

NEPAL

(Continued)

-Sylvain Levi

Tuesday 1st February—Another Mangal -Var. Refuse now to believe in the Jyotisa (astrology), doubled with the Nimittacakra (science of signs). A stanza addressed to Kula Mana has been fruitful. Flies are not captured with vinegar nor are Pundits with durbhasitas (ill words). The excellent Kula Mana sends me a reply which I transcribe on account of the good news it conveys and because it shows the extent of the knowledge of Sanscrit among the Buddhists of Nepal whom Kula Mana is the cudamani (diadem).

Crikulamanapanditena bhavatam crimatam pranamaputrasahsarena prarthana krtam bhavatam uktam... etc, (see page 359 "Nepal", Vol. II. by S. Levi)

Which signifies in good French that he had procured himself at great pains a manuscript of the Sutralamkara and that he hands me the copy. Decidedly it must be believed that Nepal is not yet exhausted by so many researches. A rapid and very summary examination permits me to ascertain that it is not the Sutralamkara of Acvoghosa, but another work known under the same title that has for author the Bodhisattva Asa-

nga contemporary of Vasubandhu (Vth-VIth century). It is once again preliminary and must I wait for something better ? Vexed at the refusal of the the pseudo Pundit of Zimpi Tandu at Patan (the Simpi-tandu is credited with being very rich in manuscripts), I have again had recourse to the divine Saravasti and I dazed my man with this virulent reproach.

bubhuksitam vyaghrim drstva svacar-
iram ayacitah
pacav api karunaidra bodhistvab pura
dadan

agatam apithim... etc. (S. Levi, Nepal, Vol. II, page 359.)

I had struck the sensitive cord. Immediately the following reply is received (again a sample of the local Buddhistic Sanscrit) :

bhavatam crimatam pranamya bhavatam
ajnapita pustakanam
madgrhe asti va na asti maya na juatam
bhavatam krpa cet
tarhi likhitva anyagrhe maya gantum
anyatpustakam bhavatam
agre yah pustakani samarpayami.

Here is another promise of useful collaboration. I will go to Patan tomorrow

and kindle this zest that awakens. Such a long time is needed in this country of India to come to a result. But I would not like to leave Nepal before having exhausted every possible chance ; I now know the men, my luck of clokas has not yet spent. This morning already under a burning sun (suddenly as it behaves here the heat has appeared the heat of a Parisian summer), the cortege begins its journey to Mount Nagarjun that dominated Kathmandu towards the North and raises to more than a 1000 metres above the valley its steep slopes richly wooded, rebounding towards the S. S. E. in two billows (the latter carrying Svayambhu Natha) and towards the S. E. in a mamelon overlooking Balaji. desired to visit the cave associated by tradition to the memory of Nagarjuna who is believed to have lived thither and composed the tantras (Is this not here pre-eminently the domain of the Tantras) would there still remain there a few inscriptions as the caves of Barabar have brought to light ? Captain Sahib and the Commander-in-chief had put me on my guard ; the slope of Nagarjun is the reserve of wild animals for the Maharajah's hunts. They had not lied. I had the pleasure of seeing a tiger which had just been shot and was bleeding on the ground. But that is all I met with. The grotto which is widely open and not very deep faces full to the South ; it shelters a statue larger than life size and fairly in pieces of Cakyamuni ; stelas as everywhere else among these people fond of epigraphy (too fond alas, because this one kills the other and in order to make new stelas, they simply scrape the old ones), but nothing ancient, the oldest date is from the beginning of the XVIIIth century. The old caityas in ruins rise at a short distance. invaded by vegeta-

tion. There also stelas of between 100 to 150 years, nothing more. Lower down, at the entrance to the reserved domain stands a small temple of Civa made ill use of by a classical Saunasi all spattered with ashed the forehead decorated with a sacramental signs, arrayed with a necklace of rudraksamalas and what lives here in company with beasts. I met on my way another type of Yogi ; clothed in an overcoat which he carried under his arm, grinning romping and perpetually in the mood for laughter. I have not had the time to ascend the mountain to the top where the Buddhists burn their corpses and disperse the ashes to the wind ; I have had to come down with great pains on these steep slopes covered with dry grass where the shoes hopelessly slip. The Commander-in-chief had given me a pre-arranged place of meeting. I am now more than persons grata. An hour and a half of interview today and on what a tone. I have further been obliged to put and end to the interview myself. Captain Sahib overtakes me on my way back and hands me in the name of the Commander-in-chief, a magnificent Khukuri, the Yataghan than that every Nepalese carries at the waist, with a scabbard silver-plated ; two small knives are part of the whole: they are meant for works of small importance and a case for the tinder and stone (tinder-box). Matches are not yet here a current object of consumption. Also a French letter come from Paris and which I am asked to translate. A gentleman E. C. writes to "Sir Maharaj Dhiraj" to ask him the collection of Nepalese stamps. Sacra famed, I offer to undertake to despatch him his wants, but Deb Sham Sher in the mood for good-will, pretends to despatch them himself.

