

TIBET, KASHMIR AND NORTH INDIA 647-747

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Tibet made her debut into history with the unification and consolidation brought about by Srong btsan-sgam-po 630-698 A.D. (1) With the help of a strong army, he subjugated the provinces of Dbus and Gtsang and quickly became the master of the whole of Tibet. Not content with extending his empire from Gilgit to Chinese Turkestan, he vanquished King Amsuvarman of Nepal, forcing him to marry his daughter, named Khricun (Bhrkuti) to him (2), and challenged the emperor of China, compelling him also to offer him the hand of his daughter Wen-Cheng along with some territories. This consolidation at home and expansion abroad was accompanied by socio-religious organisation and cultural upliftment. Thus Tibet emerged as a great power on the Asian scene.

The consolidation of a big power across the frontier is usually a menace for a country, for 'two is company, three is none' is the very antithesis of truth in political history. However, during the lifetime of Harsha in India for a variety of reasons—the prestige of his power, his intimate relations with China, manifest in the frequent exchange of embassies, his interest in Buddhism, which had become the dominant ideology of Tibet, and the preoccupations of the Tibetan emperor with his own affairs—the frontier of North India did not witness any serious disturbance. But the death of Harsha in 647 and the disappearance of his awe and glory gave the green signal to the frontier troubles and led to a rupture between India and Tibet.

We know that Harsha tried to cultivate friendly relations with the T'ang court of China. The opening of a route through the Banepa-kuti pass about 639 had shortened the journey from India to China *via* Nepal and Tibet. Just after his meeting with Yuan-Chwang, Harsha sent an envoy to Ch'ang an, bringing among other gifts a broad-leafed illex, of a kind unknown in China (3). The T'ang reciprocated this gesture by sending a return mission to India in 643 under Li-I-Piao with Wang Hiuen ts'e as second officer. This mission returned to China in 645. But, soon afterwards, another mission was despatched to India, this time under Wang Hiuen-ts'e with Tsiang Cheu-Jen as the second officer and an escort of thirty horsemen. When the mission was on its way, King Harsha died and his minister O-lo-na-shoen, Arjuna or Arunasva, usurped his throne. He is called Na-fu-ti which Sylvain Levi takes to mean a Brahmana (4). He broke off with China, the reason for which may have been his anti-Buddhist feeling, born of his Brahmana heritage, and went to the extent

of maltreating the Chinese embassy. The *Ancient History of the T'ang Dynasty* Ch. 198 states that "he used in the campaign the troops of the barbarian to attack Wang Huen-ts'e. They (the escort of the mission) gave a fight to the barbarian but the party was not equal (to the enemy); when the arrows got exhausted, all were taken prisoners and the tributes given by the different kings were all plundered. Wang Hiuen-ts'e alone escaped under the cover of night." (5) The *New History of the T'ang Dynasty* Ch. 221 gives the following account of this incident: "He (O-lo-na shoen) placed the army in the field to drive away Wang Hiuent-s'e. The mission did not have an escort of more than a few dozens of cavalry; they could do nothing and all perished. The goods offered as tributes by the kings were all plundered. Wang Hiuen-ts'e escaped" (6)

