

THE HOLY MOUNTAIN

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BEING THE STORY OF A
PILGRIMAGE TO LAKE MĀNAS
AND OF INITIATION
ON MOUNT KAILĀS IN TIBET

BY
(BHAGWĀN) SHRI HAMSA
??

TRANSLATED
FROM THE MARĀTHI BY
SHRI PUROHIT SWĀMI
WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
W. B. YEATS

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(BHAGWAN) SHRI HAMSA
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INTRODUCTION
BY
W. B. YEATS

· INTRODUCTION ·

I

I know nothing but the novels of Balzac, and the aphorisms of Patanjali. I once knew other things, but I am an old man with a poor memory.' There must be some reason why I wanted to write that lying sentence, for it has been in my head for weeks. Is it that whenever I have been tempted to go to Japan, China or India for my philosophy, Balzac has brought me back, reminded me of my preoccupation with national, social, personal problems, convinced me that I cannot escape from our *Comédie Humaine*? We philosophize that we may reduce our minds to a single energy, and thereby save our souls and feed our bodies. We prove what we must and assume the rest upon hearsay. No two civilisations prove or assume the same things, but behind both hides the unchanging experience of simple men and women. When I read the travels of Purohit Swāmi, or of his Master, Bhagwān Shri Hamsa, I

am among familiar things. *Seraphita* has prepared me for those adventures, those apparitions, and I remember that the knights and hermits who prepared the ground for our *Comédie Humaine* preferred, it may be, such adventures to philosophy, such apparitions to dogma:

*‘One wise friend and one
Better than wise being fair.’*

2

Shri Purohit Swāmi at the beginning of this century was a Mr. Purohit, student of the University of Bombay. He had inherited from his Marāthā fathers the worship of Dattātreya, the first *Yogi*, spiritual Father of all *Yogis* since, or, as we would say, their patron saint. He had seen him in his dreams, but such knowledge is insufficient; dream words are few and hard to understand; he needed for guide some man who could point out from personal experience what meditations enrich the waking mind. For a time he ceased to read. When he fixed his attention upon the Lord Dattātreya even the *Bhagavad-Geetā* distracted him.

The students had come to associate scholarship with a weak body and shabby clothes, and there was a reaction towards athletics; he had prided himself on being scholar, athlete, dandy, but be-

cause women, notorious disturbers of meditation, attracted him, and were attracted, he ate little, grew a beard and dressed out of the fashion. Finding that among holy people his mind grew quiet, he frequented temples and places of pilgrimage; because contact with a supernatural being is never attained through the waking mind, but through the act of what is called the 'unconscious mind', he repeated thousands of times every day: 'We meditate upon the splendour of that Being. May it illuminate our intellects', until he spoke those words in his sleep, or silently while engaged in conversation. At a temple in Nar-sobā Wādi he met a beautiful courtesan who had come seeking a cure for some ailment, found the cure, but whenever she attempted to return to her lover, fell sick at the border of the territory, and now sat there, and would while life lasted, dressed in a white robe, praising her Divine Master to the notes of her lute. She had prayed, not foreseeing its consequence, not only for physical, but for spiritual health, and the 'unconscious mind' had heard her prayer.

3

But because he could not persuade those Masters he found acceptable to accept him, he sank into despair. He sat weeping in his room; a friend

knocked at the door, asked him to meet a certain Shri Nātēkār Swāmi, now known as Bhagwān Shri Hamsa, who had just arrived. 'We ascended the stairs of the Keertikar building', he writes, 'and were admitted into a small room at the top floor. As I entered, the Swāmi, who was sitting upon a tiger's skin, rose. Our eyes met.' And Shri Nātēkār Swāmi, though so far as Mr. Purohit knew they had never seen each other, said: 'We meet again after a long time'. He was the elder by four years. He came of a wealthy family, and his father, dreading that his son would become a wandering monk, as had uncles and ancestors, had made him marry at the age of sixteen; but one day while he sat reading upon a river bank, his soul awoke, and throwing book and European clothes into the river, he began a life of austerity. The country people account for his sanctity with a story as incredible to modern ears as any told of the childhood of some European saint, but symbolising an alliance between body and soul our theology rejects. A certain beautiful married woman at the age of twenty had, with her husband's consent, become a pilgrim. After wandering from Himālayān shrine to shrine for many years, she had found a home in a ruined temple at Brahmāvarta. Some called her the mad woman, and some, because of the cotton mat

that covered her loins, 'the lady of the mat'. She had but two possessions, that cotton mat and her lute. Shri Nātēkār Swāmi's father went on pilgrimage to Brahmāvarta with his son, then but a child. Father and son visited the Lady of the Mat. The child climbed on to her knees. She said: 'Leave him with me; I will take care of him'. The father did not dare to disobey, but was alarmed because she had no food but a daily piece of bread brought her by a water-carrier. When he returned next day with food, the child would not touch it, because the Saint had fed him from her breast. She fed him for a fortnight, then gave him back to his father, saying: 'He will know when a grown man what I have done for him'. One day the Saint called the water-carrier, told him that she was about to leave the world. Because he wept, she gave him her mat as a relic, told him that he must bring her lute to the boy she had fed. Then as she played and sang, the waters of the Ganges became disturbed; first little waves, then great waves; the more she sang, the greater grew the waves. When they touched her feet, she handed the lute to the water-carrier. A moment later they had swept her away; then, upon the instant, all was still.

Mr. Purohit took up once more the life of a student. When he had passed, to please his father,

his final law examination, he was summoned by Dattātreyā in a dream. He and his Master set out for Mount Gīrnār, where the footprints of Dattātreyā are shown upon a rock. He repeated all day: 'We meditate upon the splendour of that Being'. At the foot of the Mountain, he vowed to throw himself from the cliff if his Divine Master remained hidden. As they climbed the seven thousand steps, he neither ate nor drank, though he had starved himself for weeks, and he had constantly to lie down to rest. At the full moon of 25 December 1907, the birthday of Dattātreyā, they reached the summit. He fell asleep upon the sacred footsteps as the sun set, and did not awake till the moon was in the sky. As he awoke he knew that Dattātreyā had in his sleep accepted him, and when he felt his forehead, he found in the centre the first trace of that small mound that is the Indian equivalent to the Christian Stigmata. He had attained *Sushupti*, or unconscious *Samādhi*, a dreamless sleep that differs from that of every sleeper in some part of the night, every insect in the chrysalis, every hibernating animal, every soul between death and birth, because attained through the sacrifice of the physical senses, and through meditation upon a divine personality, a personality at once historical and yet his own spiritual Self. Henceforth that personality, that

Self, would be able, though always without his knowledge, to employ his senses and, as in the East the bodily movements are classified as senses, to direct his life. He was not isolated, however, as are men of genius or intellect, for henceforth all those in whom that Self had awakened were his neighbours.

Already while his attainment was incomplete, when he had not even reached the top of the steps, he had seen a beautiful slender woman, with dark bright eyes and red lips, leaning against a tree, and as she vanished, received her benediction, and now as he descended, another of the Masters of Wisdom, a bright-eyed man, appeared.

Although accepted, although henceforth not Mr. Purohit but Shri Purohit Swāmi, he refused to accompany his friend who had in a meditation known as *Savikalpa-Samādhi* been ordered to seek *Turiyā*, the greater or conscious *Samādhi*, at Mount Kailās, the legendary Meru; he thought himself unworthy, that he had not freed himself from the World, and could but carry it upon the journey.

4

Sometimes they came in contact with that Europeanised India England has created with a higher education, which is always conducted

in the English language. Shri Purohit Swāmi saw to his Master's comforts, left him stretched out for sleep in a first-class carriage, went to find a third-class carriage for himself, but there was not even standing room. He decided to return to his Master, but found an empty carriage. His Master had left the train and was sitting upon a bench, naked but for a loin cloth. A Europeanised Indian had denounced him for wearing silk and travelling first class, and all monks and pilgrims for bringing discredit upon India by their superstitions and idleness. So he had stripped off his silk clothes, saying that though they seemed to have come with his destiny, they were of no importance. Then, because the stranger was still unsatisfied, had given him his luggage and his ticket. They were able, however, to continue their journey, for just when the train was about to start, the Europeanised Indian returned and threw clothes, luggage and ticket into the carriage. He had been attacked by remorse. When they reached their destination, Shri Nātēkār Swāmi sat down in the prescribed attitude, passed into *Samādhi*, and Shri Purohit Swāmi, openly rejoicing, sang his praises—Divine and Human Master, one in that dark or bright meditation:

*'Lead me to that Kingdom of Thine
Where there is no pleasure of union*

*Nor displeasure of separation,
Where the self is in eternal happiness.
Thou alone can thither lead the ailing soul'*

—verse after verse, until his Master came out of meditation with a cry: 'Victory, victory to the Lord Dattātreya'.

5

Much Chinese and Japanese painting is a celebration of mountains, and so sacred were those mountains that Japanese artists, down to the invention of the colour print, constantly recomposed the characters of Chinese mountain scenery, as though they were the letters of an alphabet, into great masterpieces, traditional and spontaneous. I think of the face of the Virgin in Siennese painting, preserving, after the supporting saints had lost it, a Byzantine character.

To Indians, Chinese and Mongols, mountains from the earliest times have been the dwelling-places of the Gods. Their kings before any great decision have climbed some mountain, and of all these mountains Kailās, or Mount Meru, as it is called in the *Mahābhārata*, was the most famous. Sven Hedin calls it the most famous of all mountains, pointing out that Mount Blanc is unknown to the crowded nations of the East. Thousands of Hindu, Tibetan and Chinese pilgrims, Vedāntin,

or Buddhist, or of some older faith, have encircled it, some bowing at every step, some falling prostrate, measuring the ground with their bodies; an outer ring for all, an inner and more perilous for those called by the priests to its greater penance. On another ring, higher yet, inaccessible to human feet, the Gods move in adoration. Still greater numbers have known it from the *Mahābhārata* or from the poetry of Kalidās, known that a tree covered with miraculous fruit rises from the lake at its foot, that sacred swans sing there, that the four great rivers of India rise there, with sands of gold, silver, emerald and ruby, that at certain seasons from the lake—here Dattātreyā is himself the speaker—springs a golden Phallos. Mānas Sarowar, the lake's full name, means 'The great intellectual Lake', and in this Mountain, this Lake, a dozen races find the birth-place of their Gods and of themselves. We too have learnt from Dante to imagine our Eden, or Earthly Paradise, upon a mountain, penitential rings upon the slope.

6

Shri Nātēkār Swāmi visited other sacred places in the Himālayās before starting for Mount Kailās, travelling sometimes alone and almost always

by unfrequented routes. He recalls the narrow escape of himself and his Nepālese guide in the Dehrādun Forest from an infuriated elephant, by dropping from a precipice to lie stunned at its foot; but once he had started, his travels record local customs, his pleasure in scenery, some occasional hardship—for a time little that one does not find in Ekai Kavizuchi's *Three Years in Tibet*. Sometimes he and his three coolies sleep on the ground, sometimes in a temple or cave; sometimes there is difficulty about food, or about a mule or ass to carry it; sometimes he notices that the guest-house is full of fleas; once he is so cold he has to surround himself with lambs, two at his head, two at his back, and six or seven about the rest of his body. Sometimes he forms a brief friendship with a Tibetan official or fellow-pilgrim. Pilgrims for untold years doubtless have had such adventures. Now and then something reminds us that we accompany a holy man. Once he and his coolies were caught by a score of mounted robbers. For a moment he was dumb with terror, then he became suddenly calm, closed his eyes, turned towards Mount Kailās, bowed in adoration of his Master, sat down in the Yogi posture that is called *Padmāsan* and waited in silence. The robbers fell silent also. Then one, the strongest and fiercest, asked his name and

business, and what money he carried. He explained, or tried to explain by signs, that he was a pilgrim and had no money. The robber called four of the other robbers, said he would kill him and his coolies and take their clothes. Whereat Shri Nātēkār Swāmi called upon the name of his Master, thrust his neck forward to await the blow of the sword, and went into meditation. When he awoke, his eyes wet with tears of adoration, the robber was kneeling before him, his head upon his thumbs; the other robbers, their swords sheathed, were fanning the swooning coolies.

At Lake Mānas Sarowar the supernatural begins to stir the pot. He had, according to his vow, to spend two weeks upon its bank, bathing twice a day in its icy water, taking but one meal a day, and at that nothing but the tea Tibetans mix with butter, and speaking not a word. At five in the morning of the last day of penance he heard a voice towards the west, the direction of Mount Kailās, a woman's voice as it seemed, singing the *Māndukya Upanishad's* description of the four states of the soul: the waking state corresponding to the letter 'A', where physical objects are present; the dreaming state corresponding to the letter 'U', where mental objects are present; the state of dreamless sleep corresponding to the letter 'M', where all seems darkness to the soul, be-

cause all there is lost in Brahma, creator of mental and physical objects; the final state corresponding to the whole sacred word 'AUM', consciousness bound to no object, bliss bound to no aim, *Turiyā*, pure personality. He searched the shore but could find no one; even his binoculars showed it empty. He sent his coolies to inquire at the neighbouring monastery, but nobody could tell them of the singer. Then he paced the sands, thinking of the voice, but when he had gone a hundred yards, was startled to see before him the print of a human foot. He told his coolies that they must gather up the baggage and follow, that he had set out for Mount Kailās. He followed the footprints for two or three miles along the south shore, but near the rocky western shore they grew indistinct and disappeared. He went on in the direction they had taken till stopped by an ascent too steep for his exhausted body.

After two days travelling, one day through storm and hail, spending the nights in a cave and in a foul hut made out of loose stones piled up on four sides, a great single slab for roof, he began his penitential circuit. At the eastern side the guide, pointing to a cave a thousand feet above his head, said that a great Hindu saint lived there, but that he knew no way to reach it. Shri Nātēkār Swāmi and the guide began to climb, but before

they had gone a quarter of the way the guide was taken ill. The Swāmi told him to return to the coolies, that he and they must remain a week in a Buddhist guest-house, then if they heard nothing of their master, return to India.

The ice began fifty yards below the cave; that past, came a perpendicular cliff with notches for hand and foot cut in the rock, and seven feet from the bottom the mouth of the cave. He climbed, and crawling through darkness, found a dim lamp and an oldish naked man, sitting upon a tiger's skin. He prostrated himself in reverence and said: 'Lord, it is your grace that has brought this servant to your hallowed feet'. The naked man laughed and said: '*Achhā, Vatsa, Uthake baitho*', which means—'My darling, get up!' He was told that he might ask for anything except for age, name and parentage. He asked in Hindi, Marāthi, in English, and the answer came always in the same language, perfect in grammar and accent. He noticed that whatever the language, that language alone was used, no foreign word admitted, and became convinced that his host knew all languages. It was he who had sung the *Māndukya Upanishad* and made those footprints on the sand, and it was because of that old acquaintance that he had called him darling. Shri Nātēkār Swāmi stayed there for three days, eat-

ing nothing, but drinking water, and during those three days his host neither ate nor drank. Then he returned to his coolies, and having told them to await for a week, set out alone for Gaurikund, a little lake high up upon Mount Kailās, wherein he was to cast sand from the southernmost point of India and so complete his pilgrimage. Pilgrims such as he perpetually encircle that religious India, which keeps Mount Kailās within its borders, that all the land may be blessed by their passing feet.

After two nights spent in hollows of the ice, his overcoat about his head, his feet drawn up to his ribs, he came back defeated, but set out again the next day, and after a climb of five thousand feet, reached the lake, and there, twenty feet from the shore, broke through five feet of ice, cast in the sand, sat down, passed into meditation awaiting the object of his pilgrimage, the physical presence of his Divine Master, Dattātreyā. He has described his uncertainty as to whether he would live or die, recorded the exact placing of his staff, what points of the compass he had first looked at, what words he spoke, his different postures, a tiger's skin that he had brought for his seat; details all settled by tradition. For three days he remained in meditation, gradually the mental image of his Master grew dim, voices spoke. Three times he heard the words: 'O my child, O my

dear', but he knew that if he opened his eyes while the mental image remained he would fail. What were voices to him if he could not see the physical form? At last the mental image suddenly vanished. He opened his eyes, and Dattātreya stood before him, made him perform certain further ceremonies, admitted him to the Giri order of Sanyāsins, promised to keep his heart from straying to physical things, and named him Hamsa, which means 'Soul', but is also the name of those emblems of the soul, the white-winged, red-beaked, red-legged water-birds of Lake Mānas Sarowar.

7

Shri Purohit Swāmi claims that his Master gained at that mountain lake, *Turiyā*, whereas he himself had but gained upon Mount Girnār a dreamless sleep, *Sushupti*. The philosophy and technique of both of these states are described in the *Yoga-Sutras* or aphorisms of Patanjali, written somewhere between the third and fifth centuries of our era, but containing a far older tradition, or in the voluminous commentaries, written between the middle of the seventh and the ninth centuries. The Spirit, the Self that is in all selves, the pure mirror, is the source of intelligence, but Matter is the source of all energy, all creative

power, all that separates one thing from another, not Matter as understood by Hobbes and his Mechanists, Matter as understood in Russia, where the Government has silenced the Mechanists, but interpreted with profound logic, almost what Schopenhauer understood by Will. If I think of the table on which I am writing, my mental image is as much Matter as the table itself, though of 'a subtler kind',¹ and I am able to think correctly, because the Matter I call Mind takes the shape of this or that physical object, and this Matter, physical and mental, has three aspects—'*Tamas*', darkness, frustration, '*Rajas*', activity, passion, '*Satva*', brightness, wisdom. In Patanjali and his commentators there is a detailed analysis of the stages of concentration that would be Hegelian did they include the Self in their dialectic. The first is the fixing of attention upon some place or object, the navel, the tip of the tongue. Any object will serve so long as it belongs to oneself and is an immediate perception, not something inferred or heard of; or one may fix attention upon the form of some God, for a God is but the Self. But one cannot fix attention without some stream of thought, so if the object be the tongue, one thinks of the tongue

¹ 'Subtler', 'finer', because it penetrates all things. Ordinary matter cannot go through the wall, mind can.

as symbol or function. As I write the word, I think at once of Blake's 'False Tongue' which is the 'vegetative' sense, then I remember that according to Patanjali meditation upon the tongue awakens the perception of taste or colour or sound. The taste, colour and sound so perceived attains supernormal perfection as fact and idea draw together. Should one choose a God as the theme of meditation, the majesty of his face, or the beauty of his ear-rings, may, as trance deepens, express all majesty, all beauty. The second stage is this identity between idea and fact, between thought and sense; an identity that recalls the descriptions of dreams in the *Upanishads*. The third stage is *Sushupti*, a complete disappearance of all but this identity. Nothing exists but that ravening tongue,¹ or that majesty, that beauty; the man has disappeared as the sculptor in his statue, the musician in his music. One remembers the Japanese philosopher's saying, 'What the artist perceives through a medium, the saint perceives immediately'.

In the fourth stage the ascetic enters one or more of these stages at will and retains his complete memory when he returns; this is *Turiyā*,

¹ The tongue represents colour and sound, perhaps because the ascetic can see the point of nose or tongue, but not his eyes or ears.

but as yet only in the form called *Savikalpa*; full *Turiyā* or seedless *Samādhi* comes when all these states are as a single timeless act, and that act is pure or unimpeded personality, all existence brought into the words: 'I am'. It resembles that last Greek number, a multiple of all numbers, because there is nothing outside it, nothing to make a new beginning. It is not only seedless but objectless because objects are lost in complete light. Darkness is the causal body of existence. Objects are its serrates and dentures. One remembers those lines of Coleridge:

*'Resembles life what once was deemed of light,
Too ample in itself for human sight?
An absolute self—an element ungrounded—
All that we see, all colours of all shade,
By encroachment of darkness made?'*

8

If *Turiyā* be attained, the ascetic may remain in Life until the results of past lives are exhausted or because he would serve his fellows. While such binding to the past remains, or duty to the living, it must, one would think, be incomplete, something less than absolute Self. Probably such an ascetic regards complete 'seedless' *Samādhi* as an ideal form, an all but unattainable ideal that he

must approach through Life after Life: a central experience, touched or it may be but symbolised at some moment when some quality of Life flowers.

The life of an ascetic is a preparation for meditation. He repeats the name of some God thousands of times a day, frequents a shrine, is convinced that he must offer there all the devotion, all the passion aroused in his present life, or in his past lives by friend, master, child and wife. If he finds it impossible at once to transform sexual into spiritual desire, he may beseech the God to come as a woman. The God may send some strange woman as his emblem, but should he come himself, the ascetic wakes at dawn to find his empty bed fragrant with some temple incense, or patches of saffron paste upon his breast; but, whether the God send or come, every need soon fades, except that for unity with God. Nor is supernormal sense confined to the moments of concentration; he will suddenly smell amid the ordinary occupations of life, perhaps in the middle of winter, an odour of spring flowers, or have an unimaginable sense of physical well-being that is described as a transformation of the sense of touch, or meet in empty places melodious sound, or a fine sight. I have been told that somewhere in India sits a musician into whose mouth pupils put food and drink. He was accustomed to listen

to such sounds and imitate them, but one day the hand he had thrust out towards the string stopped in mid-air and became rigid; from that day he has remained drunk and lost in *Sushupti*.

The ascetic who has not freed his mind of ambition and passion may pass not into *Sushupti*, but into a distortion of the second stage of concentration, analogous to that of dreaming-sleep; sense and thought are one, but the bond between that unity and his ego remains unbroken. He is in the condition of the witches who project afar their passion-driven souls in some animal shape, while their bodies lie at home, or of that woman in Murasaki's book who killed, without knowing it, her enemy in a dream. On the other hand, the ascetic who has attained *Turiyā*, enters this second stage wide awake, and as there is nothing outside his will, he can shape a new body to his need, or use the body of another. The old ascetic of the cavern was in this stage when he sang and left his footsteps on the sand. Those who have attained 'seedless' *Samādhi*, are said to be physically immortal; they do not die, but make themselves invisible. The story-tellers describe them dissolving their bodies while they seem to bathe, or leaving, like Christ, an empty tomb: at will, they pass into the Source.

An ascetic who has rid himself of passion may,

though unfitted for *Turiyā*, seek, like many Greeks, wisdom through those self-luminous and coherent dreams that seem to surround, like a ring of foam, the dark pool of dreamless sleep. If devoted to some God, or to some other image of the Universal Self, he may pass that ring, obtain *Sushupti* in its highest form, the dreamless sleep of the soul in God. When he returns to waking life, he is still an instrument of that other Will; those upon whom his attention falls may grow more fortunate, but his own fortune will be no better; a miracle may happen under his eyes, but, because it must be as though waking, he still slept, he neither knows nor may inquire whether his sacrifice has played a part. He may even, as I imagine, be ignorant of common things, be somewhat childish as though he cannot see by daylight, resemble in all things the pure fool of European tradition. After death indeed, he attains liberation, becoming one of those spirits that have no life but to obey that Self, who creates all things in dreamless sleep:

*‘There is in God, some say,
A deep but dazzling darkness: as men here
Say it is late and dusky, because they
See not all clear.
O for that Night, when I in him
Might live invisible and dim!’*

The ascetic seeking *Savikalpa-Samādhi* identifies it with *Satva*, but calls *Sushupti*, which he identifies with *Tamas*, the *Samādhi* of a fool, because in that state he is ignorant, and because he is liable to fall back upon it, as though sinking into lethargy, but he who thinks *Sushupti* the supreme self-surrender, must, I am persuaded, identify *Sushupti* with *Satva*, the waking life of sense with *Tamas*. *Savikalpa-Samādhi* is, as it were, ringed with the activities of life, *Sushupti* ringed with dreams, and both rings are *Rajas*, while *Savikalpa-Samādhi* and *Sushupti* are alternatively light and darkness. Neither is in itself the final deliverance or return into the Source, for *Rajas*, *Tamas*, *Satva* constitute 'matter', or 'nature' without beginning, without reality. The Vedānt philosophers, unlike Buddha, direct our attention to bright or intelligible perfection, but seek timeless perfection, seedless *Samādhi*, beyond it in the isolated Soul, that is yet in all souls.

9

In 1818 Hegel, his head full of the intellectual pride of the eighteenth century, was expounding History. Indifferent, as always, to the individual soul, he had taken for his theme the rise and fall of nations. Greece, he explained, first delivered

mankind from nature; the Egyptian Sphinx, for all its human face, was Asiatic and animal; but when Œdipus answered the riddle, that Sphinx was compelled to leap into the abyss; the riddle, 'What goes first on four legs, then upon two, then upon three?' called up man. Nature is bondage, its virtue no more than the custom of clan or race, a plant rooted outside man, a law blindly obeyed. From that moment on, intellect or Spirit, that which has value in itself, began to prevail, and now in Hegel's own day, the climax had come, not crippled age but wisdom; there had been many rehearsals, for every civilisation, no matter where its birth, began with Asia, but the play itself had been saved up for our patronage. A few years more and religion would be absorbed in the State, art in philosophy, God's Will proved to be man's will.

