Across the Black Waters
The Sword and the Sickle
The Barber's Trade Union and other
The Big Heart
The Traitors and the Corn Goddess and
Seven Summers
Private Life of an Indian Prince
Reflections on the Golden Bed and other st.
The Old Woman and the Cow
The Power of Darkness and other stories
The Road
Death of a Hero
Lament on the death of a Master of Arts
Lajwanti and other stories
Morning Face
Confession of a Lover
Between Tears and Laughter and other stories

‘Seeking the bubble reputation...’
Shakespeare

‘Today is a bubble
Beautiful and multi-coloured
Floating down the river of Time...’

Gopala Reddy
Telugu Poet

‘Oh let’s blow bubbles!’

Irene Rhys.

LUCAS PUBLICATIONS
1

Part One

THE EXILE
(Letters to Noor)

‘Oh, where is the pennyworld of dreams I brought, to eat with Pippet behind the screen?’

T.S. Eliot

‘I travelled thro a Land of Men
A land of men and women too
And heard and saw such dreadful things
As cold Earth wanderers never know.

William Blake
The Mental Traveller

‘Not one to shy at kisses or such matter…’

Arthur Rimbaud
Blenheim Hotel,
Gower Street,
London W.C.1,
1-10-25.

My dear Noor, dearer now than ever before:

I feel utterly alone. I am away from home. Away from you, away from our beloved Ramsgate garden. Away even from the stinks, the smells and the noise of Amritsar. In a crowded country like ours it was difficult to be alone, but here one is forced to be alone. Everyone is busy. On his own. Shut in. Few words are spoken. For the first time in my life I feel the terror of being with myself, completely alone.

Drizzle, drizzle, drizzle... Then dazzle... Again drizzle, drizzle... And dizzled... And then a thin mist, or a thick mist when one can’t see a thing... I am told in November will come fogs. And traffic will stop. And people will grope along with torches... And then there will be snowfalls. And the roads will become skiddy, causing many motor accidents. And nature will envelop everything. This is the England to which I wanted to come. Quite unlike the pictures I saw in the Illustrated London News and the Times, which father used to bring home from the Officers’ Mess, with steeple of Westminster Abbey and the big clock of the Mother of Parliaments and the fountain playing outside Buckingham Palace, all showing, importantly, in the centre of the British Empire “on which the sun never sets”.

And it was Bismillah ki galat! Noor, as you would say: Everything went wrong from the beginning! When the three doctors, Dr. Malik, Dr. Chaudhary and Dr. Puri (who have come for special courses, F.R.C.S., D.O.M.S., D.P.H.M., etcetera) and myself, arrived at the Indian Students Hostel of the Y.M.C.A., at 112 Gower Street, London W.C.1, we were told by the Black Sahib, Mr. Samuel Ramaswamy, who is in charge:

‘No booking in your name—so Mr. Brown tells me!—No room!... Sorry...’

And the small, baldheaded, round-faced, snub-nosed gentleman, with a butterfly collar on his stiff neck, his heavy frame enclosed in a black coat and striped trousers, turned his back on us,
though not without a last gesture of Christian good-will, as he
ordered the long-toothed white peon:
‘Clear the hall of their baggage!... That bedding roll! And the
trunks!’

To be sure, it was partly the fault of the Doctors. All of them
had bought big steel trunks from Lahore. And one had brought his
holdall, fat with quilt and pillows. And baskets of laddus as well.
Even sandalwood flower garlands!

Is there a cheaper hotel? I ventured to ask Mr. Brown, the clerk
behind the barred window.

‘Blenheim Hotel — they charge two pounds for a small room.
And there is Hotel Warren at two pounds ten shillings.’

My heart went pit-a-pat. ‘Two pounds. Can you take me to
Blenheim Hotel,’ I said to the peon who gave me a smile.

That will be a shilling, Sir!’

I added abruptly. Luckily Dr. Malik had paid for the taxi and
had refused to take the shilling I had offered him as my share.

My fellow travellers muttered some wild Punjabi ejaculations
and bearing their luggage on strong shoulders, crossed over to the
other side of Gower Street to Hotel Warren, which was two pounds
ten shillings per room.

