IMJI GETSUL

An English Buddhist in a Tibetan Monastery

by

LOBZANG JIVAKA

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To the memory of
J.I.M.
who first stimulated
my interest in
Philosophy

Contents

Illustrations

Between pages 64 and 65

1. Rizong Gompa.
2. His Holiness Kushok Bakula.
3. (a) The Queen receiving a prayer-wheel. (b) The full Tibetan orchestra to welcome The Queen on her visit to Sarnath.
4. Rizong Shas with some of the monks.
5. Incarnate Lamas listening to His Holiness the Dalai Lama preaching in the Sinhalese Temple at Sarnath, 1955.
6. (a) Group of Ladakhi men and women in ordinary dress. (b) Ladakhi lady of some wealth in full regalia.
7. Leh, the village capital.
8. (a) Kushok Shas with Lama Lobzang. (b) Kushok Bakula presiding at a puja.

Foreword

Despite the title of this book, which means 'English' (Imji) 'Tibetan-ordained-novice-monk' (getsul), it is not meant to be a partial autobiography so much as an attempt to raise a small corner of the thick curtain which has closely veiled Tibetan Buddhism from the world ever since Westerners first penetrated the Land of Snows. A certain amount of personal background is, of course, inevitable, to explain why an Englishman should wish to receive Tibetan ordination, and enter a Ladakhi monastery as a novice to serve his time with the other Ladakhi novices without seeking special concessions because of his nationality, age, or qualifications. These things, being of merely worldly value, have no concern with monkhood.

The Buddhism of Ladakh is identical with that of Tibet, and the monasteries or Gompas differ only in their size, for whereas in Tibet they once housed thousands of monks — Drespung, which could claim 8000, was the largest — those in Ladakh may contain perhaps from 20 to 200, and since the numbers are small, the discipline may be less rigorous.

I have tried to portray life in the monastery exactly as it is at the risk of its being found tedious. The average Westerner would consider it monotonous in the extreme, because his mind is set on other things, but below the surface much is to be found that is hidden from the rest of the world, if there is the will to seek and to endure while seeking. For the esoteric Teaching which could carry man past the limitations of science, is secure in its oral transmission from Lama (Guru) to

disciple, but only to such disciples as have attained by self-mastery that level of spiritual development which enables them to receive it.

This is probably the first book on Tibet or Tibetan Buddhism which does not use the term 'Lamaism', a derogatory name suggesting a religion of exploitation, which has been passed on thoughtlessly from those who, like Waddell,[1] were antagonistic to and scornful of the religion of Tibet, to those who are sympathetically inclined towards it and desirous of understanding it.

The Tibetans themselves object strongly to the word, and also to the indiscriminate use of the title 'Lama', which the foreigner applies to everyone in the red robes. The word 'lama', meaning 'superior person', is the title given to any Teacher who has a reputation for learning and has disciples. Originally there were only two Lamas in all Tibet, the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama; then the name was also applied to the Tulkus or reincarnate heads of monasteries and others famous for their lives and learning, and finally also, as already said, to those who are recognized transmitters of the Dharma, the Doctrine of the Buddha. But to apply it to every gelong (bhikshu, fully ordained monk) and getsul (sramanera novice) is anathema to them, and is similar to calling every school teacher 'Professor'. The title becomes debased and worthless. Monks should be addressed as either 'gelong' or 'getsul' according to their status, and Tulkus and a few other highly considered Lamas are addressed as 'Rimpoche' or, in Ladakh by its equivalent 'Kushok'. 'Lama' now means 'Guru'.

It is owing to this misuse of the word 'Lama', and also to the presence as workers in Gompas of gesnyens (genyens), or devotees who live there with their wives and families, whose dress is not easily distinguishable by the foreigner from that of the monks, that the fallacy has arisen and become widespread that Tibetan gelongs are allowed to marry. A Lama may be a monk or a layman. There are no closed orders, and anyone is free at any time to return to the world if he wishes. Sometimes even Incarnate Lamas do this, though in their case it is frowned upon. If they are known for their deep learning and ability to transmit spiritual gifts, they are still honoured with the title of

[1] L. A. Waddell, *The Buddhism of Tibet, or Lamaism.* 2nd ed., Cambridge, 1934.

Lama. But by the Buddha's own decree, any intercourse after ordination annuls the title. True, in the course of the history of Buddhism in Tibet abuses crept in, as in Christian monasticism in the Pre-Renaissance era, and as in Europe, so also in Tibet there arose reformers of the original and once unique Sect, the Nying-ma-pa, or Red Hat Sect, founded by the famous Padma Sambhava who went to Tibet from India in the eighth century A.D. As a result two reformations were formed, first the Kargyudpa, still a Red Hat Sect, but strict and well disciplined, and later the Gelugpa or Yellow Hats, who venerate Tsong-kha-pa, their fourteenth-century Founder, as *The Great Guru.*

Tibetan Buddhism is little known to the Western world, and most of that little is misunderstood. The idea that it is a debased religion of sexual *abandon* and luxurious living on the part of 'Lamas' who grind the faces of the poor, riddled with superstition which they encourage, is the result partly of complete misunderstanding of symbols and partly of the deliberate attempts that have been made to vilify it, often, regrettably, by Christian missionaries. Now that Tibetan monks are with us to stay, the mystery that has always surrounded their country and themselves must inevitably be dispelled, and an understanding of and sympathetic approach to them and what they have to say is essential. Miracles must not be looked for by the idly curious. Some of them possess powers that science cannot explain, but they will never display them except to a chosen disciple for the purpose of helping him in his own development. If anyone seeks a Guru he may find him, but the approach must be a humble one. The much-vaunted superior knowledge of the West is but childish in the face of the esoteric knowledge of the East. Gelongs and getsuls may in some cases be uneducated and uncouth. But those who approach the Incarnate Lamas or Tulkus must remember that from the point of view of the latter it is they who are lacking in knowledge — and in manners, for in the East a casual politeness is inadequate for the sacred Guru-disciple relationship, a relationship unknown to the West.

In using Tibetan and Ladakhi words I have generally used a phonetic form in preference to an exactly transliterated one. The recorded conversations were, of course, in basic Tibetan

and have been rendered into colloquial English. They were much helped out by signs, for my knowledge of the language was rudimentary. The title 'Kushok' has been rendered as 'Sir', while the polite mode of address to the schoolmaster, 'lama-la', is the same with a small 's'.

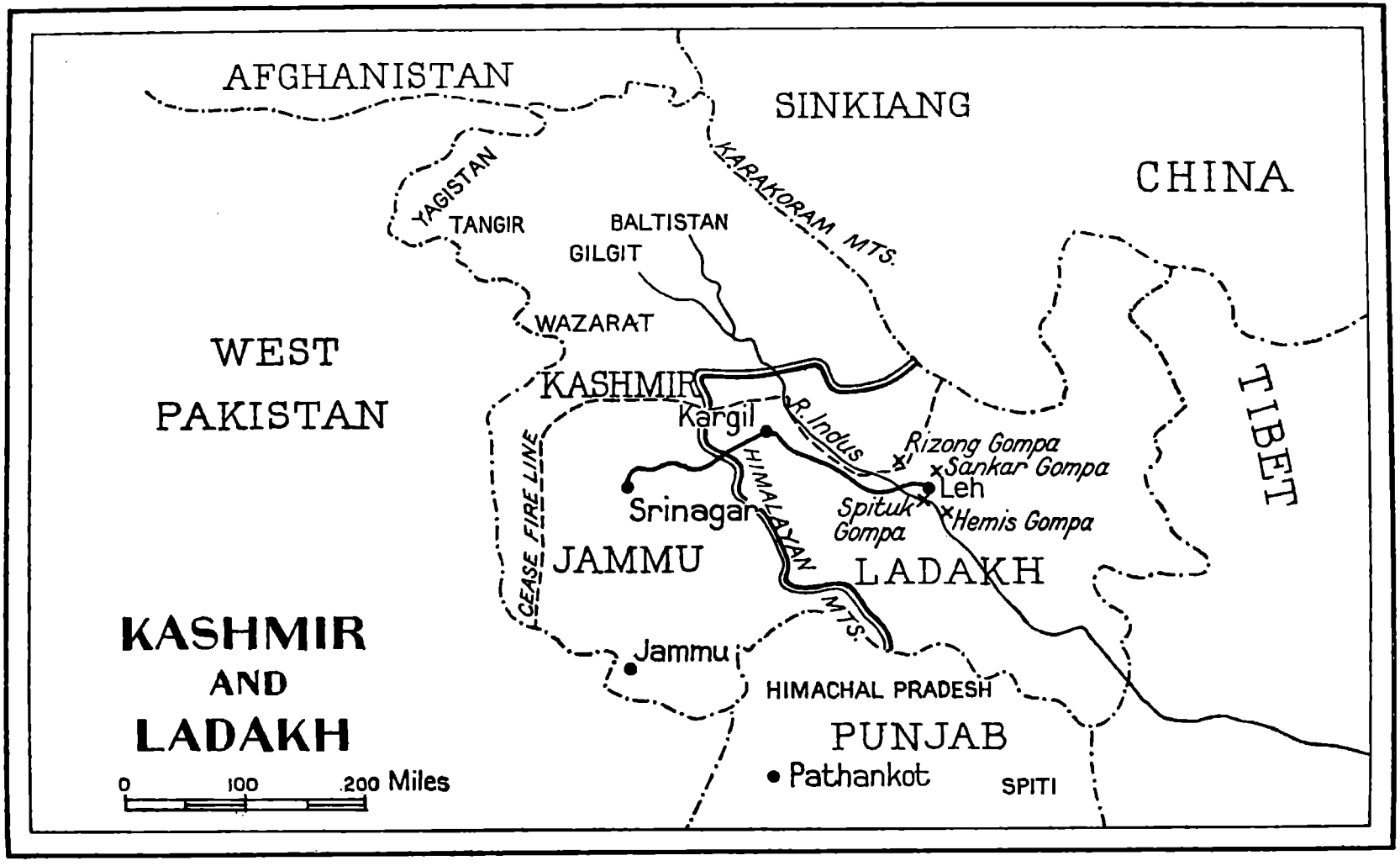
Throughout my stay at Rizong Gompa I kept a diary, and in the evenings jotted down the main events of the day. Whenever time permitted I wrote out a fuller draft, so that experiences and reactions were fresh in my mind, and there could be no deviation from fact by my having to rely on a faulty memory.

For those who are not particularly interested in the religion of Tibet this is still the story of the adventures of an Englishman, no longer in the first blush of youth, who left everything to search for Truth, and came at last to find his home in an obscure corner of the world, in a country whose name he had never heard until three years before, and who came to love Rizong Gompa as much as he had loved Oxford — and only Oxford men know quite what that means!

Sarnath, Varanasi,
India, 1961.

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

At the time of going to press (summer 1961) the author's application for a permit to re-enter Ladakh has been refused despite all efforts. So at this moment he is debarred from returning to his monastery.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TIBET
KASHMIR
AND
LADAKH
Jammu
HIMACHAL PRADESH
PUNJAB
Pathankot
SPITI
0
100
200 Miles

Glossary

OF TIBETAN AND LADAKHI TERMS AND NAMES

AMJI Physician or surgeon.

ANAGARIKA DHARMAPALA (1865-1933). Sinhalese Buddhist propagandist, founder of the Maha Bodhi Society intended to secure the restoration of the Buddhist sacred sites in India to Buddhist hands; largely responsible for the spread of interest in Buddhism in the Western world.

ANNI (-LA) Form of address to a Ladakhi nun.

ARAHANT (Sanskrit) Ideal Buddhist disciple in the Hinayana (q.v.) school: one who has broken the chains that bind him to existence and will attain Nirvana at the end of his current life.

ATISA (Atisha) (eleventh century) Indian Buddhist missionary in Tibet, reformer of Tibetan Buddhism, and author of a number of writings now included in the Tan-gyur (q.v.).

AVALOKITEŚVARA (Sanskrit) *see* Chen-re-zig.

BHIKSHU An ordained Buddhist monk: usually used of monks of the Hinayana (q.v.) school.

BODHISATTVA Ideal Buddhist disciple in the Mahayana (q.v.) school: one who by vow renounces the complete attainment of enlightenment for himself in order, in successive incarnations, to work for the salvation of others.

BÖN The animistic religion of Tibet before its conversion to Buddhism: akin to Mongolian Shamanism. Marked traces of its influence still remain.

BUM-BA NGA-BA A treatise on the 'Doctrine of the Void', by Tsong-kha-pa (q.v.).

BUM WUNG The wung (q.v.) for the fruition of the Nirmanakaya (q.v.).

CHAMS-PA The celestial Bodhisattva who will be the next manifested Buddha: 'the loving one'. Sanskrit, Maitreya.

CHANG A mild beer brewed from barley.

CHAPPALS The triple obeisance made before the image of the Buddha, or a monastic superior.

CHELA One who stands in the relation of a disciple or pupil to a guru (q.v.): Indian word.

CHEN-RE-ZIG The celestial Bodhisattva known in Sanskrit as Avalokiteśvara, the 'Buddha of compassion', who incarnates in the successive Dalai Lamas.

CHHÖSPHEL, LOBZANG (Lama Lobzang) A Ladakhi gelong at Sarnath.

CHHÖS-SKU The Dharmakaya (q.v.).

CHIMBO *see* Gyatso Chimbo.

CHÖRTEN A stupa (q.v.).

CHULIE CHAN Apricot orchard.

DALAI LAMA The ruler of Tibet and administrative head of the monkhood. All Dalai Lamas are believed to be successive reincarnations of the first, Ge-dün Truppa, born 1391 – who was himself the incarnation of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara (Chen-re-zig). The present Dalai Lama, born 1935 and enthroned 1940, left Tibet in 1959 after an unsuccessful revolt against Chinese rule in Lhasa, the Tibetan capital, and has since resided in India.

DAM CHHÖS Tibetan refugee gelong at Rizong.

DEVADATTA Cousin and disciple of the Buddha, afterwards his rival and opponent and leader of a schism in the Sangha.

DHARDOH RIMPOCHE Head Lama of the Tibetan temple at Bodh Gaya.

DHARMA Law, rule, way of life; applied especially to the teaching of the Buddha as a guide for living, and, with the Buddha himself and the Sangha (q.v.) one of the 'three jewels'.

DHARMAKAYA 'The body of the law' or 'of truth' – one of the 'three bodies' or 'forms' of the transcendental Buddha.

DONG-MO Kettle or cylinder in which tea is prepared.

DORJE (Sanskrit, VAJRA), a sceptre-like instrument, traditionally representing a thunderbolt, used in temple pujas.

DRU-BA Senior gelong at Rizong.

DUBCHES Kitchen getsul at Rizong, later a gelong.

DUDJOM RIMPOCHE A Nying-ma-pa Lama.

DULWA The Vinaya (q.v.).

EIGHTFOLD PATH The eight steps leading to enlightenment: (1) Right viewpoint, (2) Right aim, (3) Right speech, (4) Right conduct, (5) Right means of livelihood, (6) Right effort, (7) Right mindfulness, (8) Right concentration.

FOUR ARYAN (OR NOBLE) TRUTHS The four basic principles of Buddhism: (1) All existence involves suffering; (2) The cause of suffering is desire or craving; (3) With the overcoming of desire, suffering ceases; (4) There is a way of extinguishing desire – namely, the Eightfold Path (q.v.).

GABRA A hostel for travelling monks, under the control of a gompa (q.v.).

GANDEN TRUB-PA (GE-DÜN TRUP-PA) Disciple of Tsong-kha-pa (q.v.) and founder of Drespung monastery in Tibet; reincarnated in the successive Dalai Lamas (q.v.).

GELONG A Tibetan Buddhist monk who has received the Higher Ordination; equivalent to bhikshu (q.v.).

GELONG-MA A nun, a female gelong.

GELUG-PA or 'Yellow Hat' sect, the branch of Tibetan Buddhism to which the Dalai and Panchen Lamas belong; founded in the fourteenth to fifteenth centuries by the reformer Tsong-kha-pa (q.v.).

GENDUN (GEN-DUN) An assembly of monks: the body of monks in general. Equivalent to Sangha (q.v.).

GENYEN (GES-NYEN) A lay devotee resident in a gompa. Children frequently enter monasteries as genyens with the intention that they shall later be ordained as getsuls: but adult genyens also exist, sometimes living without monastic status as lay workers in monasteries with their families.

GE-SAB-JI A disciple of Tsong-kha-pa (q.v.).

GESHÉ A gelong expert in Buddhist philosophy, and qualified by examination.

GETSUL A novice-monk who has received the Lower Ordination.

GOMPA A Tibetan or Ladakhi Buddhist monastery.

GUENTHER, PROFESSOR Tibetan scholar at Varnasi University.

GURU A Buddhist or Hindu spiritual director or teacher.

GYATSO CHIMBO Kitchen gelong at Rizong in succession to Thondup (q.v.).

HARI SINGH Ruler of Kashmir and Jammu from 1925 till India's attainment of independence: deposed 1949.

HINAYANA One of the two main divisions of Buddhism, representing the Theravadin or Pali tradition of the Buddha's teaching; followed today mainly in Burma, Ceylon, Thailand, and Cambodia. It is directed towards self-salvation.

HLA-BA Gelong attendant on Kushok Shas.

HLA-SKYUBS Second senior gelong at Rizong.

IMJI (DYIN-RJI) English.

JAM YUNG Gelong custodian of the Temple at Rizong.

JAM YUNG The Bodhisattva of wisdom: equivalent to Sanskrit Manjuśri.

KAMTRUL Assistant to Karma-pa Rimpoche (q.v.).

KANPO Senior gelong at Rizong.

KANZYUR JAM PAL RIMPOCHE Former head Lama at Drespung, Guru of Kushok Shas, now resident at Rizong.

KARAN SINGH Son of Hari Singh (q.v.); elected head of state for Kashmir and Jammu, 1952.

KAR-DRUB-JI A disciple of Tsong-kha-pa (q.v.).

KAR-GYUD-PA One of the two 'Red Hat' sects of Tibetan Buddhism, founded in the eleventh century by Marpa (q.v.). Milarepa (q.v.) was also a member of this sect.

KARMA-PA RIMPOCHE Head Lama of the Kargyudpa sect.

KATAG A white scarf presented as a token of honour to a distinguished visitor.

KORRE A wooden tea-bowl.

KUSHOK Title of, or form of address to, the head of a monastery or highly reverenced Lama; Ladakhi equivalent of Rimpoche (q.v.).

KUSHOK BAKULA Ladakhi Minister of State and head Lama of Ladakh.

KUSHOK SHAS Head of Rizong monastery, previously monk at Drespung in Tibet.

LAMA 'superior person'; a Tibetan Buddhist teacher or guru.

LAMA CHOD-PA A form of puja (q.v.) 'in praise of the Lama'.

LOBZANG, LAMA *see* Chhösphel, Lobzang.

LOCHAS RIMPOCHE Former Professor at the Monastery of Drespung, staying at Sankar gompa.

LONGS-KU Equivalent to Sambhogakaya (q.v.).

LOTUS (LO-TRUS) A kitchen getsul at Rizong.

MAHAYANA One of the two main divisions of Buddhism, representing the Sanskrit tradition of the Buddha's teaching; followed today mainly in Tibet, China, and Japan. Its ideal devotee is the Bodhisattva (q.v.).

MANDALA A ritual circular diagram of various forms employed in temple services and as an aid to concentration.

MANTRA A verbal formula, often in itself meaningless, used as a nucleus for meditation.

MARPA Founder of the Kar-gyud-pa sect and guru of Milarepa

(q.v.); known as 'the Translator' from the number of Indian Tantrik texts that he rendered into Tibetan.

MILAREPA Poet and saint of the eleventh century, disciple of Marpa, and one of the most revered figures of Tibetan Buddhism.

MUDRA A liturgical hand-movement or position of the hands used in pujas and for purposes of magic.

NAMGYAL A gelong.

NASTAN A gelong who has been ordained for ten years: corresponds to the Hinayana Thera. Nastan Chimbo = Maha Thera.

NIRMANAKAYA The 'body of manifestation' or of 'transformation' – one of the 'three bodies' of the transcendental Buddha. In Tibetan, Tulku (spruls-ku), (q.v.).

NOR-PHEL A gelong at Rizong.

NYING-MA-PA or 'Red Hats', one of the main sects of Tibetan Buddhism, founded in the eighth century by Padma Sambhava (q.v.).

PAD-MA Lotus.

PADMA SAMBHAVA Indian missionary who first introduced Buddhism to Tibet in the eighth century A.D.

PAK Dough made from tsampa flour.

PANCHEN LAMA Spiritual head of Tibetan Buddhism and head of the Tibetan monastery of Tashi-lhunpo, and congenital Guru of the Dalai Lama. The most important spiritual figure of Tibetan Buddhism. He is believed to be one of a series of incarnations of Amitabha, the Buddha of Boundless Light. The present Panchen Lama, since the Dalai Lama's flight from Tibet, is controlled by the Chinese and under constant armed surveillance.

PARI Pot for holding or carrying tsampa flour.

PAR-PA Dumplings of tsampa flour.

PATIMOKKA (Pali) *see* Pratimoksha.

POTALA The Dalai Lama's official palace at Lhasa.

PRATIMOKSHA A fortnightly ceremony when the monastic rules are recited and breaches of them confessed; also, the rules so recited.

PUGU CHUNG-CHUNG Name given by author to a child genyen at Rizong.

PUJA A temple service. Indian term: Tibetan = sku-rim.

RIGDOL Gelong, 'manager' of the Rizong gompa.

RIMPOCHE Title of, or form of address to, a Tulku or specially revered lama.

SAMBHOGAKAYA The 'body of bliss', or form in which the Buddha teaches the Dharma to the celestial Bodhisattvas – one of the 'three bodies' of the transcendental Buddha (Tibetan, Longs-ku).

SAMTEN Schoolmaster and needleman gelong at Rizong.

SANGHA Pali name for the Buddhist monastic order as a whole; literally, assembly.

SARSANISIRI, BHIKSHU Sinhalese Bhikshu who ordained the author.

SHÉS-RUB Gelong at Rizong.

SHES WUNG The wung (q.v.) corresponding to the Dharmakaya (q.v.), intended for the development of transcendental knowledge.

SHOR-LO Sour milk with chopped herbs and radish or other vegetable leaves.

SKANDHAS The five elements that form a living being: form, emotion, perception, impressions, and consciousness.

SOL-TIP A metal tea-kettle.

SONAM Gelong at Rizong.

SRAMANERA A novice-monk, usually used of novices of the Hinayana school: equivalent to getsul (q.v.).

STOBDEN Layman, nephew at Kushok Bakula.

STOD-GA *see* toga.

STON-DŪS: Gelong, cook-attendant on Kushok Shas.

STUPA A mound raised over the body or the ashes of a deceased person, or over relics of the Buddha or holy men.

SUNG WUNG The wung (q.v.) corresponding to the Sambhogakaya (q.v.): it is intended to assist the development of mantric speech.

SUTRA Literally thread, string: a section or chapter of the Buddhist scriptures.

TAKI A flat, heavy brown scone or cake.

TAN-GYUR An immense encyclopaedic compilation of Indian and Tibetan literature in the form of commentaries on the Buddhist scripture.

TAPI A piece of sheepskin used as a brush or polishing cloth.

TASHI Boy genyen working in the kitchen at Rizong.

TASHI NAMGYAL Brother of Lama Lobzang.

THANKHA A sacred painting, usually on silk or silk-bordered canvas.

THONDUP Gelong in charge of the kitchen at Rizong: later cook-attendant on Kanzyur Rimpoche.

TOGA The dark red upper garment of a Tibetan monk; a sleeveless waistcoat.

TORMA A cake of dough, with butter and sugar, often formed into conventional or fanciful shapes, as an offering at shrines.

TRAP-PA generic term for monks, embracing both gelongs and getsuls.

TRIL-BU The hand-bell used by monks in pujas.

TRIPITAKA The body of Buddhist sacred writings accepted by the Hinayana school.

TSAMPA Flour, the staple diet in Ladakh.

TSHIG WUNG The wung (q.v.) corresponding to the totality of the 'three bodies' of the Buddha.

TSHULTIM DORJE Genyen working in Rizong kitchen.

TSHULTIM NYIMA Ladakhi merchant, founder of Rizong gompa.

TSONG-KHA-PA Tibetan Buddhist reformer of the fourteenth to fifteenth centuries, and founder of the Gelugpa (q.v.) sect.

TUB-SUNG Kitchen.

TUK-PA Rope sling for carrying goods.

TULKU A reincarnated lama, often head of a monastery; also equivalent to Nirmanakaya (q.v.)

TUPA (THUG-PA) Soup or stew made from tsampa flour dumplings and radishes or other vegetables.

UPASAKA A lay disciple in the Hinayana school: equivalent to genyen (q.v.).

VIHARA A Buddhist monastery.

VINAYA The code of discipline for Buddhist monks, traditionally handed down from the Buddha himself, as part of the canonical writings.

WHEEL OF INTERDEPENDENT CAUSATION The series of the twelve Nidanas, or links in the chain binding the individual to existence, which must be broken to attain final enlightenment and salvation – each being dependent on that which precedes it – are: Ignorance, Karma, Individual Consciousness, Name and Form, the Sense Organs, Touch, Sensation, Craving, Grasping, Becoming, Birth, Old Age and Death, and Suffering.

WUNG A spiritual gift or initiation transmitted from a lama to a disciple.

YI DAM Any tutelary deity, especially Vajra-Bhairava, believed to be a metamorphosis of Avalokiteśvara (q.v.).

YSHÉ GOMPO Refugee monk from Tibet, attendant on Kanzyur Rimpoche.

YSHÉ TIMLEY Brother and getsul attendant to Lochas Rimpoche.

YUNG-TSIN LING TSENG RIMPOCHE: Senior Guru of the present Dalai Lama.

YUSUF ALI Indian frontier guard; ex-Army Lieutenant-Colonel.

ZA-WA Deputy 'manager' of Rizong in absence of Rigdol.

ZHING Wood.

ZOD-PA Gelong at Rizong, brother of Samten (q.v.); handyman and carpenter.

CHAPTER ONE

Rizong Gompa

I first heard the name of Rizong Gompa from Professor Guenther, eminent Tibetan scholar in the Sanskrit University of Benares, now better known as Varanasi. It was a hot day in November, and after lunch we were discussing the respective merits of the Hinayana and Mahayana disciplines, the two major divisions of the Buddhist religion. This led him to tell me that Rizong Gompa in Ladakh, of which he had some second-hand knowledge, was noted for its strictness, and that it kept the Vinaya, or Code of Discipline for monks, fully, whereas many monasteries of both divisions had become slack and degenerate. This Code, which differs but little in Hinayana and Mahayana, purports to have been derived from the Buddha himself, who lived 2500 years ago, and it seems likely that a good deal, though not all of it, may indeed have done so.

'If a monk goes out, and returns with his robes not absolutely correctly arranged, he gets a nice beating at the gate,' he told me. 'Nice for whom?' was the obvious question that went unasked. Guenther went on to relate what he himself had heard.

'And if they go down to the village, when they come back they have to pass a breath-smelling test. If they have been drinking alcohol they get a hundred lashes at the gate and another hundred when they reach the Temple.' I wondered idly how they ever did reach the Temple after a hundred lashes. It sounded like the Army in the good old days!

He admitted,[1] however, that he had not himself been to Rizong; the little monastery to which he retired annually was in the Punjab, but I was later to discover that the strictness of Rizong was a by-word in Ladakh and northern India. At the time of our conversation, though, fantastic as it sounded, I was well aware of Tibetan notions of discipline. Anyone who has read Marco Pallas's *Peaks and Lamas*[2] will remember his description of *puja* or the temple 'service' in a Tibetan gompa. He gives a vivid description of the monk-wardens, armed with long staves, who parade up and down the aisles among the seated congregation, and when a monk is observed fidgetting or sleeping he is hauled out and beaten then and there. Not that there is any disgrace attached to the idea of beating in the Tibetan mind. Indeed, if it were explained to any lama that corporal punishment was damaging to the ego, he would undoubtedly say, when he came to understand this, that that was all the more reason for administering it, as it was the ego that stands in the way of attaining Enlightenment, and the sooner it is damaged the better. At all events it is merely a part of education to the Tibetan, and a monk's education is never finished.

But on that hot afternoon in Professor Guenther's room at Varanasi my interest in the matter was a mild one, for I had no thought at that time of becoming a Rizong monk, and had such a thought occurred it would quickly have been dismissed; for entry into Ladakh, with the Chinese situation what it was, seemed an impossibility. Even Guenther added to his other remarks that no foreigner could get a permit to enter the forbidden territory. So, much as I should have liked some training in a Tibetan monastery, I gave no thought to Rizong.

It was a year since I had received at Sarnath the Hinayana Lower Ordination making me a *sramanera* or novice-monk, and I was attired in the yellow robes with the bare right shoulder of the Order. So, that day I took a cycle-rickshaw back to Sarnath from Varanasi and promptly forgot the name of Rizong for several months.

It was therefore surprising to find myself the following July,

[1] Prof. Guenther has since said that he was referring to Tashilhunpo Gompa in Tibet, but I had the impression at the time that he was talking of Rizong.

[2] London, 1939.

riding in a jeep along rocky mountain roads, through an all brown landscape, clad in Tibetan robes of dark red, on my way to the very monastery so famed for its strictness, for a period of training as a getsul or Tibetan novice.

What had happened in the interval? And how had the impossible come about?

Having the freedom of the excellent library at Sarnath, I had read widely both Hinayana and Mahayana books, and had seen monks from both sects come in their hundreds, the Hinayana for the annual November festival and the Mahayana for the visit of His Holiness the Dalai Lama in January. And both from reading and contact my inclinations were tending more and more towards the Mahayana School.

The Hinayana *bhikshu* perpetuates certain traditions that do not accord with modern thought and give an impression of excessive pride and consequent bad manners. He will not say 'Thank you' for any gift; the giver acquires merit by giving, and so the monk has done him a service in being there to receive it. He will not return any salutation from a junior or layman, he will not rise for anyone except a senior bhikshu, he regards himself as superior to all but his own seniors in the Sangha, that is, those who have been ordained longer than he. When His Holiness visited Sarnath, this behaviour became still more obvious and repellent. When he visited the Temple, filled with yellow-robed monks on one side and red-robed on the other, all the red-robed monks bowed as he passed, while the yellow-robed merely stared. It was on this occasion that I crossed the floor and stood with the Tibetans for his return down the Temple court. But the bhikshu does not admit that the Mahayana ordination is valid, and so regards the Dalai Lama as no more than a layman. A close parallel can be found in the Roman Catholic clergy's attitude to the Protestant hierarchy. Bigotry and intolerance seem an inevitable element in all religions, which quickly degenerate from their Founders' teachings.

During His Holiness's visit a galaxy of Tulkus also came to Sarnath to confer with him. Some of these were great men in their own country; they were also great men in their own right. Never could more men of high spiritual development have been found gathered in one place than there were that January at

Sarnath. Tulkus naturally vary in degree of spiritual development, as do other individuals, but many undoubtedly are above the common run of men.

There were Yang-Tsin Ling Tseng Rimpoche, the Dalai Lama's senior Guru, and Kushok Bakula, Head Lama of Ladakh and Minister for State Affairs in Ladakh with a seat in the Indian Parliament, doing all he could to help his backward people, so long ignored by West and East. There was Karma-pa Rimpoche, head of the Kargyude sect, who, it was said, had foreseen the crisis by divination, and was the only one to escape from Tibet with the total contents and personnel of his monastery intact before His Holiness the Dalai Lama made his escape. And there were Kamtrul, Karma-pa's immediate subordinate, and Lochas Rimpoche, ex-Professor of the famous Drespung Gompa near Lhasa, who now lived permanently at Sarnath, and had been my near neighbour for the past six months.

It would take too long to name all the great ones. But the atmosphere of Sarnath was noticeably affected, and one could not but feel that these men had something that others had not, and that one benefited by their presence even though communication was limited by lack of a common language. This being the case, the scornful attitude of many Hinayana bhikshus merely showed that they themselves had not reached a sufficient stage of development to discern what was in these men who were true Lamas, and the rift between myself and them grew.

During the month of His Holiness's stay pujas were held nearly every evening beside the great stupa, the outstanding feature of Sarnath, built originally in the second century B.C., restored in the seventh century A.D., and finally resuscitated by the energies of the Sinhalese Anagarika Dharmapala, who rescued both Sarnath and Bodh Gaya from the ruin into which they had fallen. These were two of the four Holy Places of Buddhist pilgrimage, for at the latter the Buddha gained His Enlightenment, and at the former He preached His First Sermon immediately after, the text of which still survives and has been translated into English. It embodies the basic principles of Buddhism.

To these pujas I went, and began helping to prepare them

with the gelongs and getsuls from the Tibetan Temple, to which I was unofficial Medical Officer, a preparation that started immediately after lunch and did not end until about five o'clock, an hour before the puja would begin. The *torma* or dough offerings had to be made, several hundreds of them, and set up on the shelf that ran round the stupa. A thousand butter lamps were to be cleaned, with wicks fitted and oil poured in, and set up in rows, six abreast, incense sticks arranged, and flowers stuck into the little torma figures. Meanwhile European and American tourists, noticing my blue eyes, would hinder by asking silly questions or taking photographs.

Naturally the Hinayana bhikshus did not like the protégé they had ordained taking part in these Mahayana functions, conspicuous in his yellow robes among the reds. Yet those whom I knew best and who were resident in Sarnath developed a degree of resignation if not toleration, and we remained on friendly terms from a mutual personal liking which doctrinal differences did not overthrow.

Now there was in Sarnath a little Ladakhi gelong who wore the yellow robes to which Buddhist monks are everywhere entitled, out of convenience because of the heat, and without having changed his views. This was Lama Lobzang Chhösphel, always known as 'Lama Lobzang', since in India all Tibetan monks are known as 'lama'. He was in charge of a group of small Ladakhi boys destined to become monks, but for the present taking advantage of a Government scholarship scheme to receive a more modern type of education at the Maha Bodhi Society's primary and secondary schools in Sarnath. He spoke Hindi fluently, and knew enough English for me to be able to talk to him. His Guru was Kushok Bakula, and he did much work as an intermediary between refugee Tibetans, especially Lamas, and the Indian officials.

It was my interest in the preparation of the Tibetan pujas that caused him one day to remark that I ought to become a getsul or Tibetan-ordained novice monk, and go into a monastery to learn and to be trained. The idea appealed to me immensely, for by now I was almost free of Hinayana thought and discipline and was tending in every way towards that of the Mahayana. But how could I enter a monastery? The few in

India were unsuitable, being far removed from tradition. Tibet was closed to all. There remained only Ladakh, and to go there a permit was necessary.

Now the plains of India in the summer months are intolerably hot, and Lama Lobzang suggested that I went with him and his boys to stay in Kashmir with Kushok Bakula at Srinagar for their two months' holiday. Then the idea evolved rapidly. Why not be reordained, and then see if Kushok Bakula could get me a permit to enter one of the monasteries under his supervision in Ladakh? Yes, Lama Lobzang knew of the very one that would suit me best. I did not ask which, being very attracted by the idea of reordination. Strictly speaking there should be no need for this, for the Lower Ordination, as well as the Higher, is the same for both sects, but it would facilitate my getting a permit, for it would provide a valid reason for my going, and Kushok Bakula would be my Guru and sponsor. Moreover, Tibetan monasteries are notoriously hostile to foreigners and have never made them really welcome, but with their own robes and their ordination, this aspect would not arise, for I should be one of them despite my nationality.

The Ordination therefore took place at the end of April under the auspices of Lochas Rimpoche, for all the others had long since departed, and with Lama Lobzang interpreting and organizing it. No one was informed except Professor Guenther, who happened to come upon it by accident before the lunch which was to follow, and saw me in my borrowed plumes; and he was pledged to secrecy.

By this time I had found out the name of the monastery that Lama Lobzang had decided was the most suitable for me — Rizong! Its strictness, he thought, would be good for me, as I was much in need of discipline, and the gelongs there had plenty of time to instruct me.

Three days after the Ordination I left for Kashmir, still in the yellow robes, but with a new red skirt, an orange shirt and thin outer robe in the luggage, to change into when we stopped the night at Jammu, and in Kashmir my education was to begin as a preparation for Rizong.

The new robes consisted of a yellow cross-over sleeveless shirt and a dark red skirt, containing eight yards of material, the ends stitched together (unlike the Hinayana yellow skirt,

which is a rectangular piece of cloth put on and folded with a panel down the front and bound by a girdle). The red skirt is worn with four folds over the left hip facing frontwards and four over the right facing backwards. The number of folds differs with different monasteries, but the folds must face as stated for followers of the Dalai Lama, whereas for followers of the Panchen Lama the folds face the reverse way, backwards over the left hip and forwards over the right. On top of the shirt is the *stod-ga* (toga), dark red, sleeveless, and with cross-over front, lined in bright red, which lining must show at the collar. The shoulder pieces are extended and edged with blue piping. This, according to Professor Guenther, was devised by Atisa, the famous Indian missionary to Tibet in the eleventh century, and was derived from the Indian fashions of his day. Finally there is the outer robe, a long strip of cloth whose size and quality varies with the means of the buyer. It is worn over the left shoulder, under the right arm, and back across the chest over the left shoulder, being then folded up so as to leave both arms bare, however cold it may be.

I was now a *getsul*, which was merely another word for *sramanera*, and under the immediate tutelage of Lama Lobzang, ranking not much above his group of boys, whose ages ranged from 8 to 12. Indeed, that tutelage had already begun in the last few days in Sarnath, when I had had to attend their evening puja in the Temple and try to learn the Tibetan words by heart, despite their meaninglessness to me. The little cane he kept for the boys rapped me on the wrist if my hands wandered away from their proper position, and on one occasion, elsewhere, I received that hearty smack on the side of the face which is a favourite method of Tibetan castigation and of which more will be heard later.

But as a getsul I must expect and accept all this. All getsuls went through the same mill, and I had no desire to take advantage of my age or background — or of the fact that Lama Lobzang only came up to my shoulder! If I was ever to become a Tibetan 'lama' I must work my way up from the bottom. Having long been my own master was an impediment in the way of any higher development. It was for this reason that he had selected Rizong as the school to which I was to go, not only to learn the correct manners and customs, but also to help me

shed that personality which was the product of a rigidly English upbringing. I had long felt myself that this was standing in my way, and therefore I was prepared to co-operate in full and not allow a false pride to hinder me further. Pride can be coped with; the ideas inbred from childhood are much harder to deal with, and need external aid. This aid I should now undoubtedly receive.

The Englishman is hypercritical of everything un-English, and judges everyone immediately by his own standards. What is 'done' and what is 'not done' is merely the English custom and convenance, with regard to those of other people. Now I should find that, as a minority of one in a Ladakhi gompa, it would be I who would be judged against their accepted standards, who would violate their manners and convenances, who would have to alter my views as to the 'done' and the 'not done'. I should not be criticizing; it would be I who should be criticized, and as I had always been hypercritical, this must inevitably have a beneficial effect.

I was two months in Srinagar before the permit arrived through the good offices of Kushok Bakula, who took me to Delhi with him one day that we might visit the Defence Ministry together and assure it of my bona fides.

Then came the day when I flew alone from Srinagar to Leh, for Lama Lobzang had gone before with some of his boys to allow them to visit their homes, which they had not seen for three years. As the plane soared ever higher to clear the great mountain ranges and the air grew colder, I became more and more excited at the thought of what might be before me. During my stay in Srinagar, whenever anyone was told where I was going I heard the same story. Rizong is famous for its strictness — and for its fruit trees. How would I get on there, unable to speak Ladakhi and with only a smattering of Tibetan? Would they just ignore me when they found I could not understand them, or would they make an effort to teach me? Would I be beaten black and blue, or would they have a hereditary awe of a 'Sahib'? If so, my purpose in going would be defeated. Even Lama Lobzang felt this awe slightly, so that I had received less at his hands than if I had been a Ladakhi getsul.

And the Head Lama: how would he regard me, suddenly thrown into the middle of his establishment? He was Rizong

Shas, nephew of Kushok Bakula, born in the royal house of Ladakh, of which Bakula was a Prince in his own right. He was young, so I had heard, and had escaped from Drespung, where he had spent fifteen years in education, two days after His Holiness the Dalai Lama, and had come to Buxar Refugee Camp, where he had been incarcerated until Lama Lobzang, appealed to by Kushok Bakula to act as liaison officer, managed to secure his release and restored him to the monastery he had left in his youth.

