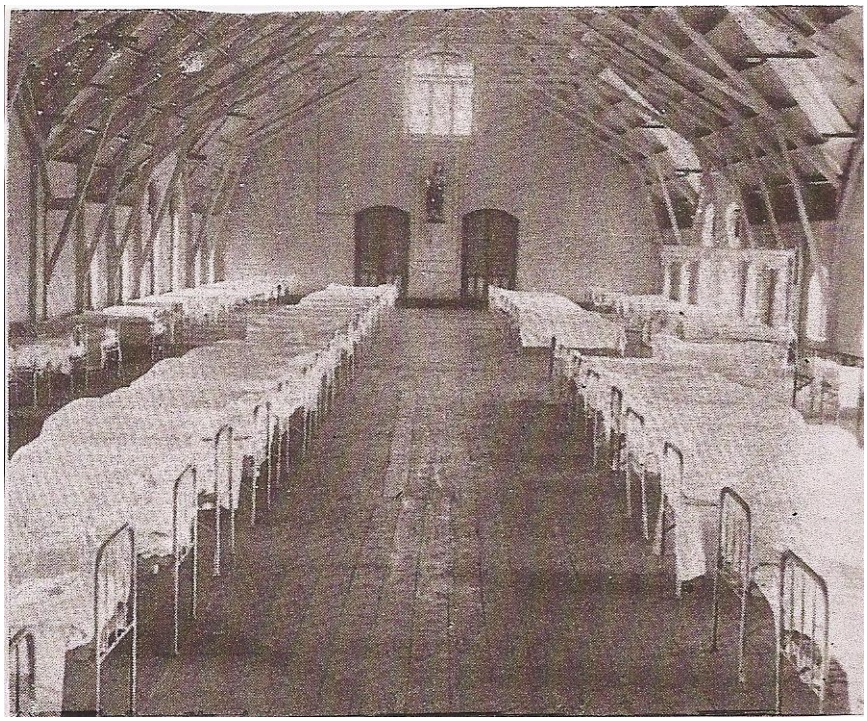
UP AND ABOUT

IN

NAIROBI AND BOMBAY

A Self-Portrait of My Early Days in Kenya and India



John Lawrence Nazareth

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To the memory of my parents

John Maximian Nazareth (1908-1989)

and

Monica Isobel Freitas-Nazareth (1917-2007)

Preface

This e-book, a collection of ten vignettes, is intended to serve as an addendum, or appendix, to my earlier book, *A Passage to Kenya: A Historical Collage of a Unique Time and Place*, with which I assume the reader is familiar. My purpose is to add some personal color to that historical and political account by describing memories from my youth in Kenya and India, which was spent largely in the cities of Nairobi and Bombay (today's Mumbai), hence this booklet's title, a variant on George Orwell's "Down and Out in Paris and London."

Although the booklet covers my early years in Kenya and India, occasionally I weave in musings from a subsequent period and a septuagenarian's perspective. As the reader will quickly discern, there is a thread of continuity that runs through the writing, arising from a pivotal event in my youthful life. Hence this booklet's organization into the four Parts shown in the Table of Contents, which should be perused before proceeding further.

I use the term "vignettes" to highlight the fact that my writing is selective, much having been omitted. It is possible to read these vignettes in any order. But, they have been sequenced to tell an underlying "my-early-story," or, in other words, to create a *"self-portrait of my early days in Nairobi and Bombay,"* and thus it is best to read them in the order presented.

Quotations within the text are usually in a smaller font size. Occasionally, I have added clarifying material in square brackets, i.e., [….], and phrases or sentences are sometimes *italicized* for emphasis within a quotation. A short bibliography is also appended.

I want also to emphasize that my intent throughout has been to honor all those who happen to be mentioned explicitly by name, and no confidences or sensitivities have been betrayed in this writing. The various memorabilia

of my early days that are referenced in several of these vignettes---letters, high-school records and magazines, scouting paraphernalia, and so on---were lovingly-preserved by my parents in their Kenyan home. When it came time to shutter their household, as described in Vignette 5 ("Who Made You?"), such items were too precious to discard. Instead, I gathered them into a suitcase, which I then brought home to the United States, where they remained unattended in the back of a closet for many years. But later, in much the same way that the books from my deceased father's library proved to be invaluable when writing *A Passage to Kenya* as I've recounted in its Preface, so too did this suitcase-full of memorabilia prove to be a treasure-trove that helped shape my recollections from a distant past.

I am especially grateful to my wife, Abigail Reeder Nazareth, for her advice and valuable editorial assistance. Without her enthusiasm for my familial history and her encouragement that I tell it, neither *A Passage to Kenya* nor this addendum would have seen the light of day. My brother, Lionel Nazareth, has been a constant source of encouragement and I especially appreciate his overall verdict on this booklet: "It is all so sympathetically and lovingly written." I'm also very grateful to my sister, Jeanne Hromnik, whose linguistic and editorial expertise served to significantly improve several of these vignettes, in particular, "Young Under the Apple Boughs." And I want to single out and especially thank my Mumbai-resident aunt and godmother, Freda Freitas-Pai, the sole surviving member of my parents' siblings. Now at the ripe age of just two years short of a century, she remains mentally sharp as a tack, and our occasional long-distance telephone conversations have given me a living link to that earlier generation of my natal family.

Other relatives and friends, old and new, have provided valuable feedback on *A Passage to Kenya* and/or this addendum. Their comments and corrections, helpful reference material, or simply their interest and encouragement as the writing progressed are all greatly appreciated. In alphabetical order, I would like to thank Selma Carvalho, Stuart Dreyfus,

Arthur and Caroline Ginsberg, Tristan Hromnik, Kristin von Kreisler, Ram Kulkarni, John Nazareth, Bob O'Malley, Beresford Parlett, Benegal Pereira, Mel de Quadros, Cheryl Quick, Olaf Ribeiro, and Gene and Minetta Shearer. I apologize for any inadvertent sins of omission.

Last but not least, I thank the readers of these two works and hope that they derive as much pleasure from reading them as I did from the writing. I would welcome any and all feedback, which can be sent by e-mail to larry_nazareth@q.com or by post, addressed to me at P.O. Box 10509, Bainbridge Island, WA 98110, USA.

JLN,
Bainbridge Island,
April, 2018.

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Part I: Prelude

1: A Fateful Decision

When I was twelve years of age, my father blew up his family. Not literally, of course, because his intentions were entirely without malice. But the consequences of a decision that he made, largely on impulse, were much the same as if he had planted a landmine under the foundations of the little bungalow, built from quarried stone and roofed with sheets of maroon-red, corrugated iron, where my parents and we, their three children, lived at that time.

Our home was located half-way down Forest Road in the city of Nairobi, the capital of the then-British colony of Kenya, and my father's fateful decision to send me from this safe haven to a boarding school in England appears to have had its genesis some three years earlier, during a trip he took to London on a legal matter. His career then was approaching its zenith. He had just been appointed Queen's Counsel (Q.C.), a position of high rank within the British legal system, and he would soon be elected to the Kenyan Legislative Council, the putative governing parliamentary body of Kenya. During his stay in England, my father had had occasion to visit Stonyhurst College, a distinguished Jesuit-run public high-school in Lancashire, in the northwestern part of the country. (In English parlance, `public' means `private' and `college' means `high-school'.) Although my father had long ago lost his Roman-Catholic faith and no longer attended church, or even the obligatory Sunday mass, he continued to hold the education-oriented and highly-intellectual order of the Jesuits in high esteem, an opinion derived from his own schooling at Jesuit-run institutions in Bombay. (More detail can be found in Chapter 7 of *A Passage to Kenya*.) He had been taken on a personal tour of Stonyhurst College by its Jesuit Rector and had been treated most cordially, and he came away extraordinarily impressed. He was "bowled over," as the English say in a metaphor derived from cricket, their national game.

Looking through the school's prospectus, which I found many years later among my father's papers following his death in 1989, I can see why. The college has a fascinating pedigree, which is described in the opening paragraphs of its prospectus as follows (information within square brackets below is added for clarity and italics are mine):

"Stonyhurst College was originally founded at St. Omers [in north-western France and at that time part of the Spanish Netherlands] in 1592, by Father Robert Persons, to provide for English Catholics that education from which they were debarred by the penal laws [of Elizabethan England]. It carried on its work there through many vicissitudes till forced by the French Government to seek an asylum at Bruges [also in the Netherlands] in 1762. Further troubles drove the establishment to Liege in 1773, where it remained until again driven out, this time by the French Revolution. Mr. Thomas Weld of Lulworth, an old boy of the College, then offered to his old masters the Hall of Stonyhurst, which his family had inherited from the Shireburns. The Hall had been built in 1592 (the same year in which the College had been founded in St. Olmers) by Sir Richard Shireburn, and stands *on the slope of Longridge Fell, overlooking the Ribble Valley.* Here, then, the College migrated in 1794 [just a few years after the American Revolution of 1776 and the birth of the United States], and this has been its home ever since."

Jesuits seemed to have made a habit of running afoul of authority and being evicted from one country after another. Their ouster from France took place soon after they were ejected from the Portuguese Colony of Goa (and Portugal itself) in 1761, as described in more detail in *A Passage to Kenya*. And a further connection between the College and Goa can be found in Stonyhurst's Chapel, where some of the hairs from the head of St. Francis Xavier, the Jesuit patron saint of Catholic Goa, are said to be preserved.

The Motto of the college, to which teachers and students equally aspire, is "*Quant Je Puis,*" which translates to "As Much As I Can," and the reason it is in French, in contrast to the more traditional Latin, lies in the origins of the college in a French-speaking land, prior to its move to Stonyhurst Hall. A photograph of that original Hall of Stonyhurst shows an imposing building, rather like Blenheim Palace, the home of the Churchills, or a

palace of the House of Windsor, alien and forbidding for a youngster. All manner of famous people are numbered among its alumni, so-called "old boys" of the school, including R.R. Tolkein, who wrote *The Lord of the Rings* during a residency at the college, at a time when his son was on the teaching staff. Another was Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, creator of Sherlock Holmes, who apparently modeled his Hall in *The Hound of the Baskervilles* after Stonyhurst Hall.

Following my father's visit to Stonyhurst and return to Kenya in August, 1955, he submitted an entry form and registration fee to the Rector of the college and received a prompt, cordial, and to-the-point reply (italics mine):

"I have put Larry down for September, 1959, the normal age to come after passing the Common Examination for Entrance to Public Schools. He should be entered for this by his Headmaster for the previous June. For Stonyhurst, *the subjects by which he will stand or fall are English, Mathematics, Latin and French,* and it is well to bear in mind that the standard of boys abroad is apt to be a little lower than that of their contemporaries in England unless special measures are taken."

And there the matter seems to have rested, untouched and apparently forgotten, for a full two and a half years. But four days before Christmas, 1957, presumably on an impulse whose motivation I know not, my father wrote again to the Rector, referring to the above letter, and saying that he proposed to bring me to England in summer of 1958, so that I could be coached to the standard required to pass the aforementioned Common Entrance Examination. He wanted me to stay with an English family, preferably in London, and be tutored nearby, and he asked for a recommendation for a good English family and the names of suitable tutors. (You can see echoes here of my father's own days in England in his twenties when he resided with a family and pursued his law studies as described in *A Passage to Kenya*.)

The response from the Rector arrived early in the New Year of 1958 and it was understandably chilly (italics mine):

"Thank you for your letter of December, 21st which reached me two days ago. While applauding your intention to have Larry coached in England for Common entrance, I must say that your requests pose problems with which I have little acquaintance to deal. The kind of family to which I might recommend you is not the kind of family that would agree to harbour a strange boy for a year after a mere exchange of letters: it would have to wait till you are in the country and have been able to have a personal interview and discussion. *And when a boy needs coaching for Common Entrance, this is a problem that worries his Prep. School, not me.* However I realize that in your position so far from England it is up to me to do what I can to help you. Since a London coach would be no use without a London home, and that must wait till you are in England, I wonder whether a country coach with a residential establishment would meet your needs as well or better. I know of two Catholic ones. There is Captain Young, of Crawley St. Mary, Crawley Down, Sussex, and Mr. E.W. Butler, 1, Goldington Road, Bedford. The former is in the country, with 17 acres of private grounds, and the latter is in a large town, as their addresses denote. *Both have limited accommodation and you may find it impossible to get in*; but if the idea of a residential establishment out of London commends itself to you, you might begin with those two and see how you get on. If not we will see what we can do about London."

Sadly, my father appears not to have taken these broad hints. He was a busy man with a successful law practice, a budding political career, and a family to support. Another four months went by, and, a few days before his departure for England by air, he wrote again to inform the Rector that he and my mother would be arriving in London "on June, 25th instant," following a ten-day holiday in Italy, and that he would then set about contacting the recommended Captain Young and Mr. Butler "to see how we suit each other and whether there is a place available for Larry." He would be in England for a month and a half and would have plenty of time "to come to some satisfactory arrangements." He added he would write again to the Rector after arriving in London where his address would be "c/o Barclays Bank, D.C.O, Cockspur Street, near Trafalgar Square."

And so it was that on the 26th June, 1958 I found myself on an airplane, headed on my own for London, my parents having gone ahead a fortnight earlier. My brother and sister and I had been entrusted to the care of my father's sister and her husband, Aunty Clarice and Uncle Tertullian, who

lived not far from our house in Nairobi, and they took me to the airport at the appointed time and made sure I was safely aboard the airplane. That's how it was with Goan families in Kenya during my youth. Close relatives could be counted on to undertake burdens of this sort.

For the flight itself, I was put under the care of the cabin crew and a fellow passenger, a young man on his way to London. In those days, one did not fly directly to London. Instead the British Overseas Airways Corporation (B.O.A.C.) flight stopped overnight in Wadi Halfa, a small town on the Nile in the north of Sudan, which we've previously encountered in *A Passage to Kenya.* It was from Wadi Halfa that the 19th century explorer Samuel Baker set off southwards through the formidable swamp of the Sud in search of the source of the river Nile. And it was also from there that General Horace Herbert Kitchener, the "ruthless technician of the British Empire," pushed his railroad down to Khartoum. But, a century later, the Sud was no longer a barrier to travel and one could simply fly over for a restful, overnight stay in lodgings provided by the B.O.A.C.

The young man to whose care I had been entrusted had befriended a young lady on the flight, and in the evening they strolled together in the grounds of the hotel beside the Nile, anxious to shake me off as I trailed along behind them. Not being fully schooled at that time in the "facts of life," I failed to comprehend, and so I was not easily deterred. But eventually I tired and went off to bed. Later he too turned in, and once more I proved to be a burden to him, because next morning he recounted that for much of the night I had moaned in my sleep. My subconscious was undoubtedly much more aware then was my waking self of the fate that awaited me; namely, that I was soon to be torn from my family and abandoned *"on the slope of Longridge Fell, overlooking the Ribble Valley"!*

Next morning, following the customary and to me wonderfully exciting revving of the aircraft's propellers at the start of the runway, we set off again, bound for London. My parents were at Heathrow airport to meet me, and we made our way to the London town-house owned by a Goan

friend of the family, Fitz D'Souza, with whom they were staying. At that time, Fitz was a well-qualified and seasoned barrister-at-law, having been part of the team that defended Jomo Kenyatta at his Mau Mau trial in Kenya. He had returned to London to complete his Ph.D. in Economics and perhaps with the added reason of avoiding being himself detained by the authorities in Kenya. During the time of our 1958 stay in his London town-house, Fitz was a still a young, unmarried man. He had an English girlfriend with whom a boy of my tender age could be quite familiar. In particular, I recall her burning the dinner that she was preparing for him one evening and when I asked whether Fitz might be displeased upon his return, she said quite simply: *"Fitz will eat what he is given!"* Later, Dr. Fitz D'Souza had a distinguished and moneyed career ahead of him following his return to Kenya, which included a stint as Deputy Speaker of the Kenyan Legislative Council and the acquisition of extensive investments in real estate. As Kenya approached independence in 1963, my father and he would lock horns over their political differences, as discussed in my father's memoir, *Brown Man Black Country*. But, nevertheless, Fitz remained a good friend of the family, and after my father's death in 1989, he wrote him an especially glowing obituary.

My father's plans for depositing me, at very short notice, in a preparatory school in England, where I could be brought up to speed for admission to Stonyhurst College, soon began to unravel. It appeared that he had not done his own preparatory work sufficiently well. Neither the aforementioned Captain Young of Crawley Down, Sussex, nor Mr. Butler of Goldington Road, Bedford, had openings for me in their respective establishments and, thereafter, a frantic search was begun to find a suitable alternative.

A 7th July, 1958 letter arrived from the headmaster of Broomham School in North Hastings, Sussex---was this the location of the battle of Hastings?---with an accompanying prospectus that reads to this very day as a most forbidding of documents. Its Latin motto "Viriliter agite, estote fortes"

translates to "Act like men, be strong," and it opens as follows (italics mine):

"Broomham is a Coaching Establishment for boys aged from between 10 to 14 plus years who require careful preparation for the Public Schools' Common Entrance Examination, which they normally take when about 13 and ½ years of age. There are nearly always a few boys who, because of illness, change of school or other circumstances, are not quite up to the required academic level. Broomham meets this need and provides just the right country environment for mental and physical development.

:

The view is held that the majority of boys are intelligent and although they may be backward for one reason or another, or seem not able to concentrate, almost all of them are capable of learning, given the right training in every department of life. The school believes in inculcating an orderly mind, and the boys are taught to be alert, industrious and receptive. ….. They are trained to be well disciplined and well-mannered and are encouraged to use initiative and intelligence.

Importance is attached to neatness, punctuality and personal hygiene."

Clearly this establishment was along the lines of a reformatory and did not fit the bill! I was intelligent enough and already able to concentrate, well-mannered, neat, punctual, and reasonably clean. What was desperately needed, rather, was *intensive* tutoring in the four Common Entrance Examination subjects in order to reach the high standards required for admission to Stonyhurst, in particular in the French language, of which I had no knowledge whatsoever.

We rushed up to Stonyhurst upon receipt of a July 9th letter from the Rector, who wrote again somewhat unreceptively to my father as follows:

"Thank you for your letter of the 6th. I don't think I can make any really helpful suggestions in view of the many applications you are at present making. Furthermore, as you say you expect to be here on a visit in the near future, I will refrain from any observations till I can see you. Kindly let me know in good time the day and hour of your expected arrival as I am kept very busy from now on to the end of the term, and should not like to miss seeing you."

Strangely enough, I remember nothing of this brief visit to Stonyhurst College---the trauma of that time seems to have expunged it from memory. But it must have borne fruit, because shortly thereafter a handwritten letter arrived from a Jesuit colleague of Stonyhurst's Rector, who was resident nearby in London:

"It is now 11 am and since before 10 o'clock I have tried to phone you five times but the line has been engaged. If you will get in touch with Peter Kenworthy-Browne, Esq., [address and telephone number followed] you may find a solution. He has been a lay-master [meaning that he was not a Jesuit] at Stonyhurst & then ran a Prep. School: he has now retired, but will do private coaching and he might well be able to arrange for your son to board with a good Catholic family…….. ."