I went behind the Tommy towards Blenheim Hotel, feeling ap-
prehensive and nervous about whether I would get a room. I felt a
strange panic. Tremors of bellyache as I have always felt on go-
ing into unknown worlds. My eyes were half-closed through fear.
There was a twitch in between the linking line of my eyebrows, which
mother always said was a bad omen.

‘Antic room, Sir, two pounds, bed and breakfast!’ said a young
clerk in his continental accent.

Tommy dumped my luggage and put his hand out, over the old
mahogany counter. I gave him a shilling, even as I thought of my
future in this money world, the price of academic honours and ideas.

Noor, it is terrible, this lurking dread of being here without money!
All my buoyancy is gone.

The clerk led me up three flights of stairs in the semi-darkness
and opened the door of this room where I am sitting in bed, writing
to you. The ceiling is low. And the small space is congested with fur-
niture. The first thing I did when I got into the room was to go to the
only small window, which I thought might give me a view of the
road. There was a ledge and the street was blocked from sight. I
could only see the thin rain falling on the window pane.

‘Come and get your luggage, Sir!’

After I had heaved my three things, I lay down in the classic
pose of the Indian student in our Khalsa College Hostel, arms and
legs stretched apart, trying to recover my calm. I was also un-
consciously imitating the figure of Christ outside the churches I had
seen in Italy. Oh! the loneliness I felt, suddenly, in that moment,
thousands of miles away from home. After the stress of the rail
journey across Europe, where black-shirted policeman woke us up
between Calais and Dover. And then the words from porter to peon:
‘That will be a shilling, Sir’ everywhere. And Mr. Ramaswamy’s curt,
‘You have come on a philosophical quest. So don’t panic. But exile is
You have come on a philosophical quest. So don’t panic. But exile is
a kind of death of oneself and of other people! I feel every one of you
has died somehow. And I have lapsed for you. I am only alive
through my memories of you and our walks together and talks,
and bits of poems recited to each other and our spontaneous
laughter. But all of you are in me. And I am in you. So we are not
really dead to each other. As long as I go on remembering. That is
why I have begun writing a letter to you. And I will write you one
every day. I promise. But you must promise to answer back.

Suddenly, the memory of my mother comes to me. I think of her
suffering blow from father for my sake. And my inaudible sobs
become an unuttered cry:

Oh Mother!
Oh my mother
When the memory of you comes to me
My heart aches.

‘Why have I come away?’ I ask myself again and again, Noor.
The answer comes: ‘You really wanted, in your heart of hearts, to
dress like Mr. Ramaswamy, and wear a butterfly collar? In spite of
your boasting about the belief in Gandhi and homespun, you had, if
the fire after supper.'

I was grateful. I surmised she must be a simple peasant woman, come from Belgium, to serve in a city to earn extra money for her family. I showed her the address of Sardar Trilochan Singh, the nephew of the poet Bhai Vir Singh, our senior, who had come here for Ph.D. in Economics and Bar, to tread "the royal road" of success, as a member of the Sikh nobility for whom, as you know, the British Sarkar has special jobs as they have for the rich Muslims.

'My friend lives in Golden Green,' I said now, feeling like a falcon who can fly and conquer the world. You remember my adoration of myself as Iqbal's falcon.

'Not Golden Green—Gilders Green' she corrected me. I felt abashed at my mispronunciation, but Golden Green sounds to me better than Gilders Green.

'You go by Tube from Warren Street. I give you map. Tomorrow Sunday!—You go.'

I slept soundly after I had made at least one friend, though early in the morning I had a bad dream that I was in my dark room in Kucha Fakir Khana in Amritsar and the ghost of Yasin came and appealed to me not to go away from her and then suddenly became a pigeon, whom her husband came and strangled, till the feathers flew in a thousand wisps of cloud in my room. I woke up struggling to recall the shadows. Yasin did not appear. I suppose she always felt I loved myself in her rather than loved her for her own sake.

I shall send you this anguished letter day after tomorrow, Monday. Perhaps also write a postscript full of happiness, which I shall write to you after I have seen Tochi.

All my love comes to you on the wings of this pigeon, my letter, flying thousands of miles away to you.

Your Krishan
My beloved friend,

Today is Sunday.

