

# NEPAL

( Continued )  
THE POPULATION  
THE NEWARS

*by Sylvain Lévi*

The population of Nepal divides, as is usually the case, into two groups: the masters and the subjects, the conquerors and the vanquished. The masters are the Gurkhas who conquered Nepal in 1768. The subjects are the Nevars, the masters at one time, dispossessed by the Gurkha conquest. If one believes the Vamcavali, the Nevars themselves only entered the valley after the institution of the Nepalese era (year 9=889 J. C. ; rectified date; 1096 J. C.); they came from southern India under the leadership of Nanya deva an ordinary raja of the Carnatic (The central plateau of the Deccan); their native place was the country of Nayera. The classical geography of India ignores this country. The chronicler, or rather the tradition he follows evidently designates under that name the country of the Nayars or Nairs, the Malabar coast. Legends confirmed by positive indications connect, in fact, the religious history of Nepal to the southern extremity of the peninsula. When the Nevars who had definitely become part of the Hindu civilization, preoccupied themselves to find ancestors on the soil of orthodox India, the Nairs quite naturally struck the complaisant imaginations of the national genealogists. The analogy of the two names: Nayera, Nevara, already demonstrated to evidence the original parentage of the two nations; besides, if the Nevars scandalized the Brahmans

by their indifference to the sacrament of matrimony, the Nairs at the other end of India were practising the same doctrine, and although admitted in the Brahmmanic organization, they faithfully cherished the custom of pelynadry, common to the Himalayan tribes. The 'Svamins' of the Deccan while passing through as pilgrims or installed as priests in Nepal, must have noticed at first sight these links between the Nairs and the Nevars, since colonel Kirkpatrick was equally aware of them at first sight. The conceit of the Newars is flattered by this reconciliation, since the Nairs in spite of their irregular practices are classified as Ksatriyas amongst the noble castes.

But history has drawn nothing from these whims: the features, the customs, the language of the Nevar reveal quite another origin; it is to the North of the Himalaya that one must look for their cradle. And it is also from there that the local traditions contained in the Puranas and the chronicles, bring the first inhabitants of the valley: The Bodhisattva Manjucris, who opened an outlet to the imprisoned waters and who transformed the old lake into inhabitable earth, came into Nepal from Mahacina-China; the disciples who followed him, and who were the first colonists, were also people from the Maha-Cina; the king whom he installed,

Dharmakara was a native of this same country. Only later, with the Buddha Krakuc-chanda, orerunner of Cakya muni, Brahmans and kaatriyas came from the Hindustan; and it was a Hindu raja, Dharmapala who succeeded to Dharmakara the Chinese. Kings and Saints hastened since then in a flock from India; yet Nepal escaped again to the "people of the four castes". The barbarous Kiratas who had come from the eastern valleys, took possession of the town and reigned over it for a long time. A raja who had come from southern India, Dharmadatta of Kanci (Conjeveram), expelled them and re-established the four castes. But the deplorable times of the iron age, of the Kali Yuga, had arrived and the ksatriyas of an authentic character had disappeared. The god-father and patron of Nepal, Ne Muni, had no choice but to select a king among the shepherds; these shepherds, it is true, were really worth princes, because they had entered Nepal as the followers of Krisna, the god shepherd. After the shepherd, a new dynasty of herdsmen (Abheras) governed the country; then the Kiratas became once more the masters. However, there remained in Nepal personages of Kastriya blood; the powerful emperor Acoka was able to find a son-in-law. Lastly there appeared the legitimate dynasties of real Rajputs, who came from the West: the Race of the Moon, the race of the sun, the Thakuris.

Free from the disguises of the legends, the account reduces itself to a small number of acceptable facts: a first immigration arrives from the North of the Himalaya; it is followed by another immigration which arrives from the south. The country at first belongs to warlike tribes established in the mountains of the East; the population of shepherds which occupies it, several times attempt to shake off their yoke. Lastly, bellicose parties, sprung out from the Rajput countries succeed in gaining independence to Nepal, and under their authority the

kingdom becomes civilized.

The Nevars are the companions of Manjucri; their features like their language show their parentage with the tribes of Tibet as well as with the other indigenous clans which share between them the territory of the Gurkhas' kingdom. The Eastern tribes, the least penetrated by the Hindu influence, still retain positive signs of their origin. Thus the Limbus, who form a branch of the Kiratas divide themselves into two tribes: the tribe of Kaci or Benares and the tribe of Lhasa; they relate that ten brothers born at Benares, separate themselves into two groups and found again themselves in Nepal where they had come, some directly from India, others by a 'detour', in passing through Tibet. Another myth gathered by Sarat Chandra Das deserves to be recalled as an historical document owing to the amount of general truth contained therein, it could very easily be applied to most of the Nepalese valleys: one day, a Tibetan herdsman who was tending to his flock towards the defile of Kangla, to the west of Kanchanjanga, discovered that one of his yaks had disappeared. He followed the marks crossed the defile and found his yak, lazily stretched, with its stomach well filled. The tired herdsman falls asleep; on waking up, the yak was still missing; a new search brought the shepherd on the marks of the animal to a verdant vale. He playfully sows a few seeds of barley, returns to his country, relates his discovery; nobody wishes to believe him, still less to go and see for themselves. A little while later, our shepherd leads his flock in the valley he had visited he found again his barley sprouting with ripe ears (of barley) on to it. He plucks them and shows them to his friends. This time they were compelled to believe him and they flooded him. In this way the village of Yangma was founded.