And thus began an extended interaction with Peter Kenworthy-Browne---henceforth P. K-B---which started with great optimism for the task at hand, but then quickly soured and ended rather badly.

After a phone conversation with my father, P. K-B wrote a highly intelligent, precise, and to-the-point letter on July 21st, outlining his plan of action. During each school term of 12 consecutive weeks, he would tutor me at his home for "at least 4 hours a day for 5 days in the week, and more if and as required." I could reside during the school term with Mrs. Lynch, "a young widowed lady, Catholic, with 3 young children of her own, two of whom will be returning to school as boarders about half or ¾ way through September." Although it was currently the school holiday season, he suggested that we start immediately with an hour or two each day, and as often as convenient. I could come by train---he listed suitable morning and afternoon train times, with a change at Reading, for an hour-long journey, to and from his place of residence---and he added, very caringly:

"I could give him [Larry] some refreshment at 11 o'clock and he could get something at the Buffet on the return train, or at Reading station. I don't know if he has any books. He should immediately get `A French Course for Schools' by Collins, Pub: MacMillan. If he has any other books perhaps you would let me have a list of them, and I will tell you if they are what we want. If not, I will tell you what is required for the Common entrance. I can provide exercise books (to write in). [He listed his fees and concluded as follows.] Then, as I said, you would appoint a guardian who would be responsible

[the underlining was his!] for Larrie [spelling again was his], and to whom I would refer in cases of necessity, or in the unlikely event of an unfortunate accident or illness, and with whom you would arrange for the holidays."

Of course I had brought no books whatsoever, nor did I have an appointed guardian or a place to stay during the current holiday season, after my parents returned to Kenya in late August, and during subsequent holiday seasons in-between school terms. A landlady, advanced in years, was somehow located, who could provide accommodations for me before the school term commenced in September, but P. K-B interceded almost immediately by letter (italics mine):

"I am fully persuaded that you might on no account to carry on with the idea of boarding Larrie out for the next 2 months alone with an elderly landlady. There is no torture more terrible for a boy of 12 as loneliness, and anything might happen. *He would certainly be unfit for work after a little time.* The most I could take him for would be a couple of hours a day, Mons. to Fris. only, during the holiday period. He is not like a young man going into digs [meaning a rented room and here he is alluding to my father's own experience during his law studies in England as a young adult, as described in *A Passage to Kenya*]."

Furthermore, the Stonyhurst Rector threw up a formidable obstacle. He had put me down long ago for potential admission in Fall, 1959, and he could take me no later. This meant that I would have to sit the Common Entrance Examination in June, 1959, i.e., in ten months time, and reach the necessary high standards set by Stonyhurst in all subjects. Now quoting the Rector, P. K-B continued: "All he says is, and I agree with him, that only a very outstanding boy could cover the ground between now and June '59, the time of the exam."

My father wrote to P. K-B on August 2nd to express his deep dissatisfaction with the turn of events, and saying, in particular, that P. K-B appeared to be "not in a position to make the *all-out effort* that is necessary to secure success" (italics mine). To which P. K-B replied, again with considerable grace, three days later: "Thank you for your letter of 2nd which I received to-day. I fear it has cost you something to write it, as I see in it

considerable disappointment. But in justice to myself (and others) I must point out one or two things, which I hope you will believe." He reiterated the misunderstanding that has arisen around the date of admission to Stonyhurst and the Rector's firm deadline of September, 1959: "This of course puts quite a different complexion on the matter, and it would be simply dishonest of me to tell you that the boy could do it. Only an exceptionally brilliant boy could do it." He went on to express surprise that my father would say that he could not "expect the all out effort and support" from him. "I can assure you" he continued, "I am far too keen on such work, and far too fond of boys after my long---and I may say successful---career to merit such remarks, but I see impossibilities when they stare me in the face." He discussed in detail issues concerning lack of accommodations during holidays when Mrs. Lynch's children would be home and I would likely have to stay alone elsewhere: "Think of those long afternoons and evenings with nothing for him to do and no one to talk to, and for nearly two months," and to emphasize his point, *"even one hour of sheer loneliness is very bad for a little boy. I can't think why neither you nor I saw it in the first place."* He ended this multi-page letter on a very soft and conciliatory note: "I trust you will not think me unsympathetic, because I am very much the opposite, and I do feel for you very much in this matter. It is unfortunate that Stonyhurst will not give us more help, but no doubt the Rector has good reasons why he can't offer more."

And so it was that the entire episode ended with the following extraordinarily graceful letter, written to my father from the Rector of Stonyhurst:

"Thank you for your letter of Aug. 12th telling me of your final decision about your son's schooling.

It was most good of you to have written at such length to explain all the circumstances. I fear you have been to an immense amount of trouble in trying to arrange suitable schooling in England. But I am sure you have been well advised to decide on India. To have had to get your son up to the necessary standard for a good public school at such short notice would have been asking for something near to a miracle. I am sorry in the circumstances that Larry will not now be coming to Stonyhurst. I liked very much the

little I saw of him. However, I hope he will do well in India. If he inherits the ability of his father he will go far.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,

F.N. Vavasour, S.J."

In the next vignette I will explain how it was that I continued onward to attend a boarding school in Bombay, India, as alluded to above by Fr. Vavasour, and also give details of the remainder of our stay, thereafter turned to summer holiday. But, for *now and forever*, I cannot say "thank you!" loudly enough to long-deceased Peter Kenworthy-Browne of Icknield House, Goring-on-Thames, Reading, and to Fr. F.N. Vavasour of the Society of Jesus and Rector of Stonyhurst College, which stands on the slope of Longridge Fell, overlooking the Ribble Valley, *for rescuing me from my father's very best of intentions!*

2: Passage to Bombay

I was not going to return to St. Teresa's, the school I had previously attended in Nairobi, and I made that abundantly clear to my parents. I reminded them of the huge sendoff that I'd received from my schoolmates and teachers before I set off for England, and especially from my fellow boy scouts in our school's scouting troop. The humiliation of a return after just a few weeks would be too hard to bear.

I remember that sendoff very well. It was to be my last day of attendance at school and the priest-headmaster of St. Teresa's had asked me to come at the end of the school day to pick up a letter of recommendation that he had written for Stonyhurst. On some pretext or other, he had directed me to return to our classroom, whereupon, no sooner had I opened the classroom door, than a collective cheer broke out. My classmates, scouting mates, and teachers had gathered in secret to bid me farewell. The room had been made festive with overhead buntings, eats, soft drinks, and even a little speechifying. After all, there was every reason to celebrate: a St. Teresa's boy had made good! He was being sent off to be educated in the land of our colonial masters.

How could I make an ignominious return to that classroom and to what would surely be a collective jeer? I have no idea how my parents managed, in so short a period of time, to make alternative arrangements so that my education could instead be continued in India. There was no internet and e-mail in those days, telephone calls would have been vastly expensive, cablegrams consisted of just a few, barely legible lines. They must have done it by aerogram, the postal air-letter form that was the standard mode of overseas communication at the time. The new plan was that I would be re-booked to travel to the home of my maternal grandparents in Bombay, and, with the help of their two daughters, Aunts Lucy and Yvonne, who resided with them, I would be enrolled at St. Mary's High School, the very same Jesuit-run boarding school that my father had attended in his youth,

and which I've described in some detail in Chapter 7 of *A Passage to Kenya*.

The fact that my grandparents were willing to take me under their wing at such short notice and assume the burdens of guardianship was a testament to the closeness of my mother's natal family, and to her parents' and sisters' feeling of obligation and their code of loyalty to each other. I don't think that my mother had ever been happy that I was being sent to boarding school in England at a tender age, but I remember no verbal conflicts between my parents in Nairobi. However, in London, they were beginning to have disagreements. And who could blame my mother after what seemed like a madcap turn of events. Recently, however, I have learned that St. Mary's High School in Bombay was sometimes characterized as the "Eton of India." So St. Mary's was not an unreasonable substitute for Stonyhurst, my father's first preference.

Freed from the prospect of being turned prematurely into an Englishman, and the matter of my continued schooling having been settled, the remainder of our journey turned to holiday. I began at last to enjoy the sights of London. I had already mastered the labyrinthine underground train system, known locally as the "Tube," and was able to help my parents navigate it. We visited Trafalgar Square to see Lord Nelson's column, which was erected in his honor following his destruction of the French fleet at the Battle of Trafalgar. But, more importantly to me, to feed the pigeons that gather in numbers even greater than the tourists! We purchased a bag of seed from a nearby vendor, and I was soon surrounded by a flock of birds and rewarded, in turn, by a joyful photograph, taken by my father, of me with arms outstretched, a well-fed pigeon perched on each seed-filled palm, a third pigeon standing on my head, and Lord Nelson in the background, aloft on his column. (No thought had I at that time---and apparently neither did Lord Nelson---of the dangers of contracting psittacosis, a lung infection popularly known as "parrot fever," transmitted to humans by inhaling bacteria from the feathers or droppings of infected pigeons!) We went on to Buckingham Palace where I received another

photographic reward, this time standing beside a Palace Guard in his tall bearskin cap, ramrod erect with eyes fixed straight ahead. When I wandered closely around him, his posture and facial expression remained unchanged, but his eyes began to follow my movements. Don't you dare smear my well-shined boots, he seemed to say! We went to Whitehall to admire yet another set of guards, now wonderfully helmeted and on horseback. And, of course, we toured the famous Kew Botanical Gardens and the Battersea Fun Fair---shut down in the nineteen-seventies but still fondly remembered by Londoners---where I was allowed to ride unaccompanied on the big dipper. The Wall of Death was a special thrill: a wooden cylindrical structure where spectators standing on a platform at the top can look down on a motorcyclist, who accelerates gradually from the base *until he is able to ride horizontally,* round and round in circles at high speed. The wonders of centrifugal force!

I'm sure we visited the British Museum. But grey, dusky buildings filled with ancient, historical objects did not interest me in my youth, and I retain no memories of it. I preferred my history in book form and laced with adventure. I was especially partial to the historical fiction of G.A. Henty, who wrote books with titles like *With Clive in India* and *With Wolfe in Canada* and *Out on the Pampas*. Much later I learned, to my chagrin, that Henty was an imperialist and an avowed racist. Enid Blyton's mystery fiction for children was another favorite. Her principal characters were bands of young detectives, *The Secret Seven* and *The Famous Five*, the Harry Potters of their day. In my youth, my father had tried to get me to read American classics like *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn*, but I felt no resonance with them. However, *Lamb's Tales from Shakespeare* and *The Greek Myths* were another matter. I enjoyed them greatly, especially when my father had read them aloud to my siblings and me when we were very young.

As you will recall from the previous vignette, on their outbound journey my parents had traveled by air from Nairobi to Rome and, after a short holiday in Italy, they had continued onward to London. It was necessary that they

return to Rome to pick up their return flight to Nairobi. Thus I too had been booked to travel by air from that city directly to my grandparents' home in Bombay in order to embark on the next phase of my schooling. It so happened that another Kenyan acquaintance, Braz Rodrigues, and his French girlfriend, Jeanette, were setting out on an automobile tour of Europe, and, ever resourceful, my father had reached an agreement that we would accompany them and they would transport us to Rome. Braz and Jeanette were on a *pre*-honeymoon and were travelling on the cheap. They intended to sleep under canvas in campgrounds and my parents and I would stay overnight at hotels or inns. Braz had a Volkswagen, as best I can recall, and we crammed into it in accord with the old elephant joke. (Question: How do you fit four elephants into a VW? Answer: Two in the front, two in the back! In our case, three in the back!) I'm not sure that Braz and Jeanette were keen on having company on their trip, but my father must have convinced them by a generous sharing of expenses. Besides, he was a man of considerable importance and one did not say "no" to him with impunity. The imposed-upon couple did, however, put a foot down when I expressed an interest in spending a night with them in their tent. Just as in Wadi Halfa, my ignorance of the facts of life came in the way of my understanding.

We traveled rapidly, across the English Channel by ferry to Calais and on to Paris, then through central France and via Switzerland into Italy and onward to Rome, but here I will not go into detail. On the morning of my departure for Bombay, I crawled in between my mother and father in their hotel bed in Rome and cried bitterly. But I reassured them that I would not disgrace myself and the family by shedding tears when we said goodbye at the airport. And, indeed, I did not! Soon afterwards my parents too would board an aircraft and return home to Kenya. I feel certain that Braz and Jeannette were glad to wave the three of us goodbye and embark on the remainder of their holiday, in their vehicle made for two. Later they were married and made their home in Kenya. Braz was an accomplished cellist and loved his musical instrument as much as he did Jeanette. When

thieves broke into his house in Nairobi and locked him and Jeanette in the bathroom while they ransacked their possessions, he is said to have shouted through the keyhole: "Take anything, take anything, but please leave my cello!"

And so it was that at the end of the summer of 1958 I found myself on board an Air-India Super Constellation aircraft, bound for Bombay, India. I was placed in the care of a Catholic priest who happened to be travelling on the same flight. As we lifted into the air, huge flames belched from the engines' exhaust pipes located on the upper surface of the wings of the aircraft. But I was quickly reassured by an air hostess. Later, I was permitted to visit the cockpit of the aircraft, which became the subject of a letter that I wrote to my classmates in Nairobi after I arrived in Bombay and was enrolled in the boarding school at St. Mary's. In a subsequent vignette, I will elaborate on that transformational experience of my life, which marked the beginning of my real education. But first I must dwell on my first twelve years, when I was young and care-free and up-and-about in the city of Nairobi, the capital of the then-British colony of Kenya.

Part II: The Nairobi I Left Behind

3: Young under the Apple Boughs

Recollections from my childhood and early youth seem to have no definite timeline. Instead, they have coalesced into individual pools of memory and are ringed with golden auras that stand out against the dark, deep background of all that has been forgotten.

My earliest recollection is that of being seated on a hardwood floor and peering down into a darkened hole in a floor-board when I was little more than a year old. It is more a presence, or should I say a *pre-sense,* a memory of something that may not have happened. For me, however, it is real, my sole link to the "wood-and-iron" house of my birth---"wood" because that was the material of its construction and "iron" because its roof was made from corrugated sheets of that metal. Shortly before my second birthday, my parents were fortunate enough to be able to move to a small stone bungalow about half a mile down the road, away from this wood-and-iron house in which they had lived in the first years of their marriage, along with my father's unmarried sister, the widow of my father's eldest brother and her children and, at one time or another, two other brothers, one of them newly married. Houses were scarce in the years immediately following World War II. The wood-and-iron house has long since disappeared though I remember walking past a similar structure as a child with my younger sister and brother on our way to church.

The stone bungalow was rented from my father's eldest sister, Natividade, who had built it for her elder son. She was a large, slow-moving woman, soft and infinitely weary, who lived in the house immediately adjacent, within the same compound. My younger sister and brother were born in that bungalow. Like its more impressive neighbor, it is now in a sad state of disrepair.

Of my brother's birth I retain another of those pools of memory: being placed next door in the care of Aunty Nathu and assured that the baby was soon to be dropped from an airplane. The traditional stork would surely

have been simpler and less dangerous but I clearly remember that it was an airplane. I recall looking upwards anxiously at the sky, fearful of missing the moment of landing.

I lived my childhood, up to the age of twelve, in that house on Forest Road, and the memory of those years is best captured for me by the opening stanza of *Fern Hill*, a poem by Dylan Thomas:

> "When I was young and easy under the apple boughs
> About the lilting house and happy as the grass was green
> The night above the dingle starry,
> Time let me hail and climb
> Golden in the heydays of his eyes,
> And honored among wagons I was prince of the apple towns
> And once below a time I lordly had the trees and leaves
> Trail with daisies and barley
> Down the rivers of the windfall light."

Those for me were the apple days, my princedom my aunt's large compound within which our bungalow was located behind a tall kai-apple hedge---a plant of South African origin with little apricot-like fruit that ripen from hard green to soft golden yellow. It grew along the unpaved path for non-motorized traffic--pedestrians, bicyclists, and the occasional rider on horseback---that bordered Forest Road and demarcated the front boundary of the compound.

As I've described in some detail in *A Passage to Kenya*, Forest Road took its name from a narrow fringe of forest, varying from one to three miles in width, which once grew on this land. A chronicler of early pioneering days, Errol Trzebinski, described this strip of forest as "impenetrable" and "magnificent", a place where animals followed secret paths and visitors were entranced by the foliage, butterflies and flowers. But as Nairobi grew progressively, from a railway station and frontier town into the capital city of a newly-established colony, the forested fringe had given way to segregated, residential suburbs; for example, Parklands and Muthaiga, where *only* immigrants of European origin were permitted to live. The flora and fauna receded into smaller, isolated forest preserves or into the vast,

mysterious, and dangerously lonely stretch of forested land known as the Nairobi City Park. This park lay immediately beyond the sports fields of the Indian community, in particular, the Patel Club and the Sikh Union, which bordered Forest Road to the north, while along the entire length of this road to the south, within gated compounds, were the homes of families of Indian origin---Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Parsees, Goans---comprising another segregated, residential suburb of the city. Aunty Nathu's was one of these compounds, and it had retained a little of the magic of that earlier pre-colonial time. Within its hedged boundaries grew a large variety of trees and shrubs, many of them fruit- or vegetable-bearing, which had been planted by an unknown hand to replace the indigenous forest. It was a garden of delights, enormous in the eyes of a child. And, whilst the wild animals of the forest had long retreated into the confines of the Nairobi National Park, on the southern outskirts of the city, or to the open Athi plains beyond, the butterflies and birds of the forest had remained.

Despite the passage of time, I can reconstruct with precision the layout of the grounds. Between the two houses grew the centerpiece of the compound, a huge mango tree with branches that spread over our red, corrugated-iron roof and bore plentiful fruit in season. As a child, I loved to clamber up into its lower limbs to pick a semi-ripe mango, which is delicious when sliced around the large seed and the flesh laced with a sprinkling of chili-powder and salt. This area between the two houses was a mini-orchard in itself, containing a pomegranate tree, alongside a spreading fig bush that yielded fruit which turned from green to dark purple. And beside it grew a little banana grove.

Next to our front bedroom window was a spreading mulberry bush and, behind the house, a tall mulberry tree. In season, it carpeted the ground beneath with furry, deep-purple berries. A sweet-potato patch spread wild, covering a wide area behind this mulberry tree. This was an especially joyful place for me, because within the foliage were to be found lady birds, insects smaller than a child's finger nail, spotted and polished like brightly-colored beads, most commonly red or orange with little black spots. Most

often they would fly off when I tried to capture them in my enclosed palm, but sometimes I was successful, once even succeeding in imprisoning a little collection in a matchbox. It is said that these pretty little creatures could crawl into your ears when you were asleep and, on that pretext, my six-year old sister, Jeanne, took it upon herself to release back into the garden this precious collection. In the ensuing uproar, Njoroge, our Kikuyu cook was dispatched to the sweet-potato patch to gather replacements, my protests silenced, and my sister suitably admonished despite the dangers she had supposedly protected us from.

