

CHAPTER 3

CAMBRIDGE: FREE ENQUIRY

MY NEW ALMA MATER

At Cambridge my avowed objective was Socratic free enquiry and, at the conscious level at least, I was prepared to follow the argument no matter where it may lead, despite the fact that I continued to remain a practicing Muslim, whose concrete content of faith was shaped under the combined influence of Sir Syed, Amir Ali, and Maulana Azad *et al.* I was already familiar with Freud's concept of defensive thinking and rationalization and was keen to avoid intellectual self-deception. In other words, my roots were in the domain of faith, while my aspirations beckoned me to the domain of pure reason. Above all, I yearned to be honest to myself.

As stated already, my prime inner perplexity was how to reconcile the vast extent of human pain and suffering (*prima facie* quite sporadic and unmerited) with my traditional faith that an almighty and loving God was the Creator and Sustainer of the universe. Suffering as a punishment for evil deeds was quite understandable as a natural or logical recompense as well as a means of education or reform of the evil doer. But this could not justify the suffering of children and also of morally good or virtuous persons in the case of gruesome accidents, diseases, natural calamities, crimes, etc. The difficulty could be removed if we were to qualify our initial belief in the innocence or goodness of the children or the adults concerned. But this appeared

stretching the argument too far just in order to support or defend one's faith, and this procedure had little appeal for me, once I had started on the path of reasoned free enquiry. It was in this frame of mind that I had arrived at Cambridge. The problem continued to haunt me, but I persisted in patient reflection and analysis, helped by my Cambridge teachers and the wealth of books recommended by them.

Let me give a few concrete illustrations of the lines of analysis contained in the oral discussions and books in this context. One line was that God 'tested' the faith of the individual through subjecting him to pain and suffering. Immediately I was led to ask why should an all-knowing God have to test His creation? Another line of argument was that, through suffering, God educated or developed human character. But why should an all-powerful Creator use such a tortuous and painful method? Yet another line of thinking for justifying human suffering was that, through the suffering of children or innocent adults, God vicariously punished those who were really guilty. But why should a just and all loving God 'use' innocent beings for the good of society? The above pattern of arguments led me nowhere and I found myself stuck in a dark tunnel of confusion and perplexity. In the free atmosphere of Cambridge I found myself attracted to the Hindu concept of '*karma*' and rebirth as an alternative and, *prima facie*, a more satisfactory explanation of the phenomenon of human and animal suffering in a universe created and presided over by God. This point needs a little elaboration.

The 'problem' of unmerited suffering has its genesis in our inner conviction that innocent and good people should not suffer in a universe created by an all loving, all just and all powerful God, while the doers of evil may well be punished. Thus, the suffering of children whom we deem to be innocent or the suffering of the virtuous adults lands us into existential perplexity regarding our notions of Divine love and providence. If, however, the innocent child or the virtuous adult does not have one single life but his soul gets incarnated time and again according to his '*karma*' the *prima facie* unmerited suffering in the present life can consistently and conveniently be viewed as due pun-

ishment for wrongs done by the person in some previous incarnation. This postulate or faith is the bedrock of all faiths of Indian origin. It is pertinent to point out here that faiths of Semitic origin also have a common postulate, namely, the Final Day of Reckoning and Judgment. This postulate also greatly helps in resolving the inherent riddles and paradoxes of Divine love and justice when one dispassionately and impersonally reviews the human situation as a whole. The point, however, is that both the existential beliefs or postulates are, in essence, culturally conditioned, and that there is no way to confirm their truth, through reasoning, once a person, for some reason or other, falls into the state of 'existential' doubt or uncertainty. It was quite plain and evident to me that the arguments commonly cited to show or prove the phenomena of rebirth were far from being conclusive. In any case, the concept or postulate of '*karma*', in the Hindu sense of repeated rebirths and deaths, until the final release from a protracted cycle was not a (strictly) universally held conviction, like the conviction of an underlying Supreme Power/Unifying Principle behind the flux of all that exists and happens. Even 'atheists' universally hold this latter conviction, in some sense or other.

