

Jamyang NORBU
From the collection *SHADOW TIBET*

Introduction

Every author is wise and forbearing in his own eyes.
— Cicero

I never imagined I would end up in life — and a bit late at that too — a writer of sorts. For a considerable period in my youth I had regarded myself exclusively as a man of action. I was disabused of this conceit when I joined the Tibetan guerrilla force in Mustang in 1971. Lugging a rifle, few hundred rounds of ammunition, some grenades, a pistol and an unbelievably heavy pack — at altitudes where after every seven or eight steps I absolutely knew I was going to die — soon convinced me that I nowhere resembled the Hemingway character that I had, till then, persuaded myself I really was. In my last couple of years at school “Papa” had been the dominant literary influence on my life and I had taken all that “grace under pressure” stuff very seriously.

I was a voracious but not a very discriminating reader: devouring everything from Alistair McLean to Tolstoy, from Robert Heinlein to Herman Melville — and everything else in between — easily averaging three or four books a week. Inspired by Robert Graves’ *Count Belisarius* and Marguerite Yourcenar’s *Memoirs of Hadrian*, I gravitated towards history, specifically ancient Roman and Byzantine history, starting with Procopius, moving backwards through Josephus, Seutonius, Tacitus, Livy, and then the Greek historians.

I had some skill in telling a story. So in 1970, the convenors of the First Tibetan Youth Conference got me to write them a play for the occasion. My first, *The Chinese Horse*, which I also directed, met with not inconsiderable success in the small refugee world, more for the novelty of the thing (it was the first proper modern Tibetan play) than for its debatable literary merits. The Dalai Lama got a command performance and he seemed to enjoy it. Since then I have written plays whenever I have had the chance to actually stage them — the last being a comedy, *TITANIC II: A Drama of Romance, Immigration and the Freedom Struggle*.

But political writing, which makes up the bulk of my literary output, was something I was drawn to primarily out of frustration, even a rage of sorts that I was unable to otherwise express. In the late sixties and seventies nearly everything one read on Tibet in the world press appeared negative, hostile and outrageously untrue. Not only were individual journalists and writers as Felix Green, Han Suyin, T. D. Allman, Neville Maxwell, Chris Mullin, Seymour and Audrey Topping and others, happily regurgitating Chinese propaganda, but even media institutions themselves: *The New York Times*, *Le Monde*, *The Guardian*, *Newsweek* and especially *Asahi Shimbun* and *The Far Eastern Economic Review*, often gave the appearance of being franchises of the Chinese Propaganda Ministry. Some of them still do.

Of course, one knew they were all lying through their teeth, or at the very least were allowing themselves to be deceived for a variety of self-serving reasons. Reading Han Suyin’s offensively

racist accounts of Tibetan imbecility — that we ploughed by making yaks butt plough handles from behind, till wise and infinitely patient Communist Party cadres explained to us how the yak had to go in the front and the plough at the back — made me tremble with anger. But what could you do? Even the few hippies in Dharamshala lured there by Manali hashish and Tibetan esoterica were more inclined to believe Maoist propaganda than anything a Tibetan refugee had to say about the tragic fate of his nation and people.

I am sure it was the moral indignation I felt, not just at the violence and the injustice Tibetans were enduring, but also the blatant efforts by Western admirers of Chairman Mao to represent the Chinese occupation of Tibet as beneficial, humanitarian and progressive, that eventually forced me to sit at my desk and start putting my thoughts and feelings down on paper. I started off writing letters to the editor, only one of which even got published (in *Time* magazine sometime in 1973, if my memory serves me) and also articles. Frankly, they were painfully bad. I also tried my hand at short story writing and very optimistically submitted a few to *Playboy* (an American acquaintance told me they paid five thousand dollars apiece), *Harper's* and *Reader's Digest*, and received my first rejection slips. Nevertheless when these stories eventually saw publication in *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, *The Hindustan Times* and *The Tibet Journal*, I was immensely proud and gratified.

But my political writing was getting nowhere. In fact, the harder I tried the more my prose seemed to degenerate into ranting and mush. In 1975, just after the death of Mao I wrote an article for the Tibetan Youth Congress magazine *Rangzen*, where in a straight stylistic borrowing from Zola's celebrated polemic, "J'accuse" in *L'Aurore*, I started every passage with the line "Mao is Dead." Though the prose was fairly excruciating, and the style, admittedly laboured, the charge against the Tibetan government of ignoring crucial developments in China and Tibet (even the death of Mao) while focusing on petty issues of exile politics, resettlements camps, religious rituals and the like, had substance — and it infuriated the Cabinet. I got into my first major scrap with the establishment. But that is another story.

Then one day, I think it was in the summer of 1976, I picked up a slim volume of essays by George Orwell. I had earlier read his novels but had only been impressed by *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. I went through the oddly, even provocatively, titled first essay, "The Decline of the English Murder" and then, like the cartoon character who has an electric bulb light up above his head, I got it. It was, more elegantly put, my one genuine road-to-Damascus moment, to date.

So, this was how it was done. You could take a serious topic, even a relatively dull one — in this case a comparison between the hypocrisy (but also probity) of pre-war English society and the casual amorality of wartime Britain, through a review of the famous murders of the period — and write about it in an interesting, amusing, sane and most importantly, convincing manner.

I kept on reading. Another welcome revelation: Orwell's essay "Notes on Nationalism" assured me that I was right on target at feeling anger and contempt for Western apologists of fascism and Stalinism (and by extension Maoism). Orwell explained the conduct of these intellectuals who, abandoning nationalism for real or fashionable reasons, could not genuinely give up the need for a Fatherland or a cause, and looked for it abroad. "Having found it," Orwell went on to further explain, "he can wallow unrestrainedly in exactly those emotions from which he believes that he has emancipated himself." But this "transferred nationalism" Orwell believed allowed the intellectual to

be “more nationalistic, more vulgar, more silly, more malignant, more dishonest than he could ever be on behalf of his native country or any unit of which he had real knowledge.”

In “Politics and the English Language” Orwell revealed to me how the corruption of language was crucial to the making and defending of bad, oppressive politics. That same year I managed to get hold of Orwell’s *Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters*, in four Penguin paperback volumes, which affected me the most deeply among his works. Of course, my own writing didn’t improve overnight, but that didn’t matter. At least, I now knew how it had to be done. I had a road map, and I knew I would eventually get there.

I began to contribute articles (almost exclusively) to the *Tibetan Review*. This was the period when the Tibetan government was sending fact-finding tours to Tibet, and attempting to find some formula: “autonomy,” “associate status,” and so on, to persuade China to enter into negotiations. I commenced on my self-appointed mission of pouring cold water on the hopes of many in the Tibetan leadership, Tibetan public and Western supporters that China was on the road to democracy and would come to some kind of positive understanding and arrangement with the Dalai Lama.

I have to be straight with the reader. I was not prolific; neither did my essays reach a wide Tibetan audience as they were written in English. To make matters worse, I could not resist throwing in the odd Latin tag I had retained from school. But however inadequate or limited in readership, these essays did somehow make an impression on the main players. The Tibetan government became hugely annoyed, and His Holiness once gave me a severe dressing down, and I daresay, I just might possibly have deserved it.

But it was the Chinese who convinced me that I was making a real impact as a writer. Tsultrim Tersey, one of the first exile-Tibetans to visit Tibet, reported in the *Tibetan Review* that at an official meeting in Lhasa he was told that my writings and the activism of the Tibetan Youth Congress were harming Chinese-Tibetan relations. A few years later, I received, via the Tibetan Security Office, a personal message from the Chinese authorities in Lhasa: that my writings were as futile as the wings of a fly beating against a rock, and that as an educated Tibetan I should return to Tibet to join in the socialist reconstruction of Tibet.

I was hugely flattered by this attention, and began to get ideas quite above my station. “Wings of a fly,” indeed. Did the Chinese know that in chaos theory there is a phenomenon called “sensitive dependence on initial conditions;” which in weather, for example, translates into what is only half-jokingly known as the Butterfly Effect — the notion that a butterfly stirring the air today in New York (or Dharamshala) can transform storm systems next month in Beijing ?

But such brave and upbeat moments were, in Dharamshala, few and far between. The Tibetan capital-in-exile is an energy and confidence sapping place. The contradictions in our society, between our professed ideals of democracy and freedom-struggle, and the increasing predilection of exile-leaders, including the Dalai Lama himself, towards a kind of autocratic conservatism (sprinkled over with New Age rhetoric for Western consumption) became more glaring and irreconcilable every passing year. Why bother at all, one felt at times; but whether out of habit, stubbornness or residual hope, one somehow kept plodding on “like strolling east when the sun is

setting. The distant places are already dark but there is still a little light just ahead of you so you take advantage of it to go on a little further.”

This observation is from *Loto Xiangzi* (translated into English as *Rickshaw*) by Lao She, one of China’s leading modern writers. A Manchu, born in Beijing in 1899, he greatly admired Dickens. He was “struggled” to death and drowned in Taiping lake near the South-west corner of the old Manchu city in 1966. *Rickshaw*, his best-known work, is the story of a Beijing rickshaw puller’s tragic life. In a particularly poignant scene the rickshaw puller’s dying wife makes the forlorn observation on life, quoted earlier.

Many writers at the time in China were deeply fatalistic about the future of their nation. Even Lu Xun, probably the greatest of them all, often felt the futility of his craft against the violence and venality of warlords, politicians and revolutionaries. This is how he put it in one of his most depressing pieces: “It seems to me that the spoken and written word are signs of failure. Whoever is truly measuring himself against fate has no time for such things. As to those who are strong and winning, most of the time they keep silent. Consider, for instance, the eagle when it swoops upon a rabbit: it is the rabbit that squeals, not the eagle. Similarly, when a cat catches a mouse, the mouse squeaks, but not the cat.”

Yet, somehow, Lu Xun’s writings have outlived the propaganda and ideology of his old nemesis, the Kuomintang, and will no doubt continue to be read and admired long after the disappearance of the Chinese Communist Party and its hacks and apologists. Good literature not only seems to be able to outlast tyranny, but further seems to have a regenerative effect on devastated political and psychological wastelands left behind by the likes of Hitler, Stalin or Mao.

So, Goethe was wrong and the apostle John right. “In the beginning was the word...”

After the war when Germany had been reduced to rubble its writers built it anew. Gunter Grass, Heinrich Boll, Siegfried Lenz, and others rewrote the destiny of their country. According to Salman Rushdie: “They tore down the language and created it anew. Hack- ing off the diseased parts, putting together, joining, stitching, adding many things, but always humour, lots of humour.”