I meet with the traditional reception at the palace ; the owd of attendants

always in a hurry and yet doing nothing, at present distracted by the arrival of the Sahib. A company paid me honours. It is preferable here to have the white skin than red sash. Deb Sham Sher has had erected a tent in the garden but changing his mind he awaits me in a small pavilion erected round a basin where water plays all round. I remember those water castles that amazed the Chinese travellers on their journey to Nepal. Many coloured glasses spread an amusing light and the water spirits distribute a particularly beneficial coolness. He advances towards me sends for his two sons of twelve and ten years of age. I speak to them about France of her greatness, especially of Paris and the coming exhibition. What prestige in this simple name of Paris even in the remote valley of the Himalayas. I offer to teach French to the brats who look very smart. Then Deb Sham Sher asks me to show him the photograph of my children. As a man well acquainted with Europe; he asks me: Undoubtedly their mother looks after them. How many madam Debs are there? Captain Sahib, ordinary subordinate having two houses, one at the gate of the Residence and the other in town or at a few hundred metres distant, has two collections of women to adorn his two households. And the Thapathali is not just one house or two, this residence of Deb, is a small town that certainly shelters several thousands of male and female inhabitants our sons could be your friends tells me the commander-in-chief. Would it not be a captivating idea to have them to correspond from Paris to Kathmandu? May yours come here some day they will be the guests of mine; may mine go to Europe, your sons would be their guide in Paris.

And I will have their portraits and that of the papa and those of the Maharajah and the Dhiraj, and my children will

send their photographs and it would be delightful. The land being well laid I show the seed. Could the authorities assist me in my search for inscriptions and manuscripts? If they could send for my Pundits. The two servant Pundits of Deb Sham Sher enter, both of them accustomed to speaking Sanscrit and the conversation goes from English to Sanscrit under the amazed gaze of the attendants present at the interview. I expose my wishes, I enumerate the works I desire to procure myself; the two Pundits, Brahmans but yet better informed than their Buddhist associates, affirm that several of these works exist and that they will proceed to make a search for them "if they are found", says Deb, "I buy them; if they refuse to sell them, I shall have copies made of them which I shall offer as a homage to the French Republic for the love of you" (Oh Oh us hasten, the Maharaja returns to take up his offices again in fifteen days and the good-will of the other). And when I rise to leave, one of the two Pundits recites the two verses that he just improvised in my honour:

namani tam vidhim nityam yena decantar-
asthayoh
avayor idrci pritih karita sukhakarini
madhuryam vacasi namrata svabhava
caturyam sakalacastraparametum
yad drstam bhavati tat kadapi mitra
nanyasmin purvam api drstavanaham.

I spare myself the trouble to translate and to husband the last remains of my modesty already so impaired.

Friday 4th February—Three days to no avail, without any result. Day before yesterday I went to Patan but Pundit Kula Mana has found me nothing else and of that long list I gave him he does not even know the titles. He had received that very morning the visit of the two Pundits of Deb Sham

Sher who had come to gather information on the manuscripts that he possesses. In truth my prince, to crown your good-will the promise given on the eve was held on the morrow. Who can now accuse the good faith of the Nepalese. Thence I proceeded to the dwelling of Mitrananda, in the Mahabodhi Vihar to examine his family manuscripts. I saw the copy books large yellow leaves in which the first in date, to the Pundit's value Amrtananda has gathered his notes on Buddhism at Hodgson disposal who has well drained it. The collection of the Anandas is very rich and eclectic: the Tantras predominate in them as everywhere in Nepal; also a fine collection of Avadanas and the Nepalese Dharmas... .., worth mentioning also a manuscript of the Bharatiya natya castra dated Sam. 1884 (1827).