The ancient ancestors of the Nevars came, also, undoubtedly from the northern regions

and their name, which has no relation at all to the more or less authentic country of Nayera, is in direct connection with the very name of Nepal, either be it that it derives its origin from the word Nepal (Nepala), or that Nepal owes on the contrary her name to a Sanscrit adaption of local ethnic<sup>1</sup>. The date of their migration is not clearly determined; no history has registered it. Hodgson, however, has found that the legends of the reigning races indicated an interval of 35 to 45 generations, or 1000 to 1300 years, since their entry into the country; he rather preferred the more ancient date, in relying on the comparison of local idioms with the Tibetan tongue; their roughness and poverty offer a sharp contrast to the suppleness and the richness of the Tibetan language, such as it was shaped by the apostles and doctors of Buddhism from the VIIth. century. So long a lapse of time, and the accidental infusions Hindu blood have not sufficed in eradicating the primitive traits of the race. The Mongolian type, described by Hodgson, on the faith of numerous observations, is still recognizable on the features of the Nevars and of the populations which surround them, Magars, Gurungs, Sonuwars, Kachars, Haiyous, Chepangs, Kasoundas, Mourmis, Kirants, Limbous and Lepchas: head and face very large, particularly large between the cheek-bones; large forehead often narrowed on the top, receding chin; large and protruding mouth, but the teeth vertical and the lips without abnormal thickness; heavy jaws, widely separated eyes, on a level with the cheeks, more or less shaped obliquely; pyramidal nose fairly long and raised except at the bridge where it is often deeply sunk in to the point of allowing the eyes of meeting, but of a coarse form, thick-set, especially at the tip, with large round nostrils: abundant and flat hair; the face and body without hair; the stature rather low, but muscular and vigorous. The Nevars, compared to their less civilized neighbours, are distinguished by a longer face, larger eyes and a better sha-

ped nose; this is here the mark of inter-marrying with Indians.

Civilization has been the cause of the disappearance of the social organization of the primitive Nevars; one can have an idea with the help of the other tribes of the same race, established in the remote valleys and better sheltered from outside influences. They are all divided in tribes, sectioned in clans and by-clans; the idea of caste is strange to them, the quality of birth is absolute. Customs of endogamy and exogamy govern marriages; the bride must belong to the tribe, but must not be issue of the same clan; fraternity by blood, friendship is reckoned with as much as the bounds of the clan. The food is not regulated by any law; except the totem, eponym animal of the group, is prohibited. The bull is a good particularly appreciated; the Gurkhas have had to fight severely with their subjects to impose on them the respect of the cow "Hindu fashion". The dead are sometimes burnt, but more often buried. Religions so to speak officially is a rudimentary Buddhism. Witchcraft, the belief in spirits, the practices of sorceries are universally acknowledged.

Buddhist missionaries from India were undoubtedly the first to bring the gospel in the valley of Nepal. After the accomodation of the colonists brought by Manjucri from China, the symbolism of the traditions brings into Nepal the prehistorical Buddhas and their successor of Cakyamuni. The fringe of the Terrai, propitious to the growth of the Buddhas, would also skirt the mountains of Nepal; from the garden of Lumbini, the eye encompasses a horizon of verdant heights and frozen summits which are the Nepalese Himalayas; the besetting allurements of the near at hand refuge might have drawn the Buddhas, amateurs of alpine sceneries: example, the mountainous circle of Rajagrha, so dear to Cakyamuni. The Jainas, who shared

this taste of picturesque landscapes and this eagerness of apostdeship, seem to have attempted to wrest from Buddhism, the conquest of the Himalayas: one of their legends shows the last of the great apostles, Bhadrabahu, on his way to Nepal, at the time of the gathering of the council of Pataliputra, half a century before the arrival of the Macedonians into India.

Buddhism, supple and convenient, was able to find its way in the organization of the Nev-ars without any upheaval; it discreetly sowed the conceptions and doctrines of India, and allowed the harvest to slowly ripen. No sooner was it ripe, than a brutal adversary came to wrest it away. The sacerdotal Brahmanism, threatened to extinction by the triumph of the heresies, had cleverly searched for a refuge in the popular worships; it had adopted and consecrated them, and renewed pantheon. Tradition, in Nepal as in India has incarnated this crisis in the Cankara acarya, the most formidable champion of Brahmanic Hinduism. It is made to appear twice in Nepal, by twice employing the same procedure of factitious connection: the presence of two Cankara (deva) kings, is interpreted as a positive souvenir of the double passage of Cankara into arya. Cankara arrives in Nepal; he finds there the "four castes" converted to the Law of Buddha. He triumphs without a struggle over the convents, wins a brilliant victory on the father of families (grihasthas) massacres a portion of the vanquished, forces cruel humiliations on others, cancels the signs which distinguished the religious men from the laymen, constrained the nuns into matrimony and substitutes the god Civa to the Buddha.

On their side, the royal families, that had arrived from India or who pretended having done so, were not of nobility to impose themselves with impunity. Licchavis or Mallas, their names shone with a disquieting brilliancy in the annals of Buddhism. In the VIth century,

Samudra Gupta, Emperior of Hindustan, could still boast of some parentage with the Licchavis. Brahmanic presumptions had progressed since and the code, said to be from Manu, who gave to orthodoxy his articles of faith, classified the Licchavis and the Mallas (together with the Khasas called upon to ascertain some day their succession) among the illegitimate castes sprung up from the Ksatriyas. Their ancestors were really authentic Ksatriyas, united with the women of the same castes; but one among them had neglected his sacred duties, and his son was thereby excluded from the Savitri, the formula of initiation which "regenerates" the high castes, lowered on the condition of degenerated Ksatria (vratya) and the indelible stain was transmitted to his descendants. To win back the lost honour and stand up on an equal with the true Rajputs, the Licchavis and Mallas were compelled, alike the Khasas after then, to proclaim a serve rigorism and to reject unions of inferior rank. Nepal thus acquired her local Ksatriyas adorers (worshippers) at the same time as Buddhistic and Brahmanic gods and which naturally served as a connecting link between the two avowals. Finally the missionaries who had brought from India, the worship of Civa had at the same time introduced the system of castes which was inseparable from it; the adepts they had won were immediately incorporated in define groups, established in imitation of India, but without, however, copying her; the valley was too widely separated from Indian, by its past, by its traditions, by its customs to enable her to unite immediately to the Hindu communities. Thus a double society worked out in Nepal: one under the control of the Brahmans, wholly destributed in defined castes, characterized by the serve of the table and the bed: no legitimate marriage outside the caste; prohibition, under penalty of forfeiture and irrevocable exclusion, to eat in common with other castes. The other, heretic, hostile in principle to the system of castes but already affected with the contagion: a religious

and military autoeracy organized to the fashion of the Brahmans and the Hindu Ksatriyas, at its head. The strength of the example given by the superior classes, the fashion, the mind prone to imitation assured from that, time the triumph of the Brahmanic organization; gradually, each class of the Buddhistic society closed up within insurmountable barriers.

