

Account of the Kingdom of Nepal

- Father Giuseppe

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XVII.

ACCOUNT OF THE KINGDOM OF NEPAL,

BY FATHER GIUSEPPE,

Prefect of the Roman Mission.

COMMUNICATED BY JOHN SHORE, ESQ.

THE kingdom of *Nepal* is situated to the north-east of *Putna*, at the distance of ten or eleven days journey from that city. The common road to it lies through the kingdom of *Macwanpur*; but the missionaries and many other persons enter it on the *Bettia* quarter. Within the distance of four days journey from *Nepal* the road is good in the plains of *Hindustan*, but in the mountains it is bad, narrow, and dangerous. At the foot of the hills the country is called *Teriani*; and there the air is very unwholesome from the middle of *March* to the middle of *November*; and people in their passage catch a disorder, called in the language of that country *Aul*, which is a putrid fever, and of which the generality of people who are attacked with it die in a few days; but on the plains there is no apprehension of it. Although the road be very narrow and inconvenient for three or four days at the passes of the hills, where it is necessary to cross and recross the river more than fifty times, yet, on reaching the interior mountain before you descend, you have an agreeable prospect of the extensive plain of *Nepal*, resembling an amphitheatre covered with populous towns and villages: the circumference of the plain is about 200 miles, a little irregular, and surrounded by hills on all sides, so that no person can enter or come out of it without passing the mountains.

There are three principal cities in the plain, each of which was the capital of an independent kingdom; the principal city of the three is situated to the northward of the plain, and is called *Cat'hmandu*: it contains about 18,000 houses; and this kingdom from south to north extends to the distance of twelve or thirteen days journey as far as the borders of *Tibet*, and is almost as extensive from east to west. The king of *Cat'hmandu* has always about fifty thousand soldiers in his service. The second city to the south-west of *Cat'hmandu* is called *Lelit Pattan*, where I resided about four years; it contains near 24,000 houses; the southern boundary of this kingdom is at the distance of four days journey, bordering on the kingdom of *Macwanpur*. The third principal city to the east of *Lelit Pattan* is called *B'hatgan*; it contains about 12,000 families, extends towards the east to the distance of five or six days journey, and borders upon another nation, also independent, called *Ciratas*, who profess no religion. Besides these three principal cities, there are many other large and less considerable towns or fortresses, one of which is *Timi*, and another *Cipoli*, each of which contains about 8,000 houses, and is very populous. All those towns, both great and small, are well built; the houses are constructed of brick, and are three or four stories high; their apartments are not lofty; they have doors and windows of wood, well worked and arranged with great regularity. The streets of all their towns are paved with brick or stone, with a regular declivity to carry off the water. In almost every street of the capital towns there are also good wells made of stone, from which the water passes through several stone-canals for the public benefit. In every town there are large square varandas, well built, for the accommodation of travellers and the public. These varandas are called *Pali*; and there are also many of them, as well as wells, in different parts of the country for public

use. There are also, on the outside of the great towns, small square reservoirs of water, faced with brick, with a good road to walk upon, and a large flight of steps for the convenience of those who choose to bathe. A piece of water of this kind on the outside of the city of *Cat'hmandu*, was at least 200 feet long on each side of the square; and every part of its workmanship had a good appearance.

The religion of *Nepal* is of two kinds: the more ancient is professed by many people who call themselves *Baryesu*: they pluck out all the hair from their heads; their dress is of coarse red woollen cloth, and they wear a cap of the same: they are considered as people of the religious order; and their religion prohibits them from marrying, as it is with the *Lamas* of *Tibet*, from which country their religion was originally brought; but in *Nepal* they do not observe this rule, except at their discretion. They have large monasteries, in which every one has a separate apartment, or place of abode; they observe also particular festivals, the principal of which is called *Yatra* in their language, and continues a month or longer, according to the pleasure of the king. The ceremony consists in drawing an idol, which at *Lelit Pattan* is called *Baghero* *, in a large and richly ornamented car, covered with gilt copper: round about the idol stand the king and the principal *Baryesus*; and in this manner the vehicle is almost every day drawn through some one of the streets of the city by the inhabitants, who run about beating and playing upon every kind of instrument their country affords, which make an inconceivable noise.