In Srinagar there had been staying with us another nephew of Kushok Bakula, Mr Stobden, who had just gained his M.A. at Delhi University and who had no propensities for being a monk. He had added one more to Guenther's stories of Rizong discipline. His cousin Kushok Shas, he said, had leapt down from his seat during a puja and, seizing a drum-stick with cane handle, beaten a gelong who was committing some fault of etiquette!

The plane landed on Leh airfield, a sand strip in a sandy desert, surrounded by brown mountains, and with the city of Leh, amid a green belt of trees, on a watercourse some three miles away. My immediate destination was Sankar Gompa, where Lochas Rimpoche and his young brother-getsul-attendant Yshé Timley were spending the summer, and thither we went in a jeep, which, apart from horses, is the only means of travelling in this country.

Sankar was built on the flat and not on a mountain-face like the majority of monasteries, and, apart from those of Bodh Gaya and Sarnath, was the first Tibetan (or Ladakhi, for they are identical) gompa I had entered and the first in which I stayed. On entry it seemed reminiscent of an Oxford college, for the building ran round a quadrangle with grass and a tree growing in it. The only oddity was the long bamboo pole bearing prayer flags which was planted beside the tree. The building was a two-storeyed one, and steps, rickety-looking though made of stone, led to the upper rooms, so that the doors were alternately high and low. Here, too, the main Temple was situated, but there were outgrowths of rooms, stables, granaries, and another small Temple, so that the gompa rambled over a large area of ground and chörtens (stupas) were erected at various points. The whole seemed to be a study in black and white;

white walls and black painted woodwork with a large golden 'coat of arms' over the main door.

Lochas Rimpoche was installed in a shrine room, and was at last receiving the respect and attention to which he had been accustomed in Tibet as a learned Lama, for in India all this was lost. 'Lama' was a name for all, great or small, and the concept of Tulku was unknown.

There I stayed five days, waiting for a jeep which would take us to Rizong, thirty-six miles away over the mountains, for it was not a much frequented route. During that time I made myself sick trying to keep up with the Ladakhi Joneses in the matter of drinking Tibetan buttered tea, to which I was insufficiently accustomed, though I had had it sometimes at the Tibetan temple at Sarnath. But I cared little for Sankar, having become imbued with the idea of being a Rizong monk and having noted the awe in the voices of all those who heard that I was destined for that gompa. Again and again I was told of its strictness and of its fruit trees.

Then at last came the day when, at seven o'clock in the morning, Lama Lobzang and I stood in the one central street of that little village-city waiting for the driver of the jeep to come back from his early breakfast. The street was hardly astir, but those about gathered round, as is always the case in India when anyone stands and talks, and soon there had collected a small group of youths and children, all just staring and saying nothing, while my bag and bedding were being stowed into the back of the car. Two laymen were hitching a lift, and we were to pick up another gelong from Spituk gompa six miles out of Leh.

Wedged between Lama Lobzang and the driver, I tried to impart to the former my feeling of wonder and admiration at the dark steely blue of the snow-topped mountains which separate Ladakh from Kashmir. The depth of the blue colour as the rising sun lit it up was inconceivable; never before had I seen mountains of that colour. But Lama Lobzang was not interested. Often I have found that beauty of scenery is something the Indian cannot appreciate. Perhaps life is too hard and the problem of survival an all-time one, or perhaps familiarity breeds contempt. So I had to watch and enjoy it alone until we turned a bend, and the mountains were behind us and in front

the typical brown range which was to be the scenery for the rest of the way.

Spituk gompa, perched on the edge of a crag, looked dilapidated; indeed, there was an appeal out for funds for its repair, for, devout Buddhists as the Ladakhis are, they are poor and are ever haunted by the spectre of starvation if their barley crop, from which the tsampa flour which is their staple diet comes, should fail. The trouble with the country is lack of rain; the fall is about four inches in the year. Thus it was that I had found Lochas Rimpoche engaged in the process of rain-making when I had arrived at Sankar gompa. He had apparently been trying for the past few days, and on the day following my arrival it had deluged for twenty-four hours. I had not suspected him of belonging to the group of 'Rain-Making Lamas' of whom more will be heard later.

With the Spituk gelong squeezed in and a hitch-hiking monk rejected through lack of space, we continued on our way, the journey of thirty-six miles taking two hours, an indication of the state of the roads, unmetalled and merely hewn out of the mountain bases, winding with terrifying hairpin bends and a sheer drop on one side, while rocks, boulders, and potholes give the occupants of the jeep plenty of exercise, as they jolt up and down in their seats.

Talking was no easy matter above the roar of the engine, so once again I was left to my own thoughts. What would my experiences have been by the time I retraced my journey along this road? Would my return be by jeep or would it be on horseback? Would I be alone or would there be any others coming with me? What was I letting myself in for by entering a monastery at all? Supposing I did not like it, would Kushok Bakula let me leave before my time was up or my permit expired? I had no money; he had paid my plane fare and had promised to pay for the return ticket, and would leave the money with someone in Leh when the time came. My thoughts wandered again and again over the same field. What did the future hold? I was a getsul, very small fry indeed. The other getsuls would almost certainly be either children or adolescents. Lama Lobzang had been strangely reticent about things. He had told me that each monk had his own cell, that I must always remember to bow to all the gelongs when I met them as they were vastly

superior to me, and that I must never indulge in horse-play with them as I had often been tempted to do with him. This had not mattered before my second ordination, but thereafter he had become rigid about it and had once given me four cracks with a belt for continuing to trifle with him after being told not to. This had been in Kashmir. I had not been much hurt, but very much amused, and I respected him the more for his courage and determination.

We had got to the furthest point we could reach, and now had a long mountain climb before us. The luggage was dumped on the road and left there.

'It will be quite safe,' said Lama Lobzang. 'No one in Ladakh steals. It is not like India, where you can't take your eye off anything but it vanishes.' I later found this to be a slight exaggeration, for the first thing I was given on my installation was a padlock for my room, and I was told always to lock it when I went out; and certainly it was not the gelongs who would be likely to take anything.

The sun was now up and growing hotter every minute as we began the climb on a pebbly, rocky track, crossing and recrossing streams. The gravel constantly got into my sandals, which were quite unsuited to Ladakhi terrain, as I was to learn to my cost in the weeks that followed. There was no longer any chance of admiring the scenery, for loose stones and jutting boulders made it necessary to watch every step, or a sprained ankle would result.

We laboured on, sweating freely now and thirsty, and still the track wound up. The river rushed below us at great speed, fed by innumerable tiny tributaries, and where the river was there were trees but all about and above us were the brown mountains. Suddenly we came on to a walkable path and a glen sprang up all around us with a mass of fruit trees on which the fruit hung, green in its unripeness. These were the apricot trees for which Rizong was so famous and we were now on Rizong territory, for the gompa owned much land.

The savage barking of a dog was heard before the nunnery came into sight. Or at least Lama Lobzang said it was the nunnery, situated three-quarters of a mile below the gompa. A nun came out to see why the dog was barking so madly. Let no one imagine a delicate female figure in flowing black robes

and a white cowl. The Tibetan (or Ladakhi) nun is dressed in the same way as her male counterpart, in dark red skirt, red toga (*stod-ga*) and outer robe. Her head is shaven, and the robes conceal her shape unless she is extraordinarily plump, so that I could not at first distinguish nuns from monks. Lama Lobzang said he could tell by the shape of their heads, but I was accustomed to more orthodox means of identification. Their voices gave them away when they spoke, for they were all very high-pitched, but their bare arms showed a muscular development equal to that of a man, and indeed they did a man's work, like most Ladakhi women. The nun is known as Annila, the meaning of which I have never discovered, and is shortened to Anni(e), which sounded comically familiar.[1]

The nun, whom later I found to be the manager, as it were, of the nunnery (also known as gompa), accompanied us up to a spring, where we were able to drink our fill, and then we set off on the last lap. By now I had no energy left for thought. We had started off without breakfast, the heat was trying, and the climb had been stiff enough already. I had long since ceased to speculate about the future, and plodded on, head down, watching the stones, as the mountains seemed to close in around us and glen and fruit trees were left behind. Steeper and steeper grew the path, and then Lama Lobzang pointed upwards to a box-like affair which seemed to have sticks sticking out of it, set on the peak of a crag. 'That means there's a monastery behind that mountain,' he said.

I looked and thought, 'Behind that mountain is a tremendous way,' not thinking of the path winding round the base, but faintly imagining that somehow we should have to go over the top. But on we went, passing piles of cut branches that had been left at different points.

'That's firewood,' he said with a grin. 'The getsuls have to carry that up to the kitchen.'

I was past commenting on this and said nothing.

'There's Rizong!' The sudden exclamation made me look up, and I had my first glimpse of my future home. Two mountains came down to the path in a V, and between them could be seen, set high up on the face of a third mountain, the monastery,

[1] I have since discovered A-ni is merely the Tibetan for 'nuns' and 'la' (lags) a polite suffix.

gleaming white in the sun. To reach it the path took a series of acute angles to cope with a gradient of one in three. It was built in tiers, as it were, and the cells seemed to be in pairs, semi-detached. Uppermost was painted woodwork on a black background, and there were prayer flags and poles which seemed, *per impossibile*, to have skulls stuck on top of them; or were these the mortal remains of long dead monks, keeping a macabre vigil over their former residence? But there was no time for further speculation, nor indeed energy, for Lama Lobzang was pressing on and I was in danger of being left behind.

'Put your robe on,' he said, urgently, for I was carrying my outer robe under my arm, and, mindful of Guenther's warning, I hastily draped it around me, over the left shoulder, under the right arm, and back over the left shoulder. But there appeared to be no gate through which one had to pass, only a chörten archway well down the mountain from the gompa.

As we essayed the path with the acute angles in it we could see red-robed figures looking down at us over the walls at different levels. Who was this coming? One could almost hear them ask. Lama Lobzang was, of course, well known to them, as all Ladakhis are to each other, and had he not brought Rizong Shas back to them a year before? But who was the other?

As we came out into a courtyard we were met by two gelongs, who took us, without speaking, to the guest room, or so Lama Lobzang called it. It was a small elongated room with matting round the floor on two sides, and with two of the little bench tables to be found in all Tibetan cells. An extra mat at one place indicated that here was the bed. The walls were white, with a red, blue, and yellow stripe running round halfway up, and a painted dado of green and red, typical, I was to find, of all Ladakhi houses. There was a small window without glass, open to the air.

Tea was brought to us, and a thick flat and weighty brown scone, called a *taki*, with which I was slowly to become very well acquainted, and several gelongs came in to talk to Lama Lobzang and learn the reason of his visit. They eyed me curiously, as I also eyed them, thinking that these would not only be my companions for the next few months but also, possibly, my

teachers and castigators. There was much variation in their features, some being markedly Mongolian with thick epicanthal folds making the slit eyes, while others could have passed without difficulty for Europeans. I had been told that the latter were the products of the activities of the army of Alexander the Great! And the rest had probably intermarried much with Tibetans, who themselves might be partly Chinese.

With hunger somewhat allayed I began to have infernal qualms, and when Lama Lobzang rose and said: 'We will now go and see Rimpoche,' I felt like a small boy being taken to his first boarding school by his father and about to interview the Headmaster. Yet oddly enough, the thought of the Head Lama himself held no apprehensions. For some time past I had known with certainty that this was the Guru I had been seeking for two years past — which was just as well, seeing that in any case he would be my Guru and my complete master during my stay at Rizong.

The guru-chela relationship is still strongly held to in Tibet and Ladakh, although modern ideas have affected it badly in India as a whole. The Guru (or Lama) is held sacred, to be reverenced at all times as the Teacher of the Dharma or Truth, for without a lama no one can attain Enlightenment, the proper aim of every Buddhist monk and the reason for his becoming a monk. There is none of the casual respectfulness that students in the West may have for their tutors and professors. The reverence is absolute. The student or disciple makes the triple obeisance each day on first meeting his Lama; he must never share his master's seat nor sit at a higher level than he; he must not start to eat before him nor precede him except to help him over difficult ground, and if he shares his room he must sleep on the floor. The disciple has the right of choice of a Lama, but once having chosen and been accepted, the Lama thereafter owns him utterly. For, unless he gives himself up to his Lama completely, with implicit confidence, there is no true relationship, and he cannot receive the Teaching, because he becomes his own barrier to it. The Lama may treat him as he thinks fit, because he will know what is best for his spiritual development. Those who have read the Life of Milarepa[1] will remember

[1] *Tibet's Great Yogi Milarepa*, Edited by W. Y. Evans-Wentz, London, 1928, p. 107.

Lama Marpa's remark to Milarepa, that he could cut him into a hundred little pieces and no one could stop him, for he had given himself to him utterly. Not that any Lama would go so far as that, but fair or ill treatment would be at his discretion. It is commonly said that if a Lama tells his disciple to jump through the window or over a precipice, he will obey instantly, secure in the faith that his Lama will not give such an order if he has not the power to prevent injury resulting from it.

And now we were on our way up to meet my Lama, this disciplinarian Tulku of Rizong, and this would be my relationship with him and with any other gelong he might choose as my tutor for training in the way of a Tibetan getsul. Despite the apprehensive feeling in my stomach I knew within me that all would be well. Rizong Shas was my Lama, and I could safely entrust myself to him. I had come home at last!

CHAPTER TWO

Prelude to Ladakh

How had all this come about? How was it that an English doctor came to abandon a promising career, his friends and relatives, and the comforts of modern civilization to become, first a sramanera of the Southern School, and then the first Westerner to be a Tibetan-ordained Buddhist monk? To sleep on a wooden bed and later on the floor; to eat with a spoon only and later with the fingers or a twig; to wash under a tap and later, if the weather permitted, in an icy mountain stream; to rise with the dawn and later long before it? What was lacking in the teaching he had received in childhood that made him exchange his religion for another? Was there something wrong with the world in which he lived, or was he merely an eccentric with a restless mind and body, ever craving new adventures and new scenes?

By the time I had reached the age of fifteen I had begun to ask what was the purpose of life — what was the purpose of *my* life? People seemed to spend their days repeatedly doing the same things without considering why they did them and without questioning whether they should be doing those things or something else. I grew dissatisfied with such apparent aimlessness in those around me. There seemed to be so much to be done in the world and so few people doing it.

The desire to discover Truth seized me in its grip, and for the next few years, while still at school, I read everything on theology I could lay hands on. I decided to become a clergyman and then go out into the mission field. This was to be Africa

and nowhere else, because the original books on Tarzan, not yet spoilt by public demand, had captured my imagination, and my desire to be a missionary was allied to my desire to live in the jungle. But let it be remembered that I was still very young!

I went up to Oxford on a theology entrance, and was saved from continuing in that School by one of those chances which have pursued me throughout my life and prevented me from doing what would hinder or at any rate not assist its real purpose, which still remained unrevealed. So eventually I became a doctor, but on the way I acquired a good knowledge of philosophy, having struck up a firm and lifetime friendship with the philosophy tutor of my college. He, sensing where my real interest lay, not only taught me formal logic but introduced me to all the great thinkers down the ages, so that I had also read widely from their works by the time I came down, never having been convinced by the argument of my colleagues that it was not possible to read outside one's Schools subject, for I always kept Sunday free from all week-day studies.

Formal logic fired me with enthusiasm at that time, as did Aristotle and Plato, and — significantly — Schopenhauer, more than any other of the philosophers. While still at Oxford I passed through the common phase of evangelical 'conversion', having been born into a Low Church family, although I abjured the Oxford Group, then thriving and full of self-satisfaction and misguided zeal, which tried to get me into its clutches while I was still a Freshman. But with the war religious enthusiasm and philosophical interest waned.

It was not the mass destruction that affected me, or the fatuity of it all, or the desperate day to day existence of those years. What really did drive home a useful lesson was the sight of people rushing madly to air-raid shelters when the sirens blew. Not that it was not a sensible thing to do, and one encouraged from Governmental level. But it seemed as if everyone was saying or thinking to himself, '*I* must be saved even if everyone else is killed,' and they would jostle and trample each other in their anxiety to be the first in safety.

I would stand on a street corner and watch this mad rush and think: 'What does it matter if *you* or *you* or *you* are killed? It will make no difference to the world. What does it matter if

I am killed? No one will notice except my near relatives.' And then I heard of a clergyman acquaintance of mine who, while in one of the safest shelters in the city, had died from a heart attack during an air-raid, out of sheer fright—died from fear of being killed! This seemed to be the last straw in sheer stupidity. Whence came this idea of the all-important 'I'? I began to ask myself.

When time permitted I scanned again the thumbed pages of my Greek New Testament, and began critically to compare Christ's teaching with that of orthodox Christianity. It seemed that the Church had moved far away from what its Founder had taught. The idea of 'being saved' seemed illogical and unnatural. Surely man's duty was to rely and to work on himself to attain self-mastery? The theme of a Saviour was sickeningly pathetic. In marked contrast were the verses of two hymns from 'A. & M.' —

> Look, Father, look on His anointed face,
> And only look on us as found in Him;
> Look not on our misusings of Thy grace,
> Our prayer so languid and our faith so dim.
> For, lo! between our sins and their reward,
> We set the passion of Thy Son our Lord.

Thus ran the first, and it was nauseating in its hypocrisy and cringing. If our prayer was languid and our faith dim, the fault was our own, and it was up to us, and to no one else, God or man, to do something about it. The second hymn was virile and worthy of Christ's life and death:

> Father, hear the prayer we offer,
> Not for ease that prayer shall be,
> But for strength that we may ever
> Live our lives courageously ...
> Be our strength in hours of weakness,
> In our wanderings be our guide,
> In endeavour, failure, danger,
> Father, be Thou at our side.

Despite the fact this was still a prayer asking for something, yet it suggested that action was coming from us, and not the whining passivity explicit in the other. But why did we ask at all? Should prayers be of an asking nature? Why did we not

get on with the job of fulfilling our purposes in life — that thought had never left me — knowing that we should always have the strength to meet all obstacles? It was an old esoteric law, though I did not know it at that time, and it is exemplified in the words of another hymn: 'Great your strength if great your need.'

If men thought about what was their purpose in life, surely there could be no wars of this kind? If men would set about working on themselves instead of sitting back comfortably and on Sundays calling on a Saviour to do their job for them, surely there would be less suffering in the world?

Further exploration of the New Testament suggested that this had in fact been the essence of Christ's teaching, and the Saviour idea was a distortion if it had not been foisted on Him later. I collected a mass of quotations from the four Gospels all mentioning the types of person who would 'in no wise enter into the Kingdom of Heaven' — those who did not work on themselves. It was a formidable list — I still have it — and it must surely upset the self-confidence of those who imagine so fondly that they, if no one else, will go to Heaven. Even the majority of the parables seemed to point in the same direction.

I discussed the matter with a clergyman friend in London, but he maintained that humility was the essential virtue and that to think you could work on yourself was the opposite to being humble. Each of us failed to convince the other.

Then suddenly I met the works of Ouspensky, the pupil of Gurdjieff.[1] Here at last there seemed to be a philosopher who had stepped outside the circle in which the others all milled, getting nowhere despite the innumerable books still being written on age-old problems. Nicoll's five volumes on Ouspensky's teaching followed, and made an indelible impression, more so than Gurdjieff's own book *All and Everything*, despite its stimulating ideas. But in Ouspensky and Nicoll, deriving from Gurdjieff's teaching, it was clearly stated that the purpose of man was to evolve, that he had no Self, as he fondly imagined he had, that 'I' was not a unity but a multiplicity of moods, and

[1] Ouspensky, P.D.: *Tertium Organum*, 2nd ed., London, 1923; *A New Model of the Universe*, London, 1931; *The Fourth Way*, London, 1957. Gurdjieff, G.: *All and Everything*, New York, 1950. Nicoll, Maurice: *Psychological Commentaries on the Teachings of Gurdjieff and Ouspensky*. 5 vols. London, 1952-56.

that the first step anyone must take was to reduce the number of these 'I's' and try to unify the Self. And one step towards this was to rid oneself of negative emotions, to which, normally, we are all slaves. This made sense. It satisfied my lust for truth. It was practical. One could start to work that very day.

The more esoteric doctrine enunciated was beyond me at this time, for I had always avoided any form of spiritualism or dabbling in the occult, and had read no books on the subject. Occultists and spiritualists appeared to me to be cranks; I lumped them together in my mind with vegetarians and Christian Scientists. But Ouspensky was neither crank nor spiritualist. With cold reason, however, he had penetrated into the realm of esoteric knowledge that has remained and been preserved in certain parts of the world, notably in Tibet and India, and he had also derived a great deal from his Guru, Gurdjieff, who had gone much further than he in the investigation of higher knowledge.

For a few years after the war these and all the other books on Gurdjieffism kept me satisfied, and work on myself was a full-time job. I began to notice habits and mannerisms, attitudes and thoughts recurring in similar situations, which previously I had never noticed, having been, as Gurdjieff would say, purely mechanical. On noticing these things it was easy to alter them; it is when one does not realize what one does that one can never change. That I did change quite considerably was evidenced by friends remarking on it. And change meant progress.

But still this did not satisfy me permanently. There now came to my notice, by another of those apparently strange chances that have pursued me all my life, not ceasing with the single occasion at Oxford and even saving me during the war, the value of meditation, and I began to read books on Indian Yoga, though as yet I had not become in the least interested in Tibet.

Meanwhile, though I still went to church, I had long since given up attending Holy Communion, which seemed a travesty of Christ's teaching. For surely He meant by 'As often as ye shall do this, ye shall do it in remembrance of me,' that whenever we share a common table with others we shall remember the bond between us forged by Him. A symbolical ritual in

place of the much needed brotherhood of man seemed worthless and a sorry thing for a man to die painfully for.

The values of the world, too, seemed perverted. Why spend a lifetime making money? How many men, women and children had suffered and died for the sake of money? Money — impermanent and worthless — and the pivot of crime!

The eternal round of work and play in which all indulged — where did it get them? They died as they were born, and what had been the value of their lives? What had they done to justify their existence? What was I doing to justify mine? This was no new question; I had been asking it since my years of adolescence. But for myself, it seemed as if the direction of my life was out of my own hands. I often felt that I was being pushed along continually towards an unseen goal, and when I wanted to do something that I inwardly knew did not point in that direction, external circumstances would prevent me. But still the purpose eluded me. All I could do was to carry on and wait. If a burning conviction came that I must do a certain thing, I would be able to do it, and it would turn out to be the right thing for continuing the straight line in a forward direction.

Such a conviction arose in me one day and remained over the passing months, so that, when the term of my appointment ended, I suddenly threw up hospital work and signed on a cargo boat as a member of the crew. I must see the world, and this ship was going to sail all round it.

It was a new life indeed. I learned to chip and paint, to steer, to work cargo, to take soundings, and do the things a sailor should do. Admittedly my position was not quite a routine one, for it had been obtained in a somewhat unusual way, but nevertheless I was learning seamanship and could, if necessary, attend to wounds or sickness among my fellows.

Our first port of call was New York, and then followed a coasting trip round America picking up and unloading cargo. None of my shore leave did anything but confirm the opinion I had formed that the world's sense of values had completely 'gone haywire'. Here in the States size and money were the only two things of importance. The Far East was a little less materialistic and more intriguing. I seemed to be playing the children's game of Hunt the Thimble, in which you are told,

as you go near to the hidden thimble, that you are getting warmer, or colder if you move away from it. I seemed to be getting warmer as we approached India, apart from the tropical climate. But the length of stay in any port depended on the cargo call, and there was little time to seek inland for what was, I felt sure, waiting for me there. I must be patient till we returned home, and then, with my pay-off in my pocket, head back for Hindustan.

And so it happened that one day I came to Bodh Gaya. I had never heard of Bodh Gaya until a few days before, when, landing in Bombay, I came across a guide book to it. It seemed that it might be a place of interest. It was!

Here for the first time I saw a Tibetan Lama. There is a Tibetan temple at Bodh Gaya, the head Lama of which is Dhardoh Rimpoche. It was he whom I met when I told the English-speaking secretary of the Information Department there that I wanted to enter a monastery for a time. This idea had been growing within me even before I came to India for the second time. Not that I had any conception of what a monastery was like, nor had I any idea of changing my religion, but I did want to learn meditation, and it seemed that a monastery was the obvious place to do so.

The Lama therefore fetched Dhardoh Rimpoche, who was sitting at a tea stall, and my first typical English reaction to him was: 'Good Lord, the fellow's dressed like a woman!' He was — by Western standards, of course! He had on the yellow sleeveless shirt and long chocolate skirt, lined with red silk, of a Rimpoche, though I did not then know what a Rimpoche was. I stayed for a day and night with him, and watched the lamas at work sewing, and felt completely at home with them, although scanty Hindi was the only medium of conversation. And Dhardoh Rimpoche suggested I should go and stay with the 'English bhikshu' in Kalimpong. Not knowing what a bhikshu was, but informed by him that it was a Buddhist monk, thither I went, and remained four months.

That period was, as it were, a training for the next step, although regrettably the bhikshu never taught me anything nor allowed me to read any books from his library except the few he selected. For the rest I typed for him all day or worked in the garden. What was behind this policy I never discovered, and

eventually I left him and came to live at Sarnath, 150 miles from Bodh Gaya.

My time, however, had not been wholly wasted. There in Kalimpong I learned to sleep on a wooden bed, to wash under the icy tap in the wall, to abandon cutlery for a spoon, and, regrettably, to subsist on a vegetarian diet. To this I never succeeded in becoming accustomed, and I lost two stone weight in my first year in India. The eternal rice and curried vegetables, all tasting exactly the same, was a hard trial, but one that had to be endured, for I had but little money with which to buy extras after paying for my keep, and I was permanently hungry. I also had to become accustomed to the cross-legged position for the hour-length puja and meditation period every morning and evening, and to learn the Pali words, a language I had previously never even heard of. With or without a meditation master the first stage to achieve is ability to concentrate and nothing more, and this was to be a prolonged struggle with a wandering mind for years to come.

The cross-legged position I had not used since the days of camp fires with the Boy Scouts. But, knowing that it must be adopted, I had spent a period every evening on the voyage out to India, sitting on the deck of my cabin, with my watch in front of me, and making myself stay in that posture for a quarter of an hour. This now sounds but a little enough time, but with ligaments and muscles tight it was long enough, and only sheer determination kept my knees thus for the last five minutes, after which I had painfully to uncurl them with my hands. But after a couple of weeks the time extended, and before we docked in Bombay I could manage three-quarters of an hour, though scarcely with comfort. It was two years before I at last succeeded in just putting my feet on my thighs in the 'lotus' position, and then they were not far enough across. And still I cannot stay long enough to meditate in this posture most favoured by those who continue to sit cross-legged from birth to old age and death.

So the stay in Kalimpong was all part of the preparation for what was still in store. Sarnath proved to be the next step. Still with no idea of becoming a Buddhist, I arrived there and stayed at the Dharmasala, a large hostel for pilgrims, run by Sinhalese bhikshus under the auspices of the Maha Bodhi

Society. Here there was an excellent library, and now for the first time I had the full run of translations of Buddhist texts, both Hinayana and Mahayana, although at this stage these names meant little to me. Up to this time my sole Buddhist reading had been from Lin Yu Tang's *Wisdom of India*, which I had picked up in Calcutta on my first visit to India, in which he includes two major extracts only on Buddhism.

But what two extracts! The first was a Hinayana one from the Pali canon, the *Dhammapada* given as a whole. This is, as it were, the layman's textbook of Buddhism, and embodies its entire ethical system. The main emphasis seemed to be on the need for self-mastery and the abandonment of hate. 'Hate is not conquered by hate but by love,' I read. How similar to the words of that other Master: 'Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, pray for them that despitefully use you.' Surely all Master Teachers must teach this same thing? Surely those who advocate violence in the propagation of their message are not really Teachers at all?

The second extract showed the mark of genius in the selector. It was from the *Surangama Sutra*, a Mahayana work attributed to an Indian Guru of the first century A.D. written originally in Sanskrit. Here I found a metaphysical theory propounded that went far beyond anything I had read before, and annihilated at one blow those problems that Western philosophers had been debating since the days of the ancient Greeks without finding an answer to them.

'*The perception of sight by the Enlightened Mind is Pure Reality itself.*'

'*Since beginningless time sentient beings have been led astray by mistaking the nature of their mind to be the same as the nature of any other object.*'

'*There is no such "thing" as the perception of sight.*'

And again:

'*We must be careful to distinguish between the perception of our eyes and the intrinsic Perception of Sight by our enlightened Mind that is conscious of the fallible perception of the eyes.*'

Lines thus taken out of their context cannot do justice to an argument of the profundity of that propounded here, and a study of Buddhist philosophy became my primary aim.

First I read the books of the Pali canon, learning the basis of

Buddhism, the Four Aryan Truths, the Eightfold Path, the Wheel of Interdependent Causation, the *Vinaya* or rules of monkish discipline, and the Arahant theory. Then I went on to the Mahayana sutras that were available in translation, but these were pathetically few compared with the amount that had been translated from the Pali.

The idea of becoming a monk developed gradually. At first I was reluctant to change my religion, as it seemed disloyal and unfair to Christ. On the other hand, renunciation of the world fitted in with my sense of values, which did not rate very highly the things the world had to offer. But a Christian Order would be out of the question, as there was none which would tolerate my heretical views. Christ's teaching I still believed and accepted, but the Church's teaching or version of it I could no longer accept. And to seek to work through Christianity would result only in forming another little sect, of which there were far too many already. To become a monk, therefore, I must become a Buddhist.

This labelling of religions had long seemed wrong to me. Names produced bigotry and intolerance, and the feeling that one was oneself right and the man who called himself by another name wrong. But with the world as it was one had to have a label. I decided to apply to become a novice-monk, but not to become a Buddhist until the day of my ordination. What Christ taught and what the Buddha taught on the ethical plane was identical. If one man followed Christ's teaching to the letter and another the Buddha's, their behaviour would be indistinguishable. The only purpose in changing my religion, therefore, was to enable me to give up the world and become a monk.

On a day in March, therefore, I was ordained at Sarnath by Bhikshu Sarsanisiri of Ceylon, and I put on the yellow robes to become a sramanera or novice monk of the Hinayana School.

In Buddhism monastic vows do not bind for life, as they do in Christianity. A man may lay aside the robes at any time if he feels he has made a mistake. But it was not my intention merely to give it a trial, as it were; I meant, having once given up the world, never to return to that mode of life. I would not put my hand to the plough and then look back. With this end in view I wrote to my stockbroker and solicitor, enclosing a

'will' distributing my private property to those of my friends and acquaintances who were most in need. It was huge fun making a will and seeing it executed in one's lifetime! But my solicitor and my stockbroker were not going to plunge so headlong into anything. They wanted to make sure first that I was in my right senses and second that I would not change my mind again when it was too late. It was therefore a full year before I had been divested of all my capital and assets and had brought a degree of social security to certain persons who had been lacking it through no fault of their own.

But even as there are no vows for life in Buddhism, so also there are no closed orders. Accommodation was free, but if the monk has no family and no supporter, he must somehow find the means to feed himself. And the only possible source of income for me was writing. Earning money by the practice of medicine was counted by the Buddha as a wrong means of livelihood, although naturally the treatment in itself was encouraged; and in any case the thought was unpalatable as a full-time occupation.

Now began what would be a permanent struggle for existence. When an article was accepted by a paying journal there was a long wait until its publication and the arrival of the cheque. *Indo-Asian Culture* was a good paying proposition, but a quarterly, and so the wait was prolonged. The *Aryan Path* paid on acceptance, though at a lesser rate, but the editress was kind, although we had never met, and would send books for review when my need was greatest. The *U.K. Citizens' Monthly Review* paid fairly quickly but not highly. The best payer was the *Sunday Statesman*, to which I offered short stories under a secular name, since they might embody things and situations of which novice monks were better ignorant. And so it went on; looking always for new markets, struggling to pay the postage to England or, optimistically, to America, and finally with success to Australia. In the lean weeks I would exist on credit with the char wallah, who also was kind and paid my little milk bill and gave me bread and tea until a remittance came and I could pay him off. But in those days there was no butter, much less jam, no eggs, no fruit, only the bread and milk and roti and dhal for lunch. And then I would rapidly lose weight. And as soon as a remittance came the char wallah would have

to be paid, stamps would have to be bought in the hope of earning another cheque, paper and carbon were needed before ever food could be sought. Robes, of course, were supplied free by the ordaining bhikshu. It was food, food and the means by which food was to be acquired, that was the sole and ever-present problem.

Then my legatees in England began to send food parcels, but there was heavy duty to pay on them, and just before Christmas I had to refuse a big parcel because I did not possess enough for the duty. As I handed it back to the Postmaster I thought of what might be in it — real food — English food so badly needed! It was a poignant moment. Then these few faithful friends who alone knew where I was or what I had done, paid the duty before they sent the parcels, or sent a postal order to cover it. But it was difficult to keep a postal order when one was hungry. And amongst these faithful friends was that philosophy tutor who had done so much for me when I had been an undergraduate at Oxford. He died on the day I left Rizong, and to his memory I have therefore dedicated this book.

Before His Holiness the Dalai Lama came to Sarnath I had met him at Mussoorie. For no good reason six months after my ordination I suddenly determined to make a pilgrimage thither to pay my respects to him, for the story of his escape had touched a chord, and I felt a great admiration for him and a sympathy for his hard exile.

It was to be a real pilgrimage: no first-class travel, or even third-class, for that matter. I would set out on foot like the bhikshus of old, without money and depending on my begging bowl, and I would walk the 579 miles that lay between us. Early in September I set out — and was rapidly disillusioned. This part of India was rabidly Hindu, and the Hindu is antagonistic to the Buddhist. Moreover it was ten years since the Government of India had first tried to put an end to beggars by propaganda, and also the people had ceased to regard the turning away of the traveller as a sin, as the Hindu religion teaches it to be.

These points were given me by a retired judicial commissioner in Allahabad, eighty miles from Sarnath, after I had walked half the distance and gone twenty-seven hours without food because no one would give to me, and had finally been fed

by a Hindu *sadhu* or holy man, half naked and painted, as he prepared his own lunch beside a shrine. With a badly blistered foot and very hungry, I had then hitched a lift, ticketless, on a train, and getting off at Allahabad had lain down on the platform for the night between two regular beggars, for station platforms are the homes of a good portion of the population of India. Later, as I limped across the town, a good old gentleman had picked me up and taken me home with him to rest and eat for twenty-four hours, and had sent me on my way with five rupees against an emergency — 'For,' he told me, 'you will not get food given you in this part of India.'

Having thereafter been given a lift by a public truck carrier, I continued the journey by this method. All the drivers were Sikhs, and the Sikhs have a great respect for anyone in the robes. They also have a pretty sense of humour. One said to me: 'I have seen many goods labelled "Made in England", but today is the first time I have ever seen a Made in England Sadhu!'

After eight days I reached Dehra Dun, 17 miles from Mussoorie, and the last station for these trucks. The journey was finished on foot, with a climb of over four thousand feet up a mountain to the higher level where Mussoorie is situated. But at length I met His Holiness, and for the first time made the triple obeisance that Tibetan protocol demands. My outer robe fell off in the process, for it is not suited to that form of exercise, and anyway I had from the first had great difficulty in keeping it on. I wondered how others more experienced managed to wear theirs with such easy abandon.

At first in Sarnath the matter of the obeisance had given me much trouble. With all the Englishman's feeling of repulsion at the idea of one man kneeling to another, I had been hard put to it to bring myself to do so, but it had to be, for to omit it would have merely been rank bad manners. Still the refrain of a poem I had learned at school would keep coming into my mind:

> Let dusky Indians whine and kneel,
> An English lad must die!

Other English Buddhists I have met, both men and women, have told me they also had difficulty at the beginning. Still, the

triple obeisance seemed less hard than merely kneeling down and putting one's head on the ground in the Hinayana type of salutation. At any rate none of those who had been brought up to regard it as perfectly natural would be able to comprehend this ultra-English point of view, so, difficult though it was to do so, it was something to be got rid of as quickly as possible. In the best Hindu families the children go to their parents' room first thing every morning and make an obeisance to them, unnatural though this seems to us.

Be that as it may, my visit to Mussoorie was a turning-point, for from then began my slide away from the Hinayana which rapidly gained in momentum. I stayed the night there with a Tibetan family whose children had been English-educated in Darjeeling, and who were now acting as interpreters and translators on His Holiness's staff. One of these was a girl of perhaps twenty or a little more. When I first saw her I made a motion towards her to greet her as an old friend of my childhood days, but then I stopped in time. For how could she be? She was very much younger than myself, and I had never been to Darjeeling nor she to England. She looked at me strangely, and then disappeared, and I did not see her again during my short stay. But I have met her twice since then, and each time the strange feeling persisted that she was an old friend and that I had played with her as a child. There was to be another instance of this when I reached Rizong, but then the feeling was to be one of acquaintance rather than close friendship.

Of course the obvious explanation lies in the theory of rebirth, that we had known each other in some previous life, for such an experience is not uncommon. It is strange how set in our ideas we become merely through the 'indoctrination' of our parents, nurses, and teachers. One half of the world takes the idea of rebirth for granted because it has been learnt in childhood; the other half rejects it for exactly the same reason, and neither half questions the rightness or wrongness of what it has been taught. The Christian Church has decided against the theory simply because it does not fit in with its teaching about a Saviour, and also because it is an impediment to the Church's absolute authority. For the first five hundred years of Christianity it was widely accepted; but then it became connected with Gnosticism, which was condemned as ultra-heretical, and

in the sixth century Pope Vigilius declared the Doctrine of Reincarnation a heresy, and slowly the idea became lost.

Belonging by birth to that half of the world which rejects the theory of many lives, and having been so taught from childhood, I found it very difficult to change my view; but this happened some three years before I came into contact with Buddhism. Quite suddenly the difficulty evaporated, for no apparent reason, and without warning I found myself belonging to the other half of the world which accepts rebirth as normal. Since then it has been equally difficult to imagine how one could ever have regarded a single life as either possible or rational.

In the Gospels there are eight quotations referring to rebirth as being the accepted idea of the Jews of that day. But no heed is paid to them, or they are explained away by precarious logic. At all events the theory of rebirth is closely linked with the teaching of the need for self-conquest, for life then merely becomes a process of learning and an opportunity for self-evolution.

Be that as it may, my pilgrimage to Mussoorie had been well worth while, and when His Holiness came to Sarnath I was already known to him and to a few others of the Tibetans I had met there. My experiences on the way there had also been valuable, not only theoretically but also financially, for two articles about them paid dividends.

Meanwhile I had been steadily making a name for myself in the unpaying Buddhist journals, having published in all over thirty articles during my first year as a Buddhist. Not that they were making me over-popular, for I had written a series on the degenerate practices of the Sangha, which were accepted by a Ceylon journal, the first coming out the month before the Bandaranaike murder, and the rest following as a result and at the request of the editor. The name of Jivaka, given to me at my ordination because it was recorded in the Pali tradition as that of the Buddha's physician, became a byword for criticism; but at least the criticism was constructive.

During the visit of the Dalai Lama to Sarnath, I took the Bodhisattva vow before his Guru, Yang Tsin Ling Tseng Rimpoche, a very dear and gentle old man who looked seventy but was said to be only fifty-six. The Tibetans, like the Chinese, look much younger than they are up to the age of fifty, and then age rapidly.

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The Bodhisattva vow is a peculiarly Mahayana concept, unknown in the Hinayana School. One who feels a sense of dedication or of having a purpose in life, can take the vow to achieve the state of a Bodhisattva from any Tulku or Lama, and if there is an affinity between them he may receive a spiritual gift at the time, the transference of a thought, which will help him on his way. But once it has been taken there must be no looking back, or considerable spiritual degeneration will result. Rules of conduct go with the Vow, eighteen major or inexpiable and forty-six minor or expiable rules. Several of these concern the complete abjuration of the Hinayana teaching, which replaces the Bodhisattva ideal by that of the Arahant, the man who wins Enlightenment for himself alone and then escapes from the wheel of rebirth, whereas the Bodhisattva, on reaching the same degree of development, deliberately foregoes his chance of escape and reincarnates again and again for the purpose of teaching and helping mankind to take the same path. The Bodhisattva, therefore, is primarily a Teacher, and all Tulkus are naturally Bodhisattvas, although not all Bodhisattvas are as yet Tulkus, a state which requires a certain stage of spiritual evolution to have been attained, although, naturally, even among the Tulkus themselves there are varying levels of attainment.

