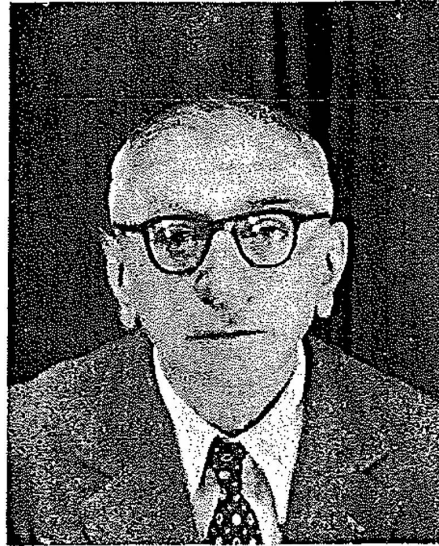


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# **MY FIFTY YEARS IN BURMA**

**BY**

**P. D. PATEL**



*THE AUTHOR*

## MY FIFTY YEARS IN BURMA

With a view to find a suitable place to settle down in life, after a peregrination through most of the important cities of India; from Bombay to Peshawar, from Peshawar to Madras and from Madras to Calcutta, from which city with the help of Thomas Cook & Sons after a pleasant sea voyage, I arrived in Rangoon on the afternoon of 30th January 1908.

I knew no one in Rangoon, having no relations and no friends. I was a total stranger. I had no knowledge about the country. I went to the Strand Hotel but there was no accommodation available. I went to the Royal Hotel in Merchant Street run by one Mr. Stewart, whom I later in life knew well, as he had acquired a property in my home town of Kalaw. At the Royal I drew a blank. The place was full of visitors. I was directed to Chisa's, a small hotel run by an Italian in Dalhousie Street facing Fytche Square (now Bandoola Square).

I felt very unhappy and uncomfortable, though the proprietor did his best to please me and make me comfortable. I believe it was a Saturday. Next morning I took a stroll in the town. On my return to the hotel I enquired whether I could get a small cottage where I could live in comfort and peace. I was directed to go to Insein and given instructions how to reach the place. In the afternoon I boarded a local arriving at Insein about 5 p.m. I engaged the usual horse conveyance then plying. To my surprise, the gharry-wallah told me there was no hotel and there was no rest house. I was at my wit's end, but the kind-hearted gharry-wallah came to my rescue. He enquired whether I was a Parsi. When I said yes, he smiled and told me that he was going to take me to a house where two Parsi gentlemen were living and accordingly he drove me to the house. It was a nice little double-storey bungalow on a high ground. Seeing the gharry, two gentlemen came out of the house. To my great surprise and pleasure, one of them was a friend who was with me in London studying at the same time. I explained to him my difficulties, and he and his friend kindly suggested without hesitation that I should stay with them. I accordingly accepted their invitation with a condition that I must be considered a Paying Guest. The other gentleman fortunately came from the same town as myself—city of Surat—where his father was Lieutenant-Colonel,

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I.M.S. in charge of the city's hospital and his brother was a school-mate with me while his sisters were with me in a drawing class. So I was amongst friends.

In two months' time, I found accommodation in the neighbourhood and rented the house where I lived for 33 years—when owing to Japanese invasion for safety sake I shifted to Kalaw.

In my college days I was a keen politician, liberal and anti-conservative. I was a follower of the Grand Old Man of India, Dadabhoj Nowrowjee, who was the first Indian to enter the House of Parliament.

During my four years stay in U.K. I regularly attended various meetings of the East India Association, and took part in debates, which brought me into intimate contacts with the powerful Anglo-Indian group of retired officials.

To help Gandhijee during his visit to U.K. in 1906 I opened a debate at the Hardwick Society by moving a resolution, "This House deplors the treatment of Indians in South Africa." The motion was carried, resulting in my election as a Committee Member. My next motion was "The regime of Lord Curzon was a failure." This was also carried and I was then elected a Life Member of the Society.

I took part at the Parliamentary Election in 1905 in support of Dadabhoj Nowrowjee who was unfortunately unsuccessful.

These debates and public speaking at various meetings were a great education and have stood me well in life.

## MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS

I was also very interested in Municipal Administration and through sheer agitation got Insein, in September 1909, notified as a Municipality with 6 elected members and 7 nominated members. I contested the Bazaar Ward where the majority of voters were the workmen in the Burma Railways loco-shop. I was successful and remained a member till Christmas of 1925. In 1916, the Municipal funds were low and the President, who was an official through majority votes, resolved to increase the taxation by 3 per cent more on rental value. This increase was very unpopular and gave me an opportunity I was looking forward to. A public meeting was organized attended even by Britishers

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resident in Insein where it was unanimously resolved to oppose the increase in taxation. The Deputy Commissioner, who was an army man, thought better of it and on the next day paid me a visit at my house. On my suggestion he agreed to nominate me as the Vice-President with full power to look into the financial question and take suitable steps. I was very successful. I brought in good revenue and without any further taxation the deficit budget became a surplus budget. The Government was pleased and in 1917 I was nominated as the first non-official President of a Municipality in Burma. Subsequently the right of election was given to the Municipal Committee and for 8 solid years, year after year, I was elected President.

Municipal taxes in Insein were lowest in Burma—7 per cent including electric lights on rental value—for which sole credit goes to me.

As President of the Insein Municipal Committee I had to work very hard—three hours a day. But I feel extremely happy to say that in December 1925 when I ceased to be the President, I left Municipal Finances in a sound state. I paid up the Government Loan of Rs.20,000/- taken by the official President and left a cash balance of Rs.1,25,000/-. This was a great achievement bearing in mind vast improvement and an annual income of Rs.1,00,000/- only. I must frankly admit that I had stiff tussles with the Commissioner of Rangoon Division, late Mr. Robertson—poor man died in a mental asylum in Scotland—over electric lights but I scored. I ultimately got the electric lights from R.E.T. & S. Co. as a result of my peppery speech delivered at the Special Meeting of the Municipal Committee and published *in extenso* by the “Rangoon Gazette” and “Rangoon Times.” I take my hat off to those papers.

As a result of my speech, the late Sir John Darwood, head of R.E.T. & S. Co. Ltd., paid a visit to me at my house at Insein and Insein got electric lights in three months time.

Matter did not rest there. Government appointed a Committee to advise whether the newly created post of Commissioner of Rangoon held by Mr. Robertson should be retained. I gave evidence before the Committee and I am happy to say the post was abolished. With that went my friend Robertson in retirement. It is sad that it is so and more because when I met him in my office lift, I told him that he was working for a mental asylum in response to his enquiry whether I was Mr. Patel.

In 1912 I was appointed Secretary of Rangoon Trades Association—a body of British Shop-owners such as Rowe & Co., Motor House,

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Barnett Bros. etc. I was fortunate in making the Association an effective one securing for the Association rights of representation on Rangoon Municipal Committee, Rangoon Development Trust, Port Commissioners and Legislative Council. The Annual Dinner of the Association was the principal social event of the year, attended by the Governor, Judges, Principal Government Officials and elite of the Mercantile community. Through heavy work I resigned in 1925, leaving a record of good work. On my wedding on 22nd November 1917 I received very valuable presents both from the Association and individual members in appreciation of my work.

### VISIT TO KALAW

My first visit to Kalaw was in 1912. There was no motor cars or buses. There was no train service even between Thazi and Kalaw. So I and my servants three in number Boy, cook and a Sweeper travelled in bullock-carts. I engaged five bullock-carts; one was full of Provisions, foreign beer and liquor, drinking water in bottles and eatables of all kinds, one was used by me for sleeping, one carried my personal luggage and two were allotted to servants. It took five days to reach Kalaw a distance of 60 miles from Thazi. I really enjoyed the trip. The scenery was gorgeous. I carried a gramophone to amuse myself and sometimes it amused villagers.

When I reached Kalaw I was immensely impressed by the beauty of the place. The Pine trees were a delight to see.

I spent five days in Kalaw which was just a growing town—a real health resort.

My second visit was in 1915 when the Railway was opened by Sir Harcourt Butler.

My third visit was in January 1919. This visit was under Doctor's orders, as a result of mild Heart attack. I brought with me my wife and my first child about five months old and stayed in an unfinished house under construction as a hotel by Naphiet of the famous Minto Mansions Hotel of Rangoon. It was not very comfortable but the climate braced me up. I then decided to purchase a house which I did in or about May 1919 from Mr. D. V. Harvey—who was then the Assistant Superintendent Western Sub-Division Kalaw. Thank God I have still got the house but in a much renovated state.