Thus harassed, the Chinese envoy reached Nepal and Tibet to seek the help of their kings. To quote the *Ancient History of the T'ang Dynasty* he "fled to T'ou-fan (Tibet) which gave him 1200 soldiers. Ni-po-lo (Nepal) gave him 7,000 cavalry. Wang Hiuen-ts'e, with the help of his assistant, Tsiang Cheu-Jen led the army of the two kingdoms and advanced as far as the capital of central India. The battle continued for three days, the loss was terrible. Three thousand persons were killed straightaway and about 10,000 fell into water and were carried away. O-lo-no-shoen fled from his capital. Cheu-jen pursued him and made him captive along with 12000 persons, men and women, and more than 30,000 animals, oxen and horses, India was thus conquered. Wang Hiuen-ts'e brought to the capital (of China) his prisoner in the 22nd year (Tcheng Koan-648). He was promoted to the rank of *tch'ao-san-ta-fou*" (7). The *New History of the T'ang Dynasty* Ch- 221 gives some different details of this episode. It says that Tibet supplied the Chinese envoy with an army of 1,000 soldiers rather than 1,200 men but Nepal gave him 7,000 troops. "He divided his army into several corps, advanced as far as the village of *Tch'a-pouo ho-lo* and, after beseiging it for three days, captured the town. 3,000 men were killed and 10,000 drowned in the river. O-lo-na shoen, leaving the kingdom, fled and reassembled his troops and returned to offer another battle. Cheu-jen made him prisoner, killing about 1 000 person this time; the others, who were guarding the women of the royal household barred the crossing of the river K'ien-t'o-wei. Cheu-jen attacked them; there was a great confusion. He imprisoned the wives and daughters of the king, and 12 000 persons and all the domesticated animals numbering some, 30,000. He received the submission of 580 fortified towns. The king of Eastern India, Chikieou-mo (Sri Kumara), presented some 30,000 animals, oxen and horses, for the army, and also bows, sabres and fringes. The kingdom of Kiamou-lou (Kamarupa) offered to the emperor curios, a map of the country and wanted an image of Lao-tzu as gift. Wang Hiuen-ts'e offered humbly

to his emperor O-lo-na-shoen as prisoner. The victory was proclaimed officially in the ancient imperial temple."(8)

It is clear from these accounts that the Chinese envoy Wang Hiuen-ts'e was not only seized by what Arthur Waley calls 'buccaneering spirit of early T'ang diplomatists' (9) but also made the best of the worst situation that faced him. Obviously, he could not have initiated the aggression, accompanied as he was with an escort of 30 horsemen only. He must have used all the force of cajolry and persuasion at his command to win an easy passage to the capital. But the Indian King was averse to everything Chinese and so tried to decimate him thoroughly. However, he managed to escape and succeeded in getting 1,200 or 1,000 troops from Tibet and 7,000 from Nepal and fought his way into the Indian capital, probably Kanauj. Whether he appealed to the religious sentiments of the Tibetan monarch or counted upon the friendship between China, Tibet and Nepal or expatiated upon the prospect of an easy conquest of an empire in India or dwelt upon the menace of the northward expansion of the Brahmana ruler of Kanauj, we do not know, but it seems certain that he could convince his Tibetan and Nepalese friends that an expedition into India would be a profitable undertaking for them. Thus, his dash in North India was veritably a joint Tibeto-Nepalese enterprise to conquer an empire to the south of the Himalayas. Though Chinese annalists described it as a triumph of their country, it can not be doubted that it was a success of Tibetan and Nepalese arms against North India. For some time Srong-btsan-sgam-po might be itching for some row with the kingdom of India and the provocation of Wang Hiuen-ts'e gave him the occasion to lash out against it. So Wang's adventure proved the veneer for Tibetan and Nepalese aggression against North India for which the ground had been prepared with the consolidation of the military strength of Srong btsam-sgam-po. That the Tibetan and their proteges, the Nepalese, succeeded in occupying large parts of North India is manifest from the remark of the Chinese chronicles that 580 fortified towns submitted to their armies led by Wang Hiuen-ts'e and an enormous booty fell into their hands and O-lo-na-shoen and his family, with a large number of followers, including the alchemist Narayanasvamin who claimed the knowledge of the elixir of life, became their prisoners (10). Besides this, the powerful ruler of Eastern India, Kumara Bhaskaravarman, also made friends with them offering them 30,000 oxen & horses for the army and bows, sabres and fringes as well as a map of the country which had a great military value. The impact of these events on the history of North India must have been tremendous.