I can imagine Balzac, that great eater, his medieval humility greater than his pride, answering: 'Man's intellect or Spirit can do nothing but bear witness; Nature alone is active—I have heard the clergy talk of Grace, but that is beyond my knowledge—I refuse to confine Nature to claw, paw and hoof. It is the irrational glory that reaches perfection at the mid moment, at the Renaissance of every civilisation. Raphael and Michael Angelo closed our sixth century, for our

civilization began when Romanesque displaced Byzantine architecture. Great empires are founded by lovers of women and of money; they are destroyed by men of ideas. There is a continual conflict—I too have my dialectic—the perfection of Nature is the decline of Spirit, the perfection of Spirit is the decline of Nature. In the Spiritual dawn when Raphael painted the *Camera Signatura*, and the Medician Popes dreamed of uniting Christianity and Paganism, all that was sacred with all that was secular, Europe might have made its plan, begun the solution of its problems, but individualism came instead; the egg instead of hatching burst. The *Peau de Chagrin*¹ and *Catherine de Medici* contain my philosophy of History. Genius and talent have torn Europe to pieces. *Divina Commedia* summed up and closed the Europe that created Mont Saint Michel, Chartres Cathedral, the Europe that went upon its knees or upon all fours. *Comédie Humaine* has closed the counter-movement, that kept her upon two legs. In my open letter to the Duchess de Castries I foretell the future. What was before man stood up, an impulse in our blood, returns as an external necessity. We shall become one through

¹ Hegel's lectures were not published until 1837, seven years after the publication of the *Peau de Chagrin*. Balzac probably derived his thought from classical sources. It is more like Vico's than Hegel's.

violence or imitation; and, because we can no longer create, gather, as Rome did, the treasures of the world in some one place. As we grow old we accumulate abstract substitutes for experience, commodities of all kinds, but an old pensioner that taps upon the ground where he once crawled is no whit the wiser for all his proverbs. You should have gone to Hugo with that romantic dream. When I was young I wanted to take opium—Paris had just discovered it—but I could not, because I would not surrender my will. My *Comédie Humaine* will cure the world of all Utopias, but you were born too soon.’

That last sentence would have been untrue. Balzac’s influence has reached some exceptional men and women. Hegel’s Philosophy of History dominates the masses, though they have not heard his name, as Rousseau’s philosophy did in the nineteenth and later eighteenth centuries, and has shed more blood.

10

Here and there in the *Upanishads* mention is made of the moon’s bright fortnight, the nights from the new to the full moon, and of the dark fortnight of the moon’s decline. He that lives in the first becomes fire or an eater; he that lives in

the second becomes fuel and food to the living (Schopenhauer's essay upon Love reversed). He that moves towards the full moon may, if wise, go to the Gods (expressed or symbolised in the senses) and share their long lives, or if to Brahma's question—'Who are you?' he can answer 'Yourself', pass out of those three penitential circles, that of common men, that of gifted men, that of the Gods, and find some cavern upon Meru, and so pass out of all life. Upon the other hand, those that move towards the dark of the moon, if they are pious, as the crowd is pious, if they can offer the right sacrifices, pray at the right temples, can go to the blessed Ghosts, to the Heaven of their fathers, find what peace can be found between death and birth. The *Upanishads* denied any escape for these. The new thinkers arrayed their ascetism, their complete individuality against the tribal dancers, spirit mediums, ritual poetry, orgiastic ceremonies, soma-drinking priests of the popular religion: 'As for living, our servants will do that for us'.

The bright fortnight's escape is *Turiyā*, and in the dark fortnight, the ascetic who, unlike the common people, asks nothing of God or Ghost, may, though unworthy of *Turiyā*, find *Sushupti* an absorption in God, as if the Soul were His food or fuel.

Man is born into 'a mortal birth of twelve months or thirteen months', into the lunar year that sometimes requires an extra month that it may keep the proper seasons, from which it is plain that every incarnation is divided into twelve or thirteen cycles. As the first and last crescents are nearest the Sun, the visionary must have seen in those cycles a conflict between Moon and Sun, or when Greek astronomy had reached India, between a Moon that has taken the Sun's light into itself, 'I am yourself', and the Moon lost in the Sun's light, between Sun in Moon and Moon in Sun. The Eastern poet saw the Moon as the Sun's bride; now in solitude; now offered to her Bridegroom in a self-abandonment unknown to our poetry. A European would think perhaps of the moonlit and moonless nights alone, call the increasing moon man's personality, as it fills into the round and becomes perfect, overthrowing the black night of oblivion. Am I not justified in discovering there the conflict between subjectivity and objectivity, between self and not self, between waking life and dreamless sleep?

The year of twelve or thirteen months that constitutes a single lifetime was thought of as a day or night in a still greater year, and that year divided in its turn into months, and so on until

we reach some greatest year. One must imagine everywhere enclosed one within another, circles of Sun in Moon, Moon in Sun. Mixed with these mythological or symbolic periods were others founded upon the astronomical phantasy of Greece. Certain cycles must have begun when all the planets stood toeing a line, like young athletes. If the equinoctial Sun encircles the Zodiac in thirty-six thousand years, as Alexandrian Greece imagined, why not consider that but one month in a still greater year? Indifferent to history, India delighted in vast periods, which solemnised the mind, seeming to unite it to the ageless Heavens. The Indian would have understood the dialectic of Balzac, but not that of Hegel—what could he have made of Hegel's optimism?—but never cared to discover in those great periods a conflict of civilisations and of nations. Even the Great Year of Proclus, though that is cold and abstract compared with the conception that has begun to flit before modern minds, was impossible to the Indian's imagination. Preoccupied with the seeds of action, discoverable by those who have rejected all that is not themselves, he left to Europe the study and creation of civilisation. This he could do, perhaps because the villages that nurtured his childhood were subject to no change but that of the seasons—their life, as it were, the

symbolical syntax wherein we may write the History of the World.

II

Greek and Roman speculation generally made the Great Year solar, but the symbolism is little different. The two extremes corresponded to the Sun's passage through Capricorn and Cancer. In the first the world was nourished by water—Philaus called it 'the lunar water'; in the second by the 'Fire of Heaven'.

I find my imagination setting in one line *Turiyā*—full moon, mirror like bright water, Mount Meru; and in the other *Sushupti*, moonless night, 'dazzling darkness'—Mount Girnār.

Does not every civilisation as it approaches or recedes from its full moon seem as it were to shiver into the premonition of some perfection born out of itself, perhaps even of some return to its first Source? Does not one discover in the faces of Madonnas and holy women painted by Raphael or da Vinci, if never before or since, a condition of soul where all is still and finished, all experience wound up upon a bobbin? Does one not hear those lips murmur that, despite whatever illusion we cherish, we came from no immaturity, but out of our own perfection like ships that 'all their swelling canvas wear'. Does

not every new civilisation, upon the other hand, imagine that it was born in revelation, or that it comes from dependence upon dark or unknown powers, that it can but open its eyes with difficulty after some long night's sleep or winter's hibernation?

*'For this one thing above all I would be praised as a man,
That in my words and my deeds I have kept those laws
in mind*

*Olympian Zeus and this high clear Empyrean
Fashioned, and not some man or people of mankind,
Even those sacred laws nor age nor sleep can blind.*

*. . . should a man forget
The holy image, the Delphian Sybil's trance
And the world's navel stone, and not be punished for it
And seem most fortunate, or even blessed perchance,
Who could honour the Gods, or join the sacred dance.'*

W. B. YEATS

P.S.—I have made much use during the writing of this essay of Shri Purohit Swāmi's *An Indian Monk* (Macmillan); of his unpublished translation of the *Yoga-Sutras* of Patanjali; and of the standard translation of the same work published by Harvard University. I thank Shri Purohit Swāmi for answering many questions.

A BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Bhagwān Shri Hamsa was born at Dhuliā on the 15th of June 1878. He was the younger son of Pāndu Tātyā Nātekar, a well-known pleader. As he lost his mother at the age of four, his father and elder brother took care of him. When Pāndu Tātyā learned from an astrologer that his son would become a Yogi, he forbade him to read the *Geetā* and found him a wife. He was married in his sixteenth year. But one day sitting on the banks of the Indrāyani at Dehu, he decided to renounce the world. He began to practise austerities; he read the *Guru-Charitra*, the Life of Dattātreyā—repeated the *Gāyatri Mantram*, took milk for his sole food. After three and a half years of this life, he went on pilgrimage encircling the whole of India, and visited once every year Mount Girnār, where the footsteps of Dattātreyā are shown to pilgrims. Then in 1908 he made the pilgrimage to Mount Kailās described in the following pages.

W. B. Y.

THE HOLY MOUNTAIN
BY
BHAGWĀN SHRI HAMSA

THE HOLY MOUNTAIN

I

Mount Kailās and Lake Mānas are the two beautiful and holy places of pilgrimage on the other side of the Himālayās, in Western Tibet. For long I had eagerly anticipated a visit there, and that wish was fulfilled after four years of craving, by the Grace of Shri Sadguru, my Master.

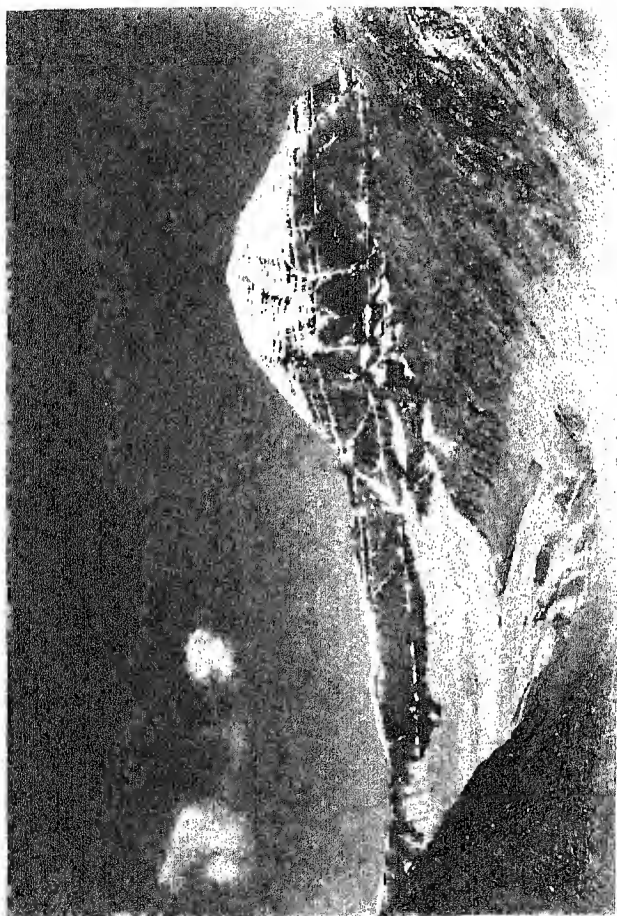
On my way to Mount Kailās I visited several other sacred places in the Himālayās—Shri Badri-Nārāyen, Kedār, Gangotree and Pashupati. In all, my Himālayān pilgrimage occupied four years, and during that time I learned how to surmount all sorts of difficulties, inclemencies of the climate, lack of good food, and all the toils of a tour, often alone, across treacherous rivers, through hills, in dense jungles and little-known villages.

Travelling alone for the most part, and generally by cross-paths, difficulties and perils beset me which the ordinary pilgrims escape. 'Why did

you go on such a pilgrimage in such a fashion?' the reader may enquire. My reply is, that during these four years I was consumed with an ideal. It led me on . . . and on.

A full account of the situations and perils through which I passed during this tour may lay me open to the charge of exaggeration, but there is no exaggeration. The Grace of Shri Sadguru was my saviour all through—both of body and soul—and that Grace gave me strength and power to emerge unharmed at the end. With faith in His Grace—Glory be to Shri Sadguru—I make bold to narrate a few of those incidents that made up my memorable pilgrimage.

One afternoon my old yet strongly-built Nepāl-ese guide and myself were passing through a part of the Dehrādun forest, merrily chatting and enjoying the luxuriant scenery. On our way through a close green thicket we paused to gaze at a herd of blue monkeys, when suddenly, by instinct, we turned. Bearing down upon us, a wild elephant lumbered not more than twenty yards distant. The elephant had grown lusty, sweat was pouring down his forehead, his trunk uprooting shrubs and throwing them over his wide back. It was the first time that I had seen a wild elephant in the full freedom of nature, and I stood astonished. But my guide was in quite another mood; he saw



THE NORTH-WEST FACE OF MOUNT KAILĀS
FROM ABOVE DIRIPHUR

From a photograph by Major-General R. C. Wilson.

the danger and only thought of how to escape from it.

Luckily I was brought to myself by the guide's urgent voice, and plunging into the thicket, we lost sight of the beast. We were wending our way again, confidence restored, when there came a rustling sound from a few yards behind us. My guide gave a quick, terrified glance, then cried: 'Swāmiji! run—the elephant is chasing us'. We ran for our lives, the guide in front and myself behind him. A yard or two separated us from the elephant. He was coming after us like an avalanche. In front sank a steep precipice; behind, the elephant, his trunk waving. He was about to pull me down, catching hold of my kafani (Sanyāsin's gown), and trample me under his feet. We looked at each other—my guide and myself—and then, as one man, threw ourselves down the precipice.

My guide lay unconscious for eleven hours; his legs were bruised green and blue. I was unconscious for a day. I had fallen heavily on my feet. My head felt as though it had sunk down into my waist, and both my waist and legs swelled. But there was no fracture. We sheltered underneath a tree, and my guide treated our injuries with herbs. His legs were cured by a lotion after three days. I took a fortnight for complete recovery.

Bowing to the lotus-feet of Shri Sadguru, my Master, I had thrown myself down. I felt it might be the will of God that we should be saved without great injury.

We encountered similar escapades with other wild animals, even the tiger and the bear, and were continuously exposed to the pangs of hunger, thirst and cold. Once we missed our way through a forest and had to wander seven days without meeting a single human being, living only on the tender leaves of trees. I thought these things happened that I might be trained for the still more arduous labours of my visit to Mount Kailās and Lake Mānas.

I do not propose to describe the other sacred places I visited on my way, Gangotree, Shri Kedārñāth and Badri-Nārāyen, as they are described in several tourists' guide-books. I will confine myself to my journey to Shri Kailās-Mānas.

Bidding good-bye to my friends I left Bombay (Victoria terminus) for my tour to Kailās-Mānas by the morning Delhi express on 4th April 1908. Next morning I halted at Binā for a few hours, and, taking the Punjāb mail at 11 a.m., reached Lucknow via Cawnpore at 8 p.m. the same day. At 9.30 p.m. I took train again and reached Bareilly at 5 a.m. the next day, where I

caught the train for Kāthagodām at 7.30 a.m. I reached Kāthagodām, the railway terminus, at 11.30 a.m. Here my journey by rail ended. From Bombay to Kāthagodām I was travelling continuously for forty-eight hours. On alighting at Kāthagodām I engaged two coolies and a pony to take me to Almorā only, for I could not secure conveyance to Māyāvati. I had to pay a rupee and a half for each coolie and six rupees for the pony, a little more than the usual rate, as those were days of famine. I managed to secure this conveyance through the Government coolie-contractor.

I commenced the uphill journey with an empty stomach. At about 5 p.m. we reached Bheemtāl, nine miles from Kāthagodām, and put up in a private Hindustāni dāk-bungalow, the charges being two annas per head per day. The Government dāk-bungalow was full; besides, the charge there was a rupee per day. Owing to the fatigue of continuous journeying for two and a half days, I stayed over the night at Bheemtāl, the first halting-place in our hill-journey.

There is a lake at Bheemtāl of the same name, about two and a half miles in circumference, with a good road around it. As it was summer, the lake was for the large part dry. Europeans and wealthy folk own several bungalows round about

Bheemtāl, where they usually halt for a couple of days on their way to Nainitāl. The forest scenery around Bheemtāl is beautiful.

As soon as I secured accommodation in the Hindustāni dāk-bungalow that is for Indians only, and my coolies were at work preparing meals, I strolled out in the mild, pleasant evening breeze on the banks of the lake. Tired and travel-weary, I enjoyed the breeze to my heart's content, pacing on alone and humming to myself. It was evening; on the hills little squares of light showed where the bungalows were lit up; people were making homewards after their boating; the tranquil calm of the night had just set in after the bustle of the day. . . . I crossed the little wooden bridge that spanned the lake, gazing at the clear sky above, or into the calm, shadowed waters below, or over the hill-tops beyond. My head was cool, my heart at peace. I felt refreshed, buoyant and extraordinarily cheerful.

A small bazaar of about twenty shops, including those of grocers, grain-sellers, and confectioners, supplies the wants of Bheemtāl. There is also a telegraph office. It is a pleasant little place.

I managed at Bheemtāl to secure for ten rupees a new pony to take me to Māyāvati. I therefore dispensed with my old pony. I had already paid its owner three rupees. As according to the

Government rate the charge for nine miles was a rupee and a half, I asked the servant to return the balance at Māyāvati, but heard nothing further about it. The people of these hilly parts were once known for their honesty.

I agreed to pay one rupee more to each of the coolies, and early the next morning left for Māyāvati. At 9 a.m. I reached Dhāree, nine and a half miles from Bheemtāl. Here there is a dāk-bungalow and a Government grocer's shop. The dāk-bungalow is on the top of a hill, and from the verandah commands an excellent view of the valley in front. My coolies were as usual preparing meals, so I took my bath and sat for worship and meditation in the shaded and quiet verandah, overlooking the majestic forest scenery so common everywhere in the Himālayās. After worship I took my meal and retired for a couple of hours. I did not stay here long. Like Bheemtāl, there was no habitation. Soon I left for Mornowli, a distance of eighteen miles, where we were to encamp for the night, my coolies having gone ahead of me.

Through the dense jungle of Mornowli we had to cross two rivers. There were hanging bridges; but owing to the summer season the water was shallow, and we crossed through the stream. At a little distance from Dhāree we had to make an

ascent, shorter but steeper than the one between Kāthagodām and Bheemtāl. My horse was trotting at a slow pace and often halted for breath underneath some thick-shaded tree. I had no companion, and I never felt the necessity for one. I was content to muse with my own Self.

By sunset I had left the steep ascent of Mor-nowli and entered the forest, from where the dāk-bungalow lay about four miles distant. The evening grew dark; a sudden thick black cloud gathered in the sky. Through this darkness it was difficult to discern even the nearest object. At about 8 p.m. rain began, attended by thunder and lightning. At intervals I heard the growls of the tiger and the barking deer. The hoppers on the trees added to the uneasiness of the night by their fearsome shrieks. It was cold and chill.

As my coolies were ahead of me, my only guide was a boy of sixteen, who tended the horse. He was quite a stranger to the place, yet a bold and courageous lad. He held my horse by the reins and found his way by the occasional flashes of lightning. We were drenched to the skin—my horse, my attendant and myself. On and on we ploughed, shivering incessantly, until 9.30 p.m. Then we reached the bungalow. The storm-clouds full of thunder, lightning and rain upset me. I threw myself at the feet of Shri Sadguru,

my Master. Immediately a beatific peace stole over my mind. . . .

The bungalow was full, even the stables; the grocer's shop and all private apartments were overcrowded. Fires were kindled everywhere. But I could not get even a square inch for the shelter and rest I needed so badly. I went in search of my coolies, and found them under a tree near by, shivering in their rain-soaked clothes.

For two hours I stood by in the rain without shelter of any kind, without food, without drink. The Deputy-Commissioner of the province had encamped in the place; that was why there was no room. His Shirastedār (chief clerk), however, was kind to me, and, making room for me in a corner of his hut, bade me rest. He also gave me milk to drink. The whole night long I sat in that corner. Outside the rain came down in torrents. . . .

II

Mornowli-Ghāt is 8000 feet above sea-level; hence the climate is very cold. In the thick forest tigers and wild beasts abound. It is a favourite shikaring place for Europeans, who put up in the bungalow, which is therefore seldom vacant. Deodār, pine and oak grow abundantly here,

and entwined in green, luxuriant verdure, make a striking background. Water for drinking is obtained at a distant spot deep down in the valley below.

The storm at Mornowli was quite unexpected—it was the full height of summer—but actually it was more severe than those experienced in autumn. ‘What could it mean?’ I pondered. ‘This fierce storm of hail, heavy rain, loud thunder and grim lightning in the midst of a parching summer?’ I felt it was but one of the methods Almighty Providence had taken to inure me to the perils of my future journey, and to give me strength and power to bear them uncomplainingly.

Early in the morning we left for Devi-Dhurā, eight miles from Mornowli, where we intended to halt for meals. The first six miles was a gentle descent, easy to travel. Then came the ascent of Devi-Dhurā. We arrived there at 10 a.m. and put up for our meals underneath a large tree. Water was very scarce owing to the drought in Kumāon Parganā. Not a blade of verdure could be seen; everything was dry, barren and dreary-looking. As we sat for our meals, a tornado swept over us and ruined our food—khichri and ghee—with dirt and dust. But somehow or other we managed to gulp down a few morsels.

Every year a 'fair' is held in the old temple of Devi at Devi-Dhurā. A dāk-bungalow and a few grocers' shops are all that make up the comforts of the place. The Deputy-Commissioner had encamped here also.

At 2 p.m. I took my horse *en route* to Māyāvati. Here we learnt that the Commissioner's entourage was to return to Almorā. I sighed with relief. Perhaps now we could get a verandah to lodge ourselves at the next halting station, as it would be free from the officials' camp and office.

I knew the road, so I started out for Dhunā-Ghāt on horseback alone. It was about six or seven miles from Devi-Dhurā, and we expected to reach it by evening. My horseman accompanied the coolies, who followed behind me. After ascending the ghāt at a brisk pace, I came to a flat plateau at about 3 p.m. The sky was interspersed with clouds, which somewhat mitigated the heat of the sun; a cool breeze had also set in. As our path was lined on either side by rows of trees, it proved to be a pleasant journey, and my horse trotted along quite easily. He seemed to enjoy as much as myself the cool breeze and the shaded road. He paced on lustily, with ears standing, stiff neck, tail erect, and chafing at the bridal. Buried in thoughts and quick-

eyed, I gazed at the mountain-tops ahead and wondered.

My one engrossing thought was of Kailās and Mānas. And, for the moment, I was anxious to reach Māyāvati. Our way to Dhunā-Ghāt lay through a forest of teak. There was utter quiet and calm. I gave myself up to it, and guessing this, my horse went his own way merrily. Dusk fell, and soon Dhunā-Ghāt lay only three miles away. At one of the turning-points in the winding path through the forest my horse paused abruptly and chafed at the bridle. I peered ahead and, to my surprise, perceived a human form. The animal was by now thoroughly frightened. The place was notorious as a haunt of ghosts, and naturally my first idea was that I had encountered one. I felt strangely uneasy. But a few minutes later I found, to my relief, that it was only a stout trunk, the remnant of a charred teak-tree.

In the evening the dāk-bungalow at Dhunā-Ghāt was reached. Gratefully I unsaddled my horse, patted him on the back and gave him grass to eat. My coolies followed shortly with the horseman. We took our meals, and the coolies retired to bed. In vain I tried to sleep, and at last gave up the effort and strolled out on the verandah. It was midnight; cool breezes were blow-

ing softly round me; tranquillity reigned unchallenged either by sound or unusual movement. I stepped down the verandah and gazed underneath the starlit sky, bathed in clear, enlivening rays of the moon. From the table-like rock ten yards to the front, the valley below looked grimly sombre in the night-shade. I stood in quiet contemplation, drinking in all the charm of the scene. For hours, it seemed, I revelled in a flood of bliss springing from my own heart and the quiet round me. Only those who are accustomed to meditate in solitude upon God and nature can realise the joy that I felt here. During that night I slept only for a couple of hours.

We rose at 4 a.m., and, after answering the calls of urgent nature,¹ left for Mâyāvati via Champāvati. Though this route was longer by six miles, the shorter route lay through a forest where there was every likelihood of our missing the road. At noon on the fourth day I arrived at the Advait-āshram Mâyāvati.

From Bombay to Mâyāvati I made an unbroken journey lasting seven days. At Mâyāvati I stayed for a whole month to rest and equip my-

¹ Every Brāhmin is enjoined to observe the following duties on getting up from his bed in the morning: Prata-marana (morning prayer), Bhoomivandan (salutation to the Earth), Shoucha-Mukhamārjan (calls of nature), Snāna (bath), Sandhyā and Poojā (worship).

self for my further travels. At the Advaitāshram I met new faces; not one of the old people remained whom I had seen on my former visit. The Āshram had an atmosphere of slovenliness, indescribably sad and dreary. In Captain Xavier's days the Āshram was, I had heard, well managed and successful. When I first visited the place it was presided over by Swāmi Swarupānanda. He passed away in 1906. I found a great difference between the state of affairs then and now. The Āshram provides for those who desire to pass their days in meditation and solitude. The rate of board and lodgings per individual has been raised from Rs. 20 to 25 per month. People with families can also be accommodated, but they seldom take advantage of the concession.

Māyāvati is a mountain range in the Kumāon Parganā 7000 feet above the sea-level, about seventy-five miles to the east from the railway station. A good road leads to this hill, which is the finest in the district. The climate is healthy and the water cool and wholesome; a thick forest of oak, rodumdum, pine, deodār and teak outlines the place, extending over three or four miles. The late Swāmi Vivekānanda founded the Advaitāshram on the top of the hill at a cost of Rs. 15,000. Captain Xavier, one of Swāmiji's European disciples, bore a large part of the ex-

penses. It was in this Āshram that the Captain breathed his last, and since then Mrs. Savier, who has now grown old, has looked after the institution.

The Advaitāshram is located right on the summit of the hill. About five hundred feet lower down is another neat little bungalow, called 'Kuteer', standing on the peak of a hillock. It commands excellent views. On the same hill, fifty feet lower, is another bungalow with a cowshed and a garden. The garden grows vegetables, mostly of the European kind, and flowers. Round about the place are avenues where benches invite the weary pedestrian. The place is very charming.

The *Prabuddha Bhārata*, a monthly organ of Vedānta, is published by this Advaitāshram. There is also a library where you can get monthly periodicals and newspapers. One Saṅgyāsin and two Brahmchārins (celibates), an American gentleman practising Yoga, and about a dozen servants—these comprise the inmates of the place. The Āshram enjoys complete solitude. There is no other village within three or four miles. At Lohāghāt, a distance of three miles, there is a post office, and the Āshram keeps up a daily postal service through its own servant.

