awaiting the speech of Sir Robert Peel as that would really decide the issue. And he was the last speaker before the vote was to be taken.

"It is with a heavy heart that I stand before you today," he began. "The prime minister and I have been colleagues – I may even say, friends – for many years. We have fought many battles together, and won most of them. Mutual trust and confidence in the future of this country was the basis of our relationship – at least until recently. But the arrival of the so-called envoy from Great Britain has turned the prime minister's head in the wrong direction. He did not care to consult the country on such an important issue. He did not care to take into confidence his party or even his trusted colleagues in the cabinet. An accidental visit by a minor scientist was made into a personal triumph of policy for the prime minister. It was he and he alone who was to receive international recognition and not Little Britain. That policy now lies shattered and in ruins and the prime minister has to bear the full responsibility for his actions. We cannot pull the chestnuts out of the fire for him."

As soon as Sir Robert sat down, excitement ran high with everyone trying to talk at once and the speaker had to bang his gavel a number of times to restore order. Then the prime minister stood up to speak, "In view of the feelings expressed in various parts of this house, I wish to withdraw the motion...."

"Resign! Resign!" the cry arose from the opposition benches.

Sir Winston put up his hand for silence, adjusted the mike and continued. "I have the highest respect for the traditions of this house which has been handed down to us from the mother of parliaments. I have every intention of upholding it. I will therefore submit my resignation to the viceroy as soon as this session is concluded."

Pandemonium broke out and even the speaker could not control it. He merely announced, "The house is adjourned," and left his seat. But the members from all parties surrounded Sir Winston, patted him on the back and congratulated him and they all sang;

“For he is a jolly good fellow!”

I could not understand how people who had behaved like sworn enemies until a few minutes ago could be so friendly now.

\*\*\*\*\*

Within three days of the resignation of Sir Winston, a coalition government was formed with Sir Robert Peel as prime minister and Sir Clement Wilson as deputy prime minister. For the first time, an Indian was taken as a minister of the crown. Krishna was appointed as ambassador extra-ordinary with the rank of a minister to negotiate with the Eastern and Western hemisphere governments, such problems as the independence of Little Britain, technical and economic aid and cultural exchange. Chuck – who seemed to be more influential and powerful than his position at the institute of psycho-biology would indicate – undertook to forward the request of the government of Little Britain and also make the necessary arrangements for travel, etc. for Krishna.

One of the first decisions of the new cabinet was to withdraw the charges framed against me and the second, to grant me Little British nationality. The next morning, I walked out of Newgate – a free man from every point of view.

## EPILOGUE

I have come to the end of the story.

One of the things I wanted to do as soon as I came out of gaol was to get a job so that I wouldn't have to live on the generosity of people like Krishna and Chuck, though they were perfectly willing to support me. But there was very little I could do. Chuck suggested that I should go round the various parts of the Eastern hemisphere and give lectures and on life in the West in general and PUP in particular. But the idea was abandoned since it was considered inadvisable for me to travel and publicise myself. Krishna wanted me to be his adviser in his new role. My intimate knowledge of the Western hemisphere would be useful to him in his dealings. While I liked to do this, it certainly did not take up a lot of my time particularly as it was not possible for me to accompany him.

Finally it was decided I should become John's assistant and eventually take over the curatorship of the museum and library. John has no sons and Sheila was not interested to succeed him, particularly after she was engaged to the poet Robert Crook. So I spent my time at the museum, going through the old records, classifying and analyzing them and bringing them into some sort of order. My work at the institute of pre-nuclear history is a good background for such a job. Already John has developed a great respect for my work inspite of a slight reserve in our personal relationship because of Sheila. The modern methods I have introduced with some help from Chuck regarding gadgetry are already yielding results. John and I ware collaborating on a standard history on Little Britain which is progressing satisfactorily.

\*\*\*\*\*

Looking back on it all now, I realise how simple and innocent I was when I first arrived here. I was a mere child in the hands of men like Chuck and Krishna. Even perhaps with men like Sir Winston Baldwin, I was only on adolescent easily moved by flattery and showmanship. I accepted what people told me as gospel truth because I myself was incapable of telling a lie. PUP had made sure of that if nothing else. The only lie – if it was a lie – was my acquiescence at being designated as the British High Commissioner. But gradually I have begun to understand the complicated nature of the relationship between motives, words and actions. Mind is a much deeper and more complex mechanism than PUPPIES gave credit, and even Western science hasn't understood it fully. I wonder if the Thought Control (TC) of the Eastern hemisphere fully comprehends it.