I concentrated on widening my intellectual and cultural horizons, which, I discovered to my dismay, were far more parochial and limited than I ever could have suspected. The parameters of Western thought I was familiar with were limited to the study of Kant, Hegel, Bradley and Russell. I had also greatly benefited from Broad before joining Cambridge and was eager to attend his lectures at Cambridge. He was also my official supervisor. At my first meeting with him at Trinity College he asked me to write an essay on any subject of my choice and to leave it in his college mailbox a few days prior to our next meeting date.

The next meeting remains virginally fresh in my memory. A great world famous thinker had carefully gone through and made written comments on a student's essay running into fifteen or twenty hand written notebook pages. The subject was '*The Freedom of the Will*'. I had done my best and I believed that my language was very clear and

precise. However, Broad's powerful and sharp mind made me realize the utter folly of my belief. What I had supposed to be transparently clear now began to appear to me as capable of several possible interpretations that Broad proceeded to spell out, one by one, in his even, measured but rather halting manner. This was Broad's typical philosophical behavior. When listening to my talk or reading some word or expression I used he quietly interrupted me and with disarming innocence asked me to explain the exact sense I had in mind, and I was hard pressed to do so. Later on I learnt that Broad never rejected or dismissed even the most absurd view or theory without first coolly and respectfully analyzing all its implications.

In other words I was just blissfully unaware of the spectrum of meanings hidden in ordinary words or philosophical theories. I, therefore, decided to focus all my studies on Broad's method of rigorous analysis of philosophical terms and theories far more exactly than I had ever done before. Broad's famous pupil, John Wisdom, had done precisely the same in his early phase (before Wittgenstein entered his life) in his early work, *Problems of Mind and Matter*.

Broad who was an extremely cautious and balanced thinker also powerfully influenced my thinking in another way. He impressed upon me the philosophical significance of authentic psychic phenomena. He strongly disapproved of the tendency in 'hard' scientific circles to dismiss reports of spiritual or paranormal occurrences as sheer superstition, delusion or fraud. Sidgwick and Myers, before him, had already founded in Cambridge the famous *Society for Psychical Research* for the systematic and scientific study of such phenomena. Broad ably carried forward this work. He pointed out that hard-boiled skeptics fall into dogmatism when from some proved instances of the fraud or deception of mediums and spiritualists they generalize about all psychic phenomena, as such. Broad affirmed that critical enquiry consisted of two distinct tasks, one exploring the authenticity of the paranormal events or occurrences, and two, arriving at their valid religious or philosophical explanation or theory. To reject the very possibility of such phenomena, on the ground that they violated scientific theories

or postulates of the present day was a case of reverse dogmatism. This amounted to an *a priori* denial of the complexity of the universe and to a one-dimensional approach to Reality. Likewise, to accept that some reported or investigated cases were authentic does not amount to proving the truth of any particular religious or philosophical belief or beliefs.

THE NEW WAVE IN THE REALM OF PHILOSOPHY

Not very long after my first exposure to Cambridge philosophy I found that the famous trinity of Cambridge Philosophical Analysts: Moore, Russell and Broad, had become rather dated and sterile and that the philosophical landscape in Cambridge had been totally transformed. New issues and problems, or new ways of dealing with old philosophical issues had come to occupy the center stage of philosophy. The author of this radical change was Ludwig Wittgenstein, of Austrian origin, who much earlier had been a pupil of Bertrand Russell and Moore. The new approach to philosophy consisted of intensive linguistic analysis of ordinary language, and this analysis was used as a tool for clarifying technical concepts or theories of philosophy. This type of analysis was very different from the analytical method of Moore, Russell and Broad.

Wittgenstein had fathered this new approach in his second phase of philosophical activity at Cambridge in the middle thirties. In his first phase in the twenties of the 20th century he had authored *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, which had declared all metaphysical talk or theories as 'nonsense'. He had qualified his position in the second phase and it was the later Wittgenstein who had become the father figure of the new Ox-Cam philosophy after the Second World War.