Tulkus exist throughout the world, in all countries, but only in Tibet, Mongolia, and Ladakh are they sought out and called by that name. The first Tulku, identified in 1474, was the recognized Incarnation of Ganden-trub-pa, successor of Tsong-kha-pa, the great reformer and founder of the Gelug-pa School, and thereafter it was believed that all heads of monasteries reincarnated and search was made for them. The whole subject has been little examined in Western literature, nor have the difficulties of the theory been put forth. Nevertheless it is certain that many of these Tulkus are on a far higher plane of development than the ordinary man, and only by an extraordinary life is it decided that one will reincarnate and so become a Tulku for the first of many rebirths as such.

Having taken the Bodhisattva vow I was still covered by my original ordination, although I was now irrevocably a Mahayanist; but it was a logical sequence of events, quite apart from facilitating entry into a monastery, that I should be reordained

and become a getsul, with the name of Lobzang added to that of Jivaka. This latter could not be altered, because by now I was too well known in Buddhist circles from my writings. There had been no break in the progress of thought, and I had merely graduated, as it were, from the Hinayana to the Mahayana in a perfectly natural fashion. Not that any bhikshu would admit this, but then they knew nothing about it!

All this time I had not lost sight of my primary aim, which was to become proficient in meditation. Every morning by five o'clock I was in the great Sinhalese Temple which dominates Sarnath, and, after a brief puja, sat for an hour in an unsuccessful attempt to gain the mastery over my wandering mind. There was no short cut, no other means but dogged perseverance. Just when I was really making progress and watching with interest certain physiological effects that a concentration deeper than normal could produce, raising the body temperature, producing a rigidity of the muscles which ceased to feel tired, and a reduction of respiration almost to nothing, I had a series of three unfortunate accidents within as many months. I injured my back by a fall; I nearly asphyxiated myself by unsuspected carbon monoxide fumes from a charcoal stove; and, finally, I snapped an ankle ligament in falling down the altar steps, this last event having no cause or reason. On the top step my ankle just gave way in a most abnormal fashion. Was this interference from outside or sheer coincidence? In each case my meditational practice was interrupted by pain, and in the last instance I could no longer sit cross-legged for over a month, because that part of the ankle which was injured would be pressed against the ground.

Two years went by, and still I had not re-achieved the stage that I had reached when the first accident occurred. But there was nothing for it but to continue daily trying and trying, some days a little more successfully than others, occasionally with the occurrence of a slight vision, which, however, merely arises from one's own mind and is to be regarded as no more than the sign that a certain mild depth of concentration has been reached. But often I have asked myself, how far would I have gone by now had those three accidents not happened? And to that there is no answer.

CHAPTER THREE

I Enter Rizong

'Now we will go and see Rimpoche.' Lama Lobzang rose and brushed off the crumbs of the taki from his robes. 'Come, Imji getsul.'

He had given me this name from the time I had been ordained. Imji means 'English', and having a euphonic quality of its own it stuck. Since he used it persistently during the hours of his stay with me in the monastery, the others also picked it up, and it was quickly reduced to 'Imji'. Towards the end of my stay a few began to call me 'Lobzang', which, whether it was so or not, I took as a sign of being completely accepted.

With the first two gelongs who had greeted us leading the way, and the others, who had come to see what it was all about, dispersing again to their respective jobs, we bent nearly double to come out through the little door not more than three feet high and with a big lintel to step over. These doors were the same, I was to find, all over Ladakh, and to find to my cost too, for I was for ever bumping my head on them, forgetting to duck in time — the reward of unmindfulness!

We climbed some steep steps which were made of flat rocks, uneven in surface and some as much as two feet deep. These were the steps I was later to struggle up and down carrying heavy tea-kettles, baskets of fruit, or tubs of food. But at this time that was hidden from me, and I merely thought they might have been made lower and more numerous. It was a long time before I realized why they were like this, and why the doors were made so small.

We crossed a courtyard which appeared to confront a temple, one of the structures with painted woodwork that we had seen from below, and we now saw at close quarters the poles with skulls on them and tridents coming out of the top. They were not real skulls, but wooden imitations, and anatomically very incorrect. I could not help noticing this, even though my thoughts were chiefly centred on the Lama I was going to see.

We ducked through another door, climbed a broad wooden ladder up to the uppermost court, and there we were in front of his room. There was no time for more wondering, for Lama Lobzang was walking quickly across the flagged yard, up the two steps, bending — though not much, for he was so small — to go through the door and into the room. There he began to make the triple obeisance. Following close behind, I too rearranged my outer robe as I had been taught, so that it hung loose from both shoulders, and followed his movements exactly. Then I went forward and placed on the table the small tin of sweets I had brought for an offering, for it is the custom when you meet your Guru for the first time to bring a present, however small.

The Lama took no notice of me, but smiled and said something to Lama Lobzang, which probably meant, 'Good-morning; how are you? Please sit down.' For he owed him a debt of gratitude that he was not still incarcerated in Buxar refugee camp, and was pleased to see him.

We sat down cross-legged on a rug, in front of which was one of the little bench tables, and immediately a gelong attendant produced two little china tea bowls and filled them with Tibetan tea. Then there was silence for a while, for it is not good manners to plunge straight into your business, and it was for the Lama to speak first.

For the moment I was careful not to look at him, for this too would not have been polite, but I surveyed the room with interest. Where he sat there were three levels of accommodation, for should some Lama higher than he come, he must be given the highest place. The lowest level was merely a thick rug on the floor. Corresponding to these levels of seats were bench tables, two, one on top of the other, for the highest, a single one next, and then a low flat one last. For the tables on

which the tea bowls are placed must also be graded according to the status of the person using them. The bigger tables were brightly painted in Chinese style, and the first two were covered with books, papers, and a variety of things including, of course, the inevitable tea bowl, which, as it belonged to a Rimpoche, had a silver cover.

Then the conversation began. Since it was in Ladakhi I could not follow it, but I caught the words 'Imji getsul' and 'Lochas Rimpoche', and then Kushok Shas looked at me long and steadily. Looking back, I saw a youngish man, curiously ugly of face, but with an air of straightforward determination about him, of patent honesty and vigour. He was dressed, like all Rimpoches, in the dark red gelong skirt and the brocaded toga, while his outer robe hung loosely over one shoulder and lay in folds on the rug beside him.

His black hair was nearing the time for another shave. His large brown eyes were set widely apart, and the eyebrows met in the middle. His nose was broad, and turned up so that the nostrils faced frontwards rather than downwards. His mouth was small, but with thick lips. His body was of an athletic build, and, as I found later, he was a shade taller than myself. The hands were particularly noticeable, for they were fine and delicate like a woman's. Kushok Bakula had similar hands, and indeed all the Tulkus I met bore this same feature; however fat they might be, and some were, yet were their hands refined and feminine.

It was interesting that my Lama should be an ugly man, for in the past in my mechanical reactions to people, I had always gone much on appearance, and whether they spoke in cultured accents and did the things that were 'done' or not. Here at least was the major reason for my coming to Rizong, to break down these habits of years that produced criticisms and judgements.

Lama Lobzang resumed the conversation, and the brown eyes moved away from mine to look at him. What had he thought of that strange blue pair that had held his and returned stare for stare? For, from observation, I was to learn in time that getsuls did not look their superiors in the eye, but would keep their looks modestly downcast or give a mere flicker upwards, and cover their mouths with their robes lest

their breath offend. To 'stand up and look you in the eye' is a purely Western conception of a virtue.

I continued my survey of the room. The walls were covered with *thankhas*, the Tibetan pictures painted on silk and mounted on rich brocades, always in the same colour scheme, a narrow yellow band around the picture, a narrow red band around that, and then the expansive area of brocade, often in blue, sometimes in green or gold, according to what might be obtainable. There was a small snapshot of the Potala, together with one of the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama in a frame, and another bigger frame holding a selection of snapshots, too far away to identify. The floor had rugs, with a bare piece of planking left in the middle. There was nothing suggesting luxury or wealth. The rugs were old though thick, and needed repair in places, and the Lama's robes also seemed to have seen better days. His toga had become frayed at the collar, and there was a small patch on his outer robe. But this was in keeping anyway with the Buddha's conception of monkhood.

I caught the word 'amji' which means 'doctor' from Lama Lobzang, and saw a flicker of interest in Kushok's eyes as he again looked at me. But I was not pleased, for I had hoped that, after all, nothing would be said of my medical status.

Eventually Lama Lobzang condescended to give me a very brief resumé of the conversation. He said that he had told Rimpoche that I was an English getsul who had been ordained at Sarnath by Lochas Rimpoche (who had been one of Kushok's Gurus at Drespung), and that Kushok Bakula had wanted me to enter Rizong for a few months for training.

'I told him I didn't want any concessions made for you,' he added.

'What did he say?' I asked.

'He said, "All right, tomorrow he can start work in the kitchen with the other getsuls",' was the reply.

I was perfectly satisfied with this, wishing to do anything that all getsuls did, although it was somewhat unexpected, as Lama Lobzang had neglected to inform me of this before we came. The reason came out later when, that evening, sitting in the little guest room, I asked him:

'What does one do in the kitchen?'

'Don't be silly,' he said, 'of course you can't work in the kitchen.' This *volte face* took my breath away.

'But I thought you said he said I was to.'

'He was only joking. What could you do in the kitchen?'

I began to feel annoyed, for suddenly and inexplicably Lama Lobzang's 'sahib' complex was asserting itself. He was an odd mixture. For a while he would treat me as if I were a small boy and smack or belt me, and then suddenly, for no clear reason, he would behave as if I were some sort of superior being. But I had come to Rizong essentially to break down the personality of the 'sahib', and to be treated as something special because I was English and for no other reason would only perpetuate this state. And in any case I wished to be no different from the other getsuls, and to be treated exactly as they were. Only by this means could I hope to graduate to become a gelong.

Nor was I in the least convinced that Kushok had been joking. He had a penetrative mind and was no fool. Obviously if he was to judge of the character of a newcomer, especially of an unknown foreigner, it must be by a period of testing. If I worked well in the kitchen and pulled my weight, was popular enough with my fellows, and no complaints were laid against me, then I might be worth teaching and raising later to a higher status. But if I sat down and behaved as if I thought I was superior to all that and would not dirty my hands by honest work, and expected privileges, then of what value would I be and what would my character be worth? No, if Kushok had said the kitchen he had meant the kitchen, and I intended to work in the kitchen until released therefrom by his orders.

I told Lama Lobzang this. He sniffed his disgust at my attitude and the conversation ended. But all this was not until that evening.

At length he rose to leave, and I watched anxiously to see if we had to make another obeisance, so as not to be backward in my good manners, but he did not. He said instead, it seems, that we would be coming back again, and so, once more ducking through the door, we left.

'Now we will go and see the Guru,' said Lama Lobzang, and I was at a loss to know what he meant.

It transpired that 'the Guru' was old Gyarong Kanzyur

Rimpoche, one of the two Head Lamas of Drespung Gompa who had escaped with Lochas Rimpoche's party at the same time as Kushok Shas fled with another group; for small groups were safer, and each party numbered about a dozen. Kanzyur Jam Pal Rimpoche was elderly, a heavy man with hunched shoulders, and his breathing suggested chronic bronchitis and emphysema which produce such a posture. He had a kindly face, and when he laughed shut his eyes tightly and opened his mouth wide, while his body shook. As he had been one of Kushok Shas's Gurus at Drespung, the latter had taken him in when he was released from Mismari refugee camp and, with his young attendant Yshé Gompo, had given them a home at Rizong. I learned that for convenience the Ladakhi title of Kushok was used for the Head Lama and Rimpoche for Kanzyur, since he was Tibetan, although Kushok might be addressed as 'Rimpoche' if one wished.

Rimpoche got up as we were making our obeisance, not knowing who the visitor in Tibetan robes might be, and he tried to take me by the arm and lead me to his own seat. But I held back, and Lama Lobzang came to my rescue by remarking that I was only a getsul and an English one at that, so I was released and was able to sit on the floor dutifully behind him, while Rimpoche resumed his own seat on a higher level.

The room was furnished similarly to the other, with rugs, bench tables, and raised seating, but an additional feature was the bookshelf. A Tibetan bookshelf is a series of box-cubicles, like those used for letter-sorting in a post office, and each cubicle holds one volume of the long narrow Tibetan manuscript books, wrapped in rich cloth and placed between two painted wooden slabs to keep the precious contents as perfect as possible. Apparently part of the gompa's library was kept here.

We did not stay very long, and I understood nothing of what was said. We then left to go on a voyage of exploration, up and down steep steps, across flagged courtyards, and in and out of temples. Of these there were four, and they seemed to be allotted to the different constituents of the Triple Gem, the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha, to which, in Tibetan Buddhism, the Guru is added.

The Temple we had first passed housed a huge statue of the

Buddha, adorned in rich brocade robes and looking down the room with an air of peaceful compassion that the sculptor had caught well. On his left and right there were sundry other images, of whom I did not then know, nor could I remember the names that Lama Lobzang rattled off with a speedy familiarity.

The next Temple we visited was up another steep flight of stairs within a building. It was a long room in two sections, that is, partially divided by panelling, and was the Lama temple, for the main statues were of Tsong-kha-pa and his two famous disciples, Ge-sab-ji and Kar-drub-ji, life-size and all with actual yellow 'lama' caps such as they must have worn. For obviously these had been originally modelled from life. They appeared in all temples, being shown sometimes in the prime of life and sometimes with Tsong-kha-pa as an old man, the features being still the same, but wrinkled and fatter.

The third temple towards the end of the monastery was presumably to the Dharma, for the main feature was an enormous chörten or stupa which towered to the ceiling. It had been decorated with ornaments attached to strings stretching out from either side of it to the platform on which it stood. Amongst these ornaments was the incongruous sight of a 'Christmas tree' paper bell, one of those you fold outwards and grip with a clip. It was in red, white, and blue, and it would have been interesting to know how it came there. But Lama Lobzang was totally ignorant of Christmas trees, and it was no use asking him.

The fourth temple, as I came to know later, was used apparently only by those who wanted to do a little private puja of their own in the evenings. For it was too small to hold more than half a dozen people at a time, and was very dark inside. Perhaps this then was for the fourth part of the Triple Gem, the Sangha, the Buddha, and the Dharma having already been supplied.

We came out into the brilliant sunshine again, and I suggested we might profitably find a lavatory, if there were one. Lama Lobzang said scornfully that there were dozens of them, and pointed across the courtyard to a little 'house' standing by itself against the parapet.

'There you are,' he said.

I went over to investigate. The room was about eight feet by five, and the floor was covered with an ankle-thick layer of ashes and powdered flint rock. In the middle was a slit hole, to which the ashes sloped down, offering a precarious foothold. A long-handled spade took the place of the more modern flush system; it was certainly simpler, and incapable of going wrong.

I asked about the washing facilities, but met with no response. Lama Lobzang started a new conversation. But I was not wholly unprepared for an absence of them, as it had been the same at Sankar Gompa. If one wanted to wash one had to fill a basin in the kitchen. Plumbing is unknown in Ladakh, and there are no taps anywhere. All such things would have to be flown over the mountains, and the cost of heavy piping would be prohibitive. Anyway, for centuries the peoples of Ladakh had lived successfully without the excessive washing that takes place as a matter of course in other parts of the world.

When the evening came a pot of soup was brought for me. It was a special concession Lama Lobzang had asked for, because not only had I had no breakfast that morning, but my two days of sickness at Sankar just before we came had left me depleted. Kushok had said I could have it that night but not thereafter, for at Rizong they did not eat after midday, following the Buddha's ruling on this point. This rule was originally made for three reasons. The early monks lived in the jungle, and depended on begging in the villages for their food. If they were to eat several times a day they would be a big burden to the people; an evening meal also meant walking through the jungle at night, which was dangerous, and the time they should be devoting to meditation would be wholly taken up with seeking food. So the Buddha decreed that His monks should eat only one meal a day, and that in the forenoon. This very soon degenerated into eating as many meals as they liked so long as none were taken after noon. And this custom still prevails in all the Buddhist countries of both sects, although many slacker monasteries and individuals do eat at night. Nowadays the number who eat at night is probably greater than that of those who do not, whether it is done secretly and with pious

disclaimers as in the Hinayana countries, for fear of being found out, or openly as in India and many of the Mahayana monasteries, where it is considered to be impractical not to have a later meal.

From a medical point of view the practice of stuffing at one time and then starving the body for twenty-four hours has nothing to recommend it. Flatulence, dyspepsia, and colic result, all of which incidentally are mentioned in the Pali canon as complaints of the Buddha Himself and His Sangha. But the rationale of the original ban is undeniable. In any case, once the practice has degenerated into taking more than the one meal a day, the rule loses its point. But in Ceylon, Burma, and Thailand the laity are intolerant and bigoted on the matter, and condemn as no-monks any who are found breaking it. Hence the need for secrecy. Admittedly the laity of these countries have a vested interest, for the monks depend wholly on them for their food, and do not, as in India, have to provide for themselves. Be that as it may, at Rizong eating in the afternoon was banned, but two meals and tsampa could be taken in the morning.

With the tupa came in a number of gelongs and some of the kitchen staff, two boys and a getsul, together with the cook gelong, whose name was Thondup. He had purely Western features, and was of medium height, but slight of build. They all knew Lama Lobzang well, apparently, for his mother came from Gaspola, the nearest village to Rizong and eight miles away.

My luggage, the bag and the bedding, now came up on the broad shoulders of two gelongs who had been sent down the mountain to fetch it, and who were better accustomed than either of us to climbing mountains with heavy burdens on their backs. It was late before we were able to turn in, Lama Lobzang on the mat which was to be my bed for the next three months, and myself on the floor beside him.

Tired as I was, I was kept awake by constant itching, and could imagine insects crawling all over me. Lama Lobzang, however, slept peacefully and deeply. In the morning I mentioned this to him, but he discounted the idea of there being fleas, although I showed him the bites. Still, it was no use troubling about such a matter, for, fleas or not, I

must live there with them and become used to them if that were possible.

After breakfast of taki with some honey on it we went up to see Kushok again for Lama Lobzang to say goodbye; for he was expecting the jeep to return some time during the day, and would have to wait down on the main road until it came. As it turned out later, he had to wait until four in the afternoon, and then it was a military jeep that picked him up, and not the one that brought us.

We sat down once more on the rug in Kushok's room and were given tea, and Kushok and Lama Lobzang talked a while.

'Gyalpo ret?' Kushok said to me after a while. This was Ladakhi, and I did not understand.

'Yakpo ré?' he switched to the equivalent Tibetan at my blank expression. 'Is it good?'

'Ha-chang yakpo ré,' I replied, understanding this time. 'It is very good.' I assumed he was really asking if I thought I would like Rizong.

Now Lama Lobzang asked him if there was any school, as he expected me to learn the puja while I was there. There was no regular school-time, apparently, but the boys went to the gelong schoolmaster whenever they could get away from their work, and would then have to recite the verses they had been given to learn the day before, being beaten if they did not know them. Lama Lobzang seemed satisfied!

This visit was briefer than the first, for there was always the possibility of missing the jeep and having to wait several days until there should be another, and he had to get his boys back to Sarnath for the opening of the new term. So we rose, and he made his farewell obeisances, kneeling while one of the small strips of red ribbon was placed on his neck. This is a sign that one has been to the Guru, and they are highly prized especially by the laity. They are knotted round the neck, and may either be worn until they fall off or be removed after a day or two.

His small bag was soon packed, and after the gelongs had gathered to see him off, a Tibetan refugee, Gelong Dam Chhös, and myself walked down with him to the chörten archway. I gave him a final bow, and then we shook hands, as had been our normal custom, and Lama Lobzang disappeared slowly out of view down the mountainside.

My feelings were mixed as I watched him as long as possible. He was my last link with the life I knew, and the sole intermediary between myself and my future associates, whose language I could not speak. The last thing I had asked him was the Ladakhi word for 'kitchen', and learned that it was 'tub-sung'. Now I was on my own, for better or for worse. Would I like it here, or would I wish I had never come? What madness had possessed me? Why not go back with him while there was still time? But my panic lasted only for a second or so. This was the place where I had wanted to be for so long; all the time we had been waiting for my permit to come I had been champing impatiently. And did I not already feel that this was my home? One could never let Kushok Bakula down after he had been so helpful in the matter of getting me here.

We turned to climb the hill again, and Gelong Dam Chhös smiled encouragingly at me as if he knew what I was feeling. More strong than ever was the conviction, already felt, that I had known him before, and that here was a friend.

Rizong looked down on us benignly from the superiority of its one hundred and forty-five years of existence. The gold in its paintwork gleamed in the sun, and the skulls, constructed as if they were all a single bone, grinned out into space to remind one that life is impermanent; that happiness and misery alike will not last, that 'even this shall pass away'.

'Tub-sung?' I asked Dam Chhös. He led the way to the right of the main path, through a kind of stable, up more steep steps, far more crooked and uneven than any we had mounted previously, and then we turned off into a large room on the right. There he left me.

The floor was planked all over, and the ceiling supported by pillars made from planed tree trunks. In the middle stood the oven, a massive structure of baked mud, as is common all over Ladakh. Flanking the wall opposite this was a second range. Fires were going in each, and great cauldrons and basins were bubbling merrily. Along the further wall ran a dresser on which hung ladles of every size made of copper or brass, and on its shelves the greatest selection of teapots I had ever seen, again of brass and copper and of three sizes; first a long row of small ones, then two tall ornamental brass ones with silver fittings, and finally two large rounded copper ones. Big flat

dishes of brass stood against the wall behind them. Adjoining the second stove were small cupboards, and below them a wooden structure for holding enormous brass or copper urns — for fetching the water, as I was to discover shortly.

Along the third wall, which was divided by the door, were constructed two long high box affairs, one for holding the firewood, while the other had a variety of such things as baskets, rope slings, and skins lying in it. These might originally have been intended as beds for the kitchen staff, but were not being so used now. The two windows were small and without glass, and a hole in the roof above the main stove let out the smoke, or some of it.

I was made to sit down on a piece of dirty matting under the windows and left to my own devices. As I looked about me my main impression was one of blackness, the wood fires having blackened everything in the room, including the monks and boys working there.

I sat and watched, feeling out of it as one always does when one comes new to a place. Everyone else knows exactly what to do and is busy, and one just stands about helpless for the time being. Also there was the language difficulty. It would take me much longer than normal to learn what to do and how to do it, where things were kept, and what the orders meant.

As I watched the tea was being made. A boy was holding a long wooden cylinder, while an elder youth, standing on the edge of the hearth so as to be raised, was pumping a long rod up and down inside it. This was not the first time I had seen Tibetan tea being prepared, for Yshetellin used to make it in Sarnath, and we had it also in Kashmir. Then the contents were suddenly emptied into a cauldron boiling on the stove, stirred with a huge ladle; the cylinder was refilled and the process repeated. In time I learned that the cylinder, a three-foot-long affair bound with brass bands, was called a *dong-mo*, and soon it was I who would be holding it.

But it was to be a day or two yet before I was able to convince anyone that it was all right to ask an Englishman to work, or even to soil his hands, and at first all that was expected of me was to sit on the mat and do nothing. Not being able to have anything explained to me I went cautiously for the first

two days, watching and not trying to do much until I grasped the general principles of the kitchen routine. Then I began to do odd jobs that I was fairly certain of, such as fetching wood from the yard below whenever the stock ran low, washing up pots and bowls that were put down beside the swill tub for future cleaning, and sweeping the floor, which constantly became littered with everything that was discarded on to it — vegetable scrapings, leaves, and the like.

At first I thought that the boys too were getsuls, and so they would technically be senior to me, but I was soon told that they were genyens (*ges-nyens*), a class which does not exist in the Hinayana School. Adult genyens approximate to the *upasaka* or lay devotee of the South, but to the child there is no parallel, for the Hinayana sangha ordains them as getsuls from seven years old and upwards — one of the sources of degeneration in the Sangha, for then, with no general education and knowing no other life, they become monks in time whether suited for the life or not, simply because they cannot visualize any other kind of existence. The genyens, on the other hand, may if they wish become getsuls at a later age, or may go out into the world, having seen rather more of it than the little sramaneras of the Hinayana School, for they are not bound by the getsuls' rules and have much more freedom. They wear a robe like a dressing gown of dark red, which quickly becomes black and ragged with all the hard work they have to do, but it is for their parents to replace it; for the monastery only houses, feeds, and teaches them, and has no further responsibility. The genyens rank below the getsuls, and so it was that I was able to chase and clout Tashi for starting to call me 'Imji sahib', a title which I was not anxious to acquire. This drastic treatment had the desired effect, and no one else tried to call me by that name. And slowly, day by day, I began to do more work, until by the end of a week I was on the same level as the other getsuls, starting before dawn and ending with the dusk, but with an hour or more off during the day when work was slack to enable me to practise reading and translating and to spend more time with the schoolmaster Gelong Samten than the others did.

Gelong Samten began by giving me the small booklet containing the rules for getsuls, of which there are thirty-six,

incorporated in puja form to be recited twice monthly at the 'Patimokka' ceremony. This also has no counterpart in the Hinayana School, where only bhikshus are admitted to the ceremony, and there are no rules for getsuls as such, apart from some taken from the Vinaya, mostly those concerned with general good manners in polite society. But in the Tibetan School at a certain point in the Patimokka ceremony the waiting getsuls are admitted, having to recite the piece in an attitude of proper humility, and are then excluded again while the gelongs complete the function unseen by any other eyes. It was this little puja I was first given to learn, and Samten would come down to the kitchen each morning at about seven o'clock to hear my stumbling effort; I was assured by all around that I would be beaten if I did not know it. As it happened, this fate never befell me, not because I learned well, for I did not, but because Samten was sent down shortly after my arrival on an errand to Lochas Rimpoche in Sankar gompa at Leh and came back imbued with the idea that I was a big doctor, so he decided he could not beat me, although he had been threatening to before he left. I am not a big doctor, as I have no higher qualifications, but I had once removed an infected toenail from Rimpoche with a local anaesthetic, and since then I had acquired that status in his eyes and nothing I could say would alter it. The result was that I learned next to nothing, having no reasonable incentive, for acquiring by heart meaningless words in a foreign language is a considerable mental tax, and I could always find something better to do. As I quickly forgot what I had already learned with Lama Lobzang, the policy was not beneficial, and in the end Lama Lobzang was far from pleased.

Another task unique for a getsul was that of teaching the Head Lama English. He would send for me from the kitchen whenever he felt like it and we started with the alphabet, but he, like myself, wanted to know without having to learn. It was strange that he could assimilate by heart huge books of Tibetan Dharma a thousand pages long with no trouble, yet could hardly learn three English words a day. The learning of puja and Dharma by rote had been beaten into him and all gelongs, especially Tulkus, from their earliest years, and I had evidence of the way he could pick it up almost effortlessly, while I would

labour for a week trying to recite even one verse automatically, so that it was the same situation in reverse, an additional reason why I was not harassed to learn as any other getsul would have been. For now, despite my lack of knowledge, I was at last a Rizong getsul.

CHAPTER FOUR

A Getsul's Life

I found myself in the company of three children and five youths, ranking above the children who were genyens and below the youths, who had all been ordained as getsuls for much longer than myself.

The bottom place was held by a boy of perhaps nine whom I nicknamed Pugu Chung-Chung, Tibetan for 'little child', a name which thereafter stuck to him until he was seldom called anything else. Instead of being affronted, as any Western child would be, he seemed rather proud of it, and could be heard saying it over to himself as he went about his work. He was small but very strong, with rounded shoulders and chest muscles from carrying heavy loads, so that he looked like a weight-lifter in miniature. His red dressing-gown robe was in tatters, as all of them were, and portions of dirt-begrimed skin showed through. Soap was not supplied, so they could never wash properly; there was only a kind of slightly caustic detergent powder which was meant mainly for washing the hands before touching dough, and even that was doled out carefully.

Pugu Chung-Chung was at the age of showing off, especially since he had a real grown-up, albeit a very stupid one, before whom he could show how efficient he was. He was also always having his head smacked because he was not so efficient as he thought. Inclined to be aggressive and to show temper when punished, he would try to smack back, which no genyen or getsul should do to a gelong. On one occasion, after he had been particularly trying to the cook-gelong for a few days, we

were having breakfast together with two or three gelongs, who had come, as they sometimes did, to have theirs on the kitchen floor with us. These included Gelong Samten, the schoolmaster. One of them took a light smack at Pugu's head for some reason or other, and thereupon the boy seized the large wooden ladle from the tupa pot and tried to belabour his castigator with it, but succeeded only in splashing everyone around with the soup. For this his head was smacked in earnest, and he was put on the floor, his gown turned up, and he was smacked again many times on his bare bottom, till everyone felt he had got what he deserved.

The next in age was Tshultim Dorje, who appeared to come from a higher-class family, judging by his features, manners, and the fact that he was able to come out in a new robe, though not before it was time. Also the cook-gelong sometimes called him 'nono', a polite term meaning 'little squire', although at other times he would thump him as the rest of us did. The eldest genyen, due to become a getsul during the year, was Tashi, of whom more will be heard later. He was said to be seventeen, but this was difficult to believe, as his voice was quite unbroken. He too was well developed muscularly and could carry a man's load. He had a thin pointed face which, however white it might be from being dashed with water, surmounted a black neck down which ran an absolutely straight line of demarcation. His chiefly was the job of staying in each afternoon to keep the tea service going, so he was unable to make the river very often for a wash. For when it was learned that the Imji getsul had soap with him — real *soap* — the kitchen staff with one accord found it necessary to go on some task that took them past the river, gathering fruit or wood, and they would stop and have a thorough wash. It was not from choice that they were dirty, but from force of circumstances.

After lunch I would slip off, armed with a sling and the orders to bring back a load of wood if I went to bathe. Half a mile down the mountain was one of the numerous streams which gambolled along bumping over the rocks and gravel of its bed, and as you looked into it there appeared to be gold dust shining in the dirt, but when you tried to take it out the gold was gone — only the dirt was left in the palm of your hand. Here, surely, was a lesson to be learned!

I had wisely armed myself with a pair of dark red bathing trunks, suspecting that any bathing would be in public. For the boys it did not matter, but a monk should not strip where he would be seen. Before I had finished washing myself or my garments, which must be dry before I could return in them, for I had no two sets of robes, there would be a Whoop! and down the path would come running Pugu Chung-Chung. Tshultim Dorje, Getsul Lotus, Getsul Dubches and Gyatso Chimbo who was to become our new cook-gelong, no longer official but laughing and begging the loan of the soap.

Rubbing the surface dirt off first with water to save that precious commodity, they would then soap all of themselves that they could reach, and I would scrub their backs, and gleefully they would splash down into the water and run up and down in the stream showing off their now gleaming bodies in the sun, impervious to the cold. Having no towels, they would then have to dry off under the trees, unless the sight of a nun coming up from the near-by nunnery sent them scurrying into their filthy gowns again. Then each would shoulder his basket or sling and be off on his allotted task, and Gelong Gyatso would wave his arms at me as he looked back, making signs that I was not to forget the load of firewood or it would be the worse for me. Then amid laughter we went our separate ways.

The wood consisted of branches about five feet in length, cut from the many trees that thickly clothed the valley here. They were chopped off by gelongs with inadequate axes, and left in great piles to be fetched by us of the kitchen. I would select what I thought I could carry without incurring ridicule for having too small a load, and then heaving it up across my shoulders I would start up the steep path, sometimes having to walk sideways where the mountain came down almost to my feet or boulders protruded. The wood would begin to press on my backbone, and then it was necessary to find a high rock to rest it on and re-hitch it. Then twigs would scratch or the sling would be cutting into my shoulder, and again a rest and re-adjustment would be necessary.

The chörten archway is passed, and the last and steepest lap begins. One does not look up; it is enough to see each step as it comes, but at last the stable door, which is below the kitchen steps, is reached, and with a little manœuvring one edges one's

way in sideways. Then there are two steep steps, and one must take one hand off the rope sling and haul oneself up the first. A few more and flatter steps, and at last the courtyard is reached and the bundle falls with a clatter on to the stone flags. Untying the rope, I sling my outer robe over my left shoulder and, breathless and panting, climb the remaining stairs to the kitchen, sink exhausted on the window sill, and ask for tea. But then I remember that my cup is in my room, and up again still further I have to go to fetch it. When at last it is filled with salty, scantily buttered fluid, I cannot help thinking how much more acceptable would be a cup of good sweet 'English' tea.

But by this time the day's work is nearly over, for we started early in the morning. The kitchen would come to life long before the dawn broke. With no other means of telling the time, the cook-gelong who took over after I had been there a fortnight, Gyatso Chimbo, would awaken and try to judge it from the position of the moon. If satisfied, he would rouse the rest of us, and we would stumble down the steps, feeling our way in the pitch darkness, light the tiny oil lamp which was like a candle, and then two genyens would make the fires and it was their place to be comfortably seated on the hearth by the reddening glow, pushing in bits of sticks to feed the flames.

My own place came to be at one end of the long trough used for rolling the dough or pak. The tsampa flour would be measured out and moistened and then rolled back and forth, being discouraged from forming itself into a solid mass, for what was needed was tiny dumplings of bead size, and all larger masses that formed had to be broken up. So back and forth I would roll, with Gyatso at the other end, and it would be an hour before he was satisfied with the result. Meanwhile the radishes, the only vegetable there seemed to be in any quantity, would be boiling merrily, and to them the pak would be added. This stew, known as tūpa (*thūg-pa*), which means 'soup', was the daily breakfast without variation for the length of my stay, and probably for the length of the lives of all the rest of the monks.

The tupa ready, we filled the earthen pots, put in their small wooden ladles, and bore them off to the gelongs' cells. Three was the normal complement to carry, with or without some tsampa pots or *pari* slung from a finger by their strings. Breakfast

for ourselves consisted of what was left in the tupa cauldron, and sometimes we had to go early to collect the pots again in the hope that some of the gelongs might not have eaten all their share, for often there was nothing left for us but water and leaves.

One morning while seated on the floor of the kitchen with the other getsuls and genyens, using a bit of twig for cutlery to spear the tiny lumps of dough out of their watery environment, I had a sudden vision of my London club – the bed with its Dunlopillo mattress, the tail-coated waiter wheeling a breakfast trolley into my room and handing me the morning paper. As I look at the trolley I see the cornflakes and milk, creamy from the cow, not from water buffaloes as in India, and sugar, as much as one wants; under the silver cover is crisp brown bacon and scrambled eggs on fried bread, and a rack of toast and marmalade. I abruptly put an end to this unwise piece of daydreaming, and looked at my cup with the greenish water and leaves floating in it and a bit of dough stuck on the side above the water line. Then I looked at my companions, three dirty boys in ragged dressing-gowns, two smoke-blackened youths, and a couple of gelongs who were breakfasting with us. Their faces were friendly and sincere. Then Tshultim Dorje picked up the ladle and dug deep into the cauldron, swilling round the water in search of the dumplings, and he filled my cup again. The moment had passed, and the London club was forgotten!

After breakfast and washing up there would be apricots to distribute, tea to be made, wood and water to be fetched, and lunch to be prepared and served.

But life in the kitchen was happy and friendly, although not painless, despite the absence of much disciplinary action. The holder of the *dong-mo*, or tea cylinder, would undoubtedly have boiling tea splashed over his hands and bare feet by too vigorous an operator, without redress if the latter was his senior. Then there was the daily 'trial by fire' of the tsampa balls of *par-pa*, which composed the main part of the midday meal each day. This was the last thing to be cooked. The flour was put into a huge copper bowl half filled with boiling water, and after simmering for some time it would have to be stirred with a baton shaped like a small cricket bat. When all the water

had disappeared and the dough seemed dry, the bowl was whisked off the fire, and we had to plunge our hands into the fiery mass and tear off lumps and roll them into balls the size of croquet balls. If we were very lucky there might be a smear of butter left round the sides of the empty caddy to rub on our hands, but even so our palms were left reddened and smarting for some time afterwards.

When there was no puja the daily dinner of the gelongs was always the same. We would carry up a massive wooden tub full of the par-pa to the long dining-room, where the gelongs were seated cross-legged on matting that ran round the walls. At one end was a raised dais for Kushok, for, although he did not dine with them, he would come and talk if there was anything requiring to be said to all of them together, as he did on the day after my arrival to acquaint them formally of the new and strange character in their midst. The par-pa was distributed on wooden platters, then *shor-lo*, sour milk laced with chopped herbs and radish leaves, would be put into the little korre or wooden tea bowls. The balls would be broken and a small piece flattened between finger and thumb, and then dented with the thumb until it formed a tiny spoon. This would be dipped into the shor-lo and the whole eaten in one mouthful. Vegetable stew — more boiled radishes — would make a second course, and unless villagers had brought up any dainties this would be the entire meal. If they had, then there might be curds, or nuts, or a kind of cream cheese. When the remnants had been collected we would return to the kitchen and help ourselves to whatever might be left. But the most sought after were the leavings of Kushok and Rimpoche, for their food was specially prepared and much richer than our own simple diet.

It was customary to use a small bundle of straw or leaves tied together to clean the pots and bowls after a meal. One morning I was washing a tupa pot with a handful of greenstuff I had picked up off the floor, and when finished I threw it aside. Later another getsul saw it and made similar use of it. Eventually I watched Gelong Ston-dūs, Kushok's cook attendant, pick it up, brush it off with his hand, and proceed to chop it up for his master's dinner! It was a bundle of onion leaves which had come up for him. Waiting until the tray had come back empty I then recorded the early history of our Head Lama's

lunch, whereat great merriment arose from all but the cook-attendant.

It was pleasant to be able to slip away after dinner down to the stream above the nunnery, and to wash off a little of the dirt that had collected; only a little, however, for gradually it became ingrained, and my elbows, knuckles, and ankles were permanently blackened. But for the first couple of weeks I was not asked to carry wood, and would lie on my back in the sun learning puja and sinking into a doze in so far as ants and flies permitted.

It was in this early period of my career that, as one did not come in sight of the gompa until two-thirds of the way back, I had developed the habit of walking up the first part in only my skirt, and then with Guenther's warning in mind dressing at the last moment. One afternoon I was coming up the first part of the path with my shirt on but loosely flapping, my towel slung over my shoulders to dry, and my outer robe tucked under one arm. Rounding a boulder on a hairpin bend, I saw to my horror, not ten yards away, Kushok with his two attendants coming down to bathe. He was swinging a stick he had picked up. I hurled my outer robe on to a rock and started hastily tucking in my shirt, but had not succeeded before he was up to me. He stopped and looked me up and down, and then a slow grin spread over his face at my evident consternation.

'Come!' he said in English — a tribute to his English lessons — and he walked on down to the river, while I perforce had to follow. But one does not go into the river with a Tulku, or even watch him at his ablutions. Only his personal attendant may do that, for his is the task of holding the towel and soap, and of shaving if necessary.

This day Kushok saw for the first time in his life a pair of bathing trunks. Much intrigued, he asked their name, and seemed impressed by their usefulness; for he himself wore his long under-garment, resembling a yellow petticoat, in the water. At all events, on another occasion when I met him coming down to bathe again his attendant was carrying a pair of men's under-garments known as 'briefies' in white Kashmir wool — but then no one would see him in these.

