

VIII.

An ACCOUNT of a JOURNEY to TIBET.

TO THE HONORABLE

JOHN MACPHERSON, ESQ.

GOVERNOR-GENERAL, &c.

Fort William.

HONORABLE SIR,

HAVING, in obedience to the instructions with which you were pleased to honour me, examined *Poorungeer*, the Goffeyn, who has at different times been employed in deputations to the late *Teeshoo Lama*, formerly accompanied him to the court of *Pekin*, and who is lately again returned from *Tibet*, and having collected from him such an account of the journey he has just performed, and other information, as he could give me relative to the countries he had left, I beg leave to submit it to you in the following narrative.

In the beginning of last year, *Poorungeer*, having received dispatches from Mr. *Hastings*, a short time previous to his departure from *Bengal*, for *Teeshoo Lama*, and the Regent of *Teeshoo Loomboo*, immediately set about preparing for the distant journey he had engaged to undertake, which employed him until the beginning of

of the following month of March, when I beg leave to recal to your remembrance, I had the honor to present him to you for his dismissal. He then commenced his journey from *Calcutta*, and early in the month of April had passed, as he relates, the limits of the Company's Provinces, and entered the mountains that constitute the Kingdom of *Bootan*, where, in the prosecution of his journey, he received from the subjects of the *Daib Raja*, the most ample and voluntary assistance to the frontier of his territory; nor met with any impediment to oppose his progress until he came upon the borders of *Tibet*. Here he was compelled to halt for near a fortnight by a heavy fall of snow, that commenced upon his arrival, and continued incessantly for the space of six days, covering the face of the country to so great a depth, as totally to put a stop to all travelling, and render it impracticable for him to proceed until a thaw succeeded to open the communication. During the time of his confinement at *Phari*, he says, such was the severity of the cold, and the injurious effect so rapid a transition from a temperate climate had on the health of himself and his companions, that it left him little room to doubt, if an early change had not fortunately taken place, and permitted his advance, that they must all have fallen victims to the inclemency of the weather.

However, as early as it was possible for him to leave *Phari*, he proceeded by long stages on his journey, and, without encountering any further difficulty, on the 8th of May following, reached *Teeshoo Loomboo*, the capital of *Tibet*. Immediately upon entering the Monastery, he went to the Durbar of the Regent *Punjur Intinneet Nemohein* to announce his arrival, and the purpose of his commission. Quarters were then allotted for his residence, and an hour fixed for him to wait upon *Teeshoo Lama*; who, as he was informed the following morning, intended to leave the Palace to occupy one
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of his gardens, situated on the plain within sight of the Monastery, where it was visible a considerable encampment had been formed. The *Lama* quitted his apartment at the first dawn of day, and was lodged in the tents pitched for his accommodation before the sun had risen.

In the course of the morning, at the hour appointed for his admission, *Poorungeer* went down to the *Lama's* tents. He heard, on entering the gates of the enclosure, that the young *Lama* was taking his recreation in the garden, ranging about, which became with him a very favourite amusement. As it was at this time in *Tibet* the warmest part of the year, that he might enjoy the benefit of the air, his attendants had chosen a spot where the trees afforded a complete shade, to place an elevated seat of cushions for the young *Lama*, after his exercise, to rest upon. In this situation *Poorungeer* found him, when summoned to his presence, attended by the Regent, his parents, *Soopoon Choomboo*, the cup-bearer, and the principal officers of the court. After making three obeisances at as remote a distance as it was possible, *Poorungeer* approached, and presented to the *Lama*, according to the custom of *Tibet*, a piece of white pelong, and then delivered the letters and presents with which he had been charged. The packages were all immediately opened before the *Lama*, who had every article brought near to him, and viewed them separately one by one. The letter he took into his own hand, himself broke the seal, and taking from under the cover a string of pearls, which it enclosed, ran them over between his fingers, as they read their rosaries, and then with an arch air placed them by his side, nor would, while the narrator was in his presence, permit any one to take them up. *Poorungeer* says the young *Lama* regarded him with a very kind and significant look,