The method of this philosophy was creatively developed in the late thirties and the early forties by John Wisdom of Cambridge and Gilbert Ryle of Oxford. This method led to the revolutionary conclusion that classical philosophical theories were alternative ways of

defining basic concepts, and further, that every definition or theory was illuminating or misleading in its own way. The implication was that the proper method of doing philosophy was not to attempt to prove any philosophical theory as either true or false, but rather to show in what way or ways each theory drew attention or laid stress upon some feature or aspect of a highly complex states of affairs. The proper approach, therefore, was to 'dissolve' philosophical issues or controversies rather than a futile attempt to solve them in the classical mode of analysis and unverifiable speculation. This approach led to results, in some respects, similar to the Logical Positivist rejection of Metaphysics. However, the mature and developed form of linguistic analysis in the manner of Wittgenstein, and John Wisdom *et al* was essentially different from the summary and total elimination of Metaphysics as 'nonsense'. In fact, it stood, relatively, nearer the ancient Socratic dialectic, or the Indian Jaina doctrine *Siyadvada*.

Having studied Western Philosophy in India in the classical mode (as a systematic exposition and evaluation of alternative and exclusive theories in the areas of Metaphysics, Epistemology, Ethics etc.) I was totally at sea in the new philosophical climate at Cambridge. By the time I reached there Wittgenstein had resigned his post due to the onset of cancer and permanently shifted to Oxford. He died there in 1950. Listening to the lectures of John Wisdom who had acquired world fame, next only to Wittgenstein himself, and reading his extremely terse and closely argued articles helped me greatly to enter gradually into the spirit of the Copernican revolution in philosophy. I also had the privilege of several hour-long tutorial sessions with Professor Wisdom, the resident '*Guru*' of the new movement. He was extremely considerate to me. However, my intellectual growth was a slow, halting and rather difficult process and this almost crippled my ability to put my own, as yet, nebulous thoughts and views in writing.

The new approach to philosophy had a corrosive effect upon my religious convictions which, liberal as they were, presupposed that religious and ethical truth claims, if valid at all, were objective truths, even if they could not be proved logically or empirically. I was still

standing at the threshold of the new approach to philosophy and I clung to the classical epistemological approach that judgments were either subjective or objective and that the expressions, 'subjective judgment' and 'objective judgment' had a fixed determinate meaning. I was unaware that, under the impact of modern science and the collapse of traditional Christian value system after the first world war an 'existentialist' revolution had taken place in philosophy, chiefly in France and Germany, in addition to the 'linguistic' which was, primarily, a British contribution to contemporary philosophy.

There was yet another difficulty I encountered in my quest for certainty and truth relating to the riddle of unmerited human suffering. The philosophical atmosphere at Cambridge was gradually drilling into me a philosophical faith in the crucial importance of following the correct philosophical method in one's quest for truth. The essence of the Cambridge approach was first, to seek the maximum possible conceptual clarity in what one purported to hold or believe, and next, to ask the person making a particular truth claim to spell out the proper method of verifying or establishing the truth or 'validity' of the said claim. Now when I attempted to apply this method to the '*karma*' theory or belief I got stuck in confusion. It was difficult, if not impossible, to make out what, exactly, was meant when it was said that a congenitally deformed male patient was, a fresh incarnation of a ravishing princess who was punished for her haughty behavior towards others. The inherent lack of clarity increased sharply when one tried to analyze the belief that a scorpion or ant that I perceived was, in a previous incarnation, a horse or a philosopher. The idea or notion of punishment as well as of reward was also far from being clear when rebirth took the form of the metamorphosis of one species into another. Neither the concept of '*karma*' in this sense was clear, nor the hypothesis of '*karma*' could be verified.

My inner spiritual and intellectual struggles finally made me realize that religious faith was not the subject matter of logical proof or scientific certainty, but that it was a matter of cultural conditioning. The latter, however, could, and in some cases, did evolve into existential certainty and authentic commitment. Though the concept of

'*karma*' attracted me, it never became for me an irresistible 'whisper of the soul'. In the final analysis I found myself pushed into the arms of the Theology of Mystery and a philosophical humanistic version of liberal Islam.