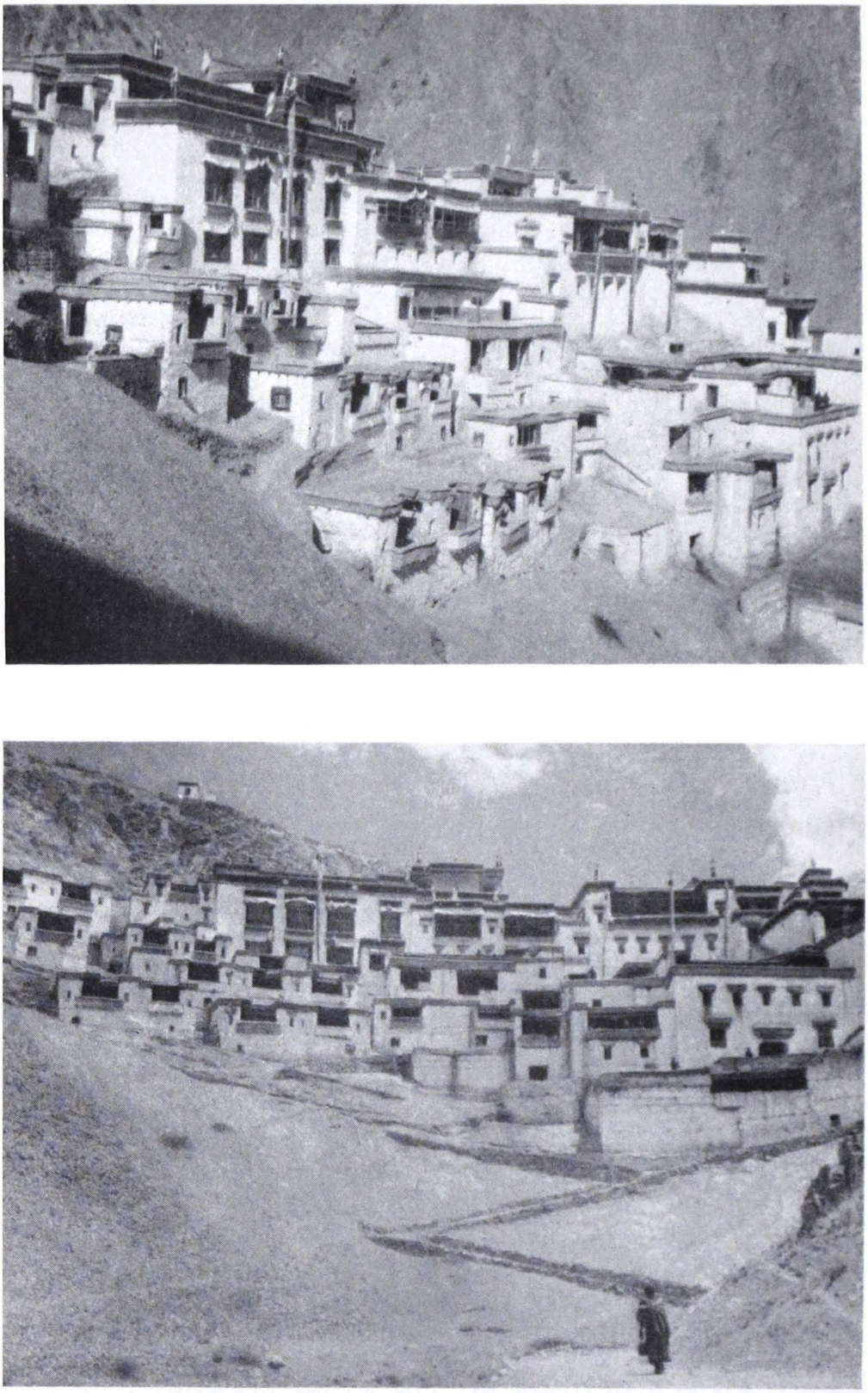
One day we all went on a picnic, to which a puja at the

nunnery was attached; as I learned later, it was for the purpose of ensuring a good crop of apricots and apples, after the manner of the spring services held in many parts of rural England.

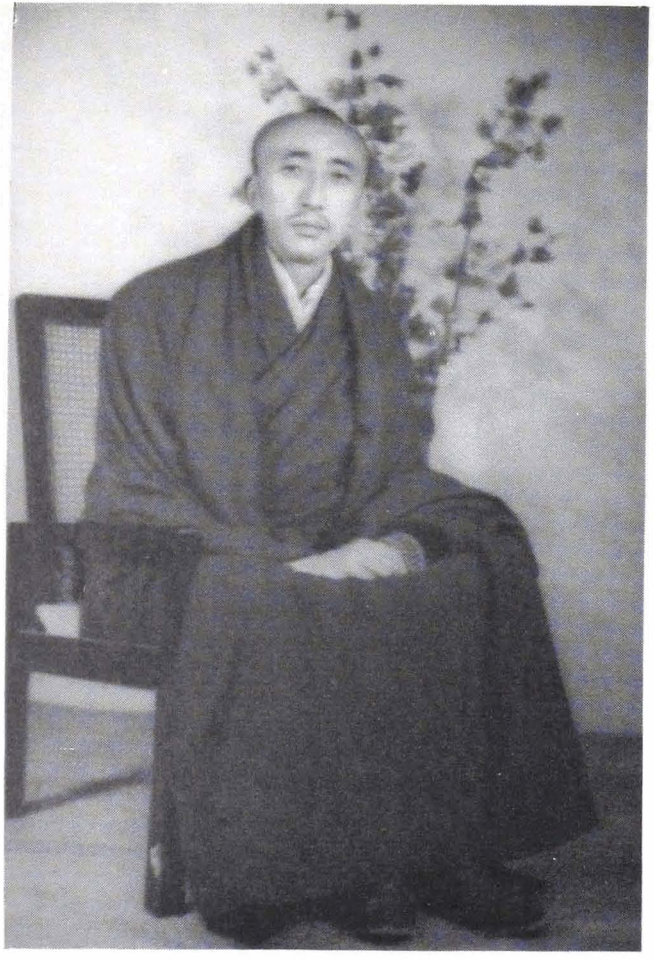
In the morning the puja was of the ordinary variety, and we getsuls served tea to the chanting gelongs. There was then an interval during which any who wished could bathe, and those who did not still took the opportunity of washing their clothes, so that the apricot trees were festooned with robes and shirts. Lunch was eaten, as on all such occasions, in the Temple itself, and consisted of rice and vegetables, rice being a special delicacy in Ladakh and Tibet.

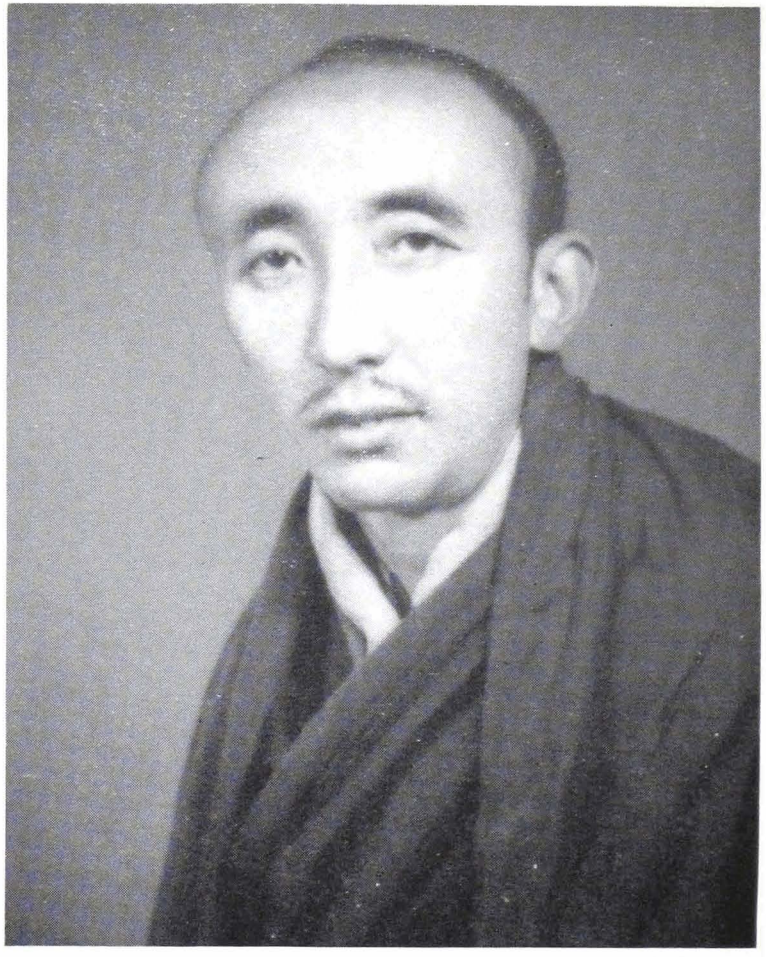
The afternoon puja, however, was utterly different from anything I had hitherto seen. It was held not inside the Temple but on its flat roof, whereon was a white stone slab with an upright back like a tombstone, and the well-known symbol  painted on it in red. Old Rimpoche was assisted, panting, up the home-made ladder, and placed on the high seat prepared for him. Then he was dressed in his yellow outer robe, used only on certain formal occasions, on top of which went a beautiful brocade garment, covering only the shoulders, chest and back. On his head he tied a kind of crown with diamond-shaped pictures rising from it and a black fringe hanging down; the general effect was reminiscent of Red Indian headgear, so that I came to think of it as the Red Indian puja. Kushok and all the gelongs were similarly attired, except one who forewent his in order that I should be decked out too, to my immense embarrassment. But it was no use protesting. They were determined to have their fun! Two gelongs, amid hoots of mirth, put on the top dress over my dirty shirt and tied the crown on. There was nothing to do but sit and bear it, still utterly ignorant of what it was all about.

While the hot sun blazed down and a warm breeze blew, a large fire was kindled on the stone slab and a table prepared laden with dishes piled up with different varieties of grains and cereals, one delicious-looking plate of rice pudding with dried apricots stuck in it, and bundles of grasses. All the musical instruments were distributed, and the puja began. To the accompaniment of trumpets, conch shells, drums and horns, the various dishes were emptied into the fire, on which periodically oil was dropped, and then the wind would blow the smoke



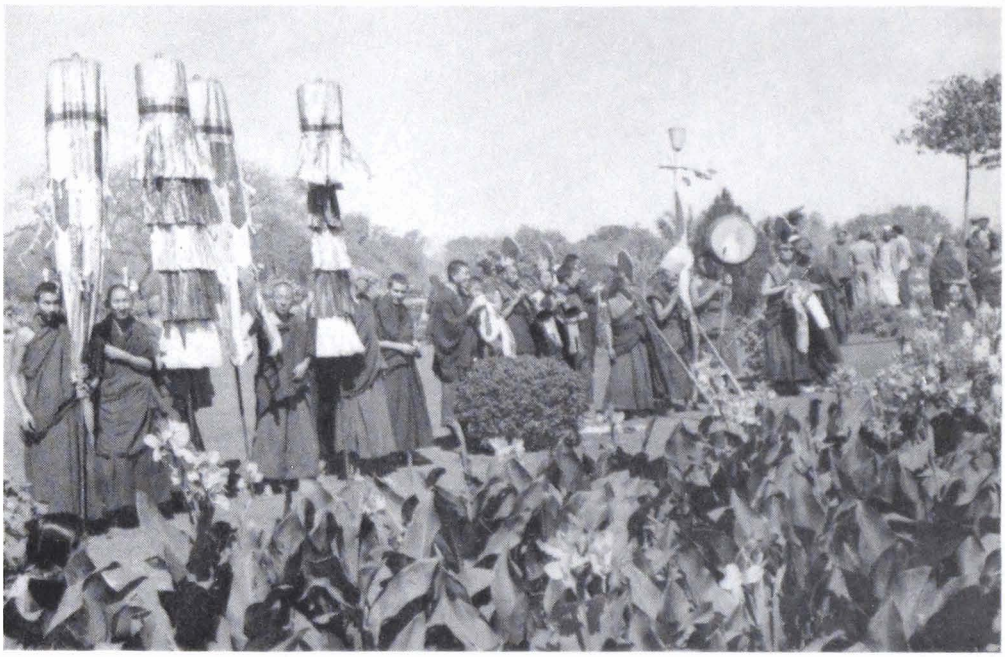
1. Rizong Gompa.





2. His Holiness Kushok Bakula, Head Lama of Ladahk and Minister of State Affairs for Kashmir and Ladahk.

3 (a). The Queen receiving a prayer-wheel and Tibetan book given her by the Head Lama of the Tibetan Temple at Sarnath on the occasion of her visit.

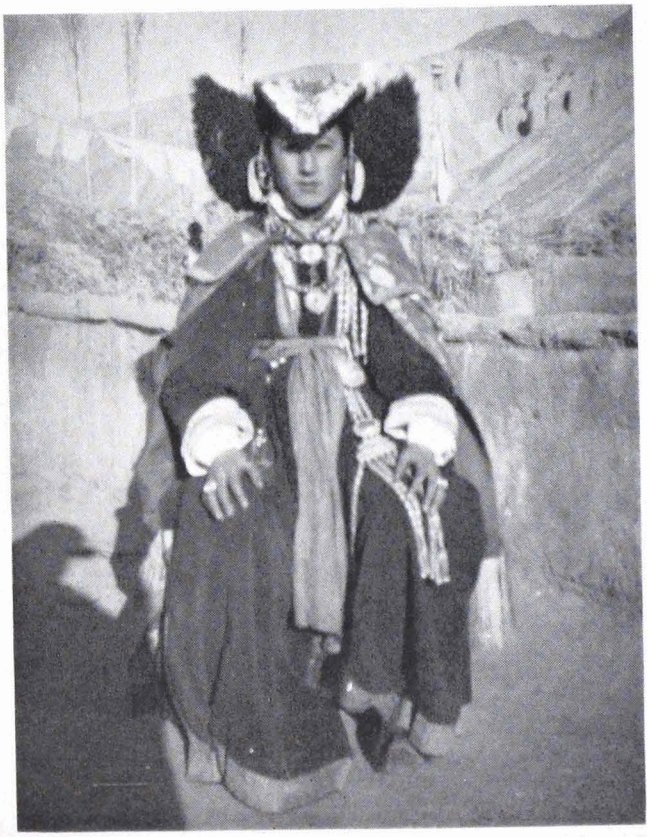


3 (b). The full Tibetan orchestra to welcome The Queen on her visit to Sarnath. All the instruments are visible—cymbals, drums, long trumpets, short trumpets, conch shells. Conch shells and cymbals are adorned with the white scarves or 'Katag'. The 'Alexander the Great' helmets are worn by trumpeters and cymbal players. The 'petticoats on sticks' are called gyal-tsen, signifying 'royal banner', and are brought out to welcome important personages. I am holding one and looking at the musicians.

4. Rizong Shas with some of the monks of Rizong Gompa. *From left to right:* Gelongs Lhaba, Thondup, Ston-dus, Rigdol, Imji Getsul, Rizong Shas (seated), Zod-pa, Dam-Chhös, Konpo, Getsul Nyime.

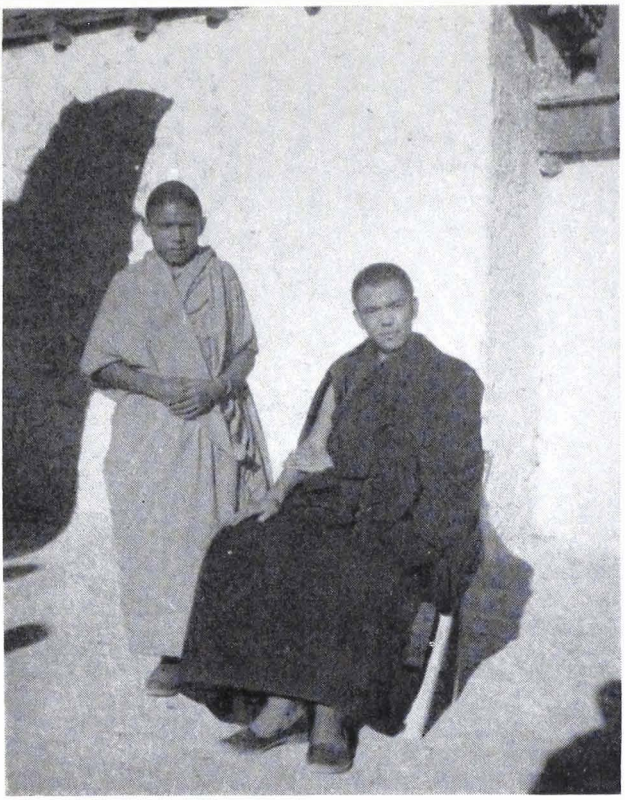
5. Incarnate Lamas in foreground listening to His Holiness the Dalai Lama preaching in the Sinhalese Temple at Sarnath during his 1955 visit when Tibet was still free. Kushok Bakula and Lochas Rimpoche are in the centre of the picture, third row from front, one each side of the centre aisle. They are all wearing the ceremonial yellow robe outside their red robes. Brocaded togas can be seen well in the foreground.

6 (a). Group of Ladakhi men and women in ordinary dress. Members of Lama Lobzang's family, who is seen with them at Sarnath.



6 (b). Ladakhi lady of some wealth in full regalia.

7. Leh, the village capital. One of two main streets of mud and stone surface. The palace on hill in background is where Kushok Bakula and Kushok Shas were born.



8 (a). Kushok Shas with Lama Lobzang, taken just before he left me at Rizong.

8 (b). Kushok Bakula presiding at a puja. Note the 'High Lama Cap' which may be worn only by Heads of Monasteries and Khenpo's.

into our faces until we were almost obscured from each other's view. What with the sun, the smoke, the flies when the smoke died down, and the curiously weighty 'crown' on my head, I was only too glad when at last all was burnt and the puja came to an end.

During this time no tea was served, which was most unusual, but the moment it was over we of the kitchen were herded below to make and serve it, and finally, loaded with the dongmos and the sol-tips, the big tea kettles, ladles, and all the equipment used, we toiled slowly up the mountain again to Rizong, there, of course, to make a bee-line for the kitchen and once more brew the inevitable tea for the evening.

So the days went by. While the warm weather lasted it would be practical to bathe every day, but I had no illusions about the future. With autumn and a failing sun, baths would become more and more rare, until by mid-October, if still there, I should probably be in the same state as the rest of the monastery. The stream was already icy enough, even with a blazing sun at midday, and the hard water made no effort to co-operate with the soap in obtaining a lather. So despite the daily bath, the dirt was steadily accumulating.

When we had first arrived I had been far too well dressed for a getsul. The cotton shirt looked much smarter than everyone else's serge ones, and the orange shirt, common to Tibetan monks in the plains of India, was not worn by anyone else here except Rimpoche and Kushok, all the rest having red shirts. But time swiftly remedied these little things. Within a month the skirt was streaked with every kind of eatable and drinkable substance. Tea was daily splashed over it with its butter content, tupa and shor-lo found their way on to it, and dishwater added its smears. Then, one morning, my outer robe (really the property of Lama Lobzang) caught fire.

I had been sitting on the raised hearth edge, rolling the dough in virtual darkness, and thinking how pleasantly warm I was becoming behind, when a gelong who had just come in suddenly made a dive in my direction, gave me a hearty clout on the back, and tore off my robe, which from smouldering had broken out into flame. He stamped it out, and when the damage was surveyed there were five large holes where it had hung in folds, quite irreparable, and it had to be

shortened and rejoined that evening by the light of a flickering oil lamp.

Kushok, meeting me one day, stopped and surveyed my robes carefully. I began to explain that it was very dirty in the kitchen and I really could not help the state that they were in, but he shook his head in approval. 'Yak-po ré!' he said, ('It is good'), and passed on.

Meeting Kushok elsewhere than in his room always presented me with the difficulty of knowing just what was the right thing to do. Sometimes gelongs would give a sweeping bow, sometimes they would make the triple obeisance, sometimes a single one. It seemed to depend on where they were, but I was never sure of the correct approach, and no one ever tried to tell me. The first time that I met him in the courtyard the habit of years reasserted itself, and I had said 'Good-morning, Sir,' before it occurred to me to doff my robe and bow, and by that time he was gone, quite ignorant of the meaning of my polite salutation, which he only came to learn later.

I noticed with pleasure that when junior gelongs or even getsuls bowed to their seniors the bow was always returned, without, however, doffing the robe. Good manners appeared to be the order of the day. If any gelongs breakfasted in the kitchen, as sometimes two or three would, as they left they would make a bow to the kitchen staff, who would then return it. 'Thank you very much,' — 'Not at all, think nothing of it!' possibly being the equivalent of the words exchanged. This would be an unheard-of thing in the Hinayana School, where bhikshus would never bow to a junior bhikshu, much less to a sramanera.

A day dawned which was to be a memorable one in the lives of four of the getsuls. They were to receive their Higher Ordination. Puja started in the Dharma Temple even before breakfast, and the tupa was served there instead of in the cells. Then immediately after the *torma* or offerings of dough had to be made, and the *taki* cooked, which would be eaten during the puja with a small lump of butter and a teaspoonful of sugar, used only on such an occasion, on the top one of the pair each gelong would receive. After breakfast, while puja continued in the Dharma Temple, the actual ceremony took place in the Buddha Temple, conducted by Rimpoche and Kushok. Here,

of course, no tea was served, for no one except gelongs may witness this ceremony. The four getsuls, who had not appeared in the kitchen that morning, were scrubbed clean and in new robes with borrowed yellow ceremonial outer robes, and looked very nervous and embarrassed. After the Ordination was complete they all adjourned to the Dharma Temple to take part in the puja in progress there and to have lunch.

News of the Ordination had been spread around among the villagers, who were coming up all through the morning with a variety of offerings of food of all sorts and a little money for the gompa. All these now joined the puja and had to be given lunch. So up and down the steep steps we trooped, with the heavy cauldrons of rice, the plates, the vegetables, the curds, the fruit, for it was a veritable feast day, and with luck some of the dainties might be left over for us. When distributing the apricots we would refresh ourselves freely on the way, but today we felt in honour bound not to touch anything until the gelongs had eaten. With the kitchen staff cut, it was three weary genyens and two weary getsuls and an equally weary cook-gelong who sank down eventually on the kitchen floor to gather what might be found on the plates and to scour the bowls for curds and 'cheese'.

I must admit that I wished I could have been among those who received the Higher Ordination that day, but I had not been there long enough, for it came at the end of my second week. My case would be a difficult one for them to decide on, and they must get to know and trust me before I could expect an application to be considered. They had never previously ordained a Westerner gelong, just as there was no precedent for a getsul, and there is a natural distrust in the East of the Western foreigner with his strange ways and incomprehensible attitude of mind on certain matters. Becoming a getsul did not admit one into the Order or Gendun; only Higher Ordination did that, so that if I proved unsuitable it would matter little. But the other was a serious step that could have repercussions on the good name of the monkhood altogether. I must wait until my period of testing was over.

One new gelong, Gyatso Chimbo, took over on the day following from Thondup, who now retired to the position of Rimpoche's cook-attendant. Gyatso Chimbo (the name means

the Ocean) was a disciplinarian, and he tightened up our working lives considerably, for Thondup had been easy-going and seldom exerted himself in any direction. Now the baby genyen, Pugu Chung-Chung, felt the weight of his fist and the strength of his arm, and even I no longer continued to enjoy the complete immunity I had had hitherto. But then the baby genyen had to learn, so did new getsuls! And Gyatso was neither harsh nor a bully. He was merely efficient, and expected others to be so too.

However, I was protected to a great extent by two things, the fact that I was a doctor, and my inability to understand what was said to me in Ladakhi. I had tried to persuade Lama Lobzang to keep silent on the matter of my medical abilities, but he refused on the ground that my services might be required, although it would have been time enough when this actually came about. In the kitchen Ladakhi was spoken, for only those who had been considered sufficiently promising to send to Tibet to finish their education at Drespung could understand or speak Tibetan, and the kitchen staff were all too young to have had this privilege. Even the schoolmaster Samten had spent but a single year there before the crisis, and admitted he knew but little of the language apart from the wealth of puja he had committed to memory. It never occurred to them to repeat an order slowly after I had managed to understand it by signs or any other means, so that I could recognize the words again.

The person who understood me best was Kushok Shas, but apart from trivialities, if we wanted to say anything of any importance or if I wanted to discuss some doctrinal or philosophical problem, I had to write down my questions with the aid of a dictionary, and he would then write an answer and I would take it away and construe it. It was particularly frustrating when there was so much new and strange, so many inexplicable customs, so much I wanted to know.

The two Tibetan refugees, Yshé Gompo, Rimpoche's attendant, and Dam Chhös, seemed to understand me quite easily, and would interpret to old Rimpoche, who, besides being somewhat deaf, never succeeded in understanding my most simple sentences, doubtless owing to a combination of a Ladakhi with an English accent.

There was much enthusiasm for learning the English alphabet, but they one and all became shipwrecked over the letters F and V, which do not occur in Tibetan. I had never before thought there was the slightest resemblance between the sound of F and that of P, but to them it seemed so, and when P failed to meet with my approval they added an S to say EPS for F. Some of them mastered it in time; Kushok in three days, others took longer. Some, like Schoolmaster Samten, still failed after three months; two genyens managed it straightaway.

Friendly as they all were, there were times when they were almost too friendly, for the Western idea of privacy is something quite strange to the East, and I could not retire to my little room to read or learn without anything up to half a dozen of them coming in and sitting on the floor, uninvited. They would pick up this or that paper or book, and if it was in Tibetan would read out aloud, ask questions, and talk to each other. It was impossible to work.

For six weeks this went on exasperatingly, until one night Samten put his head in to call me to his cell, and I took the opportunity of lodging a complaint with him as tactfully as possible, for there were four gelongs in my room at the time. He promised to speak to them, and thereafter I had relative peace; only two continued to come who were too thick-skinned to take the hint or understand that I wanted sometimes to be alone.

Lack of teaching was also a drawback; to me grammar was the fundamental of any language, and something to be learned from the start. In Tibet, however, the study of grammar is considered to be very advanced indeed, and only the geshés and most intelligent of the gelongs go on to it. Hence no questions, however carefully framed, on points of grammar elicited any answer, only looks of blank incomprehension. They knew how a sentence should be written, but could form no rules concerning its structure.

Another drawback was the fact that the early hours we kept in the kitchen prevented me from continuing my two-year-old practice of an hour's meditation after getting up. This I missed badly, and with the lack of privacy it was not possible to fit it in during the day, for with one ear cocked towards the door in anticipation it is impossible to become relaxed enough to concentrate. It would have to be foregone until I returned to

Sarnath for the winter. On the other hand the cook-gelong, Gyatso, would send me off to my room to study whenever there was a slack period in the work, and in this I was abetted by Gelong Samten, who was often in the kitchen talking to visitors or keeping an eye on his protégés. I would therefore retire thankfully to my mat on the floor and try to learn ten words of Tibetan a day, or to translate or learn a piece of puja, until a dirty face appeared in the doorway and said 'Imji! tub-sung!' 'Kitchen!' and down I would have to go again.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Gelong's Life

The monks of Rizong were a merry lot. Although observant of their individual ranking according to seniority, they had none of that overweening sense of dignity and that self-complacency which is so marked a feature of Hinayana bhikshus. They were not above manual labour, indeed they could not be, for they were their own carpenters, needlemen, painters, builders, porters, scribes, and domestic servants. No nuns were allowed to work in the gompa to look after the kitchen, as happens in some monasteries, and was the case in Sankar gompa where I had first stayed, although it is against the Rules. No laymen came in regular attendance, although the villagers helped on special occasions especially when there was any travelling to be done, bringing up the horses and acting as escort.

And if not above manual work, neither were they above a little horseplay from time to time, for many of them, if they had no particular task on hand, would find their way to the kitchen and chat with each other or start to play. This would usually end in the weaker one being picked up and dumped in the long box for firewood, or one of us would suffer the same fate amid roars of laughter from the rest. No one minded; no one's dignity was hurt, even our new cook-gelong who ruled the kitchen so well would scramble out again not in the least discomfited.

The foremost in the horseplay was also the biggest of all in the gompa. He was Gelong Jam Yung, nearing six foot, and bearing a striking resemblance to the British film star Rex

Harrison, also, incidentally, fancying himself as something of a comedian. He was the strongest too, and he alone bore to the upper storey the brass urns of water for the use of Kushok and Rimpoche. Acting more or less as his stooge in play was Gelong Ston-dūs, Kushok's kitchen attendant, who prepared his food, and so spent most of the day with us, sleeping on the floor whenever not actually engaged in work or play. He was by nature an unintentional clown of no marked intelligence, but with a kind heart, evidenced by the way he always gave me a share of his master's leavings, although they were his rightful perquisites and he could have kept them all for himself.

Among the others who spent some time in the kitchen were Gelongs Samten and his brother Zod-pa. Not that I knew they were brothers until just before it was time for me to leave, for Samten had strong Mongoloid features, slit eyes, and a prognathic jaw, and could easily have had some Japanese blood in him, whereas Zod-pa would have passed without difficulty as a European and a good-looking one at that, and there was not the slightest resemblance between them. Samten was both sewing man and schoolmaster, and sometimes when he did not come to the kitchen to hear my lesson I would have to seek him out in the sewing room, where he and two others would be doing work as fine as any seamstress could produce. He kept a thin cane in the rafters of his cell, and in the early days he showed me the method of chastisement, which was given on the tips of the fingers and thumb held together, and even a slight flick could be painful. Although the getsuls bore permanently on their nails the effects of his administrations, they were not afraid of him, and he seemed popular with them. He was always sought out when advice was needed, and gave of his time willingly to help them. He was unpretentious and good-humoured, and would lead the puja in the absence of the senior gelong, for he had a thorough knowledge of form and ceremony, and was one of those who before the crisis had spent a period in Drespung gompa in Tibet. He too had been in his time a kitchen genyen and then a getsul, and worked his way up, as indeed had they all, so they were not unsympathetic with our troubles though at times they might laugh at us.

Zod-pa was several years his brother's junior, and was a general handyman and carpenter. He had made himself a

large wooden box to sit in in his cell for warmth against the winter. It was rather like a coffin to look at, but spacious and strongly made, and since then I have seen others in houses in Ladakh, so presumably they are a feature of local furnishing.

The most senior and oldest gelong was old Dru-ba, mumbling mantras to himself all day and hobbling round with the aid of a long staff, yet never failing to spin the prayer wheels as he passed them. He seldom came to pujas, and no one bothered about what he did. But he would sometimes climb the steep steps up to Kushok's room and make his bent and shaky old legs go down in the triple obeisance to his Master, and then sit on the threshold, nodding in the sun and mumbling all the while. He had his own tupa pot kept separate from the rest, as it was uncertain what use he might make of it, and no one would eat of his leavings. But he was carefully looked after by the youngsters, and always received his share of any dainties that might be brought in.

The next in seniority, who therefore ranked as the Senior Gelong, was a hollow-eyed skeleton of a man, who might well have had some serious stomach trouble judging from his facial appearance. He was quiet and spoke but little, and was seldom seen out of his cell except for the daily lunch or for pujas.

Besides Ston-dūs, Kushok had a personal attendant, an elderly man with greying hair, named Hla-ba, who was excessively kind and who had probably looked after him when he was a child Tulku in Rizong. He had had a bad fall at some time and suffered a Colles fracture of the left wrist which had never been set, with the result that the arm bones overlapped and gave him a much shortened arm. By now it was too late to correct it.

Rimpoche had brought his own attendant with him from Drespung. Gelong Yshé Gompo was young and upstanding, and, since he never came near the kitchen, appeared astonishingly clean compared with the rest of us. It was he, with Dam Chhös, whom I felt I had known before, and he seemed easily able to understand my halting Tibetan. He was next but one the most junior gelong there.

The most junior, well on in his thirties, suffered from a foot deformity such as I have never seen described in surgical text-books or met on anyone before. The big toes of both feet

turned down at right angles from the middle joint, so that it was impossible for him to walk on the flat of his feet, and as a result his arches had become excessively concave. No accident could possibly have caused such a bilateral deformity, although there was the possibility of its being the result of deliberate mutilation, which is widely practised in India by parents on their infants to ensure them successful careers as beggars; which is a reason why the Indian Government is doing its best to abolish begging, and tourists are requested not to give to beggars. But in this case, with the left foot a little worse than the right, a congenital defect is the more probable solution.

It is, therefore, of interest that he was ever ordained at all, even as a getsul, for there is a long list of physical anomalies which ban from ordination. In the Buddha's day the loss of a hand, a foot, or an eye, ear, or nose would suggest a criminal record, for these were the punishments for crime, even as they are in parts of the Middle East today. Moreover the monks, as they lived hard and in the jungle and had to travel preaching the Dharma, needed to be able-bodied. Hence any gross physical defect, especially lameness, brought a man under the ban. Not that all these bans are likely to have stemmed from the Buddha himself, as many bhikshus believe. For dwarfism and humpback are two congenital malformations which, *inter alia*, prevent anyone from becoming a monk, yet there are no less than six references in the Pali canon to one Bhaddiya the Dwarf, of whom the Buddha is made to say: 'You see this bhikshu coming, bhikshus, ugly and misshapen and despised of the brethren; yet he is a bhikshu who has gained that for which young men go forth from home to homelessness,'[1] namely Enlightenment, which many bhikshus physically perfect failed to win. Doubtless many of these rules grew up later. It is interesting to note that goitre is a condition which brings one under the ban, yet many Tibetan and Ladakhi

[1] *Samyutta Nikaya*, I, v. 10 (*Kindred Sayings*, vol. I, trans. Mrs C. A. F. Rhys Davids, London, 1917, p. 49); Idem, II, xxi, 6 (*Kindred Sayings*, vol. II, trans. Rhys Davids and F. H. Woodward, London, 1922, p. 189); *Udana* (*Minor Anthologies of the Pali Canon*, vol. II, trans. Woodward and Rhys Davids, London, 1935, pp. 23f, 89f, 92); *Anguttara Nikaya*, I, 14 (*Gradual Sayings*, vol. I, trans. Woodward, London, 1932, p. 17); *Theragatha*, ccxxv (*Psalms of the Brethren*, trans. Mrs Rhys Davids, London, 1937, p. 230).

gelongs suffer from it. I met one very highly placed Incarnate Lama with a marked goitre which he said he had had from quite a boy; but he did not know it was a goitre!

The perpetuation of these bans in an age when mutilations are caused by wars and accidents and not by a criminal record, so that the individual is quite blameless in the matter, shows an effete and atrophic attitude of mind, and a man can do good work of a scholarly nature and seek Enlightenment for himself while no longer having to trudge through the jungle to seek his food, which in any of the Buddhist countries will probably arrive at his vihara each day. But this is the Hinayana attitude. The Mahayana school, on the other hand, has always reserved for itself the right to adapt the disciplinary code, *within the spirit of it*, to suit changing conditions, and hence is sneered at by its Southern brothers for breaking the Rules. The Hinayana keeps the letter of the law and ignores the spirit; the Mahayana keeps the spirit even though breaking the letter when necessary.

It would seem, therefore, that this deformed gelong, who was long past the normal age for ordination, had had a period of testing and that his patience and defiance of his handicap had won it for him. For he was one of our chief helpers in carrying water up the mountain from the well a quarter of a mile away. He would trudge along on the outsides of his feet, a basket containing the big brass urn on his back, up and down, sometimes several times in succession, and he spent much time in the kitchen helping us, for what he lacked in intellectual ability he made up for in willingness to work. Surely the Mahayana attitude is the more reasonable one, especially for a religion in which Compassion plays so large a part?

Another character was Gelong Nor-phel, who, like Ston-dūs, was an involuntary clown but in a less attractive way. He was always trying to assert himself without having the necessary intelligence. If any of us were doing a job, he would start to give us orders to do it, a little late, or orders to do something we should not be doing then, or that should not be done at all. While serving tea at a puja after darkness had fallen and it was difficult enough to see the little tea bowls he would always say irritably: 'Pour quickly, pour quickly.' I was sorely tempted more than once to do as he said, and the result would have been

tea all over the place as the cup overflowed. But there would have been repercussions then, and I restrained myself. He also had a habit of going up to people, even his seniors, twitching their robes and making some derogatory remark about them. But he meant well withal, and was merely foolish.

Then there was the gelong who, from his features and the military moustache he sported, might in the appropriate uniform have passed for an English Army Captain! This was Gelong Shés-rub. It would take too long to describe them all, but they were good-humoured and wished to be friendly. They made my path easy, and I felt perfectly at home among them in a way I had never felt among the Hinayana monks.

When we took the morning tupa round to them in their cells, each would be at his private puja in front of whatever altar he had been able to rig up, muttering the words to himself, and when we fetched the pots again they would still be at it, having eaten in between.

Since I found the handling of three pots difficult, and invariably upset tupa down my robe, having to duck to go through the tiny doors, which the small boys did not have to do, I was allowed to confine myself to two, those of the attendants of Kushok and Rimpoche, which meant a climb to the top storey. There during the summer months I would find both the Principals already up, Rimpoche at his toilet cleaning his teeth in Western fashion with toothbrush and paste, Kushok walking round his courtyard with a chewing stick in his mouth, which is the Indian version of the same activity. But later, as the days grew darker, both would be still in bed, Rimpoche on his raised settee and Kushok on the floor because he was too long to fit the bed-seat. Rimpoche's room was directly under Kushok's, and also up a little wooden ladder. Yshé Gompo was a useful person to serve with tupa, for he seldom ate more than half of his pot, whereas Hla-ba, Kushok's attendant, always ate all his. But he might give one an apple or some apricots, as a tip as it were.

During the morning the gelongs would go about their respective tasks. Some would be copying puja or Dharma books, some were still learning by heart, the sewing men would be off to the sewing room to make brocaded robes for the images or

for special puja occasions. Jam Yung was the custodian of the Temple, and he would clean it out each day, set new flowers, and all the little bowls with water or clean the lamps. Zod-pa would do any carpentry required or make anything at all that might be needed. The kitchen staff would be mobilized along with the two cook-attendants, and old Dru-ba would sit in the sun drooling and mumbling to himself.

But the most important person in the gompa, apart from the Head Lama, was the manager-gelong, Rigdol, who alone handled money and had to do all the business that kept the monastery going. He was in close contact with villagers from all around; his position was very like that of a purser on a ship, and he fulfilled it in exactly the same way. For he kept a tight hold on everything, and doled out stores with obvious reluc-tance.

Puja, of course, plays a large part in the gelongs' lives. The Tibetan calendar is different from that in use throughout the rest of the world, and all pujas bear a relation to the position of the moon, unless one is specially requested by some individual who gives it. There are 108 different ones, all of which they know by heart, so Samten told me, and he began to write down for me a list of their names, but never finished it. Of these I was only familiar with one, the *Lama Chod-pa*, or *In praise of the Lama* (Guru) which Lama Lobzang always used with his small boys. Every night in Sarnath and again in Kashmir we had chanted our way through it, and it lasted nearly an hour. It might be as late as nine or ten at night before we started when we were in Kashmir, and little boys who have been running wild all day are naturally tired by that time; so also are Imji getsuls who have been up at five in the morning and sometimes not to bed till after midnight! But it was a heinous crime in Lama Lobzang's eyes to drop off to sleep in puja, and to prevent it he always armed himself with a belt removed from one of his charges and would slash out at anyone seen nodding, not even Imji getsul being immune. Hence it was with surprise that I found that in this disciplined monastery one could go to sleep with impunity, even when in sight of Kushok!

But here pujas were seldom held in the evening; mostly they took place in the morning or early afternoon. The torma would be made by gelongs, who would sometimes give rein to their

imagination and fashion all sorts of funny little figures out of the dough and then paint them with vegetable dyes.

Pujas might be musical, non-musical, or slightly musical. Those with no accompaniments were dry and uninspiring, for the Tibetan recites at a great speed which can only be called a gabble, and the distinguishing of words is quite impossible. The slightly musical pujas consisted of chanting each line on one note and then dropping a tone at the last syllable, and at the proper pauses there would be a burst from the trumpets, drum, and bells.

But those which were really stimulating were those with full musical accompaniment. Then not only the instruments already mentioned were used, but also horns like hunting horns, and conch shells and cymbals, both large and small. The drummer follows the cymbal player, and to my great delight I was frequently allowed to play the big drum, eventually alone when it was an occasion for a single one.

At nearly every puja two genyens or getsuls had to attend to serve the tea which seems to be an integral part of it. At frequent intervals, perhaps ten minutes apart, there is a cessation of chanting, and then we would leap up and make our rounds with the big tea kettles, which would generally serve for three rounds and then had to be taken down to the kitchen to be replenished. I could never conceive how the gelongs put away as much tea as they did. Not that there was any need for them to strain themselves in any way over the matter, for at the same intervals they could, if they desired, slip out; there was always a lavatory built near a temple for this very reason. But from their insistence on my drinking too it would seem to be regarded as a part of the puja, and my resistance to their demands did not meet with much approval. However, as I became more used to it and if it was not too salty, I slowly began to follow their example, for the servers might serve themselves as well.

Since Buddhist pujas have been much misunderstood by Western tourists, a diversion to explain some points connected with them may not be out of place.