A well-trodden footpath demarcated the boundary of the sweet-potato patch and it led from our back door to Njoroge's living quarters at the rear of the compound. In addition to skills in cooking and capturing lady birds, Njoroge was very adept at removing jiggers, nasty little members of the flea family that lived in the black cotton soil of the compound. We children were cautioned never to go out in the compound in bare feet, because one ran the risk of a female jigger burrowing into the exposed skin and taking up residence to lay her eggs. Left unattended, this wound would fester and ultimately even turn gangrenous. So a jigger had to be removed promptly and carefully using a needle, whose pointed end was first sterilized with a burning match. Less threatening creatures called ant-lions also inhabited the black cotton soil and they fascinated me greatly. Their burrows were marked by little inverted cones of very finely sifted soil. If one took a twig and carefully worked it round and round within the fine grains of soil, one might unearth one of these little creatures before it could burrow deeper. I'd spend happy hours in search of them.

A little lemon tree grew within the sweet-potato patch and, on the other side of the path, about twenty of thirty yards from our back door, was a lemon-orange tree, the result of a cutting from a lemon tree being grafted onto the root stock of an orange tree, or perhaps it was the other way around, yielding a hybrid that bore both types of fruit on its two main stems. And next to this hybrid was another large mango tree, somewhat smaller than the one between the two houses and nowhere as productive.

The lemon-orange hybrid, however, retains a sad pool of memory for me. One morning, when the sleep had barely fallen from my eyes, I wandered down the L-shaped passageway that led from the bedroom shared with my two siblings, still dressed in my pajamas and with my catapult in hand. Looking out the back door, over the couple of small steps that led down to the back yard of the house, I spotted a movement in this far off lemon-orange tree and without aiming at anything in particular I fired off a shot in its direction. To my surprise, out dropped a little red robin, stone dead! These tiny birds, which have a deep red breast and a brownish back and wings, weigh less than an ounce and are much smaller than their American counterparts, which also happen to be called robins. (The latter are longer and leaner looking, generally have orange breasts and grayish wings and are at least twice the size and weight.) By some unfortunate accident of fate, this little red robin had perched on a branch within this tree, directly in the line of fire. But, instead of delight at my unexpected success, my reaction, when I picked up the lifeless little creature from where it had fallen to the ground, was to be heart stricken. I was overcome with sadness, and, thereafter, I lost interest in my catapult. The reason why hunters and fishermen find pleasure in tormenting and killing living, breathing creatures remains a mystery to me to this day. I can recall another unexpected encounter, but this time rewarding, in the backyard of the compound. One morning, a huge tortoise appeared, seemingly out of nowhere. It must have crawled out of the Nairobi City Park and through the playing fields, crossed Forest Road at night when the traffic was minimal, and then into our compound. It stayed for a few days and then it was gone. A silent visitor from an alien world!

At the two front corners of the compound were gated entrances, connected by a semi-circular driveway made from red murram. Near the smaller of these gates, a well-established loquat tree stood like a sentinel, decked out in dark-green, leathery leaves. It bore fruit the size of apricots, which ripened in clusters from a furry green to a light shade of orange. The loquat plant itself has a fascinating history. It originates from south-eastern

China, where it is celebrated in Chinese paintings and poetry, and from China western colonists spread it to countries across the globe. Birds called "long-tails" would flock to this loquat tree and it also attracted slow-moving chameleons. One would occasionally spot these reptilian creatures lazing in its branches, their evil, conical eyes swiveling independently to give them all-round vision. Their scaly skin, which changes color to match the background, provides wonderfully effective camouflage and the ability to attract, or perhaps simply ambush, a mate. And their laziness is deceptive, because from a stationary, camouflaged posture, they can shoot out tongues, as long as their bodies, to catch a variety of small creatures---ants, butterflies, caterpillars, snails, worms, lizards, and geckos---all of which could be found in abundance within our Forest Road compound.

It was in this front area of the compound with its semi-circular drive between the two gates that my mother once attempted to demonstrate her driving skills. Flushed with success after a couple of lessons from my uncle, she suggested to my father that they take a spin in the family's Ford Consul. Against his better judgment, he was persuaded to occupy the front passenger seat and they set off. We three children watched from the small veranda at the entrance of the house. My mother confidently turned on the engine, mistakenly stepped down hard on the gas pedal instead of the brake, and took off at high speed. Panic stricken, my father seized the steering wheel. The Consul took an abrupt turn leftward, narrowly missed one of the fir trees that bordered the drive, and careened into the hedge. A minute later and they would have hit Forest Road, which was always a busy road carrying a heavy load of traffic from Pangani and the eastern reaches of the city to the western areas. Thereafter my mother was dispatched to a driving school, where she received instruction from an oversized individual known as Fatty. I think Fatty might have had a crush on her, because he declared her to be "the best student he'd ever had." For his part, my father was confirmed in his belief that husbands teaching their wives to drive could only lead to marital discord, another source of which my parents could ill afford, although they were happy enough in

those days in the little rented house. It was a safe and happy refuge in a garden world.

The compound, as I recall, also contained guava trees along the other side of Aunty Nathu's house from ours, next to a high hedge that demarcated the western boundary of the compound and separated her from unknown neighbors beyond. And directly behind her house were two full-grown pepper trees. These stood some twenty feet in height, with trunks displaying a very distinctive bark and leaves composed of dozens of long thin, greenish leaflets, sheltering clusters of tiny, bright pink berries resembling peppercorns. Pepper trees are actually native to Peru and they are unrelated to the pepper that fed the spice trade and, indirectly, led to people like me arriving on these shores.

Such was the garden of delights with its shrubs and trees, some indigenous and others imports from across the globe, which provided so many opportunities for play during the "Fern Hill" years of my youth.

4: Siblings and Cousins

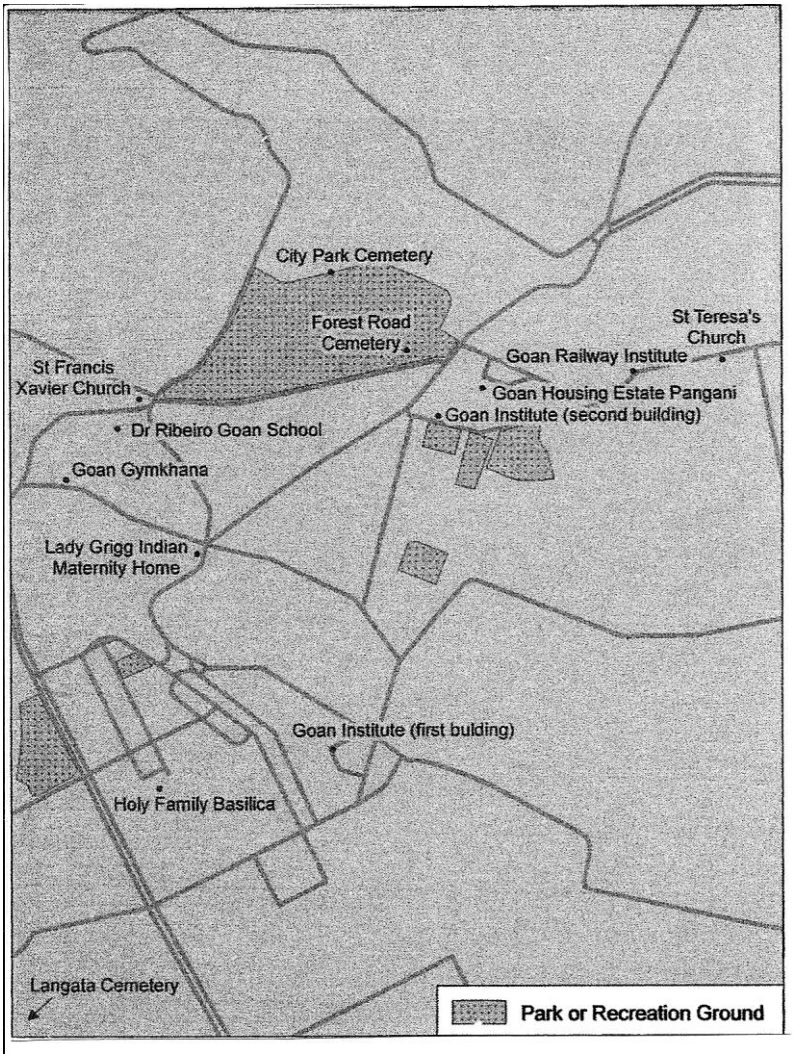
As any reputable anthropologist will tell you, birth order within a family can be everything. If, like me, you are lucky enough to be the first-born, you will receive a lion's share of parental attention and aspiration. If you are the youngest, you are lucky in a different way. You become the well-loved darling of the family. But, if you are in-between, you will likely suffer inwardly, and at an early age, from an inadvertent and totally unintentional neglect on the part of your parents and your siblings. And then you will more readily attain the virtues of independence and self-reliance, and may even seek innovative ways to attract attention. Perhaps that's why my sister, Jeanne, the middle child, resorted to attention-grabbing measures, like releasing my precious, matchbox collection of ladybirds into the sweet-potato patch from which they had been gathered. Lionel, being the youngest, had no need for such devices. To my mother, he was "Peechie-Lovely," and to my father, "Bunty-Ho-Ho." I remember especially well, when he was little and we lived in the rental on Forest Road, how he would clamber down from his chair after a meal at dinner-time and amble across to my father's place, at the head of the dining table, to sit very contentedly on his knee. And, with my mother, the two enjoyed a little play-game where he was picked up, and, perched against her hip by an embracing arm, they would engage in a sing-song duet, cheek-to-cheek:

Mummy: "Peechie-Lovely!"
Lionel: "Mummy Darling!"
Jointly: "Oo..oo..oo..o.o.oo!".

Our first cousin Philomena, or Mina as she was known within the family, was our leader. She was the younger daughter of my father's eldest brother, Uncle Vincent, and his wife, Aunty Lily, and senior to us by a few years. Mina would visit regularly to take charge of our play. She'd organize little cookouts by the side of the house where we would prepare a concoction called *ugali,* an African staple---maize, or corn, flour is mixed

with water and then stirred continuously over a flame until it becomes fluffy. The house, fortunately being built from blocks of stone, was not easily set ablaze. Another day, after I accidentally ran over and killed a sickly little bird when riding my tricycle on the front drive-way, I recall Mina leading us through an elaborate burial ceremony for the unfortunate creature. However, if truth be told, Mina and my siblings were not the main focus of my attention. At the center of my youthful universe of play were my two cousins, Edgar and Vincent (affectionately called Vincy), the eldest sons of my father's sister, Aunty Clarice, and her husband, Uncle Tertullian. Edgar was *exactly* a year and a day older than me, and Vincy was a year younger. So we were a natural threesome.

If you peruse the map below, you will see a road that runs approximately west to east. It lies just south of the large shaded area identified at the bottom of the map as "Park or Recreation Ground." That's Forest Road! At its western end you see the Roman Catholic Church of St. Francis Xavier, where my siblings and I were baptized more than a half-century ago. Just down the road from it was the old wood-and-iron house, where my parents first lived after their marriage, and about half a mile further down was Aunty Nathu's rental, to which they had moved a year after I was born. At the other end of Forest Road, and a similar distance from our home, you can see the Forest Road Cemetery, where my paternal grandparents and other relatives were buried. So our little stone bungalow within Aunty Nathu's compound, equidistant from the baptismal font and the graveyard, was a refuge---peaceful, safe, and secure---between the magnet ends of birth and death!



Extract from *Community, Memory, and Migration in a Globalizing World*, Margret Frenz (Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2014): "Map 6, Nairobi Goan Institutions."

The DeSa family, for that was my cousins' surname, lived less than a mile away from us. Their house was near the eastern junction of Forest Road with another main road and right next to the small, U-shaped segment of shaded parkland area. They rented it from a Muslim named Samsudin, who made his living from a petrol ("gas") station on the main road. A murram driveway sloped downhill beside the petrol station and ran past Samsudin's own dwelling and his adjacent rental, and then terminated behind the two houses in a little oval around a roughly grassed island. A high hedge

separated this compound from the vast, mysterious stretch of the City Park, which lay immediately on the other side, and, in the overhanging trees, one would often see and hear the chattering monkeys of the ancient forest that once grew there, separating the lands of the Kikuyu and the Maasai. (As you see from the map, this City Park stretched over a huge area immediately beyond the cemetery and the sports fields of Forest Road.) At the eastern boundary of Samsudin's compound, the land descended sharply into a long-abandoned quarry, a dangerous area forbidden to us for play, which the local Africans cultivated here and there in little garden plots of maize, or corn as it is called in America, and other foods.

In those days, Goan families would regularly visit their relatives, typically early on a Saturday evening. These gatherings were very informal. We'd simply drop in, perhaps telephoning ahead, and the adults would chat together in the living room for an hour or two over cocktails. Simple hors d'ouvres were served, which the DeSas' African cook would quickly assemble. And when it was time to leave, Aunty Clarice would often issue an invitation: "Would Larry like to stay overnight?" Of course, I was always eager to remain behind, while poor Jeanne and Lionel hung their heads and had to go home with my parents.

Another golden pool of memory: those overnights with my cousins. We'd play together the next day and I'd be taken home in the evening. The DeSa boys slept in a room fitted with bunk beds, which would often lead to a competition between Edgar and Vincy as to where and with whom I would sleep. The next morning, Aunty Clarice would sometimes bathe the three of us together in the same bathtub, in the innocence of pre-pubescent youth. Theirs was a warm, loving household where growing up was natural and undisciplined. Of course, there were the usual disagreements. Edgar and Vincy would confide: "Yesterday, Daddy made Mummy cry!" And, if her children misbehaved beyond accepted bounds, Aunty Clarice would administer a hand-whack on the backside. To me that

seemed a sign of parental affection! I remember wishing she would lay a hand on me too, but, of course, she never did.

Discipline in our home was very different. My parents used neither hand nor rod. When thwarted, I would sometimes yell at my mother, "I wish you were dead!" But, instead of a physical admonition, she would simply remain silent, and I would soon be seized with enormous dread, because, like most children, I believed that my words might actually bring about the deed. My father's approach to discipline was equally measured. Once, for example, when we were on a beach-cottage holiday in Mombasa, he had tasked me to deliver a message that was of some importance. This I completely forgot to do and my negligence caused him some considerable inconvenience. But he did not admonish me immediately. Instead, he bided his time, and once we had returned to Nairobi following our vacation, he took me aside in the living room and administered a stern lecture on the need to have a strong sense of responsibility. He had not wanted to ruin my holiday mood in Mombasa!

The DeSa family always had a household dog. During those days, it was a big, undisciplined German shepherd called Lassie. She would jump all over us when we visited, so we'd usually wait inside our vehicle until Lassie could be corralled. Not surprisingly, Lassie soon had a large litter of pups. My cousins kept one of the males, whom they named Pluto, and we took another, also male. We brought him home that night and kept him in a padded basket in the interior corridor of the house, but he mewled so piteously that I felt forced to open the door of our bedroom before daybreak and let him in. By morning the floor was covered in his fresh doo-dahs. We struggled over a name for our little beast and eventually settled on "Simba," which means "Lion" in Swahili. But my cousins, who remained possessive over Lassie's litter or perhaps felt a sense of entitlement, gave me a very hard time over our choice of name: "Why on earth would anyone call their dog a *lion*?"

It was Edgar and Vincy who introduced me to the joys and the grief of a catapult. They would cut a small Y-shaped branch from a tree limb, trim it suitably, strip off the bark and smooth the wood. Thin rubber strips were then bound to the tops of the 'Y' and the free ends joined by a little leather patch that held the ammunition---a small stone or a hard, green fruit from the kai-apple hedge---to be catapulted at some innocent victim. My cousins, who had declared war on so-called "butcher birds," because they had a reputation for attacking and maiming other birds, did not look in the mirror and recognize the contradiction. We would fire at just about anything! I have a vivid memory of aiming, again and again, at a little dove on the ground within our compound, missing each time. But then the previously-described episode occurred with the robin in the lemon-lime tree, when I came face-to-face with the grief of my catapult and abandoned its use forever.

Occasionally we would suffer wounds to our own flesh as well. Vincy set out to sharpen a pencil on his thigh with a knife and gave himself a nasty gash that required stitches. I recall climbing up on a window ledge in an attempt to reach a box of chocolates that had been secreted on the top of a nearby cupboard, losing my balance, and falling against the edge of a metal trunk beneath the window sill, which did serious damage to my left knee. Edgar must have distinguished himself similarly, but I don't remember specific details. These wounds, once healed, left prominent scars of which we each were enormously proud.

It was also from my adventurous cousins that I developed an enthusiasm for riding my bicycle. I taught myself quickly on the front murram driveway and thereafter would pedal joyfully round and round within Aunty Nathu's compound, or ride further afield on the wide pedestrian pathway that ran the length of the compounds alongside Forest Road. One fine day during the dry season, Edgar and Vincy organized a particularly memorable trip when we pedaled all the way to the newly-built Embakasi airport, to thrill at the sight of airplanes landing and taking off. (Today, this airport is renamed for Jomo Kenyatta.) Their father, Uncle Tertullian, an

outdoorsman adept at hunting and fishing, did not discourage his children from daring exploits. He would let them row their little boat out on the lake known as the Nairobi Dam, without supervision or life jackets. Often, he took his family to the headwaters of the Tana River, in the Thika area, to catch little, sardine-like fish. But I did not generally accompany the DeSas on such expeditions. In contrast to Uncle Tertullian, my parents were totally lacking in outdoor skills, and they did not encourage me in such pursuits.

When we were resident on Forest Road, our birthdays were extended-family affairs. We celebrated together, with presents exchanged. I still have in my possession a book titled *The World's Greatest Wonders*, published by Oldhams Press Limited, Long Acre, London, but otherwise without specific authorship, and bearing the handwritten inscription "To dear Larry, Best wishes for a happy birthday on <the date in 1954> From Uncle Tertullian & Auntie Clarice." It contains picture after picture of wonders, both natural and man-made, across every continent, each followed by a short description. Here is an assortment obtained by leafing though this book and choosing captions completely at random:

"The Ziggurat of Ur—Scene of the Earliest Civilization ……. The Strange Pillar of Fatehpur Sikri ……. The Enormous Pagoda at Hangchow ……. Huge Arches of Portugal's Greatest Aqueduct …….. the Wonderful Ice Cavern of Dobsina ……. Summer Palace of Russia's Tzars ……. The Romance of the Canadian Pacific …….. 600-Feet Deep Mystery Crater ……. The Great Terraced Pyramid of the Sun …….. The Snake-Like Twists of the Zwartberg Pass ……."