INFLUENCE OF I.T. RAMSEY

Another source of my philosophical and religious conflicts and perplexity was the influence of another Cambridge teacher, I.T. Ramsey. He was my tutor and later became a Professor of the Philosophy of Christian Religion at Oxford and Bishop of Durham. More important and significant is the fact that he was an extremely noble and loving person. My close contact with him gradually led me to question some of the beliefs and attitudes that were a part of my conventional Islamic upbringing. For instance, the belief that eating pork or taking alcohol leads to moral degradation. Here was a man who was extremely learned, had a very sharp intellect and logical mind but he held sincere beliefs quite different from mine. Likewise, he took pork and alcohol, but he remained remarkably honest and compassionate.

Not only Professor Ramsey, but numerous students and others regularly took pork and alcohol, had sex attitudes and morals vastly different from the Islamic, and yet they were admirably honest, responsible and dutiful persons. They were so honest that the Seminar library of the Department of Philosophy functioned effectively without the services of an issue clerk. Students borrowed books for studying at home simply by entering the relevant details in the issue register placed near the exit. When they returned books they made the proper entry on the same page. There were no losses or thefts, or, if there were any, they were so negligible that it hardly mattered.

Yet another matter, which began to intrigue me, was the realization that performing the five Islamic obligatory prayers in the prescribed collective manner, inevitably, hampered normal working activities in several parts of the globe. For example, in Cambridge itself during the winter months the days were so short (due to the early setting of the

sun) that three of the five daily obligatory prayers had to be squeezed in the space of two and a half hours. In summer the nights were so short due to the very early rising and late setting of the sun that the gap between the last night prayer and the dawn prayer next day was a mere four hours.

I gradually began to realize that many of my beliefs and attitudes, as a Muslim, were what they were, not because they were demonstrable or self-evident, or 'natural' in the strict sense (as I had been taught) but that I cherished them because of cultural conditioning. A good Christian or Hindu was in the same position. The difference between me and a typical conventional Muslim was that I had honestly internalized the Islamic ethos, while the majority of believers were given to only external discipline. Though I never rejected the core of my Islamic faith, it got transformed into an 'existential commitment' to Islamic basics, rather than to the entire gamut of Islamic belief and practice, just as Ramsey's Christian faith was an existential commitment to Christian basics.

In his great novel, *Of Human Bondage*, Somerset Maugham tells how the hero, as a young man, one day suddenly awoke to the realization that his Christian convictions were, in the final analysis, derived from his childhood training, and this insight had a profound impact on him for the rest of his life. Maugham also refers to the paradox that arises when bad things happen to good people, in other words, the religious difficulty of reconciling unmerited pain and suffering with belief in an all powerful and all loving Creator. Dostoyevsky has raised this problem in the most powerful and poignant manner in his great novels, especially the masterpiece, *Brothers Karamazov*. I was to read these novels much later on. But my mindset and basic approach to religion had crystallized in this period.

FROM CAMBRIDGE TO MUNSTER, GERMANY

From Cambridge I proceeded to Munster University, Germany, after obtaining my Honors degree in the 2.2 grade. This was not much

of an academic achievement. However, I felt I had not done badly, since I had a lot to unlearn, by way of the uncritical philosophical methodology I had earlier acquired. I had first to be awakened from my own 'dogmatic slumbers' even as each one of us has to go through a 'shaking of the foundations'. No less an authority than Bertrand Russell has observed that students who had not previously studied Aristotelian logic learnt Mathematical logic faster than those who had, precisely because the latter had first to unlearn many wrong unconscious assumptions deeply embedded in their mind.