look, spoke to him in the *Tibet* language, and asked him if he had had a fatiguing journey. The interview lasted more than an hour, during all which time the *Lama* sat with the utmost composure, not once attempting to quit his seat, nor discovering the least forward uneasiness at his confinement. Tea was twice brought in, and the *Lama* drank a cup each time. When ordered to accept his dismissal, *Poorungeer* approached the *Lama*, and bowing before him, presented his head uncovered to receive his blessing, which the young *Lama* gave by stretching out his hand, and laying it upon his head. He then ordered him, as long as he resided at *Teeshoo Loomboo*, to come to him once every day.

The following morning *Poorungeer* waited upon the Regent at his apartments in the Palace, to whom, after observing the customary forms of introduction, he delivered his dispatches. After this he visited *Soopoon Choomboo*, the *Lama's* parents, and others, to whom he was before known, and says he experienced from all quarters the most cordial and kind reception; for they had been long used to consider him as an agent of the Government of *Bengal*. He found no change whatever to have ensued in the administration since his attendance upon me in *Tibet*. The country enjoyed perfect tranquillity; and the only event that had taken place of importance in their annals, was the inauguration of the infant *Lama*, which happened the preceding year; and as this constitutes a concern of the highest moment, whether considered in a political or religious point of view, being no less than the recognizance, in an infant form, of their regenerated immortal Sovereign and Ecclesiastical Supreme, I was induced to bestow more than common pains to trace the ceremonies that attended the celebration of such a great event, conceiving that the novelty of the subject might render the account curious, if even it should be found to contain no information

mation of real utility. I shall therefore, without further apology, subjoin the result of my enquiries, premising only, that my authority for the description is derived principally from *Poorungeer*, and confirmed, with some additional particulars, by the concurring reports of a Goffeyn who was at that time himself present on the spot.

The Emperor of *China* appears, on this occasion, to have assumed a very conspicuous part, in giving testimony of his respect and zeal for the great religious Father of his Faith. Early in the year 1784, he dispatched Ambassadors from the court of *Pekin* to *Teeshoo Loomboo*, to represent their Sovereign in supporting the dignity of the High Priest, and do honor to the occasion of the assumption of his office. *Dalai Lama*, and the Viceroy of *Lassa*, accompanied by all the court, one of the *Chinese* Generals stationed at *Lassa*, with a part of the troops under his command, two of the four magistrates of the city, the heads of every monastery throughout *Tibet*, and the Emperor's Ambassadors, appeared at *Teeshoo Loomboo* to celebrate this epocha in their theological institutions. The 28th day of the seventh moon, corresponding nearly, as their year commences with the vernal equinox, to the middle of October, 1784, was chosen as the most auspicious for the ceremony of inauguration; a few days previous to which the *Lama* was conducted from *Terpaling*, the Monastery in which he had passed his infancy, with every mark of pomp and homage that could be paid by an enthusiastic people. So great a concourse, assembled either from curiosity or devotion, was never seen before; for not a person of any condition in *Tibet* was absent who could join the suite. The procession was hence necessarily constrained to move so slow, that though *Terpaling* is situated at the distance of twenty miles only from *Teeshoo Loomboo*, three days expired in the performance of this short march. The first halt was
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made at *Tfondue* ; the second at *Summaar* ; about six miles off whence the most splendid parade was reserved for the *Lama's* entry on the third day ; the account of which is given me by a person who was present in the procession. The road, he says, was previously prepared by being whitened with a wash, and having piles of stones heaped up, with small intervals between, on either side. The retinue passed between a double row of priests, who formed a street extending all the way from *Summaar* to the gates of the Palace. Some of the priests held lighted rods of a perfumed composition, that burn like decayed wood, and emit an aromatic smoke ; the rest were furnished with the different musical instruments they use at their devotions, such as the gong, the cymbal, hautboy, trumpets, drums, and sea-shells, which were all sounded in union with the hymn they chanted. The croud of spectators were kept without the street, and none admitted on the high road, but such as properly belonged to, or had a prescribed place in, the procession, which was arranged in the following order.