Arnold J. Toynbee has shown that the challenge of blows and

pressures stimulates a people to creative activity and often intensifies the process of political and military consolidation among them. In India also, after the subjugation of vast territory by the Tibetans and Nepalese and their retirement with a big booty and a large train of prisoners of war, the imperatives of political unity became strong and the imperial tradition of Harsha strove for a revival. For a time there was a free-for-all in which Bhaskaravarman occupied Karnasuvarna and the adjacent territories, the later Guptas of Malwa fought their way into Magadha, the Maukharis revived in their ancestral seats and one of them Bhogavarman established matrimonial relations with the rulers of Nepal, the Turki chiefs, assuming the title of Tikina, pressed into the Punjab and the Karkotas or Nagas began to rise in Kashmir. But, out of these conflicts and struggles, the later Gupta ruler Adityasena emerged supreme and cemented his alliance with the Maukhari Chief Bhogavarman by marrying his daughter to him. The successors of Adityasena continued to use the imperial title indicative of paramount sovereignty, but the inroads of the Tibetans also battered the states of North India from time to time intensifying the urge of a more effective unification (11). Ultimately the man of the hour appeared in Yasovarman in the last part of the seventh century and beginning of the eighth. Most probably he was connected with the rulers of Kanauj and inherited their imperial tradition. At the head of a large army, he campaigned in all directions and became the paramount sovereign of North India from the eastern sea to the north-western marches with an appreciable influence in South India also. After consolidating his position in India, he, according to the chronicler of his campaign, Vakpatiraja, conquered the Himalayan region (12) This shows that, after setting his house in order, he grappled with the challenge of the Tibetans, Nepalese and other mountainous people. In order to strengthen his offensive against these people, he sought the collaboration of the Karkota King of Kashmir, Lalitaditya Muktapida, in spite of his rivalry with him over the states of the Panjab, like Jalandhara reported by the Korean pilgrim Hui-ch'ao. This is clear from the memorial presented by Lalitaditya's envoy Bhadanta Wu-li-to to the T'ang court in May 733 in which he stated that his master, along with the King of Central India, controlled the five principal routes of communication of Tibet and fought against the Tibetans with constant victories (13). Earlier, in November-December 731, Yasovarman (Yi-sha-fu-mo) himself sent an embassy under Bhadanta Po-ta-hsin (Bhattasena?) to the court of emperor Hsuan-tsung with the presents of local products obviously with a view to seeking succour against the Tibetans with whom Lalitaditya was also engaged (14). All this undoubtedly proves that Yasovarman was keenly conscious of the Tibetan menace and, after entrenching his paramountcy

in India, moved in the Himalayas, as Vakpati states in his *Gaudavaho*, to quell it, and, in collaboration with Lalitaditya, controlled the five principal routes of communication with Tibet and also inflicted some reverses on the Tibetans, and, in that process, composed his affairs with his Kashmiri colleague, despite regular pinpricking and provocation over the states of the Punjab, and also tried to form an entente with the T'ang of China in order to secure what assistance he could get from them.

The impact of Tibetan expansion was ever greater on Kashmir. The mountain range running from the Zoji-la due south to Kashtvar and the narrow valley of Maru Wardwan (Kashmiri *Madivadvan*), adjacent to it, separates Kashmir from the Tibetan country called Bhauttadesa. Baltistan (Skardo) and Ladakh, to the east of it, are called "Little and Great Tibet", "Little and Great Po-lu", in Chinese Annals. *Sukshma-bri-hatbhuttadesa* in the *Rajatarangini* of Srivara (iii, 445) and *Lukh Butun* and *Bud Butun* in modern Kashmiri. To the east of them is a belt of high mountains and glaciers and then the region of Suru and Zanskar (15). Thus Kashmir was very close to Tibet and exposed to her aggression. This filled up the rapid rise of the the Karkota or Naga dynasty there.