The book is carefully covered in brown paper, which I'm sure was my mother's doing, because that is what she always urged for our school books. It is a joy to look through to this very day, and I think the love for travel that I later developed in adulthood may have had its origins in that book of wonders. As for my other tastes, or lack thereof, in reading, I have described them in a previous vignette.

A friend of my father who worked for a bank would visit frequently and bring bank envelopes bearing stamps of all shapes and sizes, and from

near and distant nations of the world. As a result, I became an avid stamp collector, putting together a stamp album that I still retain to the present day. I also collected sea shells, which I gathered from the beaches of Mombasa where our family spent many an August vacation. Our parents indulged us as children and there was never a shortage of toys and games, both for play or instructive purposes, for example, a "Mechanno" construction set, a chemistry set, and, my very favorite, a Bayko building set. My siblings and I played "snakes and ladders," draughts---known as "checkers" in the United States---and a card game called seven hands, which is a simplified form of bridge. But, whether it was playing games or performing well at school, we were never put in competition with one another by our parents. It was always, "Larry, Jeanne, and Lionel," and whatever rivalry arose between us was primarily of our own making.

While the bonds and the deep natal love for one's siblings last a lifetime, all other precious bonds were broken, never to recover, after I left at age twelve for boarding school in Bombay, as recounted in a previous vignette: the bond with Edgar and Vincy, with my beloved bicycle, with our dog Simba. Strangely enough, I have no recollection of corresponding with my cousins during the two years that I was away in Bombay, so perhaps the tie was more one-sided than I would like to think.

Overnights with cousins, a bicycle, a catapult, a mysterious area forbidden for children to play, a pet dog, a favorite book, a stamp collection! Commonplace items for every boy and yet, for each, lit up uniquely---differently, individually, singularly---by the golden halo of childhood memory. To paraphrase the famous opening lines of Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*: "all happy childhoods are alike but an unhappy childhood is unhappy after its own fashion." Every now and then that joyfully-recalled period of my boyhood enters my dreams. Not long ago, I dreamt of Samsudin's compound, only now the forbidden quarry had turned into a pastoral meadow with a broad, inviting pathway leading back to the two houses, and the mysterious area beyond the hedge and adjoining the City

Park, with its overhanging trees and chattering monkeys, had become instead an upward-sloping, grassy bank with children and dogs at play.

I have a place for my cousin Edgar buried deep in my heart, the feeling of a younger for an elder brother. Perhaps it is mutual, who knows? We have not seen each other in many decades and I fear that if we did now meet again, our grizzled heads and very different life trajectories might cause that feeling to evaporate altogether. Perhaps it is a feeling best carried to the grave!

5: Who Made You?

My instruction in Roman Catholicism began at an early age through the teachings of the Catholic Church collected in *Deharbe's Catechism*---written in German in the mid-nineteenth century by a Jesuit priest, Joseph Deharbe, and widely translated and circulated---and I still have its opening question-and-answer session committed to memory:

> *Q: Who made you?*
> *A: God made me.*
> *Q: Why did God make you?*
> *A: To know him, to love him, to serve him in this world,*
> *and to be happy with him forever in the next.*

During my youth, I was content to remain within the boundaries of this literal interpretation of the religion and its accompanying joys: the magic of the Christmas season that marked the birth of our savior, Jesus Christ; the delight of Santa Claus coming down the chimney to leave presents under a Christmas tree; the joyful, cleansed feeling after a Saturday-afternoon confession followed by Sunday-morning communion. And, on the other side of the ledger, I survived the accompanying fears of a Roman Catholic upbringing: the guilt of sin, whether it be mortal or venial; the fear of a temporary consignment to purgatory; worst of all, the threat of eternal damnation in hellfire!

Even today, as a lapsed Roman Catholic, someone who in the Catholic vernacular has "lost his faith," I can still turn the opening text of the Catechism into an excellent motto by which to live, simply by stripping off its causal explanation ("God"), its underlying sexism ("him"), and its promise of future salvation ("forever in the next"), and then turning its poetry into prose: Q: Who made you? A: "God-only-knows!" Q: And why did "God-only-knows!" make you? A: *To know, to love, to serve, and to be happy.*

Most Goan families who had immigrated to East Africa were practicing Roman Catholics and their conformity to the beliefs and practices of this religious faith served to define the very life the community. But my parents were an exception. As children, they had received the standard Roman Catholic upbringing, but, in adulthood, neither were adherents to the strictures and structures of the religion. Nevertheless, they had wisely decided that my siblings and I would be raised in a similar manner to themselves, in order that we, and indeed they, not become estranged from the wider Goan community. That was my good fortune: to have a traditional upbringing within a particular religious faith in early life, coupled with the freedom to make up my own mind about religion, in general, once I had reached the age of reason.

For as long as I can remember, my father never entered a church, save to attend a baptism, a wedding, or a funeral. As a youth, he had been a fervent, practicing Catholic, but he "lost his faith" during his university days, the writings of Bertrand Russell having held sway over him in his turn to agnosticism. He had a special love for a poem by James Henry Leigh Hunt, which highlighted his approach to matters of religion, and which he could quote from memory and would recite to us as children.

"Abou Ben Adhem (may his tribe increase)
Awoke one night from a deep dream of peace,
And saw, within the moonlight in his room,
Making it rich, and like a lily in bloom,
An angel writing in a book of gold:---
Exceeding peace had made Ben Adhem bold,
And to the presence in the room he said
"What writest thou?"---The vision raised its head,
And with a look made of all sweet accord,
Answered "The names of those who love the Lord."
"And is mine one?" said Abou. "Nay, not so,"
Replied the angel. Abou spoke more low,
But cheerily still, and said "I pray thee, then,
Write me as one who loves his fellow men."

The angel wrote, and vanished. The next night
It came again with a great wakening light,
And showed the names whom love of God had blessed,
And lo! Ben Adhem's name led all the rest."

We chose a line from this poem---"Write me as one who loves his fellow men"---for my father's gravestone. Towards the end of his life, after his hopes for an active role within the political sphere were repeatedly dashed, he had reversed course and become attracted to the teachings of Vivekenanda, a famed Indian political activist turned mystic. He even took up the practice of meditation, with mixed results. As my mother would remark, when in a less-than-generous frame of mind, "Your father emerges from a meditation session in a worse mood than when he started!" If truth be told, my father lacked a spiritual dimension to his nature. He was a man of reason, possessed of an especially powerful intellect. An unworldly man of this world! But, as it often does, that *other mysterious world seemed to make its presence felt* after he passed into it in 1989.

My father had lived a long and healthy life, but, at the age of eighty, he suffered kidney failure and had to endure the indignity of peritoneal dialysis. A catheter, a soft plastic tube, is inserted into the belly by surgery and, once or twice daily, a sterile cleansing fluid is put into the belly through the catheter and later removed. (This must be done with precision and attention to hygiene for which my mother received the necessary training. She did it with great care each day with the assistance of my sister, who had come to help my parents at a difficult time.) My father wasted away as the illness progressed and, at the time I visited him in the early spring of 1989, his body had been reduced to skin and bone. But his mind remained as clear as a bell until almost the end. Following a year-long battle with the illness, he told us that he could no longer endure the treatment and wished to end the punishing dialysis regime. But he was greatly troubled by the question of whether this meant that he was committing suicide. As was his way, he studied and thought over the matter with considerable care, but he had not reached a decision when, a

little over a week later, I returned to my teaching and other duties at my university in the United States. "I'll always be looking over you" were his last words when we said goodbye. Soon afterwards he had the dialysis treatment ended with the consent of his doctors. He died a week or two later. My father had concluded that he was only removing the totally *artificial means* being used to prolong his life and that he was not committing suicide by ending the dialysis. He was simply letting his life run its course to its natural end.

I could not leave my teaching duties a second time to attend his funeral, nor would he have wanted me to come. But when I returned in the summer of 1989, following the end of the academic year, there were strange occurrences within the household, incursions perhaps from that other world! Decades earlier, he had purchased the Great Books Series and he often took down a volume from the bookshelf in search of a reference. One day during that fateful summer, Volume 7, *The Dialogues of Plato*, lay open at page 222 on the coffee table in our living room. A little penciled line marked a passage that read as follows:

"Then he, or any man who has the spirit of philosophy, will be willing to die; but he will not take his own life, for that is held to be unlawful."

This was from the Dialogue titled *Phaedo*, which took place in the prison where Socrates was held after he was condemned to death by the court, on the day that he took the poison. *Nothing else in the entire volume was marked,* only that little pencil line on that particular very relevant paragraph. My siblings, Jeanne and Lionel, had also returned to Nairobi that summer and neither they nor I nor my mother had any recollection whatsoever of having consulted that volume. Yet there it lay open at that particular page, within its relevant and deeply-moving dialogue reported by Plato, which took place between Socrates and his disciples before he calmly drank the poison ordered by the court and passed into the other world.

And then, soon afterwards, there was the strange and mysterious appearance of a mated pair of hornbills in the front garden. Although we were often visited by a variety of tropical birds, never before had we seen birds of that particular species. Yet now the hornbills returned, day after day, silently perched within the jacaranda tree that grew tall and spreading in the garden, its branches reaching to an upstairs bedroom window. The male was considerably larger than the female (as is normal with the species) and seemingly dominant over his mate. Their plumage was black and funerary, and, almost always, they perched close beside and touching one other. If one moved to another branch within the jacaranda tree, the other very soon followed. And then one day, just as mysteriously, the pair vanished, never to return.

Hornbills are native to subtropical Africa and have earned their name from a large, downward-curving beak. Ornithologists, in the pages of Scientific American magazine, describe them as "the most fascinating, charismatic, and awesome of birds," and symbols of luck, purity, and fidelity. Their plumage is dull---black, brown, or grey---but the skin of the neck and face can be brightly colored, and they can vary in size from being as small as pigeons to weighing as much as 15 pounds. Some have been known to live for up to seventy years and they are famously monogamous, although heaven only knows what thoughts and urges to infidelity may run through their minds.

Our two visitors in the jacaranda were of the larger variety, facial colors were completely lacking, and they were plumaged in black as if to honor the dead. *They seemed almost a metaphor for my two parents* and the relationship between them. I know from my mother's knowing glances that she viewed their appearance as highly significant, and so did I, but there was nothing more to be said. This omen was simply in accord with her other-world spirituality that seemed to be woven into her very being. Perhaps it was a resurfacing of our ancient Hindu, pre-Portuguese Goa Dourado heritage, of which I've given a detailed description, along with a brief outline of my mother's own background, in Chapters 5, 6, and 8 of *A*

Passage to Kenya. Like my father, she was very intelligent, but, in marked contrast to him, she was not at all an intellectual. She did not adhere strictly to any particular form of Catholic observance, and, indeed, my father had his own, matching indictment of my mother's spiritual life: "You make a convenience of religion," he would tell her. She was perfectly willing to skip the obligatory attendance at Sunday mass when other duties beckoned, in particular, the need sometimes to supervise our African servant's preparation of Sunday's lunch, which was usually an elaborate, multi-course affair, followed by a pajama-clad, Sunday afternoon siesta. And, if my sari-clad mother felt that someone had cast an evil eye on one of her children, she would take out their "deesth" (evil eye) in a Hindu-derived, hybrid ceremony that involved incantations of a Roman Catholic prayer---I can't remember now whether it was an "Our Father" or a "Hail Mary---accompanied by a slow waving of the maternal hand over one's body, from head to foot, concluding with a "thu, thu, thu" incantation and three soft little whacks on the backside. Fortunately for us, she did not perform the more elaborate version that required the sprinkling, even burning in a stove, of prescribed chilies and spices. The aforementioned incidents with Plato's Phaedo and the hornbills seemed very much in accord with this other-than-Roman-Catholic world that my mother inhabited.

As for myself, as I've said before, I passed through all the stages of a standard Roman Catholic upbringing---Baptism, Confession, Holy-Communion, and Confirmation. There is one missing called "Extreme-Unction," which, as a child, I must confess I thought was called the sacrament of "*Extre-Munction*." And I have yet another confession to make, in addition to the many that I made in the confessional. I used to be ashamed in my early youth of not having a sufficiently large number of sins when I kneeled before the priest. However, I possessed a Bible with an Appendix that contained, literally, an extensive list of sins, and I would go through it beforehand, trying to identify ones to which I could own up. Is it a sin to knowingly lie about one's sins in confession? Does it lead to an

infinite regress from which there is no salvation? This was one of the first logical conundrums that I confronted within the Catholic religion.

A Roman Catholic upbringing imbues one with a lifelong fascination for matters of religion. Even today, I find it hard to bypass a church, say in Rome, or a temple by the Ganges, or a mosque in Istanbul, without entering and exploring. And this has led me also to an abiding interest in philosophy. Initially, I was drawn to other, more serious logical conundrums within Catholicism than the one above: for example, is it possible for an all-powerful God to create a weight that is so heavy that God cannot lift it? An answer either way, yea or nay, identifies a limit to God's omnipotence!

Departing from the literal word, I became attracted to *metaphorical interpretations* of the Roman Catholic faith, for instance, the writings of Tielhard de Chardin and, later, Joseph Campbell. The masterful anthology of Aldous Huxley, *The Perennial Philosophy,* opened my eyes to an understanding that mysticism is the foundation of all the great religions of the world. And this, in turn, drew me to the teachings of Buddhism, the *Upanishads* of Hinduism and their centerpiece, the *Bhagavad Gita,* and also to the pantheism of Spinoza and the writings of Kierkegaard.

During the early nineteen-eighties, I had the good fortune to be able to travel extensively across the Indian subcontinent in an exploration of its religious traditions, which resulted in my two self-published booklets, *Three Faces of God and Other Poems* and *Reminiscences of an Ex-Brahmin: Portraits of a Journey Through India*. Much later in life, I undertook a detailed study of works written for the non-specialist within cognitive science and its scientific study of consciousness as a biological phenomenon. This newly-emergent discipline was spearheaded by some of the most prominent scientists and philosophers of our day, for example, Nobel Laureates Gerald Edelman and Francis Crick, Antonio Damasio, John Searle, and several others. However, these studies have failed to illuminate their object of study to my satisfaction.

Eventually these explorations led me to my refuge in the interrelated philosophies of nature of Gustav Theodor Fechner, William James, Henri Bergson, and Alfred North Whitehead, four preeminent philosopher-scientists of the 19th and early 20th centuries. This is not the place to elaborate on details of my personal exploration, but for anyone interested, it has found an expression in my recently-published play, *The Tease Spoons: A Drama in One or Three Acts*.

Let me simply close this vignette with two quotations from these philosophers of nature that might serve to whet an appetite for more. The first is from William James' glowing tribute to Gustav Theodor Fechner in his introduction to the latter's booklet *Life After Death*, which Fechner wrote and published under his pseudonym Dr. Mises (italics mine):

"Fechner's name lives in physics as that of one of the earliest and best determiners of electrical constants, also as that of the best systematic defender of the atomic theory. In psychology it is a commonplace to glorify him as the first user of experimental methods, and the first aimer at exactitude in facts. In cosmology he is known as the author of a system of evolution which, while taking account of physical details and mechanical conceptions, *made consciousness correlative to and coeval with the whole physical world* [Fechner termed this the "*daylight*" view of the world]. In literature he has made his mark by certain half-humoristic, half-philosophical essays published under the name of Dr. Mises---indeed the present booklet [for which William James later wrote an introduction] originally appeared under that name. In aesthetics he may lay claim to be the earliest systematically empirical student. In metaphysics he is not only the author of an independently reasoned ethical system, but of a theological theory worked out in great detail. *His mind, in short, was one of those multitudinously organized cross-roads of truth,* which are occupied only at rare intervals by children of men, and from which nothing is either too far or too near to be seen in due perspective. Patient observation and daring imagination dwelt hand in hand in Fechner; and perception, reasoning, and feeling all flourished on the largest scale, without interfering either with the other's function."

The second quotation is from Henri Bergson's *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, his last major published work (italics again mine):

"People are never tired of saying that a man is but a minute speck on the face of the earth, the earth is a speck in the universe. Yet, even physically, man is far from

occupying the tiny space allotted to him, and with which Pascal himself was content when he condemned the "thinking reed" to be, materially, only a reed. *For if our body is the matter to which our consciousness applies itself [then] it is coextensive with our consciousness, it comprises all we perceive, it reaches to the stars.* But this vast body is continually changing, sometimes radically, at the slightest shifting of one part of itself which is at its center and occupies a small fraction of space. This inner and central body, relatively invariable, is ever present. It is not merely present, it is operative: it is through this body, and through it alone, that we can move other parts of the large body. And since action is what matters, since it is an understood thing that we are present where we act, the habit has grown of limiting consciousness to the small body and ignoring the vast one. The habit appears, moreover, to be justified by science, which holds outward perception to be an epiphenomenon of corresponding intracerebral processes: so that all we perceive of the larger body is regarded as being a mere phantom externalized by the smaller one. We have previously exposed the illusion contained in this metaphysical theory [*Matiere et Memoire* (Paris, 1896). See the whole of Chap. I.] If the surface of our organized small body (organized precisely with a view to immediate action) is the seat of all our actual movements, our huge inorganic body is the seat of our potential or theoretically possible actions: the perceptive centers of our brain being the pioneers that prepare the way for subsequent actions and plan them from within, everything happens as *though* our external perceptions were built up by our brain and launched by it into space. But the truth is quite different, and we are really present in everything we perceive, although through ever varying parts of ourselves which are the abode of no more than potential actions. Let us take matters from this angle and we will cease to say, even of our body, that it is lost in the immensity of our universe.

If one seeks an analogy to the evolution of Christianity, in particular, Roman Catholicism, I would describe Gustav Theodor Fechner as akin to a Prophet of the Old Testament, Henri Bergson as the mystic-founder of a new religion that is not at odds with the discoveries of modern science, William James as Bergson's John the Baptist, and Alfred North Whitehead as Bergson's St. Paul. I have become convinced that these great philosopher-scientists could well point the way out of our present spiritual wilderness, which John Updike has termed an "Era between Gods," and toward a whole new view of our universe and our place within it.

6: It Takes a Village

Hillary Clinton chose the phrase "It Takes a Village" for the title of one of her books in order to highlight that fact that, beyond the nuclear family of parents and children, it does indeed take an extended family of grandparents and uncles and aunts, and an intact and embracing larger community, to successfully raise a child. And because it is the women of a family who bear primary responsibility for the rearing of children, it seems appropriate to begin this vignette with a photograph of my paternal aunts in Nairobi---my father's sisters and sisters-in-law---who constituted the female wing of our extended family.