* I suppose a name of *Blagavat* or *Crishna*; but *Bbarga* is *Mabadeva*, and *Bajri*, or *Vajri*, means the *Thunderer*.

The other religion, the more common of the two, is that of the *Brahmens*, and is the same as is followed in *Hindustan*, with the difference that in the latter country, the *Hindus* being mixed with the *Mohammedans*, their religion also abounds with many prejudices, and is not strictly observed; whereas in *Nepal*, where there are no *Muselmans* (except one *Cashmirian* merchant) the *Hindu* religion is practised in its greatest purity. Every day of the month they class under its proper name, when certain sacrifices are to be performed and certain prayers offered up in their temples. The places of worship are more in number in their towns than, I believe, are to be found in the most populous and most flourishing cities of *Christendom*; many of them are magnificent according to their ideas of architecture, and constructed at a very considerable expence; some of them have four or five square cupolas; and in some of the temples two or three of the extreme cupolas, as well as the doors and windows of them, are decorated with gilt copper.

In the city of *Lelit Pattan* the temple of *Baghero* was contiguous to my habitation, and was more valuable, on account of the gold, silver, and jewels it contained, than even the house of the king. Besides the large temples, there are also many small ones, which have stairs, by which a single person may ascend on the outside all around them; and some of those small temples have four sides, others six, with small stone or marble pillars, polished very smooth, with two or three pyramidal stories, and all their ornaments well gilt and neatly worked, according to their ideas of taste: and I think, that, if *Europeans* should ever go into *Nepal*, they might take some models from those little temples, especially from the two which are in the great court of *Lelit Pattan*, before the royal palace. On the outside of some of their temples there are also great square pillars of single stones, from twenty to

thirty feet high, upon which they place their idols, superbly gilt. The greatest number of their temples have a good stone staircase in the middle of the four squares, and at the end of each flight of stairs there are lines cut out of stone on both sides. Round about their temples there are also bells, which the people ring on particular occasions; and when they are at prayers, many cupolas are also quite filled with little bells, hanging by cords in the inside, about the distance of a foot from each other, which make a great noise on that quarter where the wind conveys the sound. There are not only superb temples in their great cities, but also within their castles.

To the eastward of *Cat'mandu*, at the distance of two or three miles, there is a place called *Tolu*, by which there flows a small river, the water of which is esteemed holy, according to their superstitious ideas; and thither they carry people of high rank, when they are thought to be at the point of death. At this place there is a temple, which is not inferior to the best and richest in any of the capital cities. They also have it on tradition, that, at two or three places in *Nepal*, valuable treasures are concealed under ground. One of those places they believe is *Tolu*; but no one is permitted to make use of them except the king, and that only in cases of necessity. Those treasures, they say, have been accumulated in this manner: When any temple had become very rich from the offerings of the people, it was destroyed, and deep vaults dug under ground, one above another, in which the gold, silver, gilt copper, jewels, and every thing of value were deposited. When I was in *Nepal*, *Gainprejas*, king of *Cat'mandu*, being in the utmost distress for money to pay his troops, in order to support himself against *Pri'hwinarayan*, ordered search to be made for the treasures of *Tolu*; and, having dug to a considerable depth under ground, they came to the first

vault ; from which his people took to the value of a lac of rupees in gilt copper, with which *Gainprejas* paid his troops, exclusive of a number of small figures in gold, or gilt copper, which the people who had made the search had privately carried off ; and this I know very well ; because one evening as I was walking in the country alone, a poor man, whom I met on the road, made me an offer of a figure of an idol in gold, or copper gilt, which might be five or six sicca weight, and which he cautiously preserved under his arm ; but I declined accepting it. The people of *Gainprejas* had not completely emptied the first vault, when the army of *Prit'hwinarayan* arrived at *Tolu*, possessed themselves of the place where the treasure was deposited, and closed the door of the vault, having first replaced all the copper there had been on the outside.