On three sides the hill on which the Advaitāshram stands is surrounded by high mountains:

on the northern side there is a wide plateau. From the open yard in front of the Āshram, a pleasant sight meets the eye. Towards the north the vale stretches afar, covered with green verdure; from east to west, the mountain-tops rise in a semicircular fashion, peak upon peak, snow-clad. On every side mountain ranges overtop green forests. Clouds scurry to and fro, sometimes enveloping one in their water-laden vapours; at other times passing below one's feet. At night the place echoes to the howls of wild beasts. But mornings and early evenings give a picture of exquisite beauty that is met with at no other time. While I was there a hail-storm descended; the ground was snow-white; trees were washed green and fresh; all was calm but for the warble of birds. In the charm of the hour I soon forgot myself.

While at Māyāvati I spent my time mostly in roaming happily underneath the tall deodārs in the woodland, or humming to myself on the roads. At times, sitting alone on a rock on the bank of the rivulet down below, I drank in the beauty of nature to my heart's content, and spent hours and hours in serene meditation. Being a lover of solitude, I seldom mixed with the inmates of the Āshram except for a few minutes in the library after the evening meals. I could hardly

spare time for desultory chatting. A talk for a few minutes with Mrs. Savier if she happened to meet me was the only interruption that broke the solitude of my evening woodland rambles. It was the solitude that kept me at Māyāvati so long. . . .

The journey from Bombay to Māyāvati did not prove troublesome. From Kāthāgodām to Māyāvati the way did indeed lie through hills and forests, but to compensate for this there were good roads, and on the way many dāk-bungalows and shops. And so my seven days' continuous travel gave me no great worry. During my month's stay at Advaitāshram Māyāvati, I collected the necessary equipment for the goal of my desire—Kailās and Mānas.

As I entered Western Tibet for the first time, having very meagre, if any, information about the land and the ways of its inhabitants, I made many mistakes, and consequently incurred heavy expenses. Had I known, I ought to have engaged the two coolies from the Kumāon Parganā only up to Garbiyāng, and not for good, on monthly wages of Rs. 11 and 8-8 respectively, as I had done. For beyond Garbiyāng these coolies were useless to me. They were more ignorant of Tibet than myself. Besides, a local servant is necessary for preparing meals. At Māyāvati I obtained a parcel of biscuits, tins of condensed milk, candles

and other necessary commodities kindly sent to me by post from Bombay by my friend the proprietor of the Rām Agency. I had taken a quantity of warm clothing, so necessary on a Himālayān tour. I used to put on five thick woollen garments one over the other, and over them all wore my kafani. A pair of woollen trousers covered the lower part of my body; my legs were wrapped in leggings. I wore boots. My head was uncovered, but a nightcap and a silk turban would keep the head warm. I also took with me blue-pebbled glasses to keep from the eyes the intense glare of the sunlit ice, but I used them only once. I had a small binocular and a watch—two things that later proved of great value.

The inmates of the Advaitāshram told me it was impossible to succeed in my Kailās-Mānas tour—I was so thin and weak. They tried to dissuade me, but I said: ‘I am the child of my Master. Never shall I have a weak heart!’

The night previous to the day on which I was to start in earnest for Kailās-Mānas, I sat in meditation. Thereafter I felt strong and fresh even to conquer the Himālayās and gain my ideal. Yet my body was weak. It was my mind, resolute and firm in conviction, that towered in strength above me. Faith in myself, intense longing, continence and implicit surrender at the feet

of Shri Sadguru, my Master, and the consequent divine recklessness in my pursuit after the ideal, carried me aloft. I never had a thought, not even a passing dream, about my body. With such resolution I started on my pilgrimage to Shri Kailās-Mānas. I wrote last letters to those anxious for me and laid down my pen which, by the grace of God, I was destined to take up again after four months.

Early the next morning I bowed at the feet of Shri Sadguru, my Master, and started for Kailās-Mānas with two servants. Both of them were Brāhmins belonging to that part of the country, and one knew a little of the Tibetan (Hoon) language. Garbiyāng is 125 miles from Māyāvati, with halting stations at intervals of ten miles. Horses can be hired up to Kailās-Mānas, but the expense is considerable. I travelled on foot, and so it took a fortnight before I reached Garbiyāng. At one p.m. I entered Chidā, thirteen miles from Māyāvati. It was a very hot place. There is a dāk-bungalow and a grocer's shop, but no good water to drink. On my way I halted at Lohāghāt for twenty minutes to post my letters and to give instructions to the postmaster about my address. My coolies were not willing to proceed at a stretch to Chidā, but they had to follow me and managed to arrive at Chidā at 3 p.m.

They were neither clever, agile nor courageous. They never kept pace with me for a single day during the whole tour to Garbiyāng. I was always walking ahead, alone and in tune with myself. As I had studied the science of breathing, I was able to breathe regularly even uphill and downhill. Thus my pace was regulated by my breathing. I never ate or drank while walking, and so avoided any stomach complaints. My coolies usually rested for half an hour after ascending a hill.

When I say I felt no hardship on my journey, I mean that I perceived none. My mind was so engrossed in the ideal I cherished—I was so eager for it—that I was scarcely conscious of the sufferings and trials of the body.

We put up in the verandah of the dāk-bungalow at Chidā. Under a pine near by the servants prepared the meals. Common flies were so numerous here, and sat so thick on our clothes, that we seemed to wear a coat of flies. Fortunately none went down our throats during meals. For the first time in the Himālayās, I saw mango-trees. I reclined on a tiger-skin the whole day, musing over the expected realisation of my ideal, and occasionally talked with my servants about the future journey.

At night we slept in the verandah, rather

soundly, because of the day's toils of our foot-journey. At midnight I heard the occasional growls of some animal near at hand; but being drowsy I did not heed them further. A short while after, one of my servants, hearing the growl of a tiger, suddenly got up. I rose too. The other servants woke and sat on their beds talking. The servant said that it was the tiger's growl that he heard. While we listened, fresh growls rumbled on the night air. We could hardly sleep after that. The following morning, the Government grocer told us that the verandah where we had put up was a favourite resort of tigers. . . .

Incidentally, I am here reminded of a similar adventure during a former tour in a forest. My Nepālese guide and myself were proceeding through a forest in the Tehri district. We had rested for the night at the foot of a tree and spread our blankets and lay down, reclining our heads on the roots as our pillows. Between us we kept burning a log of wood for warmth. I lay down in meditation over the lotus-feet of Shri Sadguru, my Master, and soon fell asleep, as I had taken no food and walked the whole day. At about 1 a.m. I awoke suddenly and looked round in the light of our rough hearth.

My heart seemed to stop its beating for one awful moment. I sat bolt upright, unable to

move. There, stretched out with its tail almost touching my own feet, and its great head facing my coolie, lay a huge tiger. Fascinatedly, I watched its striped, glossy back rise and fall with the cadence of its breathing as, cosily, it warmed itself at our fire.

My eyes met those of the coolie. Without moving an inch, he managed to return the message I flashed to him: 'We must not move!'

The perspiration oozed from my body. I tried to collect my senses and prepare for the next move of this jungle savage. But at first my brain refused to function. Then, with a tremendous effort of will, I summoned all my powers to think of Shri Sadguru, my Master. Gradually, the panic left me. Even with the tail of the tiger brushing my legs I was able to forget him. A wondrous peace descended over me. While I lay down to rest again, the tiger shambled to its feet, stretched itself, and stood up to its full height—a noble-looking beast. For a while it growled furiously, then lashed its long tail on the ground. Death was very near me then. But I clung to my Master.

The tiger smelt round my coolie, then turned its baleful amber eyes towards my feet. For some seconds it paused as if undecided, then jumping over us three or four times, shot away into the thicket.

It was about 3 a.m.

When the animal had gone, my coolie turned to me: 'Swamiji', he said, 'let us go hence soon. The tiger will return in an hour or so. It is dangerous to stay longer!'

Together we groped our way from the spot through the dark night, and after a mile or two halted, and once more lay down to sleep.

The remembrance of this miraculous escape from the jaws of death through the Grace of the Divine Master makes my heart overflow and tears run down in love at the feet of Shri Sadguru, my Master. Tulsidās has truly said: 'What can the wrath of the whole world do to him, whom the Lord protects?'

From Chidā onwards, we passed down a steep descent of three miles which we found more difficult than an uphill march. By 6 a.m. we had reached the banks of the Sharyu-Gangā. Here I bathed and performed my morning prayers and worship. We then took tea and proceeded. It was at this place that I had a further miraculous escape. The stone on which I stood while bathing slipped from beneath my feet because its sandy bed had been carried away by the rush of the stream. As I could not swim, I sank deeper and deeper in the river, and would have been swept out into the mid-stream had I not suddenly

been dashed on to a rock surrounded by water. Somehow, I managed to stand firm upon it and called out to my servants, who then were able to take me ashore. On reaching the bank, my heart was full of gratitude to the Almighty for having saved me, and I felt that this providential escape from death foretold a successful visit to Shri Kailās-Mānas. I felt strong.

Sharyu-Gangā was crossed by a bridge—one of those hanging bridges so common over the rivers in the Himālayās. At 9.30 a.m. we reached Gornyā, ten miles from Chidā, after a short uphill journey. There is the usual dāk-bungalow and grocer's shop here. The place enjoys a cool climate and there is good water. Here, for the first time, did I see banana-trees in the Himālayās.

III

At Gornyā I met Pundit Kedārnāth, the Patwāri¹ of the place, who had specially come there to look to the wants of the Deputy-Collector and his entourage. The Punditji gave me milk, curds, ghee and other provisions. He had passed the first Sanskrit examination at Benāres and was well-read in religion and in Sanskrit literature. As the bungalow was occupied, a temporary

¹ Tax-collector.

cottage was prepared for me between two big shady trees. Punditji and myself talked on religious matters the whole day. I seldom engaged in any controversy for reasons which, though not perhaps very strong, to me seemed important. In the evening I met a young pleader from Almorā, and we talked till midnight on social and religious subjects. I also met here a schoolmaster on his way to Bhot. A Brāhmin family from Mahārāshtra is said to have migrated to this part of the Himālayās some six centuries ago, in company with a Kshatriya king. Pundit Kedārnāthji belonged to this Brāhmin family. Mahārāshtra Brāhmins are said to inhabit Gangoli-Hāt. Now, of course, they are Brāhmins in name only; centuries of forest life having converted them into hill tribes.

The Himālayās are known as the 'Uttarā-Khand'. The diet of the Brāhmins of these parts is not strictly vegetarian, except in the case of Pundits. Their ways of life are like those of the hill tribes. They even take the work of coolies.

While at Gornyā, one evening, I went out alone for a ramble in the forest, and was standing on the edge of a precipice projecting towards the west. It was the hour of sunset. All was quiet. The vale to my right was shaded by the mountain in front; the plateau on the left was still shining

in the mellow evening sun; gentle breezes blew cool and soft. The whole scene roused in me feelings of adoration, and I soon lost myself in meditation over my Master, now reflected or symbolised in the glory of the sun. At 8 p.m. I returned to my cottage and took my meal. I lay down, repeating the name of the Lord till midnight, when I fell asleep.

At 5 a.m. we four—myself, two servants and the schoolmaster—continued our journey further. We reached Pithorāgad at 8.30 a.m. It is the seat of the Tahsil and a centre of trade. The town is semicircular in shape and is protected by an old fort. The place was the station of a military garrison under Nepālese rule. There is a post office and a dāk-bungalow. The province is also known as Sor Parganā. Pithorāgad is a fertile Tāluque growing rice, wheat and rāgi, and possesses a good market. It is a centre of activity for the Christian mission, which has added to the Congregation of Christ nearly 4000 souls for a ‘mess of pottage’, after the usual fashion. At Pithorāgad I purchased provisions not likely to be available elsewhere on my further journey.

There is a Tahsildār at Pithorāgad. After our meals we left the place at 2 p.m. for Sor, the seat of the Parganā in Almorā district. From the top of the hill I gazed around me. I saw fields

irrigated with water which glistened in the sun and moved freely through them. The fields were waving with the green verdure of Mundhwā corn and sloping over hills like the steps of a staircase. From the top of the hill one could see clearly the town of Pithorāgad lying at the foot. On our further journey I used to travel every day a 'Padāva' and a half, *i.e.* fifteen miles. By evening we arrived at Nawār, and put up in a Pāthashālā or school about a mile from the town.

The Pāthashālā was located on the top of the hill; the spring of water was 400 feet below in a vale at the foot—'Khad', as a valley is called in that part. As the coolies seemed fatigued, I went down the valley myself in the dark night to fetch water. I brought my kamandalu (a Sanyāsin's water pot) full, as that was the only large vessel we had. On my way to the spring I felt something rush between my feet, but, owing to the darkness, I could not see what it was. Assuredly it was not a serpent.

In one of my former tours in the Gangotri-Jamnotri tract, I remember myself and my guide were passing through a meadow overgrown with tall grass up to the knees. To the left rose the mountain range and to the right was a steep precipice. I went on enjoying the beautiful scene of the evening and thinking of my Master. My

foot happened to tread on the tail of a huge cobra. Automatically I stepped back. The serpent stood erect and hissed furiously. Then he attacked me and struck his hood on my right cheek, then rushed away, partly satisfied, but fell down the deep precipice and was shattered to pieces. It was five feet long and six inches thick, had yellow scales with dark spots, and large, round beaming eyes. It was a splendid specimen. Though his hood only touched my cheek, I felt giddy for a while, and vomited frequently green and blue. A short while afterwards I completely recovered myself.

Here at Nawār a few faggots and dried cowdung was all the fuel that we could secure, and so the khichri that I prepared was only half-boiled. Furthermore, I had no plate from which to dine, so I washed a slab of stone and used it instead. All the water in my kamandalu was finished, and again I had to fetch water. At this the younger of my servants offered to go for me, and after stumbling several times on the way, he succeeded, after an hour's absence, in returning with a kamandalu full! We slept in the verandah. The floor was very uneven, and I could not rest. During the journey I used to sleep very little—at times only a couple of hours. At about 4 a.m. I had a dream, in which I had a vision of my Mas-

ter. In that dream I also saw a close friend of mine from the Bombay side, for whom I had given not even so much as a thought ever since I had left Bombay.

Leaving at 3 a.m., we arrived at daybreak at Kanāli-Chhinā, four miles from Nawār, and, finishing our morning duties, we bought provisions from a grocer and continued our journey till 9.30 a.m. We halted here for meals in a field under a mango-tree near the village of Mithodā. The water was cool and pleasant. Refreshed, we started for Askot. At 3 p.m. we took the steep ascent of three miles. It was cloudy and a wind was blowing. We mounted higher and higher till we reached the top at 6 p.m.—an arduous ascent. From head to foot we were bathed in perspiration, and felt as if our legs were giving way. At the top, my friend the schoolmaster and myself reclined on a wide slab and enjoyed the cool breezes. I looked round through my binoculars and saw clearly the town of Askot. On the top of the hill in front was a four-storeyed mansion rising high above the few hundred houses at the foot. The fields were all green, and there was a garden of mango, plantain, tangerine and other fruit trees. When I saw that beautiful garden I said to myself that I would pitch my camp in that garden after reaching Askot. I looked out

for my coolies and caught sight of them smoking their pipes under a teak-tree at mid-way. From the hill-top the village at the foot appeared like a tiny spot at the farthest end of the curving road, and my coolies, though at mid-hill, looked like tiny black flies. I whistled and beckoned them to come up, but no response came from them. They came, however, at 7 p.m., panting and quite exhausted, though none of them carried a load of more than thirty pounds, while my clothes alone weighed nearly twenty pounds.

The coolies rested for fifteen minutes and intimated that they were too exhausted to proceed the four miles to Askot. Besides, it was already evening. Eventually we lodged for the night at a village with only three houses, a mile and a half lower down. We feared we would have to fast, but, fortunately, we procured four seers of wheat-flour for a rupee from one farmer, while the school-master got four potatoes from another. At 10 p.m. we took our meals and slept in the open field. By now the sky was beginning to look overcast; rain clouds were gathering. As there was also, according to the peasant, the danger of tigers roaming at night, we put up in a rice-thrashing hut near by; but we could get no sleep, for the rice-insects pestered us all throughout the night. At 5 a.m. we left for Askot, and at a few furlongs met a

milkman who led us by the short cut. We reached Askot at 8 a.m. It is ten miles from Kanāli-Chhinā. Askot has a post office and a market.

Askot is a town granted in Jahāgir to the Rajawād, the holder of the Jahāgir, and fetches an annual income of Rs. 20,000. The Rajawād has to pay a tribute of Rs. 1200 per annum to the British Government. The tract is a fertile one and the climate very temperate. Rice, wheat, maize and sugar-cane are grown in abundance. There are large groves of mango-trees, and even the Alphonso and Fernādez (two precious kinds of mangoes) are raised here. Askot means 'Aishi-Kot' (*i.e.* eighty forts). In old days eighty Rajawāds ruled over this province; the Pāl kings, the first of whom was Bhupendra Sing Pāl, grew in power, and defeating all the others, took over to themselves the whole province. The western frontier of Nepāl lies at a distance of five miles from Askot.

I had intended to halt at Askot only for buying provisions, and thought of taking our meals on the banks of the Gori-Gangā, three miles lower down, so that we could manage to reach Balwākot by evening. But at Askot I met Prince Jethālāl, who insisted on my staying with him at least for one day. We were accommodated in an old postal house, and were given sufficient sup-

plies. After bath and worship I took my meals at noon. Inside the house the heat was oppressive, especially as it faced the west, and so I passed all the time in the mango-grove under the trees.

In the evening as I was reclining in the shade on a tiger skin spread over a blanket, looking towards the open sky in meditation of the Almighty, Kumār Jagatsing, the political Peshkār of Askot, accosted me. He had come to see me. His beaming eyes and noble countenance gave indications of his amiable and high character. He knew English, and though our conversation went on in Hindi, we occasionally spoke in English. After formal greetings he questioned me about my native place, parentage and such other matters, and I gave him such information as I thought advisable. He looked intently on my face for a few minutes and then, bowing, requested that I should stay at Askot for four or five days more. He suggested that I should leave for Tibet in July or August; but owing to the season being autumn, with its terrible Himālayan rains, combined with the heat at Askot, I could not agree to the idea. My friend the schoolmaster suggested that Garbiyāng, being cool and more picturesque, would be a good place of resort. I accepted this suggestion, and the Peshkār Sāhib also agreed. The Peshkār promised a note to the

Patwāri and to his agent at Garbiyāng, who would accommodate us in his official bungalow there. Though getting a salary of Rs. 50 per month from the British Government, the political Peshkār enjoys large powers of administration over the Bhot. He is really the lord of the place, and so to say, plays the part of the British Secretary of Trade with Tibet. Kumār Jagatsing came from the ruling family of Askot.

It was only at Askot and Gornyā that I slept soundly since I left Māyāvati.

After spending a day in Askot, at 3 a.m. the next morning I resumed my journey once more. By sunrise we reached the river Gori-Gangā, on whose banks we rested and took tea. For a while I loitered on the hanging bridge over the river. At the other end of the bridge is a junction of two roads, the one on the left running to the Pindari Glaciers, the river's source, and that on the right leading to Garbiyāng. Our way lay along this river, and three miles further down we arrived at the confluence of the two water-ways, Gori-Gangā and Kali-Gangā. It was indeed pleasant traversing the bank of the Kālī-Gangā, passing at times through thick rows of trees.

At 9.30 a.m. my friend the schoolmaster and I decided to take our meals near by. Seated under a large tree, we awaited the arrival of our coolies.

We waited and waited, our eyes anxiously watching the path, till mid-day. A few minutes later we met a 'Mawāshi' (farmer) who told us that two coolies had passed by nearly two hours ago.

We started off immediately, asking whomsoever we met if they had encountered our coolies. At last we reached the Dharmashālā on the river, the solitary building at Balwākot. The village lay a mile and a half away from the road. Red-eyed, weary, aching in our limbs, we went on, finally meeting our coolies on the riverside, a mile and a half from Balwākot. They were resting, exhausted and weary.

My friend the Kuti schoolmaster met his colleague from Garbiyāng, so leaving him, I went down to the Kāli-Gangā to bathe. The water, ice-cold, was swelling. Seated on a piece of rock, I splashed the water freely over my head, and felt considerably refreshed.

After a welcome meal, we rested until 3 p.m. There were five of us now; our new companion, the Garbiyāng schoolmaster, having been in the Bhot for a long time, was better acquainted with the part of the country and its people than his friend from Kutī.

That evening we slept in an open field near the village of Kālkā. I have always preferred the

sky for a roof to huddling in a dirty and dingy Dharmashālā or peasant's cottage.

A Khampā (trader) of Darmā had encamped but a few yards from us in the same field. He possessed a herd of goats. At 9 p.m. we were busily engaged preparing our meals when the herd stampeded towards us. A tiger had pounced upon one of the flock, and the remainder, frantic in their fright, ran amuck. We called aloud and hallooed with all our might, at which the tiger slipped away into the darkness without taking a single victim. We slept soundly that night.

We reached Darāchulā at 9.30 a.m. and halted in a chowki for the whole day. Pundit Lokamani, the Tolā-Munshi of the place, was extremely courteous to me and spared no effort to ensure my comforts. He held pilgrims, saints and Sādhus in great respect, and was always hospitable to them.

Darāchulā, situated on the river Kālī-Gangā, is a large town, being the residence of the Bhutiās in the Bhot during the winter, and of the political Peshkār of the British Government for eight months. The right bank of the river marks the British and the left the Nepālese frontier. On the other side of the Kālī-Gangā resides the Nepālese officer called the Lieutenant. The climate of Darāchulā is uncomfortably hot, and conse-

quently flies are numerous. From Askot to Darā-chulā is a fairly easy route, except for the descent near Askot. When one journeys from Darā-chulā to Askot, the climb almost takes away one's breath.

There is no hanging bridge over the Kāli-Gangā, but a strong rope is suspended across the river over two stout posts, pitched on either bank. A cradle is attached to the rope, which is pulled by others from one end of the ropeway to the other. A few people, however, cross the river by way of the cradle without any help from others.

After bathing in the Kāli-Gangā and performing worship, Pundit Lokamani invited me to his house to share his meal. After a short repose for an hour, we talked of Tibet, Kailās and Mānas. The Punditji, who had visited Mount Kailās, narrated the many incidents of his tour. He gave me much useful information for my future journey.

That night I was again invited to a meal by Pundit Lokamani, and I relished the good fare he provided. It was the first well-prepared meal I had partaken since leaving the Binā station.

Punditji's wife was a gracious lady, with a religious turn of mind. I was pressed by Lokamani to stay with him for a few days, but I could not accept the invitation. Nevertheless, I promised

on my return from Kailās-Mānas to avail myself of his hospitality.

The next morning at 3 a.m. our party of five left for Khelā, about ten miles distant. We had to climb a steep ascent stretching three miles, and it was 10 a.m. before we reached Khelā. The tract from Askot to Darāchulā is indeed a hot one.

We lodged in the hut of a forest Chowkidār, and later, when we had time to explore, found there was a post office, a grocer's shop and a Government sarāi at the place; the ghee here was the best of its kind.

I dined with a Public Works officer in the afternoon, and he registered extreme surprise at the little quantity of food I took.

My friends the two schoolmasters told me that further onwards from Khelā the climate was very cold.

At 3 p.m. we concluded our noonday's rest and prepared to leave. Two roads lead from Khelā, the one towards Darmā Parganā, the other towards Chowdās. We set off at 5 p.m. with the object of covering as much of the steep ascent to Chowdās as possible before 8 p.m. Half a mile from Khelā we encountered a slope and came at length to the Dhowli-Gangā, spanned by a strong wooden bridge. Although it was summer, the river was in flood, owing to the sun melting

the snow over the mountains and the water finding its way to the rivers.

My mouth was parched, and I drank deeply of the clean, ice-cold water of the Dhowli-Gangā.

The steep ascent of Chowdās begins on the opposite bank, and until 7.30 p.m. we could cover only a mile and a half. Then, thoroughly tired, we lodged by the water's side near a Mawāshee's hut. We slept on a bed of grass out in the cold.

We resumed our journey at 3 a.m.

At night one of the schoolmasters requested the peasant to supply us with fuel, ghee, milk and wheat-flour, but he flatly refused, though we offered to pay him well. The other schoolmaster then pointed towards me, and told him that I was a Sādhu sorely in need of food. At once the peasant and his wife bowed down to me, and begged that I should excuse their poverty. They had nothing to offer. I told them that I did not want anything. Thereafter, the schoolmasters again went to the Mawāshee and asserted that they were Government servants, and that he was therefore in duty bound to give them supplies. At this the man, without even a grumble, brought the necessary provisions, and we paid him the cost. What greater proof could there be that 'Might is Right'?

The ascent of Chowdās, three or four miles in length, is perilously steep. At its summit lies the Bhot tract, a part of the Almorā district. The Bhot is made up of three parts—Darmā-Patti, Chowdās-Patti and Vyās-Patti, each with a Patwāri over it.

We entered into the Chowdās-Patti, two miles further on reaching the village of Pāngu. Here, for the first time, I saw Bhutiā people. The men, women and children of the place regarded me with unfeigned surprise, and inquired about me from the Garbiyāng schoolmaster. Understanding their language and ways, for he had been amongst them for ten years, he told them that a Sādhu from Bombay was on a visit to Kailās-Mānas, and that he had met me on the way near Darāchulā.

We sought rest under a large walnut-tree till 8.30 a.m. The walnut-tree is very beautiful and as large as a banyan-tree, although it does not possess the hanging roots of the latter.