## RAILWAY TO KALAW

While I was Secretary, Rangoon Trades Association, on 1st February 1915 the Railway to Kalaw—a distance of 63 miles from Thazi was opened to traffic by Sir Harcourt Butler—the then Lt. Governor of Burma. The Governor, his personal staff and a select number of guests travelled from Rangoon to Kalaw in a special train. I was one of the fortunate ones as I as Secretary accompanied the President, The Rangoon Trades Association, the late Mr. F. F. Goodliffe.

The journey from Thazi was magnificent. Kalaw with an elevation 4292 lies in a valley between sloping hill sides covered with pine trees. It possesses a good climate. Since the opening of the railway it developed rapidly into a popular Hill Station and health resort. Alas it has gone down. The pre-war level and amenities of life as then have disappeared with disappearance of pre-war residents and influx of new comers from Burma.

The scenery on this branch is exceptionally fine. The line winds in and along the hill side, with magnificent views right down the valley.

After arrival at Kalaw and a short speech by the Governor declaring the line open, he along with all the guests were entertained to a sumptuous lunch at Kalaw Club. After which the party returned to Rangoon.

Being ambitious, I also stood for Rangoon Municipal Committee in the year 1915. The Parsis were grouped with Europeans, Anglo-Indians, Jews and Armenians. I was strongly opposed by the Britishers who put up the then Manager of the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank against me. My strong opponent was Oscar de Glanville as he was then known, while the Anglo-Indians and Anglo-Burmans solidly stood by me. I was successful and remained a member for a period of 3 years. It was during that period that the question of turning Rangoon Municipal Committee into Rangoon Corporation was mooted. At the next election in 1918, owing to heavy work which I had to perform as President of Insein Municipality, I did not stand as a member.

Along with the late U Hpe, who was the first Burmese member of the Indian Legislative Assembly, I had the pleasure and honour of entertaining to a Burmese breakfast, the late Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, first Labour Prime Minister, Messrs. Gokhale and Choble, three members of the Civil Service Commission on their visit to Burma. We two briefed these three distinguished visitors to the best of our ability for which they thanked us profusely.

## WORLD WAR ONE

During the First World War, I helped the Government in every respect in collecting money, myself subscribing liberally and recruiting a labour corps for Mesopotamia. I was appointed Recruiting Secretary for Insein District. I have still got the appointment order with me. At my expense I toured throughout the Insein district and secured a good number of recruits. As a result, the Commander-in-Chief of India sent me a badge in appreciation of voluntary service during the war. The badge is with me.

I had an unique experience during the war. It was a Bakri Idd day. The Deputy Commissioner late U San Pe, and District Superintendent of Police, Mr. Webster, were sick. Trouble over killing of cows between the Hindus and Moslems who all lived at Sawbagyigone was expected. I was asked by Deputy Commissioner to visit the area, and remain on the scene to see that there was no unpleasant incident. About 7 a.m. I all by myself, as I refused to have Police escort, with a cane in my hand appeared on the scene. I knew everyone and everyone knew me and respected me and that is why I was asked to do this work.

I talked, joked and related amusing stories and after three hours of anxious time I brought about a settlement. It was that Hindus should provide five goats and present them to Moslems who in turn would refrain from slaughtering cows. The goats were slaughtered and Moslems sportingly presented one goat after slaughter to the Hindus. After everything was amicably settled I returned home, had my lunch with a bottle of Pilsner Beer which after an exhaustive morning was very welcome. After lunch I saw the D.C. He was mightily pleased. So ended the day.

The Commissioner Pegu Division wrote to me a letter of profuse thanks.

I was one of the founders of the Orient Club which functioned for a long time on Halpin Road, in a hired building. Alas, all founders, except P. P. Ginwalla now in Calcutta, Sir U Thwin and myself, are dead. Against much opposition I, with some prominent members shifted the club to its present place by raising debentures. I secured a sum of K8,000 from timber magnate late U Ba Oh to build the portico and verandah facing the lake.

Later in life I took an interest in racing while racing was still on the old Race Course Maidan. I can claim having won a 100-1 win



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and 50-1 place on Hell's Belle, belonging to Mrs. Gamble whose husband was Private Secretary to Sir Harcourt Butler. It was a great day, for excitement and money-making.

On the eve of shifting the Turf Club headquarters from Godwin Road to Kyaikkasan, Justice Cunliffe, who was then High Court Judge, tabled a vote of non-confidence against the then Stewards over their decision about a pony called Hit-Hard, jointly owned by Mr. Quinlivan, Director of Public Instruction, and U Kyaw Din, the Grand Old Man of the Bar at present. Feelings were running very high. The Chairman of the Board of Directors was not allowed to preside at the meeting. His place was voted to Mr. Justice Duckworth—another High Court judge. Fortunately, this gave me an opportunity and I made my maiden speech at the meeting. My arguments appealed to the members and by an overwhelming majority the resolution was defeated. That gave me an opportunity to take prominent part in the affairs of the Rangoon Turf Club. I carried weight with the Board of Directors which included Sir John Cherry—Chairman of Port Commissioners. With my influence my first act was to get rid of the judge—a Britisher who had only one eye and whose decisions were invariably wrong in close finishes. He is dead and I shall say no more.

After my advent, proceedings of the Annual General Meetings became lively. At one meeting I carried through five resolutions to improve racing and the administration.

I was instrumental in terminating the services of Regi Powell—the then Stipendary Steward. He was a clever man but there were general complaints about his handicappings. So he went and Major Pugh took his place. At the Annual General Meeting one of his admirers who was a member of the Bar moved a resolution that a Gold Cup called Powell Cup be inaugurated as a mark of appreciation of his work. I opposed it and ended up my argument by saying "Caesar's wife should be above suspicion." The resolution was lost by a large majority. Then I stood as an independent candidate for Directorship opposing Col. Wellbourne—Inspector General of Police. I stood 3rd. So I became a Steward as well and held these posts for 3 years.

Powell was succeeded by Major Pugh. Poor Major Pugh is no more with us. He committed suicide while trekking to India during evacuation. I might mention here that Racing owes a debt of gratitude to the late U Tha Din Gyi. May his soul rest in peace.

## RAILWAY STRIKE

About 1921 or 1922 (I am not sure of the exact year) there was a general strike by workmen of the Loco-shop of the Burma Railways at Insein. Mr. Craig was the Loco-Superintendent. The entire work covering various departments came to a stop. In the Municipal Election workmen were my staunch voters. As a result of this connection they looked upon me as their Leader. I had a very tough time for a week. They used to come to my Rangoon office at 83 Phayre Street and there was not a standing room either inside or outside my office in the passage. In fact a string of workmen stood on the pavement right from the Central Telegraph Office up to the porch of my office building.

My reward was that I was successful in securing a settlement between the workmen and the Railway Company. This settlement secured me a good status among Railway officials who were all Britishers. I used to be a frequent traveller by rail and whenever I travelled I was given all facilities of a comfortable journey.

The workmen in return showed me their gratitude for getting their grievances remedied. In fact they did nothing without first consulting me. There were fortunately then no Unions but I became their leader.

I still remember with gratitude various kind acts of Railway top officials including Chief Medical Officer Dr. Douglas and Dr. Carrier—both very eminent London M.Ds.

## EDUCATIONAL

During Sir Harcourt Butler's regime there was a conference at the Government House to inaugurate Divisional School Boards. I was invited as a representative of the Indian Community. This much annoyed some old so-called prominent members of the Indian Community. As a result of this conference I was put on the Divisional School Board for Insein and Hanthawaddy Districts with Commissioner of Pegu as Chairman. It was very interesting work and I relished it. We did good work.

## POLITICS

To show my interest in politics I took a prominent part when the White Committee came to Burma. The Indians then headed by Mr. S. A. S. Tyabjee and others boycotted the Committee. I gave

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evidence and secured a number of Indians, including the late Mr. Mirza M. Rafi from the districts, to send written memorandums.

Though the White Committee was boycotted by prominent Indians, I did a signal service to the Indian Community. Thirteen seats were allotted to the Indians and it was also open to them to contest any general seat.

As a matter of fact, at the first election held in 1923, I stood for Insein General Constituency while my opponent was U Ba Hlaing. There were about five polling stations. I was leading in four but owing to transport difficulty I neglected Tantabin polling station where my opponent secured all votes.

I lost by 76 votes. I filed an Election Petition. It was heard by a Tribunal consisting of two High Court Judges and one District Judge.

I alleged corruption and treating. The Tribunal held that my charges were proved but they declined to set aside the election for a most unrealistic and fantastic reason. They held that as it was first election, it would not be right to interfere. So my most cherished dream to be a member of Burma Parliament ended to my great disappointment.

So I devoted myself to more useful and profitable work.