I half-remember being lent a dog-eared paper-back copy of *The Tin Drum* in the summer of 1974. The adventures of the dwarf drummer Oscar Matzerath — who’s screams broke window panes for miles around in war time Danzig, was so enthralling, so disturbing and so maniacally profound, that I actually ran a slight fever during the course of the reading. Of course, it deeply affected my outlook on literature, though I find myself somewhat inadequate to the task of explaining exactly why. In his appreciation of the message of *The Tin Drum*, Rushdie manages to give voice to the supreme lesson he derived from this great book:

“This is what Grass’s great novel said to me in its drumbeats: Go for broke. Always try and do too much. Dispense with safety nets. Take a deep breath before you begin talking. Aim for the stars. Keep grinning. Be bloody-minded. Argue with the world. And never forget that writing is as close as we get to keeping a hold on the thousand and one things — childhood, certainties, cities, doubts, dreams, instants, phrases, parents, loves — that go on slipping, like sand, through our fingers.”

Re-reading these pieces for this collection I can see I have, in a manner of speaking, somehow managed to keep a weather-ear cocked to the beat of the little drummer. Whatever else I may have failed to accomplish in my writings, I have at least kept on grinning and — as even my most severe detractor will attest — been absolutely bloody minded, argued with everyone, and gone for broke like there was no tomorrow.

About the title of the book — why *Shadow Tibet* ? Well, one of my better pieces in this collection is so named. I also intended it as a tribute of sorts to the great Belgian sinologist and art historian, Simon Leys, whose *Chinese Shadows*, was one of the first and most brilliant exposés of Maoist China that I came across. There is one other reason why this book is called *Shadow Tibet*.

Like alternate worlds in science fiction, two distinct Tibets appear to co-exist these days. One flourishes in the light of celebrity patron- age, museum openings, career and academic opportunities, pop spirituality and New Age fashions. This is the Tibet that has captured the romantic fantasy of the West and which has drawn much of the interest that the Tibet issue receives at the moment. Here, Tibet is far more than the issue of Tibetan freedom and represents the unrealised aspirations of the affluent and the established for spiritual solace, ecological harmony and world peace. Here the problems of Tibet: the nation of the Tibetans, is nowhere as relevant or important as that of Tibet: the repository of a secret wisdom to save a materialistic and self-destructive West.

The other Tibet exists in the shadow of a cruel and relentless Darwinian reality. Under Chinese Communist occupation it is a world of paid informers, secret police, prison walls, torture, executions, unemployment, racism and overwhelming cultural loss; revealing itself in the lives of individual Tibetans (like sores on plague victims) in alcoholism, sexual degradation, broken families, violence and growing hopelessness. In the exile community this manifests itself, especially in the leadership, in intellectual confusion, loss of political direction, hypocrisy, cynicism and bitter religious and political strife.

Yet, this is also a world, unacknowledged perhaps, of selfless service, loyalty, love of country — and when called upon — of heroism and sacrifice. This is the world I have attempted to write about. This is *Shadow Tibet*.

JN
Nalanda Cottage
Dharamshala

The Mandala of Sherlock Holmes

The Adventures of the Great Detective
in Tibet

Jamyang Norbu

Based on the reminiscences of

Hurree Chunder Mookerjee

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I travelled for two years in Tibet, therefore, and amused myself by visiting Lhassa and spending some days with the head Lama. You may have read of the remarkable explorations of a Norwegian named Sigerson, but I am sure that it never occurred to you that you were receiving news of your friend.

Sherlock Holmes
The Empty House

Is not all life pathetic and futile? ... We reach. We grasp. And what is left in our hands at the end? A shadow. Or worse than a shadow — misery.

Sherlock Holmes
The Retired Colourman

The Mandala (Tib.: *dkyil-'khor*) is a sacred circle surrounded by light rays or the place purified of all transitory or dualist ideas. It is experienced as the infinitely wide and pure sphere of consciousness in which deities spontaneously manifest themselves ... Mandalas have to be seen as inward pictures of a whole (integral) world; they are creative primal symbols of cosmic evolution and involution, emerging and passing in accordance with the same laws. From this perspective, it is but a short step to conceiving of the Mandala as a creative principle in relation to the external world, the macrocosmos — thus making it the centre of all existence.

Detlef Ingo Lauf
Tibetan Sacred Art

From time to time, God causes men to be born — and thou art one of them — who have a lust to go abroad at the risk of their lives and discover news — today of far-off things, tomorrow of some hidden mountain, and the next day of some near-by men who have done a foolishness against the State. These souls are very

few; and of these few, no more than ten are of the best. Among these ten I count the Babu.

Rudyard Kipling
Kim

When everyone is dead the Great Game is finished. Not before. Listen to me till the end.

Rudyard Kipling
Kim

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Preface

Too many of Dr John Watson's unpublished manuscripts (usually discovered in 'a travel-worn and battered tin dispatch box' somewhere in the vaults of the bank of Cox & Company, at Charing Cross) have come to light in recent years, for a long-suffering reading public not to greet the discovery of yet another Sherlock Holmes story with suspicion, if not outright incredulity. I must, therefore, beg the reader's indulgence and request him to defer judgement till he has gone through this brief explanation of how, mainly due to the peculiar circumstance of my birth, I came into the possession of this strange but true account of the two most important but unrecorded years of Sherlock Holmes's life.

I was born in the city of Lhasa, the capital of Tibet, in 1944, the year of the Wood-Monkey, into a well-to-do merchant family. My father was an astute man, and having travelled far and wide — to Mongolia, Turkestan, Nepal and China — on business matters, was more aware than most other Tibetans of the fragility of our happy yet backward country. Realising the advantages of

a modern education, he had me admitted to a Jesuit school at the hill station of Darjeeling in British India.

My life at St Joseph's College was, at first, a lonely one, but on learning the English language I soon made many friends, and best of all, discovered books. Like generations of other schoolboys I read the works of G. A. Henty, John Buchan, Rider-Haggard and W. E. Johns, and thoroughly enjoyed them. Yet nothing could quite equal the tremendous thrill of reading Kipling or Conan Doyle — especially the latter's Sherlock Holmes's adventures. For a boy from Tibet there were details in those stories that did at first cause some bewilderment on occasions. I went around for some time thinking that a 'gasogene' was a kind of primus stove and that a 'Penang lawyer' was, well, a lawyer from Penang — but these were trifling obstacles and never really got in the way of my fundamental appreciation of the stories.

Of all the Sherlock Holmes stories the one that fascinated me most was the adventure of *The Empty House*. In this remarkable tale Sherlock Holmes reveals to Dr Watson that for two years, while the world thought that the great detective had perished in the Reichenbach Falls, he had actually been travelling in my country, Tibet! Holmes is vexingly terse, and two sentences are all we have had till now of his historic journey:

I travelled for two years in Tibet, therefore, and amused myself by visiting Lhasa, and spending some days with the head Lama. You may have read of the remarkable exploration of a Norwegian named Sigerson, but I am sure that it never occurred to you that you were receiving news of your friend.

When I returned to Lhasa on my three-month winter vacation, I did try and enquire about the Norwegian explorer who had entered our country fifty years ago. A maternal granduncle thought

he remembered seeing such a foreigner at Shigatse, but was confusing him with Sven Hedin, the famous Swedish geographer and explorer. Anyway the grown-ups had far more serious problems to consider than a schoolboy's enquiries about a European traveller from yesteryear.

At the time, our country was occupied by Communist troops. They had invaded Tibet in 1950, and after defeating the small Tibetan army, had marched into Lhasa. Initially the Chinese had not been openly repressive and had only gradually implemented their brutal and extreme programmes to eradicate traditional society. The warlike Khampa and Amdowa tribesmen of Eastern Tibet staged violent uprisings that quickly spread throughout the country. The Chinese occupation army retaliated with savage reprisals in which tens of thousands of people were massacred, and many more thousands imprisoned or forced to flee their homes.

In March 1959, the people of Lhasa, fearing for the life of their ruler, the young Dalai Lama, rose up against the Chinese. Fierce fighting broke out in the city but superior Chinese forces overwhelmed the Tibetans, inflicting heavy casualties and damaging many buildings. I was in my final year at school in Darjeeling when the great revolt broke out in Lhasa. The news made me sick with worry about the fate of my parents and relatives. There was little information from Lhasa, and what little there was was vague and none too reassuring. But an anxious month later, All India Radio broadcast the happy news that the Dalai Lama and his entourage, along with many other refugees, had managed to escape from war-torn Tibet and arrived safely at the Indian border. Two days later I received a letter with a Gangtok postmark. It was from my father. He and the other members of my family were safe at the capital of the small Himalayan kingdom of Sikkim.

From the beginning my father had not been taken in by Chinese assurances and display of goodwill, and had quietly gone about making preparations to escape. He managed to secretly

transfer most of his assets to Darjeeling and Sikkim, so that we were now in a very fortunate situation compared to most other Tibetan refugees, who were virtually paupers.

After graduating I decided to offer my services to help my unfortunate countrymen. I travelled to the small hill station of Dharamsala where the Dalai Lama had set up his government-in-exile, and was soon working at the task of educating refugee children. The director of our office was an old scholar who had previously been the head of the Tibetan Government Archives in Lhasa, and a historian of note. He had a wide knowledge of everything concerning Tibet and loved nothing better than to share it. He would hold forth late into the night in a ramshackle little teashop before a rapt audience of young Tibetans like myself, and imbue in us the knowledge and wonder of our beautiful country.

One day I asked him if he had ever heard of a Norwegian traveller named Sigerson having entered Lhasa. At first he also thought that I was asking about Sven Hedin, quite an understandable error, as Tibetan geographical accounts, rather inaccurate and fabulous when dealing with far away land, were inclined to treat the Scandinavian and Baltic nations as homogeneous feudal dependencies of the Czar of Russia. But on explaining that the Norwegian had travelled to Tibet in 1892 and not 1903 as the Swede had done, I managed to ring a bell somewhere in the old man's labyrinthine memory.

He did remember coming across a reference to a European in government records for the Water-Dragon Year (1892). He remarked that it had happened when he was collating state documents in the central archives in Lhasa for the preparation of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama's official biography. He had noticed a brief memo regarding the issuing of road pass for two foreigners. He was sure that one of the foreigners referred to was a European though he could not recollect his name. The other person mentioned was an Indian. He remembered that very well, for in

later years the Indian had come under strong suspicion of being a British spy. His name was 'Hari Chanda'.

I was staggered by the significance of this revelation for I too had heard, or rather read, of Hurree Chunder Mookerjee (to give the full name and its more anglicised spelling) in Rudyard Kipling's novel *Kim*. Few people outside India are aware that Kipling actually based his fictional Bengali spy, the fat, ingratiating, loquacious, but ever resourceful Hurree Babu, on a real person — a great Bengali scholar, who had on occasion spied for the British, but who is now more remembered for his contributions to the field of Tibetology. He lived most of his adult life in Darjeeling and was somewhat of a celebrity in that small hill town, what with his C.I.E., F.R.S. and the great respect that the leading British notables at that time had for him. He died in 1928 at his home, Lhasa Villa.