A rich old Bhutiā approached us, and said that because I was a Sādhu, he would be glad to entertain me and provide me with food. I declined the offer, however, promising to halt on my return journey and accept his kindness.

We proceeded further, arriving in due course on the River Jeevati (Jayanti). Here I bathed,

performed my worship and took tea. We reached Sonsā at 11 a.m. after mounting an ascent of a mile and a half. We made our way to the Patwāri of Chowdās-Patti, who resided there; he supplied us with provisions and, our appetites appeased, we put up in the nearby grove of walnut-trees.

While my coolies and the schoolmasters were preparing meals, I chatted enjoyably with the Patwāri. He knew a little English, having had two years of schooling at Almorā. He could speak Hindi fluently. He was a young man, efficient in his work, yet of a gentle disposition. He was delighted to see me.

We left at 3 p.m. and arrived at Tijā, three miles distant, by evening. Rain was falling, and we were fortunate enough to secure accommodation in the hut of a trader who was an acquaintance of the Garbiyāng schoolmaster. At night we were troubled by the corn-insects; but we were truly thankful to be sheltered from the wind and rain. The water conduit from the hills passed close to the hut.

To reach Tijā we had to make a two-mile descent, for it lay at the foot of the hill beside the road. At Rung, a nearby village, a Bhutiā had died only that day, and here I was given the opportunity of witnessing the ceremony of the

last sacrament practised among these people. It was a strange affair, too. The dead body is hacked into pieces, tied in a bundle and placed on a bier which is carried in a musical procession, comprising both men and women, to the place for cremation. Every family must bring fuel to the consuming fire.

IV

That night I was seated alone in the open, meditating to myself, the snow-capped mountains gleaming before me, when a group of four or five young girls came running towards me, whispering to one another in their strange language. I was preoccupied, and in no mood to be disturbed. I thought, if I ignored them, they would go away. Instead, they began to laugh aloud, and I might never have discovered the reason of these painful attentions had not the schoolmaster, who had overheard their conversation, come to my assistance and explained that the girls had taken a fancy for me and wished me to prolong my stay. Just then a young Bhutiā accosted me, and asked me in English whence I came. I regarded him in surprise and replied also in English, that I came from Bombay. He was obviously puzzled that a 'Bājee'

(Sādhu) should speak English, and thereafter he talked in Hindi, confiding to me some of his own history. Meanwhile, the young girls drew nearer, and one of them threw her arm round the Bhutiā's neck and sat close by him. I retired hastily inside, and later the schoolmaster told me that in this part of the country young girls, and grown-up women also, mixed freely with men, but that seldom was evil meant. He tried to persuade me to let the girls sing and dance for us, but I being adverse to his proposal, the matter was dropped.

The next day, at 11 a.m., we resumed our journey after having bought supplies, there being no store at our next halting station. By 6 p.m. we reached Gallāgad, a distance of six miles. We had to cross an unbridged river—a troublesome and hazardous feat for travellers and postal runners. We found a Government sarāi here, but it was so infested with dirt and fleas that I preferred to sleep under a tree in the open. At 3 a.m. we again continued our journey.

The road to Mālpā was a difficult one, and, though only ten miles long, took us nearly nine hours to traverse. On one side of our path rose high, towering mountains; on the other dropped sheer, perpendicular precipices, with the Kālī-Gangā flowing below at a depth of 4000 feet.

Withal, it was narrow and pebbly, interspersed freely with steep ascents and sudden descents. By the Grace of my Master, we reached Mālpā at 12 a.m. safely.

This part of the journey is formidably difficult for Bhutiā tradesmen, their mules, horses, goats and goods often slipping off the narrow path to plunge deep down into the valley to inevitable doom.

As I walked ahead, my coolies and the school-master seemed extremely anxious for my safety, and exhorted me to move with the utmost caution. I marched on steadily, however, with God overhead and Shri Kailās-Mānas within.

From Gallāgad to Mālpā we journeyed by the new route, the old road being so much more troublesome. Not a drop of water is available on the way, hence its name—Nirpāni Pass (waterless pass). This route is not now used.

We arrived at Mālpā at 12 a.m. in the burning heat of the sun. There was a Dharmashālā on the banks of the River Kāli-Gangā. But I was in a quandary. Outside it was parching hot; inside nothing but dirt and fleas. Which was preferable? My coolie swept a place clean, and I sat there roasting in the sun.

Fifteen minutes later I prepared a drink by mixing condensed milk with water. I drank

thirstily and felt remarkably refreshed. I then took my daily bath and performed prayers and meditation. We dined at 2 p.m., after which I reclined for a while.

At 5 p.m. I set out for a stroll on the banks of the Kāli-Gangā, leaving the schoolmaster chatting in the Dharmashālā with a trader who, he found, was an acquaintance of his.

Mālpā is situated in a valley cut by the rapidly flowing Kāli-Gangā, and the evening here presented a sombre scene. It was eerily quiet in the valley. Only the rushing water broke the grim silence. The mountains around loomed like massive forts, inspiring awe in the heart of the onlooker.

For some time I roamed along the banks of the river, meeting none of the wild animals which are known to abound in this part.

When, eventually, I returned I found a Bhutiā had returned from shikaring with some deer's flesh. I was ravenously hungry after my walk and, the meal being ready, I took my full share. We chatted for a while and then retired for the night. But I could get no sleep—the fleas were too violently active during the hours of darkness.

We resumed our journey at 4 a.m., and reached Budhi at 9.30 a.m., having had to negotiate two ascents of a mile and a half each. We remained the day at Budhi.

Budhi and Mālpā enjoy varying climates, the one excessively cold, the other hot.

The Bhutiā trader of the place gave us his open courtyard and a tent to shelter us from the sun. At night rain fell, and we had to make a hasty removal to the stable. But once again fleas and the rank odour of the place brought a restless night.

At 3 a.m. we set off again, and after mounting a steep ascent—the one between Budhi and Garbiyāng—reached the summit at 6 a.m. The schoolmasters were exhausted by the uphill journey; while the coolies, panting and breathless, could go no further for the time being. Their feet refused to move, and at every half-dozen yards they had to stop to regain breath. I halted once only at midway for fifteen minutes, yet I was breathing fast and somewhat exhausted. We managed the ascent before daybreak; after sunrise it would have been an almost impossible task.

The hill leads at the top to Vyāspatti. On looking down, my eyes were delighted at the beautiful scenery of nature. A fine plateau extended far and wide, enjoying cool and healthy climate, green with verdure; streams of clear and cool water streamed down from the high hills on to the valleys and fields below; on the other side

rose a thick green forest of Bhurjapatra. It was the hour of early morn when nature is balmy with the breath of life.

I felt an exquisite joy surge within me. This was pleasure unspeakable. . . . I seemed alone in the world—at one with nature.

On my way I passed a beautiful stream of water, and thought of taking my bath and performing my daily observances. The water, however, was so cold that my limbs were benumbed. Immediately I dressed again, and in Yogic posture (Āsana) for meditation, sat on a tiger's skin spread on a large stone slab. The Lord of the Day was just coming over the horizon; the Goddess of Morn, clad in crimson cloth with blue bodice, seemed to await eagerly the arrival of the Lord; dew-drops on the tender blades of grass in the fields were shining like pearls; and the high mountain peaks round about seemed to vie one with another to welcome the glorious sun. The charm of the whole scene was superb: snow-capped mountain-tops reflecting the ruddy rays of the morning sun and shedding their mellow light on the green forest of Bhurjapatra and Cheed (kinds of trees).

The sweet warble of birds provided divine music to enhance the charm.

Once did I look around me before I sat for

meditation. The hour of early morn—the silence and repose, the ineffable beauty of nature—soon bore me aloft into a higher life. My mind became calm and serene; and with the centre of vision fixed between the eyebrows, I was soon wrapped in meditation over the lotus-feet of my Master. I became unconscious of my body, and was all in love and bliss in that sacred land of spirituality.

Two hours later we resumed our journey.

I reached Garbiyāng at 8 a.m., and my first task was to enquire at the post office if any letters had arrived for me. The Patwāri of the place and the political Peshkār's servant had, I learnt, gone to Kuti, so I put up in the house of the schoolmaster, there being no accommodation at the post office.

I met at the post office a Dravidian Sādhu whom I had seen at Māyāvati, and who had set out for Lake Mānas at my suggestion only four days ahead of me. He unburdened to me his tale of grief, but I had no mind to listen while he was in unseemly mood. When he insisted in continuing, I had to tell him quite firmly that I could bear with him no longer.

Garbiyāng, at 10,000 feet above the sea-level—the same height as that of Shri Badri Kedār—marks the terminus of the British frontier. It

possesses a well-to-do population with about a hundred and fifty houses. The monsoon here is temperate, but there is a heavy fall of snow. From June to September the season is pleasant; later in the year intensely cold.

It was here I learnt that the way to Tibet was still frozen and the Lipu Pass completely blocked by ice and bitterly cold. I had, therefore, to remain at Garbiyāng for twenty days.

I was fortunate enough, however, to procure the Peshkār's bungalow. There was no Dharmaśālā here, and the houses of Bhutiā people were uninhabitable. A Government grocer's shop was a scarcity here, and supplies were most difficult to obtain. Indeed, it was impossible to get good provisions, even if double the usual price were paid. My friend the schoolmaster of Garbiyāng rendered much help in securing provisions. The head men of the caste gave me 'Jāphat' (provisions) sufficient for three people for two meals, to be sent with servants at intervals.

At Garbiyāng rice cannot be satisfactorily cooked, and consequently I was obliged to eat wheat-bread and lentils-curry ('Dāl-Rotee'), both for morning and evening meals, with occasionally wild vegetable. Milk was, of course, an unknown commodity here.

We suffered considerably from lack of good

food, especially as the good climate and the good water made one feel abnormally hungry.

Agriculture and trade form the main occupations of the Bhutiā people. Except for two or three months in the year, they are absent on business in Tibet, Nepāl and India, though formerly they seldom went beyond Gallāgad. Summer is unbearable to the Bhutiās. During the last fifty years they seem to have made remarkable progress from their semi-barbaric condition. They are cruel by nature; singing and dancing are their chief amusements. Young people of both sexes, married or single, mix freely with each other in sport, merriment and dance. Women manage the homes and fields, while men look to trades.

During my visits even to the well-to-do people, I found their residences invariably dingy and dirty, exuding a foul stink of flesh and drink. Fleas run about their clothes. . . .

Bhutiās are average in build, neither too tall nor short: their women folk are stout and healthy, with fair complexions. They wear silver ornaments and drink and smoke like males. Girls remain unmarried till twenty or twenty-five. It is difficult to make out what kind of religion these people profess, but they are great worshippers of demons and ghosts. Their customs and cere-

monies seem an admixture of those found in Tibet and India.

Bhutiā women are specially fond of dance and song, chanting their love-themes in the Gurkhāli dialect. Bhutiās, like the Westerners, hold public balls at night—known as ‘Rung-Bung’. These are accompanied by drink, smoke, dinner, dance and music. Love-marriages are in vogue here, and their romances usually begin at these Rung-Bungs. Divorce is allowed.

The Bhutiās have their own castes and caste-feuds, but are compelled to pay tributes to the British, Tibetan and Nepālese Governments. Mundhwā and java form the staple produce.

My stay of twenty days at Garbiyāng was a pleasant one. Every morning I visited the confluence of the Kāli-Gangā and the Tinker, about six furlongs from Garbiyāng, for bathing and meditation. At the confluence I found a quiet retreat for thought amidst rows of green trees and snow-clad mountains. The region of the Himālayās is the only place fit for practising austerities. Our sages in ancient times meditated there in the grand recesses of nature, practised severe austerities and attained the Knowledge Absolute. It was by their meditations and austerities here in the sacred Himālayās—the Home of Wisdom—that they produced the immortal

Sanskrit works on religion and philosophy which even to-day are the Light of Life to the whole world.

In my daily meditations here amidst the charms of nature I was scarcely conscious of time. It was my good fortune that I found opportunity at such a place for my meditations.

The real Himālayās begin with the perpetual-snow range; Gangotri, Kedār, Badri-Nārāyen, Amarnāth (Kashmir) and Mukti-Nāth (Nepāl) lie only in this region.

It took me nearly two months to reach Garbiyāng from Kāthagodām, the way being through hills, dales, forests and across rivers. Yet these days kept me fresh and vigorous in mind and body; the cool clear water, the charms of nature, worship, and meditation upon my Master were refreshing bodily and spiritual food. The intensity for the Ideal had so much grown in me that my heart had made a bondsman of my body, and was merrily dragging it on and on over hill, dale and cascade towards its own haven—Shri Kailās-Mānas.

For the first few days at Garbiyāng I bathed with hot water owing to the piercing, biting wind. But later on I resumed my cold-water baths. I purchased a Bhutiā blanket for seven rupees. It was thick and must have been thirty

pounds in weight. Formerly such a blanket could be bought for two or three rupees, but now the exports of wool to Cawnpore have grown enormously and the price of blankets has risen in proportion.

Here, at Garbiyāng, Nature spread her charms in varied bounty. At times I seemed to move between clouds; at others I saw silvery rain clouds running from south to north under my feet. Again, at times, thick black clouds passed very near, like an umbrella waved over my head. On one side rose mountains clad snow-white; on the other, pleasing to the eye, extended rich green fields of waving java. Mountains to the right, mountains to the left, mountains to the front and mountains to the back! One felt as if these monuments of nature vied with one another, peak upon peak rising one above the other, delighting the eye with grandeur.

The place where I sat for meditation in the mornings is beyond compare.

On the other side of the Kāli-Gangā, in the territory of the Nepālese Government, rises a small hill about one thousand feet high, at a distance of six furlongs from Garbiyāng. On one side of the hill flows the Kāli-Gangā, and on the other the Tinker. At about fifty yards lower down towards the west, the rivers meet. Four hundred

feet above the level of the water lies a flat expanse of land, and five hundred feet higher, at the top of the hill, is a village of fifty houses called Chhāngru.

As the Kāli-Gangā flows on the northern side of the hill, beyond extends an open plain far and wide. A similar flat vale stretches to the north-east. All round are green fields and tall forests of Bhurjapatra and Cheed, fortified, so to say, on all sides by a rampart of mountains. Perfectly white snow-capped peaks at the top and green waving fields right at the bottom—a scene charming in itself.

While my eyes were ceaselessly feasting on these wonders of bounteous nature, my ears were revelling in the sweet symphony produced by the unison of the warble of birds and the deep rush of the commingling streams—harmony exquisite, the Sound Eternal. The clouds passing over created pictures of light and shade that were so pleasing to the eye. How blessed did I feel, enrapt in adoration over the lotus-feet of my Master, at such a wondrous place in the still and balmy hours of every morn! A remembrance of this happy state still thrills my heart.

One day, after my meditation was over, I gazed freely at a bird on the tree in front of me. It was hopping from bough to bough and whist-

ling in merriment. Suddenly the adorative mood rose within me, and I passed into rapture in joy and bliss inexpressible. Tongue fails to describe the joy—which is cognisable to experience only.

The charms of the place and the joys of meditation chained me: twenty days slipped by like so many minutes. The well-appointed bungalow in which I resided belonged to the political Peshkār. Round it was an extensive yard—a favourite resort of mine on clear moonlit nights. My Dravidian friend—Gurunādā Bāwā—seemed not to appreciate the pleasant atmosphere of my bungalow, and preferred the town some distance away. I gave him a woollen kafani to protect him from cold. He had contracted the opium habit common to a few Sādhus and was restless and impatient when he had not the wherewithal to satisfy his intense craving. He was often short of food too, and frequently I took him to meals with me. Fifteen years he had lived the life of a Sādhu; but he was a Sādhu only in name. He was extremely sensitive to bodily pains and comforts: I could pity him—that was all.

At 10 p.m. one evening, a fortnight after I came to Garbiyāng, I was pacing in the courtyard after my meal, pondering over the sweet name of my Master, when an abrupt thought reminded me that on the eighth day hence I should start

for Tibet. The idea eased my mind. That very night I had a dream of good omen. The next day I broke the idea to my friend the schoolmaster, who thereupon informed me that a Khampā, with a herd of goats, had come from Tibet that morning, and though the road was not quite clear, it would be so within a week. He also said that I might get company on the journey, and hoped my tour would be an easy one. Within three or four days, as the snow melted, the regular traffic began, and a few Bhutiās from the Chowdās Parganā came to Garbiyāng on their way to Tibet. On the eighth day as arranged, I left for Tāklākot (in Tibet) in company with a rich Bhutiā trader of Pāngu. At 8 a.m. we reached Chhāngru, where I halted with the Padhān (head) of the village, as I had promised him that I would stay with him for a day on my way to Tāklākot. The next day, after our midday meal, we left for Tinker—myself, two coolies, Gurunādā, a Nepālese Hawāldār, and a police sepoy. The way to Tinker is very rough, and lies by the side of the river, though with a slope in the middle through Nepālese territory. Tinker is seven miles from Chhāngru.

The previous evening Gurunādā had exchanged hot words with my coolies, and so was in a fretting mood. He fasted in anger the whole

day, and would not even take meals the next day. I tried in various ways to appease him, but his irritation increased. He would not, he said, accompany us to Kailās-Mānas, though our people assured him that in our company his journey would be comfortable. He was not in a mood to listen, so we resumed our journey without waiting for him. The road to Tinker was steep and rough in ascent. We felt exhausted before we reached our destination at 12 a.m. We ate jagree and drank water, and took rest. Half an hour later we espied Gurunādā coming towards us, at a distance, groaning and leaning on his stick at every step. We welcomed him and treated him to jagree and water, and were specially courteous to him the whole day. But he often grumbled at the coolies, so long as he was with us.

At Tinker we stayed a day and a half, our Nepālese Hawāldār proving himself very useful in obtaining necessary lodging and good food through the Padhān of the place. Then the Nepālese and the police sepoy returned to Chhāngru, and we resumed our journey—myself, two coolies, Gurunādā and the Bhutiā trader. The Bhutiā merchant had with him two Huniā (Tibetan) servants and seven Zubus carrying cloth bundles, and four horses. By evening we reached a Dharmashālā about two and a half

miles from Tinker, and stayed there for the night.

The Dharmashālā lay at the foot of the Tinker Dhurā (pass). It is always easy to go over passes and steep heights in the early hours of the morning, so we put up here for the night. The Dharmashālā had several rooms, but was dirty. We *had* to pass the night there. Our Bhutiā trader unloaded his cloth bundles and spread a tent cloth over them. Near by I saw a heap of leather sacks, about fifteen feet high, full of groceries. These were the goods of my Bhutiā trader, unloaded from his herd of two thousand goats which was encamped there.

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Tinker Dhurā is one of the several passes that lead to Western Tibet and is generally frequented by Bhutiā traders. As it had rained heavily the previous night and the roof of the house leaked freely, I had perforce to sit the whole night with an umbrella over my head. Even then my clothes were soaking wet. Lighting the fire was beyond question, the ground was so drenched; we had therefore to fast. Gurunādā suffered much from cold and rain.

We intended to resume our journey at 3 a.m., but we had to travel the whole day over the pass

through snow and ice[†] and therefore took tea and meals early, as it is impossible to contend with the ice on an empty stomach. My Bhutiā friend the merchant hired for me from Tinker a horse for one rupee for six hours. Tinker Dhurā is 18,000 feet in height, and the steep ascending pass extends for about five miles. We started at 4 a.m., myself and the Bhutiā merchant on horseback, the others on foot, with the animals marching ahead. The sky was overcast with heavy clouds and mist was hanging thick in the air.

Tibetan goats, yāks, horses and other animals are very useful to travellers as guides. They walk along very cautiously, smelling the ground. They know, either by scent or instinct, the pits and ponds on the way, which are generally covered over by ice, and in their march avoid them. It is, therefore, the common practice among Bhutiā traders to march with these animals ahead. One of our horses was an expert traveller's guide, and his owner, the Bhutiā merchant, told me that the animal had often saved his life and goods from destruction.

At Khelā I saw the 'Zubu' for the first time. It is like the 'Yāk' (the wild bull)—a hybrid of the yāk and the domestic cow. We arrived at the top of the Tinker Pass at 12 a.m. and stood on a height of 18,000 feet. It was snow-white all round.

My feet were covered with snow two or three inches above the ankle. I wore blue-pebbled glasses to minimise the glare of the sun-rays reflected from the ice. On reaching the top of the pass, I sent away the horse, took the glasses from my eyes, and turned round for a moment. It was grand and sublime to behold. I was instantly reminded of the chapter in the Bhagavad-Geetā which treats of how Lord Śhri Krishna showed the Virāta Swarupa (Cosmic Revelation) to Arjuna, who, being unable to take it in with his mortal vision, prayed for a higher divine vision. This Himālayān scene has ever since been riveted in my memory. I shivered with cold—yet the grandeur and sublimity overtook me and cast out all bodily discomforts. The weather was normal, there being no rain nor storm except occasional snow-fall. We stood on a high mountain range, with deep ravines and precipices to the north and south, forming, as it were, the dividing line between India and Tibet. The crossing of this perpetual-snow range is a most arduous task, and frequently men and animals succumb in the attempt. In the course of our journey uphill one of the horses slipped off his feet and fell. In a minute his legs stiffened, his tongue hung out, and his eyes were contorted. The bindings were cut and the saddle was taken

off; it was only after great and continuous efforts that the animal could be made to stand on its legs. By the Grace of Shri Nārāyen we got to the top of the Tinker Pass safe and sound. For a few minutes I gazed intently at this grand scene of nature. Here, in this land of eternal snow, I could imagine the feelings which a soul, taken away from the mortal coil, might experience on being ushered into the land of Heaven! It is impossible to describe further the effect of this sublime scene on my mind.

We waited fifteen minutes on the top of the Dhurā for the sake of Gurunādā and my coolies, who were still coming up. Because of the uncertainty of the weather and the fear that a snow- and rain-storm might bring destruction upon us, we resumed our way and marched ankle-deep through snow; my limbs oft became benumbed with cold. With the long staff in my right hand, I walked on for an hour and a half by the side of one of the horses through ice and snow. At last we came to a pebbly road, and the Bhutiā merchant and myself went in front. At 3.30 p.m. we reached at last the end of this difficult part of the journey, and sat for rest by the side of a water spring. I felt exhausted and, for a few minutes, lay on the ground motionless. My stomach was crying aloud with hunger, but the food was with

the coolies. My Bhutiā friend, however, kindly gave me two pieces of bread and a handful of dry grapes. We chewed our food at leisure and waited for the others. Nearly an hour later, my coolies and Gurunādā reached us. Gurunādā had two violent motions on the way and was terribly exhausted with headache and fatigue. The coolies also seemed quite done up, and on reaching the spring threw themselves headlong on the ground, saying they could not keep alive any longer. I felt very anxious for them. We then mixed ghee, jagree and sattū-flour (a mixture of various flours) together and gave it to the coolies and Gurunādā. After this repast they seemed to be restored a little and looked fresher. But Gurunādā was panting, and it was only after some hours that his breathing became normal again. Normal breathing is possible up to a height of 9000 feet; beyond this limit the air is more rarefied, and breathing becomes faster until one is exhausted. While marching, we used to hold black pepper in our mouths so that they would not grow parched. By the side of that spring we rested for two hours. Thereupon we resumed our journey together over a wide, flat plain with not a shrub or a tree to relieve the eye. Six of us and the seven animals—these were apparently the only living beings in that wild, dreary plateau.

At 5.30 p.m. we saw Tāklākot on the top of a hill. Biting winds now began to blow in our faces. Though Tāklākot seemed so near, yet we could not reach the place before 7.30 p.m. We travelled continuously for fifteen hours this day. On reaching Tāklākot we found the River Karnāli was flooded. Nor was there a bridge. We had to cross the river on the backs of the animals. On the opposite bank was a big cave carved out in the rock with several Gumphās (rooms) in it. I stayed in one of these rooms for the night, after having it swept clean of the accumulated refuse. My friend the Bhutiā merchant put up in another Gumphā after unloading the animals, for they were to be sent back to Tinker that very night, no fodder being available for them at Tāklākot. The animals were very hungry, having travelled all the way from Tinker through the arduous pass. The coolies, Gurunādā and the tradesman and his servants were soon eating Sattu and Jān (a kind of drink prepared from Java).

Here we met with half a dozen Tibetans. They were dead drunk. Working their ogre faces, they threatened to kill us if we did not immediately leave Tibetan territory. They posed as Tibetan officers. When we did not move, they grew turbulent. It was 8.30 p.m. I could not understand

a word of what they said. The Bhutiā trader, however, explained something to them, and they went away for a time. The Tibetans are a wild people, and a foreign traveller is likely to feel in constant dread of his life amongst them. My coolies and all of us were so exhausted that we did not take the trouble to prepare tea or food, but immediately retired to sleep. But I could not sleep; my body was aching the whole night.

I came out of the Gumphā the next morning at 5 a.m., to go to the river for bathing. Before I had proceeded far, however, a Tibetan approached me and said in his language that the Zumpan Sāhib wanted me immediately. I took him to my Bhutiā friend, who explained that I would see the Zumpan Sāhib after meals at noon. It was very cold, and a chill, bleak wind blew; the water of the river, I was told, was unhealthy. So I gave up the idea of taking my bath that day.

