

NEPAL

(Continued)

Two Months in Nepal

January-March 1898

Note book to sojourn

- Sylvain Levi

Sunday 23rd January-Return from Patan. One hour's walk to the Residence; a little less than three quarters of an hour to Kathmandu. The path skirts the Eastern wall of the town and the manoeuvring fields passes through the suburb of eastern wall of the Trilokecvara skirts the recently built temple of Laksmi Narayan and the gardens whence there rises a heap of Dharmacalas peopled with Sadhus (priests); and facing the Thapathali (the palace of the Commander-in-Chief); turns suddenly towards the West to cross the Bagmati on a bridge of bricks. Lost in its vast sandy bed, the Bagmati would not sufficient during the dry season to the piety of the faithful eager to bathe in it; a small arm has been canalized that runs alongside the ghats at the foot of the temple of Laksmi Narayan. Having crossed the river, the path takes another sharp elbow towards the South.

Patan is a vision of fairly-land still more enchanting than the too uniform Jeypore. The roads larger than those of Kathmandu, often paved with large slabs are covered paths sheltered by the approach on both sides of the large Nepalese roofs; not a house without sculptures and colours; the beams,

the small beams, the lintels, the window-sash frames are sculptured with a kind of devilish inspiration. And everywhere temples, pagodas, caityas, combining all the types of Indian architecture adapted by the most picturesque taste, red bricks, green bricks, gilded brick, profusely decorated of sculptured wood and crowned with a kind of Chinese pavilion with roofs rising tier upon tier; and on the square there group in the most amusing disorder, pagodas with rattles and temples with colonnades and high bevelled pillars surmounted by copper statues.

My first visit has naturally been to the Pundit Kulamana whom Indrananda had mentioned to me as the pride of Buddhistic science. Oh, the kingdom for the blind. The honest Kumamana awaited me in ceremonial dress, yellow shirt with a kind of black overcoat; carpets had been spread on the ground of the court, near a caitya and there the conversation began. I was at first compelled to swallow the recital of a Cakyasimha stotra (hymn) composed by Indra with the Pundit's commentary, then a Triratna stotra with its glossary, I took up the same texts, gave them a commen-

tary of my own and at the same moment I became a very learned man. The road having thus been paved, I request him to show me his manuscripts. He brings me a Gandavyuha, a Bodhicaryaratra, a Pancaraksa. I tell him that we people in Europe know these things to our finger tips; I need something new, something unheard of, of something unforeseen. I reveal to him— he hardly expected it, all that Buddhistic literature has produced and lost and he gives me his word of honour that he would begin a search and bring me what he finds. He follows me afterwards to the Hiranyavarna Vihara, the most important of Patan; in spite of the Pundit, I meet with a positive result and the good Pundit, a little vexed, explains to me then that the Buddhists are not the masters they share the vihara with the Caivas who are unmanageable, Mitrananda, the mukhya and the sepoy then go inside and take stamping of the stelas. There wretched people conceal their antiquities. On my way I take the inscription engraved on the royal throne and which dates from Narendra Malla; I come across an inscription of Siddhi Narendra Malla 757 (No 17 of Bhagvanlal) on one of the temples on the square of the Darbar Mitrananda shows me on the square to the south of the Durbar a small caitya of bricks covered over stucco and which

passes for a monument of Acoka; but I vainly scatter and search in the surrounding detritus, nothing, nothing. At last at the corner of a street, I see a stela that rises above the bricks of the pavement and on which I think I can discern archaical letters. To work, we dig up— pull out, better in a hole of fifty centimetres without any regard for the department of roads and bridges and I find myself facing the inscription No. 3 of Bendall, now buried.

And I tender my excuses to the Nepala unjustly discredited. I received this morning the visit of Captain Sahib who brought me from Deb Sham Sher the two volumes of the 'Isis Unveiled' of Madam Blavatsky and a nataka (drama) Kucalavodaya, published in 1897 and composed by the Pundit Chubi Lal Socri, favourite of Bhim Sham Sher, general-in-chief and brother of Deb Sham Sher. Further as I express to him the desire to examine Bhatgaon at leisure, he proposes to place a house at my disposal thither, so as to avoid me an excessive loss of time, Bhatgaon being 7 miles from here. In short he informs me that Nepalese suit (of cloths) including the belt and cutlass. They seem to take a pride in showing the spontaneity of their hospitality during the Residents absence.

(To be Continued)