The routes passing through Baltistan and Ladakh and connecting Tibet, Sinkiang and Kashmir were vital arteries of commerce and communication and hence the bone of contention among these powers. But Tibet was the strongest among these contestants. Srong-btsan-sgam-po's son Mang-srong-btsan (699-712) defeated the Chinese when they tried to recover some of the territories ceded by them during the preceding reign. His son and successor, Dung-srong (712-730), won the hand of the Chinese princess Yun-sing-kong. He was followed on the throne by his infant son Khri-Ide-gtsung-brtan (730-802). During his infancy China made another bid to regain the lost territories, particularly, the strategic region of Gilgit. In 736 Tibet made a show of submitting to China, but, in the same year, her forces attacked Baltistan, fought the Chinese army, stationed there, and, in 738, totally defeated it (16). Again, in 744, the Tibetans conquered this region and up to 747 retained their control over Ladakh (17). Baffled in his moves, the Chinese emperor had to marry his daughter Chin Cheng to the Tibetan crown-prince Hjang-tsha-lha-dbon, and, on his death due to an accident, to the Tibetan emperor himself, as dowry, she brought with her two Chinese provinces, Chin-chu-and Ku-e-i on the Yellow River. This train of events indicates how powerful Tibet was at that time and how serious her menace was for Kashmir.

In the above circumstances the Karkota ruler sent a diplomatic mission

to China in 713 for seeking her aid. (18). Then, in 720, another embassy from Kashmir visited China. In referred to the King of Kashmir as Chen-t'o-lo-pi-li (Chandrapida). In return, an envoy came to Kashmir from China conveying the recognition of Chandrapida as the king of that region. Following this diplomatic activity, an army of 4000 Chinese soldiers entered Baltistan and repulsed the Tibetans who had entrenched themselves there. (19). But it does not appear that the Tibetan occupation was permanently vacated for we find the struggle in full swing in the next decade.

Thereafter the Kashmiri King Chandrapida was assassinated through the machinations of his brother Tarapida Upayaditya who is described by Kalhana as a cruel and unjust ruler opposed by the Brahmanas. So much engrossed he must have been in his home affairs that he could hardly attend to the problems beyond the frontiers and the diplomatic moves they involved. However, the next King Muktapida Lalitaditya was an energetic and enterprising ruler. He took up the frontier issue, collaborated with Yasovarman in containing the Tibetans, barred the five main routes of their country and inflicted significant defeats on them. Having thus won the breathing space, he proceeded to mobilise the resources of China against the Tibetans and, with this end in view, sent an embassy, headed by Bhadanta Wu-li-to, to the T'ang emperor in 733. The memorial presented by this envoy was as follows :

"Since the establishment of my country (all kings) sent tributes to Your Majesty Emperor, the Heavenly Khan, obeyed and acted upon under your order. In this country there are three armies, namely, elephant corps, cavalry and Infantry, I, a humble servant of Your Majesty, along with the king of Central India, control the five principal routes of communication of Tibet, fought against the Tibetans with constant victories. If your Majesty, the Heavenly Khan, will despatch the Imperial armies to Po lu, I will be able to supply food to two hundred thousand soldiers. Moreover, there is a dragon pool in this country named Mo-ho-po to-mo (*Mahapadma*) I wish to build a memorial building for Your Majesty, the Heavenly Khan, I, therefore, pray for an Imperial Appointment by proclamation" (20).

This document shows that the Karkotas had ever been solicitors of the alliance and assistance of China in their struggle with the Tibetans and that Muktapida was particularly keen on seeking her succour and offered to bear the huge expenses of maintaining an enormous Chinese army of 2,00,000 men at Volur Lake and also to raise a memorial for the

T'ang Emperor Hsung Tsung (713-755) in his kingdom. The outcome of Muktapida's diplomatic endeavour must have been positive for we find the Tibetans making a show of peace by paying tribute to the T'ang Emperor in 736. But, side by side, they intensified their campaign in Baltistan and, in 738, completely annihilated the Chinese army in that sector, as said above.

In the meantime, Muktapida fell out with Yasovarman over the suzerainty over the Panjab states. It appears that the Turki Shahi rulers, cornered by Yasovarman and patronized by Lalitaditya, added fuel to the fire. Thus, the erstwhile colleagues in the protection of the frontier and the struggle with the Tibetans for that purpose were locked in a deadly conflict. Lalitaditya marched in the Gangetic Valley, defeated Yasovarman but reinstated him as a vassal at Kanauj, undertook a triumphal march in eastern and probably even southern India and emerged as the paramount sovereign of the whole of India (21).