A short while thereafter the Bhutiā came to my Gumphā, where I was reading the Avadhoota-Geetā as usual and Gurunādā sat in another corner for meditation. Here about twenty Tibetan men, women and children stood before me. These people pestered one of my coolies who knew their language with all sorts of questions. They stared at me and at Gurunādā, and laughed and joked amongst themselves. Two or three old

men were apparently remonstrating with them. I thought they were joking at my coolie because he stammered. In their eyes Gurunādā was a true Sādhū, because he wore long matted hair on his head, put Rudrāksha beads on his person, and because his whole body was besmeared with ashes; besides, he had the Sanyāsin's wooden bowl. My attire was quite otherwise. My hair was short, I wore no Rudrāksha, I carried a brass kamandalu and I did not besmear my body with ashes. So these Tibetan people thought me some prince from India disguised as a Sādhū. My clothes, my clean kafani, and the fact of my engaging coolies as servants, added to their suspicion. On the Bhutiā arriving he was asked a number of questions regarding me. He told them that I was only a Sādhū, a learned and very amiable man on pilgrimage to Kailās-Mānas. The Tibetans then dispersed. My Bhutiā friend then told me that he was going to the Zumpan with fruits for him and would talk to him about me and solicit a free passage for me. He asked me to go to the Zumpan in two or three hours' time. It was then 9 a.m. The piercing cold and the biting wind had made cracks on the lips and faces of my coolies and Gurunādā. I found that my lower lip had also cracked; blood was coming from it freely.

For fuel we bought prickly shrubs worth two annas and purchased from the Bhutiā trader wheat-flour, ghee and Muga lentils. Then my coolies prepared meals and we took our dinner. We were thinking of going to the Zumpan when we met the men sent for us. Gurunādā, myself and the coolie who could speak Tibetan went to meet the Zumpan at 12 noon.

The Zumpan's residence was at a height of 500 feet from our place. The route was steep and exhausted us. The Zumpan's attendants accompanied us to point out the way. The main entrance of the residence seemed more like the private mansion of an Indian chief or Jahāgirdār than a fort. The outer walls were striped in white and brown paint. The construction was of earthwork only. On the west projected a terrace adjoining an apartment with holes for windows. The whole thing seemed to me like a Gadhee (an earthwork fort) in Khāndesh. We were led from the main door through a narrow, dark, winding lane to another large entrance guarded by two stout dogs. The dogs were about three and a half feet in height, with jaws larger than those of a bull-dog; they had long and soft hair, were full-developed in neck and chest, with slender waist and long, shaggy tails. The animals were each tied to the side of the door with three stout iron

chains passed through belts round their necks. On seeing us they rose aggressively and growled somewhat like tigers. Tibetan dogs are quite at home in icy regions. Passing through the second door we saw two long wings, one on either side: in one, four Huniās were grinding sattū; in the other sattū-wine was being prepared. We climbed upstairs by a ladder. Then the Tibetan attendant asked us to sit down, and proceeded up to the third storey on a shaky ladder. The place where we sat was extremely dirty.

A few minutes later Parmā Bhutiā—my friend the Bhutiā trader—came down to me and said that the Zumpan Sāhib was in a good mood and desired to see me—that he had given the Zumpan Sāhib the necessary information about me. The two Lāmās who were talking to the Zumpan having departed, we were called up to the third storey. The Zumpan stood on the terrace with his face towards the river; near him was Parmā Bhutiā; a little distance away stood a Tibetan who from his dress and deportment, I presumed to be a servant of the Zumpan.

I was introduced duly to the Zumpan Sāhib by my friend Parmā Bhutiā. The Zumpan bowed to me, and I blessed him in the usual fashion of Sādhus, raising my hands. The Zumpan wore Dokchyā (boots reaching the knee)

of red velvet, a brocaded Bakhu (long robe) and a tall embroidered cap on the head. In his hand he carried a rosary of beads.

Neither very fat nor very lean, the Zumpan bore an aristocratic countenance. He beckoned me to follow him to a neat, clean, though small hall which he used as his office, drawing-room and worship-chamber. Dans (Tibetan rugs) were spread profusely on the ground, with mattresses and cushions laid over them. Small Sedan-stools were also placed in front of the mattresses to be used while dining. The Zumpan inquired about the coolie and Gurunādā who had accompanied me. Parmā Bhutiā acted as our interpreter. The Zumpan seemed pleased with me. He showed me with complaisance the silver bead-counting machine and the silver and gold utensils (Neer-ānjan) used for daily worship. The symbols 'Om Māmi Pāmi Hum' were engraved on the bead-counting machine. As we talked on religious subjects, our interpreter the Bhutiā found his task very difficult. After a short, desultory conversation I made a request for the permit, whereupon the Zumpan immediately gave me a permit bearing his official seal for four persons. At this moment a Bhutiā merchant came there and made a present of fruits to the Zumpan—plantains, Alphonso mangoes, almonds, dried grapes,

etc. The Zumpan accepted the dry fruits and offered the green fruits to me. I accepted the mangoes gladly. In my tour to Kailās-Mānas I used to eat one mango every day. Fortune favours the strong in faith. While departing, the Zumpan gave me a rupee as Dakshinā (an offering to a pious Sādhu) and expressed his hope that my journey to Kailās-Mānas might be a pleasant one. I blessed him in my turn. The Zumpan Sāhib came as far as the ladder to bid me good-bye. I had spent nearly an hour with him.

I was really very fortunate, for Tibetans are a suspicious folk. But my friend the Parmā Bhutiā had assured the Zumpan that I was not a spy in disguise. Obtaining the permit is usually a very complicated and difficult business, my friend the Bhutiā told me. But in my case I got within thirty minutes the permit for visiting Kailās, Khochar-nāth, Teerthāpuri, Lake Mānas and other places. The Bhutiā said that the Zumpan was pleased with me and strongly impressed in my favour, to which I remarked that it was the Grace of my Master, who was my saviour all through.

There is a large Buddhist monastery on the hill on which the Zumpan's residence stands. About three hundred Lāmās reside in the monastery and worship the image of Buddha kept there, with

great pomp. The monastery also contains a large library. Near by was a prison-house for Tibetan convicts, who are punished very severely, and are accorded excessively harsh treatment.

I could not minutely study the system of administration in Tibet, first because of my ignorance of the Tibetan language, and, secondly, because the object of my Himālayān tour was purely religious, viz. pilgrimage to Mount Kailās. What information about the political conditions I could gather was only by way of general talk and friendly intercourse. The Zumpan is a Tibetan officer like the Divisional Commissioner in British India, having authority over and administrative charge of a province. The Garpan is a superior officer—like the British Governor—over three or four Zumpans. He is assisted by a Shepchit with a Lāmā—the latter two officials being entrusted with the work of dispensing justice. Gārtok is the seat of residence of the Garpan of Western Tibet.

I managed to see the inside of the prison-house. A young Huniā dacoit was sentenced to death and the sentence was being carried out. He was tied up in a sack of yāk-leather and roasted to death in the parching Tibetan sun. In Tibet summers and winters reach extremes of heat and cold. Among the Tibetans cutting off

hands and feet is also a common form of punishment. So intense was the heat inside the prison that I was exceedingly thankful to leave it.

As I had to prepare for the future journey, I stayed at Tāklākot for four days. The tract round about Tāklākot is dry, except for the few patches of green fields of java (barley) on the banks of the blue Karnāli, and the prickly shrubs used as fuel. There is no fodder for cattle. At Tāklākot the days are hotter than at Garbiyāng, but the nights are severely cold. Fodder for cattle and food for men—both have to be stored for the year. Fuel is very scarce; the dung of the yāk, horse, mule, ass and goat is dried and used as fuel. Exorbitant prices are charged for all manner of things. Provisions can be bought, though at heavy prices. Further on they are absolutely unavailable. I had therefore to buy provisions immediately which would suffice us over four weeks. I bought sattū, wheat-flour, four pounds of ghee of wild cow, six tins of condensed milk and three pound tablets of Tibetan tea—for all this I had to pay thirty rupees. I asked my friend the Bhutiā merchant to procure for me a mule-teen or a yāk-owner who could serve as my attendant, at the same time using his animal for carrying the load of provisions. But I was told that no animal was then available, first because fodder

was not to be had on the hills in that season; secondly, because marauders used to frequent the parts near Kailās-Mānas; and thirdly, because, among Tibetans, the person engaging the hired animal had to make good the price of the animal to the owner if it was lost in the course of the journey. What guarantee could I—a poor monk—give to make good the possible loss? A yāk, mule or a horse generally cost one hundred rupees. I spent two days in trying to make some arrangement or other, but in vain. On the third night, however, I resolved to start for Shri Kailās-Mānas the following day, come what may, so the next morning, with my eyes turned towards the river flowing below, I thought over my resolution and decided to start after the noonday meal, even if no conveyance was available. Then Parmā Bhutiā introduced a middle-aged Huniā who, he said, was willing to accompany me to Kailās and, besides, owned an ass for carrying my load. The man was well acquainted with the passes and routes, and was willing to bear the sole responsibility of the loss of his ass. It was like a help-mate sent from on High. I bowed down in adoration at the feet of my Master, who was my saviour all through. The Bhutiā then settled the terms at Rs. 15 per month, to which I agreed. The man demanded a month's wages in advance and

swore that he would not desert me, whatever happened. I advanced him the money readily. Later I learned that the man agreed to these terms only because he was hard pressed by circumstances. My new servant suggested that we should start at 2 p.m., and I agreed, as that was the hour I had considered suitable in the morning. I was so impressed by this timely help—such an unexpected God-send—that the following verse from the ‘Dāsbodha’ of Shri Rāmdās Swāmi at once occurred to me: ‘The mind’s aims are fulfilled and the obstacles are chased away, if the Lord sheds His Grace’. Here in me I realised the truth of this verse. With eyes flowing with tears of love, and heart full of adoration, I bowed once again at the lotus-feet of my Master.

We completed our meals at 12 a.m. and were quite ready to resume our journey. I waited and waited for my Huniā carrier, but he did not turn up. At last at 6 p.m. he came, saying that he had been detained long at the Zumpan’s office, where he had been to pay the instalment of dues. As it was already evening, the man suggested going only a short distance and lodging for the night in his house across the river, a mile and a half away. We agreed to the plan and started at 6.30 p.m.—myself, two coolies, Gurunādā and this Tibetan guide with his ass. At sunset we crossed the

river by a wooden bridge and passed the night in a cave. My Tibetan guide went to his home to make further preparations for resuming the journey next morning. He gave us a few prickly shrubs for preparing our meals. Tea was prepared and we took it. Gurunādā and myself were chatting, when Parmā Bhutiā came to us and introduced an old Sādhu who accompanied him. I offered a seat to the Sādhu and asked my coolies to prepare tea. I learnt from the Bhutiā that the old Sādhu was no other than Morpankhī Bāwā, who had been making annual pilgrimage from Muttrā to Kailās for the last twelve years. I blessed my fortune at having the opportunity of seeing this venerable old Sādhu.

VI

It was the Bāwā's vow to visit annually Kailās-Mānas for one Tapa (twelve years), and to spend each year a month and a half at Kailās in meditation of the Lord Shiva. This was his twelfth year, and Morpankhī Bāwā was returning from his last visit to Kailās-Mānas. On his way back he met Parmā Bhutiā at Tāklākot, who spoke to him about me. So the Bāwā had hurried specially to see me. Until the tea was ready we talked. The Bāwā gave me a pinch of Kailās earth as a Pra-

sād (a pious gift) from Kailās, which I reverently placed over my head. He also gave me Vishapāshān, a medicine to produce heat in the body in case of excessive cold. I offered the Bāwā tea and sattū, which he took. After smoking he blessed me and bade good-bye. He stayed with me for one hour and a half. I went up to the bridge to see him off and wave a loving farewell.

Morpankhi Bāwā was a thin man of about sixty years of age. His hair was long, matted, and tied over his head. From head to feet he was besmeared with ashes. He wore white canvas shoes and carried kamandalu which had ghee in it and a pair of tongs. He used to travel sixty miles every day, and could go from Darchin to Tāklākot in a single day. He had gone to Kailās only a couple of months before me, at a time when the whole of Lipu Pass is frozen with ice, and even goats find it hard to cross. Some years back he used to wear a cap with peacock feathers, and so was called Morpankhi Bāwā—the Bāwā with peacock feathers. The political Peshkār of Askot had spoken to me about this Bāwāji. He was reputed in that province to have a good knowledge of herbs and drugs. I found this to be true.

We slept in the cave and the next morning at 5 a.m., after our daily calls, we took tea. The guide came and we resumed our journey by

the road along the Karnāli to Gārtok. In Tibet there are no good roads, nor can one travel without guides. Within four miles of Tāklākot there was a kind of footpath. Further on there was none. A local guide was thus a necessity. It was already cold when we started out. We shivered incessantly and, to add to our discomforts, fine gravel on the path pricked the feet. The sunrise, however, warmed us a little. After we had covered four miles, our ass slipped over a narrow and soft part of the road into the river, which, though shallow, had a strong stream. It was being borne down by the current, and we thought it would be lost. My coolies and the guide ran along the bank after the floating ass. After about twenty yards it was washed up on a piece of rock, almost lifeless. The guide jumped into the river and somehow pulled it to the bank. Luckily, the river was not in full flood. It was 9.30. . . .

Owing to the cold, the guide's limbs appeared to be frozen, blue and green. He put on his leather bakhu and lay down for half an hour, after which he felt better. With great difficulty our loads of provisions were brought over from the other bank of the river. The bundle of match-boxes and some of the sattu were wet, but we spread them and our clothes in the sun. I had secured a fresh supply of sattu from Tāklākot.

It had taken us nearly seven hours to reach here.

We resumed our journey at 3 p.m. Not a soul met us on the way. At 7 p.m. we arrived at Kardamkhār, a village with only two or three houses. We had to lodge for the night in the open. I ate a mixture of tea, sattū, jagree and ghee, but found my stomach grew flatulent, so I ever after avoided taking sattū. A dozen biscuits, three pints of tea sufficed me for the day. Owing to the intense cold I did not feel hungry, though I used to walk thirteen miles every day. Even so, I kept my health and strength. My coolies, however, ate with increasing appetites.

Kardamkhār lies twenty or twenty-five miles from Tāklākot. Here I met with many Tibetan yāks and sheep. Various are the types of Tibetan sheep; one is little over a foot in height, with very soft wool. They, especially the young, are very beautiful to look at. At Kardamkhār we slept in the open; it was cold, and the wind blew fiercely. To counteract this we had put on thick clothes, but they were full of little insects, special products of this place. They used to bite us like fleas. Outside was fierce cold; inside there were these insects—so we were doubly harassed. However, I took off my clothes and lay down, covering myself with a Bhutiā blanket; yet I shivered continu-

ously and my teeth chattered. At this a Huniā woman brought me a dozen lambs and told me to put them by my side to ward off the intense cold. Accordingly I slept with these little lambs around me, two to the front, two at the back, two by the head and four or five at the feet, covering myself as well as my queer bed-mates with a blanket. I could then sleep for a few hours. The little animals were still close by my side when I awoke.

The trade season of Tibet had just begun by the end of June, but was not yet in full swing. The Bhutiās, Huniās and Jumlis had not yet begun their annual journey. I hardly met anyone on the way. At 5 a.m., after tea, we resumed our journey. On overcoming the short ascent about two furlongs from Kardamkhār, we came upon an extensive plain with neither shrub, tree nor spring to relieve the eye! All around mountains stood like grim sentinels. It was the hour of sunrise, when the glorious Lord of the Day was coming over the eastern horizon. All was tranquil. The ice-tipped mountain-peaks reflected the ruddy rays of the morning sun, and shone like emblazoned moulds of copper. The east on our right was gorgeous with sunrise; in front of us a wide and open plain extended; beyond it rose high peaks, peeping at us—strangers to the

place—from beyond the clouds. On our left extended mountains far and long, revelling in a storm of hail. No sound of birds could be heard to break the calm repose of this scene. The five of us marched slowly along, awed by this grand scene of nature. But the prick of gravel on the road soon wearied the feet, and my coolies often sat down for rest. My Tibetan guide too felt exhausted. We rested for half an hour and resumed our journey.

The Tibetan plateau is 16,000 feet above the sea-level. Here breathing is difficult, and even a short march brings on fatigue. In Tibet oftentimes biting winds blow fiercely during days as well as nights; and the skin gets cracked and blood flows.

After we had travelled six or seven miles we came across a running brook and stopped on its bank for lunch. For protection from the wind there was a convenient wall. Thin green grass flourished weedily by the banks of the stream, and my carrier's ass was delighted with it. It brayed exultantly.

In Tibet there are no Dharmashālās for travellers, but walls are erected at short distances. These walls are made of stones piled upon stones and afford shelter from the fierce Tibetan winds. Tea was prepared. I took tea with biscuits and

my coolies took tea and sattū. Then we prepared ourselves for further journeying. My Tibetan guide began his meal at 9.30 a.m. and had not finished though it was over five hours since he began. He consumed about ten pints of tea, about a seer¹ of sattū and some flesh. The Tibetans take their food on wooden tables or stone slabs. The process is somewhat as follows. About ten pints of water are heated and tea and flesh boiled in it together; the tea is then served out in a Faruwā (wooden bowl), and sattū is mixed with it. This mixture is eaten slowly; ten or twelve morsels at a time with a Faruwā full of tea. Then comes an interval of rest for fifteen minutes; again tea and the mixture; again rest. This goes on till the dinner is over. At times pieces of flesh are eaten with rock-salt.

My guide finished his eating at 2 p.m., and I asked him to prepare for further journeying. He offered an excuse, saying that it would be quite dark before we could reach the next pass, which was frequented by Dākus, and we would, therefore, have to stay in that dangerous place for the night. He suggested we had better wait till evening, when the Khampā who had left just after us from Tāklākot would overtake us, and then resume our journey with him early in the morning.

¹One seer is two pounds (avoirdupois).

At first I found this idea plausible and agreed to it. One of my coolies, however, who had been to Tibet twelve years before, pointed out that the place where we were putting up was in fact the haunt of Dākus (marauders), and the Dākus had attacked him here on his last journey. I protested to the guide on hearing this news, but he would not yield. So we had to stay there the whole of the day.

We had to roast in the sun from noon till evening, perspiring amidst hot winds, with reddened eyes. At intervals the cold, bleak wind bit us to the bone.

At about 3 p.m. we saw two men mounted on yāks moving towards us from a great distance. We thought at first that the Khampā was coming. But there were no herds of goats, and Khampā seldom travels without goats. A short while after the two men on yāks also disappeared and we felt dejected. My guide set out pebbles in front of him on the ground, counted a few numbers, drew some figures on the floor and posed in an astrologer's fashion to prognosticate the Khampā's arrival. Soon he told me that the Khampā would come by evening. I had no mind to listen to him, and we sat on till evening, roasting under the sun. I had an umbrella overhead and meditated upon the lotus-feet of my Master with my

face northward. Gurunādā covered himself with a Mārwāri blanket, and my coolies lay under their blankets, restless from the sun. Near by my guide snored in sleep.

It was 6 p.m., yet the Khampā had not turned up. All the guide's talk about the Khampā was a deliberate lie. The fellow pretended to be disappointed and suggested that we should sleep there the night and start early the next morning. I spoke not a word to him!

It was 7 p.m. My guide went by the river-side to the east in search of his ass, which had strayed far for grazing. The coolies and Gurunādā were listlessly looking round. I was watching the sun going down in the west and pondering on the wisdom and glory of the Creator of the Universe. Cold, biting winds had just begun to blow, and a star here and there shone out in the sky. Just then Gurunādā felt somebody coming towards us from the east, and told me so. We looked in that direction and found two men on horseback fast riding in our direction. In less than fifteen minutes they had arrived within a few feet and began staring at us and our goods. One of them was a man of about forty years of age, and the other about twenty-five. Each carried a gun, sword, spear, poniard and hatchet. They were stout, with shaggy wild hair on their

heads, and of flat countenance. They looked cruel. Their Tibetan horses were also short and stout. On seeing these armed men we were at first alarmed. From their speech and gestures I could gather that they wanted to know who we were, where we were going and what we had got. One of my coolies knew Tibetan, but he was too terrified to speak. Gurunādā raised his hands towards them in an attitude of blessing, while I uttered, 'Kāshi Lāmā, Mānas Sarowar-Kailās'. At my words the young man smiled. I was sitting in my usual posture of meditation. A few minutes later both were bowing down to us from their mounts before proceeding on their way beyond the hill, to fade from sight.

As they rode away my guide appeared carrying a bunch of prickly shrubs in one hand, and with the other leading the donkey by the ear. At once my coolies related the incident of the two horsemen. His manner was distinctly disquieting. My suspicions concerning him were considerably strengthened by his excuse for staying there that day. Thereafter I viewed him warily and placed little trust in his words.

It was now severely cold, and bleak winds blew. My coolies prepared our meals, while the guide attended to his own wants. He had finished his supper at least five minutes before we had

appeased our own appetites, and I was struck at this unwonted quickness. Since then I found that at night he ate little and slept early.

At last we retired to rest. On the floor I spread a mat, a tiger skin, a blanket and, over all, a sheet of white cloth—this was my under-bedding. Fully dressed, we used to cover ourselves with a rug and a Bhutiā blanket. Our sleeping posture was to lie face downwards, drawing hands and knees towards the chest.

Before sleeping, I impressed upon Gurunādā and the coolies that it was His Grace that had brought us thus far and would carry us through; all we had to do was to place full and implicit faith in His Grace. I eventually slept, meditating in adoration over the lotus-feet of my Master. Near us lay the guide, his faithful ass standing at his head throughout the entire night. At intervals we would rise in order to shake off the layers of snow which fell incessantly and settled in heavy layers upon our coverings. Never shall I forget the night. Strong winds were blowing, snow was falling, and the cold was appalling. Any part of the body, if exposed for the briefest space, became benumbed and paralysed.

Ten hours of the parching heat of day were followed by ten hours of freezing cold during the night; besides which there was the ever-present

dread of the returning Dākus. Little wonder that such a strain kept us uneasily wakeful!

When we rose at 4 a.m. each one of us was encased in a solid layer of ice half an inch thick. Only my guide seemed unmindful of such arctic conditions. There he lay, snoring hard amidst this shower of ice.

That day we were destined to suffer extremes of severe heat and cold. I was the first to leave my ice-bed. I sat for a while, the blanket tightly around me. It was the hour of early morn. All was calm and quiet; the sky occasionally overcast by clouds, with here and there a star twinkling in the lightening heavens. Above the lining of a cloud shone the moon, half luminous, and near her the star of Venus. The scene created in my soul queer ripples of joy. The early hour of morn, the union of the moon and the brilliant Venus, the lining of clouds, tranquillity reigning supreme, snow-capped peaks high up, the vast plains below, and sky crowning all. Any description of this cosmic scene must surely fail to give even a faint impression of the rhapsody of pleasure and joy which can be realised by experience only. I was lost in the ocean of bliss. I felt that the unbearable sufferings of the alternating climate of the last twenty hours were more than amply recompensed.

I have already related that my guide offered some excuse to prolong our stay in this place for a day. We found later that the true reason was that his ass required rest and the green grass by the banks of the brook, it being impossible to procure fodder until we reached Kailās.

We resumed our journey at 6 a.m. The road was very rough, strewn with large round pebbles. On one occasion I slipped and fell down, but did not sustain serious injury. Thereafter we marched with increased caution. Two hours later we had to cross a river. The water, though shallow, was freezingly cold, and bit even the toes that were but dipped into it. My young coolie lifted me upon his broad shoulders, while Gurunādā sat on the back of my guide; thus did we cross the river. The stream was only six yards in breadth, but the river-bed was wide, and where the stream broke into small currents each a foot or two wide, we jumped over them. The dry pebbles and shingles of the river-bed prevented our feet from slipping; but by 9 a.m. the parching sun overhead and the hot sands under our feet became a real affliction. After twenty minutes of manœuvring we were out of the river-bed and sat for rest at the foot of the hill we had to mount.

Just before we commenced the uphill journey, we heard close behind us the clatter of horses'

hooves. No sooner had we turned to investigate than we were surrounded by twenty to twenty-five Dākus mounted on horseback, fierce in aspect and quite capable, apparently, of murder. Indeed, there seemed every likelihood that we should all suffer instantaneous death, and the thought parched my tongue and paralysed my nerves.

Then, by a miracle, I regained control of myself. Thoughts of death vanished. With closed eyes and face towards Shri Kailās-Mānas, I bowed in adoration to the lotus-feet of my Gracious Master, my saviour all through. Then I sat down immediately in Padmāsan (a Yogic posture) preparing myself for meditation. What Gurunādā, my coolies and the guide must have felt, I had no time to think. For what seemed an eternity, there was deep silence—even the ruffians ceased fretting on their horses. Calmly I waited. I had no fear. Was I not at one with my Master?

The minutes flew by unheeded. Then there was a swift movement in the gang of Dākus. From out of their numbers a middle-aged man detached himself. He was probably the strongest built of them all, and his countenance the fiercest. Sword in hand, he came up to where I sat, enquiring by gestures who I was, where I was going

and what I had got with me. By signs I told him that I was a Sādhu from Kāshi (Benāres) on pilgrimage to Mount Kailās, and had no money with me, but only sattū. Thereupon, brandishing his sword, he signed to me that we would all be cut down and our clothes and other articles taken away. Then he beckoned to four of his cut-throat companions to come down with their swords. I now felt that my end was near at hand. . . . Calmly I prepared myself. Was this to be the end. . . .? A tense moment when time seemed to stop. . . . Then . . . I cried the sweet name of my Master and bowed down in mind, in reverent adoration before His lotus-feet and to Shri Kailās and Lake Mānas. . . . I closed my eyes in cool and quiet meditation, with my head projected a little forward.