The van was led by three military commandants, or governors of districts, at the head of 6 or 7000 horsemen, armed with quivers, bows, and matchlocks. In their rear followed the Ambassador, with his suite, carrying his diploma, as is the custom of *China*, made up in the form of a large tube, and fastened on his back. Next the *Chinese* General advanced with the troops under his command, mounted and accoutred after their way with fire arms and sabres ; then came a very numerous group, bearing the various standards and insignia of state. Next to them moved a full band of wind and other sonorous instruments ; after which were led two horses, richly caparisoned, each carrying two large circular stoves, disposed like panniers across the horse's back, and filled with burning aromatic woods. These

These were followed by a senior priest, called a *Lama*, who bore a box, containing books of their form of prayer, and some favourite idols. Next nine sumptuary horses were led, loaded with the *Lama's* apparel; after which came the priests immediately attached to the *Lama's* person for the performance of daily offices in the Temple, amounting to about 700; following them were two men, each carrying on his shoulder a large cylindrical gold insignium, embossed with emblematical figures, (a gift from the Emperor of *China*.) The *Duhunners* and *Soopoons*, who were employed in communicating addresses, and distributing alms, immediately preceded the *Lama's* bier, which was covered with a gaudy canopy, and borne by eight of the sixteen *Chinese* appointed for this service. On one side of the bier attended the Regent, on the other the *Lama's* Father. It was followed by the heads of the different monasteries; and as the procession advanced, the priests who formed the street fell in in the rear, and brought up the suite, which moved at an extremely slow pace, and about noon was received within the confines of the Monastery, amidst an amazing display of colours, the acclamations of the croud, solemn music, and the chanting of their priests.

The *Lama* being safely lodged in the Palace, the Regent and *Soopoon Choomboo* went out, as is a customary compliment paid to visitors of high rank on their near approach, to meet and conduct *Delai Lama* and the Viceroy of *Lassa*, who were on the way to *Teeshoo Loomboo*. Their retinues encountered the following morning at the foot of *Painom* Castle, and the next day together entered the Monastery of *Teeshoo Loomboo*, in which both *Dalar Lama* and the Viceroy were accommodated during their stay.

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The following morning, which was the third after *Tee-shoo Lama's* arrival, he was carried to the great Temple, and about noon seated upon the throne of his progenitors; at which time the Emperor's Ambaffador delivered his diploma, and placed the presents with which he had been charged at the *Lama's* feet.

The three next ensuing days *Dalai Lama* met *Tee-shoo Lama* in the Temple, where they were affifted by all the priests in the invocation and public worship of their Gods. The rites then performed completed, as I understand, the business of inauguration. During this interval, all who were at the capital were entertained at the public expence, and alms were distributed without reserve. In conformity likewise to previous notice, circulated every where for the same space of time, universal rejoicings prevailed throughout *Tibet*. Banners were unfurled on all their fortresses, the peasantry filled up the day with music and festivity, and the night was celebrated by general illuminations. A long period was afterwards employed in making presents and public entertainments to the newly inducted *Lama*, who, at the time of his accession to the Musnud, or (if I may use the term) Pontificate, of *Tee-shoo Loomboo*, was not three years of age. The ceremony was begun by *Dalai Lama*, whose offerings are said to have amounted to a greater value, and his public entertainments to have been more splendid, than the rest. The second day was dedicated to the Viceroy of *Lassa*. The third to the *Chinese* General. Then followed the Culloung or Magistrates of *Lassa*, and the rest of the principal persons who had accompanied *Dalai Lama*. After which the Regent of *Tee-shoo Loomboo*, and all that were dependent on that government, were severally admitted, according to pre-eminence of rank, to pay their tributes of obeisance and respect. As soon as the acknowledgments of all those were received who were admiffible

fible to the privilege, *Tee-shoo Lama* made, in the same order, suitable returns to each, and the consummation lasted forty days.