## SPORTS

All my lifetime, I had taken interest in sports. In my school days I was 100 yards and one mile race medalist. I had my own Cricket Team. I was the Captain and the Proprietor. In Insein I in 1912 organised a football association and was its Vice-President. I donated a Challenge Cup and ran a team named after me. In 1941 my team won my Cup.

In 1940 I donated a cup for a Badminton Tournament to be played in Rangoon. The final of the tournament was played in Corporation Hall in presence of Lady Cochrane, wife of the then Governor of Burma, who presented the cup to the Winners.

I also donated a cup for Boxing which I did in keeping with my all-round support of sports.

As a result of Japanese occupation all these cups were lost.

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For Arakan Relief Fund in about 1927, at Myaungmya I organised a football match between two ladies' (all Karen) teams. That was the time when U Tun Ya was the Deputy Commissioner.

It was a great success. The football alone, which was auctioned twice, fetched K1,500. I even secured a donation from the Bishop of Rangoon who was on a visit and who disapproved of the match.

I had a picture of both the teams but lost it during Japanese occupation.

## 1940 RANGOON MUNICIPAL ELECTION

There was a Municipal Election in 1940. I was persuaded by friends to stand to contest the seat of the sitting member Mr. J. K. Munshi—an ex-Mayor. He was supported by a leading member of the Bar who never liked me for my independence and by a High Court Official. There were three seats allotted to the group of Parsis, Jews, Armenians and Anglo-Indians. The Municipal Commissioner was late U Soe Nyun who made no secret of his support for Mr. Munshi. He was inclined to reject my Nomination Paper. On the phone from my house at Insein at 8 p.m. I gave him a hot talk with the result that the intention of rejection vanished in the air. On the Election Day by 11 a.m. I had secured a sufficient number of votes to score a smashing victory. So I went to the Silver Grill of good old days—a place for cheers, for some refreshments to remove all fatigue. Between 2 p.m. and 4 p.m. I brought in 200 more voters. I had 25 motor cars through the kindness of friends. I really enjoyed to see the down-casted face of my life long bitter enemy—so-called leader of the Bar. He is no longer with us, so I shall say nothing.

In the evening when the results were announced I stood on the balcony of the Corporation building and received an ovation which is still ringing in my ears, from my supporters who were waiting downstairs.

It was a brilliant day and a brilliant achievement, topping the poll, producing stomach-aches and head-aches for my opponents.

During the short time I was on the Committee I was the leader at the meetings of the Corporation. The old sitting members took back seats. There is one Burmese Councillor who is still with us. He is a Supreme Court Judge. He can vouchsafe what I am saying.

To my credit I introduced one innovation. I was a member of the Finance Committee. At my suggestion the Budget was considered for

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five days sitting from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. with a break of one hour 1 to 2 p.m. for lunch. It was a Deficit Budget. We, to the greatest annoyance of the then Commissioner—poor soul is dead, turned it into a surplus budget. Thanks to the Chairman of Port Commissioners who was the Chairman of Finance Committee and Mr. Prescott—Commissioner of Police who gave me whole hearted support.

I represented the Corporation on the Agri-Horticultural Society Committee and Rangoon General Hospital Committee which gave me a scope for some solid and constructive work.

The Hospital nurses gave me solid support at election time much to the annoyance of the Matron—a Britisher who tried her best to prevent them from voting. But good old girls stood by me. I was their friend. I had written in the “Rangoon Gazette” letters supporting their grievances. They were over-worked, under-fed and compelled to do menial work. The Government appointed a Committee to investigate the grievances. The Chairman was Mr. Swithanbank—Commissioner of Pegu Division; Col. Kennedy—Inspector-General of Hospitals, and my friend the Matron were members along with some four others. I was the first witness. I still remember Col. Kennedy asking the Chairman who the devil I was and the Chairman’s reply was that I was the “Uncrowned King of Insein.” In my evidence apart from nurses’ grievance I mentioned an incident which just staggered the Inquiry Committee members. I said one day I went to the X-ray Department and asked the officer in charge to X-ray me. To my surprise I learnt that the machine was out of order for nearly one year.

I felt very happy to know that the report of the Inquiry Committee was fair and useful. The nurses were satisfied and pleased. I became their Daddy.

## WORLD WAR II

After Japan declared war on U.K. and U.S.A., life in Rangoon was much disorganised. Sir Reginald Dorman Smith, the then Governor of Burma, failed to inspire confidence among the civilian non-Burmese population in spite of urging every night on the radio to ‘stay put.’

On 23rd December, 1941 the Japanese Air Force was over Rangoon. The result of the bombing was terrific—250 men, women and children were killed in an East Rangoon Park. I was in my Rangoon Office

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when the bombers appeared. I got into my car and drove at a terrific speed to Golden Valley where my married daughter with a six-month-old baby was staying with her husband. We sheltered in the trench.

A dear friend of mine Mr. Pope of Watson & Sons was killed in his office. This showed that there were 5th Columnists in Burma. I attended his funeral at Hanthawaddy Christian Cemetery on Xmas Day. To my horror I saw a huge stack of corpses lying unburied.

As a result of frequent bombing, I sent away my family consisting of my wife and a young daughter to Kalaw while my married daughter, her six-month-old baby, her husband and his parents also went to Kalaw.

I remained in Insein. I had a most gruelling time. Life was completely disorganised. In January I went by road to Kalaw to see how the family was getting on. I took with me my wife's jewels which were in a locker of the Imperial Bank. Just as well I did it because those who left their valuables in the lockers lost them. On my arrival I found my daughter had left her jewels in one of the lockers of the Imperial Bank. I was much annoyed and by the first train I sent my son-in-law to Rangoon to collect the jewels. A week passed and there was no sign of his return. I immediately went to Rangoon by car. When I arrived in Rangoon I saw my son-in-law. He gave me the jewel box. His excuse was that he was in search of a man whom he had given a cheque for K10,000/- for cashing while there was no sign of him. I took the jewel box, went to my house at Insein, called all servants, gave them six months wages and asked them to look after both houses and their contents promising to return within six months. How little did I know what was in store for me.

Next morning I with jewel box left by car for Kalaw. At Pegu I nearly lost my car as Army and Police combined were seizing all cars but by presence of mind I escaped driving 60 miles an hour and waving frantically to car seizers as if they were my friends.

I broke journey at Nyaunglebin, slept with the jewel case under the pillow and a loaded revolver close by. Nothing happened. Early next morning I resumed my journey and had refreshment at Pyinmana Railway Station. Soon after I had left the Station, Japanese bombers appeared and pounded Pyinmana badly. I drove as fast as I could with a stop at Meiktila and reached Kalaw next morning.

When Singapore fell, I sent away the family to India. From Kalaw they travelled right up to Tamu from which place they trekked to

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Dimapore. Finally by train from Dimapore via Allahabad to Bombay. The journey took exactly one month. I received a telegram that they reached Bombay safely. That was the last telegram Kalaw Telegraph Office handled.

### EVACUATION OF RANGOON

Soon after I had left, the evacuation of Rangoon was ordered, resulting in pillage, plunder and arson. I subsequently learnt that all my servants, nine in all, ran away at the first sign of trouble and I lost all. When Rangoon was evacuated half a dozen families from Rangoon evacuated to Kalaw. There was a High Court Judge and his family, a District and Sessions Judge and his family, Secretary of Finance Ministry and his family a Deputy Commissioner and his family, a District Superintendent of Police and his family and lastly Sir Oscar de'Glanville and his wife. He had acquired the very house with a cottage attached to it in which I had stayed during my visit in January 1919. When he arrived in Kalaw in either March or April 1942 he was a sick man. The mismanagement of Sir Reginald Dorman Smith distressed and disheartened him. He was occupying a very prominent position in life. He was the leading criminal lawyer, Leader of the Golden Valley Party in the House of Representatives and President of Burma Red Cross. Such being the case he could have easily evacuated in comforts to India but he did not approve of that idea.

I arranged for a Japanese Doctor Hasikura to see him at his house. I took him in my motor car. He made a thorough examination and came to the conclusion that he was physically fit but he was suffering from mental worries for which he could do nothing.

On top of this an evil minded Indian made a report against him to the Japanese military authorities with a result Sir Oscar was ordered to leave his house and shift to a cottage in the Bazaar quarter. This completely upset him. He could not walk so I placed my motor car at his disposal. In a week's time he shifted. I used to visit him but he was far from being well. In a short time he died and was buried at the Christian Cemetery. Not one Burman of position who had taken shelter in Kalaw attended his funeral through fear of Japanese Kempetai.

Soon after Lady de'Glanville left Kalaw but during C.A.S.(B) Administration returned to Kalaw and settled down in her cottage. Her daughter a teacher in Kingswood School and a grand daughter are with her.