The conquest of Nepal by Harisimha deva in 1324 precipitated the elaboration of the system of castes. It brought in to reside in the valley for the first time, a Hindu king of blood and origin irreproachably authentic and a conscientious observer of the laws of Brahmanic purity. He is believed to have brought with him seven castes: Brahmans, Bhadelas (Bandyas ?) Acaryas, Jaisis, Vaidyas, Rajakas and Khadgis. The enumeration is expressive; Harisimha, expelled by the Musulmans of the Terai regions where he reigned, took the precaution to bring away with him in the suspicious shelter which alone remained open to him, the indispensable auxiliaries of the holy life: the masters of sacred science, the priests of local divinities for the soul and for the benefit of the body, the doctors, the washermen and the butchers; the one was no less necessary than the other. To entrust one's limbs, one's clothes, one's meat to servants whom the law does not authorize to undertake these various employments, does not expose one to the least risk, save the negligence of the most solemn duties. Harisimha deva did not wish to lose neither his soul or his rank. His washermen and Hindu butchers introduced in the Nepalese society bore the same austere conceit as the Brahmanic and the Ksatriyas; consigned by the Brahmanic law to an infamous rank, they relished, however, the honor of being classed therein; and their example influenced the lower strata of the population to the benefit of the formation of castes alike that of the Brahmans working on to the top of the social ladder.

The conquest of Harisimha, hastened also by its political results, the opening of the new 'regime'. Having supervened after a long crisis of feudal anarchy, it held away with equality over the parties and the rival clans and re-estab-lished order. Soon after, the restoration of the Mallas gave back to the country a national monarchy adept at understanding and satisfying the local interests. The reign of Jaya sthiti Malla falls in this period of fruitful seclusion that follows violent upheavals and works out durable benefits. Happily Harisimha deva and his dynasty had introduced in Nepal the social pre-occupations which stirred India at that period. The crushing triumph of Islam, the ruin of the last of Brahmanic empires threatened with a sudden collapse the institutions which the sacerdotal talent had patiently erected. To avoid such a formidable catastrophe, the few princes who retained with their independence the religion of the past, gathered at their court eminent jurisconsults (lawyers) bade them to draw up "Sommes" (summaries) intended to complete the written law, for a long time unchangeable, with the help of the oral law, constantly rejuvenated to adapt itself to the present. The house of Harisimha deva was distinguished by its zeal. The minister of Harisimha, the Thakkura Candecvara, composed or had composed under his name two encyclopaedias of religious jurisprudence: the Smriti-Ratnakara and the krtiya-Cintamani; among the princes of the branch (House) who reigned over Tirhout on the southern frontier of Nepal, Narasimha deva patronised Vydyapati, author of the Dana-Vakyavali; Madanasimha deva ordered the writing of the Madana-Ratna-Pradipa; Chandrasimha deva protected Micra Micra, author of the Vivada-Candra and Hari Narayana favoured Vacaspati Micra, author of the Vivada-Cintamani. Jaya Sthiti Malla was keen on the accomplishment of the same work in Nepal. He called five Pundits from India to help him: Kirthi Natha Upadhyaya Kanyakubja, Raghunatha Jai Madhali, Sri Natha Bhaskar, Mohi

Natha Bhatta and Rama Natha Jha who compiled the *Castras* and drew from them a series of laws on the castes, the funerals, the houses, the fields. "Laws of such a nature existed in the past, adds the chronicler, but they got lost owing to the neglect in not using them".

The task was a delicate one; it was a case of adapting the social institutions of Brahmanism to a population divided into two autonomous communities and over which triumphism. It was therefore necessary to carefully arrange matters as regards the feelings and the traditions of the majority, if one wished to work out a lasting benefit. In the first instance it was the question regarding the *bandyas*; the adopted solution had to exert its influence on all the other problems. The *Pundits* only managed the affair. They admitted on the faith of the traditions, that the *Pandyas* were the real descendants of the *Brahmans* and the *Ksastriyas* converted by the Buddha *Krakucchanda* during the *Treta* period; the vicissitudes of time and the intervention of *cankara acarya* had compelled them to neglect the monachal life, to live among his own kink (in family) and to exercise professions; but the "four castes" did not honour them the less. It was decided to classify them according to their genealogy, as *Brahmans* or as *Ksatriyas*, but without establishing any sub-divisions. "The *Bandyas* are equals to the *Samnyasis* who are all of one class alone without any caste distinction. The equality of the two religions was thus recognized in principle; but it worked out to the benefit of Brahmanism which supplied the point of departure of the classification:

The population was divided to the number of 64 castes:

1) 'Brahman', or 'Dvija', or 'Vipra': sacerdotal caste. They belonged to the two great Brahmanic families: *Panica-Gauda*, *Brahmans* of *Hindustan* come up from the neighbouring

plains into *Nepal*; *Panica Dravida*, *Brahmans* of *Decan*, brought and installed by *Cankara acarya*, according to the tradition, but renewed or multiplied in fact by the frequent political or religious relations of *Nepal* with the South of *India*.

2) 'Bhupa' 'Raja' 'Narendra', or 'Ksatriya': military caste.

3) 'Lekhaka': writer.

4) 'Kayastha': scribe.

The exaltation of the castes of the writing was a sign of the ages; it consecrated the triumph of the regular administration, or as we shall say, of the offices. Their power was recent, but it has done nothing but grow since then and the *Kayasthas* of *Bengal* contest today the first place to the *Brahmans*.

5) 'Mantrin': Counsellor

6) "Saclva": Comrade

7) 'Amatya': Minister

These three castes comprised the high 'personnel' of the court.