What could have happened in those breath-taking seconds that were like ages? I know not. It was like a dream-vision. I remember that I saw the chief of the Dāku band standing by my side with his sword drawn over me. Then I must have fallen into an ecstasy of adoration; for twenty minutes later, when I came to myself, my eyes were full of tears of love, my throat was choked with joy, and my whole frame throbbed in ecstasy! I tried to cry aloud, but my tongue clave to the roof of my mouth. Again I forgot my-

self in rapture. On coming to myself five minutes afterwards, I found the whole scene had changed ! The man who a few minutes ago stood with his naked sword drawn over me, now knelt down before me with his head bent, resting on the thumbs—a suppliant posture; a little behind, to my left, lay his sword; the four men who had dismounted had sheathed their swords, and were fanning the coolies, Gurunādā and my guide; the rest of the Dāku band stood in wonderment, holding their horses by the reins. Wonderingly, I gazed round me. On all sides a miracle had taken place. I stood up. The Dākus mounted their horses, and their chief, who stood in front of me, informed me by gestures that I had nothing to fear now, and begged my pardon for his uncouth behaviour. Thereupon he offered us tea-tablets, sattū, flesh and his horses for our future journey. As I wished to go on the pilgrimage on foot, I refused to have the horses; tea I already had, and flesh I abhorred—so I accepted only the sattū. I then asked by signs the chief of the Dākus what prevented him from cutting me down. He explained by signs that as I sat calmly with my eyes closed, my face looked to him like the sweet, innocent face of a child . . . his heart was moved and captivated, and the sword slipped from his hand. At this explanation of his, I was

at once lost in loving adoration upon my Master. I fully understood the promise of Lord Shri Krishna in the Bhagavad-Geetā. 'Of those blessed ones who worship Me in love in one-ness, turning not elsewhere, with minds steadfast, do I bear the sole burden.'

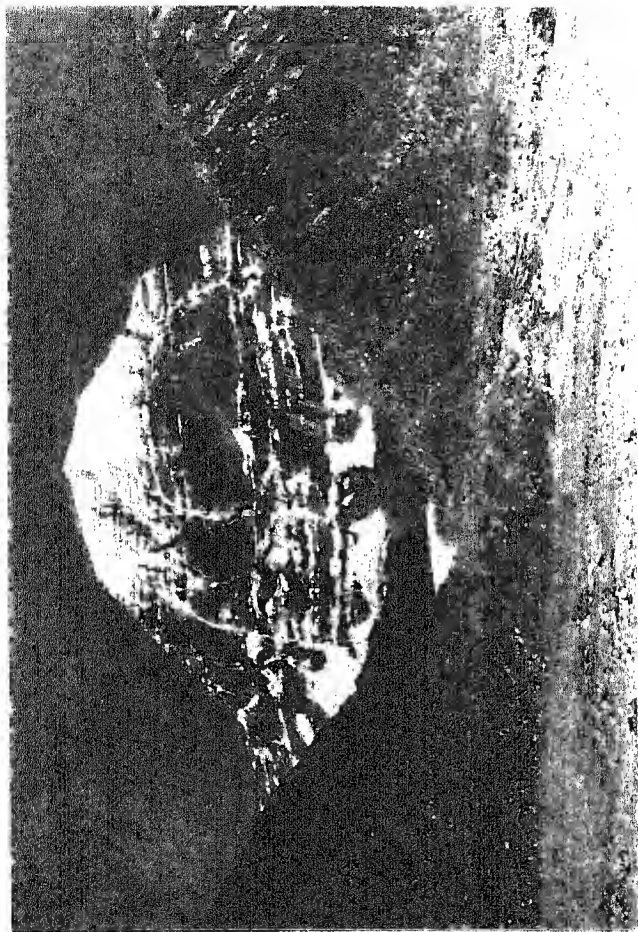
The Dāku band had ridden off towards Kardamkhār, but one of their number galloped in the direction of Lake Mānas. I now turned round to my coolies, but found all in a state of unconsciousness. I called them by name and shook them, at which they sat up and inquired whether the Dākus had gone away, and whether they were free from the jaws of imminent death. I assured them that if God never willed their death, how could mere mortals, however potent they may be, take the life out of them? At this they felt and showed relief; their faces, erstwhile pale with fear, now beamed brightly. What a sport of Fate! We were on the very brink of death, but Time, the Reaper, was yet to come. Our feelings which bubbled up when the Dākus—death itself—came upon us, could better be imagined than described. The Dākus are a very fierce and cruel people; formerly they were like cannibals devouring human flesh; they would not be content with stripping naked the wayfarers, but revelled in manslaughter. They held that a turn round

Kailās was a full and complete absolution, for all their sins of theft, marauding and slaughter. The habitation and 'sphere of influence' of these Dāku people extends over Eastern and Western Tibet, the Chinese borders and the Tārtary frontiers!

We did not remain here long, for our guide informed us that on the summit of the hill lay Lake Rākastāl, on whose shores we could anticipate a comfortable bivouac. It took us nearly one hour to scale the hill, and during our climb we encountered hares, wild rats and Tibetan Fiyās. The Fiyā is common only to Tibet, and is a brown-coloured, soft-haired animal much like the hare. Its skin is very pliable and is used by Tibetans for the making of caps.

At 11 a.m. we received our first glimpse of Lake Rākastāl over the flat plain across the hill. Beyond we could see Mount Kailās, hazy and faint. Mānas Lake was not yet in sight.

The Tibetans nurture a belief that difficult passes and steep heights are the favourite haunts of Gods and Goddesses; and at all such places mounds of stones are raised, having a pole fixed in the centre and attached to which flutter coloured rags. Tibetans approach these mounds, chant or hum some prayer, add a further stone or two to the pile, and tie another rag to the



MOUNT KAILAS, SHOWING ITS PERPENDICULAR
ROCK SURFACES ON THE NORTHERN FACE

From a photograph by Hugh Rutledge, Esq.

pole. This practice is common with the people of Bhot too.

VII

When we came in sight of Kailās, my Tibetan guide stood as if turned to stone. For five full minutes he remained in prayer, his face turned towards Kailās and the mount near by. He entreated us to pray also, so facing Mount Kailās I bowed down to Shri Kailās-Nāth.

Resuming our journey, eventually we came by the southern shore of the lake, Rākastāl. Traversing the eastern bank for some time, we halted and put up on the sandy beach. We were all exhausted, the coolies particularly, by the continuous uphill march, the sun growing hot overhead, and mainly by the ever-present strain of a possible attack by the fierce Dākus. Moreover, the sand under our feet was growing increasingly hot.

For a few minutes we lay down in the sand and enjoyed the refreshing waft of the wind before preparing our meals.

My guide went in search of fuel—prickly shrubs and dried dung—while the coolies made an improvised fire-place by placing three stones close to each other, and a separate one for the guide.

Fire was lighted by flint, and the coolies prepared tea by burning the prickly shrubs, which, though quite green, burn well and form the common fuel in these parts.

I washed my hands, feet and face in the lake, and turned to look towards Mount Kailās, whose peak shone bright in a clear sky. The realisation of my cherished object, for which I bore so much physical and mental suffering, seemed near at hand—the haven of my pilgrimage, Mount Kailās, stood before my eye, though still at a distance. The idea, the hope, exalted me, and soon I forgot the worry and exhaustion of the journey. I sat down on the beach of Lake Rākastāl with my eyes fixed upon Mount Kailās, meditating upon the lotus-feet of my Master. Kailās' peak shone clear till my meditation was over.

The peak of Mount Kailās is in the shape of a dome. At that hour the sun shone clearly on its summit, which resembled a radiant ball of burnished silver. I was reminded of the golden dome of the temple of Shri Chidambaram, in the Madrās Presidency, and its inexpressible beauty when shining in the sun's rays. There is one great difference between the two. The golden dome of the temple of Chidambaram is man-made, while the silvery peak of Mount Kailās is the work of nature.

I now turned my eyes round about the wide lake. Not a tree grew on the shore, and all was dreary. The lake itself looked serene. I will describe it at length when speaking of Lake Mānas later on.

After my meditation was over, I took tea and biscuits. My coolies finished their meals and we resumed our journey for Mānas at 1.30 p.m. Kailās was invisible in clouds and snow-storm. We proceeded by the right bank of Lake Rākastāl. The ass could get no fodder beyond Kardamkhār, and so had to be fed when we fed. We gave him sattū and tea. This meal was insufficient, of course, but it could not be helped. Further on in the journey we had to cut short our own rations.

At 4 p.m. from the hill the Lake Mānas came in view. At the sight of this sacred and venerated lake, we all bowed down in joy. Every one of us poured out his heart in worship. For fifteen minutes we were all under the charm, the spell of adoration; not a word passed our lips. Our eyes were flowing with tears of joy, and we felt that all our labours, trials and difficulties had been recompensed. I am sure that the sight of this magnificent Lake Mānas will arouse similar feelings in everyone, whoever he may be, Hindu or what you will. . . .

The range of hills running from east to west forms the dividing line between Lake Rākastāl and Lake Mānas. It was from one of these hills that we caught the first sight of Mānas. The distance between the two lakes is one mile—the breadth of the range of hills south to north at the bottom. Mount Kailās lies north-west, north of Mānas. Standing on the top of the hill separating the two lakes, I turned round for a moment. Facing the west I saw Kailās to the front, Rākastāl to the left, Mānas to the right, and snow-clad Mount Gervā-Māndhātā at my back. Gervā-Māndhātā bears a ruddy hue all over, except the summit, which, being snow-capped, looks pure white. Once again I gazed my fill all round. What a grand and magnificent scene! I stood mute for half an hour. Verily, my eyes drank in to the full the superb beauty of this exquisite triad of nature—Lake Rākastāl, Mount Kailās and Lake Mānas. I was at once lost in rapture, as was always the case whenever my eyes met with such scenes. How can words describe the glory of the cosmic body of Shri Nārāyen—the image of God wrought in the whole Universe?

At 5.30 p.m. we reached the shores of Lake Mānas; and after having it cleaned, lodged in one of the Gumphās there. Water was fifteen yards from the Gumphā. That day I asked my coolie

to prepare the full course of meals, and with great difficulty he succeeded in preparing Chapātis (wheat-cakes) and masur-lentil-curry. We all bathed in the clear waters of the lake and then took our meals with pleasure after offering to the Almighty. The meal over, I sat on my tiger's skin spread outside the cave, looking with my binocular northwards towards the lake. I could witness the scene at sunset. During the ten or twelve days that I stayed at Lake Mānas, I had the good fortune to witness the varied scenes—inexpressibly beautiful—of sunrise and sunset, moon-lit nights and snow- and hail-storms.

Turning my binocular towards Rākastāl, I found that it was thirty to thirty-five miles in circumference and larger in extent than Mānas, its creeks stretching far landwards. On all sides it was surrounded by hills, with not a single tree on its shores. The water was brackish and impure, yet cold and wholesome. In the centre of the lake was a small hillock with a Gumphā on it, known to be the residence of two Lāmās who were practising penance there. These Lāmās never came out of the Gumphā. During autumn, when the lake was frozen over with ice, sattū and tea sufficient for the whole year round was carried to the Gumphā on goats' backs and stored there. The gentle ripples dancing on the surface of the

waters when the wind is blowing make a beautiful picture. Fish and other aquatic creatures are said to inhabit the lake, but I saw none. All around the lake it is dreary, with not a tree to relieve the eye. Mirage lures the vision. The Sutlej has its source in Rākastāl. From the adjoining hill the lake appears serene and sombre, and like a curtain draws a sense of quietness over the mind.

Next I turned my binocular towards Lake Mānas. A pair of Hamsa were playing on the waters. What a holy and sacred lake the Mānas is! Circular in shape, it is surrounded by hills on all sides, with no trees on the shores, just as with Rākastāl. How exquisite would have been the beauty had the lake been lined round with tall trees! The water of Lake Mānas is sweet, cold and crystal clear, besides being very healthy. On the four sides of the lake are four Buddhist monasteries, with the image of Buddha worshipped in each. A Lāmā with a few disciples is in charge of each monastery. I expected to find near the lake a temple consecrated to the Lord Shiva, but on enquiry I found that nowhere in Western Tibet are there, at present, images to Hindu deities except at Khocharnāth. Mānas Lake looks calm, charming and sublime; the ripples on the surface are very pleasing, and kindle sacred, religious

and joyous emotions in the heart. The Hamsa birds gambol during day in the crystal-clear water in numbers together, and retire to their homes on the hills for the night. During my stay on the lake I saw no other feathered creature but the fine-looking sacred Hamsa. This bird subsists on water-cress and water creatures. When sailing smoothly over the waters with his neck and beak erect, the Hamsa looks the finest picture of beauty. I never saw the bird on land. It is a little taller than the duck and shorter than the stork, and its limbs are so finely proportioned that it looks symmetry itself. It is a long-distance aviator. Perfectly white in colour, with a silvery gloss, the Hamsa has red beak and ruby eyes. I never saw its feet, for the bird never came on land. I had read that the Hamsa drank only milk out of a mixture of milk and water, but I could not verify the fact to my own satisfaction. The Hamsa is known not to frequent the lake in winter.

Packs of hares from the bordering crevices of the hills frisked and played about on the shores of the lake. When these tiny, tender, swift and innocent animals came hopping about in numbers, it seemed as if small pebbles were spattered about by the wind. At times I saw flocks of fifty hares. The lake is about thirty-five miles in cir-

cumference, and is surrounded by a shore of white sand.

Lake Mānas is the home of sanctity, the abode of peace. It is the very heart of Nature, full and throbbing. The region seems to be not of this earth, but of Heaven, of the blessed Land of the Soul. The snow-capped mountains around are reflected in the still, crystal-clear waters of the lake. Sunrise and sunset, the canopy of the sky during the day and the shining moon and stars at night—all these are scenes of ineffable beauty. I feel certain that any amount of description, however finely writ, would never even so much as approach an idea of the splendour of the actual scenes. At such a beautiful and solitary place the mind loses itself and there is harmony full and complete.

A month earlier, the Swiss traveller, Dr. Sven Hedin, had been to the lake. During his stay of over a month he had opportunities of watching the varied scenes of nature there. He writes of the lake thus:

‘Oh! what a wonderful lake it was! I have no words to describe it. To my dying day I shall never forget it, and even now it is in my mind as a legend, a poem and a song. Nothing that I can recall through all my wanderings can compare with the overwhelming beauty of this night jour-

ney. It was like listening to the silent and mighty throbs of the heart of Nature, to feel her pulse grow numb in the clash of night and revive in the morning glow. It seemed as though this landscape, ever changing as the hours creep slowly by, were unreal; as though it no longer belonged to this earth, but lay on the borders of the world beyond, nearer to Heaven, the region of dreams and phantasies, of hopes and longings, a mysterious fairyland, rather than to this earth of men and sinners, of worldliness and vanity.¹

I stayed on the shores of the lake for twelve days for my Anushtāna.¹ The morning and evening baths meant regular calls of death. With my Koupin (a Sanyāsin's rag round the waist) on, I used to dash into the water up to the waist and dip in my head. The head or any part of the body, if exposed out of water, became, as it were, lifeless. On the shore my coolies were ready with my clothes, which I immediately put on. It was not before I had lain down for a few minutes covered over by my Bhutiā blanket that I could get warm enough to sit in posture of meditation. My coolies felt happy for the first two or three days, but afterwards they grew tired of the solitude there; and naturally too, because they were

¹ Anushtāna is a religious observance for a fixed period.

of the world worldly. Such a beauteous solitude—solitude after all—was unbearable. Besides, I was not to speak—that was my vow; so they grew tired and longed to get away. I fasted the whole day, and at 11 p.m. at night took only tea. It was at this hour alone that we met and saw each other. By the Grace of my Master, my Anushtāna ended successfully. On the last day of the Anushthāna at 5 a.m. I heard strains of melodious music sung by a human voice coming from the west. In rapt attention I listened and thought it the voice of a woman. I decided, a little later, that the chant of Shri Māndukya Upanishad was being sung. Through the binocular I searched in the direction from whence came the melodious sound, but saw no human figure on that beach of sand. I strained my eyes and gazed all round, but there was no trace of any human figure. The music lasted for half an hour, then it ceased, and the incident began to trouble me. What could have been the meaning of this sweet chant of the Māndukya Upanishad in this solitary region? Was it an hallucination? Or was it the strains of some high-souled Mahātmā while bathing in the lake? Or could it have been the music of a fairy nymph or a spirit of the other world? I could not make out anything and grew restless; and so at 6 a.m. sent one of my coolies to enquire at the

adjoining Buddhist monastery. Returning, he told me that the Lāmā had been away from the monastery for the last four days, and may have left for Tāklākot. Failing to get any clue, I grew more and more restless. Revolving over the incident to myself, I was pacing southward, with my eyes fixed on the sand beneath my feet. I was absorbed in myself and was blind to the charms Nature puts on at early morning. The very scenes which up till now held me captive, as it were, no more were charms for me, so rapt was I in myself. Did Nature regret my new blindness towards her charms? No, not at all, say I. Mother Nature was not complaining; no, she felt pride in me, her nursling, that I had, instead of being led away by the evanescent and outward charms of her creation, engrossed myself in seeking after the Real, Absolute, Eternal Spirit. And happy at the yearnings of my heart, she proffered me a boon later fulfilled on Mount Kailās.

VIII

I had scarcely paced a hundred yards on that sandy beach when, to my surprise and delight, I beheld before me the marks of human footprints. The idea came to me at once that these must have been the footsteps of a great Sage, a Ma-

hātmā, who had bathed in the lake. At once I resolved to follow the footsteps, beckoning my coolies to follow me with bag and baggage. One of them came ahead of the others and I confessed to him that I had set out for Kailās, that they should accompany him. The coolie returned to the Gumphā, packed our belongings, and handed them over to the guide.

Fifteen minutes later I heard the sound of human voices. I thought the Mahātmā for whom I longed was calling me from behind. I turned—the guide had thrown down the baggage from his ass's back and set off in the direction of Tāklākot again. My coolies were standing by the baggage, calling aloud for me. I beckoned to them and to Gurunādā to follow me, and went on tracing the footsteps. Across the southern shore I came to the western, where, after a few yards, the sandy beach disappeared and I came upon rocky ground. I had travelled now about two and a half miles from the Gumphā, and, to my disappointment, the footsteps grew fainter till, at a quarter of a mile farther on, they ceased altogether. The footsteps led on to Mount Kailās. Here I was confronted by a steep rocky ascent. I was completely baffled. What could I do? As I had lived on nothing but tea during the last twelve days, I felt exhausted; and as all trace of

the hope which led me on had vanished, I sank down in a swoon.

My coolies came running to me; and when my consciousness came back I saw that the Tibetan guide had returned with his lean ass loaded with the baggage. He complained angrily of the conduct of the coolies, but I made signs that he should hold his peace for a moment.

It was 8 a.m. My coolies prepared tea, but I took it after offering it to my Master and to the Mahātmā whom I was longing to see. I ate some biscuits and felt refreshed.

My coolies had been prudent enough to bring with them their water-pots and my kamandalu full of water. Otherwise they would have had to return at least a mile back to get water. Such foresight I saw in them for the first and last time.

While we partook of our food, my guide's ass was regaling itself on the dried dung near by. I was moved to tears at the sight, and asked my coolies to give half a seer of sattū mixed with tea to that patient, industrious and starving animal. How could sattū serve it? But there being no alternative, we somehow managed to keep its body and soul together.

After a short rest we continued our journey. Four or five miles distant across the plain beyond the hill, we discovered a small cave which,

for the time being, we made our headquarters. Near by was a Gumphā, with the image of Buddha inside. It was called Chhu Gumphā and occupied by a Lāmā.

Mānas Lake was half a mile ahead, lower down, under a steep descent. Close by our lodging place were two springs of boiling hot water, the vapours issuing ten to twelve feet high.

We stayed in the cave for the night, as Gurun-ādā was suffering from headache and fever. He took only tea and lay through the whole night moaning and groaning. I could not suppress my anxiety for him, and thought of waiting till morning to see if his condition improved.

A strong hail-storm was raging on Mount Kailās; the sky was overcast with thick black clouds, and although it was just 4 p.m. there seemed no sign of the darkness breaking. On the top of the hill we thought we heard the sound of somebody whistling. I asked my guide if he could explain, and he informed us that it was a servant of the Lāmā, residing in Chhu Gumphā, who was whistling to his sheep. Soon we glimpsed a herd of some 2000 sheep approaching him.

Lāmās are rich folk owning yāks, thousands of sheep, and carrying on a rich trade in wool. Their wealth is reckoned in sheep and yāks, just as the riches of our Rishis of old times consisted

solely of cows and bullocks. The difference lay only in this: that the Rishis never traded, while the Lāmās do.

In the evening we finished our meals and were chatting a while prior to retiring for the night, when suddenly a violent storm broke out, accompanied by the fall of heavy hail. It raged for two hours, and though under the shelter of the cave, we could not altogether escape its fury. The storm abated at last, and thereafter we knew all the torments of snow, wind and an indescribably intense cold. Our sufferings can better be imagined than described.

At 9 p.m. we had rolled ourselves in our beds. The night was dark; a calm followed the storm which had burst, and the wind was blowing fast. I saw a human figure standing before me. I pointed out this to the guide. He told me that it was a Tibetan woman from the adjoining Chhu Gumphā who had come to beg a handful of sattū from us, as she knew we were pilgrims on the way. I was a little surprised at this; however, I asked my coolies to give her two handfuls of sattū. My guide then suggested not to give her that much, as he knew a lot of other people from the Gumphā would soon follow and our supply would be exhausted. I hardly minded his fears about so many beggars turning out that cold

night and asked the coolies to serve her two handfuls, which they did. She was glad and, bowing to us four times, went away saying, 'Jyu, Jyu'. But the guide was right. In less than half an hour we were confronted by twenty beggars—men, women and children. My guide remonstrated with them, but they refused to move away, and at last I told my coolies to distribute half a handful of sattū to each of them. At this the beggars were greatly pleased, and went away in merriment. To appease their hunger these beggars had been obliged to venture out on such a dreary night, battling against the elemental forces of nature! Every living being—not man alone, but from the tiniest insect up to the wild tiger and lion—is a slave to this passion of appetite, the craving of the belly. My thoughts ran on. In penury and distress, man is mindful and conscious of the existence and power of the Almighty; but given strength, affluence, and success, instantly he belittles his Maker and goes forth, egregiously strong and omnipotent in his own vanity. But always will retribution overtake him in due time. . . .

Gurunādā felt better the next morning, and at 5 a.m. we took up our journey once more. The sky was clear; Mount Kailās could be seen full and clear, and the morning winds had begun to

blow. It was a pleasant, auspicious hour, and even my sick companion felt sufficiently strong to march forward. We walked on till 11 a.m., when the sun grew hot and parching winds set in, forcing us to rest in the plain for half an hour. Here we saw herds of Tibetan deer running past us at a distance of fifty feet. We rose to wend our way when, at thirty yards from us, we saw something like a cloud of dust rising from the ground. My Tibetan guide told me that it was a pack of wild Tibetan horses coming towards us.

We watched this strange sight curiously, but, perceiving our movements, the animals veered round and dashed along in a southern direction. I followed them through my binocular. It was a pretty sight—to watch these short yet stout, hardy and swift creatures with their thick long hair, galloping with necks erect and tails raised aloft. These horses seldom approach human habitations, and it is only with the greatest difficulty that they are caught and tamed. In packs they march on, foodless often for two or three days.

At 12 a.m. we reached Barkhātarjan. The houses here are built of raw earthen bricks with no proper roof but a tentage above. Most of the people live in Chholdāries (tents), numbering about thirty-five in all. The post office and a

trader's house were of brick, and a third was in course of building.

The Tibetan Government's post office is meant for official purposes only, and is not available to the public at large. It is maintained mostly for the sake of Government communications between Lhässā and Gārtok. The post office is known in Tibet as 'Tarjan'.

Lhässā lies twenty or twenty-two days' march from Barkhātarjan towards the east, and is the twentieth or twenty-second halting station. It is said that the postal runner between Lhässā and Gārtok is tied and sealed to his horse lest he dismount between one halting station and another. If at the end of his journey the seal is found to have been tampered with, the man is liable to heavy punishment.

Huniās live in Chholdāries, made of strong, thick and warm blankets prepared from the hair of yāks. They are impervious to rain and afford good shelter against wind and snow.

On arriving at Barkhātarjan at 12 a.m., we encamped in a plain near the town. All round the town were scattered the bones and dung of animals. My guide, however, cleaned a little space for me, and I sat there under the scorching sun, amidst the filthy odour. No sooner did we encamp than a group of men, women and children

gathered around us. The girls stared at the coolies and myself and whispered one to the other; the small children appeared to be afraid of us; while the aged folk looked at us with suspicion. These people pestered my coolies with questions. One of them invited my Tibetan guide to his house. He wanted my permission, and I allowed him to go, but asked him to secure for us some fuel before leaving the camp. He went, but sent a few prickly shrubs with one of my coolies. I had to pay two annas for this. . . .

Whatever may have been the experience and opinion of travellers like Dr. Sven Hedin concerning the Tibetans, I am very much prejudiced against them, save for a few exceptions. Credulous by nature, the Tibetans seem to be mean, cruel and unscrupulous, ignorant even of the common courtesies of human dealings. Like Bhutiās, they possess no honesty of word. If, happily, one gets a good guide and servants, it is well and good; otherwise, travellers will find themselves sorely hindered! Amongst these semi-barbaric people there is little appreciation of nature, yet Tibet can boast ^{of} some wonderful scenery. This part of the country abounds also in rich mineral ores and salts. Between Rāka-stāl and Mānas a rich ore of gold is said to exist. For the exploration of this negotiations were

proceeding between the Tibetan and Chinese Governments. The Shepchit, a Chinese officer, was guarding the place.