Sisters and Sisters-in-Law

In the foreground, seated from left to right, are my father's three sisters: Aunty Clarice, who was married to Uncle Tertullian; Aunty Nathu, whom we have met in an earlier vignette and was long widowed; and Aunty Maisie, who turned down her suitors and chose to remain single all her life. And standing immediately behind, again from left to right, are their sisters-in-law, the wives of my father and his brothers, namely, my mother; Aunty

Lily, who married my father's eldest brother, Uncle Vincent; and Aunty Louisine, the wife of his second eldest brother, Uncle Eddie. When this photograph was taken, the youngest of my father's siblings, Uncle Simon, had long before migrated with his family to neighboring Tanganyika, which is why his wife, Aunty Thelma, is missing from the sister-in-law line up. Also missing is my paternal grandmother, who died many years before I was born. My paternal grandfather had preceded her to the grave, as did another son, Uncle Gerald, from an illness at a very young age. All three lie buried under fine, adjacent gravestones in the Forest Road cemetery.

Before Uncle Simon moved away to Dar-es-Salaam, he was a favorite of his young nephews and nieces. He would take us on drives in his automobile, most memorably over the so-called "switchback," a section of roadway that traversed a valley, declining sharply for a couple of hundred yards and then turning upwards again. An optical illusion made the upward slope appear much steeper than it was in reality, and he would descend at some speed and then swoop upward to our squeals of delight. But what was especially intriguing to us about Uncle Simon was that he had an artificial ear. His natural one had been bitten off by a household servant, who flew into a rage and attacked him with sharpened teeth after being falsely accused of stealing a tricycle that belonged to one of my uncle's children. As it turned out, some other family members had decided to play a practical joke by hiding the tricycle, with the most unfortunate of consequences. There is another, perhaps more believable, version of this tragedy: the servant had rushed at Uncle Simon and had sliced off a good part of his ear not with his teeth but with a sharp metal object. In any event, my poor uncle had to make a special visit to England for reconstructive surgery, which took the form of a plastic ear to replace the original.

A ghoulish question that was of great interest to us as children was what Uncle Simon might look like without his ear. And the answer was revealed to us one sunny day during the traditional holiday month of August when the family, including several uncles, aunts, and cousins, gathered at beach cottages in the coastal city of Mombasa. Early one morning, Uncle Simon

entered the Indian Ocean for a swim. A large wave came up unexpectedly behind him, broke forcefully over his head, and took off his reconstructed ear. We spent the rest of the day alternately trolling the water with fishing nets and searching, without success, up and down the length of the beach for the missing appendage. My long-suffering uncle had to return to England to have his ear replaced for a second time. Meanwhile, an unsuspecting beachcomber might have collected a very hard and pink plastic shell on that shore.

When it came to working with his hands and with mechanical or electrical devices, my father was no good at all. He was strictly an intellectual. For example, his idea of gardening was to acquire and then, in a comfortable armchair, peruse a copy of *Tropical Gardening*, the classic work on the subject. So if we were in need of help or advice on practical matters, he would often turn to Uncle Tertullian, the husband of his younger sister, Aunty Clarice. In return, my father could offer advice and help on matters where legal expertise was required.

Uncle Tertullian was a manager at an auto-dealership and he knew everything there was to know about automobiles. My father always consulted him before making a purchase and upon his advice acquired a Chevrolet, a wonderfully-sturdy vehicle which could stand up like no other to Kenya's atrocious roads. It came in especially handy later when he campaigned for election to the Kenyan Legislative Council. Uncle Tertullian again came to the rescue after my father went on an overseas trip on some legal matter and returned bearing gifts of two balsa-wood, model airplanes: one propeller-driven and the other a helicopter. My uncle had to be called in to assemble the propeller-driven model and he managed to get it off the ground. But it promptly crashed and broke into pieces. As for the helicopter, thereafter it remained in its packaging in a cupboard for several years.

Uncle Tertullian's wife, my father's favorite sister, Aunty Clarice, became a highly-respected and beloved teacher at St. Teresa's School, which I will

describe in more detail in the next vignette. Aunty Maisie, her older sister, was also a teacher and I've learned only recently that she had done something quite extraordinary during the pioneering days of Kenya. She started one of the very first schools for Goans in Kenya, which Selma Carvalho in *A Railway Runs Through* describes as follows:

"A determined Maisie Nazareth had for some time been running a private school of thirty-eight pupils. The G.O.A. [Goan Overseas Association] took over the school with Maisie retained as its first principal. It was an uncertain start that would turn to certain despair by the beginning of 1929 [the start of the Great Depression and just a few years before my own father's return to Kenya] when the school faced closure for various reasons, chief among which was that not many Goans placed their faith in it, preferring instead to send their children to the Catholic Mission School."

This was long before I was born and I have no idea of the eventual fate of that school. For as long as I can remember, Aunty Maisie, like Aunty Clarice, taught at St. Teresa's, where she too was highly regarded. In other ways, however, the two sisters were very different. Aunty Maisie had a reputation for being a busy-body, she interfered in other peoples affairs, usually with the best of intentions. It was probably the result of leading a solitary existence. Aunty Clarice, on the other hand, was known for always displaying the utmost tact and diplomacy. They were both intelligent women who expressed their intelligence in different ways.

As for my father's two elder brothers and their wives: we have already met Uncles Vincent and Eddie during their youth in Chapter 7 of *a Passage to Kenya*. They had each returned to Nairobi after their schooling at St. Mary's in Bombay. Uncle Vincent died prematurely some years before I was born, leaving his wife, Aunty Lily, to support and raise their four children, which she did with a considerable show of courage and determination, winning the admiration of the entire family. Uncle Eddie was an accountant. I remember him as being perpetually weary and rather ill-tempered. But he was completely upright and trustworthy, and indeed my father entrusted him with managing the accounts for his legal practice. Uncle Eddie married his first cousin, Louisine, and they were a closely-

bonded pair. (My uncle, who had no children of his own, earlier had assumed responsibility for the widow and children of his deceased older brother and was much loved and respected by them.) Aunty Louisine was a saintly woman and a calming influence on her irritable husband. She was very handy with needle and thread and for many years she ran a sewing shop called EDNA, a name she composed from the first two letters of her husband and soul-mate's name and surname: EDdie NAzareth.

I have a vivid memory of Aunty Louisine and my mother seated at a table that was covered in an assortment of sheets of crepe paper of various colors, cutting out petal shapes that they then assembled into artificial flowers. These flowers adorned our various homes in Nairobi for many years. After they retired, Uncle Eddie and Aunty Louisine migrated back to Goa, where they purchased a colorful little cottage in the village of Moira, from which my paternal grandfather had emigrated to Kenya at the end of the nineteenth century. For my aged uncle and aunt, the wheel had come full circle.

My paternal grandfather's children having for the most part been long-lived and fruitful, my youth was replete with a large number of first cousins of very different ages. This was the result of large families and a phenomenon that was not uncommon in times gone by: the first child, Clara, of my father's eldest sister, Aunty Nathu, was born before my paternal grandmother's last child. My cousin, Clara, thus was older than her (and my) Uncle Simon. Her children, Anthony and Carmen, were our contemporaries while she and her husband were on a level with my parents and family members of that generation.

Clara's brothers, Sidney and Jules, were also much older than my siblings and me, as were the four children of Aunty Lily and Uncle Vincent. I have few memories of most of my first cousins from that period of my pre-teenage youth, save for Mina, whom I've mentioned previously, Edgar and Vincy---the two eldest sons of Aunty Clarice and Uncle Tertullian and my principal playmates, whom we have also met in a previous vignette---and

cousin Jules, who was of suitably large dimension and therefore was regularly chosen to play Santa Claus at the Goan Gymkhana's annual Christmas celebration for children. He'd sit on a chair on a raised dais wearing a red costume and a white beard, and we would queue up to perch, one by one, on his ample knee, to receive a Christmas gift. It was either me or one of my young cousin playmates who would ask, not completely innocently: "Are you really Santa Claus or are you Jules?" Cousin Jules would reply very simply with great good humor: "Ho, Ho, Ho!"

This surrounding presence of aunts, uncles, and cousins was for us a key component of Hillary Clinton's "village." Another was the Goan Gymkhana, which served as a nexus, or focal point, for our social life within the wider Goan community. Social clubs like the Gymkhana were introduced to the country by the British and they quickly proliferated. The most prominent was the notorious Muthiaga Club, located in the whites-only suburb of the same name, of which we have spoken in some detail in Chapter 8 of *A Passage to Kenya*. Indians followed suit, albeit in a more sober fashion, organizing their own clubs, community by community. Directly across from us on Forest Road were the playing fields of the sports-loving Sikhs and their club-house, which was known as the Sikh Union. Here the Sikhs, decked out in colorful turbans, played field hockey with great expertise. Immediately next door to them was the clubhouse of the much less athletic Patels, and nearby also were the grounds of the cricket-oriented Suleiman Virjee Indian Gymkhana. And, of course, there were various other clubs and related organizations elsewhere in Nairobi, serving the needs of their respective Asian-Indian communities. I've given a detailed background of Kenya's Goan community in *A Passage to Kenya*, within Chapters 5 and 6 titled "Golden Goa Turned to Clay" and "Church, Caste, and Club." Many Goans had immigrated to Kenya directly from the Portuguese colony of Goa and were Portuguese nationals. They did not wish to be identified with Indians, my family being in the minority that was proud of its Indian heritage. Indeed Kenyan Goans were often viewed as handmaidens of the British, within a colony whose inhabitants were intentionally kept separate

by race, community, and tribe. Rabindranath Tagore has famously described India as that "magnificent cage of countless compartments." Kenya also was a cage of many compartments, but here it was easier to keep count: first and foremost, the division between European, Asian, and African, and then, within each such racial group, many further community, religious, or tribal subdivisions. The Goan community was one of these clearly demarcated subgroups, its members a cocktail of Indian and Portuguese and British influences, living now under the brilliant African sun.

The Goan Gymkhana in Nairobi to which our family belonged was founded in 1937, just a few years after my father's return to Kenya as described in Chapter 8 of *A Passage to Kenya*. The perpetually-bickering, caste-minded Goans had splintered into three different clubs, the other two being the Goan Institute and the even-earlier Railway Goan Institute. You will find all three clubs on the map included in Vignette 4, and a detailed history of their founding is given, for example, by Selma Carvalho in *A Railway Runs Through.*

In a nicely written newspaper article titled "Goan Gymkhana steeped in Kenya colonial history," Douglas Kiereini provides a description of the clubhouse itself as follows:

"This imposing structure is built to a Victorian design comprising a ground floor used mainly for storage, an upper floor hosting the main clubhouse and a viewing balcony. Walls are constructed of butch stone to the ground floor and burnt clay bricks rendered and painted externally to the upper floors.

The roof is covered in iron sheets supported by timber members. Doors are made of paneled timber while windows are glazed in steel casements. Floors are finished in polished parquet, terrazzo and coloured cement screed.

Access to the upper floor is via a grand terrazzo stairway leading to a colonnaded entrance way. There is a swimming pool to the rear of the main clubhouse with bandas [tent-like huts] for shade. The club also offers indoor games [like badminton, as well as billiards in a separate bar area adjacent to the dance floor] and a football pitch."

Dances were among the principal events hosted by the Goan Gymkhana. Complementing the foregoing sketch of the clubhouse, Peter Nazareth has provided a matching and equally well-written description of a dance at a typical Goan club. His description is buried within the pages of his fictional novel, *In a Brown Mantle*, but it is indeed an accurate reflection of fact. Here is an excerpt:

"A dance in a Goan institute used to be rather formal. The dance usually starts at 9pm, which means that the band starts playing around 9.30 pm and couples start drifting in at a quarter-to-ten.

The people are semi-formally dressed in attractive dresses or suits. The couples sit on chairs placed around the dance floor or around small tables. If they sat around the dance floor, the men usually vanished to the bar. They then hold their drinks and watch from the sidelines until somebody gathers up the nerve to commence dancing.

Then the men go up to the ladies of their choice (they dance with their wives first) and say "May I have the next dance, please?" the reply is usually "Yes" in which case they go round the floor in varying degrees of happiness.

The band plays a set of three pieces---say three quicksteps. Each piece lasts for three or four minutes. The band takes a break and then the two return to their seats, the man saying "Thank you very much" and "May I bring you a drink".

The next dance starts – a set of three foxtrots. And the dancing starts. Three waltzes. A break. A set of three rumbas. Break. ……

There is no eroticism in Goan dances. Rather, whatever eroticism exists is submerged …….. there is no break in the civilized behavior, except for the inevitable fight around the bar, which ends by somebody bringing the warring parties together over a drink or somebody being thrown out."

Chairs were placed all around the dance hall, where dancers could rest and the older generation could gather to gossip with one another and relive their salad days. The dance was the centerpiece, but it was the community gathering that was by far the more important. The dancing hall was where the mating dance of life could take its first, faltering steps, with girls of a marriageable age always kept under the watchful eye of a parent or guardian. Often a dance was merely an accompaniment to a feast or other

social event, of which there were many. The Kenya Goan community was further segmented by village of origin within Goa---for example, our family traced its origins to the village of Moira---and adherents of each of the main villages organized a yearly social at the Gymkhana, which was open to other members of the Goan community as guests.

The Christmas and New Year Balls were special affairs when men came dressed in tuxedos or white sharkskin jackets and women in full-length gowns. My father was an excellent dancer and he loved to be on the dance floor, whether it be for a waltz or a fox trot or even a quick step. My mother, on the other hand, was quite content to sit and watch with the ladies of her generation. But there was a code to follow. If a man asked a married woman to dance then her husband was under an obligation to ask the man's wife. So my poor mother would often have to get up and be steered around by someone who might be equally uncomfortable on the dance floor.

The code of conduct at dances no doubt caused social stress for the adults. There was the potential for all manner of slights and faux pas. But for us children it was quite different. We did not accompany our parents to the high balls---they would dress up in their finest and put us to bed before they departed---but during the many events that we did attend, it was our joy simply to run around the Gymkhana, upstairs and downstairs in the balconies and on the stairway that joined them, or simply enjoy the view from the upstairs ballroom gallery of the dancers and the gathering below:

"Mummy, may I have something to eat?" "Daddy, could I have a Pepsi from the bar?" "Look, there's Uncle Tertullian and Aunty Clarice just coming in." "Hi Edgar, Hello Vincy!" "There's Santa Claus dressed up as cousin Jules." "Hey, let's go upstairs!"

And down the corridors of time! Phrases from T.S. Eliot's poem, *Burnt Norton*, come to mind:

"Footfalls echo in the memory….down the passage….into the rose-garden. There rises the hidden laughter….of children in the foliage. Quick, now, here, now, always---ridiculous the waste sad time, stretching before and after. ″

Safety and joy within the all-embracing, cotton-wool warmth of the Goan community is how the Nairobi Goan Gymkhana lives on in my memory.

7: Be Prepared

During colonial days, schools in Kenya were racially segregated and organized along community lines. I attended St. Teresa's School, which was located on Juja Road, about two miles from our home, in the district called Eastleigh, even though Dr. Ribeiro's Goan School was closer, just beyond the Church of St. Francis at the western end of Forest Road. As the name suggests, Dr. Ribeiro's school was begun with a large grant from that great medical practitioner and Kenyan pioneer whom we have met in Chapter 4 of *A Passage to Kenya*. During the early days of the colony, there had been considerable rivalry, in both the political and social spheres, between Portuguese-oriented Ribeiros and Indian-oriented Nazareths, and that was perhaps the reason for my parents' choice of school. Or perhaps it was family loyalty, because, as mentioned previously, both Aunts Clarice and Maisie were teachers at St. Teresa's. Dr. Ribeiro's school was run by the Goan Overseas Association, and its students would be herded around in buses with the letters G.O.A. emblazoned on their sides. My fellow classmates at St. Teresa's took considerable joy in referring to our rivals at Dr. Ribeiro's as the Goats of Africa.

St. Teresa's School was run by nuns from the St. Teresa's Convent. Initially it was co-educational. Later, the boys' section was spun off and head-mastered by priests of the Holy Ghost Fathers. Most of the students were Catholic Goans, but there were children from other Asian communities and faiths as well---Hindu, Moslem, Parsee, Seychelloise. And the teachers were mostly secular, but of the Catholic faith. The girls' school was located on one side of Juja Road and the boys' school on the other, both set amidst school grounds that were extensive and bordered by hedges. The sports fields lay within the girls' school area and St. Teresa's Church was situated in-between the two schools on the boys' side. At that time, Nairobi's main airport was also located in the Eastleigh district, some distance beyond the schools, and when Princess Elizabeth, the heir to the British throne, visited Kenya in February, 1952, her motorcade came down

Juja Road on its way to the governor's residence. The schoolchildren were marched out of school that day, to line the road on both sides and cheer and wave little British-Kenya flags as the Princess passed. Soon afterwards, while the Princess and her husband were on a game-viewing tour at Kenya's famed Treetops Lodge, the news came that her father, King George VI of England, had died suddenly and unexpectedly in his sleep. The Princess had to curtail her visit and return immediately. There was no cheering this time as she was rushed back to Eastleigh airport, first to attend her father's funeral and later her own coronation as Queen Elizabeth II. Who would have guessed then that she would become the longest reigning English monarch of all time?

During the latter half of that same year, the rebellion of the Kikuyu tribe known as Mau-Mau erupted into the open, of which I've provided a detailed description, from an historical and political perspective, in Chapter 11 of *A Passage to* Kenya. I was six years of age at the time, and just beginning my schooling at St. Teresa's, and I have very little personal memory of Mau-Mau terror. There is, however, one particular date, two years later, that stands out in my memory: April 24, 1954. That's when the so-called Operation Anvil was initiated to round up and clear Nairobi of Mau-Mau suspects. Soon afterwards, police arrived early one morning at our house and took away our long-time servant, Njoroge, simply because he was a member of the Kikuyu tribe. I retain a vivid recollection of British officers in khaki shorts and knee-high boots and their African cohorts called "askaris," usually chosen from non-Kikuyu tribes, in navy uniforms and wearing sandals with leggings. Iron-hard men! There was nothing we could do but stand by helplessly as Njoroge was led away. He was put in detention along with many other young, male Kikuyu servants in Nairobi. I think he might have been released a couple of years later, but I do not know his fate.

Following this episode, my father adopted a mixed-breed, full-grown, male dog called Dukie, in order to provide some added measure of protection for the household. But, if truth be told, I was much more scared of Dukie than

I was of the Mau-Mau. When I'd take him on a leash for a walk within the compound, the beast was quite uncontrollable. We were all much relieved when Dukie escaped the compound and ran away. He was last spotted playing with other dogs in the Ngara area, which coincidentally happened to be the district where earlier an Asian family had been attacked by the Mau Mau. There were actually very few physical attacks on Asians (and Europeans) in the city. The fear was primarily psychological.

By mid-1955, the Mau-Mau had been crushed militarily. Nairobi's city dwellers felt safer, but, sadly, at the cost of Kenya having been turned into a police state---for details, see again Chapter 11 of *A Passage to Kenya*. It was around this time that I was permitted to ride my bicycle each morning to school, a distance of a little under two miles. Thinking back now, I'm amazed that my parents gave me this freedom. The roads were potholed and carried considerable traffic---automobile, lorry, cart, and bicycle---but I'm very glad that they did. It helped nurture self-reliance and an independent spirit. I loved to ride to school: first east on Forest Road, which today is completely unrecognizable as the Meru-Nairobi highway; a jog left, and then right onto Fairview Road, which took me through the Pangani district; then left again onto Juja Road and into Eastleigh, where St. Teresa's School was located. Although the roads themselves are unnamed on the map of Vignette 4, you can see there the general pattern of my route to school each day.