To the westward also of the great city of *Lelit Pattan*, at the distance of only three miles, is a castle called *Banga*, in which there is a magnificent temple. No one of the missionaries ever entered into this castle, because the people who have the care of it have such a scrupulous veneration for this temple, that no person is permitted to enter it with his shoes on ; and the missionaries, unwilling to shew such respect to their false deities, never entered it. But when I was at *Nepal*, this castle being in the possession of the people of *Gorc'ha*, the Commandant of the castle and of the two forts which border on the road, being a friend of the missionaries, gave me an invitation to his house, as he had occasion for a little physic for himself and some of his people. I then, under the protection of the Commandant, entered the castle several times, and the people durst not oblige me to take off my shoes. One day, when I was at the Commandant's house, he had occasion to go into the *varanda*, which is at the bottom of the great court

facing the temple, where all the chiefs dependent upon his orders were assembled, and where also was collected the wealth of the temple; and, wishing to speak to me before I went away, he called me into the veranda. From this incident I obtained a sight of the temple, and then passed by the great court which was in front: it is entirely marble almost blue, but interspersed with large flowers of bronze well disposed, to form the pavement of the great courtyard, the magnificence of which astonished me; and I do not believe there is another equal to it in *Europe*.

Besides the magnificence of the temples, which their cities and towns contain, there are many other rarities. At *Cat'hmandu*, on one side of the royal garden, there is a large fountain, in which is one of their idols, called *Narayan*. This idol is of blue stone, crowned and sleeping on a mattress of the same kind of stone; and the idol and mattress appear as floating upon the water. This stone machine is very large: I believe it to be eighteen or twenty feet long, and broad in proportion; but well worked, and in good repair.

In a wall of the royal palace of *Cat'hmandu*, which is built upon the court before the palace, there is a great stone of a single piece, which is about fifteen feet long, and four or five feet thick: on the top of this great stone there are four square holes at equal distances from each other. In the inside of the wall they pour water into the holes, and in the court-side, each hole having a closed canal, every person may draw water to drink. At the foot of the stone is a large ladder, by which people ascend to drink; but the curiosity of the stone consists in its being quite covered with characters of different languages cut upon it. Some lines contain the characters of the language of the country; others the characters of

Tibet, others *Persian*, others *Greek*, besides several others of different nations; and in the middle there is a line of *Roman* characters, which appears in this form AVTOMNEW INTER LHIVERT; but none of the inhabitants have any knowledge how they came there, nor do they know whether or not any *European* had ever been in *Nepal* before the missionaries, who arrived there only the beginning of the present century. They are manifestly two *French* names of seasons, with an *English* word between them.

There is also to the northward of the city of *Cat'h-mandu* a hill called *Simbi*, upon which are some tombs of the *Lamas* of *Tibet*, and other people of high rank of the same nation. The monuments are constructed after various forms; two or three of them are pyramidal, very high and well ornamented; so that they have a very good appearance, and may be seen at a considerable distance. Round these monuments are remarkable stones covered with characters, which probably are the inscriptions of some of the inhabitants of *Tibet*, whose bones were interred there. The natives of *Nepal* not only look upon the hill as sacred, but imagine it is protected by their idols; and, from this erroneous supposition, never thought of stationing troops there for the defence of it, although it be a post of great importance, and only at a short mile's distance from the city: but during the time of hostilities a party of *Prit'hwinarayan's* troops being pursued by those of *Ganprejas*, the former, to save themselves, fled to this hill, and, apprehending no danger from its guardian idols, they possessed themselves of it, and erected a fortification (in their own style) to defend themselves. In digging the ditches round the fort, which were adjoining to the tombs, they found considerable pieces of gold, with a quantity of which metal the corpses of the grandees of *Tibet*

are always interred ; and when the war was ended, I myself went to see the monuments upon the hills.

I believe that the kingdom of *Nepal* is very ancient, because it has always preserved its peculiar language and independence ; but the cause of its ruin is the dissention which subsists among the three kings. After the death of their sovereign, the nobles of *Lelit Pattan* nominated for their king *Gainprejas*, a man possessed of the greatest influence in *Nepal* ; altho' some years afterwards they removed him from his government, and conferred it upon the king of *Bhatgan* ; but he also a short time afterwards was deposed ; and, after having put to death another king who succeeded him, they made an offer of the government to *Prit'hwinarayan*, who had already commenced war. *Prit'hwinarayan* deputed one of his brothers, by name *Delmerden Sah*, to govern the kingdom of *Lelit Pattan*, and he was in the actual government of it when I arrived at *Nepal* ; but the nobles perceiving that *Prit'hwinarayan* still continued to interrupt the tranquillity of the kingdom, they disclaimed all subjection to him, and acknowledged for their sovereign *Delmerden Sah*, who continued the war against his brother *Prit'hwinarayan* : but some years afterwards they even deposed *Delmerden Sah*, and elected in his room a poor man of *Lelit Pattan*, who was of royal origin.