My mentor at Munster University was Professor J.Ritter. He was well known in academic circles of the continent and also abroad, though he was not as famous as Heidegger or Jaspers. During my year long stay at Munster my main purpose was to learn the German language and get familiar with continental philosophy. In those days very little of the original French and German literature on philosophy had been translated into English. I also studied a lot of general works on history, sociology, psychology and religion though I could not profit from the original writings of the great living German thinkers. My studies at Munster, however, convinced me that linguistic analysis of the Cambridge school was absolutely necessary for philosophy, but that it was not sufficient by itself. Any philosopher who reduced philosophy to any single dimension of philosophical activity fell into a trap even as metaphysicians did who played 'language games' in Wittgenstein's sense without being aware of what they were doing.

My debt to Cambridge is beyond words. It is my *alma mater* in the literal sense. I honestly try to seek truth without fearing where the argument might lead me because of my apprenticeship at Cambridge. It was in Cambridge that I saw through the essential thinness of the self-deception that often goes by the name of firmness in faith. The faithful are required to do the right thing at the right moment, irrespective of their depth beliefs or inner attitudes, or any latent contradictions in them. I maintain that latent contradictions will not rise to the surface of individual awareness if the believer systematically represses them due to some reason or other. For instance, it is quite common to hear

pious Muslims criticize marriages where there is a pronounced age difference between the spouses, but they do so without any awareness whatsoever of the full implications of this stand.

I also began to realize the essential weakness of the attempted defense of the weak spots in traditional Muslim political, economic and social institutions, such as the continuance of slavery, gender inequality, failure to grant full equality of human rights etc. Likewise, I was amazed to find conventional Muslims holding that Europeans were bound to be promiscuous and immodest as they consumed pork. I developed a lasting aversion to intellectual dishonesty in its various garbs, the most subtle being religious apologetics, no matter what the religion may be. However, I never became a total skeptic or even an agnostic during an extended period of my questioning of conventional Islam.

The shift in my religious perspective was, in part, also due to my growing interest in comparative religion and mysticism. This made me see three simple but liberating truths. First, that religious faith, be it Islamic or otherwise, can never be proved. Second, that faith is, essentially, culturally conditioned, just like the mother tongue, though faith may also be acquired due to external influence or inner growth. Third, that cultural diversity is the natural condition of the human family, and any form of religious piety that aspired to do away with this cultural plurality did more harm than good to the human family.

The above convictions, at which I arrived, thanks to my apprenticeship at Cambridge, became the pivot of my intellectual and spiritual life. They liberated me from parochialism and ethnocentricity without pushing me into atheism or sheer indifference to religion or spirituality, I, however, continued to be deeply troubled due to my utter inability to find any solution to the problem of pain and suffering in the universe. No attempted solution, including the Indian concept of '*karma*' in previous births of the soul could overcome my perplexity or 'existential opaqueness' on this score.

My association, both at Cambridge and Munster, with several

persons who were men of both great ability and integrity but professed different religious beliefs and held different views on secular issues taught me to respect all religions, even atheism. It became transparent to me that the simple goodness of the heart or human decency cut across religious beliefs, that it was the quality of one's inner life or character rather than one's religious label, that was supremely important in human affairs, In other words, excellence of character and inner goodness were not the monopoly of any religion. Indeed, even skeptics and atheists could be good and compassionate human beings.

There were two other basic things I learnt during my Cambridge days: the value of music and of democracy. Father had always valued music and dance despite restrictions placed by orthodox Islam. However, his defence of music was a rather partial and halting apology for *Sufi* or religious music in general. This was a far cry from the high place both Western and Indian thought give to music in the scheme of the good life. Both these traditions hold that music has the power to bring man to almost the ecstasy of mystical experience. The prestige of the Faculty of Music at British and European universities made me read the lives of some of the great Western composers and changed my perspective on matters concerning art in general. However, I never had the opportunity to attend concerts until my visit to Germany.

I experienced democracy in action for the first time in Cambridge when I noticed the extremely kind and courteous behavior of students to the college waiters and other attendants. Likewise, renowned University teachers, no less than the town shopkeepers, office assistants and bank managers all treated the students with utmost courtesy and consideration. What struck me most was the incredible courtesy shown by car drivers to the pedestrian traffic. All this was in sharp contrast to conditions in my own country.