The next time I went to Darjeeling to visit my family who were settled there, I took a walk on the Hill Cart Road to Lhasa Villa. It was occupied by a retired tea planter, Siddarth Mukherjee (or 'Sid' as he insisted I call him), a great-grandson of our famous scholar-spy. He listened patiently to the rather long and involved story I had to tell him. Hurree Chunder Mookerjee had published a book on his trip to Tibet, *Journey to Lhasa through Western Tibet*, but had made no mention in it of any European accompanying him. He had probably done so on the insistence of Sherlock Holmes who was, at that time, trying to keep the knowledge of his existence a secret from the world. I hoped that if I could gain access to Hurree's notes, letters, diaries, and other private papers I might find some reference to Sherlock Holmes, or at least to a Norwegian explorer.¹ Sid was thrilled to learn that

1. I thought I had finally managed to run our elusive Norwegian to earth when I came across this title at the Oxford Book Store, Darjeeling: *A Norwegian Traveller in Tibet*, Per Kraerne, (Bibliotheca Himalayica series 1 Vol 13), Manjusri, New Delhi, 1973. Unfortunately this was the account of an actual Norwegian, and a missionary at that.

his great-grandfather could possibly have known the world's greatest detective, and was more than willing to help me in my quest. Most of Hurree's papers had been stored in some large tin trunks up in the attic of Lhasa Villa after his death. It took me about a week to go through all the musty old documents, but aside from a bad cold, had nothing to show for it — not a single reference to anyone who could remotely have been Sherlock Holmes. My disappointment could not but have shown. Sid was very kind and tried to cheer me up by promising to get in touch with me if he would come across anything that could contribute to my research.

So the years went by. My work took up all my time and energy and I had almost forgotten my abortive search when, just five months ago, I received a telegram from Darjeeling. It was short, but exultant:

Eureka. Sid

I packed my toothbrush.

Sid had greyed a bit, and Lhasa Villa hadn't weathered too well either. I noticed that a part of the back wall of the bungalow had collapsed. Sid was tremendously excited. He sat me down hurriedly, stuck a large whisky pani in my hand and let me have it.

Just a week before, Darjeeling had experienced a fairly severe earthquake — geologically speaking, the Himalayas being a rather new range, and still growing. By itself the quake was not strong enough to do any serious damage, but an unusually long monsoon had softened the mountain sides and undermined a number of houses. Lhasa Villa had not been severely damaged, only a part of the back wall had collapsed. When checking the damage Sid had discovered a rusty tin dispatch box embedded in a section of the broken wall.

Extricating it from the debris, he found that it contained a flat package carefully wrapped in wax paper and neatly tied with stout twine. He had opened the package to find a manuscript of about two hundred-odd pages in his great-grandfather's unmistakably ornate running script, and had excitedly commenced to read it, not pausing till he had finished the story, sometime in the early hours of the morning. And it was all there. Hurree had met Sherlock Holmes. He *had* travelled with him to Tibet — besides getting himself into some unbelievably strange and dangerous situations.

So the Babu had not been able to resist the urge to commit a true account of his experiences to paper, but had taken the precaution of sealing it within the back wall of his house; maybe with the hope that it would come to light in a distant future when 'The Great Game' would be over, and when people would read of his adventure in company of the world's greatest detective, with only wonder and admiration.

Sid took out the manuscript from a chest of drawers and put it in my trembling hands.

Knowing that I was a writer of sorts, Sid insisted that I handle the editing and the publication of the manuscript. But aside from providing some explanatory footnotes, I have had to do very little. The Babu was an experienced and competent writer, with a vigorous and original style that would have suffered under too heavy an editorial hand.

Sid and I are going halves on the proceeds of the book, though both of us have agreed that the original manuscript and the copy of the Tibetan road pass that was with it, should, because of its historical importance, be entrusted to some kind of institution of learning where scholars and others could have free access to it.

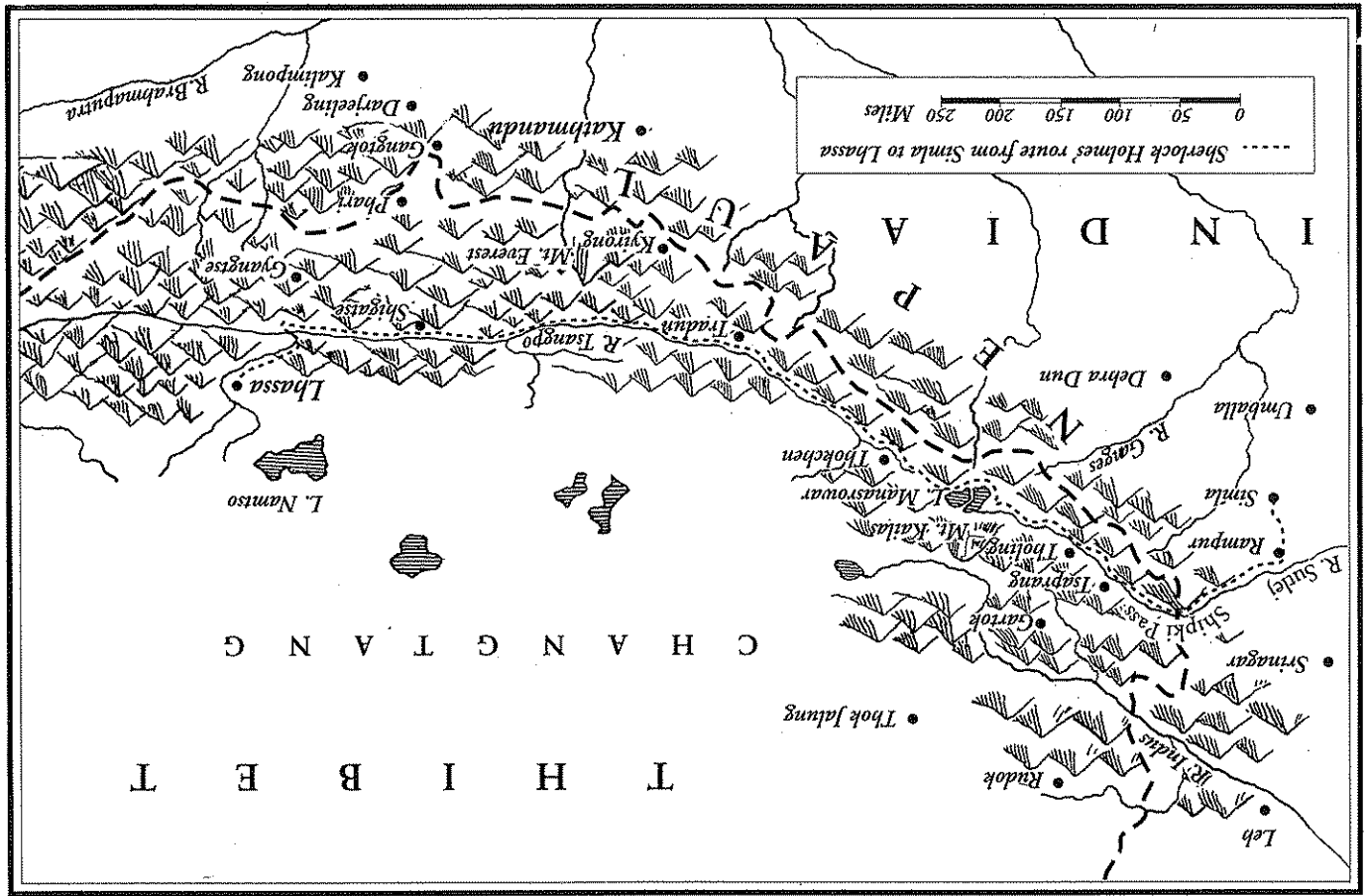
Tibet may lie crushed beneath the dead weight of Chinese tyranny, but the truth about Tibet cannot be so easily buried; and

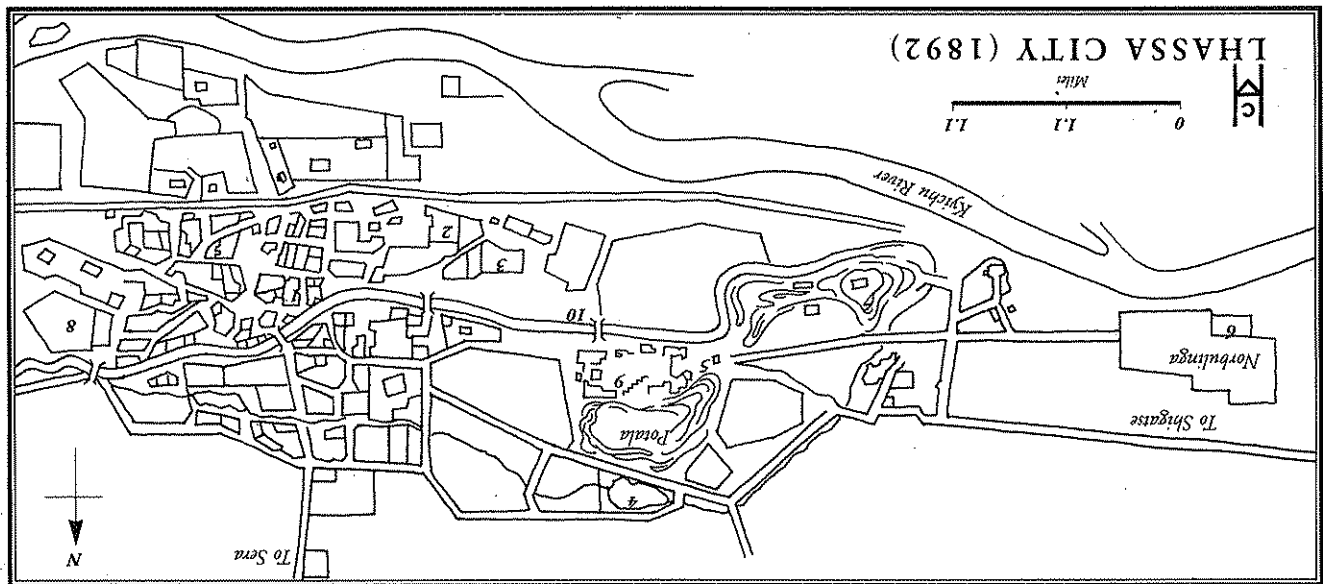
Preface

even such a strange fragment of history as this, may contribute to nailing at least a few lies of the tyrants.

October 1988

Jamyang Norbu
Nalanda Cottage
Dharamshala





Lhasa City (1892)

1. The Central Cathedral
2. The Chinese Legation
3. The Kashgar Caravanserai
4. The Serpent Lake and Temple
5. The Gateway to Lhasa (Stupa)
6. The Guards' Barracks
7. The Iron Hill Medical College
8. The College of Occult Sciences
9. The Shol Village
10. The Turquoise Bridge

Introduction

'The Great Game...' Good Heavens! Could anyone think of a more infelicitous and beastly awful expression to describe the vital diplomatic activities of the Ethnological Survey — that important but little-known department of the Government of India, which in my very humble capacity, I have had the honour to serve for the past thirty-five years. This execrable appellation was the creation of one Mr Rudyard Kipling, late of the Allahabad *Pioneer*, who with deplorable journalistic flippancy, managed, in one fell stroke, to debase the very important activities of our Department to the level of one of those cricket matches so eloquently described in the poems of Sir Henry Newbolt.