I had breakfast in the same basement room. Fried eggs and (don't be shocked you Mussilim) bacon. Then I took a map of the London underground from Madeline and went to look for Tochi. As you know, he was my model before I came to England for Ph.D. and him transformed into a suited, booted, necktie'd imitation Sahib—except that he is brown and still wears his turban and beard.

Absorbed by the semi-naked women on the posters advertising underwear in the Tube railway, which runs under the earth, I got carried on to Brent, one station beyond Golders Green. The automatic doors open only for half a minute; he who gets in gets in and he who gets out gets out. Time and train wait for no one here.

You ask that Bobby there—the policeman, the cigarette-shop owner told me when I arrived in the void outside Brent station.

He wore a hat like that of Alexander the Great in the picture in our school uniform with shiny nickel buttons. He scanned my face, dug his eyebrows, and said:

'Tis, see, Sammy… Walk straight along towards Hendon Corner. Walk along! Until you come to…

I bowed to him, the old fear of the exalted white Sahibs in India creeping up from my frightened soul before this burly constable, who, unlike the Tommy's smile Catholic under his brown moustache.

Losing my way and finding it by asking passerby, whose twisted disgnosed at myself for allowing myself to be carried beyond Golders Green absorbed by the posters.

At last, after a two mile trudge under a grey sky, I sighted Hendon Lane. The semi-detached houses, with their trim little gardens, stretching for half a mile towards a church seemed endless. A few gentlemen were washing their cars. They certainly don't mind soiling their hands with work here, which we leave to our servants and un-touchables, though they looked solemn, their faces grey, greyish-pink and red, with white patches on their necks under the smudged ash sky. I feel it is their strange pinkish red colour that separates them from us, with the aura of fear to me from the faces of white Sahibs seen during my childhood in cantonments.

I knocked at the door of 142 Hendon Lane, tentatively. I don't know why, but I was full of a vague awe of the Sunday silence.

A pretty young girl with a white tiara and apron opened the door. Noor, I must confess I am very susceptible. I liked her.

'Mr. Triolohan Singh?' I said smiling at her as though she was going to unfold to me the secret of her charm.

'Oh, Beaver!' she said. Then she put her right hand on her mouth, smiled shyly, flushed red and corrected herself:

'Oh, Mr. Singh!'

'Who is it?—Doris?' came a woman's clear voice from the dining-room.

Doris rushed back into the narrow hallway and reported in a suppressed whisper: And a middle-aged, hawk-nosed Englishwoman with steel-rimmed glasses, dressed in a sari, came out, looked at her watch and said:

'Mr. Singh—have you an appointment with this young man?… It's nearly lunch time you know—I wish you Indian boys would learn to have a sense of time… He is in the garden… I am Mrs. Palit, his landlady… I shall ask him if he will see you—you are?'

'Mr. Krishan Chander Arozi…'

'Mr. Singh—a Mr. Esad for you!' she shrieked… 'Remem:er—if lunch is nearly ready… Doris, take Mr. Singh's guest into the garden.'

I followed Doris, unversed by Mrs. Palit's hard words. I was frightened of spoiling the polished surface of the linoleum on the floor, oppressed by the landlady's mechanical fury. I recalled the melodious calm of the house of the poet Bhai Vir Singh, where I had last seen Tochi before he came here.

'Hain—Teddy? You—where have you suddenly sprung up from—Tadpole! Tochi said. And he pushed his hand limply forward, putting on an artificial smile as though he was too frightened of the landlady to greet me. I opened my arms to embrace him, Indian style. He compromised with a half embrace, put his arm around me, and led me through the dining room, towards a handsome…
young man, who was drinking beer from a huge mug. You will
remember the kind of rich student gentleman from Government Col-
cricket matches in Lahore.

Mr. Mehta – also from Punjab – studying to be I.I. B. London
the fountain ceramic talks: ‘Bhisan Chander – nom de plume Azad.

I stretched my right hand to Mr. Mehta. He took it with the tips
said: ‘Have some beer!’

I nodded, feeling like a crude peasant. My heart palpitating like
fashionable student from Government College.

While pouring the beer into an empty mug, Mr. Mehta turned
Hiya! Neither letter! Nor telegram! Nor telephone! And it is near
strict English etiquette!