OXFORD AND CAMBRIDGE: SOME GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

Before I conclude this chapter I would like, first, to make a few

general observations on Cambridge, and then to share four significant experiences without going into their concrete details.

Cambridge is world famous for its College 'backs'. The term 'backs' refers to the extensive lawns, gardens and meadows forming part of the banks of the river 'Cam' running right through the university campus. Great English poets have described the pastoral charm and peace which pervades the lush green meadows decorated by daffodils in the center and weeping willows on the banks of the Cam gracefully flowing down the ages, quite innocent of the contributions made by a Milton, a Newton, or a Darwin inside the colleges of solid brown stone, adjoined by equally solid and artistic bridges of stone across the pensive Cam. The moment one enters into the old colleges one feels transported into the medieval era of castles and meadows. However, the new red brick building of the Central Library on the other side of the Cam serves as a reminder that the age of Newton has now passed over into the age of Einstein. Having had the good fortune of visiting several famous universities like Oxford, Edinburgh, Paris, Heidelberg, and Harvard etc. I would impartially give top marks to my *alma mater* on the score of scenic ambience. However, I am told some university campuses in China and Sri Lanka are even better.

The friendly rivalry between the two oldest and premiere centers of learning and culture in Britain, Oxford and Cambridge is well known. I was, therefore, rather keen on visiting the 'other place' or the 'wrong place' as the Oxonians and Cantabrians refer to each other in jest. In order to judge things for myself I, along with two friends, went on a four-day tour of Oxford and the adjoining Shakespeare country, as it is called. We friends agreed that on the whole the college buildings at Oxford had an edge over the colleges at Cambridge, but there was no equivalent of the river Cam and college backs at Oxford. As for academic excellence, both of my friends (who happened to be studying Economics) never had any doubt of the much greater importance of the Cambridge contribution. I too was convinced that it was the Cambridge thinkers who, under the impact of modern science and Mathematical Logic, had given a creative and immensely influential turn to the modern way of doing philosophy. At this point I cannot resist sharing a popular joke at Cambridge at the expense of Oxford

dons.

An Oxford don was asked to explain what makes one drunk. He took a drink of whisky and soda and got drunk. Next day he took some brandy and soda and again he got drunk. The third time he mixed gin and soda and got drunk again. The Oxford don was familiar with the Cambridge logician and philosopher, Mill, and his famous logical method of agreement for finding out causal connections. The learned Oxford don promptly applied the method and concluded that since soda was the common factor in all three cases of getting drunk, soda was the cause. So much for Oxford powers of reasoning! The even more amusing part of the joke is that the Oxford version of the same joke locates the learned don in Cambridge.

Shakespeare's birthplace, Stratford upon Avon, is an enchanting little town whose architecture and ambience a thoughtful and grateful nation has preserved for future generations. No high-rise buildings have been permitted to dwarf the modest cottages of the poet's time. However, a memorial theatre attracts millions of visitors from Britain and abroad. Booking of seats is done a year in advance, though a small quota is reserved for spot booking by tourists. This facility leads to the formation of nightlong queues. We had to stand in the queue, by turns, as we were keen to watch the play that was on at the time.

Coming back to Cambridge, the college shower baths were located in a separate annex to the main building. There were no separate cubicles for taking showers in privacy. British students did not mind at all this arrangement. But I, as an Indian felt quite embarrassed to bathe completely in the nude before my college mates. I, therefore, arranged with the bath attendant to have a shower before the official admission time. This seemed to work for some time, but it was rather inconvenient having to rush to the college baths in the very early hours of the morning or at other odd times. The bath attendant felt rather amused and surprised at my oriental notion of shame in the presence of the same sex. I briefly told him that customs differ. However, I soon found myself acting upon the maxim to do in Rome as the Romans do.