As I've described in Chapter 7 of *A Passage to Kenya,* schools in Kenya followed the remarkable system---a prescribed syllabus and a uniform system of examinations---set up by the British across their overseas colonies, which made it easy to move from one to another. Standards 1 through 7, each a year long and locally tested, were followed by the Empire-wide Junior Cambridge Examination. Students who passed then went on to Forms I through IV, each again extending over a year, and terminated by the Senior Cambridge Examination ('O' Level, the letter standing for `Ordinary'). There was then the option of two additional years of study, Forms V and VI, and a final hurdle known as the Senior

Cambridge Examination (`A' Level, meaning `Advanced'), which was in preparation for admission to a university.

I was in Form II and in the middle of the school year when the events described in the opening two vignettes occurred. Before my transplantation to St. Mary's in Bombay, attendance at school was a hum-drum affair. I was almost always at the top of my class, but I have no recollection of striving particularly hard at my studies or any serious classroom rivalry. I simply went to class regularly, did my homework, and took the examinations. Having started school early and having received at least one double promotion, I was younger than my contemporaries, but apart from that there is little that is exceptional to relate about my classroom experience, and I will spare the reader further detail.

Outside of the classroom, my two best school buddies were a Moslem and a Hindu: Gulamali-Abbas Musa and Sunil Sarkar. We would go around as a threesome, our arms around each others' shoulders, as is so common with Indian children. In addition to the standard curriculum, St. Teresa's provided instruction in the Scripture for the Catholics, while non-Catholic students were enrolled in a class called "Morals." I did not think that Gulamali-Abbas and Sunil were immoral---we were much too young to even know the meaning of the term---and the fact that they were non-Catholic, and therefore destined for hellfire, did not come in the way of our friendship. I have many pleasant memories of our times together: floating little boats made of wood down a drainage ditch that bordered the classrooms, which turned into a raging torrent during the rainy season; collecting little, polished "lightning" stones of various colors that we found in the sand piles at nearby construction sites; eating mangoes laced with chili-powder and salt sold by African vendors from carts outside the school grounds; attending matinee movies on a Saturday afternoon in downtown Nairobi---westerns, for instance, "Shane" were among our favorites. We'd sometimes gather at the home of another school friend, who lived about a quarter of a mile from Aunty Nathu's compound, to play with water pistols or borrow and share comic books based again on wild-west characters,

Buck Jones and Kit Carson. Still, I was often lonesome for companionship, and then I would go across Forest Road from Aunty Nathu's compound to the soccer fields of the Sikh Union and lounge behind the goal posts, waiting for a ball to come crashing into the netting and register the scoring of a goal.

Without any doubt, my fondest memory of my school days at St. Teresa's was its Boy Scouts troop: Group No. 85, Eagle Patrol. You see it recorded in the "Membership Card and Record of Progress" at the end of this vignette. I loved my khaki uniform with its belt and buckle that spelled "Boy Scouts - Be Prepared" around its circumference; the little, embossed, leather slide to hold my boy-scout scarf in place; my lanyard with whistle attached to summon help in an emergency; and the badges that recorded progress from tenderfoot to second class, to first class, and beyond. My original tenderfoot record from the previous year had been signed by our Parsee scoutmaster, Kursi Rustumji, whom we respected and loved dearly. He had only one arm---the other was missing at the shoulder so his shirt sleeve had to be pinned up in place---but that disability did not hamper him in any way. He could tie his shoelaces one-handedly, which impressed us greatly. He was very approachable, but he maintained discipline. Once, for example, following some misbehavior whose details I do not recall, he made the entire tenderfoot troop go round and round on their knees on the school's basket ball court. The following year, I moved up to second-class rank under a different scoutmaster and began to earn a few badges. I appear to have passed "Rules of Health," "Hand Axe," "Compass and Map," "Cooking," and "Fire Lighting" which I recall as being especially challenging. One had to build a little tent-like structure of twigs, with some dry grass bunched within, and one was permitted but a single match to light the fire. If the wind blew out the match or the fire did not properly ignite and died out, the result was failure. I failed once or twice before earning the badge. And, I must have been well on the way to passing "Knots and Lashings," because I can still tie a "bowline" around my waist, should it ever become necessary to throw a lifeline to a swimmer in

distress, and a "round-turn and two-half-hitches" to secure a tent line. But I did not earn the badge before leaving the troop later that year. Our objective, of course, was always to *Be Prepared!*, the boy-scouts' motto. There were other mottos too, for example, "a scout is a friend to all and a brother to every other scout." We took much pleasure in omitting the `r' in `friend' and again in `brother': *a scout is a fiend to all and a bother to every other scout!* Perhaps this was the infraction that resulted in Kursi Rustumji's mass punishment of his tenderfoot troop.

Few people know that Lord Baden-Powell was the founder of the Boy Scouts movement, and even fewer that he lies buried at the foot of Mount Kenya, near the town of Nyeri. Perhaps my most treasured memory of all was the time our entire troop attended the *Boy Scouts Jamboree* held at Nyeri to honor our founder. Transportation was provided by the father of one of the scouts in our troop who owned a charcoal supply business and lent one of his flat-bed trucks to the school. Fully attired in our boy scouts' uniforms, we piled into the rear, which had shoulder-high, protective railings around the flat bed, but was open to the elements. I recall the driver barreling around curves at high speed, on roads with steep fall-offs, as we climbed steadily to the foothills of the mountain. He could easily have taken the entire troop to an entirely different destination. The highlight of the Jamboree was the march of the scout troops, gathered from across the continent, to the gravesite of Lord Baden Powell. It was over a distance measured in miles and on a very hot day, and on the homebound march some of the scouts in our troop collapsed from heatstroke and fatigue. But somehow I managed to stay upright. That gave me a reputation for toughness with my fellow scouts--- always a plus at a boys' school!

Such were my perfectly ordinary, happy-go-lucky days before that fateful day when I found myself aboard an Air India Super Constellation aircraft with flames belching from the exhaust pipes above its wings. I did not know then that I was ending a definite phase of my young life and beginning a very different one. As with the precious bonds broken with my

cousins Edgar and Vincy, which I have described previously, so too were ruptured the precious ties described here. Looking back now, I'm reminded of the closing lines of Dylan Thomas' poem, *Fern Hill*, whose opening lines I have quoted in an earlier vignette:

> "Nothing I cared, in the lamb white days, that time would take me
> Up to the swallow-thronged loft by the shadow of his hand,
> In the moon that is always rising,
> Nor that riding to sleep
> I should hear him fly with the high fields
> And wake to the farm forever fled from the childless land.
> Oh as I was young and easy in the mercy of his means,
> Time held me green and dying
> Though I sang in my chains like the sea."

I had a strange dream, just the other night. I had scheduled an appointment at the barber shop for a haircut as usual. But this time the barber did not cut my hair. Instead, he removed it entirely from the scalp and in its place he substituted a hairpiece. The barber insisted, over my objections, that it was a definite improvement, because I would not need a haircut again. I wonder what that dream could mean?

BOY SCOUT

Name Larry Nazareth

Patrol Eagle

GROUP No.

Main Route to First Class

	SUBJECT		DATE
TENDERFOOT	Interview by S.M.		
	LAW & PROMISE		
	SALUTES		
	UNION FLAG		
	DRESS A WOUND		
	WOODCRAFT SIGNS		
	KNOTS & WHIPPING		
	INVESTITURE		
SECOND CLASS	FIRST AID		
	RULES of HEALTH	[illegible]	4/3/58
	HEALTH EXERCISES		
	OBSERVATION		
	6 COMMON TREES		
	KNOTS, LASHINGS		
	HAND AXE	[illegible]	[illegible]
	SIGNALLING	-	
	COMPASS, MAP	[illegible]	18/2/58
	FIRE LIGHTING	[illegible]	17/10/57
	COOKING	[illegible]	11/2/58
	HIGHWAY CODE		
	Re-test TENDERFOOT		
	2nd CLASS awarded		
FIRST CLASS	EMERGENCIES		
	FIRST AID		
	SWIMMING		
	READ A TRACK		
	TREES, BIRDS		
	ESTIMATING		
	LASHING, SPLICING		
	FELLING AXE		
	SIGNALLING		
	HIGHWAY CODE		
	MAPPING, COMPASS		
	JOURNEY		
	10 NIGHTS CAMPING		
	Re-test 2nd CLASS		
	1st CLASS awarded		

Special Proficiency

"UNDER 15" BADGES	DATE
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
NO MORE PROFICIENCY BADGES MAY BE GAINED UNTIL 1st. CLASS.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	
11.	
12.	

No 1796

The Scout Cord

FIRST CLASS and six Proficiency Badges.
(See over)

Promotion

SECOND	P/L	T/L	

Service Stars

CUB Service	1st Year	2nd Year	3rd Year
	24/2/58		
	4th Year	5th Year	6th Year

Up to Senior Scouts

Left Group

Part III: Two Years Can Be an Eternity

8: Trafalgar Square

After courageously crossing the Indian Ocean in 1944 to embark on her married life in Kenya, my mother had nevertheless remained close to her natal family in Bombay and continued to steer by their compass. So it was only natural that every few years she would want to return with her children, usually accompanied by my father, for an extended holiday at her parents' home. It seemed almost taken for granted that we could stay with them for months on end and be made to feel welcome. My maternal grandparents and aunts were thus no strangers to me when I was unexpectedly put under their care in late August, 1958, my passage having been smoothed by three extended visits to Bombay during the preceding decade.

The first of these took place a year after my birth, when, as I've recounted in Chapter 8 of *A Passage to Kenya*, my parents had travelled to India in August, 1947---first by train from Nairobi to the port of Mombasa and then onward by ship to Bombay---in order to be present at the Indian Independence celebrations. Of course, I have no memory of that momentous event. But I have a validating photograph taken at that time and duplicated below, where you can see all the members of my mother's natal family. Seated front and center are my maternal grandparents, my grandmother holding me upright at the tender age of a little more than a year. On either side of them are their two eldest daughters: my mother sits next to my grandmother with my father standing behind, while Aunty Lucy sits next to my grandfather. Behind her is the only son of the family, Uncle Lennie. Aunty Freda stands beside my father, and next to her is the youngest member of the family, Aunty Yvonne. This was my mother's natal family, in their prime, at the time of Indian Independence in 1947.

The Freitas Family in the Year of Indian Independence

We returned to Bombay in 1952 and again in 1955, each visit extending over a few months. At the time of our first visit in 1952, my father's political fortunes were at a low ebb as described in some detail in Chapter 10 of *A Passage to Kenya*, and he took the opportunity to travel to India with the entire family, arriving in Bombay a little after we had. My mother, along with Lionel, Jeanne, and myself, aged two, four, and six, respectively, went ahead by air. On this outbound Air India flight from Nairobi to Bombay, an air hostess accidentally spilled hot coffee on Lionel, who set up a frightful howl, thus marking us for especially attentive treatment during the remainder of the journey.

In 1955, my father's political fortunes were on the rise again and he did not accompany the rest of the family on our holiday. That time, we went by sea from Mombasa. I recall especially the flotilla of boats, laden with fruits, woven baskets, hats, and other colorful items for sale, that came up to greet our ship, the *SS Amra*, after it dropped anchor off the Seychelles Islands en route to Bombay. *These two visits in 1952 and 1955 have melded together, in my memory, into a single extended holiday.*

At the time of our visits, my grandparents and their eldest and youngest daughters, Aunts Lucy and Yvonne, lived together in a second-floor flat within Trafalgar Square, a rectangular, gated compound located in a neighborhood of Bombay known as Byculla. (In the United States, the second floor is reckoned as the third, the bottom floor being called the first rather than the ground floor.) My mother's other two siblings, Aunty Freda and Uncle Lennie, had by that time left the family home in pursuit of their careers. My maternal grandfather, Diego Marcus Freitas, had moved his family to this flat in Bombay many years before Indian independence. Prior to their relocation, they had lived in Karachi, now the principal city of Pakistan, but at that time a British-ruled city within an un-partitioned Indian subcontinent.

My grandfather had held a well-respected position in the tax office in Karachi and his five children were all born and attended primary and secondary schools in that city. He had made a considerable sacrifice by moving, in order to ensure a good education for his children at Bombay's well-regarded universities. It had cost him his context and his place in society. "You can't imagine what a changed man he became," my mother would exclaim when describing her father's resulting exile in anonymous Bombay. But this served only to increase the pride he took in his five highly-accomplished children.

My grandfather had also maintained an ancestral home in Goa. Movement between British India and Portuguese Goa was relatively unhindered, and, each year, the entire family would travel by ship to Goa for delightful

vacations, of which my mother often spoke. After India achieved independence in 1947, Portugal steadfastly refused to relinquish its 450-year old colony to the newly independent nation, so that movement of the family between India and the colony of Goa became more difficult.

The family flat in Trafalgar Square was located in one of the multi-storey buildings that formed a continuum around the compound's rectangular perimeter. Elevators were not common in those days and the individual flats were reached instead by inner stairways that were spaced at intervals. These staircases were dimly lit and gloomy and led up from the compound to flats grouped in pairs on each floor, one flat on either side of its staircase, separated each from the other by a broad landing.

The overall design of Trafalgar Square permitted every flat to have an open gallery---a non-protruding balcony with protective railing and overhead awning to shield it from sun and rain---and from my grandparents' gallery one could look down onto the compound below and across to the galleries of other neighbors in the compound, a wonderful mix of Indian communities—Hindu, Moslem, Goan, Parsee, Jewish, Anglo-Indian. (My grandparents' neighbors occupying the flat opposite them on their floor were an Indian-Jewish family called the Cohens.)

Outside the gate of the compound ran Ripon Road, lined with shops and alive, from daybreak to midnight, with the congested traffic and noisy bedlam of an Indian city: bullock-carts, horse-garries, automobiles, auto-rickshaws, bicycles, and innumerable pedestrians. But Trafalgar Square itself was a relatively peaceful oasis. The compound was treeless and in its center was a large, rectangular stone platform, several yards in length and width, and raised about a foot off the ground. This was surrounded on all sides by a wide carriageway, which separated the platform from the entrance stairways to the surrounding flats, and which could be circumnavigated with ease by an automobile.

If we needed wheeled transportation, my grandmother's household servant, Augustine, who helped her with the daily cooking and cleaning,

would go downstairs and out the gates to summon a horse garry. Usually there was a queue waiting patiently outside on Ripon Road. The driver, known as a garry-walla, would come into the compound, …., clip-clop, clip-clop, clop-clop,…., circling the stone platform, and would wait outside our stairway entrance. Sometimes I would be permitted to sit up with the driver, while the others rode in the carriage. Now and then, an automobile might enter the gate to pick up or drop off a passenger. But the compound was usually free of vehicles, a delightful playground for children, especially on the raised stone platform in the center where they could be monitored by parents looking down from their upstairs galleries. It was also a place for the Trafalgar Square community to gather and gossip once the heat of afternoon had cooled to a balmy evening.

Throughout the daylight hours, vendors would come and go. A knocking on the front door---its rapping sound made by striking the wooden door repeatedly using the handle of the outside latch---announced the arrival of the dhobi, coming to deliver the weekly wash. He carried it on his head in a large bundle wrapped in cloth, which he would lay down and unwrap on the landing, revealing freshly-washed sheets, cotton shirts that were starched and spotlessly clean, well-pressed pants, and other assorted items of clothing. A list would be checked off to verify that all was in order. He would then pick up the next weeks' laundry and cart it away to his "dhobi village" on the outskirts of the city, where it would be washed by hand in an age-old way: the clothes soaped and scrubbed by beating them on flat rocks on the banks of a running stream. In particular, plastic buttons on shirts and shorts could not survive this method of washing, so cloth buttons had to be substituted.

Knock, knock again on the front door, a few minutes later! This time it was the man who sold pots and pans. He had a disease that bleached his skin to a pinkish white and he was quite harmless, but his appearance frightened me dreadfully.

A drum-beat or the shaking of a rattle downstairs announced the arrival of a street-performance troupe: one member would play scratchy music on a single-stringed, improvised violin, another would turn summersaults on the stone platform, and yet another would tie a tiny baby to one end of a long, wooden pole and balance the other end on his forehead. Afterwards, they would circle the compound, collecting coins thrown down to them by residents from their upstairs balconies.

An endless trellis-work of sounds filled the Square, a hubbub of activity so very different from Aunty Nathu's tranquil, vegetated compound on Forest Road, which was its counterpart in Nairobi. Many years later, when Aunty Lucy came to visit us in Kenya---by that time we had moved to a larger house in an upscale and equally tranquil suburb of Nairobi---she found the silence deafening. My mother had made the transition to Africa, her sister had not!

When we visited my grandparents in 1952, we had remained in Bombay through the Christmas holiday season, with the exception of my father, whose legal commitments forced his return to Nairobi a little earlier. Christmas is, of course, the largest event of the Goan-Catholic calendar, and it is celebrated in Bombay or Nairobi in much the same way as it is celebrated worldwide. Christmas decorations are put up. Augustine, being good with his hands, had constructed a pretty star from strips of bamboo and colored, crepe paper, which he hung in the open gallery.

On Christmas morning, we children awakened to gifts from Santa Claus, who has rushed down from the North Pole in his reindeer-powered sleigh, clambering down non-existent chimneys to deliver them. (In the tropics, Rudolph's red nose must surely be the result of sunburn!) Among papers preserved in my father's filing cabinet, I discovered, many years later, a little gem of a letter that was handwritten and dated from that Christmas holiday in 1952. It captures, far better than any description I can muster, the relationship with my mother's natal family and the sweetness of our

visits to Bombay. It is transcribed below and also reproduced at the end of this vignette:

FAIRYLAND, NORTH POLE

Xmas 1952

My dear little Larry-boy and Jeannie-girl,

I squeezed down the chimney of your Nairobi house, about one hour ago, but I was so surprised not to find you there. You see, Larry had written to me to send his toys to Nairobi. So, I've rushed across the sea, in my sleigh, to give you your toys in Bombay. In the hurry, some toys from my bag fell into the sea, so I may not be able to give you everything you asked for. On my way back to Fairyland, I'll ask the sea-fairies to find the nice things that fell out, and maybe, you will get them later.

I am leaving a cricket-set for Larry, because he is so good at games. But, remember, Larry, when you play cricket, or tops, or anything else, you must be a sport --- no crying for your Mummy from downstairs. My gnomes have told me that you fight with the other boys. Don't do this, Larry, but be friends with everybody; and remember not to worry your grandparents, Mummy and Daddy and your aunties by being naughty. If you are a good little boy, you'll get something lovely, next Christmas, packed for you by the packing elves.