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It was in early February 1942. Some of the British Banks packed up and opened out in Mandalay. As far as I remember Mandalay was bombed by the Japanese for the first time in early March. It was a terrific bombing. Prior to that Meiktila got her share. Soon after Mandalay was bombed I left Kalaw for Mandalay by car in search of two friends, who according to my information, were still in Mandalay.

The journey was by no means pleasant. When I passed through Meiktila, a portion of the town was still burning. Mandalay was worse. The Chinese soldiers were a nuisance. They were after my motor car. So I went to Dr. Wiles' house who was then District Medical Officer, Burma Railways, at Mandalay. I knew him well. He was surprised to see me. I left my car at his house, took a cycleshaw and went on my errand. It was heartbreaking. Fires were still on. Stench from dead and burning bullocks was terrific. Indian soldiers were helping themselves from deserted shops. I spent over two hours, but I found no trace of my friends. The cycleshaw man refused to carry me farther. So I engaged a bullock cart and kept up my search. It was nearly four o'clock in the afternoon. So I gave up the search and went back to Dr. Wiles' house.

There to my great surprise I met Dr. Carrier—may God bless him. He is alive and working in U.K. He was Chief Medical Officer, Burma Railways and only London M.D. in Burma.

He advised me to evacuate to India but I impressed on him and on Dr. Wiles to evacuate. I said I was safe. How little I then knew about the Japanese brutes.

After tea I started to return to Kalaw. When I reached Langwa it was getting dark. The Mogul Headman, Zain-ul-Abbadin, had a big Mogul camp on his estate. Most of the Moguls families from Rangoon and Shirazees of Kalaw had taken shelter there. I knew several. So I was among friends.

I was given one cottage, had a good dinner and above all I enjoyed Johnny Walker Black Label Whisky.

I had a fair night and in early morning after coffee I took leave of my host and motored as fast as I could back to Kalaw which I reached about early afternoon and thus ended a journey full of events, sad and grim and without finding out the whereabouts of my two friends. I might



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mention here that both Dr. Carrier and Dr. Wiles returned to Burma in 1945 on Burma being re-occupied and they unfortunately went out of Burma in early 1948. It was a pity that Burma was so shortsighted in pushing out these eminent Doctors.

I have still got with me Dr. Carrier's one prescription. I carry this mixture wherever I go. It is a marvellous stuff. It serves me well.

Through Japanese occupation I lost 75 per cent of my Estates earned by hard work for 33 years and also lost a very remunerative occupation which gave me an income of K4,000/- a month.

I and many others suffered for want of protection to which we were entitled, and received nothing by way of compensation for all losses suffered inspite of lavish promises held out during the period of war by H.M.G. I have still got with me extracts of speeches in Parliament to the effect that Burma will be compensated.

After I had seen to the evacuation of my family to India, I tried to return to Insein but I was not successful as the road was completely blocked. I then decided to remain in Kalaw where I spent four and a half years when I returned to Rangoon in April 1946.

I was in Kalaw when the Japanese occupied Kalaw. I was offered Chairmanship of the Peace Preservation Committee but on grounds of age I refused and I was not pressed.

It was April when 5,000 Japanese troops with artillery passed through Kalaw on their way to Taunggyi. Everybody of position including a District and Sessions Judge, a High Court Judge, a Secretary of the Finance Ministry and others lined up on the road at Kalaw barrier and paid homage to the Commander. I did not go.

In the early stages everything went off well except on one occasion. One very early morning against advice the District and Sessions Judge with his family and all belongings including 3 or 4 rifles left by cars for Rangoon. The Japanese had received information of this movement. So the whole party was arrested near the barrier. The wife with grown-up sons and other members was allowed to return to the house the family was occupying, but the husband, rifles, and his posh motor car were taken to Aungban, which was the headquarters of the army. I received a frantic S.O.S. from his wife for help. I approached the High Court Judge and the Finance Secretary but did not receive any help as they blamed the District Judge for breach of mutual pact.

With the help of an Indian who was *persona grata* with the Commander, I managed to get the husband released in the afternoon, after a severe dressing-down he had received. The Judge is still alive and flourishing.

But up to now I received no gratitude for pulling him out of serious trouble while his own kith and kin refused to help. Such is the world.

The year 1942 passed off without any serious trouble, though one morning I had a narrow shave. Early one morning 4 Japanese Officers with eight armed soldiers came to the house and surrounded it. I was asleep but the noise woke me up. I opened the door. I was severely questioned by the senior officer. I saw that I was in for something serious. I quietly asked my driver to go and call a Japanese Sergeant in-charge of Wireless living just in front of my house as he had promised to be of service in case of trouble. His name was Yoshida. He came in no time and jabbered in Japanese to the officers and thereby worked a miracle. The officers, tails down, quietly walked out without saying a word. The soldiers followed. I was grateful to Yoshida so I invited him to have Chota Hazri with me.

I then questioned him what was the matter. His reply was "Burma men very bad. They say to Nippon, you are a spy. Nippon say 'yes' and take you away and *cut* your throat."

I said that is very cheerful news. We had a nice Chota Hazri. He inquired whether I had any other trouble. I said yes that yesterday some soldiers came and took away my revolver leaving a receipt behind but they are after my motor car as well. So he took me to the man in charge to Hotel Kalaw. He was a very decent man—a member of Japanese Diet. Yoshida explained everything. In no time my revolver was produced and returned to me. Then he wrote something in Japanese on a piece of paper and pasted it on the wind screen of my motor car. Then I returned home thanking the officer in English. I saw poor Whiting and one of Smyths seated in the Hotel garage with a sentry over them.

Kingswood School was turned into an Army Hospital. There were seven Doctors attached to the Hospital. One evening they visited me and borrowed some books such as Life of Lord Curzon and an autobiography of Asquith. They became very friendly. I visited the Hospital. One night we had dinner in my house. They brought two bottles of Saki. I had a good fill, but one of them got a bit drunk.

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Trouble in Kalaw was that some Burmans as well as Indians made false reports against some residents with a view to curry favour with Japanese Army men.

One Burman and one Indian were very active in this line of dirty work. They are still in Kalaw.

Through the workings of one of these two persons and with the help of a Japanese Major in January 1943 I was arrested. He went to the extent of giving evidence against me. According to him I was a British spy, a most dangerous man and there would be a strike in the Bazaar if I was not locked up. He had seen me drinking Whisky with Britishers at the Kalaw Club.

When I was asked to cross-examine him, I replied: "He is a damn bloody liar." The investigating officer thereupon said "So and So you damn bloody liar go." The inquiry so ended in my favour.

I spent twenty-one days in captivity. I was classed as a British spy and a most dangerous man. I received terrible thrashings seventy-five slaps without a break on both cheeks, merciless beatings with a bamboo on legs and back resulting in terrible swellings and finally was tied up to the ceiling, dangling in the air for 45 minutes. There was lack of food. I had no bath. It was winter. I slept on a bare floor, no mattress, no pillows and no blanket. It was frosty and bitterly cold as I was in an open cage with bars all round. I had an iron constitution and through the mercy of Providence I survived.

During my absence my house was occupied by the Kempetai Chief and his America-educated Japanese interpreter. The Chief made himself comfortable wore my clothes and used my motor car. Through the kindness of the Interpreter, I was released. Every day I provided dinner and so became friendly with the Chief. He asked me to prepare a list of all Anglo-Indians, Anglo-Burmans, and Europeans. As a matter of fact, there were six Danes living in a house owned by me and one Frenchman who was a dentist. I was asked to report as to their antecedents and whether they could be trusted.

I gave everyone a clear certificate so they all lived in Kalaw without molestation till Kalaw was relieved on 7th June 1945.

I had no more trouble. As a matter of fact, Indians who had any difficulty, came to me for help owing to my friendship with the Kempetai Chief.

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In June 1943 I went to Rangoon travelling in a bus carrying goods sitting right on the top. It was an unique experience and I rather enjoyed it. It took 3 days to reach Rangoon. I had to depend for food on road-side eating shops. The object of the visit was two fold:— (1) to ascertain the state of my 4 houses, three in Insein and one in Rangoon and contents of two which in pre-war days were occupied by me, and (2) to attend on my own a Conference called by Subhas Chandra Bose.

I was shocked to see the state of my houses — the contents with lovely furniture made by Rowe & Co., expensive Piano, His Master's Voice Gramophone, two Radios, valuable pictures by Dutch artists, Silver wares, etc., had been sent away to Tokyo. They were all in the occupation of Japanese Army.

I attended the Conference held at the B.A.A.