I am not fully cognisant of how it all came about, but very unfortunately Mr Kipling managed to acquire details of the affair concerning 'The Pedigree of the White Stallion,'¹ which he coolly published in the Sunday edition of the *Pioneer*, 15th June 1891, entitled, 'The Great Game: The Lion's Reply to the Bear's

1. Kipling expanded and incorporated this account in his novel *Kim*, published in 1901.

Intrigues. Essentially it concerned five confederated kings on the North-West frontier of India (who had no business to confederate) commencing earnest but secret negotiations with a firm of gun-makers in Belgium, a Hindu banker in Peshawar, an important semi-independent Mohammedan ruler to the south, and — the greatest cheek of all — a Northern power whose interest could, in no way, be said to coincide with that of the Empire's.

The Department had not been wholly unexpectant of such a development, and I had been assigned north for more than a year to keep a sharp eye on the doings of our five rajah sahibs. It is not necessary for me to elucidate the *modus operandi* of the following; suffice it to say that by establishing amicable relations with an underpaid secretary and transferring a large amount of rupees, I managed to arrange the betrayal of some vital *mursala*, 'King's letters', or state correspondence which let all the cats out of the bag, so to speak. I had forwarded the revelations via E.23, C.25, and eventually K.21 to Colonel Creighton, the head of our Department.

The government acted with unusual promptitude and despatch. An army of eight thousand men besides guns were sent north, and it fell upon the five kings ere they were ready. But the war was not pushed. The troops were recalled because the government believed the five kings were cowed; and it is not cheap to feed men on the high passes. It was not the best of solutions; in fact, I thought it the most reprehensible laxity on the part of the government to allow the five kings — who were-as treacherous as scorpion-suckled cobras — to even live. But officially I am debarred from criticising any action of my superiors, and I am only stating this unofficially merely to elucidate the political situation.

When that issue of the *Pioneer* came out with Mr Kipling's indiscreet (to say the least) story, it caused a tremendous hullabaloo

in the Department. The Colonel Sahib realised that the inspiration for Mr Kipling's tale had come from within, *ab intra*, so to speak, and was beside himself with rage at this most base act of treason. Normally a most unemotional and reserved man, he stormed through the corridor of the departmental bungalow at Umballa with the 'righteous fury of a Juvenal.' Grim interviews were conducted in his office with all and sundry connected with the case, even I having to spend an uncomfortable hour under the Colonel's piercing eyes. Of course, I managed to acquit myself well enough, though to be scrupulously correct I must admit to shedding a little perspiration before the interview was finally terminated, *sine die*, and I was allowed to leave the room.

The resultant conclusion of the investigation revealed a less critical flaw in the integrity of our Department than we had initially feared. Two babus from the archives were sacked, posthaste, and a young English captain with literary ambitions (he had contributed poetry, among other things, to the *Pioneer*) was transferred to an army transport division in Mewar, to breed camels and bullocks for the rest of his career. Mr Kipling was informed, through the editor of the *Pioneer*, that his conduct in this affair had not been entirely gentlemanly, but that the government would take no action if Mr Kipling would refrain from the furtherance of his journalistic career in India, and return home to England — which he did.

To our relief all of us fieldmen were cleared, though C.25 felt that his izzat had been impugned by the Colonel's suspicions. But a Pathan is always touchy about matters of honour and horseflesh.

Then one day, the thin black body of E.23 was found in a dark gully behind the gilt umbrellas of the Chatter Munzil in Lucknow. A dozen knife wounds, besides other fearful mutilations, had precipitated the untimely demise of the poor chap.

I am a good enough Herbert Spencerian,² I trust, to meet a little thing like death, which is all in my fate, you know. But the long arms of the five kings beyond the passes, and also the nabob of that certain Mohammedan principality to the south, beyond the Queen's laws, (who had all been embarrassingly compromised in the aforementioned affair of 'The Pedigree of the White Stallion') did not only stop at death. Barbaric tortures, painful even to contemplate, generally preceded the vile act of murder.

Propelled by such uncomfortable ruminations, I hastened to petition the Colonel to grant indefinite leave, on full pay, to those of us who had been compromised by Mr Kipling's indiscretions, so that we could become fully incognito till matters had quietened down somewhat. The Colonel agreed to my proposal except on one point where he made a frugal amendment. Accordingly, K.21 was sent with his Lama to retire temporarily to a monastery on the Thibetan frontier, and C.25 to Peshawar to be under the protection of his blood-kin. And I, on halfpay, departed jolly quick from my normal stamping grounds in the hills, to the great port city of Bombay, to bury myself inconspicuously in that teeming multitude of Gujuratis, Mahharatis, Sikhs, Bengalis, Goanese, British, Chinese, Jews, Persians, Armenians, Gulf Arabs and many others that composed the multifarious population of the 'Gateway of India'.

Yet, in spite of everything, I must be grateful to Mr Kipling; for it was my secret exile to Bombay that directly resulted in my providential meeting with a certain English gentleman, in whose

2. Herbert Spencer, 1820-1903. Once immensely influential and internationally popular Victorian thinker, formulator of the 'Synthetic Philosophy' that sought to apply scientific, especially evolutionary theory not only to biology but to psychology, sociology, anthropology, education and politics.

company I embarked on the greatest adventure of my life, resulting (due to the subsequent publication of select ethnological aspects of the journey) in the fulfilment of my life-long dream to become a Fellow of the Royal Society in London.

But, far more than this great honour, I shall always cherish the true friendship and affection bestowed upon me by this gentleman, a man whom I shall always regard as the best and wisest I have ever known.³

3. By a happy coincidence Watson ends his account of Holmes's death at Reichenbach (*The Final Problem*), with a similar sentence. Probably Watson and Mookerjee were both unconsciously recalling the lines of another, more ancient, biographer on the death of his celebrated friend and mentor. Plato in the *Phaedo* wrote: 'Such was the end, Echocrates, of my friend, concerning whom I can truly say that of all the men whom I have ever known, he was the wisest and justest and the best.'

INDIA

The Mysterious Norwegian

The post-monsoon sky over the Arabian sea is hazeless and clear blue as a piece of Persian turquoise. The air, washed by the recent rains, is so fresh and clear that astride Malabar Point at Bombay one fancies that one can make out the coast line of Arabia, and even faintly smell in the breeze some of those '... Sabeian odours from the spicy shore of Araby the blest.'

Of course it is all pure romantic fancy on my part; the whole bally thing is too far away to smell or see, but from my vantage point I managed to spot what I had come all this way to look for.

Through a scattering of dhows with their graceful lantine sails arching in the wind, the S.S. *Kohinoor* of the Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company cleaved the blue waters, the twin black funnels of the liner trailing a wispy ribbon of smoke. The ship was late, it should have arrived this morning. Through

1. Milton, *Paradise Lost*.

a pair of sub-efficient binoculars I had purchased at Bhindi Bazaar, I could just make out the name on the port bow. I quickly walked over to the road to a waiting ticca-ghari. Hauling myself up onto the seat, I signalled to the coachman to proceed.

'Chalo!'

'Where, Babuji?'

'The harbour, jaldi!'

He lashed the thin pony with a length of springy bamboo and the carriage trundled down Ridge Road. I popped a piece of betel-nut into my mouth and chewed it contemptatively while I once again reviewed my plan of action.

Four months had passed since I had arrived at Bombay. I had peacefully passed the time making ethnological notes on the cult of the local goddess Mumba from whom the city had taken its name. But the Colonel must have felt that whatever potential dangers there had been had receded by now (and that I had received enough salubrious divertissement on departmental half-pay), for just a week ago our neighbourhood postman, a bony old Tamil from Tuticorin, delivered a taar (which is the native term for a telegram) to my temporary quarters behind the Zakariya mosque.

The missive, addressed to 'Hakim Mohendro Lall Dutt' — one of my more usual aliases — was couched in the characteristic innocent circumlocutions prescribed by the Department for ensuring the safety of our correspondence, *sub rosa*. The gist of the message was that a Northern traveller named Sigerson, probably an agent of an unfriendly Northern Power, was arriving at Bombay on the S.S. *Kohinoor*; that I was to ingratiate myself to him, possibly as a guide or some such, and learn the reason for his coming to India. In preparation for this, I affiliated myself, in purely supernumerary capacity, to a shipping agency belonging to an old Parsee acquaintance of mine.

'Hai, rukho,' shouted the driver to his nag, pulling up the ticca-ghari before the gates of Ballard Pier. I got off, and despite the

rascally Automedon's demand for two anna, paid him the correct fare of one anna, and hurried over to the pier. The harbour was crowded with merchant vessels and British warships, but I spotted the *Kohinoor* being slowly towed in by some smoky little tug boats.

The dark and dusty office of the harbour master was nearly empty except for a Gujurati clerk, sitting back in idle reverie at his desk, picking paan-stained teeth. A bounteous baksheesh of a rupee procured for me a quick peek at the passenger manifest of the *Kohinoor*. The Norwegian had Cabin 33, in first class.

When I got out of the office, docking procedures were already commencing and coolies and dockhands were rushing about the vast grey stretch of the pier hauling away on great thick ropes. The white liner towered above everyone and everything like a giant iceberg. Once the gangplanks had gone up, I in my capacity as shipping agent, got aboard the ship, and elbowing my way through the surge of harbour officials, coolies, lascars and what-not wended my way through crowded corridors, dining rooms, a card room, a billiard room and a stately ball-room, to the upper port-side deck and Cabin 33.

The Norwegian was in front of his cabin door, leaning over the railing and sucking on a pipe meditatively as he gazed down at the human maelstrom on the pier below. His person and appearance were such as to strike the attention of the most casual observer. In height he was well over six feet and excessively lean. When I addressed him, he straightened up from the railing and seemed to grow taller still.

'Mr Sigerson, Sir?'

'Yes?'

He turned to me. His thin hawk-like nose gave his expression an air of alertness and decision, and his chin, too, had the prominence which marks the man of determination. He definitely did not seem like someone to trifle with. I prepared myself to be humble and ingratiating.

'I am Satyanarayan Satai, Failed Entrance, Allahabad University,' I said, making a low formal bow and salaam. 'It is my immense privilege and esteemed honour, as representative of Messrs Alibhoy Valljee and Sons, shipping agency, to welcome Your Honour to the shores of Indian Empire, and do supervision of all conveniences and comforts during visitations and excursions in the great metropolis of Bombay.' (It is always an advantage for a babu to try and live up to a sahib's preconception of the semi-educated native.)

'Thank you.' He turned and looked at me with a pair of remarkable eyes that were uncomfortably sharp and piercing. 'You have been in Afghanistan, I perceive.'

Of course I was not expecting this, but I trust I managed to recover my somewhat shaken wits fast enough to make an adequate, if not totally convincing, answer.