There came a smile of shame before my eyes. I was unnerved as
this brown Englishman turned away his profile in disgust against the

to call him in Khalsa College, he did not stir, only eulogy the old
familiar idiom of white jelled goodnight.

Losing my way, I said, ‘Got carried on to Brent. Then walked
with words. And...’

Mr. Mehta, high with beer and the would-be Barrister’s arrogance
up above the upper lip to lick the beer and he took a contemptuous

The naive poet in me, who was connecting one thing with
I tried to immerse myself in that Self which, the poet Iqbal says in the
‘It’s so much time already. Tochi!’ Mr. Mehta delivered the notice
for me to quit.

I drank a draught of beer to drown my monosyllabic protest.
Then I got up, nervous, under my thin skin. Mr. Mehta poured
himself some more beer.

I deliberately offered my hand to him, to offset his haughty
manner, feeling more tense. As we entered the hall, Mrs. Palit was
going to the kitchen, on quick electric feet, her face protected
against my stare by a scowl.

‘Mr. Azad...’ Tochi presented me almost in a whisper.

‘Oh, how do you do... I have already met you... haven’t? A
fresh man – from your said...’ And she smiled a pale smile and looked
me up and down.

I became self-conscious. My eyes lowered instinctively like
the eyes of a peacock to see my ugly feet shod in Agra-made boots.
You remember I had borrowed the suit from you, Noor – the only one
you had. I think the selection board for the Imperial Forest Service
would have turned you down if you had appeared with this suit on and
if this Englishwoman had been a member of the Selection Committee.

‘I must get him a suit from Macarolle Brothers;’ Tochi apologised
for my homespun appearance.

‘Lotika? Mrs. Palit called to someone in the dining room.
Come and meet Mr. Azad...’ fresh from India. She seemed to relax
for a moment.

A young woman, with a lovely near-moon face, with big eyes,
like pools of light, and kiss curls like those of my Yasmin, came book
in hand. I smiled towards her as a sunflower smiles at the sun. I
admired, Noor, I can’t resist beauty.

She is going to play in Kalidana’s Shakuntala, which her hus-
band wishes to produce in London in Mr. Nigel Playfair’s Hammers-
smith Theatre! Mrs. Palit said.

The part of the deserted girl seduced by a king,’ Lotika said. ‘I am
going home soon to rehearse the play in Calcutta.

She is Mrs. Rob Roy,’ Mrs Palit said, perhaps to prevent me
from falling in love with her at first sight.

My eyes turned to Lotika’s face. I noticed the strong chin below
the soft round face. The damage had been done. All the forms of eti-
quette imposed on me by this household dissipated into my dipp-
ed-eyed admiration for her. Even though her loneliness belonged to some
Mr. Rob Roy, I felt she would not withhold admiration from an Urdu
poet admirer.

‘What is that book?’ I asked boldly.

‘Goethe’s Faust... I have just finished it. Must read it again to
get the full meaning.’

‘Oh may I borrow it?’ I said impertinently.
Like the "impatient heart-squanderer", I have been called by Prof. Henry, my dear friend, I have already replaced Yassmín's image with that of the nymph Lotika. I know you will call me "traitor," but the truth is I find the irresistible desire for happiness welling up in me. I long to be folded in the embrace of a woman. Lotika was taken back. She blushed. Then flushed.

'Åchåi—if you will return it to Mrs. Palli's library, where it belongs!' I hoped Mrs. Palli was not within hearing distance, but there she came, her face raised haughtily above a steaming dish.

'Our rule in this house is: neither lend nor borrow money nor books!' she declared. And she turned her back on all of us, as she walked away towards the dining room.

'You take it,' Lotika whispered. 'She will never read it... Only give it back to Mr. Singh. Read Goethe! He is the key to the soul of Europe... He asks for the priority of the spirit-mind against all the small wants...'

'I will take it from him.' Tochi assured Lotika innately.

'Now, come along. Boys and girls, lunch is ready!' announced Mrs. Palli as she emerged from the kitchen sternner than ever.

'I hid the book from her eyes.'

'Alright—you come to tea next Sunday,' Mrs. Palli conceded, as she came, showed me the door and made the effort to smile.