Because the monk and the lay Buddhist makes his *chappals*, or triple obeisance, before the image of the Buddha, let no one imagine he is ignorantly worshipping the image himself. He no

more does this than does the Christian worshipper, who bows down before the cross, worship the wood or brass of which it is made. The sight of the image is intended to arouse in him the memory and feeling of the Buddha and His Message and the Ideal Monkhood, and it is this concept that he acknowledges by his obeisances. Nor in the chanting is there anything comparable to the begging prayers of the Christian and other religions. The Buddhist does not use prayers of that kind, for he knows they have no value. When it was reported in the press that prayers were being said for the Dalai Lama's safety at the time of his escape, the term was used mistakenly. Not prayers but pujas were held, a very different thing.

What then is the purpose of the puja? Here we come to the uniqueness of Tibetan Buddhism, since this concept does not hold in the pujas of the Southern countries, for it is a concept born of a traditional knowledge of the relation of mind and body and of the significance and use to which that knowledge can be put. There are not only verses chanted with a musical accompaniment in Tibetan puja. There are also the mysterious *mantras* and *mudras*. The first have been described as meaningless gibberish which is repeated *ad nauseam* by ignorant devotees, and the latter as fantastic hand-wavings practised by the 'lamas'. Neither is correct.

Of mantras that most familiar to most people is the *Om mani padme hum* as it is usually written — it should be written *Om ma ni padme hum* — and translated as 'Hail to the Jewel in the Lotus', despite the fact that mantras are not intended to convey meaning by their words and are essentially untranslatable.

Govinda, in chapter 3 of his book *Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism*,[1] deals very efficiently with the subject of mantras, and removes much misapprehension concerning them. His explanation appeals to the Western-educated man, for he maintains that it is the mind repeating the syllables that produces the effect, and not the mere repetition of sounds. 'But its repetition by a human medium would not have any effect if done by an ignorant person; though the intonation may be identical with that of a master' (p. 27). He dilates on this, insisting that the uninitiated can achieve nothing by repeating mantras, any more than there would be any effect from making

[1] By Anagarika Brahmacari Govinda, New York, Dutton, 1960.

a gramophone record of them. Admittedly this explanation has its appeal, and he says emphatically that 'mantras do not act on account of their own "magic" nature but only through the mind that experiences them'. But I found no agreement on the point from either Kushok or Rimpoche.

One evening Rimpoche was making me repeat a mantra as we walked round the gompa on a regular evening tour in which any who wished might join. I then put Govinda's point that the mere repetition was worth nothing unless there was a skilled mind behind it. Rimpoche shook his head impatiently at such stupidity, and Kushok said: 'With the mind it is *very* good, but just repeating it is also good.'

The theory is quite simple, and belongs to a science long forgotten in the West. Whereas the Westerner thinks in terms of physical vibrations, the theory of psychical vibrations is far beyond him. Yet on these do mantras depend, and the physical and the psychical cannot be separated. We all know of some sounds, that of chalk grinding on a blackboard for instance, that we say 'set our teeth on edge', but only now is the view coming to be held in a small circle of the medical profession that certain noises can affect our nervous systems adversely and so cause some illnesses, and concomitantly that other sounds of a harmonious nature can soothe and heal. Certainly it is likely that some of the fatal diseases of today, scarcely known a century ago, are caused by the appalling noise-vibrations that always surround the town-dweller and are even worse in the factory and in wartime. Ally this with the idea of their other aspect, the psychical vibrations, and then presumably the adverse or beneficial effect is translated to the field of the spirit. At all events 'miracles' have been known to result from the repetition of mantras by those skilled in their use — the initiated, as Govinda calls them.

Mantras in puja, then, are for the purpose of producing certain effects by the intonation of syllables framed for that purpose and not for their meaningfulness, so that attempts to translate them will always fail. The complementary feature to these are the mudras, or strange wavings of the hands while reciting certain words of the puja, movements which range from the most simple to the extremely complicated, and need much practice. Their purpose is to bring the body also into

play for the procuring of desired effects. These may be of two kinds. The more superficial ones are aligned to named concepts that can also be depicted pictorially, such as the picture of 'Kor-lo Rimpoche, Nor-bu Rimpoche, Tsun-po, Lon-po, Lung-Po, Ta-chog, and Mag-pon Rimpoches', that appear on every temple wall, and the more esoteric are symbolical of deeper concepts that can scarcely be portrayed in any other way. The significance of some of these is probably known only to the few 'initiated' ones, for they may plumb the depths of the knowledge that has been preserved through oral transmission alone. But, like everything else, they come to be made automatically and from mere imitation by many of the less highly trained gelongs. The mudras also incorporate the use of the bell and dorje, but these cannot be further gone into here. Govinda's book well analyses the symbolism of the dorje, as will be seen later.

The purpose of puja, then, is to procure certain effects by means of the interaction of body, mind, and speech, which includes musical sounds from the instruments, and this is the form that 'prayer' takes in Tibetan Buddhism. There is no asking for anything and no bewailing over sins. Man has to achieve his own salvation and that of all living beings. This is the central core of Buddhist teaching, and Tibetan Buddhism with its Tantric development is designed to help him procure it by using knowledge that has been hidden from the world in general down the ages and is still given only to those who have practised self-discipline and gone far in mastering their lower selves, and so are fit receptacles for it.

This, again, is why so much store is set on the Lama (Guru) — disciple relationship, for, it is maintained, without a Lama one cannot reach Enlightenment. Hence a whole temple is devoted to the Lama, personified, as far as the Gelug-pa or Yellow Hat Sect is concerned, in Tsong-kha-pa, their Founder and great Reformer. In this Temple, with three life-size figures of Tsong-kha-pa and his two disciples, the Lama Chod-pa puja is chanted twice monthly. Herein also lies the explanation of why so much store is set on reverencing one's own particular Guru or Lama, and why the Tulkus or Incarnate Lamas, those who incarnate to perpetuate this knowledge and to teach others, are held in such veneration. It may also explain to the sceptical Westerner

why some of them are so obviously much more developed spiritually than the common herd. For all men are certainly not born equal, but according to their achievements in a previous life in the search for self-conquest.

Nor is puja the same serious, solemn affair as a Christian church service. At the tea-drinking intervals there may be conversation, and if anything inadvertently happens that is funny they do not hesitate to laugh. This occurred one day in my first week at this very Lama Chod-pa puja. Not being certain yet of when to get up and serve tea, I was late on one occasion, and Gelong Zod-pa nudged me. I leapt up in a hurry and trod on the back of my skirt, and to save myself from falling over backwards, put out my hand against the wall behind me, not knowing that it was loose panelling that could be removed to enlarge the seating space when necessary. With a crash the panel fell out and myself with it half through the wall, and great was the merriment at my expense. But the laughter was so spontaneous and good-natured that I felt no embarrassment and joined in it. In those early days I was always doing something that amused my companions, not having been brought up to their ways and customs.

At pujas and mealtimes the monks were always seated according to seniority right and left in two rows facing each other. To serve one usually kept to the side on which was one's tea-kettle, unless one's partner was absent on any business, and then one must go to the side headed by the senior gelong before that headed by the second most senior. No one might lift his tea bowl or korré before Rimpoche, and Kushok would always watch carefully before he would touch his own. It was for doing this that Stobden had told me Kushok had once beaten a gelong in the puja. At a puja at Sankar gompa which I attended after leaving Rizong and at which Kushok Bakula presided, I was therefore shocked to see a gelong drinking first without waiting for the Head Lama of all. But Rizong was noted for its strictness even in these details, and how quickly is a habit of the 'done' and 'not done' variety formed!

In the temples the little bench tables in front of each place are also graded in height according to ranking, Rimpoche's being the tallest, and the rest working down. So at the pujas when taki was served, Rimpoche, as the most senior present,

would receive a pile of four, Kushok three, and the rest two, and the servers would try to get two if possible, and if not had to be content with one!

Since Kanzyur Rimpoche had once been Head Lama of Drespung Gompa, or rather of one of its two sections — for there were two Head Lamas concurrently — he naturally ranked far above Kushok, who had been one of his pupils. And despite the fact that Rimpoche had no connexion with Rizong, but merely lived there because he was in exile and his pupil had given him a home because of the Lama-disciple relationship, in every way he was given precedence, and Kushok Shas's humility in regard to him and the deference he paid the old man was an attractive feature of his character. It was obviously unaffected and the result of sincere feeling. When Rimpoche lectured in the Temple Kushok sat on the floor among his gelongs, raised by no more than a mat above them. Yet throughout the monastery there seemed to be a slight feeling of resentment that anyone should take precedence of our Head Lama, and from the kitchen, whenever it was possible, Kushok was given the best, provided it could be done without anyone noticing it. But then the Ladakhi gendun and the Tibetan are conscious of their individuality, and normally keep apart, although the form of their religion is identical.

When a monk was returning to or leaving the Gompa on any errand taking more than one day, he would seek out the assembled gendun, whether at puja or lunch, and walking between the rows would kneel between the two senior gelongs facing each other and bow to each side. Then, walking backwards to the end of the row, he would repeat the obeisance for the whole row, thus honouring the gendun as a whole, even though some of them would almost certainly be his juniors. The obeisance was always returned, the seated monks inclining forward in a bow of acknowledgement. This would have no parallel in the Hinayana sangha, where salutations meet with a stony stare, and no one would think of bowing to his junior.

The atmosphere of the Gompa as a whole was peaceful; there was little friction, and doubtless this attention to detail in the matter of form and good manners accounted largely for Rizong's reputation for strictness.

Discipline must start from the top, and our Head Lama

required nothing of his monks that he did not also require of himself. If he made a rule for them, such as not eating at night, he kept it too. If they handled no money, neither did he. All monetary offerings were handed over immediately to the gelong-manager. His robes, though better than others, were by no means luxurious, and were well worn except for the change he had for state occasions. Certainly he had better food, but it is doubtful whether that resulted from his orders. More likely it was his kitchen attendant's own decision, and also due to the little food offerings brought up especially for him by villagers from time to time. He had a great sense of humour and no great sense of his own importance, and minded not at all if I behaved in forthright Western fashion instead of in the less direct Eastern mode, or failed to use honorific terms through lack of knowledge of the language. The total result must have been that he was being spoken to as he had never been spoken to before, but he would throw back his head and laugh at something I said that was not meant to be funny. Nor did I ever see him angry, but Lama Lobzang assured me that when he was a youth he had a reputation for his outbursts at things he disapproved of, and had been known to beat the entire monastery at one time. This I could well believe, but I saw no evidence of it myself. At all events the gelongs and getsuls all held him in much respect and deep affection, as was plain to see, and showed no fear of him, although the other getsuls were inclined to be a little awe-struck when they had occasion to come to his room to make a request.

No, Rizong was a happy and well-disciplined monastery, and I was happy to have become a Rizong monk.

CHAPTER SIX

Visit to Hemis Shuba

'Lüngs, Tashi! Lüngs Lotus, Tshultim Dorje! Imji, lüngs, lüngs.' These words and a kick with a bare foot made me reluctantly turn over, and I grunted with pain as my right buttock met the hard floor through the thin pallet. Then I remembered. We were not at Rizong this morning, but at Hemis Shuba, a small annexe monastery of Rizong some four miles away over the northern mountain. And it was time to get up! At that moment burst forth the sounds of the Tibetan equivalent of Reveille, beginning with the braying of the long trumpets which rest on the ground and to blow which the trumpeters have to stand, and followed by an outburst from the smaller bugles. It must be four o'clock, and the air is much colder here than at Rizong.

Ever since my arrival two weeks before, rumours had been going around about this visit to Hemis. Naturally I had thought that the famous monastery of that name was intended, and no one was able to disillusion me. But the more famous one, I learned much later, was twenty-two miles south-east of Leh and housed some two hundred monks, while its Head Lama was in the hands of the Chinese, because though his mother was Tibetan his father was from China, and so they refused to release him, but put him to work to teach in one of their primary schools in Lhasa. Only the night before, however, had I finally learned that we were to leave the next day. No, bedding was not required, I was told; just take your washing things and puja books.

Breakfast was early that morning, but nothing could be done without the preliminary tea-drinking, so we went through our usual routine, and the kitchen seemed filled with gelongs coming and going. Then, to add to the crowd, in came half a dozen stalwart Ladakhi laymen who sat down and pulled out their tea-bowls and had to be served. What they were there for I did not know, but they seemed to be known to everyone else. At length, laden with what we could each carry of kitchen equipment, we were marshalled at the back entrance of the gompa.

Here was a startling sight to my unaccustomed eyes. The Ladakhi laymen had brought up horses, two dozen of them at least, so that everyone could be mounted for this expedition. I had imagined that the Principals, perhaps, would go on horseback, especially as Kushok's saddle had been out in the yard for some days with blankets and trappings. But it did not occur to me that even the kitchen staff would ride. But ride we did, even the two little genyens, who shared a pony. Only a few were left behind: old Dru-ba, Jam Yung, the warden of the Temple, and a getsul and Pugu Chung-Chung to look after them.

What followed might have been a scene from a film on 'Merrie England'. The procession was led by Gelong Zod-pa on a brown pony with a beribboned staff over his shoulder. Then came old Rimpoche on one of two white horses, gaily caparisoned and with yellow ribbons for reins. He was dressed in his best robes with the flat-brimmed yellow 'Chinese' — style hat and the embroidered felt boots of the Tibetans. Kushok followed on the second white horse, also in his best with a new toga, whose golden brocade gleamed from his right shoulder. He too had the Tibetan boots, but wore the 'geshé' hat, a long yellow brim in front and nothing much else, tied on with red ribbons. Both horses had brightly coloured rugs under the saddles.

The gendun mounted the better ponies according to seniority, but the harnessing became less and less pretentious. The saddles were made of wood, being frames only, with a mat thrown over them, and the stirrups were uncomfortably short. I sat my nag like a steeplechase jockey, and the leather straps cut into my bare shins. For everyone else had either

Ladakhi or Tibetan cloth boots which came up to the knees, as well as the 'lama' caps with their yellow peaks and turned up earflaps showing the bright red lining. Only Imji getsul had neither. And the new slipper shoes he had been given in Sarnath before leaving were to prove their worthlessness.

When all were mounted, — and it was quite immaterial whether you got on from the right side or the left, oddly enough, — the cavalcade set off in single file along a narrow track across the flank of the mountain on whose face the gompa was built. At first, while lining up, a few of the gelongs had wheeled their horses out and cantered a little way along the path and back again as if in sheer joy at being on horseback once more. Then we started off in order of seniority, but this was soon lost, as one horse would go faster than another, or someone dismounted to readjust the girths. And last of all came Imji getsul, not from any due sense of his own inferiority, but because his pony was allergic to exercise and he was excessively uncomfortable in so strained a posture, and glad that it would proceed only at a walking pace.

It was not wise to look down. On the right the slope of the mountain was peppered with razor-edged rocks and boulders against which the small stones bounced and rattled as they were tossed aside by the horses' hooves. If the horse slipped or one happened to fall off one would come to a sticky end, cut to pieces on those rocks. I looked up. Mountains seemed to be closing in on us on every side. 'Hills mount o'er hills and Alps on Alps arise.' The line from Pope came into my mind. They were great brown barren mountains, and this thin line of men, like ants, was moving across one of them, minute in comparison.

In places it seemed as if there was no track at all, and one wondered how the horses ever kept their feet on the loose earth. But where those in front had gone those behind could follow. At length it became so steep that with the exception of Rimpoche and Kushok, whose larger steeds could bear them up, we had all dismounted. It was now that my shoes began to give trouble, scraping my heels, and I took them off in order to keep up with the rest. We reached the mountain peak at last, breathless and sweating, and found Rimpoche seated on a boulder with Kushok standing beside him pointing to something in the distance below. Looking over the edge I saw a long

strip of green valley with trees and tiny houses, but far, far away apparently, at the foot of the mountain. A stream ran through it, and its speed could be judged by the visibility of its foam from so far.

Now all were on foot, even the Principals, for no horse with a weight on its back could negotiate that incline in safety. The gelongs, long accustomed to these mountain tracks, slithered and ran, jumping rocks and laughing in their freedom. Yshé Gompo led Rimpoche with Kushok close behind to add a helping hand if necessary, and after us the ponies were brought down slowly and carefully. Barefooted on the loose sand and gravel I managed to keep up with those in the middle, much to their amazement, for normally they themselves do not go without boots out of doors.

The valley was reached, and we were met by village youths and boys who had run out to join us. We remounted, now with our escort, who beat the reluctant ponies into a trot and then dashed off to tear up sticks of wild rhubarb and chew the pink stalks. Just outside the village stood the band of drums and pipes, and we entered to a fanfare. Women dressed in their best came to make obeisance to Rimpoche and Kushok, their curious headgear rattling as they tried to touch the ground with their foreheads. It consisted of a long reddish leather strip wider in front and tapering till it reached to the waist and studded with blue shells or stones and cameos. It is not a head-dress I have seen anywhere else in the world; the nearest approach is on ancient Greek pottery, where the women depicted have something similar. Perhaps they too are indebted for their fashions to that army of Alexander the Great!

A picnic was laid out in a grove where a small stream ran. We of the kitchen, of course, did not sit with the others to eat, but had to serve. I was still sufficiently new to things not to be certain what I should be doing, and there was still the tendency to make me sit down and be waited on like a 'sahib'. However I combatted that by taking a bowl of curds and following Tshultim Dorje down to the waiting gendun and doled it out successfully.

This apparently was only light refreshment, for we then adjourned to a Temple in the village, and puja began while we were driven into the kitchen, some to make and serve the tea,

some to start cooking the lunch. My place was behind a tea-kettle, but as I sat on the hard courtyard just outside the little Temple, for there was no room for everyone inside and some of the gelongs sat here as well, there was a commotion behind me, and looking round I saw a man being carried in, apparently in a state of spastic paralysis, unable to help himself. I was inevitably reminded of the gospel story of the man let down through the roof on his pallet, only this one came in through more orthodox channels.

I knew who he was, and had been expecting to have to go and see him, for Lama Lobzang had told me of his cousin who had fallen ill about four years before and been paralysed. He wanted me to examine him and see if there was anything that could be done. Forgetful of my kettle and duty I got up and went over to him. Squatting beside him, I introduced myself, and then began to examine the limbs to see how much movement there was in them. Language prevented me from getting any history. Both legs were drawn up and locked at the knees, and attempting to move them produced pain. The right arm was similarly locked at the elbow, but less rigidly, and the fingers distorted, but the left, though bent, could be moved painlessly through quite a reasonable range. The right could also be moved a little at the elbow. The muscles were utterly wasted. The patient seemed cheerful and I could not help feeling there was just something wrong about the set-up.

Why had he not practised hard moving his arms? If there was a little movement, it could be increased with working the arms. When a medical student I had seen a case of hysterical paralysis in a young woman whose left arm was bent and fixed. You could stick pins into it and she could not feel, while the hand was distorted into a claw shape. When told she must go into a home for incurables she recovered rapidly, although before that the paralysis had been spreading. I had a strong feeling that this was a similar case. Had the man had any family troubles at the time he became ill? Was he happily married? Was his business or work congenial or flourishing, or was he in financial difficulties, or hating his job, or what? Without the history one could not determine. At any rate the verdict was that there was nothing I could do or recommend. With the joints locked, physiotherapy would have little effect,

and in any case his family could not afford a prolonged stay in an Indian hospital. He seemed happy. That was the point which stuck out. I felt that he was content to be like that. (I discovered from Lama Lobzang after my return to Sarnath that his cousin's business had been in imminent danger of collapsing and himself in financial difficulties at the time of the onset of his illness, which tended to confirm the diagnosis.)

A group of Ladakhis had surrounded us when suddenly I remembered my tea-kettle. I looked round as the chanting was still in progress and saw all the gelongs who were seated outside gazing in my direction, while Kushok was craning his neck round the Temple door to see what they were all looking at. Hastily I returned to my seat behind the stove.

It was evening before we left the Temple and had to journey to Hemis gompa which lay outside the village. But apart from the cavalcade the day had been memorable for something else — I had been given a big glass of 'Lipton char'. I hope Messrs Brooke Bond won't take exception to the fact 'English' tea goes by the name of 'Lipton char' in Ladakh! At all events, since I had had none for a fortnight it was indeed welcome. The biggest loss of all was suddenly to be cut off from ordinary tea, for which the salty buttered variety was no substitute, and to be deprived of all sugar, for sugar they did not use. The only time we had any was at pujas such as these, and then its quantity would be microscopic.

The path to the gompa led up the bed of a stream and, shod or shoeless, walking was equally painful. I was with Tashi and Tshultim Dorje, who thereupon commandeered a saddled nag that a man was holding and told him to let me ride it to our destination. He did so, and led it himself at a walk up terrain that sometimes resembled a staircase. It was just rounding a bend when the saddle listed violently to starboard, and down I went, landing on a fortunately smooth boulder on my right buttock. This was the only part of me that was injured.

Preferring to walk now, I limped on, being overtaken by gelongs, better shod, until at length we reached the gompa. I was following the stream of people down some steps and along a passage when a hand, grasping my shoulder, pulled me back into a side room I had not noticed. It was the kitchen, and I had been in danger of going on with the gelongs to their upper

and more respectable quarters! The hand belonged to Gyatso, and it now gave me a shove in the direction of the stove and instructions were added to fetch the dong-mo and hold it to make the eternal tea.

The week that followed was sheer purgatory for us of the kitchen. We lived, worked, and slept in a smoke-filled room, the smoke arising from the cow-dung used to eke out the scanty wood supply, and our eyes and noses perpetually streamed. We would stagger out for a breath of fresh air, coughing and choking with the fumes down our lungs. I developed so bad a cough that I could not sleep at night, and finally moved out into the courtyard with Tashi and Gyatso, who were suffering in much the same way, but it was icy cold as night wore on. We were also supplied with sheepskin and woollen rugs which had long been the home of fleas and lice, who resented having to share their hereditary abode with strangers, and made up for it by the huge meals they took each night at our expense.

Not all the day, however, were we in the kitchen here. Sometimes we were in smoke-filled kitchens elsewhere, for each day puja was held in a different house in the village, and with the village band preceding we would troop in a long thin line up the ravines and across fields, Rimpoche and Kushok leading, Rimpoche often on his white horse to save him from overexertion, for his chest troubled him much. The whole week's puja was for the crops, to ensure a good harvest, and on the last day but one we toured the whole area, about eight miles. On this occasion Rimpoche was left behind, as it would have been too much for him, but Kushok strode out at the head and Imji getsul struggled along in the rear, for after the first two days my shoes broke down. It transpired that they had been made of cardboard with but a thin veneer of leather, and I finished the week barefooted once more, a source of wonder to the villagers, quite apart from having an Imji in their midst. But it was hard going.

On one of these days I managed to get a thorn in my foot. There were plenty of them about; indeed, I picked up three altogether, but only this one gave me trouble. Rigdol dug it out with a needle, but I decided this sort of activity must stop, and next morning I sought out Kushok shortly after dawn to ask

permission to stay back that day as I could not go walking barefooted over rocks and stones and thorns any more.

I had to wait until he had returned from the stream where he washed, and then I made the triple obeisance. On coming up the second time he suddenly said: 'Good morning,' a phrase he had but lately learned. I replied, 'Good morning, sir,' with a grin as I went down for the third time, and then made my request.

'It is only a short one today, it will be all right. It is easy,' was all the answer I got, and perforce I had to go. Although it seemed hard at the time, as it turned out it was a very good thing that he had taken a spartan attitude.

We crossed the river as usual to the village and found the house that was entertaining us for the day. All Ladakhi houses are built on the same lines, being square with mud and stone walls, a courtyard, and then a wooden ladder leading up to the living quarters, where also are the kitchen and the shrine room where pujas can be held or visitors welcomed. Everywhere the doors are low and pillars support ceilings, and from the pillars spread out ornamental blocks just at my head level, so that I was continually cracking my head during this stay at Hemis.

Today we had gone on ahead, and Kushok and Rimpoche were to follow after first paying a call at some other place. The tea was ready and the dinner cooking when I went up on to the flat roof with the Temple room built in one corner of it. Some gelongs were standing round talking and drinking tea, which Tashi and Tshultim Dorje were serving. My eye fell on someone sitting amongst the gelongs against the wall out of the sun. It was a familiar figure, old and shaky, his chin wet with saliva and a prayer wheel in front of him on the little table. Could it be? Yes, it was old Dru-ba whom we had left behind at Rizong! But how had he got there? I nudged Rigdol who was beside me.

'Dru-ba,' I said in a voice filled with wonder. Rigdol nodded casually.

'But how on earth did he get here? Did he ride?' I asked.

'Walked,' said Rigdol, making the appropriate motions with his hands.

Walked! Old tottering Dru-ba with his long staff and prayer

wheel, his spare robe on his back, had climbed over that steep mountain! It was incredible! But there he was; there was no denying it.

Amid a blast from the bugles and trumpets Rimpoche and Kushok arrived and puja began, those who could not get into the little room sitting outside.

I was seated on the floor behind my tea-kettle and we were half-way through, when three policemen entered, one in khaki, and two in dhotis and Moslem caps. The one in khaki went up the Principals' seats and made the triple obeisance to them; the two Moslems stood looking uncomfortable at the back of the room. He said something, and then came back and beckoned me to come out with them. Mystified I followed, and then learned that my permit had expired because it had initially been made out for thirty days only, owing to a muddle in the office. I had immediately applied for a renewal and, having heard nothing, had forgotten all about it. Now they had instructions that I was to return to Srinagar.

'No,' I said, 'I go to Rizong tomorrow.'

'Then come back with us to Leh and see the Superintendent,' one urged.

'No,' I repeated. 'I go to Rizong and to Rizong alone. I have no money. Kushok Bakula paid my fare and will pay the fare back when he wants me to leave. He has wired to say he has applied to Delhi for an extension, and I have that wire at Rizong.'

They were a bit nonplussed, not having expected a definite refusal, but as yet I had hardly been in residence three weeks, and I was not going to be winkled out like this. Besides, without money how could I go? It was this point that carried most weight. So in the end we compromised by my writing a letter to the Superintendent at Leh explaining the situation. It took a long time before a piece of paper could be discovered in the village, but at last I was free to return to my kettle, which had been taken over meanwhile by Tashi.

Great had been the interest and speculation during my absence, and many were the signs the chanting gelongs made, suggesting that I was to be taken handcuffed away, and they were wondering what awful crime had I committed. Had Kushok granted my request to be allowed to stay behind at

Hemis when everyone else was away, the police would inevitably have had their suspicions aroused, for there was a deadly fear of spies, so that I was glad then that he had refused it.

Every day at four o'clock Reveille sounded, and often we were not in bed before midnight. Yet oddly enough, short hours of sleep did not worry me at any time during my stay in Ladakh. The kitchen was always full of laymen who came up to help and to drink tea and eat the tupa we made till late at night. The Ladakhi man is dressed monotonously in a long wool dressing-gown type of coat, *au naturel* in colour, with trousers to match. It is bound round the waist by a coloured band, usually blue, sometimes red. He has a Western shirt, once white, now black and thickened by grease, for he wears it day and night until it is time to have a new one. His head is shaved in front and on top, and at the back the hair is allowed to grow long and is plaited, the length being artificially added to by horsehair which brings the plait down to his thighs. He has ear-rings, necklaces, bracelets and rings, and yet manages to look virile. Some grow little beards; nearly all have moustaches. They are cheerful and good-natured and live a hard uncomfortable life, yet not aware that it is hard or uncomfortable, for they know no other.

The women, in addition to the headgear already described, have a similar dressing-gown type of dress, dark red for the younger ones and black for the older. On their wrists are bracelets of cut conch shells which they click together when bowing, to show respect. Some wear the Ladakhi hat instead of the 'Grecian' headgear. These hats are worn by both sexes and at all ages, from the smallest boy baby to the oldest woman. The odd feature about them is that the brim is cut away in front and then turns up at the sides into points. The crown is almost square and stiff like a top-hat. It is usually in black corduroy with red lining.

One evening we had returned from a long day and I had decided to turn in early, despite the crowd talking in the kitchen, so I put my bed out on the floor when Rigdol remarked that we were going out again. Out again! What a blow! All day we had walked and worked, and in pitch darkness we were to go out again in a village where there was no street lighting because there were no streets to light!

Lagging behind because of the shoe situation, Gyatso waited for me, and we stumbled along over the rocky ground, climbing walls that were made of loose stones, until we reached what seemed to be the centre of the village. Into a house we went, up a long ladder, and emerged into a brilliantly lit room, so that I blinked and could see nothing but some gelongs sitting on the floor just in front of me. I turned aside, not knowing where to go, and Tashi leaped up, seized my arm, and pulled me down beside him. Disgruntled at having been dragged out to what I thought was another puja, and tired after a long day, I nodded off, the lamp from a gas-mantled Hurricane lamp still blinding me. The ringing of a bell roused me, and blinking I saw a stage in front of us on which the curtain had just risen, and on it were strange figures, some in animal masks. I now looked round and found we were apparently in a kind of theatre. Behind us where we sat was a wall, and from it rose tiered seats, as in a cinema. On the right of our room was another little room without a front, facing towards the stage, which seemed to be a 'box' where Kushok, Dam Chhös, and a few other senior gelongs were sitting. There was no roof and massed heads hung over the side walls. So there was a Local Dramatic Society!

The play being in Ladakhi I could not follow the words, but it appeared to be about the conquest of the Bön religion in Tibet by the early Buddhist missionaries from India. That is only a guess; it might have been about anything else. All the cast was male, mostly children and youths, and there was only one adult, who was also producer and prompter. He took the part of the victorious missionary. But the outstanding actor was a boy of about fourteen, who had injured his foot and had to act sitting down except for the moment when he killed the wicked Bön priest, when he stood on one foot and hopped forward with his sword upraised. He was a natural comedian and actor, and obviously gagged freely with the audience, to its huge delight, for he kept it and his fellow actors in fits of laughter. After the show was over Kushok called him down to give him a reward, and he hopped up to the box on the stick he had used throughout. Given proper training he would make his name in the world of the stage.

Returning to the gompa by the light of half a moon without

shoes was another ordeal, but at last we arrived and I thought of my well-stocked bed. But no! first we had to chop the radishes for the morning's tupa, as we did every night. The only consolation about this was that in virtual darkness, one could eat them while we chopped, and no one would see us breaking the rule of the monastery about not eating at night. Bed came after midnight, and Reveille sounded again at four o'clock next morning.

That afternoon there was a *chang* party, chang being the mild barley beer. It was naturally a layman's party, for monks may not take alcohol in any form. They sat down outside the gompa about a hundred strong, and were served by boys, while their womenfolk looked down over the wall on the path above. Then they began to dance; first a women's dance and then the men's. To my untutored eye both seemed exactly the same, and equally uninspiring. Slow tiny steps were taken with little hand movements by the dancers, who paraded in single file moving round in a circle. The rhythm was quite good, but the slowness and lack of motion made it dull and uninteresting. As the chang flowed, drunk in the same way as tea so that the bowl should never be empty, some of the men began to show signs of becoming frisky, and here and there one would leap up and start a more vigorous dance on his own, only to have his arm firmly seized by his eldest son and be led away home unprotesting to sleep it off.

All this week, apart from the troubles of shoes, fleas, and smoke, I had to cope with Tashi. He was a good lad and efficient, but unfortunately he was under the delusion that he was indispensable. Serving tea and meals seemed to be the most prized of all the daily chores, and there was considerable rivalry to secure the tea-kettles or plates, if Gyatso had not actually allotted them, as eventually he took to doing. Even I was infected by this feeling, so that Tashi's annoying habit of trying to take one's kettle or plates out of one's hand and go off with them had to be restrained. He did it with everyone, but more with me, as at first I showed little resistance, being under the impression that he was a getsul and therefore senior to me.

But one of the gelongs told me that the three boys were only genyens, and that I should beat them if they annoyed me. This seemed to be going too far, but when he would try to take the

plates I had brought laboriously up or down ladders from the kitchen to serve them I would bring my knee up straight into his stern, as a sign that he should mind his own business and go to fetch his own.

Then one afternoon I had been allotted a tea-kettle by Gyatso for the puja and was sitting about three yards away on a piece of matting, always finding the hard floor painful on my ankle bones. Tshultim Dorje sat immediately behind his on the other side of the room. Tashi came in and looked round, then sat himself down beside my kettle on its stove. Puja was in progress, and Kushok looked up and I caught the thought that flashed into his mind: 'I wonder if Imji getsul will take that lying down.' I rose and in two strides came behind Tashi, lifted him still sitting cross-legged, and slung him towards the door. He landed on his feet and skipped out with a grin. I went back and sat down just behind my kettle, hard floor or no hard floor. Then at the sounds of disturbance in the chanting I looked up and saw Kushok, his hands on top of his bowed head, shaking with laughter and all the gelongs hard put to it to continue the puja. Their sympathies were with me, as they had seen the struggle that there had been over the past few days and how Tashi had sometimes pushed one of the other boys out in order to take over.

On the fifth day, after the normal morning routine of puja with lunch, the company adjourned to a large field where all the villagers and many from neighbouring villages had gathered, so that there must have been several hundred people present. A semi-enclosure had been rigged up, with a kind of throne for Rimpoche, who was to preach a sermon. Kushok sat on the ground on a mat in front of him with his gelongs, but scarcely raised above them, although he had his little table for bell and dorje. All the musical instruments we had brought with us were out and the puja began.

Unfortunately the sermon was long, though not by Tibetan standards, but few Ladakhi villagers could understand Rimpoche's Lhasa accent or his classical phrases, and soon there was a considerable amount of fidgeting and disturbance on the periphery of the crowd, and a few of the gelongs scattered round to try to keep order. My own efforts merely caused more merriment, unfortunately, for no one could understand what I

said, so they laughed uproariously and I retired again to my seat on the edge behind the throne.

I came into my own shortly, however, for after the sermon every person present would go up to Rimpoche and bow before him and receive one of those bits of ribbon on their necks which showed that they had been to the Guru. At Sarnath I had had much practice in coping with such crowds, for during the Dalai Lama's visit the relics of the Buddha (two minute pieces of bone dug up by a British archaeologist) and considered by Western experts to be probably genuine, hundreds of Tibetan pilgrims would surge forward as they appeared, as if each was afraid he might not see them if he did not push to the front. Babies in arms and aged people were endangered by this stupidity, and the crowd had to be controlled by force, making a single file and not allowing anyone past the barrier until there was space in front of it. The barrier, too, had to be held in place, or it would have been swept away.

It was the same on this day. The moment the signal was given that they might come forward, the whole congregation leapt to its feet and there was a tidal wave of humanity, pushing, shoving, trampling, all quite unnecessarily. Zod-pa had his beribboned staff which he and a Ladakhi layman held to form the barrier, trying to raise it to allow just a few to pass and having it torn from their grasp. I came up alongside him and with another stout Ladakhi we joined hands across the path to form a second barrier behind the staff, and when babies or old people were coming we kept everyone else back until they were safely through.

Meanwhile the puja continued, led by Kushok. Suddenly above the murmur of the chanting, half-drowned by the noise of the crowd, an English voice rang out in a cry of pain: 'Oi, get off my bloody toes!' In the anguish of the moment, with a pair of army boots, iron heeled, trampling on my bare feet, I forgot my robes and decorum and reverted badly. After a shove had sent the delinquent off, two toes were indeed bloody. Fortunately no one could have understood what I had said!

A final entertainment was arranged for us the next evening in the shape of a variety show, and I found myself sitting next the boy who had won my admiration on the stage a few nights

before. Wondering if his lameness was permanent or an accident, I asked him in Hindi, and discovered that the day before the play he had twisted his ankle badly, but that it was getting better.

The variety show was a mild affair. Some youths opened with another of those slow dances which seemed to me to be all the same but doubtless were not. Once again it was an all-male affair except for one item, a song by a woman, but since it would be immodest for her to appear blatantly on the stage, she sat on the edge of the door, well screened by children, so that she could not be visible except to those, like myself, who sat along the side opposite her. There she sang her song in a very high soprano and as if she was intensely self-conscious, as she probably was. A few more dances followed, but there was no funny act. The whole was short, and we were soon able to leave.

Next day, joy of joys, we were due to return to Rizong, out of that dung-smoke, the incessant chattering, no privacy, and the bare-footed walking. We could not leave early enough for me, so I set out with the kettle I had been given to carry, full of gladness, only to find that first we had to stop at yet another house for a puja. Indeed, it was 4 p.m. before we finally bade our farewells, and were escorted to the edge of the valley by the villagers, and their band.

There seemed to be fewer horses than when coming, and old Dru-ba had to be mounted, so the junior members of the party set off on foot over the mountain. Because of my shoelessness — I had thrown them away by now — I was allowed a horse, once again with short stirrups and little between the wooden saddle and myself.

We did not go back over the mountain — the climb would have been too much for Rimpoche; but we followed instead the watercourse that wound round its base. It was a picturesque ride, and I began to imagine myself in one of those Western films that showed similar terrain, but I was no cowboy, and a Ladakhi had to show me how to hold on to the rear girths that went under the horse's tail, to keep on while it went down a very steep incline made solidly of rocks. This horse had a predilection for going as close to a boulder as he could, so that I had to whip one leg out of the stirrup and hoist it up to avoid

being scraped by the rough surface. We splashed through the river, crossing and recrossing it, and thorn bushes caressed my bare legs in passing, so that I soon became a mass of scratches. How I envied those felt boots all the others had! Old Dru-ba rode in front of me, his right leg twisted in curious fashion so that the toe pointed under the horse's belly, his long staff held across his body rising and falling as he swayed from side to side, dozing his way home so that I was reminded of a tight-rope walker who kept his balance by the same means. He was listing heavily to port and I was in constant fear of his falling off, but somehow, inexplicably, he stayed on and saw nothing of the scenery. But this might have been the way he came, thus avoiding the mountain climb.

It was a longer route, but we were going home at last! Nothing else mattered. We reached the bend where I went to bathe daily, and there some of the nuns from their gompa had come to greet us with pots of incense burning. Up the winding path, and we had reached the chörten archway and dismounted, all except old Rimpoche, when a burst of music came from the upper parapet; the musicians having raced on ahead were waiting to greet Kushok on his return to his monastery. He walked with the rest, all taking the long route to the upper quarters except ourselves, who short-cut through the stable to the kitchen, immediately to start making tea to refresh those tired after a hard journey. The week of purgatory was over. The kitchen looked happily familiar in its blackness and brass wear. Pugu Chung-Chung's face beamed a rosy welcome. It was a true homecoming!

CHAPTER SEVEN

With the 'Rain-Making Lamas'

'Tomorrow going Yon Tan,' announced Kushok Shas during an English lesson in which I was trying to impart the present, past, and future tenses in terms of today, yesterday, and tomorrow. My heart was immediately filled with misgivings. Was this to be another Hemis?

We had been back only two days, but much had happened in that time. I had had my only *contretemps* with my schoolmaster, Gelong Samten, over a sick Tashi, Kushok Bakula had paid a flying visit for one night, four Tibetan geshés had arrived to stay, and old Kanzyur Rimpoche had had a slight heart attack.

The day after our return the entire gompa had gone down to the river for a much-needed bathe, for we had brought back in our clothes a good supply of Hemis's livestock, and it would be as well to wash them. During the morning there was a short puja at the nunnery in which Tashi was, oddly enough, nowhere to be seen, nor did he appear to help serve the lunch, which for him was most unusual. Shortly after I found him lying on the ground clutching his head, with an empty fruit basket beside him. His symptoms suggested the same sort of bilious attack I had suffered from at Sankar, and he had probably drunk too much tea, more buttered than usual, while at Hemis Shuba. I told him to go back to Rizong and I

would give him some medicine. At that moment Gelong Samten and another gelong came up and were strangely unsympathetic, imagining that Tashi was malingering, which, from the very nature of the boy, was most unlikely.

'He's sick and I'm taking him back to Rizong,' I said.

'He's supposed to be fetching vegetables,' Samten replied, indicating the empty basket. 'He just wants to sleep.' The injustice of this annoyed me.

'He's not fetching vegetables or anything else,' I said in tones one should not use to one's gelong school-master. 'He's going back to Rizong to bed. When he is all right he works very hard. Today he is ill. He is not going to work.' My professional instincts were thoroughly aroused.

I pulled Tashi up by the hand, made him wash his black face in the stream, and began to lead him away. Then Samten said something I did not understand, and at that moment Tashi conveniently elected to be sick. This settled it, and there was no more opposition to my taking him off. But apparently the affair was reported to Kushok, for next day he asked me about it. When I told him Tashi had vomited five times between the nunnery and the gompa he said no more. And from that day Tashi ceased to be in any way a trouble to me.