On Thursday I visited the temple of Ichangu Narayan one of the four great Narayans of Nepal to the N. N. W. of Kathmandu in a small secondary valley formed by the two promontories of the Nagarjun; the path is fairly difficult; it outlines the hill of Svayambhu, then successively scales two lesser chains of the mountain called one of them Haltsok and the other Ichangu. Cultivation covers the bottom of the valleys as well as their slopes entirely shaped in graduated terraces as is the custom here; the lower side of the mountain presents the shape of staircases. In spite of its great sacredness, the temple of Ichangu Narayan is fairly wretched, temple of Nepalese style, without luxury or grandeur, even badly maintained; the dharmasalas in the vicinity falls in ruins. In spite of its so-claimed; antiquity, nothing ancient. The stelas of the yard do not date back more than two centuries; on a brick platform that serves as a base to the temple a stela

of more ancient appearance shows its first lines. The shape of the letters seems to indicate the XIth or XIIth century, but decisive refusal to allow it to be extracted from the brick-bed wherein it is fitted. In returning I make the ascension of Svayambhu Nath once again and visit the temple and vihara of Saravasti built behind the Svayambhu on the other summit of the hill but all our researches under wood in the chaos of stones to no avail.

On Friday I spent the day searching Kirtipur, so proudly perched on the steep hill ahead of the Chandragiri, at a distance of three miles S. S. W. from Kathmandu. The "town of people with noses cut" has not recovered from the terrible blow given by the Gurkhas; she is putrefying in her stinking ruins. I carefully visited the great temple of Bagh Bhairab, Bhairava with the tiger adorned from head to foot and on all sides with bull's horns spoils of those victims daily sacrificed. In the courtyard quite a considerable number of secondary chapels. The convent of Mahabudh has to anterior inscription to 700 of the Nepalese Samvat; the great central caitya, all white-washed rises on a vast two-stories terrace overloading the houses of the vihara. The dwellers of this vihara are of an ignorance of the Nepalese Buddhists; impossible to find out anything on the manuscripts they possess. On my return I visited the long series of temples graduated along the banks of the Bagmati, near the confluent of the Bisnumati.

Sunday 6th February-Yesterday a torrential rain with thunder like running fire then snow whitened the slopes around. This morning by an icy fog that limited perception to ten paces, I proceeded on my way to

Chobbar. It is today the "Magha purnamasi", I know it too late to spate the beliefs of my escort. In entering the field that separates the Residence from the town I suddenly hear from I know not where, muffled symphonies and suppressed choruses and guess through the dense mist procession of phantoms. It is the feast of the full Moon. The cold is intense and the Nevars little affected by cold yet cover their faces like Musulman ladies. And yet the pious Brahmans are there, stark naked at the fountains at the washing-places on the banks of the Bagmati, accomplishing with a minute punctuality all the detail of the rites ; signs (aspersions) meditations, etc. All those vague forms I cross carry in their hands brass trays on which are carefully arranged offerings of flowers and perfumes ; the temples bells peal, the holy images have already the forehead adorned with a real hump of sandal wood or of red lead and on the foreheads of the faithful the remains of the offerings trace quite fresh lines in white, yellow and red. At the temple of Laksmi Narayan on the Bagmati the yogis grouped around their chapel (each brotherhood has its dharmasala, its chapel, its courtyard, its ghat, its water, its banner ; Vairagis, Sadhus, Sannyasis, etc) make an infernal din ; some beat the drum, others shake the cymbals, another blows the trumpet ; another proceeds to burn incense at the four corners of the platform.

Chobbar is to the South of Kathmandu on a rounded mamelon with rugged and steep slopes ; the Bagmati to force an outlet has forcibly separated the mamelon from mount Phulchok and has cut herself a deep gorge whence it flows out towards the South. At the opening of the gorge there rises the temple of Bighna-Binak (Vighna Vinayaka), otherwise called Gan-

eca one of the four doubly-holy temples of Vinayaka in Nepal. The actual temple is entirely modern, of Nepalese style without any character ; Ganeca is covered with veil that discloses only the forehead of the god to the adoration of the faithful who come to anoint him. On top of the mamelon, undoubtedly commanding a beautiful view of Kathmandu in the North, Patan in the East, Bhatgaon in the North East ; and Kirtipur in the West (but the still badly scattered mist has prevented me from seeing anything) ; the old bihar of Chobahal in the centre of the courtyard at the usual place of the caitya, there stands a temple of Mahadeva of Hindu style with colonnades and vimanas. The sanctuary of cakyamuni instead of being simply inserted in the periphery of the vihara forms here a temple having its appropriate development in Nepalese style, a curious feature is the abundance of copper utensils, vases, pots, plates, frying-pans, all hanging in the temple from top to bottom. In an adjoining courtyard there rises a stela corroded by time but on which there still appears the remains of ancient letters. I return through the fields and this time under a strong sun, by the Pulchu-Bihar erected on a small hillock to the west of Patan and very close to the town. It is to this bihar that belongs the four stupas of Acoka built at the west of the town, but the stupa is fairly distant. In the bihar itself I find nothing and caityas of plaster and brick erected in front of the bihar fall in ruins.