Jeannie wanted a skipping rope. I've got one for her in my red-bag; and there's also a sweet little doll for her. There was no cloth in fairy-land this year, so the tailor fairies have used one of your old dresses, Jeanne, to make your doll's little dress. You must be careful of your frocks, Jeannie, and remember to be good and obedient, and never, never fiddle with anything. O.K.? And don't forget to learn your prayers and your lessons.

I'm keeping a horsey next to Lionel's bed. Tell him to be good. What a pretty star you have in your gallery! How wonderful it will look with a bulb.

I left your Daddy's newspapers in Nairobi. I hope he gets them.

My reindeer are getting tired of waiting. I can hear Rudolph saying that his red nose is getting cold. So, good-bye till next year ----

Santa Claus

This was no doubt a collaborative effort between my mother's siblings, with my ever-playful and multi-talented Aunty Yvonne, the youngest of the sisters, very likely taking the lead. But when I shared a copy of this letter with my maternal aunts many years later---by then they had moved to fancier accommodations in another part of the city---they had no recollection of having written it.

For my part, I remember with much pleasure the variety of "games" that I played downstairs with the children of Trafalgar Square during our two visits in 1952 and 1955, although the "fights with other boys" seem to have faded from memory. These games included gilli-danda, which is a variant on cricket; bambaram, a game played with spinning-tops; another played on the stone platform with the discarded covers of cigarette packs, which are assigned values determined by their scarcity; kite-flying and kite-fighting, in season; and, of course, the well-known Indian pastime of carom, a "strike-and-pocket" board game akin to billiards. (To say more would require page-long explanations, but a Google search coupled with Wikipedia articles will provide fascinating detail.)

Another memory, golden-ringed and especially precious, dates to our second visit, when I was barely nine years of age: our family walking with friends and their children on Juhu beach in the late evening, palm trees swaying in a breeze, moonlight shining on the waves. A girl of my age, running and playing alongside, no name, no image attached, just magic in the air. It marked the beginning of my sexual awakening.

The return from our extended holiday in Bombay in 1955 marked another significant turning point: it was when my parents began quietly, and then later un-quietly, to drift apart. My father was forty-seven years of age, my mother thirty-eight. "Why did you leave him alone for all those months at such a dangerous age?" said Aunty Freda to my mother many years later. "I was an innocent. How was I to know?" was her reply. I too was innocent and care-free in those days and completely oblivious to the fractures of marital life. And little did I know, when we returned to Nairobi in that year,

that my own fracturing, of a very different kind, would begin but three years later.

FAIRYLAND, NORTH POL
Xmas 1952.

My dear little Larry-boy and Jeannie-girl,

I squeezed down the chimney of your Nairobi house, about one hour ago, but I was so surprised not to find you there. You see, Larry had written to me to send his toys to Nairobi. So, I've rushed across the sea, in my sleigh, to give you your toys in Bombay. In the hurry, some toys from my bag fell into the sea, so I may not be able to give you everything you asked for. On my way back to Fairyland, I'll ask the sea-fairies to find the nice things that fell out, and maybe, you will get them later

I am leaving a cricket-set for Larry, because he is so good at games. But, remember, Larry, when you play cricket, or tops, or anything else, you must be a sport - no crying for your Mummy from downstairs. My gnomes have also told me that you fight with the other boys. Don't do this, Larry, but be friends with every body; and, remember not to worry your grandparents, Mummy + Daddy + your aunties by being naughty. If you are a good little boy, you'll get something lovely, next Christmas, packed for you by the packing elves

Jeannie wanted a skipping rope. I've got one for

her in my red-bag; and there's also a sweet little doll for her. There was no cloth in fairy-land this year, so the tailor fairies have used one of your old dresses, Jeanne, to make your doll little dress. You must be careful of your frocks, Jeannie, and remember to be good and obedient, and never, never fiddle with anything. O.k? And don't forget to learn your prayers & your lessons.

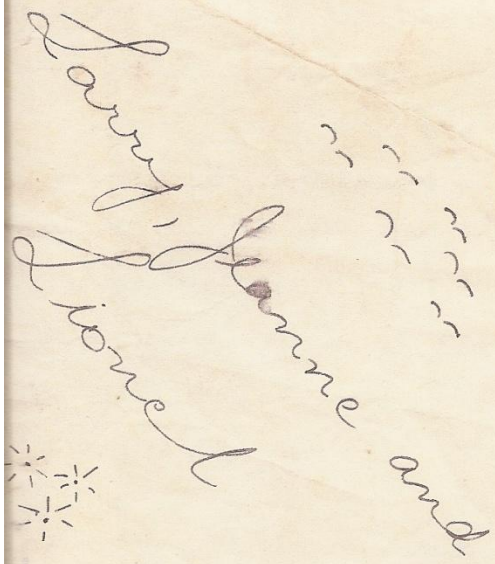
I'm keeping a horsey next to Lionel's bed. Tell him to be good. What a pretty star you have in your gallery! I almost dropped it while I was climbing into your room. How wonderful it will look with a bulb.

I left your Daddy's newspapers in Nairobi. I hope he gets them.

My reindeer are getting tired of waiting. I can hear Rudolph saying that his red nose is getting cold.

So, good-bye till next year—

Santa Claus.



9: St. Mary's High School

Following our Stonyhurst College misadventure in England in the summer of 1958, as described in the opening vignette, I arrived in Bombay to find my grandparents' home relatively unchanged from the time of my previous visits in 1952 and 1955. But the Trafalgar Square compound itself was no longer the playground and tranquil oasis of my childhood memory. Old families had moved out, new families had moved in, the diverse but integrated community of previous visits had atomized. I remember looking down with sadness from the gallery of my grandparents' second-floor flat, nostalgic for my playmates of the past.

My grandfather had grown more irritable during the intervening years. It is only now, during my own sunset years, that I fully appreciate his generosity in assuming the added responsibility of a twelve-year old, thrust unexpectedly into his household. He had developed his own unique way of dealing with those youngsters who got up to mischief in the compound after darkness had descended. My grandfather would accumulate the peeled skins from bananas consumed at mealtimes, which he would then place strategically on a little ledge under the gallery awning. If the noise downstairs became unbearable, he would take down one of these banana skins and hurl it from the gallery into the compound and in the general direction of the disturbance.

My grandmother was as loving as ever. Each morning she would beat-up an egg for my breakfast. She'd first add a teaspoon of sugar to the raw egg in a teacup, and then, using the back of the teaspoon in a smooth, circular motion, she would whip it up until the foam rose to the very brim of the cup. Finally, she'd take down the precious bottle of brandy that my grandfather had secreted on a high shelf in the dining room, and add half a teaspoon to the cup. Prohibition was still in effect in India in those days and liquor was strictly rationed. So, needless to say, my grandfather was not pleased. But my grandparents were a devoted couple who had married

for love and my grandfather did not stand in the way of my grandmother's wishes. A delicious way to begin the day!

Each evening after dinner, again in fulfillment of my grandmother's wishes, Aunts Lucy and Yvonne and I would gather around her to say the rosary in the rear bedroom of the flat. For those unfamiliar with this Catholic ritual, it consists of reciting several "Hail Mary's," which are preceded by an "Our Father" and concluded with a "Glory Be," this sequence repeated several times. My grandmother would seat herself in a reclining armchair. Since she had trouble with circulation in her limbs, she would usually place a leg up on an extender that could be rotated out from under the chair's arm---an Indian, perhaps uniquely Goan, piece of furniture that I've not encountered anywhere else. By the time prayers were said, my grandfather had usually taken to his four-poster bed in the adjoining room. If he needed a glass of water or some assistance he would call "Buckeeet" (his pet name for my youngest aunt) and the rosary would be interrupted until his need could be fulfilled.

My two aunts shared this rear bedroom, sleeping on comfortable mattresses and bedding that had been put atop large, wooden chests in place of the more common box-springs. These chests were filled with the prize books that my clever aunts, uncle, and mother had accumulated during their schooldays in Karachi and Bombay. On occasions, bedding and mattress would be rolled back and a chest opened to retrieve a particular book. Of course, my aunts were by then far beyond their school years. Aunty Lucy was already well established in her career as a teacher of the French language at St. Mary's High School. And Aunty Yvonne was completing her Ph.D. thesis in the field of Microbiology.

I was to be enrolled at St. Mary's High School and my Aunt Lucy helped smooth the way. Since I had been out of the classroom for half a year, I needed to make up lost ground. She hired two tutors from the school, one for mathematics and science subjects and the other for subjects in the arts, and I took my tutorial lessons in the open gallery, the same gallery where

Augustine, the family's household servant, had years earlier hung his beautifully-constructed Christmas star, and from which my grandfather would currently launch his banana-skin missiles. "What do they teach in Africa?" exclaimed Mr. Soares on my first day of tuition, unimpressed by my academic achievements to date. But I was a bright and diligent student and I made rapid progress. By year's end I was up to speed and ready to face the school year, which began in January. And it was Mr. Soares who first awakened my interest in mathematics, for which I owe him a great debt of gratitude.

In entering St. Mary's High School, I was following in the footsteps of my father and his two brothers. I've provided a detailed description of both the school and their educational experience in Chapter 7 of *A Passage to Kenya,* which I will not repeat here. But a little more background information of the "prospectus" variety is in order, before relating my own schooling experience that shaped the rest of my life. I must confess, meanwhile, that in my two years at St. Mary's, I do not recall ever consciously entertaining the thought that, decades earlier, my father and his siblings had occupied the very same space and had lived experiences akin to mine. The blinkered eyes of youth!

St. Mary's High School actually consisted of two independent schools under the same banner, which were located on opposite sides of Nesbit Road in the district of Bombay known as Mazagon. They were for male students only and they were called the "blue" school and the "red" school, respectively, after the colors of the ties worn by students as part of the required school uniform. I was to be enrolled in the "blue" school, which, long after India had become an independent nation, continued to follow the prescribed syllabus and tiered system of examinations leading to the Cambridge Overseas School Certificate (`O' Level). This overseas school system worked *uniformly* across all current (and former) British colonies, making it relatively easy for me to move across the Indian Ocean from Nairobi to Bombay. The "red" school, on the other hand, followed a parallel system that had been created in India after independence and its

concluding examination was called the Senior School Certificate, or S.S.C.. I should mention here that Aunty Lucy taught French in the "red" school, but that other side of Nesbit Road was a world with which I had no contact, save for this familial connection, and it will not enter further into this account.

St. Mary's "blue" Prospectus opens as follows:

"From its foundation in 1864 St. Mary's High School has been under the management of the Fathers of the Society of Jesus [known more simply as the Jesuits].

The institution, consisting in the main of three imposing buildings and two ample playing grounds, lies off Nesbit Road beside the Church of St. Anne. The locality, once a fashionable quarter of the city of Bombay, is still an oasis of comparative quiet and seclusion amidst the bustling modernity of the *Urbs Prima in India* [primary city of India].

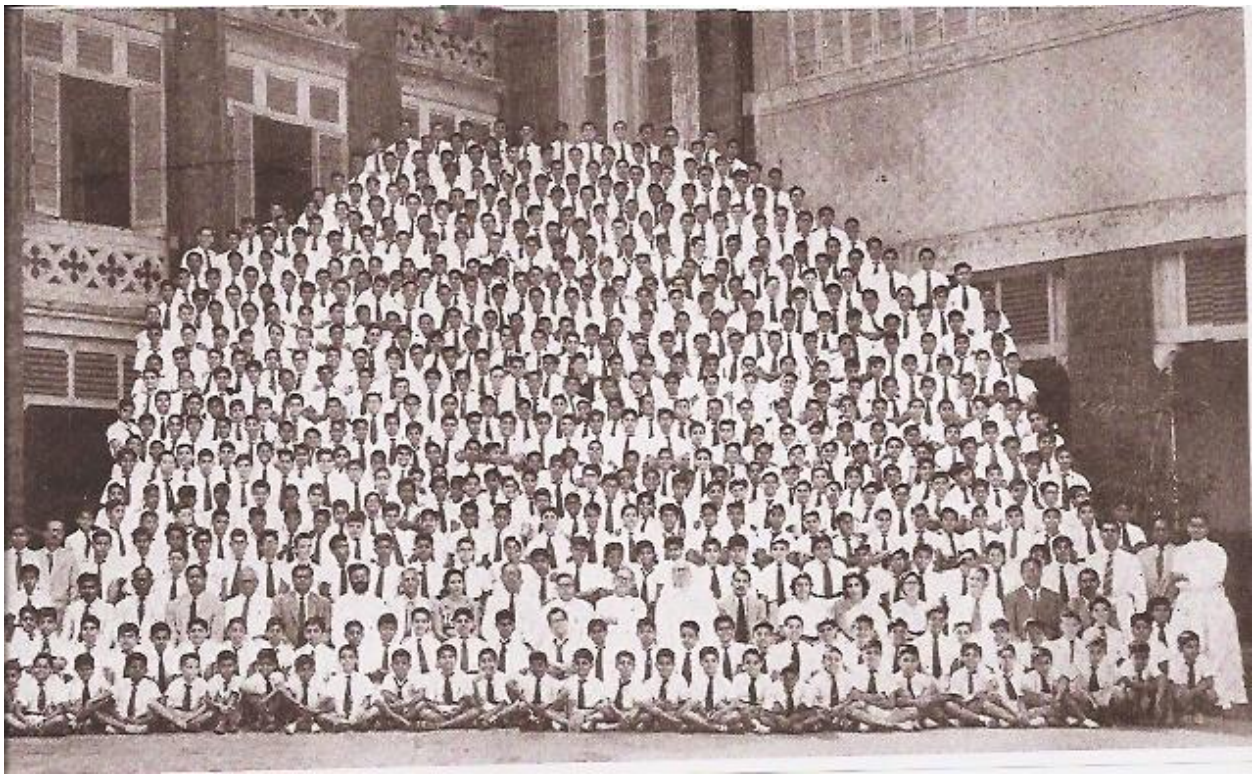
The school comprises both a Boarding and a Day school.

The aim is not merely intellectual education through the intelligent application of the mind to the various subjects of the syllabus but, with greater emphasis, the careful development of all the various habits that the future of the boy as an upright citizen demands. In the Catholic this education is given a religious as well as a moral basis."

The school year began in January and comprised three terms: January – April; June – September; and October – December; with vacations in-between terms. The hours of classroom attendance on schooldays were 9.45am to 1.15 pm and 2.15 pm to 4.15 pm and the school week ran Mon. – Wed. and Fri. – Sat. with Thursday and Sunday being full days off, an excellent arrangement that permitted study in the evenings and on the off-days. (The contrast with the school year in England and the United States with its three-month break in the summer is very marked.)

Seven Standards, numbered using Roman numerals I through VII, constituted the "Lower School," at the conclusion of which students faced the hurdle of the Junior Cambridge examination. Those who did well enough moved on to the "Upper School," where they advanced through four additional Standards, VIII through XI---in Kenya these were called

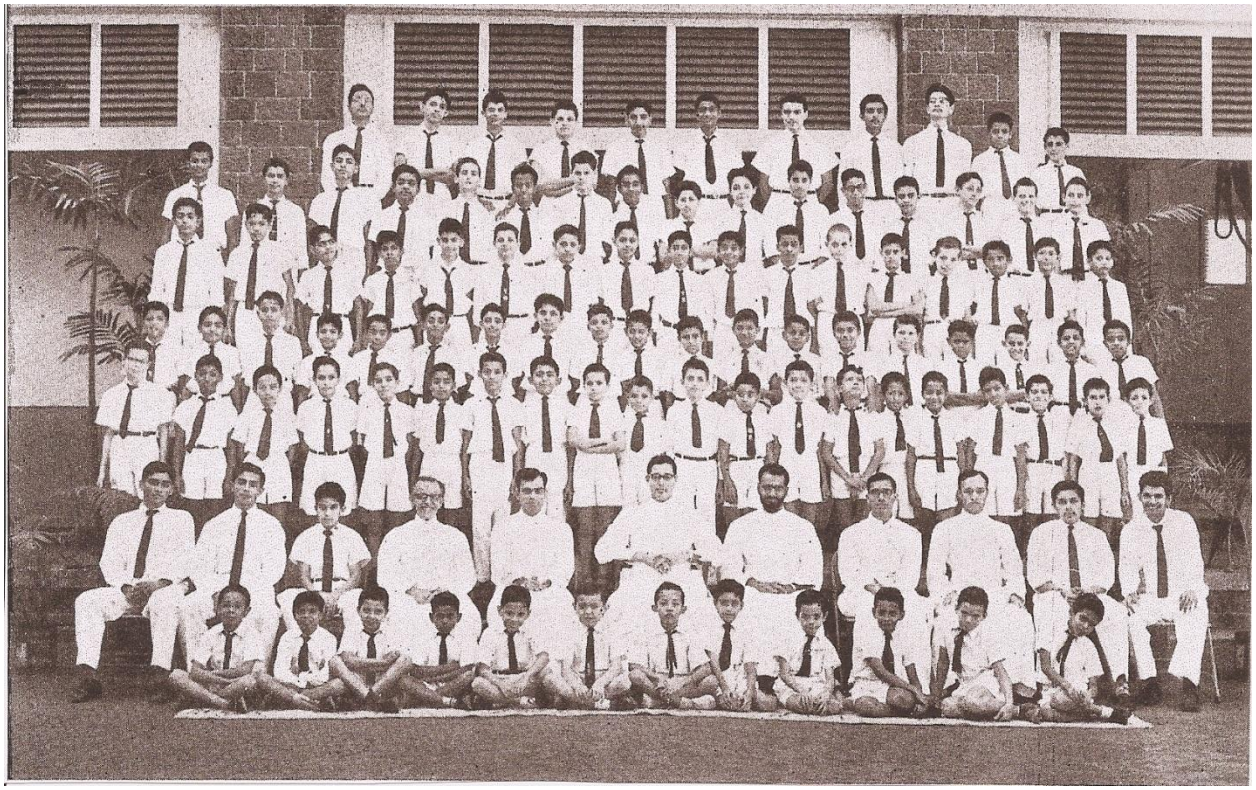
Forms I through IV--- terminating with the Senior Cambridge examination. Here is a picture of the students of the Upper School, decked out in the compulsory school uniform of white shirt, white shorts or trousers, and navy blue tie, which captures beautifully the organizational skills and discipline of the Jesuits. (There was a similar one for the Lower School.)