On the following afternoon word came that Kushok Bakula was on his way. A Ladakhi runner had come up with the news that he had reached Saspola and would be with us before evening. Musicians were stationed on the upper parapet to give him a welcome when he came in sight, and meanwhile we made our usual circumambulation of the gompa, Rimpoche, Kushok, and a few of us who had joined on.

I had hung back to shake a stone out of my sandal, one of the dilapidated pair I had left behind when we went to Hemis, and then I saw a rider on a white horse being led up the mountain path. My exclamation caused Kushok to look back and then down in the direction I was pointing. At once he started at a run towards his room to collect the white scarf or *katag* with which the distinguished visitor must be welcomed, and Rimpoche and his attendant went on alone to finish their round and then to retire to their own room where Kushok Bakula, one-time pupil at Drespung, would pay his respects to that monastery's ex-Head Lama.

At that moment the trumpets burst forth as the watchers on the wall also saw the horse and rider. Gelongs poured forth from their cells and ran down the hill to be at the chörten archway when Kushok Bakula dismounted there, and I was among them, for it would be a great pleasure to see him again after I had stayed two months at his house in Kashmir and was indebted to him for my present position. When we met him he had already dismounted and was beginning the final steep climb. We made the robe-doffing sweeping bow, this not being the time or place for the triple obeisance, which would come later.

'Hallo, Jivaka!' he said. 'Hallo' is habitually used in India for the telephone, despite the aim to abolish the English language, but apart from this he had also acquired a number of common phrases, and he spoke Hindi fluently.

We walked up with him, and Kushok Shas greeted his uncle and Head Lama at the foot of the gompa, bowing to the waist and offering the katag with his tongue out in token of respect. 'Putting the tongue out' is a misleading description, for the act is one which in no way resembles that of either the cheeky small boy or the patient with his doctor. The mouth is half opened, with the tongue lying on the lower lip. It is a polite gesture indicating a feeling of respect that can be made as often as one likes in conversation with one's superiors, and is a common practice from the highest to the lowest. Kushok Bakula would use it himself in the presence of the Dalai Lama, who would pay the same tribute to his Guru.

In a short time Kushok Bakula was installed in Kushok Shas's room on the high seat, while his nephew sat on the low mat on the floor. Then we all trooped in to pay our respects, and later in the evening I had an opportunity of a short talk with him. I told him about the visit of the police, and he promised to see the Superintendent at Leh in two days' time and to wire to Delhi for confirmation of the extension he had already applied for.

He was away again early next morning, and we all escorted him as far as the chörten archway, where everybody bowed to the ground in front of him, for he is as much loved as he is deeply respected by his own people and wherever he goes.

'Good-bye, Jivaka,' he said, with a smile even as he had

greeted me. I was sad to see him go so soon, for in the short time I had known him I too had grown to love him.

A few days later there arrived from Sankar gompa, where they had been staying, four Tibetan geshés who had escaped from Drespung in Lochas Rimpoche's party. They had come to study from the books in our library, and spent all the day-time learning by heart in the sewing room which had been given over to them. A geshé is equivalent to a Master of Arts in philosophy of the older Universities, in so far as one can compare Tibetan with Western forms of education. The examination can be taken by getsul or gelong, and some few achieve it by the age of sixteen. There is a week of oral questioning, for examinations in Tibet never are and never have been written, paper being precious and the written religious script being regarded as sacred so that it can never be destroyed.

Kushok Shas, who had had no one except his Guru, Rimpoche, to talk to on his own level of education, welcomed their arrival, and spent nearly all his time with them, also beginning to learn by heart again from weighty tomes and to discuss doctrinal or philosophical points. He would sit on the floor of their room and did not seek to be raised above them, and they learned and laughed together as equals.

One evening they indulged in that favourite pastime of Tibetan Lamas, the philosophical disputation, at which Kushok first presided and then the youngest geshé was made to be the antagonist while he was battered with questions by his colleagues in turn. In these disputes, which are regarded as a kind of sport, great excitement can be aroused, and on this occasion the protagonist, who seemed to be defeating his opponent, was jumping round the room, his robe wound round his wrist, his foot going up into the air as he smacked his right hand down into his left, the typical method of putting the question, which seems as if the inquisitor was saying: 'There, answer that if you can!' But it differs from a Western debate when a recognized learned Lama is in the chair, for then his opponent starts by making obeisance to him, suggesting a lack of equality between the antagonists which is alien to Western notions of debating rules, in which only the result of the debate determines which is the superior in knowledge and quick-wittedness. On this occasion, however, the two were in a state

of equality, and the young geshé was getting much the worst of it, his opponent, as key question after key question came out, almost smacking the other's face in his excitement, so close to him did he go. I would have given much to have been able to follow the argument.

It was a few evenings later that I was just coming down the steps from my room into the kitchen courtyard when I met old Rimpoche on his evening amble with only Yshé Gompo in attendance. Since the arrival of the geshés Kushok had given up going, and stayed with them instead. Rimpoche was leaning on a long branch of firewood, and the walk was obviously costing him an effort. I asked Yshé Gompo if he was all right, and he told me that during the afternoon Rimpoche, while sitting in his room, had suddenly felt dizzy and then fallen over sideways. Yshé Gompo had felt his pulse at the time and found it was racing. After a minute or two he had recovered, but he still did not feel very well.

I took him to my room and listened to his heart, as my stethoscope was one of the things I had brought with me, together with a small roll of minor surgical instruments and the tin box for first-aid equipment Lama Lobzang had given me. But up to now there had been no call for my services.

By now his heart was at its usual slow regular rate and there was nothing to discern, only to conclude that he must have had a slight heart attack, so I warned him unavailingly against going on these unnecessary evening walks which entailed quite an uphill struggle on each of the three rounds of the gompa he was wont to make.

During the next few days the name Yon Tan was being frequently tossed about the kitchen. Getsuls and genyens would disappear for the better part of the day, and then when they came back they would say they had been to Yon Tan. Yon Tan, it appeared, was a village somewhere within walking distance. No more could I discover about it. And now here was Kushok saying 'Tomorrow going Yon Tan!' Another week of pujas, much walking and incessant tea-making in smoke filled kitchens, I thought!

But it was not, as it turned out, in the least like our visit to Hemis Shuba. The next morning I was told to take the huge ladle and go, with my little bag of towel, soap, and my puja

books. Already some gelongs had been seen going down the hill towards the stream, so apparently we were not to travel on horseback. I set off alone, and on reaching the point where our path met the main track that would lead to the Leh road I had to wait for someone to come, as I did not know which way to go. In company with a gelong, therefore, we turned left along the path on which we had come back from Hemis and continued until we reached another of the apricot orchards for which Rizong is so famous. There we found all those who had gone on ahead picking up the fallen fruit and refreshing themselves with it, and we joined the happy picnic.

With robes and caps full of fruit we then went on along the valley beside the stream, until after about two miles we turned off up the side of the mountain and finally reached the village of Yon Tan, a tiny affair built on a plateau, all the houses joined together or side by side to form a square in the middle of which was a small temple, marked out by its prayer flags. The whole could hardly have been a quarter of a mile long.

In all only a dozen gelongs had come, with three of the kitchen staff, myself and the two who had been left behind before, Pugu Chung-Chung and Getsul Lotus.

Apart from myself, Getsul Lotus was the only getsul left since the ordination of the others. He was a highly strung youth with a nervous laugh and an expression suggesting either continual pain or discontent. The possible cause had come to light one evening when, during Kushok's English lesson in his courtyard, Lotus, with gelong Zod-pa in moral support, had come up to make a request. He made his obeisances as far away as possible and then, urged on by the gelong, approached diffidently and knelt at Kushok's feet, his robe over his mouth, and asked him something in Ladakhi I could not understand. Kushok indicated me, so he rose, and walking round the pillar that separated us he again knelt and repeated what he had said. Once more I could make nothing of it, so then he asked for the key of my room and disappeared to return in a few minutes with my stethoscope. This must have been almost the first time a doctor has had a patient go down on his knees to him to ask for an examination!

Suitably embarrassed, I listened in to his chest and found a patch on the left lung with crepitations and 'stickiness'. There

was a strong suspicion of a tubercular lesion. Kushok then listened and decided that both sides were not the same, for the right was normal. There the matter rested, for what could one do about it? I had no suitable medicines with me, and the nearest suitable hospital was in Kashmir.

A few days later I had gone up to the Temple for the Pratimoksha ceremony and had found Lotus waiting outside for the doors to open, a smear of blood down his cheek, pale and violently trembling. I asked him what was the matter, and he said he had just coughed up a blob of blood but was now all right again. Later I reported this to Kushok, but since my dictionary did not give the word for 'tuberculosis', I did not make much headway. In any case there was no money to send a getsul to Kashmir by air and then maintain him in hospital there for a long period. A getsul had to be tough. He must either master the disease himself or start again in a new life after leaving so unsatisfactory a body. Medicines might be procurable through Kushok Bakula, but it would be some time before they would come, even if they were not stolen on the complicated journey they had to make. Meanwhile Lotus would continue to be a kitchen worker and no one but myself would know the dangers of infection from an open tubercular chest, by a cook who blew on boiling pots and coughed over the food and utensils.

I was interested to know how Lotus had come to receive his name, the Tibetan for the word being Pad-ma (pronounced Pad-ma in Ladakhi and Pé-ma in Tibetan) but when I asked Gelong Gyatso why Lotus had been given an English name he had replied indignantly: 'It's not English, it's Ladakhi!' After that there seemed to be no more to be said.[1]

Getsul Lotus, Pugu Chung-Chung, and myself were directed to the kitchen of the nunnery; this time a cleaner place and much more free from smoke. Here we were to cook for two days and then go daily to a different house where the food would be supplied by the owner, but our tasks changed not at all wherever we might be. It was the same routine, up before dawn, but

[1] It transpired that the mystery of the Ladakhi getsul with the apparently English name of Lotus was due to a mishearing. His name was actually Lo-trus, which means 'of good intelligence'. How easy it is to jump to wrong conclusions based on misunderstanding!

with no Reveille here, early morning tea to the temple where the gelongs would be already at their puja, breakfast of tupa — no change from the boiled radishes, which seemed to be ubiquitous — more tea, taki with butter and perhaps a few grains of sugar, lunch of vegetables with either rice, if the householder was wealthy enough, or thin taki if not, a break of two hours for a walk or wash in the stream, and then more tea and puja till after dark.

Lotus became the cook-in-chief, with Pugu and myself serving. The moment we arrived we started to make the tea while the gelongs adjourned to the Temple. Neither Kushok nor Rimpoche had accompanied us. The gelongs had brought with them many huge Tibetan books, which had been slung on their backs on the journey, and these were now piled on a shelf. When I came in for the first time with my tea-kettle I found them all, instead of doing the usual puja, reading out aloud at a fast gabble. As soon as each had finished his allotment Pugu or I would have to collect the sheets, about a dozen of them from each, and hand them to Gelong Namgyal who was distributing them. Then when all were in another set would be handed round, and so on until the book was finished, when another would be started.

In these intervals of collecting and waiting for the slower ones to finish we would replenish the tea bowls and later we, too, were to be given one sheet each, as suited to the slowness of our reading, and we would join in, no matter that our pronunciations of difficult words might be all awry or that we read uncomprehendingly.

When we left Rizong the sky was a brilliant blue, with only here and there a little fleecy white cloud going about its proper business up in the air. The gelongs started about half-past nine, for we had set out very early, and by lunch-time the sky was overcast and a cold wind had sprung up. As the evening wore on this rose to gale force and whistled through the thatched roofs and slammed inadequately shut doors and windows. I was cold in my thin robes. Then the thunder sounded above the noise of the reading, and lightning flashed lighting up the darkening temple room which by now was lit only by two oil lamps, hardly enough for them to see to read by.

I caught Zod-pa's eye and pointed to the window to indicate

my surprise at this sudden storm, for it had not rained or even looked like rain for five weeks.

'We read and the rain comes,' said Zod-pa, stopping long enough to speak, and resuming as if he had not broken off.

'Rain-making lamas': the phrase came out of the past to me. Somewhere, many years before, I had read of rain-making lamas. Could I really be among them, engaged in making rain? It seemed fantastic. There are some things you read of in books but never think could happen to you. Surely this was one of them? I looked down at my dress; yes, the red robes of the 'lama' were on me, and all around were 'lamas' seated cross-legged on the floor, gabbling, gabbling. It was not a dream. Perhaps I had misunderstood.

But careful probing and checking up, finally with Kushok on our return, all told the same story. We had come, not for a direct harvest puja as at Hemis, but on a rain-making expedition, unbelievable though it was. Admittedly, when first I had arrived at Sankar gompa, I had found that my friend Lochas Rimpoche was engaged in the same activity, and, indeed, it had rained for the next twenty-four hours, most unusually. But I had taken it with a grain of salt, for I felt such a claim would require to be tested over several instances in weeks when there was no rain, before it would within reason be proved statistically.

The reading for the day being finished, we went out into the court and shivered as the wind whipped around us. Heavy black clouds could still be seen in the fading light massed all around, and now rain was falling, though not a great deal, as if we were on the outskirts of the storm.

We had been told not to sleep in the kitchen, as we should be badly tormented by fleas, and we were pleased to be allowed to share with the gelongs the partially covered court, cold though it was.

Next morning the sun came out, but there were thick white clouds all around the periphery, and signs of heavy rain over the Indian range. Puja started before breakfast, the tupa being served by Pugu Chung-Chung, since I could not be trusted with it, for, try as I would, more tupa would go on the floor than into the tiny bowls, which had to be refilled many times.

Then once again we were behind the tea-kettles for the tea

which would be served all day as long as the puja lasted. During the morning Gelongs Samten and Rigdol joined us, for they had both been down in Saspola the day before when we had left Rizong. They told us that it had deluged at Saspola that afternoon and continued all night. Samten now took over the distributing of the books, he being the chief authority on puja form and ceremony among the monks. And he it was who insisted on the two tea servers joining in, so that Pugu's piping voice and my appalling accent could be heard among the authentic reading.

Each day the weather took the same course. The morning started fine, and by eleven o'clock the sky would be overcast and it would be raining somewhere near. Actually at Yon Tan it only rained twice more and then there were two great thunderstorms, but the rivers were now coursing freely down the mountain sides and the welfare of the crops would be ensured, and that was what we had come for.

On the day of the second thunderstorm Lotus and I were having a belated lunch in the kitchen of the house which was entertaining us when the rain came down and the thatched roof proved inadequate shelter. As it came in we moved from place to place on the floor, trying to keep dry and snatching a few mouthfuls before we had to move again, for we had no change of robes if these got wet. The family did not seem to mind; they had wanted rain and now they were having rain. What matter if it came into the room? It was the crops that were all-important! The two-year-old girl child, with the epigastric hernia, who had been running round stark naked, however, took a different view, and howled until a coat was put on her and her mother cuddled her to her breast. But there was no one to cuddle us, and after the last mouthful had been swallowed we left and ran to the shelter of the temple, which was at least solidly built.

One afternoon, sitting in the village square before the temple, during the lunch break, Samten told me that a star was going to move across the sky that night. The date was 17 August, if my home-made calendar was correct, for here they use the Tibetan calendar which bears no relation to any in any other part of the world, except, perhaps, the Chinese. I could make little of what he was trying to say, as he spoke Ladakhi,

but he was quite certain that the star would move across the sky that night.

I took the opportunity of his leisure to question him about the method of rain-making, for the odd pages that I had read, although I could only vaguely understand them, concerned the Doctrine of the Void and had nothing to do with the weather. The Doctrine of the Void is a much maligned metaphysical theory, unjustly criticized by Western writers who have failed to understand it and set store by the words employed. 'Void' is a misnomer, but there is no other word that can be better used. Actually this theory is the very peak of metaphysics, Western or Eastern. It goes so deep that it surpasses the ability of words to do justice to it. The *Bum-ba Nga-ba*, a volume of a thousand pages, is devoted to it, and it was from this that we were reading that day.

He told me that there was one set of books for making rain and another for stopping deluges, but that neither had anything to do with the weather. Gelong Nor-phel, coming up then, added that twenty years ago a British Commission had sat to investigate the claims of the Rain-making Lamas and had found them substantiated, but had been unable to decide how the phenomenon occurred. Perhaps it had been a newspaper report about this that I had once read, for somewhere I had heard of them before.

My own view, for what it is worth, is as follows. The undeniable effect is produced by the concentrative ability of the gelongs, which is aided by reading, in their minds all the time being the thought that they are there for the purpose of making rain. The sound of the words can have little to do with it when everyone is reading something different and at different speeds, and the book on the Void was not originally written for the purpose of making rain, but was one of Tsong-kha-pa's philosophical treatises. Those who remember the 'miracle of Dunkirk' when the weather, from being windy and rainy, became suddenly fine, windless, and with calm seas for the number of days required to bring our men back across the Channel, often in the frailest of craft, may perhaps imagine that the National Day of Prayer called for by the King on the preceding Sunday, while the nation did not then know the reason for it, might have had something to do with the change

in the weather. In that instance, probably the focusing of the nation's mind on one object with all the fervour many could muster would achieve an effect, although a mere 'asking' prayer has little validity.

After returning to Sarnath I questioned Lama Lobzang as to what was the traditional explanation among the Tibetans regarding their success in making rain.

'It's easy, I can do it,' he said airily, to my astonishment. He then went on to explain further in terms of concentration and, above all, controlled imagination, which is the next step after concentration and of immense practical value. Indeed, it would not be inaccurate to say that controlled imagination is the same as the 'faith' of the Christian religion. If you can visualize as an actuality what you want to accomplish, then it is accomplished. The trouble is we never can visualize anything as already becoming an actuality, only as a piece of imagination which we *hope* may come into being, thinking all the while that it probably won't.

I suggested that a few Lamas would be an asset to England in view of her climate; to which he said that if the people themselves did not believe but stood round doubting and irreverent, nothing could happen; even the best concentration would be balked by these outside influences. But in Ladakh and Tibet the villagers firmly believe in the efficacy of the Lama's concentration, and so there are none of these disturbing influences.

He told me more. He said that in Tibet previously the Government used to maintain Lamas in little houses on mountain tops all over the country, to divert the devastating hailstorms for which the country is notorious, which destroy the crops utterly and leave famine in their train. Those who have read Milarepa[1] will remember his associations with such hailstorms. But, said Lama Lobzang, it is very easy to divert a hailstorm with your finger-tips and carry it to a piece of uncultivated land or mountainside where the material damage will be slight. He himself when in Tibet had seen this happen and thought nothing of it, for he had been brought up to the idea of its being a perfectly natural thing to do by one trained

[1] See *Tibet's Great Yogi Milarepa*, Ed. W. Y. Evans-Wentz, London, 1928, pp. 75ff, *et alibi*.

for it. Splitting the atom was far more complicated! And hence on every mountaintop above a village or town lived one or more of these Lamas, supported by the Government and the local people, and they kept the crops safe. To the Western mind this may sound fantastic, but that is because the Westerner insists that all phenomena and abilities must be measurable by the standard rule of Science, and what does not fit that rule is therefore untrue or non-existent. He does not contemplate the possibility of the rule of Science being too short for some things that require measuring. Hence a great deal is missed and ignored through scepticism.

The Tibetan highest Lamas are well versed in what the mind can do when under proper control, and although it is doubtful whether the gelongs at Rizong themselves had any advanced psychic powers, they would have had some training and practice in meditation and concentration, and the Report of the Commission that sat twenty years ago would be interesting were it still available.

It is not possible, however, for any but a close disciple to ascertain the abilities of any Lama. He will neither admit to having extraordinary powers nor display them except for the purpose of aiding a pupil at the right moment. This is in accordance with the Buddha's teaching. Moreover, he will not aim directly at the development of phenomenal powers; these may come at a certain stage of meditational proficiency, but if so, it is taught that they should be ignored, and used only if vitally necessary for someone else's development. Those who suddenly find they are able to read other people's minds, see auras around them, levitate or even fly, alter the laws of nature, or do anything else usually termed a 'miracle', and deliberately cultivate these powers, will stop at that point and evolve no further in that lifetime. For they have taken a side turning off the main road, so to speak. Worse still, any who try to turn their new-found abilities to material advantage will degenerate very rapidly. The story of Devadatta, the Buddha's cousin, who had great psychic powers, records that as soon as he decided to use them for his own ends the powers waned. But the great Lama will have a deep perception towards his own pupils and will know how to train them aright. What need is there of being able to fly as well?

On the last day of the pujas a villager came to the temple and counted out in Samten's lap about 60 rupees in notes and small change, all that the poverty-stricken village could muster. Since fifteen men had worked ten hours a day for six days, this could not be regarded as an exorbitant fee. What they give is left to the givers, although there are conventional rates for those who can afford them. But Rizong herself was also poverty-stricken since the infringements of the Chinese, and gladly accepted what she was given.

The house where we were cooking the lunch that day seemed to be owned by two aged brothers and a woman who might have been either their sister or one of their wives — or even the wife of both, for, owing to the scarcity of population, polyandry is not unknown. She was old and wrinkled like the men, but she had an additional feature which made her appearance somewhat repulsive to the stranger. Having lost all her upper teeth, the lower front ones which were left, and were long and yellow, came out over her upper lip when her mouth was shut and reached the base of her nose. Yet she did not present a frightening appearance to the little child whom she cuddled and fed.

Next morning we left early for Rizong, and I for one was very glad. It was not shoe trouble nor fleas nor long walks that had troubled me at Yon Tan, but villagers, who, with what seemed to me complete lack of manners, had persistently laughed at me! Whether I spoke in Tibetan or English, whether I was merely fulfilling my duties in temple or kitchen, whether I was silent, or whatever I did, they just laughed and repeated 'Imji getsul' over and over again until I was sick of hearing it. Why this was I did not know. It had not been so at Hemis. And though I did not mind the Rizong gelongs laughing at me when I blundered or did something in an unorthodox way, I objected strongly to this constant ribaldry at my expense. So it was a happy Imji getsul who set foot on the path for Rizong and home!

But it was a far less pleased Imji getsul who heard that our return was only for two nights, for the celebration of the Pratimoksha ceremony, and that then we were going back again for another four days of rain-making.

I stuck my heels in and refused to go, come what might.

Fortunately another thorn in my foot had become septic, and as it was on the ball of my big toe, it was painful to walk on uneven ground; any stone or twig or gravel touching it, hurt. This was a good excuse, and with a bandage over it no one tried to make me go, but to Gelong Gyatso I told the real reason, that I was not going back to be laughed at any more, and he saw my point and did not press for it.

Once again I could fall back into the routine of kitchen and learning and catch up with my writing, which had been impossible while away, beyond the brief diary I always kept since I had come.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Moving Star and the Eight-Day Puja

Not that there was any connexion between the moving star and our eight-day puja, for the puja was in honour of the Tutelary Deity and not for interfering with the elements or producing any natural or unnatural phenomena; they merely happened to coincide in time.

For another four days the gelongs, and the kitchen contingent, one man short, returned to Yon Tan, during which time there was no rain but many heavy black clouds about. They came back to Rizong on the fourth night, and it proceeded to rain for the next twenty-four hours and then no more for the remainder of my stay.

It was the evening after their final return that I was in my room alone, studying, when Gelong Zod-pa burst in with the information that a star was moving across the sky. I ran out in great excitement to see this strange sight, and sure enough, coming over the top of the south-west mountain range, was an apparent star, moving slowly. At first I thought it was an optical illusion from the few clouds passing; then I noticed that one cloud quite definitely passed *behind* the star, and who had ever heard of a cloud being able to do that? After all α Centauri, the nearest star, was 20 billion miles away!

Watched against the mountain peak it was quite certainly moving, and it seemed to increase its speed, but that was only

because it was coming nearer. To the north-east it went, and all heads were craning upwards, following its course. On the next parapet above us were the four geshés with Kushok and Rimpoche and his attendant who had also come out to see. What was it? The general opinion was that it was some diabolical spying contrivance from Russia. And, though these monks had never seen a newspaper, they appeared to fear Russia more than China. My own belief was that it was one of those famous Flying Saucers, which I had never seen but about which I had read some five books and in which I believed.

Was this the same star that Samten had told me would pass over at Yon Tan that night? I tried to find out, but could get no satisfactory answer on the point either then or later. At the time I had thought it might be a comet which, perhaps, they had been able to foretell by their own astrological calculations, but they had said next morning that it was round and had no tail. Probably it was this same one.

Next evening it was seen again, and many times thereafter, and as I was often asked what it was I gave, in my best Tibetan, written down, my theory of Flying Saucers. It is interesting to find what are one's reactions to events such as this when one no longer has the daily newspaper propped up on one's breakfast table. Speculation went on, but not until much later was I to learn the truth.

After more than a week the moving star seemed to change its course a little, going due east after passing overhead instead of disappearing behind the northern mountain, and we could watch it for much longer. The advent of this 'star' led to a discussion with Rimpoche and Kushok about the earth and the planets. Now I had been warned by Lama Lobzang not to get involved in any such subject. It turned out that Tibetan scientific knowledge is still in a pre-Copernican state. The earth stands still and the sun moves round it. And from Chandra Das' monumental Tibetan-English Dictionary I learned that they listed seven planets by name: Sun, Moon, Mars, Mercury, Venus, Jupiter and Saturn. In Tibetan the corresponding names are Nyima, Dawa, Mig-mar, Lhag-pa, Pa-sang, P'hur-bu, and Spen-pa, which, incidentally, are also the names of the days of the Tibetan week. It is noticeable that Earth is not regarded as a planet, whereas the Sun and Moon are, and

that Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto are unknown. But what I could not understand was Rimpoche's emphatic denial that the 'Evening Star', Venus, was Pa-sang, despite Chandra Das; for it is the one star or planet it is impossible not to identify, seeing it is out before all the rest and is much brighter than they. Yet he would never point out to me that which he thought was Pa-sang.

They also do not believe that the earth is round, but rather that it is cone-shaped — an interesting fact in view of the latest scientific theory that it is really pear-shaped, although roundness is a near enough conception for all practical purposes. I showed Kushok an atlas I had with me, and how one could sail all round the world in one direction and fly over the North Pole from Tokyo to America in the other. And as this route was much shorter than the sailing route, the world must be approximately round. He saw this at once, for he had a phenomenally quick brain, but old Rimpoche refused to see it, whether he could or not.

To Tibetans all scientific data are contained in the *Tan-gyur* and so are inspired. The situation is exactly that of the Christian Church at the time of Galileo, and the Tibetan Lama faces the same struggle with his belief, now that he has been forced out of Tibet and his youngsters are beginning to go to ordinary schools. There they will learn that the Earth moves round the Sun, and then the crisis will occur. There will be the diehards, like old Rimpoche, shocked at the slightest suggestion of any inaccuracies in the *Tan-gyur*, which is thought to derive ultimately from the Buddha Himself, and who will resist the change. But if the Catholic Church could weather the storm, there is no reason why the Tibetan religion should not. The same spirit has moved in both, the idea of divine inspiration, but the Buddha taught that no one should believe just because he was told something, even if it was He Himself who said it. Each man must try to experience the Truth for himself, and only then will he truly believe. But this fact has been forgotten by both Sects of Buddhism.

How they had come to decide that it was a Russian contraption, I do not know, seeing they had no knowledge of rockets, Sputniks, or the like, although, of course, many of them had been in aeroplanes for visits to Kashmir. Nor did my theory of

Flying Saucers find any favour in anyone's eyes, despite their admitting that there were millions of other worlds at different stages of development and probably quite unlike our own, but they could not imagine any beings on other planets communicating with Earth in such a manner.

To me, on the other hand, the idea of Flying Saucers has never seemed incredible, as coming from other planets, and acting, as it were, as sentinels on guard against Earth men taking the step which will explode this planet of ours and even send its destruction out to others as well, for chain reaction is to be much feared. Nor have I ever understood why, when people talk of life on other planets, they always think in terms of earth's vegetable and animal life. Life on earth is based on the carbon atom, and its atmosphere is one of oxygen, and the two fit each other well. With the addition of hydrogen and nitrogen we have the organic compounds, and from them life has come. But Jupiter, for instance, has an atmosphere of ammonia (NH_3), and the carbon atom does not combine with this is any satisfactory or parallel way. Probably, therefore, life on Jupiter is based on another element in place of carbon. What such life can be like we cannot conjecture at all, for we are wholly limited by our own atomic structure. And similarly with the other planets atmosphere and predominant element must agree.

But as for seeing little 'men' getting out of Flying Saucers, my credulity will not carry me that far. For little 'men' implies, again, life of our own type, and there is no reason to suppose such life exists on Venus or on any other planet, unless there also happens to be the same carbon-oxygen combination, and in the same ratio.

Be that as it may, on the second day of seeing the moving star we began the eight-day puja, and with it went incessant work from dawn to dusk; no time off for a bathe or for study, but tea serving and then more tea serving carrying lunches up to the Temple courtyard where all ate together and even breakfasted there as well; our days were full.

Not normally awakened by anyone except Gelong Gyatso, during this week Reveille sounded from the upper parapet every morning at four, as it had done at Hemis Shuba. We would be off down to the kitchen immediately, the gelongs would assemble in the Temple, and puja would begin. Often

Gyatso, in his enthusiasm, would have us up long before Reveille sounded, and the pak or dough would be ready and there would be no sign of the dawn. Then we would settle down on the kitchen floor to finish our disturbed sleep until the light appeared.

It was the Middle or Buddha Temple which was used, in which the large Buddha image held the central place. On the right was Chen-re-zig, also known as Avalokiteshvara, with the thousand hands of Compassion, and on either side of the Buddha were two of his disciples, Chams-pa and Jam Yung, meaning Compassion and Gentleness. To the left sat Tsong-kha-pa with his two disciples, a little less than life-size, and behind him the curtains which usually covered an image had been drawn aside for the week; it was *Yi Dam*, the Tutelary Deity itself, unaesthetic and grotesque from the point of view of Western art, a bull's head on human body and with four arms, hung about with gruesome skulls, heads dripping with blood, and trampling a body underfoot — not implying murderous intent or violence and destruction, but self-conquest, the Victor over his lower selves.

The seats had been rearranged so that they all faced the Buddha and did not run down as usual from the image to the door, and the two middle places in the front row were raised for Rimpoche and Kushok. The full array of musical instruments was out, and at each place was a bell and dorje.

Breakfast was taken up to the Temple court by Tashi and Tshultim Dorje, as it was the tupa I was never trusted to serve, and this would be followed by apricots for dessert that the nuns would bring from the 'chulie chan' or orchard by the nunnery. (Chulie is the Ladakhi or Tibetan for an apricot.) Neither of the Principals came to the breakfast, but joined the rest in the temple immediately after.

One hour later, to enable us to wash up and make it, the tea began to be served. Apparently it was necessary to have at least one getsul in the room; it seemed that at times certain things had to be handed to a gelong by a getsul and not by a genyen. This part I never understood, but merely did as I was told when I could undertand what it was they wanted. Occasionally I failed to understand, and then one of the new gelongs got up and did it for me.

Gyatso gave me the tea-kettle all day and every day for this week, and my companion was mostly Pugu Chung-Chung, but occasionally one of the others, or Lotus, would come in instead. It proved very profitable for me, for I sat on the floor at the end of the back row, beside Gelong Samten, and could ask him things during the puja. He did not seem to mind in the least having his singing interrupted. I had a little diary with me, and in it he wrote down the names of the images as given above and various other bits of knowledge. One day, however, he picked up his bell and told me its name was 'tril-bu'. This I had known, but then he picked up the dorje and added the information that it was called a dorje. Having learned this many years before from travel books on Tibet, or as general knowledge, I thought that maybe it was time to suggest that my ignorance was not quite as abysmal as all that.

That evening, by the light of my flickering oil lamp, I wrote a very brief exposition in Tibetan, with the aid of the dictionary, on the meaning of the dorje, partly taken from Govinda's book and partly from information found in Das's *Dictionary* about the transformation of the *skandhas* — or the perfecting of the imperfect human make-up.

Next morning I gave this to Samten during the puja and he read it, nodding approvingly. Then he passed it over to Kushok, who also studied it carefully. He made no comment to me about it, but that afternoon when I was serving tea to the senior gelong, Kanpo, he leant across to him and told him how a getsul, a *getsul* mind you, had described the meaning of the dorje! Gelong Kanpo had not been there at the morning session, so he had not seen my effort, which had, however, been passed around to the other gelongs.

The reason Gelong Kanpo had not been there, or rather had precipitously disappeared out of the room, leaving his tea bowl behind, shortly after the morning puja had started, came out that evening when Samten brought him to my room and asked me to examine him as he felt sick and had had stomach trouble for the past few days. Memory of my first reaction to him revived. 'Some serious stomach trouble,' I had commented in my diary, and this, of course, implied the possibility of cancer. Now I looked again at him, the sunken eyes, the hollow cheeks, the yellow skin. Was he a cancer victim?

I got him to undress and lie on the mat that was my bed, and laid a hand on his abdomen, palpating first from the left side and then round to where he complained of the slight but persistent pain. The liver was enlarged three finger-breadths below the costal margin (the ribs) and there was a mass in the epigastrium (midriff). Thus I would have recorded in my medical student days. And there was no doubt as to the diagnosis: advanced cancer of the stomach with the liver involved, and therefore too late for any surgical interference or X-ray therapy to be of any avail. I gave him some bicarbonate of soda as a palliative. What else could one do? On two further occasions I was to ask myself this question. What could I, as a doctor, do?

If he was sent to hospital, in Leh or Kashmir, he would be amongst strangers and would have to be fed from outside as is the custom in so many Indian hospitals; and Rizong had no means for supporting a monk in that fashion for a year or so before he died. Nor would he be happy away from the place that had also been his home. On the other hand there might come a time when he would be in need of morphine and only there could he have it adequately. For even could I bring a little back with me it would be quite insufficient for such a case, and attempts to get more than perhaps half a dozen ampoules would incur suspicion of drug-taking or selling, even though I was now registered in India. It was now, thinking over the case, I decided that the question was not: What could I do? But what would happen if I had not come? For they had never had a doctor on the premises before. And the answer to that was: Nothing! When he became *in extremis* he would probably be taken to hospital, or if his functions became uncontrollable, but otherwise undiagnosed, he would remain and die slowly in his own cell amongst his friends and under his Guru. And few monks would ask for more than that.

Of medical knowledge these gelongs had none; none had come from the great medical gompas of Tibet, even to have acquired some of Tibetan medicine. With me was a tin containing a little first-aid equipment so that I could stitch a cut, do minor surgery under local anaesthetic, and give a few medicines and ointments. More than that Lama Lobzang had had no money to procure, nor had I. To send to Leh for

patent medicine from the general store took several days. Either a passing gelong had to be going there or, if a jeep was heard to be coming, a lift could be commandeered in an emergency, but then there was the return journey to be made somehow. Or if a horse was furnished, the whole trip would take at least four days. If a man had a serious accident or was very ill, probably the Indian method of carrying him on a pallet on the shoulders of four staunch friends would be the only way, with the hope to meet a jeep or truck en route. Otherwise it would take at least three days if not more, struggling up steep mountain paths with such a load.

When he had gone again I gave Samten my verdict, and told him not to tell Kanpo, but to keep it to himself. He immediately told every other gelong in the place, although they all refrained from passing it back to the Senior Gelong. I told Kushok also, but there was nothing anyone could do, except hope that sodium bicarbonate flavoured with a little ginger would have a palliative effect for a while at any rate.

At this time the morning puja ended about ten o'clock and resumed with the lunch. Daily taki, thick brown scones, were served at the end of it, two to each gelong, the top one being adorned with a lump of butter and a trifle of that precious commodity, sugar! At least it was for the first four days when gelong-manager Rigdol was away in Saspola looking after the apple crop. Then he came back on the Thursday, and that day there was no sugar nor butter, only two dry taki. 'There is none,' we were told. He left again the same night and did not return until the puja was ended. The other three days, therefore, we had butter again, for apparently there was plenty when Za-wa was in charge of the stores in Rigdol's absence! More than ever was I reminded of a ship's purser, for he could have fallen into such a job without difficulty. Except for that one day, too, the tea was more thickly laced with butter than usual, and the parpa-shorlo lunch was replaced by vegetables (radishes of course!) and thin taki-bread like pancakes and more fruit.

Kushok took his lunch with the others, as also did the geshés, who were at other times served in their own room, but Rimpoche did not come, as he needed to rest awhile after the morning's work. Every plate of vegetables, covered with the

taki, had to come up those forty-five stairs from the kitchen to the Temple court. Every basket of fruit, every tea-kettle, had to make the same journey. One day I began counting the number of times I went up, but by the time I had reached a dozen I was too tired to bother to count any more; and some of those stairs were two feet deep.

The puja itself seemed to be the same every day, but differing between morning and afternoon. In the afternoon the 'Red Indian' headdresses were put on, although nothing was burnt, and the ritual was not the same. Back at Sarnath I asked Lama Lobzang what was the purport of this strange dressing-up ceremony, and he explained it as follows: The headdress and breast cloth is in imitation of that seen on the statues of Chen-re-zig. It was the psychology of dress, although they would not have called it that themselves. If you dress up as someone you can the more easily imagine you are that person. Many will remember how, when they first joined the Forces and had yet to draw their uniform, they felt shy and awkward drilling or saluting in 'civvies', but, once dressed as soldier, sailor, or airman, they began to feel as if they were really one too and then could more easily behave like one. So here if you are dressed like Chen-re-zig you may the better be able to imagine yourself as the All-Compassionate One, and then you may behave more like him. There is much truth in the psychology of dress!

During this week I saw two familiar vegetables out of the past, cauliflower and carrots. Not that they were for the hoi polloi, of course; only one cauliflower would come up, and but a handful of carrots, and they would have been sent specifically for Kushok Shas — but there might always be a few leavings!

After my success over the dorje I determined to try to get some instruction from Kushok through the medium of writing, and I chose two subjects of considerable interest of which little is known in the West, the Wung and the Tulku.

Wung is a word usually translated as Initiation. Actually it means 'power', and it is a ceremony in which essentially something is transferred from the Lama's mind to the disciple's for the furtherance of his development. Some Westerners have received Wungs, as they are not hard to obtain for any Buddhist sufficiently interested and not too superior to ask for them.

On the strength of them, however, some have claimed to be 'lamas' and called themselves so, without any justification, and making themselves ridiculous in the eyes of the Tibetans, for no one takes that title upon himself.

Many are the wungs that are to be had from the lamas of any of the three great sects, Ge-lug-pa, Nying-ma-pa, or Kar-gyud-pa, but they do not carry the right to try to pass on to anyone else the same 'initiation', for this right can only be given to a disciple by the Guru who gave him the wung, and the owner to do so must be of a certain spiritual quality. Further, the wung, when received, should be practised. There are some people of many nationalities who collect wungs, as it were, and do not use them, but let them lie fallow, or use one and, before they have had full success with it, take others. This practice is ill-advised; the hidden talent, unproductive, can have a deleterious effect on the hider.

I myself had been given and received a wung in Kalimpong from Dudjom Rimpoche, a Lama of the Nying-ma-pa sect who had returned to lay life. Now to use both words 'given' and 'received' is a redundancy, for it is possible to be given a wung and yet not to receive it. If it is received, then a physical reaction takes place at the critical moment in the ceremony, when the ('power', perhaps in the form of a thought, is transferred; and here language is no barrier. The fact that many are not received by those who 'collect' wungs, is why they are relatively unharmed, and equally unimproved, by them. The wung, received, must not be talked about to anyone who has not received that same wung.

Another fallacy concerning wungs that seems commonly held by foreigners is that once one has been received from a Yellow Hat sect Lama, one must never receive one from a Lama belonging to either of the two Red Hat Sects, or vice versa. There is, however, no truth in this. When the Dalai Lama's Senior Guru was in Sarnath, I had checked this point through the medium of Lama Lobzang and found it to be quite erroneous.

Now on questioning Kushok for further information I learned that there are four types of wungs, corresponding to the three Bodies of the Buddha, which takes us deep into the realm of Mahayana metaphysics. The *Bum* Wung is for the

fruition of the incarnate form that Buddhas may take in order to help mankind to evolve: thus they come as the Master-Teachers down the ages, of whom the Buddha of our era was only one, for He Himself taught that there were many Buddhas, that He was not the sole Teacher of all time. This same doctrine occurs in the Hinayana sect in the puja of which occur the following Pali lines:

Ye ca Buddha atitā ca[1]
Ye ca Buddhā anāgata,
Pacuppañña ca ye Buddhā,
Aham vandāmi sabbadā!