The king of *Bhatgan*, in order to wage war with the other kings of *Nepal*, had demanded assistance from *Prit'hwinarayan* ; but seeing that *Prit'hwinarayan* was possessing himself of the country, he was obliged to desist, and to take measures for the defence of his own possessions ; so that the king of *Gorc'ha*, although he had been formerly a subject of *Gainprejas*, taking advantage of the dissentions which prevailed among the other kings of *Nepal*, attached to his party many

mountain-chiefs, promising to keep them in possession, and also to augment their authority and importance; and if any of them were guilty of a breach of faith, he seized their country as he had done to the kings of *Marecujs*, although his relations.

The king of *Gorc'ha* having already possessed himself of all the mountains which surround the plain of *Nepal*, began to descend into the flat country, imagining he should be able to carry on his operations with the same facility and success as had attended him on the hills; and, having drawn up his army before a town, containing about 8000 houses, situate upon a hill called *Cirtipur*, about a league's distance from *Cat'hmandu*, employed his utmost endeavours to get possession of it. The inhabitants of *Cirtipur* receiving no support from the king of *Lelit Pattan*, to whom they were subject, applied for assistance to *Gainprejas*, who immediatly marched with his whole army to their relief, gave battle to the army of the king of *Gorc'ha*, and obtained a complete victory. A brother of the king of *Gorc'ha* was killed on the field of battle; and the king himself, by the assistance of good bearers, narrowly escaped with his life, by fleeing into the mountains. After the action, the inhabitants of *Cirtipur* demanded *Gainprejas* for their king, and the nobles of the town went to confer with him on the business, but, being all assembled in the same apartment with the king, they were all surprised and seized by his people. After the seizure of those persons, *Gainprejas*, perhaps to revenge himself of these nobles for having refused their concurrence to his nomination as king, privately caused some of them to be put to death; another, by name *Danuvanta*, was led through the city in a woman's dress, along with several others, clothed in a ridiculous and whimsical manner, at the expence of the nobles of *Lelit Pattan*. They were

then kept in close confinement for a long time. At last, after making certain promises, and interesting all the principal men of the country in their behalf, *Gainprejus* set them at liberty.

The king of *Gorc'ha*, despairing of his ability to get possession of the plain of *Nepal* by strength, hoped to effect his purpose by causing a famine, and with this design, stationed troops at all the passes of the mountains to prevent any intercourse with *Nepal*; and his orders were most rigorously obeyed, for every person who was found in the road, with only a little salt or cotton about him, was hung upon a tree; and he caused all the inhabitants of a neighbouring village to be put to death in a most cruel manner (even the women and children did not escape) for having supplied a little cotton to the inhabitants of *Nepal*; and, when I arrived in that country at the beginning of 1769, it was a most horrid spectacle to behold so many people hanging on the trees in the road. However the king of *Gorc'ha* being also disappointed in his expectations of gaining his end by this project, fomented dissensions among the nobles of the three kingdoms of *Nepal*, and attached to his party many of the principal ones, by holding forth to them liberal and enticing promises; for which purpose he had about 2000 *Brahmens* in his service. When he thought he had acquired a party sufficiently strong, he advanced a second time with his army to *Cirtipur*, and laid seige to it on the north-west quarter, that he might avoid exposing his army between the two cities of *Cat'hmandu* and *Lelit Pattan*. After a siege of several months, the king of *Gorc'ha* demanded the regency of the town of *Cirtipur*, when the commandant of the town, seconded by the approbation of the inhabitants, dispatched to him by an arrow a very impertinent and exasperating answer. The king of *Gorc'ha* was so much enraged at this mode of proceeding, that he gave im-

mediate orders to all his troops to storm the town on every side : but the inhabitants bravely defended it, so that all the efforts of his men availed him nothing ; and, when he saw that his army had failed of gaining the precipice, and that his brother, named *Suruparatna*, had fallen wounded by an arrow, he was obliged to raise the siege a second time, and to retreat with his army from *Cirtipur*. The brother of the king was afterwards cured of his wound by our father *Michael Angelo*, who is at present in *Bettia*.