My experience inside the college was just the reverse. I had never used a dressing gown in India. However, a good Indian friend of mine who was a year senior to me in Cambridge advised me never to be seen by any lady or even a gentleman without my dressing gown on. To be seen in pajamas or a night suit amounted, in polite society, to being seen in the nude, he warned me. Nudity in the college baths was quite different from moving in one's own room or house without a proper dressing gown, according to British etiquette. However, when I left Cambridge and joined Munster University in Germany I found that nobody cared for the dressing gown inside the hostels or student homes.

An old tradition at Oxford and Cambridge is that students be present at a minimum number of college dinners during their period of stay at the university. No record of attendance at lectures is kept, though students are required to submit weekly or fortnightly essays assigned to them by their college tutors. My last College dinner is still fresh in my memory for a strange reason. But, first, I must mention a few things about the institutional dinners at Oxford and Cambridge universities, which lay great stress upon corporate living and development of character. The teachers or fellows of colleges and the students are required to live and eat together though their level of comforts and of food naturally vary. The fellows sit at the high table on comfortable dining chairs, while the students sit on wooden benches at a lower level. The quality of the food served is also different. Before dinner is served the fellows assemble in the senior common room for drinks and then, at a fixed appointed time, enter the common dining hall in a procession. A student recites the customary Christian prayer before the start of the meal.

Students are permitted to order drinks to be served with dinner and they take turns in ordering them through signing vouchers, as is the standard practice in clubs. I had totally abstained from alcohol for two academic years and my friends had come to respect my Islamic or puritan ways in this regard. At this last college dinner a very good and warm hearted American friend rather surprised me by ordering a

drink for me without first asking me. He then, literally, implored me to take it and not break his heart at this last dinner together. Well, after some hesitation I gave in to his pleading as to who knows we would ever meet again and dine together. I tasted a few drops of the drink and started wondering if I would get drunk and start behaving in funny ways on the last day in college. My fear amused my friends. I confess that my breaking one of the Islamic commandments did not produce in me any feelings of guilt. Here I cannot resist relating what, several years later, I came to hear from the venerable savant, Pandit Sundarlal, whom I had revered from my boyhood days.

In the early fifties Prime Minister Nehru asked Pandit Sundarlal to go on a goodwill visit to Nagaland. The Pandit was a true Gandhian radiating love and compassion for all. His hosts were greatly impressed that their distinguished guest freely mingled with them. But the hosts were rather disappointed since they could not offer their choicest items of food to the Pandit who took neither meat nor alcohol. However, on one special occasion the host poured a few drops of the Naga drink on Sundarlalji's cupped palm and he sipped them along with the host. Likewise, the host placed a piece of dried beef on the guest's palm and Panditji tasted the salt left after returning the portion of beef to the host. After relating this incident to me in his characteristically emotional manner Panditji went on to quote the famous line in Persian that winning over the human heart is the greatest *Hajj* or Islamic pilgrimage.

When I was studying in Munster after my graduation from Cambridge some friends belonging to different nationalities thought we would share each other's striking impressions of some foreign culture or society, one may have lived in for some length of time. When my turn came I recounted how strongly I was impressed with the democratic society of Britain. No sooner had I made this remark than a friend who happened to be an Australian burst into laughter. He expressed surprise that I could call a society democratic when one had to tip waiters, hairdressers, taxi drivers, doormen, porters etc. He proudly added if a customer ever dared to tip a waiter in Australia for services

rendered in a restaurant the waiter would reprimand the customer for his crude condescending behavior and his delusive air of superior social status. Ever since this conversation I seem to have developed a strange inhibition related to tipping. At times I suffer from an inner conflict whether to tip or not. Much later in the course of my general reading I learnt that Socialist morality also censured tipping as a Capitalist vice. Nevertheless, tipping persisted as a fact in Soviet society like numerous other evils.