The climate and water in Tibet are of the healthiest. The people trade in wool, rock-salt and other salts and minerals. Their occupations consist of manufacturing woollen blankets, grazing sheep and yāks, and dacoity—the last occupation is very prevalent.

Polyandry is in vogue here. The Zumpan of Tāklākot and his five brothers were all six wedded to a single wife. A man can marry any female except his mother or sister. These people profess Buddhism. 'Devil-dancing,' hunting, drinking and eating sattū form their chief amusements. When 'devil-dancing' the dancers put on masks, coloured and painted hideously, and dance with tinkling bells on their feet, keeping time with the drum. This dance is interesting to the foreign traveller, and I had the opportunity of witnessing one such ceremony at Gārtok. I had no opportunity to see a Tibetan wedding or a funeral. The inhabitants of Western Tibet are a well-built and brave people, of yellowish complexion, with flat cheeks, small eyes and low nose. They do not possess a very attractive general appearance: neither are their females known for beauty. Once I had occasion to see

the daughter of an officer of Barkhātarjan who was reputed far and wide for her physical beauty. I was not impressed by it, probably because my standard and conception were quite different from theirs. As compared with others of her sex, however, I must admit this particular girl was decidedly beautiful, though with short hair. Tibetan women, of course, braid their heads with the hair of yāk long enough to reach the ankles. In their hair they put coloured glass beads, and tie them on with brass or tiny silver bells. They also wear silver and glass ornaments round their necks. Their dress consists of Dokchyā below the waist—a kind of trouser combined with a woollen, hemp or leather shoe for the feet. A long, warm shirt covers the upper part of the body, like that worn by Mohammedan women; a loose cap for the head hangs down the middle of the back over the shoulders. Generally, women wear no head-dress. The Lāmās cut their hair short, while the people grow theirs long and bind it in braids like the Chinese pig-tails. No Purdā is observed among the women in Western Tibet. The rich folk travel on horseback. Horses are the common form of conveyance, while yāks are used for carrying goods. The Tibetans, though stout, are not accustomed to carrying loads and do not make good coolies.

For half an hour after our arrival at Barkhātarjan we were the objects of curiosity to the people of the town. They stood round gazing at us and talking among themselves, spinning wool with their hands on little portable spindles. Bhutiā and Tibetan men and women always carry these spindles about with them and spin even during leisure hours.

No sooner had this group of curious visitors left, than the beggars came to trouble us. We did not mind them. I took tea, biscuits and condensed milk and reclined for rest. The coolies and Gurunādā also took their repast.

✓ The Tibetan process of making tea is very peculiar. They put leaves of tea in boiling water and then add a little rock-salt; the tea is then poured into a tubular vessel like a piece of hollow bamboo, and to it is added butter of yāk and sattū; the whole is then churned by a ladle which moves up and down until the contents are well mixed. The tea is then ready for drinking. The churning vessel somewhat resembles a stopperless syringe, the piston working like the ladle. I was engaged in my daily reading of the Shri Avadhoota-Geetā, when my guide came in dead drunk. He proposed going to Darchin, to which I agreed.

Tāklākot lies about fifty and Barkhātarjan

twenty miles from Mānas Lake; Darchin is twelve miles from Barkhātarjan. Darchin is a village at the foot of Mount Kailās, to the south. There is a small Buddhist 'Matha' (monastery) here, with one or two chholdāries. In Tibet there are no good roads, not even clear paths or tracks. To ascertain mileage one has to guess. I carried no instrument with me nor had any other means to measure the distance travelled in miles.

All surplus baggage we kept at Barkhātarjan, where the ass was let loose as there was plenty of fodder for it. We started for Darchin at 1.30 p.m.

For the first nine miles our journey was a smooth one. But soon a stormy wind blew against us; clouds came on thick and it grew dark; drops of rain began to fall. We looked about for shelter, but there was not a tree nor a hill in that flat plain. I opened my umbrella; Gurunādā held his begging bowl over his head, and the coolies covered themselves with blankets. Within five minutes it began to rain. My umbrella was torn to pieces and its ribs broken; Gurunādā's bowl was smashed in fragments, and hail fell down on our heads like shells from guns. In this plight we marched on. For nearly an hour we plodded through the shower of hail shells, thinking of Shri Nārāyen and Shri Kailās Nāth. We were drenched to the skin—hail from above and pierc-

ing wind below. I cannot adequately describe our suffering.

My guide and myself were walking ahead; half a furlong behind us the coolies trudged on, and a quarter of a furlong still behind came Gurunādā, alone and moaning. Soon Gurunādā could not move a step further and sat down. I felt compassion for him, but there was no help. Owing to the furious storm we had to walk with our faces downwards. I marched on, keeping pace with my guide and contemplating over the lotus-feet of my Master. At 5 p.m. the storm abated, a gentle breeze set in, and the sun shone forth in mellow rays. We sat on the southern bank of the Indus for half an hour till the coolies and Gurunādā arrived. Then all of us together crossed the river. The bed was twenty feet wide, while the water was only waist-deep. Yet it was paralysingly cold.

We rested on the other side of the river for fifteen minutes and then resumed our journey. At 6.30 p.m. we reached Darchin, but could not get room in the Buddhist Lāmā's Gumphā there. I had, as it seemed, to sleep once more in the open. We bought tea, sattū, jagree and rice from the Lāmā—the articles were poor, yet very costly. I asked my guide to look out for some place of shelter for the night. After some effort we discovered a room—heaps of stones piled on four sides

with a slab placed over them—just sufficient for three inmates. It was dirty, but there being no other alternative, we had to make a virtue of necessity and felt the room to be like a royal mansion.

My coolies tried to light a fire for preparing tea, but it was three or four hours before they succeeded. Our stomachs were craving for food. At 11 p.m. somehow a fire was lighted, but it was 12.30 a.m. before we were able to take tea. While my coolies were engaged, a fierce, hardy and cruel-looking Tibetan came to them and asked for fire. The fellow had a long Khukri (knife) hanging at his waist. He was drunk and occasionally stared at us with a threatening look. On seeing him I was at once reminded of the Dākus. My suspicions increased when I heard him confide to my old coolie that he too was going round Mount Kailās. I considered the man a spy of the Dākus on his usual rounds. The fellow took fire and went away. . . .

Provisions for a week, a tiger's skin on which to sleep, and clothes—that was all I had. None of us could rest that night, as wind and hail blew over us. My guide slept in the Lāmā's Gumphā. At 5 a.m. I came out of the room and found the sky quite clear. My Tibetan guide came to call us at 6 a.m., for we were to begin the Pradak-

shinā (round) of Kailās that day. We commenced at 6.30 a.m.

IX

The Pradakshinā of Kailās is thirty-two miles long. On each of three sides of Mount Kailās flows a river, and on the north side runs a small water-way issuing from the mountain. At the four corners at the foot of the mountain are the Gumphās of four Buddhist Lāmās. These Lāmās are householders, similar to the priests in places of pilgrimage in India. They trade in wool and keep sheep and yāks. They lodge pilgrims in their Gumphās too and sell provisions, *e.g.* tea, sattu and fuel.

The Indus, taking its source from Lake Mānas, flows from the south at the foot of Kailās towards the west. To the north-east of Kailās, at a height of 19,000 feet above sea-level, lies Gauri-Kund, a lake, issuing from the east of which is the Brahmaputrā, flowing along the foot of Mount Kailās. Both the Indus and the Brahmaputrā are slender at the source. Mount Kailās is said to be about 30,000 feet in height.

At Darchin I learnt that eight Dākus lurked in the vast vales north-west and north-east of Kailās, in order to waylay pilgrims, Bhutiā traders and Tibetan Khampās. I started, however,

in the morning, meditating over the lotus-feet of my Master.

At 9.30 a.m. we reached the western Gumphā on the river-side, and there took tea. In our further journey we met a number of rows of stones painted red. Buddhists regard these as sacred and pass by them to the right. The road was smooth and lay alongside the river. At 2 p.m. we reached the north-western hill and valley. The place really looked perilous, with not a sound of bird or rustle of animal. We sat down for rest, and near us saw spread, as it were, a bed of yellow flowers of a kind that I had not seen since leaving the Himālayās.

Not a single soul did we meet within this north-western valley, and I was relieved that we had had no encounter with the Dākus. The way round Kailās is calm and quiet, and no evil thought enters the mind. At 4 p.m. we reached the northern Gumphā. We travelled continuously for ten hours until, feeling tired, we put up in the Gumphā for the night. We took tea. I spread my tiger's skin and lay down for the night and, like a little babe, was soon lulled to rest on the bosom of Sleep—the gentle Mother.

From this Gumphā, Mount Kailās seemed very near, though in actual fact it lay several furlongs away. When I turned my eyes towards

the summit of Kailās, I was reminded of the scene I had witnessed while standing on the beach of Lake Rākastāl in view of Kailās. I went up to the terrace of the Gumphā and feasted my vision on the summit of Kailās. What a sublime spectacle! My heart flew into ecstasy at the monument of exquisite beauty, and my eyes were full of the tears of joy. Again was I reminded of the dome of the temple of Shri Chidambaram. There it was the work of man; and here it was the sport of nature; the one was covered with a plate of gold, the other laden with sheets of crystal-clear ice shining like a silver summit. The dome of the temple of Shri Trimbakeshwara, at Trimbak, near Nāsik, is similarly fashioned—only it is black. The three are so alike: only the colours are different.

I sat on the balcony for four hours, watching the grandeur of the summit of Kailās. The Lāmā, his disciples, the female inhabitants of his house and other people there, came up to me, stared at me and asked a lot of questions of my coolies, finally departing to whisper among themselves. We stayed in the Gumphā for the night and resumed our journey the next morning at 6 a.m.

When we were to start, the Lāmā told me that a day or two previously a Tibetan Khampa was slain by the Dākus and all his sheep, two hun-

dred in number, and as many yaks, looted. I was told also that in a mine of rock-salt near by another trader had been compelled to surrender a flock of 5000 sheep. Occasionally these Dākus even waylaid the sheep and yaks in the entourage of Government officers like the Zampan and the Garpan. On such occasions these officers pursued them with 400 or 500 armed men, routed them, and secured possession of their booty. But generally Dākus keep away from Government officers. The Tibetan authorities pay little heed to this state of brigandage. There is no law regulating the use of arms in Tibet, and hence the Dākus are all well armed.

On leaving the Gumphā for my further journey, I again came across the tiny and tender yellow flowers which I had seen once before. I picked a few of these and kept them in my Avadhoota-Geetā. When I returned to Dhuliā, I gave some of these flowers—at his wish—to one of my friends there as a present from Kailās.

Now we were going by the eastern side of Kailās. At noon we halted for tiffin on the banks of the Brahmaputrā. We resumed our journey at 3 p.m. after tea. On the way my guide pointed to a cave facing towards the east, high up on the hill. He told me that it was the abode of a great Hindu Mahātmā. I looked up to the cave and

found that it was 1000 feet high, and lay on a perpendicular ridge, with two glaciers flowing on both sides. There was no way whatsoever leading to the cave; but I passionately longed to have a sight of the Mahātmā. Looking about restlessly for five minutes, I asked my guide whether he knew of any way leading to that holy cave. He replied that he knew none, but was willing to try if I went with him. We asked our coolies to wait in the adjoining Gumphā and we proceeded cave-ward uphill. We had not mounted a quarter of the way when the guide was overcome by a severe attack of stomach-ache; his head reeled so much that he could hardly look up. At once he fell on the ground. I thought at first that he was feigning, but later on his face showed that he was in real agony. I stood still for a minute with my eyes closed resolving that as now was the hour of trial, I would not turn back until I had the Darshan (sight) of the great Mahātmā. Once in my heart of hearts did I bow down in adoration to my Master and the Mahātmā whom I longed to see, and then set out with my face towards the cave. I told my guide to return to the Gumphā to the coolies, and there wait for me for six days, and if I did not return by that time, to leave for Tāklākot and take their wages from the Bhutiā merchant with whom I had left my money. I

asked him also to tell my coolies to post the card given to them at the first post office they might meet in India. I bade him good-bye. He bowed down to me before leaving and expressed a pious wish that my object be fulfilled.

As I was climbing with my face towards the cave, engrossed in thoughts about the Mahātmā, I waved my hand backwards to him.

The way was the most arduous that I had met. At about fifty yards from the mouth of the cave I had to climb over ice. I wore shoes like the Roman sandal, and socks. It was severely cold when I arrived at the glacier of ice flowing near the cave. While crossing, I slipped three or four times and fell down, taking, however, the utmost caution not to slip towards the perpendicular precipice. It was only after great effort that I succeeded in getting across the glacier. Here a new difficulty faced me. The mouth of the cave lay, with no way leading to it, about seven feet up the side of a straight cliff. However, the more difficulties, the stronger grew my resolution. I looked minutely, and found niches carved out in the cliff just sufficient to hold the toes. By the aid of these I managed to climb to the top like a monkey and reach the mouth of the cave. Inside it was all dark, and I wavered for a minute whether to go in or not. However, my resolution

got the better of this mood, and suddenly I plunged inside. No sooner did I set my foot in the cave than I fell down into a pit four feet deep. It was pitch dark; I could not see my way, and so began to crawl about. I proceeded slowly, feeling my way inch by inch. After a long while I felt my head dashed against something hard, which on examination I discovered was a human head with hair on it. A few minutes later I could see a faint light there. I perceived a human figure, and instantly bowed down, saying, 'Trāhi Mām, Trāhi Mām' (Bless me, Bless me), and lay prostrate. A human voice asked me, 'Who are you—how came you hither?' (Tum Kōn haya—Hyā kaise Āyā?). Prostrate, I said, 'Lord, it is your Grace that has brought this servant of yours to your hallowed feet'. At this I heard a gentle laugh and the words reached my ears, 'Achhā, Vatsa, Uthake baitho' (My darling, get up). Then I felt gentle hands raising me to my feet. I sat up and opened my eyes. In the faint light of a lamp burning in a corner of the cave, I saw a noble, full and serene figure sitting in Padmāsan (a Yogic posture) on a tiger skin. Once more I bowed down in loving adoration, praying, 'Bless me, Bless me', and was lost in an ecstasy of joy. On coming to myself I gazed with intent eyes on that figure in front of me. What a fine and grand figure! The

Mahātmā possessed a tall, stout, hard, full yet comely frame of body; he was of a white complexion, with large eyes and wide eye-brows; the eyes seemed to centre in themselves all the radiance of the Universe, the Divine lustre of Brahma; the nose was sharp and aquiline; he wore short tawny hair on the head curling down to the shoulders; the beard was tawny, about four inches long; he had a graceful neck, a full broad chest and slender belly, with three folds across it. The Mahātmā was naked; no ashes covered his body. A kamandalu and a tiger skin were all the riches in the cave. His age seemed to be about sixty. In all my life I never remember to have come across so perfectly beautiful and lustrous a person save my Master. The Mahātmā's face seemed to be the abode of serenity, joy, peace and light, a veritable fountain of love. How sonorous, gentle and sweet the words that flowed from those holy lips! Drinking in with my eyes for a moment the serene beauty of that face divine, I opened my lips in joy and asked the name and parentage of the great Mahātmā before me. I was asked not to put these questions; thereupon I lay before the Mahātmā a few doubtful points of Dhyān-Yoga. Full and clear replies were vouched to my questions. Again I asked questions in Marāthi and received the replies in the same dialect—chaste

and pure to the finest degree. The Mahātmā told me that he knew all the languages in the world. We occasionally spoke in English also. On watching the flow of conversation, I was struck by the fact that it proceeded strictly in the language in which it began, with no admixture of a single word from outside. I felt and was convinced that the individual before me was a great Yogin, complete Master of the powers of Yoga and a great 'Brahma-Vettā'—one who knows Brahma. May Shri Nārāyen bless all people with the sight of this Mahātmā.

I was in the company of this Mahātmā for three days. I sat in the same posture day and night, living simply on water. Every morning and evening I placed a piece of ice in the kamandalu and set it before him. When the ice had melted, the Mahātmā lifted up the kamandalu and lovingly asked me to drink it. How radiantly these large eyes beamed with love! I lived only on water, but my health was unimpaired and I felt intensely happy. Such was the Grace of the Mahātmā. He took nothing. Whenever I looked at him, be it night or day, he was seated in Āsana, absorbed in Divine Bliss. To drink in the beauty of that face—that was my only wish those three days. Every day we conversed together, sometimes for two or three hours.

As I had nothing on which to sleep, the Mahātmā gave me his tiger skin, himself sitting on the bare ground. Oh! what affection, what selflessness, what love perfect!

At night the Mahatmā would lift my head and, taking it gently on his lap, go again into the Bliss Divine. Whenever I opened my eyes, I saw that I still lay with my head on the lap of the Mahātmā—Love Incarnate—and he lost in Yoga-Nidrā (*Samādhi*).

On seeing me for the first time, the Mahātmā addressed me as his 'darling', and rightly too, so I found it to be. The melodious chant of the Māndukya Upanishad I heard early one morning while at Lake Mānas, was none other than that of this great Mahātmā, and the footsteps on the sand that led me on to the cave were his also. So much the Mahātmā graciously told me. It is impossible to describe, even meagrely, the nature of our conversation during the three days I was in the company of this high-souled Mahātmā.

The days we spent together passed like three minutes, so full of joy did I feel. Surely such noble personages are very few on the face of this earth. I recall that the late Swāmi Vivekānanda said that, for reasons of their own, many Mahātmās work for the welfare of the world in the solitude of the recesses of nature, and have often brought

about great, astounding results. These great men come into the world unknown and pass away unknown.

On the fourth day, early in the morning, I was ordered to depart. I bowed down to those hallowed feet. The Mahātmā came to see me off beyond the glacier and asked me to see his Guru-Bandhu (co-disciple of his Guru) at Teerthāpuri. Once again I bowed at the sacred feet of the Mahātmā, and wended my way down the hill to where my people—the coolies, Gurunādā and the guide—were awaiting me. They were happy at my return, and Gurunādā regretted that he had not accompanied me to the Mahātmā. I informed my coolies that I wished to go to Gaurikund, but none of them would agree. Accordingly, I resolved to start alone early the next morning.

Presently my coolies tried to dissuade me from my journey, but I was determined to go, come what may, and requested that they should wait for me, as before when I set out for the Darshan of the Mahātmā, for a week and then go back to Tāklākot, take their wages from the Bhutiā merchant, and leave for India, posting my card at the first post office they met.

After giving these instructions, I prepared for my visit to Gaurikund. I put on all the clothes

I had, bound woollen leggings over my legs, took the long steel-pointed staff, put on blue spectacles and thrust as many biscuits as I could into my pockets. I also took the Setu¹ which I had brought all the way from Shri Rāmeshwara to throw into the Gaurikund.

At last I proceeded towards the north-east, in which direction lay the Gaurikund. As I went alone, I had nothing to distract my attention and fell to repeating the name of my Master. This was the second time that I had to travel over sheets of ice, without even as much as a footpath to guide me. Streams of frozen water flowed down at intervals like glaciers. I walked on, buoyant with energy and hope, till 7 a.m., when I arrived at the beginning of the uphill journey. Here I ate a few biscuits and drank cold water, feeling quite fresh. The journey uphill was of the stiffest nature. Though I walked alone, not even a faint shadow of fear overcast my mind. I had to rest for a few minutes after every ten or twelve yards of progress. The ground of ice was extremely treacherous, and I found my long steel-pointed staff of the utmost use. The cold became so intense that my fingers, nose and face grew red and breathing was painfully hard. At 1 p.m.

¹ Sacred sand from Shri Rāmeshwara encased in a coconut shell.

I felt hungry and, sitting down on a rock of ice, ate a few more biscuits.

As I resumed my journey and mounted further uphill, I found it harder still to breathe. I felt my limbs swelling up and nerves bursting out. At 5 p.m. I climbed to the top of an ice-rock and looked around. Lake Rākastāl and Lake Mānas were looking grand, and the ruddy mount Gervā Māndhātā was shining full. Amongst others, the rivers Indus and Brahmaputrā wound down through the extensive Tibetan plateau.

From this hillock of ice, I pictured to myself the Virāt-Swarup of God in the hills, plains, rivers and lakes around. The range of mountains beyond the two lakes represented the head, the two lakes the eyes, the separating mountain range the nose between, the plain dividing the lakes and Mount Kailās the stomach, the winding rivers and rivulets the arteries and nerves, the two rows of mountains running from the Kailās his legs. Oh! what a grand picture of the image of God in nature.

I was enjoying this scene when, with startling suddenness, I felt the rock below my feet tremble, and I knew I was sinking.

I turned my eyes to look down, and with the knowledge that I was soon to be swallowed in the jaws of death, I staggered and reeled. The

place from where I fell must have been about 2000 feet below Gaurikund.

I came to my senses at 9 or 10 p.m. and found that, ditched in ice to my waist, I was lying flat on the brink of death, with a sheet of ice on my stomach. My plight was horrible.

I opened my eyes again and saw the clear sky studded with stars above; but it was all dark. I could not guess where I was. With the long staff I freed myself from the hillock of ice over my body and stood up, my limbs aching and bruised. I knew not where to go.

At last I decided that I must pass the night there till morning, so preparing a hollow ditch waist-deep in the ice with the help of the staff, and drawing the overcoat around my head, I huddled myself in it, drawing my knees up to my ribs.

At least three times each hour I had to push away the snow from my overcoat. I had heard that shelter from cold and wind in icy regions could be got only by living in hollows of ice. I tried the experiment here, with some success; but by 'protection from cold', I mean only a slight protection.

Snow fell till morn. I was the only being in that whole region, shivering in the ice-cold night. I looked at my watch: it was 12 p.m. Somehow,

I passed the night. At early morning I ate a few biscuits and proceeded on the uphill journey. Being ignorant of the route, and not knowing whither I was going, I roamed about and found ultimately that I was making downhill. In my wanderings that day I could see neither Gaurikund nor my camp where the coolies were staying. Night came on and once again I had to huddle myself in a hollow of ice. In the morning I ate up all the biscuits I had, and again resumed my way downhill. Till evening I roamed, not knowing whither I was going. At a loss, I went on and on, until I came to the foot of Kailās, where I had to pass the night. My stomach was crying aloud for food, but not a crumb of biscuits was with me. On the third day in the morning, as I walked along the foot of Kailās, I perceived some of the marks I had met on the occasion of my Pradakshinā. At this I heaved a sigh of relief. At 12 a.m. I arrived at my camp. Exhausted by the journey, the cold and the mental strain I had endured, I fell down in a state of unconsciousness, till my coolies woke me up and gave me biscuits to eat and hot tea to drink—a kamandalu full. . . . They were very much grieved to hear my experiences of this ice-trip. I then told them that the next morning I again intended to set out for Gaurikund at 3 a.m., and that they

should wait for me another week. At this my coolies implored me not to go on this perilous pilgrimage, and did their best to dissuade me. But I held fast and, as before, took with me biscuits, leggings and my staff. At 3 a.m. I started out, bidding good-bye to the coolies, and by the Grace of Shri Nārāyen, I reached the Gaurikund at 5.30 p.m. It was a clear day, but I marched on continuously, fearing lest a storm might burst. I halted only for a minute or two to eat biscuits. It took me nearly fifteen hours to go over a height of only 5000 feet!

X

Gaurikund stands at a height of about 20,000 feet above sea-level, and is a natural lake about four furlongs in circumference. The peak of Kailās seems to be about 10,000 feet above this lake. Everywhere here was snow and ice . . . snow and ice. My lips became green and blue with the severe cold; my nerves seemed ready to burst, and respiration was extremely difficult. I was the solitary being in this place. Streams of ice from over the Kailās peak descend down into the Gaurikund. There was water in the lake, but above it stood a layer of ice five feet thick. The layer had to be pierced with the steel-pointed staff—then only water bubbled to the surface.

Bathing was an impossibility. I walked over the surface of ice twenty feet from the shore and pierced it with the staff. Water ran up as from a spring. I dipped my fingers to sprinkle it over my body; I felt as if a deadly scorpion had stung the finger-tip, or that it had been severed from the hand. The tiny drops of water turned into globules of ice as soon as they were sprinkled. I threw into the lake my Setu brought from Shri Rāmeshwara: in a moment it was coated with ice.

Here, on this lake, my object which I had cherished all these long years was fulfilled by the loving Grace of Shri Sadguru, my Master. My joy knew no bounds. The Darshan of Shri Kailās, Lake Mānas and Gaurikund carried away all the strain and stress of the arduous journey; my heart was elated. I felt that my life's ideal was fulfilled.

My ideal was to have a sight of the physical form of the Lord Dattātreyā Himself, and to get myself initiated into the realisation of the Self. I was determined either to realise this or to die in meditation while sitting in Yogic posture.

I began by looking in all four directions and then spread my tiger's skin on the icy floor of the lake, planting my staff on the right. I again looked at the sky and at Mount Kailās, crying, 'Victory, Victory to the Lord, my Master!' I

stood for a few minutes facing the north. After this I sat on the tiger's skin in the Siddhāsana posture, with my face towards the north. In short, I began to face the final ordeal. It was sunset. I closed my eyes and passed into meditation, all along trying to fix the mind steadily on a mental image of the Lord Dattātreya in the centre between my eyebrows.

The first night I experienced terrible hardships. Bitter cold, piercing winds, incessant snow, inordinate hunger and deadly solitude combined to harass the mind; the body became numb and unable to bear the pangs. Snow covered me up to my breast and, till after midnight, I was fighting desperately with my mind. My body helped my mind, and I thought both of them were bent on defeating my object, but self-confidence, determination and my unbounded love towards my Master conquered them in the end.

I succeeded in subjugating the invulnerable enemies and was steadily riveted to my meditation and, as a consequence, lost consciousness of the body and of the world outside. It is so difficult to say anything further when I had passed beyond these things.