It was presided over by Subhas Chandra Bose who was immaculately dressed. I was not a delegate so I had to take a back seat. This embarrassed a Punjabi who was once my Conservancy Jamadar while I was President of Insein Municipality. He meant well and I soon put him at ease.

I remained in Rangoon for eight days during which period I occupied a room in a house on Prome Road in occupation of a Karen family. The Head was prior to war an Assistant in Rowe & Co., and so he knew me. I received my messing through the kindness of Mr. A. R. Nizami who then was in a very flourishing state.

I went to Insein in a hand-pulled rickshaw with a view to inspect my houses, look up friends and so on. I found my friend C. A. Nicholas the lawyer in a very bad state of health. Thereafter he died very soon. In Rangoon I visited my friend the timber magnate U Ba Oh. He was so pleased to see me. In pre-war days he was a dear friend. He called his wife and said "Darling, Brother has come. Bring One thousand Rupees" and so I got Rs.1,000/-. How generous in those dreadful days.

It is sad he is no more with us. He died during the Japanese occupation. I can never forget him and his kindness. I received many acts of kindness from him.

I went and saw my best friend, late U Tha Din Gyi, who was then still living in his own house. He was overjoyed to see me. I met Sir M. A. Maung Gyi at Tha Din Gyi's house. He was staying there. Next day I went to Tha Din Gyi's Court in Boundary Road. We both had

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lunch on the Bench—a very unique experience. He was a dear friend. He wrote me a letter asking me to come to Rangoon and work with him to start a Racing Club. I have still got that letter. I was seriously considering coming down but in the meanwhile poor Tha Din Gyi died. His death was a great personal loss to me and I always think of him.

In my life-time I have really missed four friends and no more. They are Maurice Oppenheimer, Freddy Miers, U Tha Din Gyi and U Ba Oh. They were towers of strength to me.

I then returned to Kalaw very sad but full of hope for the future bringing with me 150 tolas of Gold. I arrived rather late at night which did not permit me to get to my residence. I slept the night in a Baker's shop. Once he was my cook in Insein and when I brought him to Kalaw he begged to remain in Kalaw. He is still alive with wife No. 2 and does good business. During Japanese occupation I got my bread, biscuits and cakes from him. At Xmas he was Kalaw's Continental—made cakes as good as we now get at Continental. I mention this to show that during Japanese occupation in Kalaw we were well off for food. It was even so observed by late Thakin Mya who visited Kalaw and was entertained to lunch. I knew Thakin Mya since 1912, when he was practising as a Lawyer in Tharrawaddy. We were friends.

In August, 1943 I paid a second visit to Rangoon with a view to witness celebrations and festivities to celebrate the Independence (with 200 Japanese Advisers to every Department of Government including the Supreme Court) which was to be announced. It was a flop. There were hardly any celebrations worth the name. The Shwe Dagon Pagoda was practically deserted. I went to see Father Salos on Inya Road. I found him sad and depressed. I asked for six copies of the Bible which I was asked to secure for Roman Catholics in Kalaw. There were none as all were taken away by the religious Barbarians who were then the Rulers. Coming out of the Church compound, I met U Chit Hlaing—the Speaker of the House of Representatives in pre-war days. He expressed his annoyance at Shan States being not given Independence but, he assured me he would try his best and he did as Shan States got Independence on 1st January, 1944 and U Khin Maung Phyu became first Deputy High Commissioner for Shan States with Headquarters at Taunggyi. He was a delightful person, considerate and helpful. The late U Ba Win, advocate, as Home Minister was the High Commissioner. Along with Justice U Myint Thein, I attended the ceremony where Sawbwas from various states paid their homage to U Ba Win. I must say many did not come and rightly too. Their names were called out,

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they came near the dais where U Ba Win was standing they bowed and shook hands with U Ba Win. I cannot say I enjoyed this tom-foolery. It reminded me of Communist Russia.

While in Rangoon an extraordinary incident took place. Naturally I paid a visit to my friend Mr. Nizami. I was not aware he had wrongly incurred Kempetai displeasure. Soon after my visit some Kempetai visited me. I showed them my credentials. They went away without saying anything. I went out and on my return the good Karen with whom I was staying told me that during my absence the Kempetai came to the house, made a thorough search of my room, ripped open the mattress as they suspected a pair of receivers were concealed in it. He looked worried and distressed. I immediately offered to leave the house and asked for six to eight hours grace. I then went straight to Martin Avenue where a dear friend the late Mr. Mirza Hoosain (whose nephew Mr. M. A. Isphani is a High Court Judge at Dacca) and his family were staying. I explained the matter to him. It was not possible to put me in his house, but he took me to a bamboo hut which was unoccupied. It was a horrible place I could not walk with shoes. However, I agreed to occupy. He generously promised to send food to me. I was in no time back to the old house and left it with my scant luggage after thanking my host.

I realised it was not safe to remain in Rangoon so in two days time I left Rangoon. To secure accommodation in a transport I took up my stand at Thamaing on Insein Road near Galliard's house. I stood on the road from 7 a.m. to 1 p.m. and at last I saw a bus which I recognised. My friend Motilal, Marwari from Aungban, was driving. I put up my hand and he stopped. He was surprised to see me. In any case I put my belongings in the bus and took my seat next to him. He drove while I kept talking. He stopped for the night in Pegu. Our next stop was Zeyawaddy Sugar Factory. The Proprietor's Manager was exceedingly kind and especially to me. We had a delightful dinner sitting on the floor. I was given a separate room to sleep. I slept well. Next morning after coffee we left with a bag of loaf sugar—gift from the Manager. Fancy loaf sugar in Japanese regime! After three hectic days we reached Meiktila—the bus was very rickety and gave trouble. I was so exhausted that at Meiktila I slept under a huge Koko tree by the side of the road. I had a glorious sleep dreaming that I was at a wedding. Next day we reached Kalaw and I vowed that I shall not visit Rangoon again as long as these barbarians were in Burma.

About September, 1944 Subhas Chandra Bose held a Conference at Mandalay. Delegates from several cities of Burma were invited.

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A party of twelve from Kalaw also went in a bus. I was in charge during the journey to Mandalay and back. I also made a stipulation that I must be accommodated in a separate house and not in the house allotted to delegates.

The outward journey was uneventful, except that we passed through much-devastated places as a result of Allied bombing.

On arrival at Mandalay I was accommodated on the first floor of a double-storeyed building situated in front of West Moat Road. The front part was occupied by my esteemed friends Mr. S. Chatterjee, the journalist and Zora Singh, the lawyer, but now a well-established commercial man; while back was allotted to me. Col. Isan Kader occupied 2nd floor.

I was made quite comfortable and was provided with good meals. I really did not attend the Conference but went about looking up people I knew. There were a Parsi family and an Anglo-Burman family. One day while roaming bombers suddenly appeared. I was in a fix, but a kind hearted Burmese woman, seeing my plight ran up to me and pulled me down into a Grotto—remnant of a Church blown up by Allied bombers.

Bombers frequently came and we had a rough time. One day our trench was filled with more than it could accommodate. I felt sick and nearly walked out but Col. Isan Kader pulled me down and made me stay.

The principal event was a parade of Izad Hind Army, Netajee took the salute. It was held in the compound of the Agricultural College. My transport was an army truck with no seating accommodation. I travelled all the way standing. It was a remarkable feat on my part as the truck was driven recklessly on a bad road.

The parade was a sight worth seeing, but I took precautions. I kept myself on the bottom of the huge steps of the building so that if any bombers appeared I could run and take shelter.

Next day I arranged to leave for Kalaw. When our bus reached Myitnge it was rather late in the evening. About 22 bombers suddenly appeared and started action. We stopped the bus and everyone ran for shelter. My companions deserted me. I sat under a tree. The bombers dropped flares and made it daylight. I was mortally afraid. They could see me so I looked for some good shelter. Suddenly I saw a nallah full of water. I dashed for it and lay down on my back in the

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nallah. I felt safe and prayed for safety. I remained in the position for nearly twenty minutes. As the bombers rolled away I came out and ran to the bus. I was soaking wet. My clothes and shoes were in a terrible state.

I pulled out my bag, took out a bottle of Mandalay Rum which fortunately I had bought that very morning, opened a bottle of Aspirins, took three of them—swallowed them with Rum and drank half the bottle. It was a desperate fight between double pneumonia and safety. I pulled out my shoes and changed socks, shirt and pant and tied blanket on me in the style of Roman toga.

Some of my companions asked me for a drink of Rum. I plainly told them to go to hell for their cowardice to leave me alone. One of them was a Doctor.

Then there was a stormy argument whether we should proceed or remain in Mandalay as Myitnge bridge was blown-up and we could not travel by road.