'Wha...! Oh no, no sahib, I am most humble Hindu from Oudh, presently in remunerative and gainful employment in demi-official position of agent, *pro tem*, to respectable shipping firm. Afghanistan? Ha! Ha! Why sahib, land is wretched cold, devoid of essential facilities and civilised amenities, and natives all murdering savages — Mussalmans of worst sort — beyond redemption and majesty of British law. Why for I go to Afghanistan?'

'Why indeed?' said he, with a low chuckle that sounded rather sinister. 'But to return to the matter at hand, I am afraid that it is quite possible for me to do without your services, useful and necessary though I am sure they may be. I have little in the way of luggage and can manage on my own. Thank you.'

In front of his cabin door was a Gladstone bag and a narrow oval case, much the worse for wear. It looked like a case for a violin, like the kind that Da Silva, the young Goanese musician who lived next door to me, used to carry his instrument in when he went off in the evenings to play dinner music at Government House.

This was, of course, suspicious in itself. No self-respecting sahib who travelled to India was without at least three steamer trunks, not to mention other sundry items of baggage like hat boxes, gun cases, bedding-rolls and a despatch box. Also, no English sahib, at least if he was pukka, played a violin. Music was the preserve of Frenchmen, Eurasians, and missionaries (though in the latter-most case the harmonium was a more favoured instrument).

And no sahib carried his own luggage. But that was just what he proceeded to do. With the Gladstone in his left hand, his violin case in his right, and his pipe in his mouth, he walked across the deck and down the gangplank, unperturbed by the bustling pier-side crowd and the demands of the milling coolies to carry his luggage.

Of course this temporary setback to my plans was purely a matter of bad luck, or kismet as we would say in the vernacular. But I could not help but feel a slight unease at the perspicacity of the Norwegian. How in the name of all the gods of Hindustan had he known that I had been to Afghanistan? I will not deny that I was up in that benighted country not so very long ago. The first time, in my guise as hakim, or native doctor, I was discreetly pursuing some enquiries into possible nefarious connections between the five confederated kings and the Amir of Afghanistan, which unfortunately did not meet with any success. Much later, after the chastisement of the aforementioned kings, I was once again up in the snow-swept passes beyond the Khyber, this time posing as a payroll clerk to the coolies constructing a new British road; and one night, during an exploratory excursion in a horrible snowstorm, I was deliberately deserted by my Afridi guide and left to die. Whereof my feet froze and a toe dropped off ... but that is neither here nor there.

There was, *sine dubio*, something more to our Norwegian friend than met the eye. My curiosity was aroused. We Bengalis are — I say this in all humility — unlike most other apathetic natives, a race with burning thirst for knowledge. In short, we are inquisitive.

I followed the Norwegian off the ship through the bustling crowd at the pier side. His height made him quite conspicuous and I could easily spot his angular head towering well above the bobbing sea of humanity. I was careful not to reveal myself to him and took full advantage of the cover provided by the random piles of luggage and freight that covered the pier.

Peering over a pile of crate-boxes, I saw him enter the customs shed, which was a long kacha, or temporary structure covered with a PWD type corrugated tin roof. I quickly walked to the shed and, sidling up to the open door, looked inside. The Norwegian had put his Gladstone and violin case on one of the long zinc-covered counters, and was drumming his thin elongated fingers impatiently on the top as he waited. Evening shadows were already long, and in the gloom of the dark building I did not immediately notice the young police officer in khaki drill who approached the Norwegian. He was a tallish, sallowish, DSP, or District Superintendent of Police — Sam Browne, helmet, polished spurs and all — strutting, and twirling his dark moustache.

I gave a little start. It was Strickland! By Jove. Events were definitely taking unexpected turns this evening. A word of explanation to the reader: Captain E. Strickland Esq., though nominally a solid and respected officer of the Indian Police was, in another sphere of his life, one of those shadowy players of the 'Game' (to use Mr Kipling's foul epithet) — and one of the best.²

2. Kipling's indiscretions regarding the Indian Secret Service do not seem to have been confined to just the affair concerning 'The Pedigree of the White Stallion'. Kipling readers will know that Strickland and his undercover activities are mentioned not only in *Kim* but in a number of short stories as well. Strickland is depicted as a proficient investigator, though certainly less cerebral than Holmes. He is a master of disguise and possesses a wide knowledge of native Indian customs and folklore, especially the imore arcane and shady kind.

They told me that he was at Bikaner, that mysterious city in the Great Indian Desert (where the wells are four hundred feet deep and lined throughout with camel-bone) but I might have known. He was like the crocodile — always at the other ford.

He shook hands with the Norwegian and started to talk. It was impossible for me to overhear what they were saying because of the overpowering clamour of the pier. After a moment, Strickland spoke a few words to the half-caste customs officer and, picking up the Gladstone bag, proceeded with the Norwegian to leave the shed. I followed, a safe distance behind. Outside the gates Strickland hailed a ticca-ghari. Both of them got on the carriage, which then rattled out of the port area down Frere Road.

A fortunate instinct made me continue to keep behind the large Corinthian pillars of the main harbour buildings, for just then a small ferret-like man in dirty white tropical 'ducks' and an oversized topee emerged surreptitiously out of the darkness of the adjacent godowns and into the glare of the sizzling gas lamps that lit up the cab stand and the entrance of the Great harbour. His furtive manner betrayed the fact that he was secretly following either Strickland or the Norwegian, and as if in confirmation of my speculation he quickly made for one of the carriages in the line. Giving some inaudible instructions to the driver, he pointed distinctly in the direction of the fast disappearing carriage that his quarries had just taken. The driver whipped his beast and they rattled off in pursuit.

This was getting to be quite a lively evening, full of 'alarums and excursions' as the Bard would put it. I, in my turn, hailed a carriage and followed in consecutive pursuit, posthaste.

The evening life of the city had begun and the municipal lamp-lighters were nearly finishing their rounds. Dark sweating coolies hauling overloaded barrows mingled with white-robed clerks and subordinates from the government offices returning to their homes. Sweetmeat vendors and low-caste kunjris (vegetable and fruit sellers) plied their noisy trade on the pavements, their

stalls lit by smoky flares, the acrid fumes of which mingled with the pot-pourri of other odours: spices, jasmine, marigold, sandalwood and the ever-present dust. Yelling, near-naked urchins, darted about the street, clinging to the passing carriages and sometimes jumping on and off the clanging trams to the fury of the harried conductors.

At Horniman Circle a large wedding procession brought traffic to near standstill. Coolies carrying lanterns and flares lit up this colourful chaotic scene while a discordant native band, playing kettle-drums and shawms, provided a deafening but lively musical accompaniment to a group of wild dancers that preceded the groom. This splendid personage, dressed in the martial attire of a Rajput prince sat nervously astride an ancient charger. A veil of marigolds concealed his visage as he rode to his bride's home, clinging precariously to the pommel of his saddle.

I spotted the two stationary carriages about twenty feet ahead of me. The ferret-like man affected great interest in the procession though he often darted surreptitious glances at the other carriage to check on its progress in the congested traffic. He had a thin pinched face with an equally pinched sharp nose, and sported, quite unsuitable for his starved physiognomy, a set of rather flamboyant whiskers which I think are called 'mutton chops', and which were *en vogue* about a decade ago. He was a white man, of sorts, though definitely not a gentleman.

Finally, thanks to the firm supervision and energetic whistle blowing of a 'Bombay Buttercup' — the name by which traffic policemen in this city are known because of their distinctive circular yellow caps — the marriage procession turned towards Churchgate Station and traffic was permitted to proceed. A few minutes later the first carriage carrying Strickland and the Norwegian turned left towards Apollo Bunder and then into a side-street and up the driveway of the Taj Mahal Hotel. This magnificent structure, with its five arcaded and ornate balconied

stories topped by a large central dome (with lesser ones at the corners), gives an appearance more of a maharajah's palace than a mere hostelry.

Ferret-face's ticca-ghari was nowhere to be seen. I looked carefully all around but it had disappeared. I paid off my driver outside the gates and walked up the driveway.

Despite the suspicious glare of the giant Sikh commissioner, I entered the portals of this latter-day Arabian nights palace just in time to catch sight of Strickland having a few words with a European in full evening dress, whom I correctly surmised to be the manager of the establishment. The manager then politely ushered Strickland and the Norwegian down a corridor away from the lounge and then returned a short moment later, alone. I quickly crossed the lounge, trying my best to be inconspicuous. A severe looking burra mem, most probably a Collector's lady, attired in a flawless white evening dress, glared at me through her lorgnette. A flicker of her eyelids, half closed in perpetual hauteur, gave me to understand that she thought my presence irregular. I smiled ingratiatingly at her, but with a disdainful sniff she went back to her reading. Nobody else paid any attention to me.

Along the corridor were the rest rooms, and at the end, the manager's office. I tiptoed over to the door and managed to hear, somewhat indistinctly, the voice of the Norwegian. There was a large keyhole in the door. I surmised that from where I was I could not be seen from the lounge, and that if anyone did come down the corridor I could discreetly retire into one of the rest rooms. So, offering up a quick prayer to all the variegated gods of my acquaintance, I bent over and deftly applied my right ear to the keyhole. I admit that it was a caddish thing to do, but natives in my profession are not expected to be gentlemen.

'I do apologise for any inconvenience you may have had to undergo,' Strickland's voice sounded as clear as if he was speaking right beside me. 'But Colonel Creighton only received the telegram

from London two days ago, and he rushed me off here as quickly as possible to receive you.'

'I hope that information of my arrival here has been kept absolutely confidential.'

'Certainly. Only the Colonel and I are in the know.' Strickland paused slightly. 'Well, to be scrupulously honest, someone else has also been informed, but right now that doesn't really matter.'

'Nevertheless, I would appreciate your telling me about it.' 'You see, about three weeks ago we received a message from one of our agents, an Egyptian chap at Port Said. He reported that a man claiming to be a Norwegian traveller, but with no gear or kit of any sort, had landed at Port Said off a bum boat, and had booked a passage to India on the P&O liner, *Kohinoor*. We have issued standing instructions to all our chaps at those stations to report on all Europeans, who could in any way, be travelling to India for purposes other than the usual. You see, for the past few years we have been having a deuced lot of trouble with the agents of... let us say, an unfriendly Northern Power — stirring up trouble with discontented native rulers and that sort of thing. So before the telegram from London got to us, the Colonel sent one of our fellows here to check up on you. But it's all right. Seems I got to you before he did.'

'Well, I wouldn't know....'

There was a brief moment of silence and, suddenly the solid door I had been leaning against was whisked away and a very strong hand dragged me into the room by the scruff of my neck. It was a very ignominious entrance on my part, and I was truly mortified.

'What the Devil....!' exclaimed Strickland, but then he saw my face and held his peace. The Norwegian released his forceful hold on me and turned back to close the door. He then walked over to the old baize-covered mahogany desk and, seating himself behind it, proceeded to light his pipe.

'I have been listening to him for the last five minutes but did not wish to interrupt your most interesting narrative.' He turned and once again subjected me to his penetrating gaze. 'Just a little wheezy, Sir, are you not? You breathe too heavily for that kind of work.'