8) 'Pujita' These three castes probably comprised the priests of various

9) 'Devacinta' ranks who took up the

10) *Acarya* profession of local god worship or other functions known to be compromising. The *Pujita* is undoubtedly the *Pujari* who officiates in the temples of *Giva* and of the *Caktis*:

1) *Acarya* is the *Brahman* of the *Nevars* who became *Hindu*, to whom he serves as a spiritual professor and as a priest at certain ceremonies. The *Devacinta* is a variety of the same nature.

- 11) 'Grahacintaka': Astronomer  
 12) 'Jyotisa': Astronomer  
 13) 'Ganika': Calculator  
 14) 'Daivajna':
- Four castes of analogous profession but classified at different ranks of the social ladder, according to the nature of their speciality and of their customers.

The abundance of astrologers castes answers to the passionate tendency of the Nepalese for astrology. The Chinese have ascertained this taste as well as the Europeans. Nevar or Gurkha, the Nepalese will consult the astrologer in every circumstance, whether it is a question of taking a medicine, of taking a wife, or of waging a battle; the horoscope regulates all the details of life.

- 15) 'Alama': ?  
 16) 'Srichante': ?  
 17) 'Sajakara': ?  
 18) 'Supika': ?  
 19) 'Cichaka': ?  
 20) 'Marikara': ?  
 21) 'Silpikara': Artisan.  
 22) 'Bharika': Bearer ?  
 23) 'Napika' barber. One of the most considered beings of Hindu society, which has constantly recourse to his cares; he is the worthy counterpart of the western Figars, with the same variety of accessory appropriations: surgeon, mediator, etc.  
 24) 'Lepika': plasterer  
 25) 'Darukara': workman in wood  
 26) 'Taksaka': carpenter  
 27) 'Srinkhari': ?  
 28) 'Ksetrakara': land-surveyor. The reform of weights and measures worked out by Jaya Sthiti Malla made his work already very complicated still more difficult. The estimate of a surface or of a weight was not a passable task, because the unity of measure would vary with the quality of the thing to be measured. (See inf. p. 299).  
 29) 'Kumbhakara': potter. Still another element most indispensable to a Hindu commu-

nity, the laws of religious purity incurring an awful consumption of clay pots. The accumulation of the fragments of (earthen pots) pottery and of clay pots which bake in the sun betrays the entrance of a Hindu village.

- 30) 'Tuladhara': weigher. (key. sup. 28)  
 31) 'Karnika': weaver ?  
 32) 'Kamsyakara': metler of ordinary alloyed metals and manufacturer of clocks.  
 33) 'Suvarnakara': Goldsmith.  
 34) 'Tamarkara': a worker in bronze.  
 35) 'Gopala': shepherd.  
 36) 'Bhayalacancu': ?  
 37) 'Kamjikara': ?  
 38) 'Tayoruta': ?  
 39) 'Tankadhari': ?  
 40) 'Vimari': ?  
 41) 'Surpokara': ?  
 42) 'Natebaruda': ?  
 43) 'Bathahom': ?  
 44) 'Gayana': Singer  
 45) 'Citrakara': Painter  
 46) 'Natijiva': actor who prostitutes his wife  
 47) 'Surabija': ?  
 48) 'Mandhura': ?  
 49) 'Vyanjanakara', maker of porridge, cook  
 50) 'Mali'. Gardener  
 51) 'Mamsavikri'. butcher  
 52) 'Mirata'. hunter ?  
 53) 'Badi': ?  
 54) 'Dhanyamari': ?  
 55) 'Tandukara'. weaver ?  
 56) 'Nadichedi'. cutter of the umbilical cord  
 57) 'Kundakara': ivory carver.  
 58) 'Lahakara'. blacksmith, ironmonger.  
 59) 'Ksatrikara'.  
 60) 'Dhobi': washerman.  
 61) 'Rajaka': dyer; clearer.  
 62) 'Niyogi': ?

63) Mantngi

64) Carmakara carriers and skimmers.

It was further necessary to provide for the legal situation of an already considerable group and which claimed for a special treatment. The Brahmins come up from the plains have often allowed themselves to be seduced, without attempting at resistance, by the charm very little fierce, of the mountaineers; but the populations who had welcomed them and who respected their prestige were not disposed to accept for the children of these irregular unions, the degrading condition which the orthodoxy of the codes imposed on them. The Brahmin always accommodating himself with Heaven, imagined several transactions: In the Gurkhas' country, he resuscitated, as we shall see, the caste of the khas, which had disappeared in usage by his illegitimate progeny. In Nepal, among the Nevars, he invented the group of the Jaisis, an intermediate class that pretended to equal in rank the class of the Bandyas. At the time when the Bandyas were assimilated with the Brahmins, it was necessary to seclude the pretensions of the Jaisis. They were then divided into four classes, according to the social condition of their mother; Acarya, Daivajna, Vaidya, Crestha. The Jaisis Acaryas, born of a mother of the Acarya class, had to fulfil the functions of the Acarya for the Jaisis group; the jaisis Daivajnas had to be their astrologers. The Cresthas represented the Ksatriyas in this particular community. The Jaisis Acaryas were again sub-divided into three classes, the Jaisis Daivajnas in four classes, the Cresthas in a great number; the Brahmanic string, the envied emblem of honour, was granted to all the Jaisis Acaryas and Divajnas, and to the first ten classes of the Cresthas. The variety of professions of the Cresthas explained this inequality of treatment; some were soldiers, others merchants, still others bearers or farmers. The rules of the Pandit reserved bas-

ides to the Jaisis the profession of medicine and grouped in one caste with four subdivisions those among them who exercised it.

The Jyapus or Jaffus peasants who formed half the indigenous population, were classed among the Cudras and formed 32 divisions: the Kumhal (Kumbhakara), potters formed four other divisions of the same class. The caste or rather the extra-caste of the Podhyas, which comprised the most vile professions; executors, killers of dogs, removers of filth, etc. was divided into four sections.