After the action, the king of *Gorc'ha* sent his army against the king of *Lamji* (one of the twenty-four kings who reign to the westward of *Nepal*) bordering upon his own kingdom of *Gorc'ha*. After many desperate engagements, an accommodation took place with the king of *Lamji* : and the king of *Gorc'ha* collecting all his forces, sent them for the third time to besiege *Cirtipur* ; and the army on this expedition was commanded by his brother *Suruparatna*. The inhabitants of *Cirtipur* defended themselves with their usual bravery, and, after a siege of several months, the three kings of *Nepal* assembled at *Cut'hmandu* to march a body of troops to the relief of *Cirtipur*. One day in the afternoon they attacked some of the *Tanas* of the *Gorc'hians*, but did not succeed on forcing them, because the king of *Gorc'ha*'s party had been reinforced by many of the nobility, who, to ruin *Gainprejus*, were willing to sacrifice their own lives. The inhabitants of *Cirtipur* having already sustained six or seven months siege, a noble of *Lelit Pattan*, called *Danuvarta*, fled to the *Gorc'ha* party, and treacherously introduced their army into the town. The inhabitants might still have defended themselves, having many other fortresses in the upper parts of the town to retreat to ; but the people at *Gorc'ha* having published a general amnesty, the inhabitants, greatly exhausted by the fatigues of a long siege, surrendered

themselves prisoners upon the faith of that promise. In the mean time the men of *Gorc'ha* seized all the gates and fortresses within the town; but two days afterwards *Prit'hwinarayan*, who was at *Navacuta* (a long day's journey distant) issued an order to *Suruparatna* his brother, to put to death all the principal inhabitants of the town, and to cut off the noses and lips of every one, even the infants, who were not found in the arms of their mothers; ordering at the same time all the noses and lips, which had been cut off, to be preserved, that he might ascertain how many souls there were, and to change the name of the town into *Naskatapur*, which signifies *the town of cut-noses*. The order was carried into execution with every mark of horror and cruelty, none escaping but those who could play on wind instruments; although father *Michael Angelo*, who, without knowing that such an inhuman scene was then exhibited, had gone to the house of *Suruparatna*, and interceded much in favour of the poor inhabitants. Many of them put an end to their lives in despair; others came in great bodies to us in search of medicines; and it was most shocking to see so many living people with their teeth and noses resembling the skulls of the deceased.

After the capture of *Cirtipur*, *Prit'hwinarayan* dispatched immediately his army to lay siege to the great city of *Lelit Pattan*. The *Gorc'hians* surrounded half the city to the westward with their *Tanas*; and, my house being situated near the gate of that quarter, I was obliged to retire to *Cat'hmandu*, to avoid being exposed to the fire of the besiegers. After many engagements between the inhabitants of the town of *Lelit Pattan* and the men of *Gorc'ha*, in which much blood was spilt on both sides, the former were disposed to surrender themselves, from the fear of having their noses cut off, like those at *Cirtipur*, and also their right hands: a barbarity the *Gorc'hians* had threatened them with, unless they would surrender within

five days. One night all the *Gorc'hians* quitted the siege of *Lelit Pattan* to pursue the *English* army, which, under the command of Captain *Kinloch*, had already taken *Siduli*, an important fort at the foot of the *Nepal* hills, which border upon the kingdom of *Tirhut* : but Captain *Kinloch* not being able to penetrate the hills, either on the *Siduli* quarter or by the pass at *Hercapur*, in the kingdom of *Macwanpur*, the army of *Gorc'ha* returned to *Nepal* to direct their operations against the city of *Ca'hmandu*, where *Gainprejas* was, who had applied for succour to the *English*. During the siege of *Ca'hmandu* the *Brahmens* of *Gorc'ha* came almost every night into the city, to engage the chiefs of the people on the part of their king ; and the more effectually to impose upon poor *Gainprejas*, many of the principal *Brahmens* went to his house, and told him to persevere with confidence, that the chiefs of the *Gorc'ha* army were attached to his cause, and that even they themselves would deliver up their king *Prit'hwinariyan* to his hands. Having by these artifices procured an opportunity of detaching from his party all his principal subjects, tempting them with liberal promises according to their custom, one night the men of *Gorc'ha* entered the city without opposition, and the wretched *Gainprejas*, perceiving he was betrayed, had scarce time to escape with about three hundred of his best and most faithful *Hindustani* troops towards *Lelit Pattan* ; which place however he reached the same night.