Many importunities were used with *Dalai Lama* to prolong his stay at *Tee-shoo Loomboo*, but he excused himself from incumbering the capital any longer with so numerous a concourse of people as attended on his movements, and deeming it expedient to make his absence as short as possible from the seat of his authority, at the expiration of forty days he withdrew with all his suite to *Lassa*, and the Emperor's Ambassador received his dismissal to return to *China*: and thus terminated this famous festival.

With respect to the lately established commercial intercourse, *Poorungeer* informs me, that though so early, he found himself not the first person who had arrived at *Tee-shoo Loomboo* from *Bengal*. Many merchants had already brought their commodities to market, and others followed before he left it. He heard from no quarter any complaint of impediment or loss, and concludes, therefore, that all adventurers met the same easy access and ready aid, as he himself had every where experienced. The markets are well stocked with *English* and *Indian* articles, yet not in so great a degree as to lower the value of commodities below the prices of the two or three last preceding years. Bullion was somewhat reduced in worth in comparison with the year 1783. A pootree, or bulse of gold dust, the same quantity that then sold for twenty-one indermillees, was procurable of a purer quality for nineteen and twenty indermillees. A talent of silver, which was then 500, was 450 indermillees; so that the exchange was much in favor of the trader.

Poorungeer,

Poorungeer, during his residence at *Teeshoo Loomboo*, had very frequent interviews with the Regent and the Ministers, and assures me, he found the heartiest dispositions in them to encourage the commercial intercourse established under the auspices of the late Governor-General, whose departure, however, the Regent regretted, as the loss of the first friend and ally he became connected with, of, I believe it may be said, any foreign nation; in whom was acknowledged also the original means of opening the communication, and of commencing a correspondence, between the Governments of *Bengal* and *Tibet*; and although it may be observed that, in consequence of his having, from the beginning, been used exclusively to address himself to, and acknowledge alone the agents of, Mr. *Hastings*, his attachments to the *English* nation had grown not without a great degree of personality; yet, free from an unworthy capriciousness of temper, he descended not to take advantage of the opening offered by his friend's departure to close the new connection. For such was the respect he had learnt to entertain for our national integrity of character, that, under the apparent conviction our views tended to no scheme of ambition, but were confined merely to objects of utility and curiosity, *Poorungeer* assures me, he expressed an anxious desire for continuing with the succeeding Governor-General, the exercise of those offices of friendship so long supported by his predecessor; and in the hope that his would be met with equal wishes, determined to invite you to join him in preserving the same intercourse of commerce and correspondence, so essentially calculated for the benefit of both countries. In consequence of which, the *Lama* and the Regent addressed the letters *Poorungeer* had the honour to deliver to you; translations of which having, in obedience to your directions, been applied for to your *Persian* translator, I now subjoin them.

Copy

Copy of a Letter from TEESHOO LAMA.

" God be praised that the situation of these countries
 " is in peace and happiness, and I am always praying
 " at the altar of the Almighty for your health and pre-
 " servation. This is not unknown: you are certainly
 " employed in protecting and assisting the whole world,
 " and you promote the good and happiness of mankind.
 " We have made no deviation from the union and unani-
 " mity which existed during the time of the first of
 " nobles, Mr. *Hastings*, and the deceased *Lama*; and
 " may you also grant friendship to these countries, and
 " always make me happy with the news of your health,
 " which will be the cause of ease to my heart, and con-
 " firmation to my soul. At this time, as friendly offer-
 " ings of union and unanimity, I send one handker-
 " chief, one ketoo of silver, and one piece of cochin.
 " Let them be accepted."