Tochi leisurely followed her and said: 'Goodbye—see you tomorrow 9th October! 9 A.M. — sharp! U.C. — I mean University College.'

I tried to wish away my soreness at the cut and dried rules of find sanctions in some Urdu verse for so quickly forgetting Yassmín. I found Chaplin in the 'The Trump', where he had begun to follow a blonde seeing Yassmín's reflection in every lovely woman. I was hungry and it, on the main road leading to Golders Green station, there was more room in the other bar, said the buxom middle-aged barmaid, shaking her crown of platinum blonde hair knowingly on her big bosom. 'This is the Public Bar,' she added. 'The other is called the barmaid had sensed my shyness and wanted to attribute to me the status of a 'gentleman'.

I went into the other room called 'Saloon Bar' and saw that the few people there were better dressed. Except for a man with full moustachios, in thick tweeds, perhaps a retired Colonel, who was talking loudly to a well-groomed dapper friend, the other four persons were silent, or though they were maintaining themselves intact until called upon to divulge their secrets.

'Nearly closing time!' the barmaid said with a smile: 'What would you like, dear?'

'Beer,' I whispered. And I looked down to see if I could retreat into the inner circumference of my Indian soul.

'Mild and bitter—half a pint!' she asked and poured the liquid into a glass tumbler by pressing the brass handle of an automatic machine without waiting for my confirmation. She seemed to be oozing kindness and concern.

I pointed to some sausages camouflaging my organic desires behind a tight-lipped politeness. The barmaid read my meaning in my eyes and quickly uncovered the jell and gave me two large sausages, with a smear of yellow mustard.

'Hurry up please, it's time!' she said to all the others.

I was in a panic at this general notice to quit. As she kept repeating the phrase every second minute. I swallowed the sausage quickly, bowed to her and left, the call 'Hurry up please, it's time!' ringing in my ears.

And here I am, my dear Noor, in the attic again. Only not so lonely, as I have met a warm-hearted beautiful Indian woman and have taken her hands Goethe's book to read.

Love

Krishan
Blenheim Hotel,
Gower Street,
3-10-25
(1 a.m.)

‘Burning the Midnight Oil’

Now:

I have dipped into Goethe’s Faust, reading it aloud to myself, for company, here and there.

I had opened it in the Tube and began with the introduction by wanted to take in the long faced, solemn, melancholy Englishmen from the Sahibs of India. In my childhood in the cantonments I had of my father’s regiment, for staring at him. So I still have a certain fear about. Strange how childhood dreads linger.

I had rushed upstairs and got down in the rocking chair under Mephistopheles. In between reading passages I had been brooding.

In Part One, Where Goethe’s imagination runs riot and he creates a voices, warlocks, and half witches. This book will be my bible in know how obsessed I am by my curiosity, how I love philosophising.

Dyayal Singh used to say to me: You are perverse. You really believe though you say you don’t believe. By reading books you can cover the that I have learned from Goethe what I would not take from him, ghosts of the dead past in us, the enemies who deny the poetry of life, face the new, to sense the core of reality, not by going round and don’t know. Well, even I with my capacity for reading difficult philosophy books, could not absorb much from the part of Faust I have read. But, from what little I have glimpsed, I have a feeling that Goethe is telling us about a genius who wants to know everything, to possess the whole world, but who sells his soul to Mephisto, for a mess of potage, as the English phrase goes. Faust becomes a non-believer.

You will say: ‘How like Krishna’.

Somewhere Goethe makes Faust assert:

“I am the spirit that denies”

And by denying the sense of things, under the advice of Mephisto, Faust begins to analyse, as an alchemist does when he dissects nature, and he forgets the whole and goes to the parts “and is no wiser” than before he began his quest.

“Cursed be the hope,” he says.

And now I see the meaning of Professor Henry when he said to us both one day: European man is free to go to hell! He is Narcissus Absorbed in himself Selfish Egoist! He is the supreme individualist! He believes in Logic, Mathematics, Chemistry and nothing else! The chemist in the lab must be aware that he is lesser than the Alchemist—even than the crude peasant who goes by instinct and wants to embrace the whole cosmos.