The king of *Gorc'ha* having made himself master of *Ca'hmandu* in the year 1768, persisted in the attempt of possessing himself also of the city of *Lelit Pattan*, promising all the nobles that he would suffer them to remain in the possession of their property, that he would even augment it ; and because the nobles of *Lelit Pattan* placed a reliance on the faith of his promises, he sent his domestic priest to make this protestation ; that, if he

failed to acquit himself of his promise, he should draw curses upon himself and his family even to the fifth past and succeeding generation, so that the unhappy *Gainprejas* and the king of *Lelit Pattan*, seeing that the nobility were disposed to render themselves subject to the king of *Gorc'ha*, withdrew themselves with their people to the king of *B'hatgan*. When the city of *Lelit Pattan* became subject to the king of *Gorc'ha*, he continued for some time to treat the nobility with great attention, and proposed to appoint a viceroy of the city from among them. Two or three months afterwards, having appointed the day for making his formal entrance into the city of *Lelit Pattan*, he made use of innumerable stratagems to get into his possession the persons of the nobility, and in the end succeeded. He had prevailed upon them to permit their sons to remain at court as companions of his son; he had dispatched a noble of each house to *Navacut*, or *New Fort*, pretending that the apprehensions he entertained of them had prevented his making a public entrance into the city; and the remaining nobles were seized at the river without the town, where they went to meet him agreeably to a prior engagement. Afterwards he entered the city, made a visit to the temple of *Baghero* adjoining to our habitation, and passing in triumph thro' the city amidst immense numbers of soldiers who composed his train, entered the royal palace which had been prepared for his reception; in the mean time parties of his soldiers broke open the houses of the nobility, seized all their effects, and threw the inhabitants of the city into the utmost consternation. After having caused all the nobles who were in his power to be put to death, or rather their bodies to be mangled in a horrid manner, he departed with a design of besieging *B'hatgan*; and we obtained permission, through the interest of his son, to retire with all the *Christians* into the possessions of the *English*.

At the commencement of the year 1769, the king of *Gorc'ha* acquired possession of the city of *B'hatgan*, by the same expedients to which he owed his former successes; and on his entrance with his troops into the city, *Gamprejas*, seeing he had no resource left to save himself, ran courageously with his attendants towards the king of *Gorc'ha*, and, at a small distance from his palanquin, received a wound in his foot, which a few days afterwards occasioned his death. The king of *Lelit Pattan* was confined in irons till his death; and the king of *B'hatgan*, being very far advanced in years, obtained leave to go and die at *Benares*. A short time afterwards the mother of *Gamprejas* also procured the same indulgence, having from old age already lost her eye-sight; but before her departure they took from her a necklace of jewels (as she herself told me) when she arrived at *Patna* with the widow of her grandson: and I could not refrain from tears, when I beheld the misery and disgrace of this blind and unhappy queen.

The king of *Gorc'ha*, having thus in the space of four years effected the conquest of *Nepal*, made himself master also of the country of the *Ciratas* to the east of it, and of other kingdoms, as far as the borders of *Coch Bihar*. After his decease, his eldest son *Pratap Singh* held the government of the whole country: but scarcely two years after, on *Pratap Singh's* death, a younger brother, by name *Bahadar Sah*, who resided then at *Bettia* with his uncle *Delmerden Sah*, was invited to accept of the government: and the beginning of his government was marked with many massacres. The royal family is in the greatest confusion, because the queen lays claim to the government in the name of her son, whom she had by *Pratap Singh*; and perhaps the oath violated by *Prit'hwinarayan* will in the progress of time have its effect. Such have been the successors of the kingdoms of *Nepal*, of which *Prit'hwinarayan* had thus acquired possession.