I persisted on going, I knew my geography. I was a much-travelled man in Burma. I was in charge during the journey so we moved on. I took my seat next to the driver to guide him.

We arrived at Amarapura. I saw a Japanese Flat. The sight cheered my heart. I produced my pass I had secured from the Head of Kampetai. The Japanese Officer, after looking at the pass, was the essence of politeness. Our bus was put on the Flat and we moved under my instructions and soon sailed as if we were explorers along the Sagaing Bridge. It was a magnificent sight. We saw the last two spans destroyed by British retreating troops.

We then bus and all came to shore. My first move was to tackle my half bottle of Rum with two more Aspirins. After I had finished the bottle and offered my devout thanks to Providence, I had consultations with my companions. They were more reasonable and amiable. My suggestion to make a stop till midnight and then move on was agreed upon.

At midnight we started. I sat next to the driver and directed him. After an hour or so we arrived at a landing place. I saw a Japanese Flat. I thanked the Lord and after usual talk got the bus on the Flat. The officer was polite due to my pass. He very sweetly said, "It looks more bombers would be coming, please do not jump into the river when



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you see them.” I said: “Do not worry, we are very sensible people and that is why we stayed in Burma to help our Nippon Brothers.” About 4 a.m. we landed in Kyaukse. I felt very happy, I turned around and asked my companions what they thought of me. They all shouted —“Sabash, Sabash.”

Then we drove into Meiktila. I sat on the mudguard to watch if any planes were coming. We reached there in good time having once only to take shelter as a result of approaching bombers.

We went into a tea shop, had some necessary refreshment to revive us and then started for Kalaw where we arrived about a little after midday.

I looked a horrible sight but I walked to my Residence. On arrival I ordered lunch and in the meanwhile I made Gin Cocktail.

I enjoyed my lunch and Cocktail. After that I had a sound sleep till 5 p.m.

Thus ended a delightful and thrilling episode.

## VISIT OF SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE

During last week of February, 1945 Netajee Subhas Chandra Bose paid a visit to Kalaw to inspect the Army Hospital at Loian—two miles from Kalaw. He was very disappointed with the accommodation provided for him with the result that in the early morning Major Rowter of the Gharwalis called at my residence and inquired whether I would put up Netajee at my residence. I cheerfully agreed and at about 7 a.m. Netajee arrived. I received him on top of the steps leading to my residence and wished him “Jai Hind, Netajee.” He returned my salutation by saying “Jai Hind Patel Sahib.” He spent two days with me. On the first day we had a visit from Allied Air Forces. 12 bombers hovered over Kalaw. Netajee refused to take shelter.

On the first day he had a number of visitors for whom I must have prepared about 75 cups of coffee. It was a moonlight night and so after dinner we went out for a walk. Netajee was charmed with Kalaw. At the dinner table our conversation was purely on social subjects. In fact, he extremely enjoyed dinner and especially chapatis. He gave an interesting account of his stay in Mandalay jail as a Political prisoner during British regime. He spoke well of Col. Tarapore who was then the

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Superintendent in charge of the jail. Next day in the afternoon he gave a public lecture which was largely attended by residents of Kalaw including a French Dentist, six Danes, present Chief Justice of the Union, Dr. Myint Thein; and others. I did not attend as I had to arrange a dinner party in accordance with Netajee's wishes. To his credit I must say he did not ask me why I did not attend. He did not ask me what was my occupation and how I was helping his cause. His behaviour was that of a thorough gentleman. We had a very lively talk about several personalities, including late Mr. Justice Das and his family.

When he left at night, he profusely thanked me and said he had really enjoyed his stay and expressed a wish that he may come back again, little realising that the Allies were making rapid progress and the days of Japanese oppression were nearing an end. I took a letter from him that my residence belonged to him and I was his Manager with a view to prevent Japanese occupation of the house. I might here say that he was well respected by the Japanese forces. In fact, his stay did me a lot of good. Japanese Kempetai treated me with great respect. I walked with my chin up and chest expanded. They used to ask me "is Subhas Chandra your friend." My reply was "he is my uncle."

When the fortunes of war were going against Facist Japanese, before retreating they had a plan to demolish major Commercial and Government Buildings such as British Banks, I.F. Co's main Office, Secretariat, Medical College, Law Courts, High Court, Steel Bros., Port Commissioners, General Post Office, Bombay Burma Office, Reserve Bank etc. etc.

When Netajee Subas Chandra Bose came to know of this dastardly plan, he strongly disapproved of it which resulted in the abandonment of the plan. Dr. Ba Maw the Adipadi, Japanese Commander-in-chief, high ranking Japanese army officials, numerous Japanese advisors left Rangoon for Bangkok. Subas Chandra Bose valiantly remained behind. He went to the Central Jail saw an R.A.F. Officer who was a prisoner then, gave him a large white flag and requested him to go up to the British warships then in the Rangoon River, ready to bombard and destroy Rangoon, to surrender the town. This was done and that is how Rangoon was saved and a large quantity of Burmese Currency notes fell into the hands of the British.

Only after this Subas Chandra Bose left Rangoon on his way to Japan and lost his life in an air crash.

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Alas this brave and just man is no longer with us. If he had survived History of India would have been different. I say this most emphatically. He was not a visionary. He was a brilliant, realistic and far sighted statesman in the right sense of the word. May he rest in Peace.

Soon thereafter fortune of war went to the Allied Forces and the Japanese were in retreat. While in retreat, they robbed me right and left while I was in the trench. They robbed me of my plum jam a very useful item of food, my cash, my clothes and my automatic revolver which I had since 1912. The amusing part was a day after the robbery, an Indian—Motilal Jevari—called at my house with a huge bundle of clothes. He said he bought them from the Japanese soldiers on the previous day for K20,000/- and was prepared to let me have them for K25,000/-. He knew they were mine. Motilal was a useful man. I had made money out of him so I paid and got back my clothes.

Two days after I was again robbed. This time it was a larger quantity. It cost me K50,000/- to redeem them. Such was the life. I hope my readers will not question my ability to pay such sum. If any one has doubts, I suggest he pays me a visit and I will show him a little over twenty one lakhs worth of Japanese currency which are still with me. I would have retired if the Union Government had honoured the assurance given by the last British Governor of Burma, to the effect that compensation for these notes will be recovered from the Japanese Government.

I have that letter with me. I would have been satisfied with a receipt of 25 pyas for a Kyat. But alas, this assurance was thrown overboard by the Union Government. During the retreat, my losses were immense and thanks to the Hon'ble U Kyaw Nyein we sufferers got nothing while the Japanese are receiving Reparation from Burma by planting all sorts of inferior goods. That is what is called "Post-War Justice." I say 'Justice thy name is Mockery.'

During the retreat a most amusing, but annoying thing happened. One night about 10 Japanese soldiers with an Officer came up to the house and wanted to know whether I was a Britisher. I said no. Then those brutes shouted 'yes,' and pointed to my main gate saying existence of the gate proves that you are a Britisher. Then the brutes poured petrol on it and burnt it. I could do nothing. I grinned and cursed them.

One day 2 Japanese Officers came up, looked at me, admired my white woollen tennis socks and asked for them. I refused. They then held me

tight, unlaced my shoes, threw them away, pulled my socks off and the man who held a Major's rank put them in his pockets. Knowing their evil intentions, I grabbed at the shoes and ran for my life and took shelter in Justice U Myint Thein's house. They intended to take me away with them and I would have been no more in this world to write this account.

On the 8th March, 1945 Kalaw was for the first time bombed by Allied Air Forces. A wave of 14 bombers appeared. It was about 10 a.m. I took shelter in the trench. It was a terrific bombing. It was stated that 200 bombs were dropped. Kalaw Club House which was used by the Japanese as a Wireless Station was the first casualty. Two huge pine trees in my compound, in the neighbourhood of my trench fell. It was a job to get out of the trench. The second casualty was the Assistant Superintendent's office on Webber Road. The Bazaar area was badly damaged. 250 civilians were killed. It was a most pathetic sight. On that fateful day I had arranged for a lunch party—the Chief Guest was Major Lachmi—Commandant, Janshi Rani Regiment—a very charming personality. She is now in Kanpur, India. Every year we exchange Xmas Cards with an occasional letter.

None came for lunch. As a result of this bombing my children's old nanny left me. I was left without a house servant. Only servants remained with me were my cook and my dhobi. Both are still working for me. Life was thoroughly disorganized. Residents started evacuating. Next bombing was on 14th March, with a further heavy damage. The Italian Convent, Hotel Kalaw and Railway Station were badly hit. The Civil Hospital had a narrow shave. The Bazaar ceased to function. One could buy nothing. I could not get even milk or eggs.