The Upper School

Most of the students at St. Mary's were day boys, i.e., they attended classes during the day and went home in the evening. But, as mentioned above, the school also had a boarding component to make provision for boys far from home. No distinction was made between boarders and day-boys during the school day in the classroom. St. Mary's simply provided room-and-board and supervision in *loco parentis* (in the place of parents) for a relatively small number of boarders of all ages. I was one of those

boarders as pictured below (as were my father and his two brothers many years earlier). The boarding school was itself partitioned horizontally into Divisions I, II, and III so that boys of similar age were grouped together, a form of organization wisely adopted by the Jesuits of St. Mary's that was very unlike the vertical partitioning within the British public school system, with its attendant problems of "fagging"---a form of bullying where younger boys are required to perform servile tasks for older ones in their "house." (*Peter Kenworthy-Browne, thank you again!*) I was placed in Division II with boys in my own age bracket and, in consequence, during my time at St. Mary's I never experienced any bullying.



The Boarders

Before changing schools, I had already passed the Junior Cambridge Examination and was in Form II at St. Teresa's in Nairobi (the equivalent of Standard IX in Bombay). I was younger than my contemporaries, because I'd started school at an early age and received at least one double

promotion---skipping a standard---along the way. I could, and perhaps should, have repeated Form II at St. Mary's by enrolling in Standard IX. But I had made up the lost ground with my tutors and was qualified for admission to its follow-on Standard X. This made me an oddity, because I attended classes alongside boarders in Division I and the more numerous day boys of that age bracket. But, in the boarding school, I was placed with the boys of my own age bracket in Division II. This anomaly also explains why you see me sitting with older boys from Division I in the above picture---second row from the front, third from the left---while my Division II boarding schoolmates were further up in the pyramid.

Life in the boarding school was highly regimented. The following is another extract from the prospectus that can serve as a metaphor for our existence:

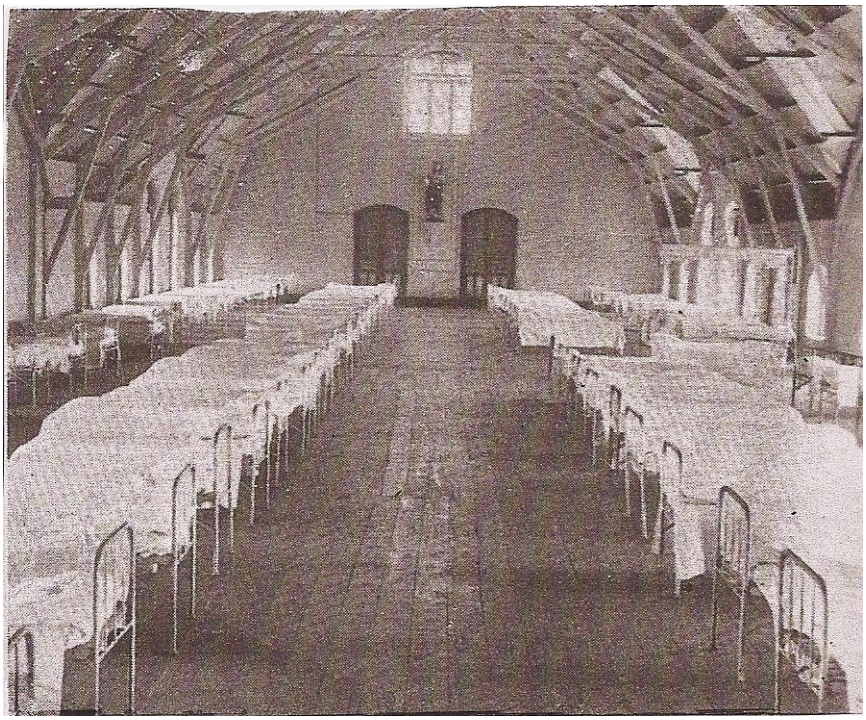
"A boarder should be equipped with the following clothes **Outfit**, which is prescribed as indispensible, any extra clothing being left to the family's discretion, and it being understood that frayed items be replaced as the need arises.

12 white shirts, 12 white shorts, 8 coloured shirts, 8 pairs of coloured shorts, 1 dozen handkerchiefs, 4 bedsheets, 4 pillow cases; 1 blanket, 4 towels, 1 pillow, 3 sleeping jackets, 3 pairs of pyjamas, 1 pair of bathing trunks, 2 navy blue ties, 1 dozen pairs of socks.

Besides at least three pairs of shoes and one of sandals.

Each article of clothing should have the boy's number clearly stitched in red as follows: in the inner right hip, inner waist band of shorts; in the inside middle of the collar of shirts and jackets; in any convenient corner of the other articles."

We slept in a large dormitory depicted below, which was located on the top floor of the residential-and-administrative building and segmented into sections corresponding to the three boarding-school divisions. A bed being assigned to each boarder, there was a one-on-one correspondence between the boys of the boarding school in the picture above and the beds in the dormitory in the picture below. *This dormitory symbolized our daily lives.* We queued for everything and our days followed a fixed pattern.



The Dormitory

My schooldays were, on the whole, happy days. Boarding school discipline was strict, but there was no corporal punishment or other abuse and we were never treated in a harsh manner. Each morning we were awakened at the appointed hour. Pajama-clad and grouped by division, we were shepherded by a prefect, in an orderly manner, down the stairs from the dormitory and across a covered corridor to a tiered room known as the "presses." Each tier comprised a row of benches with storage cupboards behind, one such dressing space assigned to each boarder. These individual cubbyholes had to be kept scrupulously clean and free of food items, because the presses were inhabited by rats that would gnaw through a shirt or trouser pocket to reach anything edible.

We brushed our teeth in an adjoining, large communal bathroom. There were no individual sinks, just long, continuous troughs equipped with regularly-spaced, cold-water spouts alongside each wall of the room. After

morning absolutions and the exchange of pajamas for school uniforms, or more informal clothing on non-school days, we were lined up once again and herded off to attend the daily mass. Over time, I learned to serve at mass, i.e., to assist the presiding priest at the altar, which provided an occasional respite from being pinned in place in a pew, alternately kneeling, standing, and sitting, trying not to fall asleep during the service. Afterwards came breakfast in the common dining room, once more grouped by division. Then school, and, at the end of the school day, we played sports in the "ample playing grounds" mentioned in the school's prospectus---basketball, soccer, and field hockey, depending on which sport was in season—followed by a cold-water shower in the communal bathroom, the water squirting down from overhead pipes, fitted with nozzles spaced at regular intervals. After dinner, there was free time for socializing, and then we were marched to the study hall, and later to the presses to dress for bed.

The subjects taught at St. Mary's were Religion (Moral Instruction for non-Catholics), English Language, English Literature, Mathematics, History, Geography, Science (Physics w. Chemistry), Latin (or another language like Hindi, French, etc.). In the lower standards also Art or Craft. At the end of the school term, there was an examination in all subjects, a student's score in each subject being recorded in his Report Book. Based upon total score achieved across all subjects, the boys in each standard were ranked from first to last, and each boy's rank was recorded in his book as well. This report was stamped with the signature of Father Ribot, the school's Rector, or Principal, who was affectionately called "Top," with pun intended, because he was short and squat with a rotund belly that tapered above and below, like an upright spinning top. The book then had to be countersigned each term by one's guardian, in my case Aunty Lucy.

Shortly after I arrived at St. Mary's, I let it be known that I intended to come first in my class, Standard X. It so happened that one of the boarders in Division I, a year ahead of me in Standard XI, was a second cousin, Emil Joshi, a relationship that I discovered only after I had entered the boarding

school. Aware of my ambitions, Emil would walk me up and down when we socialized during the recreation time after dinner and say consoling things like "You know, initially you'll probably come, say, 12th in class, and you shouldn't take it too hard." But I proved Emil wrong and exceeded all expectations by coming 2nd during my first term. The same happened at the end of the next term. Then, in the third and final term of that year, I was 1st in a class of 38 students. Emil too acquitted himself very well in the Senior Cambridge Examination that year. Nizar Jivani had previously always topped the class, and it is only now, having suffered defeats of my own, that I understand the pain he must have felt when I overtook him. We continued to be competitors when promoted to Standard XI the next year.

As for my teachers at St. Mary's, I retain a special affection for our English language-and-literature teacher, Father Beech. He was a cassock-clad, portly, Jesuit priest whose task, as prescribed by the Cambridge syllabus, was to bring to light for us Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* and Sir Walter Scott's epic poem *Marmion: A Tale of Flodden Field*. His shiny, bald pate was capable of dazzling the eye, if it caught and reflected, at just the right angle, the sunlight that streamed through our classroom's eastern-facing window.

Father Beech was a learned man and he was especially proud of a former student, Dom Moraes, who had passed through his hands at St. Mary's and then went on to Oxford University, where he achieved great fame at a young age by winning the Hawthornden Prize---a highly-regarded British literary award---for his imaginative poetry. (Not long afterwards, Dom Moraes published a very readable autobiography, *My Son's Father*, but, sad to say, later in life his muse deserted him. However, he compensated by marrying a woman who was considered one of the great beauties of her day.) While still at St. Mary's, Dom had already read many of the works of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, and indeed he was so well versed in Russian literature that his fellow students had given him the nickname "Domski." Being aware of this high standard, my own fellow students took it upon themselves to inform Fr. Beech that, for recreational reading, I was

checking out low-brow, Enid Blyton's books from the school library. But Fr. Beech said very simply to these snitches: "Let him read what he wants!"

As you might have already guessed, I was a hard-working student in those days and I spent many long hours in the study hall. But it was not all work and no play. In addition to the organized sports that we played each evening, there were blocks of free time during off-days for activities like roller skating and table tennis, and for acquiring new skills like playing the harmonica, which I picked up from a fellow boarder. On Sunday afternoons, we would gather in our division's study hall to write letters home, exchange cut-out pictures of movie stars, and engage in other social activities. And, if one's conduct and application were satisfactory, a boarder was allowed the privilege of a *monthly Sunday outing* from 9.00 am to 7.00 pm.

I became good friends with Dilip Chitnis, my neighbor in the presses---in the earlier boarding school picture you will find him seated in the second row from the front, and second from the right---and we would go off together to see two, and when possible even three, matinee movie shows in a row. On our way back to school, we would stop by the stalls of street vendors, to eat bhel-puri and drink sugar-cane juice that had been freshly squeezed directly from the canes. These stalls were not known for their high standards of hygiene and their food gave my digestive tract a good run for its money. But I believe my robust constitution probably derives from such challenges to the immune system during my boarding school days.

During the May and December holidays, boarders were required to go home to their parents or their guardians, but during the shorter Sept.-Oct. break it was permitted to remain in the boarding school. I spent my holidays mostly at my grandparents' home. However, these holidays were often made miserable by asthma attacks, caused by fibers from looms in a carpet factory that was located right next door to the Trafalgar Square compound. Or perhaps these sieges, when I could hardly draw a breath,

were brought on by my grandfather's authoritarian protectiveness, symbolized for me by his colonial topee---a broad-brimmed pith helmet---which he wore whenever he went out in the sun. He insisted that I do the same and we must have made a pretty sight, in our big and little topees, as we marched through the compound on our way to, for instance, the barber on Ripon Road to get a haircut. The responsibility for my safety weighed heavily on my grandfather and he was most reluctant to let me roam freely on my own outside the flat. But, sometimes, when he was taking his afternoon siesta, my grandmother would quietly slip the latch on the front door and let me sneak out to watch a matinee movie at a nearby cinema.

I can recall an especially delightful holiday with Uncle Lennie and Aunty Margot at their home in Jhansi, when I had the chance to get to know for the first time my cousin Sergio, their eldest son, who was affectionately called Suki. Another delightful holiday was spent at St. Mary's recreation camp in Khandala, in the foothills of the Western Ghats. However, let me not further lengthen this vignette by going into detail.

Such are my memories from my two years at St. Mary's, where my education began in earnest. My schooling there ended in rather glorious fashion by my topping the class of 46 students in the Senior Cambridge Examination and being awarded several prizes in our final term. One could choose one's own prize books in advance from a large selection in the principal's office, and once more I demonstrated my taste---perhaps more accurately its lack thereof---by selecting books of adventure, including *Bull-Dog Drummond: His Four Rounds with Carl Peterson* as described by Sapper, the pseudonym of Herman Cyril McNeile, and *Great Tales of Terror and the Supernatural*, which contained, in particular, a classic tale "Leningen versus the Ants" that I was particularly anxious to read. (Interestingly enough, these books remain popular, as evidenced on Amazon's website.)

My own "tale of terror," or more accurately horror, took place at the school-wide prize-winning ceremony. Many of the older boys in Division I of the boarding school regularly wore full-length white trousers as part of their daily school uniform, but I, along with the other boys in Division II, generally wore white shorts. I had wanted to wear full-length trousers for the awards ceremony, but I was persuaded by my well-meaning aunts to go instead in my smartest outfit of white shirt and navy-blue *shorts*. It turned out that I was the only one among the prize-winners of the Senior Cambridge class who was thus attired and it exposed me to ridicule in the eyes of my classmates, tainting my joy as I went up on stage, time and again, to receive my prizes. This, in turn, has resulted in a grudge that I bear toward my dear aunts right up to the present day.

On my last day in school, Father Beech, the kindest of men, asked me to kneel before him to receive his blessing, his right arm reaching out to the four points of the compass as he made the sign of the cross above my bowed head. I left for Kenya a few days later, shortly before Christmas, 1960, flying once more on Air India. As we crossed the equator and neared our destination, the cabin crew handed out printed certificates to the passengers, each signed, tongue-in-cheek, by Commander Kapur, the pilot of the aircraft. Mine read humorously as follows:

"His Most Imperial and Semi-Precious Highness
the Maharaja of Cooch-Nahi
Peer of Piers (Brighton & Blackpool)
Lord of Lords (0, still batting)
and Ruler of Rulers (Metric System)
is graciously pleased to bestow upon
J.L. Nazareth
the Extinguished Order of
ESQUIRE of the EQUATOR

on having crossed Ye Olde Line."

[`Cooch-Nahi' means `Absolutely-Nothing' in Hindi, `Lords' is the name of a famous cricket-ground in Great Britain, and J.L. Nazareth was hand-written on the certificate.]

We landed at Nairobi's airport soon afterwards. It was good to be home again.

What a changed boy!" exclaimed one of my former St Theresa's teachers to my mother, as she later recounted. But then everything had changed during the intervening two years, not only for me, but also for our family's domicile in Nairobi and for Kenya itself as a nation. My parents and siblings had relocated, exchanging Aunty Nathu's little bungalow on Forest Road for a splendid, architect-designed mansion that my father had commissioned in an upscale and previously racially-segregated district of the city. The political winds of change, blowing across Africa, had upended the colonial order and taken Kenya from white-settler domination to the very threshold of independence from Great Britain. And, thanks to my father's far-sightedness and attention to my education, I had come home confident and intellectually well-prepared for the long road that lay ahead.

But……that is a different his-story!

Part IV: Postscript

10: The Illustrious Freitas Family

I did not see my grandparents ever again. By the time I returned to India more than two decades later, both of them sadly had passed away. And, during the intervening years, my maternal aunts and uncle had all gone on to distinguished careers.

Aunty Lucy continued to teach French in the "red" section at St. Mary's High School and she retired as a highly respected member of their teaching staff. She always knew her mind and remained a committed spinster all her life, choosing to live in her natal home to care for her ailing parents. I have already recounted my mother's background and trajectory in life in Chapter 8 of *A Passage to Kenya*, and will not repeat it here.

Aunty Freda pursued a life-long and very distinguished career as a medical doctor in the Army Medical Corps, from which she retired at the rank of Colonel. In particular, she headed hospitals in central and southern India and for her "distinguished service of an exceptional order" she received two coveted Indian Presidential Awards, the Vishisht Seva Medal (V.S.M) in 1971 and the Ati Vishisht Seva Medal (A.V.S.M.) in 1977. In 1959, while I was still a student at St. Mary's, she married Uncle Manohar, a man of many talents. They were a unique and well-matched couple, but the fact that she was a Catholic and he a Hindu created not inconsiderable turbulence within both their natal families.

Uncle Lennie enjoyed a stellar career as a civil engineer and he rose eventually to the rank of Engineer-in-Chief of the entire Indian Western Railway Region. Early in his career, he had married Aunty Margot, who also came from a distinguished family, and they had a family of four children.

Last but not least, Aunty Yvonne, the most talented all-rounder of them all, became a renowned Professor of Microbiology at St. Xavier's College in Bombay, today's Mumbai, and was much-beloved by her many students. There was hardly a thing she could not do. She was a highly-accomplished

pianist having attained an advanced level of training through the Certificate of Music exams of Trinity College, London; she had a talent for both drawing and poetic rhyming; she could toss off a difficult crossword with ease; and she could give a lengthy and entertaining speech from notes no bigger than the palm of one's hand. Although she had several suitors, she too chose not to marry, declaring emphatically: "There is no man like *no* man!"

A few years after the end of my schooling at St. Mary's and my return to Nairobi, the Freitas family moved from Trafalgar Square to a pleasant district called Chembur, near the Church of St. Anthony, where they had commissioned and built a new family residence, a three-storey building with a comfortable flat on each level. My grandparents and Aunts Lucy and Yvonne occupied the top floor, Uncle Lennie and his family took the middle flat, and the one on the ground floor was a rental. Their compound was of that particular Indian design where coconut palms, fruit trees and vegetable-bearing shrubs predominate, and the barren, intervening ground is swept scrupulously clean each morning by the gardener.

As for the Freitas ancestral home in Pomburpar, Goa, an impressive villa that is the starting point of any prominent Goan family's story, it has remained in family hands, as the large name-board hanging over the entrance veranda proudly proclaims in bold letters---FREITAS. The house sits amidst family lands. In the foreground stand coconut palm groves, and behind are hills carpeted with cashew trees. Out in the distance, the crisscross pattern of paddy fields stretches to the horizon. The surroundings remain beautiful, but, sad to say, the villa today is in a very run-down condition.

I visited both family homes during my extensive travels across the subcontinent in the early 1980s, my one and only return to India after my school years at St. Mary's. My experiences are recorded in my booklet *Reminiscences of an Ex-Brahmin: Portraits of a Journey through India*, memories that are now distant and beginning to fade. But how can I ever

forget my time with my maternal grandparents as I was just entering my teenage years: my grandmother's beaten egg risen to the brim of the teacup with its half-teaspoon of added brandy; her quiet slipping of the latch on the front door so I could sneak out to watch a matinee movie; her insistence on the daily saying of the rosary to guarantee divine protection; my grandfather's equally-protective insistence that I wear a topee outdoors to shield me from the harsh rays of the Indian sun; his throwing banana skins at misbehaving children from the upstairs gallery; the entire Freitas family taking me under their wing at such short notice so my education could begin at St. Mary's. These are the memories, most tender, by which I remember them all, and for which I will forever be grateful.

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Author's Biography

John Lawrence (Larry) Nazareth was educated at the University of Cambridge (Trinity College) and the University of California at Berkeley. He is a mathematical and algorithmic scientist, industry consultant, and university professor by vocation and an avocational travel and memoir writer, poet, essayist, and playwright. He makes his home on Bainbridge Island near Seattle, Washington, USA. For further biographical information, please visit: http://www.math.wsu.edu/faculty/nazareth .