The Buddhas of the ages past,
The Buddhas that are yet to come,
The Buddhas of the present age,
To you, each day, I homage give.

Nowhere in true esoteric teaching is there any suggestion of a single Teacher for all time; but then time is much more extensive than is usually supposed. To those familiar with the Sanskrit terms this 'body' will be recognized as the *Nirmanakaya*, the Tibetan name for which is 'Tulku' (*Spruls-ku*) by which name the incarnate Lamas are called.

The second wung is the *Sung* wung, to assist in overcoming the limitations of speech in every form, for human speech is inadequate for imparting Truth, since speech is finite and Truth is infinite. This wung therefore is to aid the development of mantric speech, which, as already said, is untranslatable, having no apparent logical meaning, and it is for the fruition of the *Sambhogakaya* (Tibetan: *Longs-ku*) which is virtually the merging with Reality that occurs in Supreme Meditation.

The third type of wung is the *Shes* Wung, for overcoming the limitations of the human mind, conscious, sub-conscious and unconscious, and it is for the fruition of the *Dharmakaya* (Tibetan: *Chhös-sku*) so that true knowledge may supplant the relative knowledge of ordinary men.

Although there are only three 'Bodies', there is a fourth wung for the group as a whole, for here the view of Gestalt psychology has been anticipated, and Tibetan calculation invariably adds the group to the number in the group, on the

[1] 'c' pronounced 'ch'.

assumption that the Whole is more than the sum of its parts and should count as another one in its own right.

Hence the fourth wung is the *Tshig* Wung, and this is for the development of the ordinary human understanding, to raise it above its present level. This, therefore, concerns all three parts of a man which have been treated individually by the other wungs, the body, the speech, and the mind. It is this wung that the average person receives, the other wungs being for those Lamas who have already achieved a good deal in their own evolution and are skilled in meditation. These wungs are divided into parts, and a second part is not given until the Lama is certain his disciple has fully practised the first part, which is the pattern that should be followed also, but is not, by receivers of the Tshig Wungs.

So much I gleaned from Kushok at this time, and then he suddenly went off on a brief visit to Spituk Gompa outside Leh, where Lochas Rimpoche who had been his Guru in Drespung, and whom he had not met since his return to Rizong, was now residing, I had perforce to curb my thirst for knowledge until he returned.

On the last day of the eight-day puja there was a big celebration ending with the Mé Puja, that is, the Fire Puja, that which I had thought of as the Red Indian one. On the top courtyard in the middle of the gompa was a 'tombstone' like that on the nunnery roof, with the symbol  (Pum) painted on it in red ochre. Much preparation was required; there was firewood to be brought up, plates of various seeds and cereals to be put out, grasses to be gathered, and the 'tombstone' needed to have its symbol repainted and a diagram or mandala etched on the flat piece in front of the upright slab. For this Kushok himself came to assist, not merely standing and offering advice but squatting down and etching one side of the mandala while two gelongs did the other. The diagram was illustrative of the points of the compass with various symbols round the double circle enclosing them.

That afternoon, during the puja itself, the summer departed and autumn came. Never have I experienced so sudden and permanent a change in the weather as occurred that day and persisted thereafter. The sun went in after lunch and wind sprang up; although, so far as I know, no one was attempting

to make rain and no rain fell, yet the sky became cloudy. Never again during my stay did the temperature reach the same point, although it was still reasonably warm in the mid-day sun.

As the wind blew, the smoke enveloped those to windward of the fire, and Pugu Chung-Chung and Tashi were stationed in front of the 'tombstone' to hold a large tarpaulin across to keep it off those opposite. But it was too much even for them, and eventually, choking, they were allowed to retire to their back seats and the smoke blew where it would. Old Rimpoche, with his chest, suffered much, as his seat was directly behind the stone, built up to overhang it, so that he had the major benefit of the fumes, especially every time he had to drop a little oil on them, and everyone was glad when at last the puja was finished. Not least was the kitchen staff relieved, for the next day we could lie longer in bed and there would be a great deal less work to do.

The next afternoon a dishevelled gelong from Spituk in company with a layman arrived, panting, and announced that a jeep would be passing in an hour's time. This was the news for which Kushok had been waiting, and at once his bedding was hastily rolled up, a few things packed in a little bag, and he set off, accompanied only by Lha-ba, down the mountain path at a run to be at the main road in time to hitch a lift.

Knowing beforehand that he was intending to go, I had written a letter for him to take to Lochas Rimpoche to tell him my news, and had also added that if he was coming to visit Rizong, as rumour had it, he would be very hungry, since we had no sugar, no fresh milk, and on the whole insufficient food, and he was a fat man and a big eater. In the way of the East, to which the Western idea of privacy and respect for letters is entirely unknown, Kushok opened and read it, and, since it was written in Tibetan, understood it and for the first time discovered my need of sugar. He questioned me about it and told Lha-ba to give me some out of his own private stock, so that for the first time I must have had nearly half a pound. When he returned from Spituk he brought with him a consolidated lump of white sugar and a tin of powdered milk which Kushok Bakula had sent me, for he also was staying there at the same time, and all three, therefore, had read my letter. And

powdered milk and sugar meant a sweet drink last thing at night, no mean luxury, though I could remember the time when I would have scornfully refused to drink powdered milk neat, as it were.

When Kushok returned I next tackled him on the subject of Tulkus, which had long interested me, for, while accepting as obvious that every person is born at a different level of development, according to what he has previously achieved in the way of self-conquest, the more exaggerated view held by the common Tibetan that incarnate Lamas were almost deities did not appeal to me. They were to my mind men, but men on a higher plane than others. Yet even this held difficulties, for if this was true of all incarnate Lamas, how could they show any of the weaknesses of human nature, such as love of money, greed, laziness, pride, or such vices? And certainly not all appeared to be very highly developed, although equally certainly some were. And who better than a Tulku to approach on the subject of Tulkus? It is very doubtful whether any Tibetan or Ladakhi monk would ever have dared to raise the question, but it was one which had to be answered before a proper picture could be put before the Western world.

Firstly, I was told that Tulku and Bodhisattva are not synonymous terms. The Tulku is a Bodhisattva, but a Bodhisattva is not necessarily a Tulku, for he may be just starting on his career in this capacity, taking the Bodhisattva vow for the first time and merely setting his foot on the upward path. Or he may have taken it in several previous lives, but not yet have achieved the amount of self-mastery requisite to enable him to be reborn deliberately where and when he would for the benefit of mankind, which is the essence of Tulkuship.

The first Tulku was identified only in A.D. 1474. He was the reincarnation of one Ganden Trub-pa, disciple of Tsong-kha-pa and founder of the famous Tashi-lhun-po monastery, also so noted for its strictness. Two years after his death a baby boy in a village in Tibet, just learning to talk, began prattling about the life of this Lama and of the monastery, about which, by ordinary standards, he could not possibly have known. His parents sent for Lamas to investigate this extraordinary event, and they came from the monastery bringing with them certain articles that had belonged to Ganden Trub-pa, together with

other things not his. The baby seized on all that had once been his own and would not look at the other things, although pretty objects attractive to a child had been chosen. The Lamas had no doubt that this was the reincarnation of their dead Head Lama, and he was borne off to his old home for training; and the third in succession from him became the first Dalai Lama.

From that time search was always made for incarnating heads of monasteries, and now it is said that before one dies he may indicate in what district he will be reborn. Now that Tibet exists no more as a functioning state, search may have to be made in India or other parts of the world, and endless complications will undoubtedly arise, or else Tibetan Tulkus will join their brethren all over the world who, though Tulkus too, are unrecognized as such because they are born in countries where the concept is not known.

But now, I asked, how is it that, if the first Tulku was not identified until A.D. 1474, and some present-day Tulkus, like Kushok Bakula, are supposed to trace their lineage back far beyond that date (in his case to Bakula the disciple of the Buddha in 500 B.C.), how are they identified? No childish prattling about previous lives would convey anything to the parents. For this to be answered I had to go to Lama Lobzang after my return to Sarnath, for the language difficulty prevented coping with arguments. He said that there were many means of telling apart from identification by baby talk or recognizing articles previously owned, but he would not or could not specify them. Concerning Bakula, he said that this disciple of the Buddha was believed to have continued incarnating from the time of his Enlightenment under the Buddha, as a *siddha* or highly developed type of *sadhu* (holy man) in India, and only in recent centuries had he gone to Tibet and there been identified. The present Kushok Bakula was seventh in the line, that is he had incarnated seven times in succession within the last three centuries.

Of every incarnating Tulku there are four possible representative bodies or people; thus there can be four Bakulas alive at once, although this does not always happen. This is because the Tulku is able to incarnate into any of the three 'bodies' or *kaya* mentioned above, or in the 'body of the group of bodies' so to speak, which is to say that it can incarnate in various spiritual

aspects, all in human body, but the Bodhisattva can incarnate only in a single body, though if he has reached a sufficient stage of development he can choose for his parents those who are best fitted to rear him for his self-appointed task.

There are, of course, many grades of Tulkus, even as there are of Bodhisattvas and ordinary people. Men are not and never will be born equal, because the level of a man's birth depends on the nature of his previous life, and this means the spiritual and not the material level. Thus some men will always be 'better' than others, and some will be vastly inferior in all respects even to the average man.

And now came the crucial question which interested me most. How can a Tulku, supposed to be on a higher plane than others, ever exhibit human weaknesses or fall into temptation?

My master gave two answers to this. Firstly, a Tulku could slip back from the more perfect states he had attained, for in each life he had to overcome 'body-karma', that is to cope with the disadvantages of his genetic make-up, to put it in modern terminology, which might sometimes prove to be too strong.

But the second answer was more interesting and rather unexpected. Writing in my notebook, Kushok said that the investigating lamas admit that they can make mistakes in identification, that the tests are not infallible. Occasionally also (and this point came later from Lama Lobzang), the head of a monastery dies and no successor is found. Gradually over the years the monks become slack and undisciplined for want of a guiding force, and then the senior gelongs petition the Dalai Lama to indicate a possible replacement. If His Holiness sees that the monastery is suffering for lack of a head, he will then search for someone suitable to be the new Tulku, without his actually being one, although when nominated and installed, he will be regarded as one. Many people will not know this, only the few concerned with his identification and installation.

Then Kushok wrote another sentence that puzzled me for a long time, for I could not discuss it closely owing to lack of language. 'A Tulku,' he wrote, 'is born to help all men in the world, therefore I am not a Tulku although I am called one.'

Eventually it was Lochas Rimpoche, back at Sarnath, who threw light on this through the medium of Lama Lobzang,

and at the same time denied that he too was really a Tulku. It seems that there is but a small handful of real Tulkus, born to help the world *as a whole*, the Dalai Lama, the Panchen Lama, and their respective Senior and Junior Gurus, and a man like Kushok Bakula who knows exactly what he wants to do and is doing it to great effect. The few of really superior development are able to help man in general by the power of their mind in meditation and by other similar means, for the power of thought is inestimable, though totally disregarded in the West.

Of course it will immediately be asked why did not this power, if it is so great, prevent the invasion and destruction of Tibet and her people? But it is not used so specifically as this. It has the same effect as a cosmic force on the minds of those attuned to pick it up, but it is not for the purpose of achieving a definite plan or producing a material benefit. Nor may any spiritual power be used for personal ends; this is an ancient occult law. No one can tell what is the effect, or what has been the effect, of the meditations of saints in Tibet and Yogis in India down the ages.

In denying, then, that they were real Tulkus, these two Lamas were in effect saying that they were aware that they had not sufficient development to achieve a world-wide spread of influence from their minds, but that a few very big Lamas had this power.

The concept of the Tulku is utterly foreign to the West, because it depends on the actuality of the doctrine of Rebirth, which the West does not accept. But certainly there are more spiritually highly developed men in that small nation of Tibet and in Ladakh in proportion to the population than can be found in any of the other nations today. And often with this spirituality goes psychic power of which the West knows nothing, although psychic development is not a necessary concomitant of spiritual development.

Another significant result of this eight-day puja and the chance that led me to write on the dorje, was permission to borrow from the Library that volume called the *Bum-ba Nga-ba*, or *The Elixir of Life*, vol. V, as we should call it. It was from this that I had been given a few pages to read during our stay in Yon Tan, and since it contained firsthand information on the

Doctrine of the Void, I was particularly anxious to examine it more thoroughly, and if possible either translate it on the spot or at least copy it for future reference, since there would be little likelihood of my being able to understand it without assistance.

I asked Kushok, therefore, one afternoon during his English lesson if I could borrow it, for getsuls were not generally lent library books nor would they want them. He said that I might, but warned me that it was very large. And so it was! One thousand pages, 2½ feet long and seven lines to a page, with an average of sixty letters to a line, making an approximate total of 420,000 words. Then came the shattering information that he himself knew it all by heart. I looked at him in undisguised admiration. Was it possible? But then, it seemed, he knew dozens of such books by heart. While I had been doing mathematics, geography, history, biology, Scripture, Latin, Greek, and French at school, he had been learning the Dharma by heart, all day, every day, not even having Sundays off! And for over twenty years! Of the other subjects I had studied, he of course, knew nothing. But in philosophy he must be an expert, although Western philosophy was unknown to him, or even the existence of any philosophy other than Buddhistic.

I bore the volume between its painted boards off to my room and opened it, with something of a thrill at last to have the handling of one of these rarely obtained treatises, and on the Doctrine of the Void at that. I knew a little of the subject already, but in its fullest extent it will not be confined into words, and all statements made about it are a mass of contradictions — which is the secret of the Infinite after all. The Void is not Emptiness, as Jaschke's *Dictionary* scornfully says, describing it as the Doctrine of Nothingness, the peak of Buddhist metaphysics! But then Jaschke was prejudiced, being a Christian missionary, and frequently poured scorn on what he did not understand. The Void is both the All and the Nothing, the meeting-place of opposites, but the opposites of the real world and not of the relative world of our senses. When, therefore, it is remembered that in the Real there are no opposites, the insufficiency of language may perhaps be appreciated, together with the Buddha's wise remark that it is better not to waste time speculating on abstract problems, since words are useless,

and therefore any statement made about them is untrue, just as a false picture is given by trying to view the Infinite with finite senses.

I undid the wrapping carefully and settled down on my mat to see what I could make of it. Although recognizing many words, any idea of translating it was quickly dispelled. So, taking an exercise book, I began to copy, and soon found the task made easy by the amount of repetition, for whole paragraphs as well as mere refrains came again and again. This repetition is a feature of the Pali as well as of the Tibetan canon, occurring originally in the Sanskrit, and it was purposely done for two reasons. Firstly, it makes memorizing much easier, and for several hundred years after the Buddha's death all his teaching was transmitted orally and the monks learned the Dharma by heart, usually concentrating on one or other of its three great sections, though in some cases there are monks on record who could repeat the whole Tripitaka, and those who have read Admiral Shattock's book, *An Experiment in Mindfulness*,[1] on his experiences in a meditational centre in Burma will recall how he was present at a ceremony to celebrate the feat of a young bhikshu who had been able to recite the whole of the Burmese canon by heart. He adds, as would most of us from the West, that the value of such an achievement seemed rather doubtful today when books were at hand! But in the early days it was undoubtedly necessary.

As I wrote I found myself beginning to scratch rather more than usual, and plucked a louse off my shirt. Then I saw another on my skirt and two more gambolling on the rug where I was sitting. I lifted the pages of the book and ran them through my fingers. Here and there a louse fell out. The whole volume had been the residential quarters of a race of lice, and now, disturbed, they had come out to see what they could find to eat, and found me! It was no use taking the book back to the Library now, for the damage was done, and anyway my thirst for knowledge would not be baulked by mere insects. But it became impossible to sleep any more in my little room, and I had to move each night to the dining-room next door and spread my quilt out on the floor there, having first well shaken all the bedding which was my seat by day. And ever after, while

[1] By Ernest H. Shattock, London, Rider, 1958.

sitting reading or writing, I had to contend with the distraction of tickling and removing the unwanted visitors.

As any Westerner, quite apart from any doctor, would do I began by killing them, as well as the fleas with whom they set up friendly relations. Then one day, when with Kushok, he had pointed to a louse taking its afternoon walk on my skirt. I immediately squashed it between finger and thumb, and my Master was so genuinely repelled by my action and told me that it was so utterly contrary to the Bodhisattva mind that thereafter I followed the example of the other gelongs and merely ejected them with a flip or dropped them out of the window. Indeed, after taking the Bodhisattva vow I should have remembered that all life was sacred, but my Western training and habits had reasserted themselves, and I gave no thought to repeating the practice of the war years when in this one respect conditions resembled those of that time.

CHAPTER NINE

Domestic Science and Arts and Crafts

'Scientific' is scarcely a word applicable to our kitchen activities. Indeed, except for the absence of the giant spits on which oxen were roasted over the open grate, the kitchen and its staff must have resembled very much those of Elizabethan days in England. The long dresser with its shining copper and brass wear, the huge cauldrons, and the blackened state of the woodwork, all were like those replicas one may see in museums today. And assuredly we worked in the same primitive and simple way. The genyens were the scullions. and the getsuls the apprentices who ranked but little above them.

All cooking was so organized as to give the least possible amount of work, although even so there was quite enough to do. First and foremost were the radishes — and for the three months I was there, the radish crop held out manfully, though it showed signs of wilting towards the end of my stay — and every night we prepared the radishes for the morning tupa. This preparation consisted in nipping the tails with a thumbnail and tearing the leaves into small pieces with our fingers, and then stuffing them as they were into the pot. The very large ones would be sliced by Gyatso, who had the only knife the kitchen owned as part of its equipment. These would then be left soaking in water all night and emptied into fresh water in the morning, so that the dirt would have been removed by

itself, or most of it, for grit was often eaten with the tupa. Thus the need of washing or scraping vegetables was eliminated.

When small new potatoes were sent in, in the bottom of a basket for Kushok, they would be rubbed on a piece of rough sacking to remove the loose skin. A note in my diary reads: 'Had potatoes for lunch today,' an event which I apparently found worth recording! Having been given the job of rubbing, I was told not to put in the tiny buttons, but that I could have them myself if I wanted. To taste potatoes again — Yes, it *was* well worth recording!

Utensils always used for a single purpose would not be washed up, as being a waste of time and water. Thus the bat, shaped like a cricket bat, for stirring the par-pa as it boiled, was always put away as it was with the flour still clinging to it. So with the huge brass dish for making torma or pancake-taki, and the ladles for the tea.

The cleaning of the kitchen itself took place at the whim of Gyatso, often when work was slack and genyens showed signs of creeping into corners for forty winks. Then we would be given brush and tapi — a piece of long-haired sheepskin — and have to go round, bent double, sweeping and scrubbing the floor. But this was never done with water, which was far too precious a commodity.

On one such occasion Gyatso had said to me: 'Imji, tapi, Kūn serpa!' ('Clean everything'), thus speaking in the abbreviated sentences I had begun to understand. I hunted round for a tapi and started wiping over the stove and dresser to my own satisfaction, but not to that of gelong Gyatso. He gave me a thump with his fist on the backside, took the tapi away in disgust and gave it to Tashi, making me sit down and watch how to clean things properly. I was lucky to get off so lightly.

On other occasions we had to settle down on the floor and polish all the sol-tips or tea-kettles with ashes, as is the way in India, and not with Bluebell, as in the West!

Spilling anything on the floor was apparently one of the most heinous of crimes. Pugu Chung-Chung one day slipped with the tub of shor-lo, which spread itself around, and received many thumps on his head and shoulders for his carelessness until there arose cries of 'Digs, digs' ('Enough, enough') from gelongs in

the kitchen, who often intervened thus on behalf of anyone receiving chastisement.

One evening I came in with a small tea-kettle in each hand, and one somehow slipped out of my grasp and fell with a crash, the remnants of the contents swelling out into a pool on the floor. Inadvisedly I bent without thinking to pick it up, and Gyatso, who had been sitting on the mat talking to Zod-pa, was on his feet and across the room in two bounds. He administered a hard smack on the back of my head, usually safely out of range owing to his smallness, and then another, but again Zod-pa cried 'Digs, digsong!' and Gyatso gave me no more.

The boys thought Gyatso too strict, too ready with his fists, but then his predecessor gelong Thondup had been very slack, and with him they had done much as they had liked, including Pugu, who as a result had developed the habit of hitting back as previously described. Personally I liked Gyatso, who never tried to stand on his dignity, and anyway, when a ready fist is at hand, one is likely to be more careful and to take more trouble. Often he would call me quietly, take me to the store-room, and press a couple of taki into my hand, indicating that I was to push them down my shirt until I could hide them in my room and keep them for the evening, because he knew how little I ate compared with them and how the food was not natural to me. On two occasions, too, when I was so hungry in the evening as to be feeling dizzy, I could not refrain from asking for something, and as there were no taki left, he set to and made the thin pancakes especially for me, thus adding to his own work and in disregard of the rules.

One day I asked his permission to make some 'imji za' or English food, having seen some over-ripe apricots on a plate, and having the bright idea of trying my hand at an apricot tart. Of course there would be no butter, sugar, or milk for the pastry, which would be mere tsampa flour, but this I kneaded and rolled out on the board with our rolling pin, and then laid it on a metal plate, trimming the edges in the approved style. Meanwhile the apricots were boiling, and then I spread them over this and another thin layer covered it, and with a knife handle decorated the edges, as there was no fork. I cut the traditional little slit in the top, and — well, I had cooked for myself for five years as a medical student!

Great was the hilarity over all these proceedings, though the idea of cooking fruit stunned them. The tart was put direct on to the red ashes in the range, and when ready I carried it up first to Kushok and Rimpoche to give them a quarter each, as was proper, and then brought back the other half to share amongst all those in the kitchen, cutting it into fingers for the purpose. But in the end I had the most, for after one bite they all shyly put their portions back on to the plate or into my hand, and I had enough to satisfy my hunger for the time! Worse still, when later I took up Yshé Gompo's lunch I had ignominiously to remove the remains of Rimpoche's portion; he had obviously struggled manfully and managed half of it, and then retired from the fray defeated.

I had not used all the stewed apricots, but had left some in the pot for my lunch. There was more laughter at my expense when I found that Tashi had thrown them out as unfit for human consumption, although I think this was the sole instance of food being thrown away. But they would no more cook fruit than they would eat vegetables raw, except for the snippets of radishes we would help ourselves to at night from hunger when cutting them. One day something came up for Kushok which I recognized as lettuce leaves, and I begged for a handful and ate them. This horrified the rest, who were putting them into a pot to boil. But boiled lettuces have no taste, and are useless as an item of diet, though raw they have some very slight value.

The worst thing I ever did in my life was to take a passing glance at dietetics while doing my medical course. As a result, when a dish of pumpkins might come up at Kalimpong or Sarnath everyone else would fill themselves full of it and think what a good meal they had had, but I would turn up my nose at them as being over ninety per cent water and completely unnutritional. Similarly with rice and cabbage; the rice would produce some calories and no vitamins, and the cabbage a few vitamins and no calories, and where was the protein anyway? Fortunately I had never gone into dietetics really deeply, but I did sometimes wonder what was the total calorific intake over the day for bhikshus and gelongs.

As autumn drew on we began to bring up firewood to store for the winter in a little room under the kitchen. Now we brought the long straight branches which previously had given

way to more of the brushwood type, and whenever a monk came up the mountain path he would pick up one or two branches, use them as staves, and then throw them on the pile. Even Kushok did this from time to time.

Now also began a spate of carpentry, Zod-pa and Jam Yung apparently being the chief exponents of this craft. Starting from scratch with a branch or tree trunk, they had only two bought tools, a small handsaw and a plane together with some adze blades. All the rest appeared to be home-made. With the adzes they would trim the branches into flat surfaces, saw them into required lengths, and then plane. Nails were scarce, and often wooden pins did service instead. Screws were non-existent, and so there was no screwdriver. Chisels had themselves been chiselled out of bits of steel and fixed to handles shaped by themselves. Yet the work turned out was solid and creditable.

First they made a new seat for Kushok in the dining-room, the old one being no more than a rug-covered box. It was a massive structure on legs, but alas! when they bore it in triumph to the room by no means could it be got through the door or the skylight. Sadly it was borne away again, to the temple, where it was not really wanted, and the old box returned to serve once more. The same thing had happened to me once in my student days, when I had made a large bookcase in the kitchen and then could not get it round the corner of a right-angle bend into the sitting-room and had had to dismantle it and refit it *in situ*. So I could share the feelings of the carpenters as they twisted and struggled to coax the seat into a space too small for it.

New tsampa pots or pari were also hewn out of trunks of sufficient bore. This must have been done in the same way by our Elizabethan forefathers, for the system was to cut to the required length any trunk of proper diameter and then bore a small hole in one end and lay red-hot ashes in it. These would continue to smoulder as it lay on the window-sill in the breeze, and eventually the main part would have been burnt out. It was then hacked round with a chisel to smooth it, and there was the receptacle for holding tsampa flour.

Small bench tables were also fashioned, and thin lengths of wood rounded and pointed to make pens, for Tibetan writing cannot be done well with a fountain pen or with any but a thick nib.

With all this carpentry there was, of course, a wealth of shavings, and daily we had to go with a basket and collect these and store them also, to light the fire easily in the cold of a winter's morning. An average morning's collection would be seven large baskets of the type used for the water urns.

One day I went to gelong Samten's cell some distance away on the edge of the gompa, a part which had been built only a year before, and does not appear in the older photographs. There I found the lame gelong Sonam sitting on the floor stirring a pot of thick black liquid which I did not at once identify. Two nights before Samten had been in my room, as I thought kindly cleaning my lamp to make it work better, but really, it appeared, to collect the carbon which had formed on the top, although this was doing me a good turn as well. And now it was becoming ink for copying the puja and Dharma books. Samten meanwhile was rolling sheaves of Tibetan paper, rather like furry parchment. He rose. 'Come!' he said, and I followed him out of the cell and down the mountain path, wondering what he was going to do. He was carrying another pot which looked as if it contained glue, but when I put my finger into it to see it was not sticky.

Down beyond the chörten archway we went, and stopped at the well from which we fetched the water. Then he told me to take a ladle that was lying there and scoop water into the ditch that ran from the well through the wall. Still mystified, I did so. When there was enough he went outside, beckoning me to come too, crossed the ditch, and picked up a large wooden tray that was lying behind a bush. Then he proceeded to peel something off the bottom of it, and there to my surprise, was a sheet of Tibetan paper! Next he took the pot of unknown substance like glue and poured it into the tray. I examined it more carefully now to see what it was.

'Zhing ("Wood")!' he said, as I looked enquiringly at him.

Then it dawned on me this was wood pulp from which paper is made and what I had mistaken for glue had been shavings soaked in water. So this was how paper was made, and I had never stopped to think about it, merely buying it whenever I needed it. The result was good, thick, smooth parchment-like paper, and the fibres formed a fringe along the edges which would later be trimmed.

The next day I watched a book being printed. With Nor-phel, Samten sat on the ground, a carved wooden block between them, and smeared the block with the black ink made from my dirty lamp; then they laid the paper, cut to the long, narrow, rectangular shape of Tibetan books, firmly on it and ran it over with a roller. The page, lifted, then clearly showed the Tibetan words. Who had done the carving in the first place? This I never discovered, but they had many wood blocks of various works, and doubtless had it been necessary Zod-pa or Jam Yung or Samten could quite easily have done this too, if indeed these were not their handiwork.

As has been said before, sewing was another craft of the monk. But again for the first time in my life it was during my stay in Ladakh that I saw the whole process of dressmaking from start to finish.

In Yon Tan one afternoon during the lunchtime break, I had watched newly shorn wool being beaten, for what purpose I did not know, whether to remove extraneous matter, dirt, bugs, or whatnot, but this seemed to be the first step. Then everywhere one could see men and women walking round with a shuttle in one hand and tufts of wool in the other, twisting a tuft on to the already spun thread and then giving the shuttle a flip so that the new piece became twisted on to the old. Once the shuttle was full or the wool exhausted, they would carry it around with them, continuing to twist it more and more firmly until it was ready for spinning.

The spinning was part of the work of the nunnery, where looms were set up in an outhouse, six abreast. In a carding room were shuttles hung from the rafters, and nuns would sit and spin these shuttles by the hour to ensure that the thread was well twisted. The looms however were worked not by nuns but by laymen. Why this should be I do not know, but each day I was there six laymen sat behind the six looms while the nuns went about their ordinary business.

Once spun, the cloth must next be dyed the dark maroon of the Ladakhi monks' robes, and everywhere about the nunnery could be seen labels from packets of dye, for apparently this was one commodity they did not make, but had to buy. These labels could also be seen stuck on the walls of houses in the villages, for decoration, for some of them were colourful.

One I noticed particularly, for under the picture in small type were the words 'Better than', and then large and in a scroll underneath 'Made in Germany'. Such ingenious subterfuges are used by many Indian firms to try to delude customers into buying their goods, and no action can be taken, since it is the buyer's own carelessness if he does not read more carefully!

The robes for the gelongs one might have expected would be made by the nuns, but this is not the case, for there is a rule in the Code of Discipline that a monk shall not have a robe made for him by an unrelated nun; if she is his sister, mother, or daughter (from his layman days) it is all right. Neither may a nun launder robes for monks. Obviously this rule was one of many framed to restrain too much association between monks and nuns, which, naturally, had its dangers, especially for the young monks.

Those vowed to celibacy must perforce pass through a trying time at the height of their powers, and though no perverted practices were apparent at Rizong (certainly none would have been tolerated by Kushok Shas), one or two of the younger gelongs hinted that they were having some difficulty through finding no outlet. There was one older one who tried to stroke me in the wrong way when I was a newcomer, but I hit his arm as hard as I could with my fist, and he took the hint. A getsul, of course, should not hit a gelong on any pretext, but there is no legislation concerning what one should do in such a case, and this seemed the quickest way of dealing with the matter and put an end to it at once. At all events heavy manual labour always helps in this respect, and there was plenty of that for anyone who wanted it, in fetching wood and water up the mountain.

The new addition to the gompa, of which Samten's cell was part, had been built by the monks themselves; the walls were of hard mud interspersed with rocks, and the pathway continued on with flags to the furthest cell, which the second senior gelong occupied alone and away from the others.

The one art of which I saw nothing here, though I had seen it at the Sarnath and Bodh Gaya Tibetan temples, was that of sculpturing and painting. The only painting done while I was there was to touch up the skulls on their poles where the paint had worn away with the weather. In these other two temples

there was a full-time gelong artist who made and painted images and pictures, including the thankhas, painted on silk.

One afternoon while sitting in Kushok's courtyard waiting for him to come up for his lesson, I began to wonder who had built Rizong, and how. Was it the monks themselves, or did laymen build it for them? And then as I looked at the stone flags, some of them of very large size, I began to imagine them being carried up on men's shoulders toiling up the steep path from the rocks that lay in piles at the foot of the mountains all the way down to the main road. There would have been no dearth of building material, and there was still plenty left. Then it dawned on me why the steps were so steep; it meant fewer steps, and therefore fewer great stones, surely a worthy consideration. And the tiny doors were due to the scarcity of wood, for apart from our own valley, with its orchards, there was no wood for another eight miles, where the next village, Saspola, occupied the valley. And such was the state of affairs over the whole of Ladakh.

Had I but known it, and could I have read it anyway, a history of Rizong was lying in the library, but as it was, I had to wait till I returned to Sarnath to learn its story, and even then my curiosity was but partly satisfied.

CHAPTER TEN

The 'King' of Kashmir

One day I went up to collect Hla-ba's tupa pot and Kushok Shas told me they were just off down to the main road as my Guru, Kushok Bakula, with Karan Singh, was touring Ladakh and would be passing in a jeep. Get ready at once and come!

Karan Singh—The Rajah of Kashmir, as he was often referred to by the monks, had been Governor since Kashmir had ceded to India and the euphonistic term 'King of Kashmir' pleased me so much that I thought of him so, and have used the term in this chapter without any political justification.

When we had been staying in Srinagar, he had heard that Kushok Bakula, whom, naturally, he knew well, had with him two strange types, a Tibetan Rimpoche and an English 'lama'. So he invited us all to tea, Lochas Rimpoche, Kushok Bakula, myself, and Lama Lobzang. I had experienced both the friendliness and the informality for which he was noted; he had once visited England and was ready to talk about it, and he also lent me a book from his shelves which had caught my eye.

Now one morning, when I was working in the kitchen at Rizong, Jam Yung told me I was to go with him and Kushok and a couple of others, down to the main road three miles away to wait for the jeep in which Kushok Bakula and Karan Singh would be passing while finishing their tour of Ladakh. They would not be able to come up to Rizong, but they would pause long enough for us to pay our respects to them, and as Kushok Bakula was my Guru I was to come too.

All this I heard at the last moment, and having only time to

put my toga on — I did not wear it in the kitchen since it would have been ruined in a few days — I ran down the path after the others, who had already started, still as dirty as anyone might be after four hours work. My skirt by this time was no longer red but black. Its original colour was completely lost, for it was not possible to wash it, since I had nothing else to wear, and with eight yards of material in it, it would take a long time to dry. However, merely to make salutation to a passing jeep, it did not seem as if it would matter, and as the least important of those who were waiting, I should be well in the background.

Kushok's white horse had been brought up for him and was being led down to the nunnery, where its harness lay while he walked with the rest of us, gaily laughing and talking. Indeed, we were rather like a party of schoolboys out on holiday, for everyone was always glad of a chance to see Kushok Bakula, and for me, at any rate, it really was a holiday. Jam Yung, Rigdol, and Kushok with his two attendants made up the entire party, and Jam Yung had a large sack on his back which later I was to find contained the biggest and rosiest of the apples which were now taking the place of apricots, to make offering to the two in the jeep.

After passing the nunnery Kushok mounted, and demanded to know the English word for 'horse' and how to say 'I am riding a horse', but he forgot again soon afterwards. Just before we reached the main road where the path was flat and sure, he waved aside Ston-dūs, who had been leading his horse all the way, and for a short distance broke into a sharp trot, which one felt he had long been wanting to do, but never could when out with Rimpoche, whom he must not precede.

For the first time since my arrival I found myself where Lama Lobzang and I had abandoned the baggage to start our long climb to my new home. There were the two square houses as I remembered them, and in the garden of one of them we settled to wait, the householder bringing out rugs and little tables for Kushok and the gelongs, and, of course, the inevitable tea. After a while we took a walk and looked down on the river rushing below, then back to the mats to wait again. Lunch-time came, and the householder provided vegetables and the thin taki, and we also ate some of the apples.

A jeep came into sight, and we all rushed out over the low

wall, Jam Yung and Rigdol each with a large dish of the fruit and Kushok with a white scarf to offer his uncle. But it was a false alarm. Two military policemen looked at us in undisguised amusement and did not deign to stop. When the next jeep was seen, Jam Yung stepped out into the road to make it halt and asked for news of Karan Singh – was he coming soon or not? He was not coming at all, he was ill, answered the soldier driver briefly, and let in the clutch and the jeep bounded forward, missing Jam Yung by inches. 'Moslem!' was his comment on this piece of bad manners, for the Moslem soldiers hate the Buddhists even as their forefathers destroyed the great Buddhist centres in India and Kashmir, of which Sarnath was one.

When we saw the next jeep I decided to take a hand myself. I had always found that a 'sahib' can command a certain amount of respect, and when I chose to behave like a 'sahib' I could do the act quite well. I stepped out into the road and signalled to it to stop, standing nearly in front with my blue eyes fixed on the driver. As he slowed down I grasped the rim of the windscreen and demanded in Hindi to know if Karan Singh and Kushok Bakula were coming.

'They are not,' was the reply; 'Karan Singh is ill. They have gone back to Saspola and are not finishing their tour.' Then to my next question he added: 'He has a pain in his thigh.' This time it seemed definite, so I let go of the windscreen after answering the inevitable question 'Where do you come from?' with a brief 'England!'

We took the news back to Kushok standing on the other side of the wall, and a discussion began over what we should do. To me, when a layman talked of a 'pain in the thigh' he could easily mean a pain in the groin, which might be an appendix or a strangulating hernia or acute infection. And when I had been in Leh before, there had been no doctor, only a new hospital, quite well equipped. The doctor apparently had gone off to Kashmir and they did not know when he would return.

'Will you go to Saspola and see him?' Kushok asked me. Saspola was five miles away, and the only way to go was on foot.

'Yes, sir.' As a doctor I could hardly say otherwise; possibly the local medical officer was still absent.

He sat down on the rug and wrote a letter for me to take to

Kushok Bakula, and Jam Yung gave me a letter to Karan Singh which he and Ston-dūs had laboriously composed during the afternoon wait, and had expected me to translate into English for them. As I was completely defeated by it, Kushok rewrote it in the sort of Tibetan he knew I could understand. Then I translated it, and had to retranslate it back again for his approval to make sure I had really understood it. From this letter I learned for the first time of the economic situation of Rizong, for it was to thank the 'King' of Kashmir for his generosity to the gompa as the result of which the monks once more had robes and food enough. For, so the letter said, a flock of a thousand sheep and a herd of one hundred and fifty goats, from which considerable income used to be derived by the sale of wool, had all been driven off by the Chinese, as their pasturage had been on the Tibetan side of the border. What was left was hopelessly inadequate and there was no other source of income, therefore the gelongs wished to express to Karan Singh their appreciation of his donations.

It must have been about four o'clock, judging by the sun, when I set out on the dusty stony road at that lope between a walk and a run which is used by coolies all over the East, for it can be kept up for a long time without becoming breathless. My dilapidated sandals flapped in the dust at every step, and I had to keep shaking my feet to remove the small stones which kept getting in. Then, as I was walking up a steep incline, I heard the sound of an engine and saw a military truck coming up behind me. Knowing the reluctance of the Army to stop I flagged it determinedly, and after a brief argument with the driver, which ceased after he had learnt my nationality, I was allowed to climb up in the back and finished the run in comfort. But on going to the Rizong annexe or Gabra at Saspola I was told that my quarry had gone back to Leh, as Karan Singh was ill. Again there was the same story of his having a pain in the thigh. I debated with myself what to do. I had no authority from my Head Lama to go on as far as Leh, some thirty miles away; I was only a getsul, and getsuls did not go wandering off without permission. On the other hand I was also a doctor, and Karan Singh might be in urgent need of medical attention. I went back to where the truck was still stationed and asked if it was going on to Leh that night. On being told it was I asked for

a lift, and was allowed to resume my seat on top of the pile of soldiers' kitbags in the back.

The sun was setting before we left Saspola, and I was still not quite sure of the rightness of my decision. Still, there was no turning back now. We reached the village of Nyimo as the sun disappeared behind the mountain, and stopped there for about half an hour while the occupants of this and a second truck following had supper by the roadside. Three soldiers separately presented me with an apple, for apples were freely obtained here; indeed, this village was reminiscent of a Kentish orchard and brought back memories of other days.

As night fell the wind made me grow cold, and I shivered as I clutched my transparent outer robe around me, thankful at least that I had my toga on, for it was of woollen cloth. The road was not such that we could make any appreciable speed on it, having frequently to stop at hairpin bends and to reverse in order to round them at all, and I began to sing softly to myself as one does when going long distances and as I had been wont to do when driving my own car on a journey at home. What came most easily and with no mental effort was a selection from *Hymns Ancient and Modern*, most unsuitable for a Buddhist monk, but there was no one to understand, and even some Christmas carols were thrown in. My thoughts turned to the 'moving star', and I searched the sky for any sign of it, but there was none. It had come into mind as a result of singing 'While shepherds watched'!

By the time we reached Leh I was frozen and tired, and knew there would be no chance that night of my finding my way to Sankar gompa where they were staying; moreover the savage dogs attached to monasteries and private houses roam free at night, and it would be a dangerous enterprise.

The truck put me down at the military barracks a mile outside the town, and I set out, with the dogs in mind, keeping to the middle of the road and passing only three persons on the way. Leh reached, I decided I had better stay at Lama Lobzang's house, which he had told me I could do any time I was in Leh, and this I was able to find without much difficulty. There was a light from an oil lamp in the living room, and its windows were open, but the door was fast locked, and although I shouted the name of Tashi Namgyal, Lobzang's brother, who lived

there too, no response came. Presumably he must have nipped out for something or he would not have left the lamp burning, for oil was expensive. I sat down on the step to wait, huddled in my robe with my knees drawn up to my chin for warmth.

An hour must have elapsed, but there was still no sign of Tashi Namgyal, though the lamp was still burning. I knocked and shouted again without effect, and once more sat down dismal and shivering. Looking up at the sky for no good reason I suddenly became aware of the 'moving star'. I saw it more clearly than ever before, bigger and brighter, coursing its way, and I watched it till it was out of sight.