As a result of the second bombing my cook left me. I stood dazed watching him leaving me, with a huge trunk on his head on his way to Mindaik. This increased my difficulties.

I asked the Danes who were my tenants to feed me and they agreed. The dhobi used to fetch the meals twice a day while I made my morning coffee. My dhobi was a brick. He once in three days walked six miles to Mindaik and brought some vegetables paying fantastic prices such as K70/- a cabbage and Mindaik Gin at K250/- per bottle to keep life line going. He even washed my clothes while to humour him I paid K5/- per piece, and a bottle of Gin once in 3 days. I spent practically the whole day in the trench, even having my lunch in the trench. Bombers came 3 and 4 times a day. They came at a terrific speed, enough to frighten a lion.

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For solid thirteen weeks Kalaw received bombing. Glasses of doors and windows of my house were completely smashed up through blast and machine gunning.

Unfortunately, the monsoon started early. We had a fair amount of rain during April and May. That made life more unbearable and especially in the trench. As a result of machine gunning the roof of my bedroom one night leaked terribly. There was not a dry place. I spent a restless and miserable night. Fortunately I had spare shingles, enough nails and a ladder. So after 5 p.m. next day I got on the roof and repaired it. To my utter surprise I was successful. The leakage stopped I did not realise that I could be a successful carpenter.

The irony of fate was that during this heavy bombing not a single Japanese was killed. There were in all five thousand Japanese including two thousand patients in the Kingswood School and 96 nurses.

They were safely evacuated in batches night after night. The army supply point was similarly evacuated. All were supposed to go towards Bangkok.

De'Souza's house was occupied by the Colonel in charge of troops fighting on Thazi Road preventing Allied advance on Kalaw. He had five lines of telephone to instruct troops on Thazi Road. There was a Parsi Interpreter working there. He was a Burjorjee from Yamethin. He took me one day to the Army's Headquarters. It was most surprising that not a bullet was fired at de'Souza's house while the Colonel was busy devising plans to obstruct Allied advance. This showed that Allied intelligence service was not upto the mark.

It took 13 weeks for the Allied forces to reach Kalaw from Meiktila, inspite of the fact that they had 23 big guns. When these were fired it was hell. My house shook and rattled and made sleep impossible. So I shifted into servants quarters and slept there.

On 7th June 1945 I learnt with great relief that Allied forces had occupied Kalaw but to make sure I did not leave the house. Next morning I took a walk to the town. On my way I met the Brigadier and his S.S.O. They inquired how I was and whether I needed anything. My reply was "Fine, but I need nothing. With God's blessings, I am getting on well."

Next morning the S.S.O. Capt. Johns came riding to the house and asked my permission whether he could pass through my garden. I forgot

to mention that I had a beautiful garden with varieties of flowers. I was my own mali and I was proud of my garden.

I said 'Yes, but please do not damage my flower beds.' He then became friendly. So I questioned him why "so and so" a disloyal traitor, was seen in an army uniform. His reply was he met us 17 miles outside Kalaw and has been giving valuable information. My reply was he has been responsible for various unkind rather cruel acts for which he should be locked up. Capt. Johns then left. Next morning, to my great surprise, my cook informed me that this very person was a prisoner in my motor garage. I at once went and saw Capt. Johns and requested him to remove this obnoxious person from my garage suggesting that Meiktila Jail was the proper place. Right enough, he was taken to Meiktila jail.

I was then put on the Army House Committee as I was the only person who could give correct names of owners of houses in Park Area and fix rent for each house occupied by the army.

For some time all went well. I was a useful asset to the Army. One day I discovered that my valuable collection of 220 Standard Books and some valuable furnitures were removed by the army without my permission. I immediately went and saw the Colonel in charge. He expressed regret and promised to return my books and furniture before moving out of the Station. In a short period of one week, the unit moved out taking away my property.

The next instance was one morning when the S.S.O. with a bulky officer, who gave his name as Capt. Buckingham, receiving a retort from me "So Buckingham Palace has come to Kalaw," came to my house and told me to vacate it and take up my residence in Justice Sir Mya Bu's house. I said "Why." The reply was, "We like your place, it is well furnished, it is commodious, the floor is beautifully polished and we can have dances."

I said nothing doing. They said they must have it. I said: "Do not make a mistake. I am well connected with officers of the Indian Army. They will stand up for me. Let me make a suggestion. You take me by plane to Rangoon and arrange for an interview with the Supremo. If Supremo says I must give, I shall give." The officers collapsed, and said: "You know too much." I said: "Yes that is why I am alive and am here. Do you not know Supremo's Order 'Do not harass local residents who are living in their own houses. Take absentee owners' houses only. In case of need, go under the canvas.'"

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They got up and shook hands with me and made a request. "Please give some furniture." I said: "Not from this house, but I will give you some from my Bazaar office."

I kept my word and they received some tables and chairs and gave me an undertaking to return the same on leaving Kalaw. They did leave Kalaw but I did not get my furniture. For Xmas dinner; they borrowed a large quantity of spoons, forks and knives but did not return half. The forks and spoons had my wife's initials on them.

One day one Tommy walked away with my wife's and daughter's picture from the mantle piece while another pulled down a hanging lamp and put it in his pocket. The Sikhs were likewise as bad. One tried to break open my almirah lock, but he did not succeed as I unexpectedly came on the scene. As he saw me he jumped out of my bedroom window. The bayonet's marks are still on my almirah. Against these unpleasant events there were other creditable instances. The Baluchis behaved excellently. They were in charge of a young Parsi officer from Karachi. His name was Kanga. He hearing that I was a Parsi, sent me a tin full of all nice things including a bottle of whisky and a bottle of Brown's Rum. He was a very likeable officer. He helped me in many ways. I learnt from him that his father was a Doctor and fond of collecting walking sticks of various kinds. I had the same failing. So I gave him for his father an ivory stick made up of nine pieces so one can carry the stick in his pocket. I have still got with me seven sticks. I wonder where Capt. Kanga is. I would love to meet him.

There were two other Parsi officers—one Major Mistry and a second was Major Masters stationed with their units at Meiktila. Poor Mistry is dead.—Killed in Kashmir Campaign.

He was a fine man. We met often here and in Rangoon. He stayed with me here in Kalaw when I had Mr. Y. D. Gundevia—Representative of the Government of India, his wife and a young daughter as my guests. Major Masters is alive and is still in the Indian Army. Only the other day I had a letter from him from Meerut.

The C.A.B. Administration was vindictive. To start with 'Supremo' Lord Mountbatten by a stroke of the pen demonetised Japanese currency and thereby turned a very large per cent of the population into paupers. It was the most cruel and unreasonable act. To carry on generally, people resorted to borrowing at heavy rate of interest. Those who had no security to offer, took to robbery and dacoity. Crimes increased

in no time. From the bottom of my heart I blame the then administration which rightly received curses from the sufferers. It expedited the advent of Independence.

The next act of vindictiveness was a number of vexatious prosecutions mostly by the Civil Supply Department. In Taunggyi, there was one Mr. Jolly—a pre-war Assistant in S. Oppenheimer & Co., Ltd. of Rangoon. In his acts he was not jolly. He had the mentality of Lord Haw Haw. Through the grace of God and with the help of Mr. Wilson—the Assistant Superintendent a fair and upright man, I made him see the errors of his haughty and unreasonable acts. Colonel Leach—the Head at Taunggyi was a real autocrat. But the Indian boys who were taking a procession to celebrate Netajee Subhas Chandra Bose's Birthday, made him smart by appropriate retorts. After Mr. Gundevia at a reception in Taunggyi had made his speech, bringing to the notice of the gathering the part India had played in the war, Colonel Leach put his tail down and praised the Indians to the extent that without their help it would not have been possible to re-occupy Burma for a long time. Entire credit for this achievement goes solely to Mr. Gundevia—a very able diplomat and a brilliant I.C.S. who is now in Ceylon as the Government of India's High Commissioner.

In early 1946 I in an army transport provided by my friend late Major Mistry went to Rangoon. It was a job to find accommodation, but I stayed in Bow Lane with a Muslim whom I knew slightly. He did his best to make me comfortable but I slept on the floor. He is now working in a British Firm and doing well, which he deserves.

I had a hectic time but I soon returned to Kalaw by train. Then about beginning of April, I went to Bombay to see my family which was still in Bombay and to meet my son who was returning from U.K. after a stay of a little over seven years during which period he obtained M.A. of Cambridge and passed out as a Chartered Accountant. I did not like Bombay. I felt very hot. So I went to Poona where I had a number of cousins who were doing well in business and an old aunt. I also saw two friends who were with me in U.K. Then I went to a Hill Station where I stayed one month. Then I came back to Bombay looked up several friends such as the late Khan Bahdur Chandoo who at one time was Chairman of R.E.T. & S. Co., Ltd. of Rangoon.