After thus assuming the role of the undisputed emperor of North India and watching the failure of Chinese arms in Baltistan, Muktapida decided to deal with the frontier problem himself and pounced upon the Tibetans singlehanded. *Rajatarangini* states that he undertook a campaign of conquest in the pathless tracks of the far-spreading northern regions (22). Entering probably by the route, connecting Badakhshan with Little Tibet, he plunged into Turkharistan and reduced the Tukharas and their neighbours, the Kambojas, who were a widespread people having their concentration in Badakhshan near Darwaz, (23). According to Yuan Chwang Turkharistan was bounded in the north by Derbend near Badakhshan, in the south by the Hindukush, in the West by Persia and in the east by the Pamirs. In the Mahammadan period it signified the region between Badakhshan and Balkh. The river Oxus flowed through it (24). In 718 the Turkish ruler of Tukharistan extended his suzerainty from the Iron Gates up to Zabulistan and from the Murghab to the Indus. In 719 the ruler of that region, named Ti-sho, sent to China a Manichaeen learned in astronomy. But, in an Arab raid he fell into the hands of the Muslims who plundered the country. In 727 his son wrote to the Chinese emperor about this incident obviously to seek his help (25). Lalitaditya must have marched against him or his successor.

At that time the Arabs were hovering over the horizons of Central Asia. Qutaiba-ibn-Muslim had conquered up to the Jaxartes.

Nasr-ibn-Sayyar regained the regions overrun by Qutaiba. His successors raided into Turkistan upto the borders of China. Lalitaditya came into

conflict with one of them and worsted him in three engagements (26).

But the most significant success of Lalitaditya must have been against the Tibetans. (27) called Bhauttas, Bhodas, Bhattas, and also against the Daradas and the rulers of Sinkiang, called Uttarakuru (28)

What was the impact of the victory of Lalitaditya over the Tibetans we do not exactly know, but it is clear that it evoked a sharp reaction from the Tibetans who reconquered Baltistan in 744 necessitating the Chinese offensive under Kao Hsien-shih in 747.

It is also suggested (29) that the Tibetan crown-prince Hjang-tsha-lha-dbon put Lalitaditya in a precarious condition compelling him to commit suicide.

Thus, we observe that in the century 647-747, Tibet was a potent factor in the history of North India, determining the policies of her rulers, giving particular turns to their attempts at imperial consolidation at home and diplomatic overtures abroad, and specially making them frontier-conscious in their undertakings, alignments and conflicts.

NOTES

1. Rahula Sankrityayana, 'Buddhism in Tibet under Imperial Patronage' *Cultural Heritage of India*, Vol. I, pp. 300-301; H. E. Richardson, *Tibet and its History* (London, 1962) p 29.
2. D. R. Regmi, *Ancient Nepal*, pp. 155-157 holds that Amsuvarman was never a vassal of Tibet and that the episode of the marriage of his daughter Bhrikuti to Srong-btsan-sgam-po is a myth invented by Tibetan chroniclers. He bases his argument on the fact that the *T'ang Annals* and Yuan Chwang do not refer to the Tibetan conquest of Nepal. However; he holds that under Narendradeva Tibetan influence over Nepal was supreme. It is not necessary to go into this controversy here. What is relevant is that just before the death of Harsha Tibet had the upperhand in Nepal.
3. Arthur Waley. *The Real Tripitaka*, p. 78
4. Sylvain Levi, *The Mission of Wang Hiuén ts'e in India*, translated by S.P. Chatterjee (Calcutta 1967) p. 3 f, 4.
5. *Ibid.*, p 10
6. *Ibid.*, p. 8
7. *Ibid.*, p, 10