In returning to Kathmandu, I find the streets lined with a row of spectators like during our Lent days. The women have attired themselves in immoderate sized skirts that swell up like ballons. They are waiting for the passing of the Magha-Yatra. And I shall see her also. In town yesterday's rain

marinated the filth all along the causeways and in the crush of the crowd the stink is intolerable. Fortunately it suffices for the mukhya in order to open me a passage, to shout : Ho, Sahib Pundit and the ranks open out. I manage to settle myself on a terrace facing the temple of Annapurna and at that very moment I become myself the Yatra, the spectacle, the universal object in view. A group of Brahmans approaches me, begins the conversation in Sanscrit and an amiable debate opens to which the crowd listens with amusement. Here is the procession, naked children carrying sticks crowned with large balls bristling with gilded straw, most probably the sun. Above this are oranges. In the palanquins, naked lads also sitting hand on their knees they carry lamps burning incense. On a large platform stands a young boy daubed with green and garbed in spangled tinsel, with the eyes encircled in dark rings, motionless and grave. He represents Rama. On his left we see a delicious Sita, an ideal type of childish beauty, the eyes in ecstasy. Facing them a nude boy, elegant and harmonious like an ancient work of sculptures has a bow slung over the shoulder. He represents Laksmana. With the large naked sword he holds in his hand, he cuts off the nose to an ugly looking giant doll its hair dishevelled and falling with the face of a bird of prey. This is Curpanakha. Then on another moving platform stands Hiranya kachipa with a wild boars face who winds red threads symbolizing his torn entrails, whilst facing him a motionless child, with hands joined represents Prahlada. And then it is a crowd of small chapels and small statues carried on stretchers and choruses consisting of men, children, vinas, trumpets, flutes and drums. The whole ceremony was well over, when my friend Deb Sham Sher presents

himself to the acclamations of the populace. He sees me gives the order to make room for me and the terrace on which I stand is emptied in a moment.

We began to talk and pray on what ? On my manuscripts. He intends to send me five for examination and he will be pleased to give me and the French Republic any one of them I may choose.

Monday 7th February- I saw today a few things strangely expressive. I visited Budhnath to the E. N. E. of Kathmandu between the Bagmati and Mount Sivapuri, not far from Pashupati. Budhnath is the largest of the Buddhistic stupas of Nepal, larger than the four great stupas of Acoka in Patan. The circular base of plastered bricks is all along opened with regular niches wherein are fixed vertical bars around which turn prayer boxes bearing inscribed : Om Mani Padme hum. Four circular terraces of bricks graduate from the base to the hemisphere of the stupa ; the stupa is crowned with a king of rectangular bell-turret on which are painted on each side two large eyes and the edifice ends with a red canopy supported by copper rods. All round the stupa tracing an irregular rectangle stand one storeyed houses wherein reside a few Nevars but these houses especially serve as a shelter to the Tibetan pilgrims. Budhnath is the sanctuary of the Tibetans ; The Vamcavali attributes its construction to Mana deva but the relics that are deposited thither are those of a Tibetan saint. A lama dwells thither and performs thither his ceremonies. Budhnath is without contradiction the headquarters of human putrefaction. The ground is made of dung and the Tibetans swarm thither, spreading far and wide a stink of grease enough to disgust sheep a smell of he-goat enough to chase away the she-goats, disclosing between the

part-opening of their filthy tatters, oily skins that have never soiled water.

Prohibition to enter in the precinct of the stupa; I can see my Pundit, my mukhya and the coolies who are Buddhists, exploring the terraces and I settle myself to take a photograph. The mukhya and the Pundit rejoin me, they found two inscriptions ancient in appearance but in the Bhotya dialect. Granted for Bhotya. And the stamping was taken. This time the sepoy, excellent "impression taker" accompanies the Pundit and the mukhya remains with me. A Gurkha constable comes to assist him and it is not an easy task, because the ignorant Bhotyas suffocate me with their greasy pusking and place themselves against the very camera shutter. All this mechanism puzzles them and one of them addresses me: Buddhavata; another humbly offers me a pice to make me puja. I must submit myself to the indiscreet worshippings of this horde who touches alas with veneration my sleeves and my trousers. I even fell myself touched on the hand. It is a Lama from Darjeeling, he wears mittens. Does he conceal some sort of leprosy? As a fellow-member he does not release me striving to convince me that there are no inscriptions here below or above the ground. Give me back Kathmandu the town of stench, because one can still breathe there a little. At last my mukhya and his colleague decided to release me in Gurkha fashion. They swing their fists on all sides but suddenly a giant beast of a Tibetan springs forward with his chest half bare and his head encircled with long hair. He raises his arm like a club on the mukhya: Hear you Gurkha. And the ferocious Gurkha before whom India trembles, the eventual invader of India should England disappear, becomes very small and

knuckles under.