Mr. S. N. Haji of Scindia Steam Navigation Co., Ltd. who was at one time in Rangoon in charge of Rangoon Office. Mr. F. D. Lalkaka who was once Collector of Customs, Rangoon. Poor man died recently.



## MY FIFTY YEARS IN BURMA

A number of my friends and some relatives pressed me to remain in Bombay. The idea did not appeal to me at all.

So on a Scindia Boat from Calcutta—thanks to Mr. Haji, who arranged that for me, I returned to Rangoon. I must say Customs Officers in Calcutta were very helpful. I brought six bottles of Whisky with me.

This was not permissible, but if I took out a peg from each bottle it was permissible. I did that and so I brought six bottles. <sup>6</sup>

I felt extremely happy that I had returned to the country of my adoption though I did not know what would be the future. But all my life time I have been an optimist and with that feeling I re-started life in right earnest, making the most of experience and knowledge acquired during the Japanese occupation.

I had more than enough work to carry on. I took up my residence in 37th Street in a flat in occupation of a war-time friend. He was very kind and considerate. My pre-war servant re-joined me. He cooked for me. He is still with me.

My only transport was a hand-pulled rickshaw. One day I got into a rickshaw at Sparks Street. As I stepped in, the rickshaw toppled over and I fell in the Street. I was terribly hurt but there was none to help. I was in great pain, but with determination I got to 37th Street, climbed two storeys and lay on my back. Three days I suffered agonies but with determination I recovered.

Then I was fortunate in securing my old office premises. I had to do all repairs, wiring, fixing lights and fans and painting. I was more than happy. I secured all necessary furniture, including an iron safe and pictures by Burmese artists to make the place look pleasant.

It was an office *cum* residence. I resided in office from 1st January, 1947 to October, 1947.

I was very comfortable. I had several parties, cocktails as well as dinners. Living was so cheap then. There was even safety. I slept with doors open.

My boy who is also an excellent cook, cooked all meals in 37th Street where I had stayed. He was very punctual and I had no trouble.

## MY FIFTY YEARS IN BURMA

With my earnings, my income was terrific and I was able to set up a home at 12 Chin Tsong Avenue. The place was sadly neglected. Even there was no ceiling and not sufficient lights. I spent money freely and made it a comfortable home in accordance with my expensive tastes.

The Income-Tax Department was unduly and unnecessarily severe and unreasonable bordering on cruelty as a result of lack of knowledge on part of an officer who owing to Municipal Election of 1940 was not friendly. He rather showed hostility. He re-opened a case for 1946-47 settled by mutual consent for K5,000/- in 1950-52. I received most unfair and unjust treatment. I paid by way of Income-Tax for 1946-47 a sum of K30,000/- a sum which I do not think any professional man paid. But God is great—through His mercy I am alive, and living in reasonable comfort, having given up racing, card-playing, going to places of enjoyment and avoiding travelling for pleasure.

God will punish those who have attempted to harm me and have harmed me. None can avoid Providential justice.

Since Independence I consider myself very fortunate. I have all round received kindnesses and consideration from Hon'ble Ministers, Hon'ble Judges, Highly-placed Army Officers and especially the General, whose kindness and help I can never forget, High Government Officials, some Diplomats and their highly-placed staff. There are always exceptions, but exceptions do not make rules and more so as in my case I have come across only six obnoxious persons who have gone out of their way to harm me. May God take them away from this beautiful world.

I owe a great deal to my home town of Kalaw. Shans are charming and exceptionally kind people. The climate of Kalaw is bracing, food is good. There is peace and quietness. But in the world there is no place entirely free from obnoxious persons and so is Kalaw, but the great satisfaction is that those on top are always helpful, kind, considerate and anxious to remedy all grievances. It will not be right to omit two personalities—Sao Hkun Hkio, the Shan Minister, and Sao Htun Aye, the Home Minister, who is now Minister for Immigration and National Registration. I have nothing but praise and admiration for them. In every respect they fit in the modern time. I can never forget kindness, help and consideration I have received from them. That is much to be admired. My prayers are always for them, for their good work, and for their happiness.

## MY FIFTY YEARS IN BURMA

During the post-war period I addressed a letter to the then Governor of Burma requesting him to declare a moratorium in respect of interest on all pre-war loans. My representation was successful, resulting in passing of "Accrual of Interest (War Time Adjustment) Act 1947." The Act applied to all money-lenders, who were nearly all Indians, as well as to Life Insurance Companies in respect of premiums unpaid during the period of war and to all Banks in respect of per-war overdrafts.

It was a pleasure to see a large number of Burmans receiving the benefit under the Act.

I worked hard to secure compensation for damages suffered by individuals and corporate bodies during the World War II. I contributed in the press at least one hundred letters. My main contention was that H.M.G. was liable to pay compensation. As a matter of fact H.M.G. set up a War Damage Commission and invited claims. I filed a large number of claims on behalf of several individuals and Firms not leaving out myself. The Commission after due inquiry prepared a Preliminary Report assessing damages at 200 million pounds, but owing to Burma receiving her Independence, the question of compensation was clean forgotten. By a letter I appealed to Sir Winston Churchill. I have still got a copy of my letter. I received a reply through British Embassy repudiating the claim and solemn promises held out during the war.

I also handled a number of War Risk Insurance claims—most of them were of British Firms. Several claims were adjudicated by a Board and paid for, while the Board was dissolved in September 1947 without adjudicating the remaining cases. My representations to the then Government were unsuccessful. I therefore got in touch with two members of the House of Commons, Mr. Woodrow Wyatt and Col. Crosthwaite Eyre, and briefed them to put questions in the House of Commons which they did. I also wrote direct to H.M.G. Foreign Secretary and received a reply that H.M.G. will pay by way of an ex gratia payment £10 millions on the basis of 26.49 per cent on losses suffered by all British Firms including Rubber and Mining Companies.

There was also a certain payment to individuals on chattels lost. I claim full credit for this result. But all Burmans, Indians and Chinese unfortunately received nothing.

My next stand was that Japan must pay for losses inflicted by the Japanese army during the period of occupation.

## MY FIFTY YEARS IN BURMA

I contributed several letters against signing of the San Francisco Japanese Peace Treaty. I moved the Foreign Office. As a result, Burma did not sign the Treaty and so Burma ultimately secured Reparations from Japan. But I much regret to say individuals got nothing as Government collared all. It was most unfair and I blame our Pious Prime Minister there for this act of glaring injustice. He was unfortunately guided by U Kyaw Nyein who had fantastic and perverse ideas about Reparations. Even those who held Japanese currency notes were not paid inspite of a letter (still with me) I received from the Secretary, Finance Ministry, in response to my representation to Sir Hubert Rance—last British Governor of Burma.

If I had been paid 25 pyas for a Kyat loss I would have retired long ago and not worked. I have still with me 20 lakhs of Japanese currency notes.

It was a cruel act to appropriate reparations for industrialisation. There was no Burmese industry that was destroyed during the war. All industries belonged to the Ruling Class.

Reparations mean repair losses. But losses were not repaired, while amounts received by way of reparations were spent for industrialisation, some of which grandiose schemes have so far proved White Elephants and it looks as if the rest will follow suit. Further, Japan is paying in goods and Burma is receiving poor quality of electric goods from Japan, keeping an expensive establishment. In other words, Burma is paying reparations to Japan.

I say "Justice thy name is mockery." So most of the sufferers have continued to suffer.

I have just completed 80 years of age. This leaves a very short period of life. Before I die, it will give me the greatest of pleasure to see Rangoon as Rangoon was in pre-war days and Rangoon as the capital of Burma should be. There is filth, dirt, smell, mosquitos and flies, with howlings of pie-dogs at night disturbing one's sleep. It seems as if Corporation services are minus building, sewage and sanitary staff. Even in 1940 and 1941 Rangoon was the cleanest city in Asia. At present visitors carry away a most unfavourable impression. It is my honest well-formed opinion, that Rangoon will never reach pre-war level unless and until cultivation of a civic sense of responsibility—which is essential—is encouraged and rightly cultivated. Till then there is no hope. It is sad, but it is so.

MY FIFTY YEARS IN BURMA

I would also like to see all hutments removed and all pavements cleared of vendors of goods. Lastly, I would like to see an imposing building on the lines of the New German Reichstag which is being built, to house the Chamber of Deputies and the House of Nationalities; and an equally imposing building to house the Supreme Court.

May my wishes be fulfilled: So I may die a happy man.

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