Every moment increased the intensity of my yearning to see my Master, and it was while I was in this state that I thought I heard a voice.

I did not leave my meditation. Later on I found that the image which formed the subject of my meditation grew more and more dim. Yet I refused to allow my mind to leave its point of concentration; instead I fixed it there with added determination.

‘O my child! O my dear!’ I heard these words thrice, but did not open my eyes, for the mental image of my Master was still there between the eyebrows. I wanted to see the Lord Dattātreya in physical form, and naturally it was impossible for me to be satisfied with His voice alone. Moreover, no sight of a physical form was possible until the mental one had disappeared. As I was so keen about the physical sight, I did not leave my meditation, though I heard the call three times.

At last, all of a sudden, the mental form disappeared. Automatically my eyes were opened and I saw, standing before me, the Lord Dattātreya, my Master, in his physical form. At once I prostrated myself on the icy ground like a staff and placed my head on His lotus-feet.

Three days had passed like three moments for me! My Master lifted me up like the Divine Mother and hugged me to His breast and caressed me all over the body. Thereafter He gave me the mantra (sacred words) and initiated me

into the realisation of the Self. What a great bliss it was! I cannot describe that joy, as it is beyond any description through words.

*'The Master preaches through His silence,
And all the doubts of the disciple are solved.'*

Thus says a Sanskrit poet. You can take as much enlightenment from these lines as you find in them.

Here, my Manas (mind) merged into Antahkarana (heart); the Antahkarana with the Manas merged into the Chitta (mind-stuff); the Chitta along with Antahkaran and Manas merged into Buddhi (intellect); the Buddhi with Chitta, Antahkarana and Manas merged into Ahankar (egoism); and the Ahankar along with Buddhi, Chitta, Antahkaran and Manas—all merged into the Absolute Brahma! I found myself reflected everywhere in the whole Universe! It was all one harmony—full of Wisdom, Infinite Love Perennial and Bliss Eternal! Where was the body, its tenements and the 'I'! It was all Satchidānanda (Truth, Wisdom and Bliss).

The Lord Dattātreya, my Master, after having blessed me, lit the sacred fire and asked me to perform the sacrificial ceremonies. After this he initiated me into the Giri order of Sanyāsins and named me 'Hamsa'. I had nothing to offer Him

except a biscuit, which I placed in His bowl. He ate half of it and gave the rest to me as *prasād* (sacred food). Then the Lord told me to ask for a boon. I was silent in the beginning, but when I was told this a second time, I asked Him to grant me one in the words of the great devotee Pralhād:

‘Let my heart always feel the same attachment towards Thee, though divested of its harm, that the indiscriminating soul feels for worldly objects.’

My Master placed His hand in blessing on my head and said, ‘Let it be so!’ and smiled at me. Thereupon we both started out to reach my camp.

I had taken nearly fifteen hours in climbing to Gaurikund, but in the company of the Lord I took only as many minutes to reach the camp.

XI

On the evening of the fourth day I returned safely to my camp. My coolies rejoiced at seeing me again. The next morning, at 5 a.m., we left for Teerthāpuri, arriving there two days later. Teerthāpuri, lacking in habitation, lies to the north-west of Kailās, the river flowing between. The river has its source in Lake Rākastāl and flows westward. There is a hill of Bhasma (sacred ashes) at Teerthāpuri. Here, in a cave, I saw the

Sage about whom the Mahātmā had spoken to me on Mount Kailās. Seeing me from a distance, he came towards me. I bowed down prostrate at his holy feet, but he raised me, calling me 'child' and affectionately leading me to his cave. I asked Gurunādā and my coolies to lodge in another cave near by and went with the Mahātmā, who seemed a little older than, but in other respects much like, the Mahātmā on Kailās. He had the same sweet voice, the same peace and serenity beaming on his face, the same Light of the Absolute radiating from his eyes, and the same full yet graceful stature. The Mahātmā asked me to close my eyes and sit in meditation, saying he would do likewise. He asked me what more I had to gain. I made no reply. As required, I sat in meditation.

I stayed here for three days in company with this Sage, and during that time experienced the joy and bliss of Sant-samāgam, the company of a saint. I here remembered Yogini Shri Satranji Bāi, at whose lotus-feet I had the good fortune to sit for some days at Brahmāvarta, when I was a lad of eleven years. I did not see till then, and have not seen even till now, a woman so full of love, peace and joy, so graceful and lustrous.

On the fourth day I took my leave of the Mahātmā of Teerthāpuri, bowing down at his

hallowed feet. The great Soul came to see me off, when Gurunādā and the coolies had a sight of him.

We started for Gārtok, reaching there after two days' journey. Gārtok is the capital of Western Tibet and the seat of the Garpan. It is sparsely populated, more so even than Tāklākot, and the population, too, moves away in winter. Near by was the town of Le, whence the road led to Tartary. Gārtok is exceedingly cold. Thākur Jayachand was the Agent of the British Government here.

After a couple of days' stay at Gārtok, we took our return journey, not via Gyānimā, but by the middle route to Tāklākot. I kept good health during this journey, save that I had two strong motions at Barkhātarjan. I was, of course, much reduced in body. On our way back to Tāklākot we suffered much hardship in the neighbourhood of Rākastāl.

The tract between Gārtok and Barkhātarjan is uninhabited and dreary, and we had the misfortune to meet a storm. The wind blew hard in our faces and choked our breathing; dust rushed into the eyes, nose, mouth and ears. The sky was overcast with thick black clouds. Barkhātarjan lay at a distance of five miles. It was 4 p.m.

For a hundred yards we struggled valiantly to

push on, but could not make any real progress. The wind blew like a hurricane—so fiercely that when we took one step forward we were compelled to retreat two. Everywhere there was dust, and nothing but dust. The whole atmosphere was so full of it that nothing could be seen in any direction. We were walking across a plain, consequently we had no hopes of getting any shelter anywhere, and when it became impossible for us to walk, our position became helpless. On account of the velocity of the wind, we were forced to move towards the south, instead of going to the east.

As a last resource we knelt down and, drawing our legs close up, thrust our heads between them. Then we placed our hands on them and fell flat on the ground. Heaps of sand rolled over us; the wind continued to blow with unabated fury. We remained in this position for over three hours. Then the storm abated a little and we resumed our journey. We reached Barkhātarjan at 9.30 p.m. after marching through the wind-storm for about twelve hours.

At Barkhātarjan I managed to secure lodging-place in the post office at two annas for the night. I took tea only, and being exhausted, retired for the night. The next morning, feeling better, I resumed journey at 5 a.m. for Tāklākot in com-

pany with a Tibetan Lāmā who was going to Khocharnāth for the purpose of purchasing hides. He had an ass for carrying the goods.

At 7 a.m. we halted near a watering-place, and until 11 a.m. the Tibetan fellows—the Lāmā and my guide—were eating their meals. I sat in the sun, with no umbrella, looking here and there. Gurunādā and the coolies slept, covering themselves in their blankets.

It was here that I met three young Lāmās from Lhässā, on pilgrimage to Kailās. Each wore a long red felt cap, a red felt Bakhu over the body, Dokchyā on the feet and carried in their hand a spear with banner attached. One of them was the Master (Guru) and the two others his disciples. Nearing us, they began to repeat some verses from Buddhist scriptures, and held forth their begging bowls. At this my coolies gave each of them a handful of sattū. The Lāmā accompanying me also gave a handful.

At 12 noon we resumed our journey. Soon afterwards the sky was overcast with clouds and I feared a hail-storm. Indeed, we had scarcely reached the foot of the mountain on the north-western shore of Rākastāl when hail began to beat heavily upon us. In the forefront was my guide with his lean, half-starved ass. Just behind, I walked on, musing within myself and watching

the storm. Ten yards in the rear came Gurunādā, worn out and languorous. By his side walked the coolies, helping him along.

We had just reached midway when the storm achieved its height. We all stood close together, our heads bent down. Gurunādā at once collapsed on the hail-bed on the ground. His eyes turned pale, and stooping down I forced into his mouth the whole of the medicine given me by Morpankhi Bāwā. He felt better after a few moments, and the Lāmā and my coolies raised him up. But he could not stand on his legs nor take a single step.

Deeming it wiser to march on rather than stay in the storm, Gurunādā was borne on the shoulders by the Lāmā and one of my coolies, and we resumed our march. The guide undertook to lead both the asses.

We eventually reached the top of the mountain. The storm was still furious. Rākastāl and Mānas came in sight; in the distance Kailās could still be seen hazily.

Though a storm raged, it was a beauteous sight. But I could not lift my head towards the sky, for the hail poured down like shells. Below, the ground was covered in a mantle of pure white, just as if it were sprinkled over with sheets of camphor. To the right was Lake Rākastāl, the

hail splashing in the water and setting afloat circle after circle of lively wavelets, with the fine drops of water dancing over them like pearls. The hollow bubbles on the surface of the water looked like so many illuminated glass lamps. All around was a perfect spectacle of white land with the blue lake in the centre. It was a gorgeous panorama.

Turning towards Lake Mānas, I saw that half of it was lit up in the sun, the other half reflecting dark clouds and looking grimly serene and sombre.

I was charmed by this beautiful spectacle of nature, and walking on, slowly pondered over the Glory of God—Lord of Nature. My men had gone ahead of me—so rapt was I in this scene. Indeed, they had reached the downhill path while I was still at the summit.

The storm abated a little, and soft, downy snow began to fall, which we had often to brush off our clothes because it so soon condensed into ice.

At 5 p.m. we arrived at the foot of the mountain on Lake Rākastāl. We rested for a while, and then, locating a crevice in a rock sufficiently large to accommodate all of us, we decided to stay therein for the night.

It was only after great efforts that we eventually succeeded in lighting a fire by flint and cotton. The prickly shrubs were wet and refused to

ignite. We managed to take tea, however, at 9 p.m. and retired to sleep. I did not rest well that night.

Early the next morning I awakened my fellows and asked them to prepare tea. At 8 a.m. we resumed our journey along the eastern shore of Rākastāl. The sky was still cloudy, but no storm burst until we came to the flat plateau at the summit of the hill on the southern shore. It was noon, and the sun shone bright. Kailās and Gervā Māndhātā could be seen full and clear. For the last time we looked at Mount Shri Kailās, and marched on.

We had not gone more than a few furlongs, however, when my guide suddenly fell to the ground. Anxiously I enquired what was amiss, and he made gestures to say that he had a severe headache; water was trickling profusely from his eyes, and he could not hold up his head. I gave him black pepper and jagree, but it was of no avail. At last he urged us to proceed on our way, promising to follow as soon as he felt sufficiently well. We had not gone far when we saw him trudging towards us from behind.

At 2 p.m. a fierce northward gale blew into our faces. As we had to proceed southward, we suffered a good deal. Our mouths grew parched, limbs stiffened and feet cramped. The Lāmā, of

course, being a native of the place, did not feel the effects of the storm so severely as we did. Besides, we were done up by the continuous journey for the last month and a half. I had grown very weak.

At 7.30 p.m. we reached a small village called Rung-Wung.

All of us suffered many hardships on the way, but my Tibetan guide was the worst victim. He was attacked by high fever, and could not walk on alone without the aid of others. We escorted him to Rung-Wung, with the help of my coolies and the Lāmā, and put up near a running stream of clear water. We took food here and lay down for rest. Gurunādā and the Tibetan guide were groaning aloud. I sat by the side of each for a few minutes and then retired for the night.

Both felt better the next morning, and at noon, after food, we resumed our journey for Tāklākot at 2 p.m. By evening at 6 p.m. we reached the same cave on the banks of the Karnāli River as we had lodged in one night about a month and a half back. Here the Lāmā left us for Khochar-nāth. The Tibetan guide also left us and went away to his place with his ass.

We four—myself, Gurunādā and the two coolies—proceeded onward for Tāklākot. At 7 p.m. I reached the place and put up in the tent

of my friend the Bhutiā merchant. On the way I had a strong motion and consequently felt very weak. Accordingly, on arriving in the tent, I lay down quietly for half an hour. The Bhutiā gave me pepper and sugar-candy to eat and cold water to drink; thereupon I felt much better. I was then accommodated in another tent near by.

When I left for Mānas Sarowar there was but a sparse population in Tāklākot. Now, however, I found nearly six hundred tents pitched. Several Bhutiā merchants from Vyāsa, Darmā and Chowdās Pattis had come from India with articles of trade—woollen cloths, groceries, corals, pearls and grain. The whole city of canvas teemed with loads of goods piled in rows, and was alive with zubus, yāks, horses and sheep. The trade season had just begun, and there was a regular thoroughfare of Huniā, Jumali, and Bhutiā traders. For four months—July, August, September, and October—the markets are in full swing at Tāklākot and Gyānimā, and much business is done. At Tāklākot customs duty is levied on articles of trade. The Bhutiās of Johār Patti resort to Gyānimā for trade, for the place is nearer to them by the usual route—the Johār Pass. The inhabitants of Johār Patti seem to be more advanced in culture than those of Vyāsa Patti.

After a day's stay at Tāklākot, I went to Khocharnāth, twelve miles to the east. On the way I passed two or three villages with only four or five houses in each. We saw also a few green trees—the first that had met our eyes in Western Tibet. At Khocharnāth there is a temple consecrated to Shri Rāma. This large and old temple, with a rampart round it, is built in the Buddhist style; it is located on the banks of the Karnāli. A Buddhist Lāmā carries on worship there in the Buddhist fashion.

The river has no Ghāt (flight of stone steps) leading to it, as in the case of most Hindu places of pilgrimage on river sides. The images of Shri Rāma and Seetā Devi are each six feet high and are made of bronze, the seat—the throne—being also of the same metal. The art-work on the throne is precious. There is also a Buddhist library in the temple, which, besides, contains images of Rāvana, Kāli Mātā, and other Gods and demons.

We stayed in the temple for the night, and the next morning returned to Tāklākot. That day at Tāklākot there was a procession of Buddhist religious scriptures encased in 600 painted boxes—one in each—carried over the head by women, each carrying a box, ceremoniously dressed for the purpose and marching in regular rows. To a stranger like myself it was a pretty sight.

XII

I was at Tāklākot for two days. At evening in a grocer's shop I met the Zumpan, who accosted me, and after formal greetings remarked that the Tibetan climate seemed to have agreed with my health. He asked me to stay with him for a year, if I wished to go to Lhāssā, and then accompany him after that. He assured me the tour with him would be quite comfortable for me. I thanked him for his goodness, but declined the offer, as it was impossible for me to stay at Tāklākot for a whole year.

At 5 a.m. I resumed my journey from Tāklākot up to Kālāpāni, on a zubu hired for one rupee and four annas. I intended to go by the Lipu Pass, where I arrived at 12.30 a.m. This pass lies on the confines of Tibet and India. Standing here, I turned my eyes once towards Tibet and then towards India, contemplating the scene for some minutes. This pass is 17,000 feet high, and is much easier and more pleasant than the Tinker Ghāt (Pass). When I went into Tibet it was full summer in India, and now, when I came back, autumn had already set in. In this season the Himālayās present a beautiful sight. On my way to Kālāpāni, changing scenery met my eyes. I

saw beds of wild roses bloom—pure white, pink, red and yellow. I feasted my eyes on this flower-garden. Other variegated wild flowers also bloomed in abundance. The deodār, oak and bhurjapatra trees had put on green foliage. Fields of rice, mundhwā and java were waving green. My eyes devoured the luxurious verdure, as during the last month and a half not a leaf nor bud had relieved the dreariness of my sojourn in Tibet. The grand and sublime beauty of Mount Kailās and Lake Mānas and the luxuriant efflorescence of nature in the Himālayās are riveted in my memory, fast and undying. Whenever I get a remembrance of these gorgeous scenes, my heart throbs with joy and flows in adoration to the Almighty.

Coursing through the full-bloomed Himālayan hills, I crossed a river and took a short uphill journey. Here the saddle on which I sat slipped off the zubu's back and I fell. Happily, I did not roll into the river. At 6 p.m. we reached Kālā-pāni, in a thick forest—still, quiet and sombre. Here is the source of the Kāli-Gangā and near it an image of Devi (Goddess). We lodged in a thrashing-hut in a field. The place where we had put up was intercepted by a network of streams. Tall deodārs stood round, and tender vines hung from them in the manner of green curtains. My

coolies prepared chapāti and masura (lentils). We took our meals with great pleasure. Afterwards I went for a stroll in the woodland by the river-side, enjoying the beauty of the forest and high mountains and meditating on my Master. The coolies were smoking at ease underneath a tree and were talking in their own hill dialect about the tour and their respective homes and families. I joined with them in their chatting for a few minutes, and then strolled away. It was dark now, and a thin drizzle had begun. I returned to my hut and lay quiet on my blanket. At 5 a.m. I rose and asked my coolies to prepare tea. In the meanwhile I lounged in the forest near by. Kālāpāni is about twenty-five or thirty miles from Tāklākot. We left for Garbiyāng at 8 a.m. after tea.

Two roads led to Garbiyāng, one across the Kālī-Gangā through Nepālese territory, and the other via Gunjee alongside the hitherward bank of the river. The former route is the shorter by three and a half miles. At two miles from Kālāpāni we crossed the river by means of two teak beams thrown across the banks. Here the stream of the river is narrow.

Nature in the Himālayās puts on her best dress in the autumn. It is considered risky to travel here in these days. The way from Kālā-

pāni lay alongside the River Kāli-Gangā through groves of deodār, oak and bhurjapatra trees. I was passing through this part in the morning; cold and refreshing gales blew; on both sides rose green fields of waving corn—maize, mundhwā and wheat; streams coursing down from hill to dale flowed on every side; below, the Ganges roared smooth and deep; the birds on the tall trees and in the green fields blithely warbled and hopped about; on the ridge occasionally could be seen the musk deer with its unsteady, moving eyes; pure milk-white clouds slid easily from hill to hill. The hour was quiet. I walked ahead, humming and musing to myself, the coolies following me. Joy welled forth in my heart. I stood underneath a tree gazing for a few minutes at the Ganges, serenely flowing below. In a moment I was lost in the ecstasy of meditation and flew into the Land of the Soul. I sat in this state for an hour and a half, after which, on looking about, I found that my coolies were smoking near by under a tree, gazing at me. I felt extremely happy.

At 11.30 a.m. we reached Chhāngru, where there is a Gurkhāli police station. The policemen had seen me before and pressed me to stay there for the day. I agreed to their wishes. After meals I reclined for an hour in the afternoon and left for Garbiyāng at 5 p.m. The very same day Kumār

Jagatsing Pāl, the political Peshkār, had come up to Garbiyāng, and I lodged in the bungalow with him. We stayed together for five days. All my acquaintances at Garbiyāng rejoiced at my return from the pilgrimage safe and sound. They had not heard a word about me for the last seven weeks.

I accompanied Kumār Jagatsingji in his tour to Kuti, Nāvee, Gunjee and other places. I now sent away one of my coolies; the younger fellow was with me up to the Kāthagodām station. As I accompanied the political Peshkār Sāhib, my journey was a pleasant one. I used to be accommodated in a tent near his camp. Kuti is twenty miles from Garbiyāng, at a height of about 13,000 feet above sea-level, with a rough road leading to it. There are about a hundred and fifty houses at Kuti, and some of the Bhutiā traders there are very wealthy. The scenery at Kuti is fine, and we stayed there for three days. About fifteen miles to the west is Juling-Kāng. As I wished to see this place, we four—myself, the Peshkār's nephew, a Chaprāssi and a Patwāri—set out on horseback at 7 a.m. The road was rough and hilly. We trotted on slowly, and it was five hours before we rode into Juling-Kāng. The place looked like a miniature of Shri Kailās-Mānas. The lake here is about a fourth of the size of Mānas, and the

mountain is 18,000 feet high, as compared with Kailās, 30,000 feet in height. There are two fields of rice and mundhwā which are said to be natural growths; they looked so fine that one would suppose they were the results of the labours of the industrious husbandmen. We then saw the famous glaciers of Juling-Kāng. To the west of the lake over the hills extends a plateau for half a dozen miles. It was now all green with verdure and blossoming with wild flowers. We were riding our horses, at times at a trot and at others a gallop, till one hour after noon. Then we dismounted to take our bath in the lake. After this and the daily religious observances, we took a light repast and reclined on the soft, tender grass, admiring the charms of the place and adoring the wisdom of the Creator. In the meanwhile our horses grazed in the green meadows near by.

At 2 p.m. we started back for Kutī. The Patwāri and myself rode fast and were soon ahead of the others. Mādhavlāl, the Peshkār's nephew, came on foot uphill, leading his horse by the reins: the animal seemed quite exhausted. A few paces behind was the Chaprāssi on horseback. Then Mādhavlāl's horse suddenly slipped off its feet and rolled down and down. Mādhavlāl tried his utmost to stay the animal, but was himself being dragged down. The Chaprāssi whistled to

us, and we all galloped back and with some difficulty managed to stay the frightened animal from slipping further; otherwise the rider and the horse would have finished in the river. At midway we changed animals and galloped on until, at 5 p.m., the Patwāri and myself reached our tents at Kuti. I rode continuously that day for ten hours, and at night my limbs, especially the thighs, ached abominably. On our way to Garbiyāng from Kuti we halted at Gunjee, where I heard the singing and witnessed the dancing of Bhutiā girls. Our tour to Kuti and back to Garbiyāng took us about ten days.

We stayed at Garbiyāng for five days more. It was raining day and night. I told the Peshkār Sāhib that I wished to stay at Garbiyāng on the confluence of the rivers till autumn was over and then go downhill in winter. He suggested that Askot was a better place for my purposes, and there too, a couple of miles away, was a confluence of rivers. He further suggested that the journey to Askot would be comfortable in his company. I agreed to the proposal, and on the fifth day we started at 5 p.m. for Askot, halting at short intervals. It was raining heavily. I was now quite comfortable, having nothing to worry me regarding my touring arrangements. It took us eight or ten days to reach Askot. As we

reached the lower hills, I felt the heat, being accustomed to the extremely cold climate of Tibet for the last two months. Thus I did not grumble when I had to march in the rain. On arriving at Askot the Peshkār made all arrangements for my comfortable stay there.

At about three miles from Askot lies a small hill, just on the confluence of the Kāli-Gangā and the Gori-Gangā, with a thick forest of teak and deodār near by. A strong double-lined tent was pitched for me underneath a tall deodār; and the ground was swept clean for three yards round it. A large mat on the ground, a chārpāi (cot), a wooden stool and lamp was all the furniture in this tabernacle. When the sky was clear, from this place the perpetual-snow range could be distinctly seen. The forest was a frequent haunt of the bear, the tiger, the deer and other wild animals. I stayed in this quiet and solitary hermitage for a month and a half; passing my days happily in meditation. The place was named 'Hamseshwar'. The Peshkār Sāhib very kindly looked to all my bodily comforts during this period of meditation, and so I soon regained my health. Autumn was now drawing to a close, so I told the Peshkār that I wished to go to the plains below. He suggested that the Inspector of Post Offices was to come there from Almorā

within two days, and that I should go down in his company. Accordingly I accompanied Mr. Trivedi, the Inspector, on the third day to Almorā, bidding good-bye to the Peshkār Sāhib, who was much grieved at our parting.

We went to Almorā by a route quite different from that via Pithorāgad and Lohāghāt. Nature is more lavish in bestowing her charms here than over the Lohāghāt route. On the third day in the evening we reached Almorā. Mr. Trivedi arranged to get my steel trunk and money from Māyāvati to Almorā, as I was in need of them both. They came about three or four days later.

Almorā is the principal town of the district and has a sanatorium. Pine-trees are specially planted on the hill here by the Forest Department, as being conducive to health for consumptives undergoing treatment in the Consumptives' Home. These trees also add greatly to the beauty of the place. I stayed at Almorā for a fortnight with Rāi Sāhib Pundit Manorath Bhatt, the postmaster.

The autumn was over at last. I had regained my health too, so I thought of proceeding further. But the Punditji pressed me to stay for a month; I begged to be excused, said that I had to go, but would accept his hospitality on some future occasion.

At Almorā I found a number of acquaintances and passed a happy time. Starting from Almorā, I reached the Kāthagodām station the third day in the afternoon. Here I sent away my young coolie, who had been with me during the last five months. He was sorely grieved at the parting. . . .

It was October, and the heat at the foot of the hills was oppressive. I took train and halted at Bareilly for a day. Thereupon I took the Punjāb mail and went straight to Bombay.

At Almorā I had shaved my head clean of hair, and also parted with my beard, which had grown luxuriantly during the last few months. It took me six months and seven days for this pilgrimage. During this period I suffered from ill-health only once, and that for a day only. I had to spend, in all, one hundred and seventy-five rupees—nearly thirteen pounds. It was the Grace and Grace alone of my Master that carried me safe and sound through this pilgrimage of peril, danger and difficulties to fulfil my ideal.

From Bareilly to Bombay I was on the train for forty-two hours. I reached Victoria terminus, Bombay, on 11 October 1908, and was received at the station by three or four friends, who rejoiced exceedingly at my safe return. I stayed for a fortnight with them in Bombay, and then returned home to Dhuliā.

Thus was my pilgrimage brought to a close. I have laid the incidents of my adventures on the way to Shri Kailās-Mānas before you, gentle reader, to the best of my ability and in a spirit of deep humility. The narration proceeds from love, and with love accept it, gentle reader. With prayers to the Almighty that the Sun of Glory may shine luminant on the Land of India, my Motherland, and her children, and the Sanātan Dharma,¹ I lay down my pen, bowing in loving adoration to the lotus-feet of my Master, the Lord Shri Dattātreyā.

¹ Eternal Religion, as Hindu religion is called.

THE END