Of course, Faust wants his soul. Like us Orientals he wants calm. Not blind activity. He has a reverence in his study. And he meditates. He discovers that the world has power. Like the Hindu Path, which was inspired utterance. But this word is an old word and means nothing to us young Indians, who don’t know Sanskrit.

The famous Scotch thinker and writer, Carlyle, is quoted on the flap of the book to say that Goethe, in his novel Wilhelm Meister thinks that the Self grows, is made by doing things, that learning comes from experience, from what he calls Bildung, meaning education by living, which Guru Nanak and the Muslim Sufis sages cultivated. Difficult for clever clever Punjab University students like me to understand. We were made to mug books for exams to compe for Imperial Services! Goethe seems to want the highest wisdom in the world. I must get hold of Wilhelm Meister soon. As you know I am impetuous. I want to grow, to expand, to absorb everything—and quickly.

Only towards the end Goethe suggests, against the Hindu idea “to be,” the idea that we should “become”. So against our traditional
Being, which is always there to glimpse into, Goethe asserts the need for “Becoming.”

“Becoming what?” I ask. Maybe he means that by acquisition of knowledge one grows, becomes oneself, or rather more than oneself.

I know that you will be bored with all this. You are a scientist, Allah Mian. My beloved friend, I am too excited by this drama of again and again, to sort out things about European man for myself, before I begin my studies in Western thought. I feel I must add to complete or rather body-mind-spirit.

Goethe seems to have written a poem called West-Ostlicher Dr. Reise, in reply to the poet Hafiz’s Dream. I remember Dr. Iqbal talking about this poem. The great German poet was interested in the way of our mystics—about how from Rumi to Jami they overcame the chaos of life through loving. But I can’t tell you all. There are so many things in Goethe’s drama. Noor, I am overwhelmed. I had the experiences with which to test his intuitions. And there is no butterflies and brood on the universe. I am separated from all of you.

Meanwhile, “the tower is my dwelling,” as the poet Yeats says, and according to Professor Henry, away from Maples, Schoobreds. Street, in Tottenham Court Road, and towards the ragstumps of from somewhere to somewhere, like white ghosts scared of the pronounced as Schoobreds! I tried to look out of my attic room, when I was tired of reading, but returned to the rocking chair, baffled by the darkness outside and overall mist.

More later.

Love,

Krishan

Postscript, written before breakfast, 3rd October, 1925.

Oh Noor, Noor, I am so confused, not only by my fears, anxieties, apprehensions, but by the problem of knowledge versus experience. If one has ideas from other people they don’t belong to one until one has tested them in life. All Goethe’s ideas have disappeared this morning. As I can’t talk to anyone, I keep sitting down to write to you all that is happening to me. Suddenly, it came to me, in the early hours of the morning, in a kind of dream, that I was in hell, and one need not wait for the Prophet to intercede on one’s behalf, and one need not wait for the Prophet to intercede on one’s behalf, and one need not wait for the Prophet to intercede on one’s behalf, and one need not wait for the Prophet to intercede on one’s behalf, and one need not wait for the Prophet to intercede on one’s behalf, and one need not wait for the Prophet to intercede on one’s behalf, and one need not wait for the Prophet to intercede on one’s behalf, and one need not wait for the Prophet to intercede on one’s behalf.

Ararat Khudai. I feel that by reading poetry, I may grow more poems, Ararat Khudai. I feel that by reading poetry, I may grow more poems, Ararat Khudai. I feel that by reading poetry, I may grow more poems, Ararat Khudai. I feel that by reading poetry, I may grow more poems, Ararat Khudai. I feel that by reading poetry, I may grow more poems, Ararat Khudai. I feel that by reading poetry, I may grow more poems, Ararat Khudai. I feel that by reading poetry, I may grow more poems, Ararat Khudai. I feel that by reading poetry, I may grow more poems, Ararat Khudai. I feel that by reading poetry, I may grow more poems, Ararat Khudai.

Union Society,
University College,
London W.C.1.
5-10-1925.

Noor, my friend.

You may remember what Professor Henry used to say to me: “You are a strange man! Penetrate like all Punjabis! Perhaps more thoughtful. Certainly exuberant!” I tried to get courage from that compliment, as I entered the courtyard of University College, London, in Gower Street, to get admission for the Ph.D., degree in philosophy.