FOUR SIGNIFICANT EXPERIENCES AND LESSONS

A Muslim student from East Pakistan (presently Bangla Desh) lodged in a rather remote part of Cambridge town and had great difficulty in performing his prayers according to the strict timings. He was a deeply religious soul and a person of great integrity, which had much impressed me. He asked me whether he could offer his prayers in my college rooms (which were very centrally located), and I gladly agreed. We soon became good friends. One day he sadly complained that his Muslim compatriots from West Pakistan studying at Cambridge made fun of his religiosity and he was not comfortable in their society. This was more than twenty years before the Bangla Desh war led to the separation of East Pakistan.

Another instance concerns a person who later on became a Nobel Laureate in Physics. I refer to my friend, Abdul Salam. He was not only extremely brilliant but also a very good human being deeply committed to the Ahmadi version of Islam. I always admired him and deeply sympathized with the mental agony of those who sincerely and honestly claimed to be Muslims but who were unceremoniously declared non-Muslims by the majority establishment. Salam felt very unhappy at the intolerance shown to his community in Pakistan. Experiences like these confirmed for me my liberal Humanism and secular approach to politics. After a long gap of some thirty years I felt very happy and proud when the great physicist was awarded an honorary Doctorate by the AMU at a special convocation.

The universities of Cambridge and Oxford have always been known for their extra-curricular students voluntary associations and clubs. I reluctantly consented to become the President of the *Muslim Society* for one term in my final year. Dr. Fazlur Rahman of Oxford had recently been appointed Lecturer in Islamic Philosophy at Durham University. His book on Ibn Sina's philosophy had already made him well known. I, therefore, invited him to give a talk on the great Muslim savant of the medieval age. Eminent Cambridge scholars such as Professor Arberry and Professor Levi graced the occasion and the meeting was well attended and successful.

Several years later President Ayub of Pakistan asked Dr. Fazlur Rahman to head the newly established *Institute of Islamic Research* at Islamabad. Unfortunately, the author's liberal views, expressed in his excellent scholarly work, *Islam*, led to his severe victimization and eventual expulsion from Pakistan. The University of Chicago, however, offered him a Professorship. The Muslim world has yet to understand that suppression of honest views, whether the suppression be direct or indirect, is the enemy of both truth and faith. Intolerance breeds hypocrisy and sickness of the soul, never authentic faith or goodness.

The third experience took place when I was returning home from Cambridge. It was late 1952 and the 'Lysenko controversy' concerning scientific evidence for the genetic transmission of acquired traits in the species was at its peak. Under orders from the Communist High Command scientific data in Russia was distorted and suppressed to prove the thesis dear to the Party. A Communist sympathizer who was a Pakistani strongly defended the Communist party line even though he agreed that the stand of Lysenko was scientifically wrong. He held that telling lies was justified if it helped Communism. Nothing could be more different from my own commitment to the ethical approach to politics and the separation of both politics and science from religion.

My belief in the ethical approach to politics and to democracy became firmly rooted during my stay in Cambridge, and to date it has remained my spiritual anchor, despite it's being under severe attack

from many quarters ranging from Marxist intellectuals to conservative Muslims. I have always conceded the limitations of democracy, but pointed out that its alternatives are even worse.

The last experience I would like to share with the reader concerns the perplexity I felt several times whenever I attended Christian churches in search of spiritual enrichment, even though I never subscribed to Christian theology. The music and spirituality of the place of worship was my obvious attraction. Whenever the church people went round to collect monetary contributions from those present at the service I did not know what to do as a believing Muslim. Deep down in me I had some reservations about a Muslim materially helping a faith in some way tarred with 'polytheism'.

The answer came to me in a rather dramatic manner several years later when I saw a beautiful mosque and cultural center in the heart of the diplomatic enclave of Washington. The builder was a white American Christian. I was astonished and felt somewhat amused at my religious perplexity and immaturity of my days at Cambridge.

The core views that took birth in my Cambridge days, followed by a year at Munster, slowly developed over the years and became articulate enough for publication in two works, *Five Approaches to Philosophy*, 1965, and *Quest For Islam*, 1977. Though a lot of reading and hard thinking on the issues involved was done by me at Aligarh over long years the core of my ideas was shaped at Cambridge and Munster.