Water, in the Hindu society, marks the boundary of purity; a caste is honourable if the superior caste can without falling from their ranks, accept from its hands drinking water. The Podhyas, the Carmakaras and the three castes which precede them were excluded from water, however, at the beginning of the XVIIIth Century, the king Laksmi Narasimha Malla of Kathmandu, in return for personal services of an intimate nature which had been rendered him by a washerman of the Rajaka caste and by his daughters, undertook to allow water to pass through the hands of the Rajakas, that is to say, he undertook to introduce them on his own authority into the group of pure castes.

The system of the caste compels, as a preliminary condition, the scrupulous fidelity of the women; adultery between individual whom the law does not authorise the union, is a stain which risks by contagion to spread to the most innocent. The Gurkhas, scrupulous orthodoxes have enacted fearful penalties against such a fault. The Nevars had inherited from their Mongolian ancestors a philosophical indifference on the virtue of women. The councillors of Jaya Sthithi Malla contented themselves in decreeing that if a woman had relations with a man of inferior



caste, she would be degraded and would take the same rank in the caste of her seducer.

The famous "Chapter of hats" has its place marked in the Codes of India, all the marks of the caste have the precious advantage of preventing terrible confusions. The podhyas, the pariahs of Nepal, had no right to wear the national head-piece; the vest, the shoes, the gold ornaments were also denied them. The Kasais (butchers) were compelled to wear sleeveless clothes. Tile roofings were forbidden on the houses of the Podhyas, of the Kullus (Curriers) and on the Kasais.

The "four castes" including the Cudras were compelled to observe the rules of the Vastu-prakarana and of the Asta-varga on the construction of houses. The Brahmans and the Ksatriyas were compelled to employ Brahmans for the ceremonies of foundation; the Vaicyas and the Cudras could only employ Daivajnas.

The funeral rites were treated with as many items: thus the melody of the Dipaka-raga was reserved to the ceremony of the cremation of kings, certain castes had the privilege to employ the kahalas (long trumpets) during the cremation of their dead.

The clever inventions of the Pundits of Jaya Sthithi Malla have outlasted the centuries; time without altering the foundation has modified the 'facade'. This is on account of the caste, as well in India as in Nepal, in spite of its immutable features, subject to the common law of living organisms: it develops, it increases, it dies. A continued work of reproduction by scission, under the influence of time, places men and events, draws uninterruptedly from each actual caste secondary castes which prolong their original caste, envelop them and eventually succeed in suppressing them. The Nevara of today, secluded from the society of the Gurkhas, are divided into two great communities,

corresponding to the two rival avowals: the Buddhamargis or Buddhists, the Civamargis or Civaite<sup>s</sup>.

The Civa-margis, belonging to one of the religions of Hinduism, naturally enters the general frame-work of Brahmanic classification; the four regular castes: Brahmans, Ksatriyas, Vaicyas and Cudras are each represented by several groups, enclosed within a common barrier and further separated between them by the fundamental laws of the table and the bed.

#### A. The Brahmanic castes are:

- 1) 'Upadhyaya' the highest class of the Brahmans. They have the right to enter the temples of Taleju, the tutelary goddess of Nepal, a mysterious divinity introduced by Harisimha Deva. They hold the professions of spiritual masters (Gurus) and of chaplains (purohitas) for the use of the Bra and Rajputs (or Ksatriyas).
- 2) 'Lawar-ju' of inferior rank, serve as gurus and as purohitas to the inferior classes.
- 3) 'Bha-ju', they are consulted in case of illness, religious counsels; but they never give medical advice.

#### B. The Ksatriyas castes:

- 4) 'Thakur' or 'Malla', descendants of ancient royal families; they are admitted on that title in the Gurkha army and never take up professions in the mercantile or in private service.
- 5) 'Nikhu', exclusively painters of religious articles: they hold a fairly important role in the procession of Matsyendra Nath, the ancient patronal divinity of Nepal.
- 6) 'Sheashu' The Cresthas of the anterior
- 7) 'Sherista' organization.

The two groups form only one caste, united by commensalism and connubiality; they supply the Anglo-Indian army with excellent recruits; several have won the military cross.

C. Castes of the Vaicyas:

- 3) 'Joshi', the Jaisis of the anterior organization; they expound the Castrás, but do not follow any sacerdotal (priestly) function.
- 6) 'Acar', the Acaryas of some time ago; they are the priests of the temples of 'Taleju' at Kathmandu and at Bhatgaon.
- 10) 'Bhanni': They dress victuals (cook) for the divinities of the temples of Taleju.
- 11) 'Goaku' ( Gulcul ) 'Acar.' priests of small temples where they accomplish the rites of the expiatory 'homa' for those who die on inauspicious days; but take no part in the funeral strictly speaking. By the rites of homa, the Goaku Acar takes on him the sins of the dead; but if he makes an error in the fulfilment of the rites, he himself is lost. The Gaoku Acar also serves as a priest to those Nevars or uncertain and suspicious origin.
- 12) 'Makhi' Cooks and table servants.
- 13) 'Lakhipar': Auxiliaries of those preceding. All the castes accept food from the hands of these two castes.
- 14) 'Bhaghs Shashu': servants for ordinary services.

The Buddhistic community is divided into three great categories. a) the 'Banras' (Bandyas) who have clean-shaven heads; b) the 'Udas' worshippers of Buddhistic gods exclusively, alike the Banras, but who allow just a tuft of hair to grow on the summit of their head,

(c) the mixed castes, who worship at the same time the gods of Buddhism and those of the Civaite gods whom Buddhism have not adopted.

A. The Bandyas, who are the Brahmins of Buddhism, are divided into professional groups.

- 1) 'Gubhar-ju' ( Gubal', 'Gubahal', Gura-bhaju): the highest class, the only one which supplies the high Buddhistic clergy, the Vajracaryas, and which possesses Pundits. During the religions ceremonies, they wear a sacred string alike the Brahmins and the Acras
- 2) 'Barrha-ju' they work in silver and gold but
- 3) 'Bikhu' only manufacture ornaments.
- 4) 'Bhiksu' The Bikhsu is besides, a priest
- 5) 'Nebhar' of inferior rank who serves as an assistant to the Vajracarya.
- 6) 'Nibharbhari': they work in bronze and in iron, manufacture holy articles and plates and dishes and are tinmen.
- 7) 'Tarnkarmi': They manufacture guns and canons either of iron or of bronze.
- 8) 'Gamsabarhi' work in wood, carpenters.
- 9) 'Chevarbarhi' and also plasterers and stuccoers,

These nine groups form one caste only, in the light of marriage and of victuals.