'I am afraid it's all a....' Strickland tried to intervene.

'No need for any explanations, my dear Strickland,' said the Norwegian with a dismissive wave of his hand. 'Of course, everything is perfectly clear. This large but rather contrite native gentleman is without doubt the agent that Colonel Creighton sent to keep an eye on the sinister Norwegian. At least his appearance and abilities do credit to the Colonel's judgement. A man of intelligence, undoubtedly, and a scholar — or at least with interest in certain abstruse scholarly matters. Also a surveyor of long standing and an explorer who has spent a great deal of time tramping about the Himalayas. And, as I had occasion to inform him at an earlier meeting, someone who has been to Afghanistan. Furthermore, I am afraid he is connected with you, Strickland, in a manner not directly involving your Department; would it be correct of me to say, through a secret society?'

'By Jove!' exclaimed Strickland. 'How on earth did you guess all that?'

'I never guess,' said the Norwegian with some asperity. 'It is an appalling habit, destructive to the logical faculty.'

'This is most wonderful,' I blurted out unwitting, somewhat confused by the shock of such unexpected revelations.

'Commonplace,' was his reply. 'Merely a matter of training oneself to see what others overlook.' He leaned back on his chair, his long legs stretched out and his fingertips pressed together.

'You see, my dear Strickland,' he began, in a tone reminiscent of a professor lecturing his class, 'despite the deceptively sedentary appearance of the gentleman's upper body, his calves, so prominently displayed under his native draperies, show a marked

vascular and muscular development that can only be explained in terms of prolonged and strenuous walking, most probably in mountainous areas. His right foot, in those open-work sandals, has the middle toe missing. It could not have been cut off in an accident or a violent encounter as the close adjoining digits do not seem to be affected in any way; and we must bear in mind that the toes of the foot cannot be splayed like the fingers of the hand for any convenient amputation. Since the generally healthy appearance of the gentleman would point against any diseases, like leprosy, I could safely conclude that his loss must have occurred through frostbite — and the only mountains in this country which receive heavy snowfalls are the Himalayas.

I also noticed that he had a nervous tic in his right eye, oftentimes an occupational disorder afflicting astronomers, laboratory technicians and surveyors, who constantly favour a certain eye when peering through their telescopes, microscopes or theodolites. Taken along with the fact of his strenuous jaunts in the Himalayas, surveying would be the most acceptable profession in this instance. Of course, surveying is an innocent occupation, not normally-associated with people pretending to be what they are not. So in this case I concluded that he had practised his skills in areas where the true nature of his work and his identity had to be concealed, that is in hostile and hitherto unexplored areas. Hence our Himalayan explorer. *Voilà tout.*

'And my intelligence and scholasticism?' I asked amazed.

'That was simple,' he laughed. 'The degree of intelligence could easily be deduced by the larger than normal size of your head. It is a question of cubic capacity. So large a brain must have something in it. The scholarly drift of your interests was easily discernible from the top of the blue journal I noticed peeping coyly from your coat pocket. The colour and binding of the *Asiatic Quarterly Review* is a distinctive one.'

'But Afghanistan?' I managed to squeak.

'Is it not obvious? I will not insult the intelligence that I just lauded by describing how easily I came about it.'

There was a distinct twinkle in his eyes as he turned to Strickland. 'And when the shirt of an English police officer reveals the distinct outline of a peculiar native amulet, which is strangely also worn, this time more openly, around the neck of our native gentleman here, surely some kind of connection can be postulated. On the balance of probabilities the chance of both of you belonging to some kind of society, possibly a secret one, is therefore high. Moreover, in my readings on the subject, I have been informed that next to China, this country is the most infested with such organisations. Ryder, in his *History of Secret Cults*, is very informative on the subject.'

'By Thunder!' exclaimed Strickland, shaking his head in wonder. 'It's a good thing we aren't living in the Middle Ages, Mr Holmes, you'd have surely been burnt at the stake.' He leaned back on his chair and sighed, 'The Saat Bhai or Seven Brothers was an old Tantric organisation that had long been extinct, but which Mr Hurree Chunder Mookerjee here, revived for the benefit of some of us in the Department. This amulet, the hawa-dilli (heart lifter), was given to me by the blind witch Huneeefa, after the initiation dawat or ceremony. She makes them only for us. The old hag actually believes she's making them for a real secret society and she inserts a scrap of paper in each bearing the names of saints, gods and what not. The amulet helps us to recognise one another if we've never met before or are in disguise. Of course the whole thing is unofficial.'

Strickland's tone gave me to understand that the so-called 'Norwegian' was not an outsider but someone definitely connected to the Department, probably in an important and influential way.

'You see, Sir,' I explained helpfully, 'it is also a kind of insurance. There is an established belief among natives that the Saat Bhai is not only extant but that it is a powerful society with many members.'

And most natives, if they are not too excited, always stop to think before they kill a man who says he belongs to any specific organisation. So in a tight spot — if someone is attempting to cut your throat or something — you could say, "I am Son of the Charm," which means that you may be a member of the Saat Bhai — and you get — perhaps — ah, your second wind.'

'I used to belong to a lot of cults and things,' sighed Strickland wistfully. 'But the powers that be felt that I was letting down the side by traipsing about the country in various native guises, and I was told to drop it.' All I've got now is the Saat Bhai, so I hope you won't peach on me.'

'My dear fellow,' said the Norwegian, laughing in a peculiar noiseless fashion, 'so long as your Society's soirees are not enlivened by human sacrifices and ritual murder, I will carry your secret to my grave.'

'Well then, that's that,' said Strickland brightly. 'I'd better get along and send a telegram to the Colonel of your safe arrival. The manager ought to have your suite ready for you by now.'

'Well, there is one little matter that needs to be taken care of.' The Norwegian looked at me. 'Mr Mookerjee has, through his own exertions, discovered quite a bit about my affairs, and I feel that it is pointless, maybe even unwise, not to take him fully into our confidences.'

'Of course,' Strickland replied. 'Huree here is the soul of discretion, and you can trust him to keep a secret.' He turned to me with a superior smile. 'Well Huree, this gentleman on whom you unwisely inflicted your irrepensible curiosity is none other than the world's greatest detective, Mr Sherlock Holmes.'

'By blushes, Strickland,' he said in a deprecatory voice.

At that moment a blood-curdling scream burst through the corridors of the Taj Mahal Hotel.

3. For a fuller account of Strickland's problem, see Kipling's short story 'Miss Yougal's Sais' in *Plain Tales from the Hills*.

The Red Horror

The unlikely concurrence of Strickland's amazing revelation and the spine-chilling scream somewhat ruffled my normal orderly thought processes. But Strickland was quickly on his feet. 'What the Devil!'

Another scream rent the air.

'But quick, man ...' Sherlock Holmes shouted. 'It came from the lounge.'

We tumbled out of the manager's office and rushed down the corridor. As we ran, one shocking thought sprang suddenly into my mind. Sherlock Holmes had died two months ago. Every newspaper in the Empire, indeed throughout the world, had reported the tragic story of his fatal encounter with the arch-criminal Professor Moriarty at the Reichenbach Falls in Switzerland. How the deuce an' all had he sprung back to life? But before I could even begin to address this question, I came upon a scene so bizarre and terrifying that I shall probably carry its dreadful memory to my grave.

Could it be that these were the works of a lost civilisation that had existed thousands of years before the present-day Tibetans had inhabited the land? The fine condition of the statues, which were hardly damaged or eroded, could be explained by the fact that they were usually buried under the ice and only had to face periods of exposure twice a century. Maybe like Herr Schliemann, who had discovered the ruins of Troy just a few years ago, I had discovered an entire ancient civilisation unknown to anyone in the world. I decided to call it the Tethyan civilisation, after the prehistoric sea of Tethys from under which the plateau of Thibet and the Himalayan mountains had emerged many millions of years ago.

The noisy passage of a bullet past my head caused me to terminate my scientific musings, and clutching my umbrella, I quickly ran in through the vast temple door.

The Ice Temple of Shambala

Once my eyes had become used to the dimmer light inside, I realised, with some disappointment, that the interior of the cave was quite small — only about forty by forty feet. The walls were covered with strange carvings and inscriptions, reminiscent of Egyptian hieroglyphics but far more abstract and fantastic. The chamber was wretchedly cold and clusters of icicles hung from the corner of the ceiling and covered parts of the wall. A thick carpet of powdery snow covered the floor, and squeaked loudly under our boots.

The Lama Yonten was helping the Grand Lama to rest in a corner of the temple, and had laid his cloak on the ground for him to lie on. The young lad, it will be remembered, had only just recovered from a serious illness, and our desperate race across the bridge had overtaxed his frail constitution. I extracted a small hip-flask of brandy (which I carry only for medical emergencies, since I am a strict teetotaler) and, unscrewing the cap, poured some

of the vital fluid down his throat. He coughed and gasped, but the colour began to come back to his bloodless cheeks.

Mr Holmes was unsuccessfully striking vestas against the wall in order to light our dark lantern. Somehow his matches had become wet, so I went over to him and proffered a box of dry ones that I fortunately had on me. He quickly lit the lantern. After he adjusted the shutters, it threw a brilliant beam of light onto the opposite wall. He directed the beam around the room, which was quite bare except for the wall inscriptions, until in the middle of the chamber, the light shone upon a strange multi-tiered structure which rested on a stone pedestal. A blanket of powdery snow covered the whole thing, making it look like a large wedding cake.

'That is the Great *Mandala*,' said the Lama Yonten. 'The very one used by the Messenger of Shambala when he gave the master initiation to the first Grand Lama.'

Sherlock Holmes went over to the structure and commenced to dust the snow from its surface with his muffler. I joined him in the task, until very soon we were done. The *mandala* was about six feet high, while the base, a one-foot-thick stone disc, was nearly seven feet in diameter. Progressively smaller stone discs, squares and triangles were meticulously stacked on top of it, one over the other, forming a structure halfway between a squat cone and a pyramid. On the very top was a tiny delicate model of a pagoda with a graceful canopied roof. Although the basic lines and circles of this *mandala* were nearly the same as that of the painted scroll, the stone *mandala* lacked the ornamentation and colours of the latter. It looked stark and utilitarian. More like the diagrammatic proof of a complex mathematical formula than a religious symbol.

While I held the lantern above him and directed its beam wherever required, Mr Holmes crouched to subject this strange structure to an examination with his magnifying lens. Five minutes sufficed to satisfy him, for he rose to his feet and put away his

lens. Then, placing his hands firmly against the side of the thick stone disc, he proceeded to exert his full strength, in a somewhat oblique direction, against the weighty object. I did not notice anything, but some slight change must have occurred for Mr Holmes stopped and grunted in satisfaction.

'It moves,' he said, a note of triumph in his voice.

'What does it mean?' I asked.

'It means our little mystery, the riddle of the cryptic verse, is nearly solved.'

'I do not understand, Mr Holmes.'