From the RAJAH of Teeshoo Loomboo.

" God be praised that the situation of these countries
 " is in peace and happiness, and I am always praying
 " at the altar of the Almighty for your health and pre-
 " servation. This is not unknown: I am constantly
 " employed in promoting the advantage of the subjects
 " and the service of the newly-seated *Lama*, because
 " the newly-seated *Lama* is not distinct from the de-
 " ceased *Lama*, and the light of his countenance is
 " exalted. Grant your friendship to *Poorungeer Gof-
 " seyn*.

" Maintain union, and unanimity, and affection, like
 " the first of nobles, and every day make me happy
 " with the news of your health and prosperity: and
 " bestow favors like the first of nobles, and make me
 " happy

“ happy with letters, which are causes of consolation.
 “ At this time, as friendly offerings of union, and
 “ affection, and unanimity, I send one handkerchief,
 “ three tolah of gold, and one piece of cochin. Let
 “ them be accepted.”

Poorungeer, having received these dispatches in the beginning of October, after a residence of five months at *Teeshoo Loomboo*, took leave of the *Lama* and the Regent, and set out on his return by the same route he came to *Bengal*. The weather at this season of the year being most extremely favorable for travelling, he experienced no delay or interruption in the course of his journey through *Tibet* and *Bootan*, but arrived at *Rungpore* early in December, whence he proceeded as expeditiously as possible to the Presidency ; where, to his great mortification and concern, he finds, upon his arrival, his affairs involved in great distress ; the little territory his adopted Chela was left in charge of, having, during his absence, been violently invaded by *Raaj Chund*, a neighbouring Zemeendar, and to the amount of fifty begas forcibly taken out of his hands. Prevalled on by his earnest repeated solicitations, I am induced to say for him, that in your justice and favor are his only hopes of relief from his embarrassments ; and he humbly supplicates your protection in restoring and securing him in the possession of his invaded right. The liberty of this intercession, I am confident to think, would be forgiven, were it not in favor of one who has rendered to this Government various useful services ; but as, though of trivial importance, it affords an authentic instance of the encroaching disposition of inferior Zemeendars. Yet another circumstance it may not be improper to point out. The ground alluded to is a part of the land situated upon the western bank of the river opposite Calcutta, that was formerly granted under a Sunnud of this Government to *Teeshoo Lama*,
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for the foundation of a temple of worship, and as a resort for such pilgrims of their nation as might occasionally make visits to the consecrated Ganges.

Having, in conformity to your desires, done my best endeavours literally to translate all the information *Poorungeer* could give me, I have now only to apologize for the prolixity of the account, which I have been induced to be particularly minute in, as I conceived every circumstance, however trivial, might be in some degree interesting, that tends to illustrate any trait in the national character of a people we are but recently become acquainted with, and with whom, in its extended views, it has been an object of this Government to obtain a closer alliance.

I will not now presume to intrude longer on your time, by adding any observations on conjectures deducible from the elevated importance your young ally seems rising to, in consequence of the signal respect paid him by the most exalted political characters known to his nation; but beg leave to repeat, that it is with infinite satisfaction I learn from the reports of *Poorungeer*, the flourishing state of the lately projected scheme of trade, to promote which, he assures me, not any thing had been wanting in facility of intercourse; that the adventurers who had invested their property, had experienced perfect security in conducting their commerce, carried their articles to an exceeding good market, and found the rate of exchange materially in their favor.

Those advantages authorize the inference, that it will no doubt encourage more extensive enterprize; and permit me to add, I derive a confidence from the success of this infant essay, that inspires me with the strongest

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hopes,

hopes, that the commission which your Honorable Board was pleased to commit to my charge, will eventually be productive of essential benefits to the political and commercial interests of the Company.

I have the honor to be,

HONORABLE SIR,

With the greatest respect,

Your most obedient, faithful,

And most humble Servant,

SAMUEL TURNER.

Calcutta, February 8th, 1786.