B. The group of the Udas borrows its name from the highest of classes which constitute it; it is divided into seven sections, but which constitute like the Bandyas, one caste only, in the strict sense of the word.

- 10) 'Uda': they have been for a long time the great traders of Nepal; the trade with Tibet and Bhutan was in their hands. But their wealth and the social status have declined to the benefit of a class held to be the lowest, the 'Sarmis'.

- 11) 'Kassar' (Kamsyakara): they work in alloys of metal.
- 12) 'Lohankarmi': stone cutters and builders as well for religious usage as for private undertakings.
- 13) 'Sikarmi': Carpenters.
- 14) Thambas' (tamrakara): copper, bronze and zinc smiths.
- 15) 'Awal': tile-makers and tilers.
- 16) 'Maddikarmi': bakers.
- C. Mixed castes, at the same time Buddha-maeris and Civa-margis.
- The six first groups, which form among themselves alone half of the Nevar population, bear the collective name of Jaffus (Jyapus) which properly belong to the fifth class; they only form one caste in legal sense.
- 17) 'Mu': they cultivate exclusively one specie alone of aromatic herb, which serves for the head-dress and which is offered as a gift to the gods.
- 18) 'Danghu': surveyors.
- 19) 'Kumhar' (Kumbhakara): potters
- 20) 'Karbujha' funeral musicians.
- 21) 'Jaffu' or 'Kissini' peasants who cultivate
- 22) 'Boni' the soil.
- The twenty four classes which follow, only form a group by opposition to the preceding ones; but they are subdivided in real castes:
- 23) 'Chitrakar' (Chitrakara): painters of different things; buildings, tableaus, etc.
- 24) 'Bhat': dyers in red for all kinds of clothe, clothes excepted.
- 25) 'Chippan' (Ksipana): dyers in blue.
- 26) 'Kaua' or 'Nekarmi': work the iron, manufacture horse-shoes, knives etc
- 27) 'Nau' (Napita): barbers and surgeons.
- 28) 'Sarmi' (or Salmi): oil vendors and braiders of festoons for ornamentation. They are those who have supplanted the Udas in the great trade.
- 29) 'Tippah': market-gardeners.
- 30) 'Pulpul': carry the lanterns and the torches at funeral processions.
- 31) 'Kaussa': exercise inoculations against small-pox.
- 32) 'Konar': manufacture exclusively the objects which serve for weaving.
- 33) 'Gartho' (Got): Gardeners.
- 34) 'Katthar': bone-setters and hospital-attendants.
- 35) 'Tatti': make the winding-sheets (shrouds) and also the night caps worn by very young children when the ceremony of cutting their hair around the cuda (tuft on top of the head) is just completed.
- 36) 'Balhaji': manufacture the wheels of the chariot for the procession of Matsyendra Natha.
- 37) 'Yungvar' manufacturer of the chariot itself.
- 38) 'Ballah',
- 39) 'Lamu', beares of royal palanquins: They are therefore identical to the Duan whom the Gurkhas designate under the name of 'Putvar'. It is due to Prithi Narayan that this caste owes its name or rather this title



10 this the privilege to paint the eyes of the image of Bhairava: the profits are often poor to enable an ever increasing number of interested individuals to live. Fortunately, the list of hereditary professions, long as it is, does not exhaust all the categories of breadearning ones. The custom and the law have not created small merchants (Banyas), tailors, coolies and privileged porters; with the exceptions of a few specialities, cultivation (tillage) is not a reserved monopoly. So many outlets remain constantly open to the overflowing professions of the castes. The profession of physician reserved by the code of Jaya Sthiti Malla, to the Jaisis, has become the right of anybody. The profession exercised, is fruitful in Nepal, as much and even more than elsewhere; the good families have as a rule a doctor attached to their service; the ancient tradition of Buddhistic oculists has been perpetuated, in this last shelter of Indian Buddhism, by distinguished<sup>4</sup> specialists. Thus the caste reserves to its adherents a special profession, without imposing it on them; it allows them at will, to roam in the uncertain grounds of professions which belong to nobody.

The Buddhist or Civaite caste, is at the same time a professional and a religious organism. Each one of its two functions is placed under the control of a special authority. The corporation, with all its resorts is governed by a committee; analogous to the Hindu Panch and which bears in Nepal, the name of 'Gatti'. The 'Gatti' divides and controls the duties that devolve upon the caste by virtue of its monopoly; in this enchanted valley, where religion has not yet completely stopped being a continuous chain of public festivals, each one of the castes is obliged to fulfil on each occasion the prescribed duty and the execution of the duty is watched.

These corporal feasts add themselves to the religious ones; each one of the members, real or virtual of the corporation obliged successively

at determinate periods to offer a feast to all the others, and whatever be the expenses to be incurred, none must evade this obligation. Finally if a person of the caste dies, all the families of the caste are strictly obliged to attend to his funeral; death is also a pretext for processions. The law confers to the 'gatti' the right to punish every breach. The ordinary penalty is the fine proportioned according to the gravity of the offences; but, in the case where the fault of one person compromises the whole community, the 'gatti' can decree the expulsion from the caste, the fallen individual, rejected by society, finds a shelter nowhere except with those whom contact with is a degradation.