My photograph taken, I assist to a Tibetan spectacle. A tall old man strangely resembling to the statues of Homer, draped in a tunic that discloses his arm and left shoulder, grates with a bow shaped fiddle-stick a three stringed manodoline and sings God knows what. Two young Tibetan beauties accompany him two jolly girls with quite flat faces and rosy cheeks and uneven teeth the head encircled with a disc in which are set all kinds of red, blue and green stones the hair astonishingly dark and more greasy than black plaited into two tight and straight tresses that stick on each shoulder, they pull down and cause to tremble between their fingers the facing of their large sleeves. Silver chains adorn their waist. The old man and the two nautch-girls wear rings on their ears, rings large enough to serve us as bracelets. They sing, roll their eyes as if on the verge of fainting, dance a kind of jig or boree whirl in time whilst the old man keeps on grating his screeching fiddle.

At last the Pundit and the sepoy return and spread their stampings; I take up one and examine it in the Sun. Another beast of Tibetan snatches it from my hands on to it; I believe it to be an indiscreet curiosity as I have the habit of meeting here. In short the mukhya orders; "Return that to me". Then the Bhotya with a fearful expression of idiotic fanaticism crumples the paper in his hands throws it over the enclosure of the stupa springs in front of the mukhya greets him with an ironical salute by falling on his thighs his tongue protruding his skirt upturned completes his demonstration by a sign Mouquette fashion (laughed at); then feigning to brandish a weapon leaves at a run towards his den. The Lama then approaches and says softly: Believe me depart at once.

The good Homeric old man with the amiability of a man who has received two annas, insists : Depart at once, depart at once. And the anxious mukhya tells me : Ride your horses and let us go. And the pale Pundit tells me : Ah, these Bhotiyas. Our caravan glees it is the exact term ; I have seen the Gurkha routed by the Tibetan. And we are in Nepal at one hour from Kathmandu. What will it be in Tibet. Here is something that does not encourage me to visit Lhasa. And after all it is for these people that Cakyamuni has turned the wheel of law. They have well realized the type of squalid ignorance. What would happen if these very hordes took the road the India or the West.

Bhatgaon, the Maharaja gives me a house and it is very kind of him, but though it is a maharaja's house, it is not a comfortable house. From outside it is altogether neat looking ; a little outside the town right in the middle of a meadow quite close to the beautiful tank of Sikkhapohari in a pretty surrounding against the background of the valley. Laughing foregrounds with villas and gardens ; above stretch thick forests and as a crowning the inconceivable mass of glaciers. Oh, the pretty house to go and stand at the window. It has less seducing charms to the dweller. The architect who built her, certainly a Bengali had wished to follow the European style ; he has planned large windows everywhere with real venetian glass shutters ; built the architect is gone the time has passed, the glasses have cracked, broken gone to pieces, one by one the frame-work of the windows has come apart, the poor venetian shutters have lost their blades

and the wind that blows across the mountain blows across the room laden with coryzas and odontalgia. And suddenly the weather cools or at least it is colder in Bhatgaon ; Kathmandu close to Nagarjun loses in picturesqueness but gains a shelter against the icy wind of the North. Bhatgaon town is fairly fortunately sheltered in a depression of the ground at the foot of the Mahadeo Pokhari but my house built on a very exposed plateau, generously offers itself to the indiscreet caresses of the breeze. From Kathmandu to Bhatgaon three sturdy leagues by a fairly good road on which those vehicles not afraid of ditches or quagmires can circulate ; the path crosses by turn the Dhobikhola, the Bagmati and the Manhaura come down from Mount Manichur. The three rivers still swollen by the recent rains flow all three in kind of deep trenches now widened and now confined forming real gorges where rice grows leisurely in a rich and moistened soil ; the two sides of the trenches generally rise perpendicularly and extend in plateaus on which towns are built. Nothing else gives more precise a feeling of the remarkable density of the population of Nepal than the aspect of the roads that join Kathmandu to the rest of the valley it is all along on kilometres has again increased to the honour of Bhatgaon. The Darbar has thought it useful to give me a second mukhya as assistant entrusted to supply me with provisions ; and this evening in the kind of hall that comprises the ground-floor of the house there lie side by side the two mukhyas, the sepoy, the boy, the cook, the sweeper, my personal coolie, the syce and the pony.

(To be continued.)