I realise now that from the very beginning, I was manipulated like a doll on an invisible string by Chuck. I was an easily maneuverable doll. He has admitted as much in subsequent conversations and has tried to educate me on what is known as 'Wordly Wisdom'. His excuse for what he did – for example it was Chuck's idea that I should be designated as an envoy from Great Britain, a bait that Sir Winston so readily swallowed – was that he was interested in the future of mankind. Chuck was and is really and truly worried about the population problem. He is not sure if science can come up with an answer in time, to check deterioration. He has also been worried about the suppression of emotion and its total elimination in the Western hemisphere. One way of finding a solution to both these problems was to bring a Westerner to what is called the natural state and see what happens. And I just happened to fit the bill.



My blonde hair as well as my knowledge of pre-nuclear history made me the obvious choice and it was probably Chuck himself who picked me for the job. It is clear he is something more than a mere psycho-biologist at the institute in Madras. His competence in various ways, his power to get things done his responsibilities and authority seem much wider than his official job implies. But when I questioned him about it he merely laughed. Though he probably used me – and I have a suspicion he is still using me in some way – as a subject for experiments, I cannot forget that he has rescued me from PUP and made me into a human being instead of mere number.

In an attempt to understand things better and deeper, I have been learning Thought Control (TC) under Chuck's instruction. I cannot say it has made me happier. Some times I am able to divine what Joan is thinking and it was not always pleasant from the point of view of a husband. May be one day I will have to fight Chuck on this issue, that thoughts either yours or other people's, should never be controlled. But perhaps that day is not yet.

\*\*\*\*\*

About two months after I was released from prison, I was married to Joan at St. Pauls. Krishna took the responsibility for organizing it and he celebrated it on a grand scale. About five hundred invitations were sent both for the church ceremony and for the reception at the Blue Mountain club. Chuck was of course the best man, produced the ring at the right time and claimed the privilege of kissing the bride.

When the announcement of our wedding was first made many eyebrows went up, and there was a lot of gossip because of my past and Joan's background. It was considered 'most unsuitable' particularly by the women of Little Britain.

"Those old cats are all jealous" said Joan. "They left the field clear the Sheila because she was one of themselves but if they had known about me, I would have had a lot of competition."

"But why should there be?" I asked innocently. "I have no status, no money and no prospects."

"But you have one thing that no one else in Little Britain has and that is a pale face and blonde hair. You are a true blue Englishman and in our heart of hearts, we all want to be white."

I was astounded, "Does being white matter?" I cried.

"It doesn't matter to you because you have it," Joan tried to explain. "Most of the people of the British origin are secretly ashamed of the fact that they have Indian ancestors. That is why they never mention the fact, are so particular about their Britishness and that is also why they treasure their genealogies and any knick-knacks they may possess from 'home'."

"I am sure Krishna is not like that."

"May be he is not. But the Indians are just the same. They emphasise their blackness just as we concentrate on our Britishness. They have a saying 'Black is Beautiful'. You see it sometimes on the Freedom Wall."

"Is there no one among the British who isn't conscious of colour?"

“Your friend John isn’t. Though I would not put it past Sheila. And there are one or two Planters like Munroe who have intermarried with the Indian families and have caused a scandal in British society. But most of the so called elite are like that.”

“But these are prejudices of pre-partition age!”

“We do live in pre-partition days you know,” Joan reminded me. “Our friends have not been brain-washed by PUP.”

But whether they approved it or not, they all attended the wedding, made condescending remarks to Joan, addressed me as ‘Sir George’, and got drunk at Krishna’s expense. Even Sheila came to the wedding and presented me with a Spode, one of their precious heirlooms.

“Coming from England you ought to have something to remind you of home,” she said.

The only person who did not attend the wedding was Butler. I think he was true to his philosophy and considered that I had let the side down badly. I was rather sad.

Though I knew of religion only through books and was not at all sure if I believed in it, I found the ceremony strangely moving. When Joan solemnly promised to ‘love, honour and obey’ me till ‘death do us apart’, I realised I had accepted a responsibility for the happiness of another human being.

We now live in a small cottage in Kensington. It has a garden and I try to grow roses. But I am not a very successful gardener. However, as far as mixing with people is concerned Joan and I are very popular among all sections of society. The elite from Mayfair, Joan’s friends from Soho as well have Indians visit us and invite us back also. This getting together of people and free exchange of individual feelings and ideas is still a source of great wonder to me. I can never have enough of it though I am still rather reserved and cannot really let myself go.

When I got married there was a lot of speculation – whispered of course – as to whether we would have any children or not. My speech about the sterility of incubator children had been widely publicised by Chuck and it has made everyone understand the problem not only of the world but about myself. What they did not know however was about SAP. The only person who knew about it – Sheila – was not likely to talk, for obvious reasons. So the book makers had a great time taking bets offering 100 to one that Joan would not have a baby within 5 years. Knowing the propensity of Little Britons for gambling, it became almost a universal past-time. Joan herself indulged in it through one of her friends.

But the book makers are going to be ruined, for Joan is pregnant. When I sent a message to Chuck over the Transreceiver promptly came the reply, “Congratulations my dear fellow! Now my experiment is hundred per cent success.”