But the 'gatti' is only aware of corporal acts; offences against purity pass unnoticed, because they are part of the domain of the religious law and it is a religious judge who would try them. Whosoever is warned having eaten or fornicated in prohibited company, of having accepted water from forbidden hands, of having committed an offence by inadvertence, negligence or licentiousness which entail the loss of the caste, in a word of having sinned against the law, is informed against to the 'dharmadhikari' or supreme judge of the kingdom and the case is brought up before the 'Raja-guru', the Brahman who serves as spiritual director to the king. The Raja-guru examines the case, consults the castes, the literature on cauoistry which has so greatly developed since the XIVth century and pronounces the verdict. The sentence is at the same time juridical and religious: it varies between the fine, the goal, the confiscation of rights and the forfeiture of the caste; the fine handed over is shared between the government, the raja-guru and certain privileged Brahman families; furthermore, the culprit is compelled to entertain a number of Brahmans predetermined by the judgement. The sentence shows the expiation to be undergone, if the offence is remissible the culprit is bound to fulfil an act of contrition (prayaccitta); if the culprit loses his

caste, the whole body is conjointly liable for the stain and must wash itself; as a legal and religious representative of the country, the king in person is responsible for the expiation (candrayana), and the expenses that are entailed, to the benefit of the Brahman, often rise to several thousand rupees.

The jurisdiction of the Raja-guru, together with the sanctions of a Brahmanic order which it involves, is not limited to the Civaite castes; an inevitable assimilation has also introduced in its sphere, the Buddhistic castes. Buddhism theoretically foreign to the idea of caste, has not foreseen any authority charged with watching and controlling the application. The day when the Buddhists of Nepal had adopted the Hindu organization, they have quite naturally ranged themselves under the authority of the only judge who could qualify to issue decrees. The constitution of Jaya Sthiti Malla serves, it seems, as a juridical base to the decisions of the Raja-guru in the case of the Buddhistic castes.

The salient trait of the Nevar character is the taste for society. The Nevar never lives isolated, he loves to dwell, a little like the Parsian, in houses of several stories and swarming with people rather than live in solitude, as well in town as in the village. He knows how to derive delight from all the pleasures nature gives him; he sings, he talks, he laughs, he loves the countryside, delights in picnics of gay company, in a shadowy spot near a stream or a rivulet, in the shelter of an old sanctuary, facing a beautiful and grandiose view. Careful and keen cultivators, he is also an expert in the manual arts, even those of a most delicate kind; he is a goldsmith and a latented smith, whimsical carver, dyer and a tasteful painter, well-informed trader without greediness, and a born artist. He has changed the arts of India, built temples and palaces which have served for models to the Tibetans, Chinese; the classical pagoda hails

from Nepal. The reputation of the Nepalese craftsmen consecrated by the centuries, is still established in the whole of central Asia. Father Huc, who visited the Nevar colony at Lhasa, assures us that they are sought for even from the depths of Tartary, to ornament the great lamaseries, and he shares the admiration of the Asiatic, for their Jewels "which will not dishonour or shame European artists", for "those beautiful golden roofings of Buddhistic temples which resist all the inclemencies of the seasons and always have that freshness and marvellous lustre about them. The Gurkhas who resent their entry in the army have given them the reputation of cowardice; but the memory of the assaults delivered at Kirtipur testify to their bravery; their military castes serve honourably in the British army in India.

The ancient dress of the Nevar has almost entirely disappeared, and is only prevalent in a few localities, as for example at Harisiddhi, E. of Patan and in certain religious ceremonies when the priests wear it by exception. It consisted of a sort of tight-fitting jacket with a skirt falling to the ankles and gathered at the waist with many folds; a piece of cloth rolled up as a scarf covered the lower portion of the jacket and the higher portion of the skirt. But to-day the population has almost everywhere adopted the Gurkhas costume. The women wear a tight-fitting bodice and in place of a skirt a piece of cloth as wide as possible, tightened at the waist in numerous folds and turned up at the back as far as the ankle-bone. They gather up their hair and twist it in a chignon on top of the head and never wear any head-dress; on the other hand they ornament themselves profusely with flowers, especially with marygolds and also with jewels, particularly with a gold disc placed flat on the chignon. Alike the women of India they wear rings around their arms, legs and also through their ears and nose. They live from a very young age in a liberty without reserve. At eight they are taken to the temple and

they are wedded with all the ceremonies required to a bilva fruit which is afterwards thrown into water. The spouse having disappeared is always pretended living, and his bride is within her right to profit by his absence; for the law allows the woman, in the absence of the husband, to take a lover of her caste or of a superior caste; she must not choose beneath her, this is the only restriction which is imposed on her. Once she reaches the marriageable age, they give her a dowry and they marry her; outside the high society which affect the prejudices of India, the young girl can court the wooers before the marriage; after the marriage, her independence is none the less; if she wishes to leave her husband, she has only to place on the bed two betel nuts; she can from that time go away quietly. The Nevar has only one legitimate wife, she must belong to the same caste as he does, but he can associate with concubines of inferior caste, without, however, going beyond the limit of water. Adultery, which is monstrous to the imagination of the Gurkhas, is not taken seriously by the Nevars; the divorce is then the right and the accomplice must retribute to the husband the expenses involved in the marriage; otherwise, he is imprisoned.

The Nevars are very fond of meat; they eat goats and sheep (but only the mountain-sheep, because the sheep of India is recognized to be forbidden food), ducks, chickens, and particularly buffaloes. They have invented a legend to justify this taste which the Hindu, respectful of animal life, holds in horror: when the conqueror Harisimba deva ascended into Nepal, in 1324, his army almost perished of hunger on the way; the king invoked the goddess Taleju, its protectress: she appeared to him in a vision, and allowed him to eat everything that would be met with on the morrow at dawn, the king saw a buffalo, captured it and presented it to the goddess who gave detailed instructions for the choice of a qualified slaughterer. He found the

man, and it was the ancestor of the Kasais, he slayed the beast, and the goddess allowed its flesh to be eaten. The Civa-margis of the highest castes, slaughter the animals without scruple; but the Bararas refrain from spilling blood and do not eat pork, rice lentils, boiled vegetables are their main nourishments. Garlic green or cooked, and radish are the feast of the Nevars, they are especially fond of the radish buried until fermentation takes place then dried in the sun; it is impossible to imagine a more rank smell. Tradition connects the invention of this delicacy to the invasion of Makunda Sena, a little while before the conquest of Harisimba deva. They also drink alcohol (raksi) extract of rice and wheat, but they only get intoxicated on great days of festival.