'You will remember we agreed that the verse was a set of instructions, probably for the disinterment of something concealed — something precious. Since the symbolism of the *mandala* structure is used in the verse, what is more logical than to conclude that the instructions refer to an actual *mandala* — but one that is palpably whole and upright.'

'So that we can move around it in particular circles, like the instructions say?' said I puzzled. 'But ...'

'No no, my dear Hurree. Not to move around it but to *move* it. My cursory examination has revealed that this structure has not been hewn from the a single piece of stone but has rather been assembled — each layer of it — from separately sculpted pieces, each capable of being moved, or rather rotated, around a central axis.'

'Like the tumblers of a lock?'

'Exactly. Your choice of an analogy is a happy one, for this *mandala* is — if my reasoning is correct — a lock, albeit an unusual and considerable one.'

'But what about a key then, Mr Holmes. We do not have it.'

'Oh, tut, man. We need not be so literal. The verse is our key.'

'I have been very obtuse ...' said I, abashed, but Mr Holmes had no time for my self-reproaches, and was in a fever to begin testing his theory.

'Now, Hurree, if you could lend a hand here, and ... excuse me, Reverend Sir,' he turned to the Lama Yonten, 'if you could kindly read the verse to us.'

The Grand Lama had now recovered and insisted on holding the lantern, while the Lama Yonten unrolled the *mandala* scroll and read the lines on the back. 'Om Svasti. Reverence to thee ...' 'We can skip the benedictory lines,' interrupted Holmes 'and proceed with the actual instructions.'

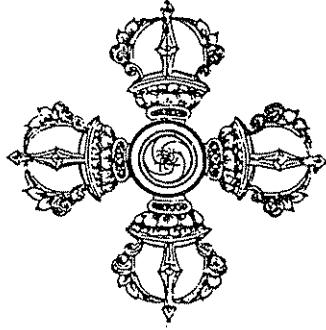
'As you wish, Mr Holmes,' replied the Lama, quickly perusing the verses, underlining the word with this bony forefinger. 'Let me see. Hmm ... ah yes ... the instructions start here. "Facing the sacred direction ..."'

'What would that be?'

'North, Mr Holmes. Shambala is properly referred to as "Shambala of the North."'

'So that would necessitate us having our backs to the entrance and facing the *mandala* from that direction. Let us see now ...'

'I have it, Mr Holmes,' I cried exultantly, scraping away the snow at the base of the *mandala* exactly across the entrance. 'There is a crossed *vajra*' inscribed on the floor here. This probably marks the direction from which we start.'



1. The *vajra* was originally the thunderbolt weapon of Indra, the Indian Zeus. The Buddhists changed it to the symbol of highest spiritual

'That is the very place where the Grand Lama must sit when meditating on the *mandala*,' said the Lama Yonten.

'So we can take it as our starting point,' said Holmes briskly. 'Now let us have the next line in the verse.'

'... turning always in the path of the Dharma wheel ...'

'Bear in mind, Hurree, that all our operations will have to be conducted clockwise. Pray continue, Sir.'

'... Circle Thrice the Mountain of Fire.'

'That would be the base of the *mandala*. See the design of flames carved into the stone. Now, Hurree, let us attend to it with a will.'

It was not an easy task. Both Mr Holmes and I were grunting with the effort, but finally the giant disc moved slowly. As per the instructions we rotated that bally deadweight three times around its axis, finishing exactly where we started, by the crossed *vajra* mark on the floor. I collapsed with exhaustion.

'... Twice the Adamantine Walls ...' the Lama droned on.

'Come on Hurree,' Mr Holmes exhorted me. 'This one will be easier. It's much smaller.'

Mr Holmes was right. The 'Adamantine wall' disc wasn't as heavy as the 'Mountain of Fire' disc, and we only had to rotate it twice. The 'Eight Cemeteries' disc was even easier, while the one after that, 'The Sacred Lotus Fence' disc, I managed by myself.

On the fifth tier the *mandala* changed shape; from the circular discs of the earlier mountains, walls and fences, to a square plinth

power 'the Adamantine Sceptre' which is irresistible and invincible. The double or crossed *vajra* (Skt. *visva-vajra*) symbolises immutability, and is hence used in designs of thrones and seats, inscribed on bases of statues, pillars, foundations of houses, anywhere where permanence is desired.

with protuberances on each side — the four walls of the Sacred City and its four gates.

‘... Then from the Southern Gate turn to the East ...’ Following the instructions we turned the square plinth a three quarter turn. Now came the last item in the verse. ‘The Innermost Palace’, which was the pagoda with the canopied roof, on the very top of the *mandala*. It was a tremendously exciting moment. While Mr Holmes gave the little pagoda half a turn from the South to the North — as the instructions specified, we waited with bated breath for the result.

Nothing happened.

A cold chill of disappointment coursed through my body. It seemed to me that somehow Mr Holmes must have made a radical mistake in his chain of reasoning.

‘We are undone, Hurree,’ said he, a pained look on his face. He turned away, and biting hard on the stem of his pipe paced restlessly about the chamber, kicking up a small storm of powder snow in his wake. He kept up his choleric perambulations for about ten minutes, when all of a sudden a happy thought seemed to strike him. He brightened at once, and snapped his fingers.

‘The *Vajra* throne,’ he cried. ‘We have omitted “... and sit victorious on the *Vajra* throne ...”’

‘But that only seems to be a concluding symbolism of some kind, Mr Holmes,’ said the Lama Yonten.

‘We have moved everything movable in the *mandala*,’ said I despondently. ‘There is nothing more left to manipulate.’

‘Let us see,’ said Holmes, going over to the *mandala*. He carefully studied the pagoda on the top with his lens, and then with the thin blade of his pocketknife, gently prised open the miniature doors of the little temple. Within the pagoda was a tiny crystal throne carved in the shape of a crossed *vajra*. It was a beautiful thing. As the Grand Lama directed the beam of the

lantern on it, Mr Holmes carefully studied this miniature *objet d’art* closely with his lens.

‘But what shall we do now, Mr Holmes?’ said I. ‘We have no instructions about what to do with it.’

‘Ah, but we do, Hurree,’ said he cheerfully. He paused. ‘We sit on it.’

With that he put the tip of his forefinger on the crystal throne and gently pressed it down. There was an audible click — as if some kind of lever had been activated. Then the crystal throne began to glow with an eerie green light. It slowly became brighter till its radiance suffused the North wall of the chamber with a light as brilliant as that of a full moon in mid-summer. The *mandala* itself began to vibrate spasmodically, the tremors increasing in intensity till the entire temple shook in an alarming manner.

To our consternation some of the icicles broke off the roof of the chamber and crashed onto the floor, throwing up sprays of snow. Mr Holmes quickly grabbed the Grand Lama and, doing his best to cover the lad’s body with his own, retreated to a corner of the chamber. The Lama Yonten and I also hurriedly backed away from the *mandala*, which seemed to be the source of all this tremendous energy.

As I retreated to the rear wall, I tripped on a piece of fallen icicle and staggered backwards. I expected to fall against the wall and put my hands behind me to take my weight, but to my surprise I encountered nothing and fell clean backwards. Even more alarming was the fact that my descent backwards did not stop at the floor but continued in a precipitate and confusing manner for quite some time, till finally I landed with a painful bump, somewhere in utter darkness.

‘Hulloa, Hurree! Can you hear me?’ Mr Holmes’s distant voice slowly filtered into my scrambled mind. I shook my head to clear it.

'I am here, Mr Holmes!' I yelled back.

'Are you all right?'

I took stock of my condition and situation. 'I think so, Sir. There are no bones broken, anyway.'

'Excellent. Where exactly are you?'

'I seem to be at the bottom of an awful abyss, Sir. I am of the opinion that the entrance should be somewhere in the middle of the wall opposite the temple door.'

'Good man. Hang on for a minute. I'll get a light down there soon.'

A few moments later a welcome glow of light appeared in the darkness above me. Gradually, as the light descended and became brighter, I was able to discern the comfortably familiar outline of Sherlock Holmes' tall figure, holding the dark lantern and walking down a long stone staircase — which must have been the one I had tumbled down. Behind him the two Lamas followed.

'You are to be congratulated, Hurree,' said Holmes cheerfully, coming up to me. 'The honour of discovering the secret of the *mandala* is yours.'

'Is this all, Mr Holmes?' said I, disappointed. 'All that mystery and noise and fuss, just to conceal a passage way?'

'Patience. We shall know when we get to the end of it.' He pointed the lantern in the direction opposite to the staircase. 'See, it does not stop here but continues much further.'

The Lama Yonten and the Grand Lama made solicitous enquiries as to my state of health subsequent to my sudden descent, and gave loud thanks to the 'Three Jewels', the Buddhist Trinity, for my deliverance.

We proceeded down the passage cautiously, with Mr Holmes in the lead holding the lantern, and the rest of us following closely behind him. Though the passage was very long it was surprisingly straight and true, without even the slightest bend, dip or rise during its entire length. The walls were constructed to an exactness

that would certainly tax a modern engineer. As we proceeded, the light from the lantern shimmered off the surface of the walls. I reached out to touch it and was surprised to discover how smooth it was — smoother than marble, even glass. There were no seams or joints, no interruptions of any kind in the unnatural evenness of the surface. It had clearly been made by a people with very advanced technical knowledge. I mentally began to review all the bits of information I had now acquired about my Tethyan civilisation, and tried to classify them in some systematic order.

Suddenly Mr Holmes paused and signalled us to halt. He then directed the beam of the lantern straight to the floor, which like the temple, was covered with a thin carpet of powdery snow. We were probably arriving at a place where drifts of snow could somehow enter this subterranean corridor.

'What do you think of that?' he asked, indicating a number of footprints clearly impressed on the soft snow.

'Obviously someone has anticipated us,' said I, worried.

'More than one, I'm afraid. There are three distinct sets of impressions. I first observed them just a little way ago. One of them is obviously a cripple. Notice how the impression of the right foot is quite askew, and also blurred because he dragged that foot.'

'Moriarty!' I exclaimed in horror.

'Yes. As I expected, the Dark One has got here before us. One of his companions led the way, he came next, and the third followed as rearguard. There can be no question as to the superimposition of the footmarks.'

'Do you think the Amban is with him?' asked the Lama Yonten.

'Probably not. The two other impressions are from the same kind of footwear — cheap, cloth-soled Chinese boots, I would think; the kind that can be worn on either foot. I noticed the Chinese soldiers wearing them.'

I was not at all happy about our proceeding with this

particularly dangerous venture, especially when highly unscrupulous bounders, fully prepared to commit violences against our persons, awaited us at the end of it.

'Hadn't we better ...' I began to make a suggestion.

'We are doing so,' Holmes interrupted me rather brusquely. He extracted a revolver from within the folds of his robe and cocked it. 'It would be well if we were to proceed with all due caution. Hurree? You are armed?'

'Yes, Sir,' I said resignedly, pulling out the ludicrous weapon from my belt, and began to go through the motions of preparing it for the coming fray.