8. *Ibid* p. 9
9. Arthur Waley, *The Real Tripitaka*, p. 95
10. P. C. Bagchi. *Sino-India Studies* Vol. I. p. 69 ; J. Needham, *Science and Civilization in China*, Vol. I. p. 212
11. L. Petech, *A Study of the Chronicles of Ladakh*, p. 63
12. Buddha Prakash, *Aspects of Indian History and Civilization*, p. 103.
13. For a translation of this memorial, as given in the *New History of the T'ang Dynasty*, see Jan Yun-hua, Some Fresh Reflections on Yasovarman of Kanauj and Muktapida of Kashmira, *Journal of Indian History*. Vol. XLV, Part I April 1967, p. 172.
14. P. C. Bagchi. Sino-Indian Relations', '*Sino-Indian Studies*' (Calcutta) Vol. I, p. 71 contends that Yasovarman wanted Chinese help against Lalitaditya, but it is unlikely, for, two years later, Lalitaditya's envoy reported to the Chinese court that his relations with the King of Central India were of collaboration against the Tibetans, which shows that by that time they had not fallen out with each other.
15. M. A. Stein, *Rajatarangini*, Vol. II. p. 435
16. S. W. Bushell, 'The Early History of Tibet : From Chinese Sources' *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (New series) Vol. XII, pp. 469-71.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 530
18. J. H. Klaproth, *Memoires relatifs a L' Asie*, Vol. II. pp 275 seq.
19. E. Chavannes, *Documents sur les T'ou-kiue Oc. identaux*, pp. 150-51.
20. Jan Yun-hua. *op.cit.*, p. 172. This author holds that since, in that year, the Chinese emperor approved of the appointment of Muktapida, therefore, he must have come to the throne that very year. But the text of the memorial shows that Muktapida had been fighting with and winning victories over the Tibetans for some time past. Thus he must have ascended the throne earlier. In fact, the proclamation of appointment by the Chinese court is merely an imperial rodomontade not indicative of the actual coronation of Muktapida.
21. For details see Buddha Prakash, *Aspects of Indian History & Civilization* pp. 111-12.
22. *Rajatarangini*. IV, 163, Critical Edition of Vishva Bandhu (V. V. R. Institute Hoshiarpur) part I. p. 133.
स प्राविशत् सुवेस्तीर्णमपथेनोत्तरापथम् ।
23. *Ibid.*, IV, 165-166, p. 133.
काभ्रोजानां वाजिशाला जायन्ते स्म हयोज्झिताः ।
ध्वान्तच्छलात्तद्विरुद्धं निरुद्धा महिषैरिव ॥

- तुखाराः शिखरश्रेणीयन्तिः संत्यज्य वाजिनः ।
कुण्ठभावं तदुत्कण्ठां निन्युर्द्ध्वा हयाननान् ॥
24. P. C. Bagchi, *India and Central Asia*, p. 19.
25. Buddha Prakash, 'A study of the History of the North-Western Frontiers of the Panjab', in *Glimpses of Ancient Panjab* (Sitaram Kohli Memorial Lectures, 1966) Panjabi University, Patiala, p. 71.
26. *Rajatarangini*. IV. 167, p. 133.
त्रीन् वारान् समरे जित्वा जितं मेने स मुम्भुनिम् ।
सकृज्जयमरेर्वीरा मन्यन्ते हि घुणाक्षरम् ॥
27. *Ibid.*, IV. 168.
चिन्ता न दृष्टा मौद्धानां वक्त्रे प्रकृतिपाण्डुरे ।
वनोकसामिव क्रोधः स्वभावकपिले मुखे ॥
28. Buddha Prakash, 'Uttarakuru', *Bulletin of Tibetology*, Vol. II, no. 1 (1965) pp. 27-34.
29. K. K. Dutta Shastri, 'A Note on an Obscure Reference in the *Rajatarangini*', *Vishveshvaranand Indological Journals* Vol. III, part II, (Sept. 1965) pp. 242-247
30. *Rajatarangini* VII, 14, 31 *on. cit.* p. 433.
तं शल्यो नाम सामग्रवैरल्यविवशं नृपः ।
बद्धं प्रतिज्ञामकरोद् वाजिलक्ष्युत्तोदष्टमिः ॥