The Nevars like the Hindus burn the corpses.

The Nevars have a particular dialect which is called the Nevari. The Capuchins made use of it in the XVIIIth century to preach the Gospel in Nepal, but they have neglected to study it scientifically and their works have disappeared leaving no fruit behind. The Nevari is still very little and very badly known; Hodgson has disclosed a connection with the Tibetan, but without deeply following up his researches; behind him Mr Conrady alone took them up again and with success. He published an excellent study on the Nevar grammar and edited a small vocabulary Sanscrit-Nevar reported at one time by Minayeff<sup>5</sup>.

The Nevar language of the middle days embodies a harmonious equilibrium between the Himalayan dialects which had remained in their primitive state-by reason of their seclusion, still poor, rough and incapable of translating the lofty thoughts and abstract notions and those dialects completely Hinduized by the constant borrowings from the Aryan tongues of the plains. The Nevar tongue has developed its

lexicon by an internal progress, and if it has had to borrow from the Neo-Sanskrit dialects, it has had to assimilate its borrowings and derive new forces there from. There are still in existence a fairly great number of commentaries on the Buddhistic Sanskrit texts or even of Nevar translations. Ever since the re-establishment of the Mallas (XIVth century the Nevar dialect is found to push its way in the epigraphy and rapidly increase in extent at the expense of the Sanskrit. The Gurkhas conquest, in overthro-

wing the Nevar dynasties, has decreed the fall and decay of Nevari. From generation to generation, the Nevari dialect slowly deteriorates to the benefits of the Parbatiya, the language of the victors.

Nevari borrowed its writing from India; it is written with the same characters as Sanskrit the varieties of writings introduced by the scribes have all a resemblance to the Devanagari, but with their forms more archaical in shape.

To be continued



## FOOT NOTE

1. Mr. Waddell (Frog-worship amongst the Nevars...) has proposed an etymology of the word 'never' by the help of Tibetan. The first syllable 'ne' would correspond to the written form 'gnas' which signifies "place, spot" and 'par excellence' "sacred place, place of pilgrimage." The Lepchas give the name of 'Ne' to the Eastern Nepal and to Sikkim and they interpret it by "place of barracks for shelter or residence". In most of the connected Indo-Chinese dialects, 'ne' signifies "residence." The Nevars would be the inhabitants of 'Ne', of the country of sacred places and 'par' 'excellence' in the Himalayas.

The syllable 'pal' would be the equivalent of 'Bal', name which the Tibetans give to Nepal (Bal-po-Bal-Yul: Boe country); the word 'Bal' in Tibetan signifies "wool", 'Nepal' would then signify: "the sacred places of the Bal." All this etymological combination seems to me greatly suspicious.

2. I borrow the two descriptions which follow from Oldfield, 1. 177 sqq. in completing them by the help of Hamilton, 29 sqq. Their indications are more than once contradictory, particularly as regards the castes Buddhargis, or mixed: Thus Hamilton classifies the 'Jopu' (= jaffus) before the 'Uda' whereas Oldfield reserves this order; following these, he places the 'Bhat', the poets and panegyrist of India whom Oldfield does not mention; then the 'Got' (gardeners- 'Garhts'),

the 'Karmi' (Carpenters- 'Sikarmi'), the 'Nau' (barbers= 'Napita'), who are far from following one another in Oldfield (No. 33) 13) and 27). Then follows the 'Sougat' (washermen= Saughar), beyond the boundary of water whereas Oldfield classifies them in the last rank of impure castes; then the 'Japu' (? potters), the 'Hial' or 'Sial' (Cowherds, undoubtedly the 'Nanda-gaowah, 43) the 'Dhui' or 'Putaul' (= Duan or Putvar, 39). Beyond that begins the impure castes, with the 'Salim' (oil vendor = 'Sarmi', 28), placed on this side by Oldfield, perhaps because their social condition had altered in the meanwhile; then the 'Kasulia' (musicians = Joghi or Dhunt'), the 'Chipi' (dyers- Chippah, 25) and the 'Kow' (blacksmiths - kana, 26) placed side by side in a much higher rank in Oldfield, the 'Gotoo' (worker in copper=Thamdat' 14), then two military tribes: the 'Kosar' who were at one time brigands as to what they said and the 'Tepai' who can marry or take as concubine the Hindu women who have lost their castes in eating impure things; and lastly the 'Puria' and the "Chamkal" (= 'Puriya' Pidhiya and 'Chamakallak' of Oldfield, in the same rank) and the 'Bala' removers of filth.

I have not had the time to proceed during my sojourn to a personal research on the castes; in doubtful cases, I have preferred to follow Oldfield who is more recent and complete, but I have naturally corrected it...

or completed it each time my notes have allowed it.

3. The Bandyas owe the practice of this profession, to the intervention of the king Siddhi Narasimha of Patan in the XVIIth. century. "As he remarked that the town had not enough carpenters, he made the Bandyas take up this profession" (Vamc, 234).
4. Key, the account of the 'Vamc' 178. a doctor of Harisimha deva, solicited by the king of the Nagas, Karkotaka, under the disguise of a Brahman, follows him in his underground palace, cure by an application of collyrium the eyes of the queen of the Nagas, and karkotaka promises him in compensation that his descendants would be good oculists. "The descendants of this Baid (Vaidya) were renowned in consequence, as

excellent oculists. "- and key elsewhere: Dr. cordier, 'Vagbhata', in the 'Asiatic Journal', 1901, 2, p, 170, n.

5. Notices of the languages, literature and religion of Nepal and Tibet, published at first in the Asiatic Researches XVI (1828), p. 409; re-printed in the Essays on the languages, etc. London 1874, p. 1.

1. August Conrady, Das Newari..., in the Zeitschr. d. D. Morg. Ges., XLV (1891) 1-35-Ein etc., XLVII (1893) 539-573)-M, Conrady has especially applied himself to show out clearly the connections of the Nevar language with the uniform mass of those dialects known as "Indo-Chinese": Chinese Tibetan, Siamese, Himalayan dialects.