'You Hurree, will bring up the rear. If anything should happen to me, you will at once escort His Holiness and the Lama Yonten out of this place. Now close the shield of the lantern. We will have to manage in the dark.'

We moved very carefully along the passage, which now gradually, almost imperceptibly, became wider, and strangely less dark, or so I imagined. As we went forward the phenomena became more apparent. Unwilling to trust my own visual senses I tentatively imparted to Mr Holmes my assessment of the luminary intensification. He had noticed it too.

'You are right, Hurree, and it is getting progressively lighter further up the passageway. We must double our precautions. The light will make us more visible, and more vulnerable.'

For another half an hour we advanced stealthily. By this time the passage had so enlarged that it was now the dimensions of a large cathedral. It was also now quite simple to locate the source of our illumination. Hundreds of feet above us hung a massive roof of clear glacial ice, via which a remote daylight filtered through to provide a pale unearthly luminescence in the cavern below.

As we sidled by the left wall of the gigantic passage way, glancing nervously up at this tremendous anomaly of nature, the thought of those millions of tons of unstable ice poised menacingly

above our heads did nothing to reassure me about the wisdom of our enterprise. A little way ahead there was a narrow opening in the wall — probably a cleft in the rock, but with the regular lines of an entrance of some kind. Maybe it was the beginning of a branch passage, or the door to a chamber.

Sherlock Holmes stopped a little way before the opening and, getting down on one knee, carefully inspected the white floor. 'I don't like it. The alignments of the footmarks change here. They do not all point forward as before, but instead point toward each other in a rough circle. Obviously they gathered around here to confer.'

Meanwhile I had proceeded to the side entrance to have a look inside. I was just stepping into the opening when Mr Holmes shouted a warning. 'Stop, Hurree It is a trap!'

Instinctively I drew back, which was most fortunate, for two shots rang out, the bullets whizzing perilously close past me. I pressed my back hard against the wall and tried to control my breathing and the rhythm of my heart, which were now totally at sixes and sevens. Pressing himself against the wall, Mr Holmes sidled up besides me. 'Moriarty and his men conferred here to prepare a trap for us,' he whispered. 'But in baiting a mouse-trap with cheese, it is well to remember to leave room for the mouse. The entrance was rather too obvious. The footmarks also provided a useful confirmation.'

'But what can we do now, Mr Holmes? I asked. We can only proceed at unequivocal peril to life and limb.'

'Let us not succumb to such morbid anticipations before having exhausted our own resources,' Holmes said sternly. 'First of all we must establish the exact circumstances of our adversaries. Hurree, if crouching very low, you could quickly peep around the corner and fire a few shots in their general direction, it may afford me the opportunity to make a quick reconnaissance. Are you ready? Now!'

I fired three rapid shots around the corner and whipped back to safety, just before a volley of rifle-fire crashed past me and echoed through the many miles of empty caverns. Mr Holmes had managed to duck back safely also, and he now stood with his back pressed to the wall and his eyes filled with frustration.

'The Devil take it!' he cried bitterly. 'They are unassailable.'
'How, exactly, Sir? I did not have time to see anything.'

'The two soldiers are entrenched behind large blocks of ice which provide them absolute protection against our bullets. There is no way they can be flanked, and they have a clear field of fire of the whole entrance. We are trapped here.'

'But we can always retreat, Sir.' I cried out at this folly, flinging my arms out in protest. It was very careless of me, I will grant you, to make impassioned gestures while under fire, for my left hand must have stuck out a bit beyond the corner. There was a sharp crack and I felt a sudden hot sear, as if a red hot poker had been pressed against the back of my hand. I had been shot. Good Heavens! I withdrew my injured limb with alacrity and tried to nurse it with my other hand, which held the revolver. Unfortunately, in the heat and confusion of things I must have dropped my fire-arm on the floor. More unfortunately still, the bally thing was cocked and ready to fire, and so it accidentally discharged a round.

'What the Devil ...?' Mr Holmes leapt back in alarm as the bullet zipped past his nose and flew up into the air.

Somewhat embarrassed by this unfortunate accident I lowered my head and affected to examine my wound with great interest. But to my dismay, Mr Holmes's reaction to this minor and absolutely unintended blunder of mine was rather violent and unexpected. He grabbed me by the collar and threw me brutally to one side. Recovering from this uncalled for assault on my person and dignity, I sought to remonstrate with him. 'Really Sir. Such behaviour is unbecoming of an English gentle...'

Just then a great mass of murderously jagged ice crashed down on the very spot where I had just stood. The accidental discharge had struck the ice on the roof and dislodged a large section of it. Mr Holmes must have seen this and taken effective steps to save my life. I censured myself for my want of faith. How could I have, for even a single moment, doubted the integrity of my noble and valiant friend.

'I ... I ...' I stammered an embarrassed apology.

But Mr Holmes was chuckling and rubbing his hands together. 'Ha ha! Capital! I never get your limits, Hurree.'

'But ...' I began to ask. He held up his hand.

'Once again, Hurree, in your own inimitable fashion, you have demonstrated the solution, *le mot de l'énigme*,
'But ...'

'How is your wound, Babuji?' the Lama Yonten enquired solicitously, taking my injured hand in his. 'If I may ...'

Fortunately the wound was only a superficial one. The skin at the back of my hand had been scored, but there was little bleeding. The Lama Yonten applied some herbal salve and bound it with my 'kerchief.

'Now Hurree,' said Holmes, methodically reloading my revolver, 'when I give the word, both of us will whip our weapons around the entrance and fire a few quick rounds — not at the soldiers, but at the roof above them — and then withdraw immediately.'

He handed me back my revolver. I knelt low near the floor just by the entrance. Mr Holmes crouched over me, his weapon raised by his head.

'Ready? Now!'

Both of us suddenly stuck our heads round the corner, rapidly fired half-a-dozen shots, and quickly ducked back to safety, just as the Chinese soldiers released a murderous volley in reply. With our backs pressed to the cold wall we held our breath and waited.

A couple of seconds later a thunderous roar burst through the entrance, followed by a veritable storm of powder snow which so filled the air that for a minute visibility was reduced to near zero.

Gradually the snow settled down and Mr Holmes and I, firearms at the ready, cautiously walked through the entrance. Our plan had succeeded beyond our expectations, for the two unfortunate Chinamen were completely buried under a mass of icy rubble. The effect had been much greater in this chamber, not only because of the greater amount of ammunition we had expended, but also as the roof was much lower at this point, with great jagged icicles dangling from it.

We circumvented the icy grave. The Lama Yonten muttered some prayers, probably for the souls of the two wretched men entombed there. On the other side, about forty feet away, was another opening. So, this chamber was some kind of vestibule. We crossed the room and walked through this new entrance.

We were now in an enormous, circular, hall-like enclosure, easily a few thousand yards in diameter, covered by a gigantic dome of ice that must have been at least half a mile high at its central point. All around this colossal rotunda were great statues — twenty in number — of grim warriors clad in strange armour. The figures were of gigantic proportions, on a par with the great Buddha statues I had beheld in the Bamiyan valley in Afghanistan. As we surveyed this awesome scene, which would have made Kubla Khan's 'stately pleasure dome' look like an inverted pudding bowl, the Lama Yonten chanced to see something.

'There is a light shining in the centre.'

I applied my telescope to my eye, but could not see very clearly. What with the cold and the damp, some condensation had formed on the inside of the eyepiece; and besides, the instrument was not a very powerful one.

'There is definitely an unusual coruscation in that vicinity,' I reported. 'But I cannot make out what is causing the phenomenon.'

'We will know soon enough,' said Holmes laconically. 'Let us move on.'

Twenty minutes walk brought us before a large column of ice — a truncated stalagmite — about six feet high resting on a square stone platform two feet above the ground. The column seemed to be made of an unusual kind of ice, metallic in appearance, and dark — but in a silvery kind of way like a moonlit sky. The strange sheen of the column's surface gave the illusion of not really being solid, but just an opening to deepest space. Little star-like specks of light reflected from the icy dome on its surface reinforced the illusion. But even more wonderful was what rested — or to be exact — what seemed to be suspended a few inches above the top of the column. A perfect crystal, about the size of a large coconut, blazed with an inner fire, its many, perfectly cut facets distributing the light in myriad magical patterns.

'It is the Norbu Rimpoche!' (Skt. *Chintamani*) whispered the Lama Yonten, obviously awe-struck. 'The great Power Stone of Shambhala.'

'But that is a mere legend,' said I, sceptically, for I had often come across the story in my sojourns in the Himalayas and Central Asia.²

'Nay, Babuji.' The Lama Yonten interrupted me. 'I recognise the stone from the description in the *Sacred Tantra of the Wheel of Time*. It is written that the Messenger from Shambhala planted two such Stones, one each at the psychic poles of our planet. The

2. Legends of the *Chintamani* stone are prevalent even beyond these places. It is believed that Tamerlane and Akbar possessed portions of such a stone, and that the stone set on Suleiman's (Solomon) magic ring was a piece of the *Chintamani*. Nicholas Roerich, the famous White Russian mystic, artist and traveller was convinced that the *Chintamani* was the '*Lapis Exilis*', the Wandering Stone of the old Meistersingers.

first was lost when the sacred continent of Ata-Ling was devoured by the great waves. The second was brought here to Thibet, but was believed to have been taken back to Shambala when the forces of evil gained ascendancy over our land.

'Yet it has always been here,' said Holmes reflectively. 'Hidden in this vast cavern, the *real* Ice Temple of Shambala. Probably the location and secret of this temple were lost after the death of the ninth Grand Lama; and since then the entrance chamber has mistakenly been thought to be the actual temple.'

'Much was lost with the demise of the ninth Hallowed Body,' said the Lama Yonten, shaking his head sadly. 'But now the discovery of the True Temple and the Power Stone will ensure the rule of His Holiness and the future happiness of our nation. And it is thanks to you, Mr Holmes; you and your brave companion.'

'Are there no thanks for me?' A harsh sneering cackle broke the sanctity of the temple. 'For me, who first discovered the Great Stone of Power?'

The Opening of the Wisdom Eye

Both Mr Holmes and I raised our pistols as the broken, cadaverous body of Professor Moriarty, the Napoleon of Crime, The Dark One, shuffled and limped into view from behind the ice column where he had been hiding. 'Journeys end in lovers' meetings,' Moriarty said with false cheer. 'Excellent. Such a perfect reunion could scarce have been expected, even if I had mailed engraved invitations to everyone. We have, of course, Holmes, the busybody, his fat Hindu Sancho Panza — to whom I owe a little something — and, ... aah ... yes, the Lama Yonten, chief monkey to our brat here ... the last Grand Lama of Thibet.'

'Hurree, shoot him if he so much as twitches a finger,' said Sherlock Holmes grimly, raising his revolver and shielding the Grand Lama's body with his own.

'With pleasure, Sir,' said I resolutely, pointing my weapon straight at Moriarty.

Moriarty looked scornfully at us. His altogether unpleasant