At last, thinking there was no point in dying of cold, I looked about for some means of entering the house; after all I had had a standing invitation! And then I noticed there was no longer any light. Had the oil burned out? The window was open, but the sill was so high that I could only just reach it with my finger-tips and could get no purchase on it to haul myself up. A rock lying by the pathway, however, being fairly flat and stable, raised me sufficiently when moved into position. I grasped the rim of the window, heaved myself on to the sill, and then tumbled headlong into the room, on to a pallet just beneath the window. No lamp was burning. It was pitch black, and I did not know my way about well enough to explore. Where had the lamp gone? If there was someone in the house, why had my shouts not been heard? Then it occurred to me that the front door must have been locked from the inside, for there had been no padlock on it. This was a puzzle, but, cold and tired, I decided to stay where I was, and creeping under the rug on the pallet, I tried to forget the cold and go to sleep.

With dawn I was away, for it would not do to be seen climbing out of a window in the village in one's monk's robes; anything might be conjectured. So I waited for a moment when there was no early riser in sight, and then let myself down on to the rock that had helped me up the night before, restored the rock to its former position, and set off to find Sankar gompa.

I arrived there, still shivering with cold, before Kushok Bakula was up; indeed before the sun had appeared and in the grey morning light. His gelong attendant, whom I had known well in Srinagar, opened the door to me; we shook hands

vigorously, and I was put to sit on a cushioned settee, the first seat I had had since coming to Rizong.

The story about Karan Singh's being ill was an exaggeration, it seemed; he had, from an old accident, a broken and tubercular femur, and it was held with a silver pin. The jolting of the jeep had started an irritation, and as his leg ached badly he had abandoned the end of his tour.

When not singing hymns to myself on the jeep I had diagnosed, in Walter Mitty fashion, a strangulated hernia for the 'King' of Kashmir on which I would operate at dead of night in the new Leh hospital! But I had not decided whether the operation would be successful or not. It would be a do-or-die job anyway. We are all Walter Mittys at times, and on a cold and lonely truck ride one may perhaps be allowed to let one's thoughts wander, contrary though it is to the mindfulness the Buddhist monk is supposed to cultivate!

At the gelong's words my dreams vanished. There would be no spectacular do-or-die operations, and anyway, I was to find, the local medical officer had returned. There was also a supply of Army doctors, since the Army had moved in during the last two months in preparation for a possible Chinese invasion that winter.

I saluted Kushok Bakula and gave him his nephew's letter, and then joined him in his private puja, at which he ordered Tibetan tea for me, as I was still shivering. Now came the problem of returning to Rizong, which would have to be done as quickly as possible, since the Head Lama had told me to come back from Saspola the next morning. For the first time I was able to have a short conversation with Kushok Bakula in Tibetan; previously everything had had to be said through an interpreter, or in writing, as I had done when he visited our gompa. But he waited until the arrival of his personal secretary, who spoke English well, before he told me he was having a reception that day for the 'King' of Kashmir and was inviting me to join it. After that he would arrange for a jeep to take me back home.

A reception! And I was filthy, even more so after my night's activities, and my clothes were straight from the kitchen! Still, it was undoubtedly an honour.

Gelong Thub-sden was busy laying carpets and rugs and

dusting chairs and tables in the hall outside Kushok's rooms, and after helping with this I went to the kitchen where lived the nun I had known when I had stayed at Sankar before, and begged for some hot water to wash in; nothing less would remove the dirt adequately. A basin was produced, and then and there I stripped to the waist and scrubbed with Thub-sden's Lux toilet soap, and in effect had a luxurious bath, compared with the standards of the icy mountain stream and the piece of Lifebuoy that would not lather in it! He also lent me a newer outer robe, as mine was blackened and in holes from innumerable burns, but about the skirt nothing could be done; streaks and all, it would have to appear at the garden party.

At twelve o'clock the guests began to arrive, and we moved out into the gompa grounds, where a marquee had been erected and rows and rows of chairs put on the grass outside it. Feeling extremely self-conscious because of my dirty clothes, I kept as far in the background as possible, but inevitably people I had met before in Kashmir and Leh started telling others about the English getsul, and I could not remain completely isolated as I would have liked to do. Moreover, over the top of the screens that had been erected around the garden peered gelongs and getsuls from Sankar, not invited, and apart from Kushok himself, I, although only a getsul, was the only other person in the robes.

The Army was well represented — it seemed as if nearly all the senior officers were present; and I was amused to hear their ultra-English accents and the way they called their superiors Sir and not Sahib. It could easily have been taken for the British Army, from which most of them derived, since the majority of them were very light-skinned too. In all there must have been over a hundred persons present.

The village band struck up on its drums and horns as Karan Singh with Kushok Bakula came into the enclosure, followed by a Ladakhi lady, in a plum-coloured velvet tunic-dress which came down to her knees and light blue silk trousers, after the fashion of the country. She was Rani of Ladakh, a relative of Kushok, and I had seen her both at Sarnath and Srinagar, but had never spoken, for when passing a man she always held her eyes downcast and did not make conversation. Her hair was in two long pigtails reaching below her waist, and she was

extremely attractive, with the same refined features as her cousin Kushok Bakula. Behind her was the District Commissioner of Leh and the Army Brigadier, judging by the red tabs on the collar of his open-necked khaki shirt. These five went through the crowd and sat down under the marquee, which was open in front, and had a raised platform with a table and chairs set for lunch. The band quickened its tempo, and talking became impossible until Kushok Bakula signed for it to stop. Then two Army officers sauntered up to me and looked at me curiously, wondering how blue eyes fitted with 'lama' robes. Thinking I had better say something, I remarked on the two rows of medals one was wearing and the single row of the other.

'War ribbons, I see,' I said as a conversational gambit.

'I should ruddy well hope so,' said the one with the double row, somewhat aggressively.

At that moment another man who was passing, whom I did not know but who seemed to know me, stopped and told them I was English. At once their faces lit up unexpectedly, as they realized that my gambit had been one of approval and not otherwise, and we had a short conversation, chiefly on the usual topics of where I came from and how I came to be dressed thus.

Then a third officer came up, and on being introduced said with something of a sneer: 'You Buddhists eat meat, don't you?' This was the typical Hindu; over and over again I had heard this from Hindus who prided themselves on their vegetarianism, although I have seen more cruelty to animals among this non-meat-eating section of mankind than anywhere else in the world.

I gave him the Buddha's own recorded answer to this question. 'If a monk is out on his begging round and no-one knows he is coming, and he does not ask for it, what harm is there if, when some good housewife puts meat into his begging bowl, he eats it? But I do forbid my monks to have animals killed for them, or to eat of animals they have seen or heard being killed.' This has always seemed to me pre-eminently rational. The officer's two companions being obviously Moslems, he had little support after this answer, and I moved away to sit down on a chair in the back row out of sight of the marquee.

To fill up time, apparently, an archery contest had been arranged. Lama Lobzang had once told me that Kushok

Bakula had been very keen on archery in his youth, so perhaps this was why, or it may have been a common form of entertainment at a garden party. At all events a target was set up against a tree, a leather background with a painted centre-piece fastened to it, and the Brigadier was first prevailed on to try his hand. Obviously wishing it had been a revolver and not a bow, he managed to overshoot with his first two arrows and to strike the leather with the third. After several others had been equally unsuccessful, the 'king' allowed himself to be led down by Kushok and took up the bow, looking at it uncertainly as if wondering which way up it should be held. Then he fitted an arrow on the wrong side of the stem and let go, so that it fell to the ground a few yards in front of him and not half way to the target. The second arrow Kushok put on the right side for him, but this again scarcely made the distance. The third he insisted on having on the off-side, and this time it sped high up into the tree-trunk.

Then Kushok tried his hand, and I waited, expecting to see three bulls or at least inners scored, but he came no nearer than the leather background, nor did anyone else who shot that day. I should have liked very much to have tried my hand, because when a child a toy bow and arrow had been my favourite plaything; it had cost 1s. 6d., and the arrows had had blunt brass tips, and for many years I had prized this and played Red Indians and Tarzan until a bicycle took its place in my affections.

Then came lunch. First those 'on high', if one may use that Oxford phrase which came into my mind at the time, were served with special dishes, and when they had begun their meal the long tables outside the marquee were filled with food and one helped oneself as from a running buffet. Still keeping to the rear, I waited until the majority had seized plates and utensils, and then crept up and found, to my delight, a dish of chipped potatoes — something I had long since forgotten. I helped myself liberally, taking also some tomato salad, another unaccustomed luxury.

Standing back behind the rest I started on my meal with much relish. No shor-lo and par-pa, or tupa today. There were curds, too, to follow, and milky rice pudding. But here was Kushok Bakula thrusting his way through the crowd towards

me. No, he couldn't be ... yes, he was signing to me to follow him up to the 'high table', and my skirt streaked and blackened as it was! Karan Singh had seen me when he had come in and remembered me from Srinagar, and wished to have a talk. I was to dine with them. At the table he sat with the Rani opposite, the Brigadier on his right, and the D.C. on his left, and a chair was put for me between himself and the Brigadier. Under the influence of the Brigadier's 'Old Boy' conversation, so utterly British, I discovered myself having just said:

'Y'know, Kushok Shas is a damn good chap!'

Surely never before had Lama been referred to in such terms by his disciple! And how easily, how depressingly easily does one revert! Now I was being pressed to magnificent food, and I explained my need for sweetstuff, so that Karan Singh had a bowl of tinned peaches in syrup placed before me and I ate my way through it with gusto. Surely my trip had been worth while!

When he asked me how it was I had come, I told him how we had waited all day yesterday for him and had heard that he was ill, so that Kushok Shas had sent me down to see if there was anything I could do, and I gave him Jam Yung's letter. It was then that I learned of the silver pin. He seemed appreciative of my having made the journey on his behalf, and asked me to take back a small offering to Rizong Shas for him which he had been intending to send.

Unfortunately the others had got half-way through their lunch before I had been sent for, and I had to stop before I was nearly satisfied, hungry as I was and with such good food around. But he had to catch a plane back to Srinagar, and reluctantly I vacated my seat and retired once more to the back row, all the more embarrassed at the respectful looks I received now as I returned through the crowd!

Then up came a man who might have been an Englishman who had been out in the sun a little too long, and in a perfect English voice he said that he had heard I wanted a lift back to Rizong. Could he stay the night there if he gave me one, as he was touring Ladakh in a jeep, being one of the Frontier Guards? I jumped at the offer, and he disappeared to change, he said, and would return and pick me up in an hour's time.

It was nearer two hours before he came back, and then he

brought with him a small red bag containing coins and a letter and scarf, which he said Karan Singh had given him to give me just before he boarded the plane. This was the promised gift to Rizong. He had changed into khaki, with one of those New Zealand Army type hats turned up on one side, and we now sat in the front seat beside the driver, who was in mufti. As this day had been the first on which I had spoken English to anyone except myself since coming to Rizong, inevitably I chattered all the way. He told me his name was Yusuf Ali, which seemed so unlikely that I asked him how he had managed to be so English.

'I ought to be; I was educated in England,' he said, 'in London and Bristol.'

At once I asked him if he happened to know a very old and dear friend of mine, who is a public figure in the latter town. He did, *per impossibile*, not well, but had met him while spending his leaves there in the early years of the war. We were now on common ground and in friendship bound. Next I took the opportunity of asking what news there was in the world of late, as I had seen no newspaper since I left Kashmir. Was Churchill still alive? Had anything startling happened? And then I remembered what I particularly wanted to know.

'What is this moving star we have seen so much? There must have been something in the papers about it, surely. Is it a Flying Saucer?'

'Oh, that's a Sputnik,' he said casually, 'Russian or American, I forget which.' But he had taken little interest, and also had not been in continuous touch with newspapers, so did not know very much about it. Anyway old Rimpoche had been nearer the truth than I!

We talked hard all the way, thus making the trip seem shorter than ever before, but it was dusk when we reached the foot of the mountain climb from which I had set out just one day before. But what a day! I in no wise regretted my decision, uncomfortable though the night had been, but I did not know what view Kushok Shas would take of it.

We commandeered a small boy to go with us, leaving the jeep with all its contents by the side of the road unguarded, since we could not do otherwise, and as the light faded we made what haste we could, for the path was tricky if one did not know it well, and as darkness fell we were stumbling over rocks and

bumping into boulders, for there was as yet no moon. The bag of money was tucked down inside my toga, and my one fear all the way was that it might fall out and all the coins go rolling down the mountainside to be searched for as treasure trove by the local children when daylight came. But it did not after all.

As we came near to the nunnery the fierce barking of the dog made us stop, and the boy refused to try to pass, for, he said, its leash was lengthened at night so that it could reach the path. There was nothing for it but to rouse the nuns, who would have retired for lack of lighting. I shouted for Annila and Gelong-ma, the word for a nun, and at length the manageress came sleepily out to know what all the noise was about and why a getsul should be coming up there anyway at that time of night. She was followed by the entire gompa, whom the dog and myself had successfully awakened, and she threw stones at the dog, driving it back, and then stood between it and the path and waved us on.

Now we were on the part I knew best, where stream and bundles of wood lay, but how different it seemed in the dark! Still, the boy knew the route like the back of his hand and led us surely on, taking the right-hand way round all the little chörtens which had been set up along it, for one should never pass one of these on the left.

When the gompa came in sight, high above us, looming white against the blackness of the mountain and the sky, there was only a single light to be seen, and that was in Kushok's room, where a tiny flame from an equally tiny oil lamp shone down over the building. He, at any rate, was up. All the rest was in darkness.

We took the short cut to the kitchen, and crack! I hit my head violently on a doorway over the steps, which normally I would see and avoid. The noise of this and my exclamation roused those who were in the kitchen, apparently not yet gone to bed but sitting in the darkness talking, and I heard Samten's voice asking who was there. I told him 'Imji getsul' and he called to me to come into the kitchen.

Warning Yusuf Ali of another low door, we went in to find half-a-dozen or so who all jumped up and surrounded us, while Pugu Chung-Chung lit the wee lamp. I introduced Yusuf Ali as a friend of Kushok Bakula, who had given me a lift in a jeep

here from Leh. This was something of an exaggeration, for until that day he had never met Kushok, but happened to be staying with one of the Army officers who had received an invitation. But it ensured his being accepted at once, and it was difficult to think of any other way of explaining him.

They clamoured to know what I had been doing and had I really come from Leh. I told them as well as I could the story of my twenty-four hours away and had to repeat several times how I had not only spoken to the Rajah but actually had lunch with him.

They looked wonderingly at each other. 'A getsul,' they were saying, 'A getsul, and he has been talking to the Rajah, and has had lunch with him.' I felt my stock rising, and so I added airily, 'Oh yes, I knew him in Srinagar, had tea with him there.' They now looked at me almost reverentially, and then Samten told me to report to Kushok, so, leaving Yusuf Ali, who I had said would sleep with me that night, to make friends as best he could speaking Urdu (for only Jam Yung understood a little of that), I felt my way up the steep steps to the upper storey.

Rizong Shas was not in his room, although the light was burning there as we had seen from down the mountain, and I next tried the geshés' room, where I found him sitting on the floor with them reading out loud from a Tibetan book. I made the triple obeisance and then produced the 'bag of gold' – actually it contained one hundred silver rupees – and laid it on the mat in front of him.

'Karan Singh?' he asked. Then I told him of my adventures, adding a graphic description of how I had climbed into Tashi Namgyal's house not finding him at home, for, of course, he knew Tashi Namgyal. He was less impressed than the others had been at my having spoken to or lunched with the 'King' of Kashmir, and seemed to think it quite an ordinary thing to do, perhaps not for a getsul, but at any rate for an Englishman!

I now looked at the letter which had been given to me with the bag, and found it was addressed to myself as 'The English Bhikshu at Rizong'. Opening it I had to translate as best I might, and to roars of laughter at my effort, his apologies for not having been able to come the day before, and his expression of hope that at some future date he might visit Rizong itself.

The final paragraph was addressed to me personally. It said that next time I was in Srinagar would I drop in at the Palace and he would give me a real *English* meal, which was typical of his informality and kindness.

And then Kushok Shas showed that, although he might be a disciplinarian, he was not bigoted or over-scrupulous, for he told me to go to the kitchen and tell them to give us something to eat. We had had a long and difficult climb in the dark and nothing since lunch, so this night he would waive the rule. I was to find another similar instance of this breadth of mind later.

Meanwhile Yusuf Ali had been ensconced in my little room, which was full of everyone down to Pugu Chung-Chung, and Tibetan tea had hastily been made and set before him. I told them Kushok had said I could eat too, although they all knew I usually had a bit at night, though that did not involve the kitchen staff, except on the two occasions already mentioned. If I did not keep back a bit of taki or tsampa I would lie awake all night in hunger, dropping off to sleep just before it was time to get up, and one cannot do that indefinitely.

Thin taki and butter appeared, and tea for me too. Jam Yung aired his Urdu with pride, and it was late before we could go to bed. Rugs were laid on the floor for Yusuf Ali in the dining room, opposite where I put down mine, and at last, tucked up and warm, and not scratching overmuch, we fell to talking once more, treat as this was for me.

I remarked on how the Army officers seemed exactly like British ones.

Yusuf Ali laughed: 'They nearly all try to be as English as they can,' he said, which I took to be a compliment to the much maligned Britisher in India.

We talked of Bristol and London and other parts of the country which he knew, and found we had another common friend in an Englishwoman who was married to a Punjabi and lived in Delhi. When I had met them I had found they were both Oxford 'men' and had gone down the year before I had gone up, so there was a bond between us, and he had worked with her at the Tibetan Refugee camps in Assam, so knew her well.

At last sleep came, and I was pleased from all points of view that I had decided to go on to Leh. It had been a good adventure and I had made a new friend.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

End of Term

Next morning I rose quietly as soon as I heard the genyens stirring, who still found it warm enough to sleep outside in the courtyard below the window, leaving Yusuf Ali rolled in his rugs like a chrysalis in its cocoon, good for yet another couple of hours' sleep. There was to be a puja that morning, I found, and the taki was being made as soon as the tupa pak was finished. By the time I was on my round with the tupa pots Ali was up and gazing at the sunrise from the kitchen courtyard.

This was always, indeed, a beautiful sight, for the sun, rising on the left of the monastery, shed its reddish glow over the tips of the Southern range, whose mountains were capped and streaked with snow which glinted against their black granite background, in contrast to the brown hills between, which refused to reflect the glory of the sun. It was the same again in the evenings, with the sun now setting on our right, and the peaks would stand out in dark contrast to the rainbow colours of the sky, and mountain deer would come and graze, silhouetted against the skyline far above us, tiny figures like toys, secure in a ground where killing or catching was forbidden.

Apologizing for lack of proper washing facilities, I brought my guest a small pot of water and rather shamefacedly offered my towel, which by no stretch of imagination could any longer be called white, but was less black in some parts than in others. Then I showed him where the lavatory was, and warned him against slipping down the slit in the middle in the still dark little room.

By now it was time to collect the tupa pots again before starting my own breakfast, and when I came back to the kitchen I found Ali sitting on the struts which held the water urns and contemplating the steaming cauldron of tupa-remnants. I pointed out the weighty urns, and remarked that plastic ones would be a great boon, since the water itself was heavy enough without having brass or copper urns as well to carry. The idea tickled him immensely, and often thereafter, and when I met him again later in Delhi, he referred to it and suggested writing to some manufacturer asking him to supply them!

A cup was found for him and filled with tupa, and I broke off a twig from a piece of firewood and gave it him as cutlery so that he could easily spear or scoop up the bits of dough. The kitchen staff were very intrigued that such a *burra sahib* should be sitting with them, and Gyatso had intended bringing his breakfast to his room and making him taki instead of giving him the tupa. But I knew Ali would prefer this. He was the kind of person who liked new experiences, and to make the most of any place he visited.

The puja tea had to be made immediately, but Gyatso gave me permission to show Ali round and introduce him to Kushok, although there was no way in which they could talk to each other and I was a poor interpreter.

I warned him I should have to make the triple obeisance, which it would be an embarrassment for one Englishman to see another Englishman doing, and he was English enough, but I said it was the same as saluting in the Army, and as he was a retired Colonel, though still quite young, he could understand that.

We were inevitably regaled with tea, and Kushok's tea was much superior in quality to that of the kitchen, being well laced with butter. But our stay was short, since there could be no real conversation. When Ali tried to make an offering of ten rupees to the gompa for his night's lodging, Kushok would have none of it, but said he was glad that he had come and had given me a lift back. Then he called on Rimpoche, who had been in Mismari refugee camp where Yusuf Ali had worked, and knew him by sight. But this time our stay was even briefer, for I could talk less to him than to Kushok, so we merely looked in, paid our respects, and left to make a round of the temples.

He was as intrigued with the 'Christmas tree' bell as I had been, and I explained the different images as best I could, together with some of the most elementary principles of Buddhism. He asked if he could come to a bit of the puja, but said he would have to leave by ten o'clock as he must reach Kargil that night. His father had been a Moslem scholar of some renown, and his mother an English Christian, and he had himself been baptized into that religion when in Bristol. But Buddhists have no objection to those of other religions coming to their pujas, and soon he was sitting crosslegged on a mat behind the row of gelongs, with a cup of Tibetan tea on a tiny table in front of him.

When it was time for him to go I had just finished a tea round, so I was able to leave safely for about ten minutes and saw him off regretfully from the kitchen steps. It had been a pleasant interlude, and though I did not know it then, we were later on to renew the acquaintance.

But my time at Rizong was drawing to a close. Kushok Bakula had told me, that cold morning at Sankar, that he had been unable to get a further extension of my permit, and that I should have to leave in the first week of October, only two weeks ahead. And I did not want to go at all! I had been happy here, despite the hard, uncomfortable life, and I felt that I had at last found my home.

One thing that I had long wanted to do was to secure and translate a copy of the Mahayana Pratimoksha, or Code of Discipline for monks, for I had already studied and written on that of the Hinayana. The Hinayana bhikshus are always criticizing the Mahayana bhikshus for not keeping the rules, and also maintain that their rules are different from the 'right' ones. Actually the Mahayana monk has 253 to keep, and the Hinayana only 232; and many of them cannot be kept nowadays in any case with the best will in the world, if one moves about that world at all.

With this in view I went to Gelong Samten one day and broached the subject. Had he a copy, and could I borrow it, please?

'I have, but what do you want it for? You have your own getsul's rules,' he asked.

'I want to translate it, sir,' I said.

'But getsuls may not read the *Pratimoksha*, it is only for gelongs,' he replied.

'I have already carefully studied the Hinayana *Dulva* (Vinaya), and I want to compare the two. There are five books of that in English, and I have read them all, and it is probably the same,' I argued, not to be defeated lightly. And I looked longingly at the book he had pulled out and was turning over in his hands.

'Then go and ask Kushok if you can. If he says, "Yes," I will lend it to you. Here, take these leaves with you,' and he pushed into my hand some half-dozen pages out of the volume.

In glee I went in search of my Master, and found him eventually in Rimpoche's room looking for a book in the library with one of the geshés.

'Gelong Samten said if you say it is all right he will lend me this book,' I said.

'What is it?' he asked, taking the pages from me.

'The *So Sor Thar Pai To*, sir,' I replied, which is the Tibetan for the Pratimoksha.

'Yes, yes, all right,' and he waved me away again and returned to his search.

In triumph I returned to Samten, stopping on the way to collect paper and pen, so that I might begin copying at once. Gelong Samten took the paper and cut it for me into the shape for a Tibetan book, long and narrow, and ruled it with six lines to the page, one of the proper fixed numbers. Then he gave me a block of wood to write on and some black ink.

'I have to go and see Kushok,' he said, 'you can stay here.'

'All right, Sir, he's in Rimpoche's room,' and I settled down to the task of copying.

By the time he returned I was half-way through and very pleased with myself, for the characters seemed a great improvement on my former efforts and it looked quite like 'lama' writing! But wait until the morrow!

Next day we were up early, for there was to be a big puja down at the Chulie Chan, the apricot orchard round the nunnery. This would resemble a harvest thanksgiving service, for the crop was now almost finished, but it had been a good one.

'Take the two big kettles with you and get going,' said Gyatso to me directly after breakfast, when the messy job of

washing the tupa pots was over. This was the task I liked least of all, as it meant putting one's hands into the slimy interiors and rinsing them with a little cold water. So off I went with the sol-tips down to the nunnery, the soles of my sandals flapping more than ever in the dust, and there I found Tshultim Dorje, who had gone on ahead, watching a cauldron of water heating on a fire in one of the two nunnery kitchens.

Shortly after, Gyatso, Lotus, and Pugu Chung-Chung arrived, Pugu's rosy cheeks beaming at the thought of a day among the apricots, or what was left of them. But it was myself that Gyatso took off down to the orchard, where a nun was picking up fallen fruit in a desultory fashion, and eating three for every one she put into a basket. Gyatso pointed at a tree which was still loaded with the golden balls. I took the hint, having never lost my youthful delight in tree climbing, and up I went, for it was easy with low branches, and when ensconced started picking fruit and throwing it down.

'Shake it, idiot!' Gyatso indicated with waves of his arm and the expression of his face. Could there really be such a stupid getsul? So hastily I began shaking, and then a passing villager was called in to go up and assist me. He, an old hand at this sort of thing, perched himself on an opposing branch and shook so vigorously that apricots bounced off my head and shoulders and the nun was hard put to it to keep up her quota of eating.

When the ground had a golden carpet over it Gyatso was satisfied and left, and I came down to help the nun and show her how fruit should be gathered, but soon I found myself eating as many as she, if not more. Then Tshultim Dorje was sent to fetch me back to the kitchen and the day's work began in earnest.

The morning's puja was of the dull and colourless variety, without music and with only the monotonous gabbling, and after it we could go to the stream to wash before lunch was ready to be served. It was now I met my Waterloo. Coming back to the kitchen I saw Schoolmaster Samten standing at the kitchen door with my painstaking effort of the day before in his hand.

'You are a very bad getsul,' he said, waving the paper in my face.

'Why, sir?' I asked, for being accustomed to being called very bad and very good alternately, I did not worry overmuch, and was not this a piece of work to be proud of? Apparently it was not!

'Look at this,' he said, smacking the sheets, 'it's full of mistakes. See here, this should be 'chen' and not 'chon', and this should have an accent, and you have left out 'den' and ... and ... ' he went on enumerating my delinquencies.

'You are very bad. Tomorrow ... ' and he raised his hand to his cheek to indicate that on the morrow I should have my face smacked good and hard. This was the common form of punishment for scholars who made mistakes in their lessons. Having already made its acquaintance I was not enthusiastic for a repetition of it; however, I was now a getsul, and that was that. At all events after it I should be likely to make fewer mistakes in the future than if I got off scot free.

My master turned over the pages, pointing out words here and there. I certainly had been very careless, and always was when copying, although he was not to know that. Then he raised his hand and patted his cheek again: 'Tomorrow!' he said. But I must be grateful that he did not subject me to the punishment then and there in front of gelongs and nuns and all. Then an awful thought struck me:

'Must I copy it out again, sir?' This would be even worse than having one's face smacked, as it took time and was a slow process.

'Of course,' he said, and walked away from so stupid a pupil.

But that afternoon, to my surprise and relief, in the middle of the puja he rose, and making the triple obeisance to Rimpoche and Kushok in farewell, went off to Hemis Shuba on business and was away for a couple of nights. But he would still return, and if I wanted to finish the copy I should have to remind him of it, for he had both my paper and his own pages. And I wanted that copy enough to risk any punishment.

Early as we had risen that morning, we were up still earlier the next. Reveille sounded unexpectedly out of the darkness, and it could hardly have been four o'clock; this meant there was to be a big puja. The kitchen was already active by the time I reached it, and tea was being made, a most unusual

thing at that time of the morning. A single kettle in the care of Pugu Chung-Chung then went up to the Temple, again an odd event, but the rest of us made pak in the normal way. All was finished at least an hour before dawn, so there was nothing more to do but settle down on the floor for a doze.

Some time after, their puja presumably finished for the time being, two gelongs came down, Za-wa and Zod-pa, lantern in hand, and they saw only five bodies stretched out and no signs of activity. Through one eye I saw Zod-pa make a bee line for Gyatso under the window, and without more ado turn his skirt up and smack him. This seemed to have no effect at all in arousing our cook, so next Zod-pa took the big brass water ladle and besprinkled him with cold water. By this time we were all awake and laughing, as also was Gyatso, who explained that there was no work to do as it was all done long ago. Zod-pa, also laughing, retreated, and we settled down for a few more minutes of rest. Zod-pa had a great sense of humour and was always practical-joking, so that it was hard to know when he was being serious and when not. I also discovered accidentally that he was excessively ticklish, and I only had to approach with a tiny twig in my hand for him to take to his heels and flee the kitchen, returning to peer cautiously round the door to see if it was safe to enter again.

Breakfast over and the pots cleaned and stowed away in their cupboard, gelong Hla-Skyubs, the second senior gelong, sent me to round up all the gelongs to come down to the kitchen and make torma, for there was apparently to be a very big puja that day. Soon the kitchen was a hive of industry. Gelongs like the gentle Dam Chhös who hardly knew what the inside of it looked like, Shés-rub, of the military moustache, Hla-Skyubs himself, and all except Yshé Gompo, the geshés, and the senior gelong were there, so that there was hardly room to move round. They were spread out over the floor with trays or troughs in front of them, kneading, and moulding and I was pouring water for them on to the flour, but more, it seemed, getsuls were not allowed to do, although at Sarnath anyone could help fashion the figures.

But there was much other work to be done. The Puja was to be in the Lama temple, which meant an extra flight of stairs after the usual ones, and two urns of red-hot ashes, one on top

of the other, to carry up, then the tea-kettles and the incense bowl. In the Temple I found Jam Yung and Zod-pa, whom I had not noticed were absent from the kitchen activity, on top of a bamboo home-made ladder unveiling the thankhas round the walls, which were usually covered by curtains against the sunlight and dirt. Going down the steps again I passed Kushok, and remembered to doff my robe in the correct bow, but could not check the 'Good morning, sir,' which came so automatically. But by now he understood this and replied with a 'Good morning'. He was on his way up to help with arranging the Temple as he had helped to prepare the Mé puja.

Apparently two getsuls were required, so Lotus and myself were the only possible choice. The puja began in an unusual way with a procession headed by Jam Yung and Zod-pa in the yellow fringed helmets, as trumpeters, one of the new gelongs, Dubches, as incense carrier, and two more with conch shells. Then came Rimpoche with Kushok following close, and their attendants behind them carrying the yellow ceremonial outer robes. Thondup then headed another contingent all armed with gifts, robes, begging bowls, dishes of apples, and a variety of other things in their arms. They entered the Temple and the fanfare ended as Rimpoche made his triple obeisance to the Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha. Then Kushok made his, and after him all the gelongs and getsuls present, and the gifts were spread out on the window sill. In addition to those I had seen in passing was a magnificent brocaded robe and a long trident affair of unknown use. Who gave them I do not know, or what the puja was to celebrate, since it was the Lama Chod-pa with more added to it. However, I was able this time to join in the chanting a little, partly from memory and partly reading from my puja book, and this made me feel I was really part of the monastery. But I still knew little enough of it.

Half-way through the gifts were brought up to old Rimpoche, who wore the special yellow cap with long sidepieces which only true Lamas may wear, and received the brocaded robe in rich colours of red, blue, and gold from Kushok, while Jam Yung, Zod-pa, and Thondup brought the other gifts that he might touch them all.

Lunch of course was served in the Temple, so that now Lotus and myself had to start running up and down the steps with

plates and bowls. But it was a good lunch, and there was enough over for us of the kitchen today, so our labour was rewarded.

The next morning there was no puja, so I was sent down to bring up an extra load of firewood for stacking, for now that whole little room below the kitchen had to be stuffed full of stacked branches before the snow made it damp and frozen. On my way up I was overtaken by Gelong Nor-phel driving Kushok's white horse. I asked him what it was for.

'Kushok is going to Leh,' he replied: 'Lochas Rimpoche is coming from Spituk to stay here. Kushok will go back to Leh in his jeep and the horse will take him to the main road.'

'What's he going for?' I asked.

'The Dalai Lama is in Ladakh and he is going to see him,' was the odd answer I received.

I found this difficult to believe. There had long been rumours of Lochas Rimpoche coming to spend a few days with us, but that Kushok would go to Leh at the same time that his guest and erstwhile Guru was arriving seemed very unlikely. Nor could I believe that His Holiness the Dalai Lama would ever be allowed by the Government to tour Ladakh in the present critical situation, for the Chinese would surely construe it as a hostile act.

But when I stacked my bundle of wood and returned to the kitchen I found a hum of activity. Something was certainly afoot. Gelong Zod-pa, Dam Chhös, and Namgyal were setting out on some errand with Tshultim Dorje in attendance. Lochas Rimpoche was on his way to Rizong from Spituk, and the white horse would meet him at the place where the jeep stopped. This much was true, but where did the rest of the story come from? I never discovered, but when I asked Samten about it later he told me that the general opinion of this gelong was that he was rather a foolish fellow.

That morning Samten returned from Hemis Shuba and after lunch indicated that I was to come to his room. Still, he seemed in the best of good tempers and pleased at the thought of Lochas Rimpoche coming, for he also had known him in Drespung.

Somewhat apprehensively I took my last sheet of foolscap to make a new book, but when I got to his cell I found that he had corrected it all for me and that I should not have to recopy it, and apparently no punishment was to be forthcoming after all!

Fortunately his annoyance had evaporated during the time he had been away.

I finished copying, and with much greater care than before, since a small spark could set things on fire again, but when I read it over it seemed to me that after all my trouble I had not got what I wanted. These did not seem to be the rules, which would have been set out differently, and what little I could understand bore no resemblance to the Pratimoksha as I knew it. I questioned Samten, who at first insisted that it was the Pratimoksha ceremony, but then admitted that it was the preliminary puja that came before the reciting of the rules. No, I was only a getsul, how could I study the rules, which were for gelongs only?

I left him and sought out Kushok, who was once more with the geshés, and showed him my copy.

'These aren't the Pratimoksha rules, are they, sir,' I asked. 'They are not set out, one, two, three, four, as they should be.'

He took it. 'No! What is it you want?'

'The rules of the Pratimoksha in a list. Gelong Samten says they are not for getsuls, but I want to see them.'

'What do you want them for?'

'To compare with the Hinayana ones, which I know well, and of which I have written a critical study. The bhikshus say the Mahayana Pratimoksha is not the proper one, and I want to compare them, sir.'

Kushok said something to one of the geshés and pointed to a volume on the table. The geshé took three pages out of it and passed them to him.

'These are the rules, one, two, three, four, and so on,' he said. 'Here are the four big ones,' and he ran his finger along the top line, but the page was upside down to me.

'Shog sod (not to kill), Ma-chin len (not to take what is not given),' I began, paraphrasing from memory, 'mi-mo (not to have a woman), hla-mig, hla-na-wa (not to claim psychic powers not having them). These are the four big ones. If you do these things you are no longer a gelong.'

'Good, very good,' he said, looking up at me in surprise. 'Here, take it and copy it.' So at last I had what I really wanted, and by the light of my flickering lamp that night I copied it, but carefully, lest Samten might think to check it later.

But it was still afternoon, and there was no sign as yet of Lochas Rimpoche appearing. There being no one in the kitchen except Tashi looking after the tea, I put on my toga and walked down the path towards the nunnery, thinking perhaps to meet him on the way up. But there was no sign of any horse or escort, and I sat down on the low wall bordering the apricot orchard and watched the stream trickle by below me. Not for long, however, was I left in peace, for a voice hailed me, and there was Gyatso in working rig signalling me to come down to the next field, where, I had not noticed, were the rest of the kitchen staff, Lotus, Pugu, and Tshultim Dorje, together with a few nuns and the girl genyen or genyen-ma, aged about sixteen or so. She had for a long time puzzled me because she looked so exactly like a boy and had boyish mannerisms so that for some weeks I had thought her to be a genyen. She wore the same red dressing gown, but in addition a pair of cotton white trousers, as did many of the Ladakhi women as well as the men. Presumably a single dressing-gown garment was not considered adequate for a female.

There they all were, sitting under a tree with a camp fire going, on which brewed the inevitable tea, and Tshultim Dorje and two of the nuns were slicing radishes for the tupa. Gyatso had a job for me, since I had so unadvisedly and unwarily come to the place of work. And he slung a basket full of radishes on to my back to take back to the gompa. Not satisfied with it as it was, however, he crammed yet more in until it was full to bursting, and though one radish does not weigh much, it is astonishing how heavy a whole basketful can be. Back I went up the hill without having achieved my object of meeting Lochas Rimpoche. Then it dawned on me that Tshultim Dorje had been with those who had set out that morning to meet him, which only meant that he could not be coming that day after all, which proved to be a great disappointment to all concerned.

Back in the kitchen I found Gelong Za-wa lying on the floor, groaning and holding his face, and on making him move his hand I saw a large carbuncle on the side of his jaw at which he kept picking. He had some fever and was feeling ill. Having nothing much to work with, I found a bit of taki and soaked it in hot water to make the time-honoured bread poultice. I tied

this on with a bandage, and gave him some sulphonamide tablets. But he was a bad patient, and seemed to think the idea of putting taki on his boil was something unheard of, so that my poultice did not stay on for long, and, though he continued the tablets, he invented some dressing of his own, but it was a week before it had gone down and he felt better.

Medical work, though slight, was a problem. The senior gelong's sodium bicarbonate was finished, and a few days later Zod-pa went down with a right side nephritis, so that he was lying on the floor of his cell with his knees drawn up as the waves of pain from renal colic swept over him. I had nothing suitable for this, my only antibiotics being Elkosin tablets, one of the sulphonamides which it is not particularly safe to use with kidney trouble. However, there was no help for it. Exhorting him, with the aid of his brother Samten, to make sure he drank as much water as he could, I gave him these, and in due course he recovered. But with gelong Kanpo, the senior gelong, it was more difficult. As is often the case with elderly people suffering from this kind of disease he began blaming me for not taking a proper interest in his case and saying I must give him medicine and advise him on his diet.

Poor devil! What he ate would make little difference, although it would be better not to have too much fat. And he had finished all my powder. A visiting gelong announced that he was going on to Leh, so Samten was primed to instruct him to buy some more sodium bicarbonate, and I wrote down my requirements on a piece of paper, together with a request for potassium citrate for nephritis cases, for Thondup was also exhibiting signs of the same complaint, bilaterally but less acute.

Off went the gelong, and I hoped some passing layman would bring the medicines back in a few days. But ten days passed, and then a gelong returning from Leh brought back a small packet of the sodium bicarbonate from the medical officer there, with a message that he was giving that, but as no money had been supplied he could not send the other. Samten had not thought of the money, or else had none to give, and Rigdol was away. Next time I came I should at least know better what to bring.

The days went by, and there was no more news of Lochas

Rimpoche, who was apparently still securely ensconced at Spituk, and we ceased to expect him.

One morning when I was with Samten, reciting my ill-learned puja, there was a sound of tinkling bells, and he jumped up and looked over the wall. Coming up the mountain was a train of mules and donkeys all laden with sacks and bales, and driven by a stout nun and gelong Sonam.

'The tsampa is coming to Rizong today,' he said. 'Come with me!'

We went up the steps and along the path past the two main temples to the back entrance. Other gelongs were now coming from all directions, and it seemed we were to unload the cargo.

The sacks and bales were unstrapped, and Dam Chhös was heaving a sack or bale on to each broad back as it presented itself. Knowing the limits of my strength after two years of malnutrition, I shouldered a bale of wool as being probably the lighter of the two. For, a few weeks before, two sacks of tsampa had come up on donkeys, and Tashi had carried one up the steps to the kitchen and signed to me to take the other. But after managing to get it on to my back I was unable to raise it and myself up the first steep step, try as I would, although I had been a rowing man in Oxford days and had several cups to my credit. It was humiliating enough to be defeated by a mere boy, but what was worse to see, a few days later, one of the fatter nuns come into the kitchen, bent double under a similar load, but yet managing to carry it without difficulty and to doff her cap as well to the gelongs as she passed!

So Dam Chhös heaved the bale up from the right side and it immediately fell off again over my left shoulder! Once more heaving, we had it more securely fixed, and I moved off in the line of porters, only to become wedged in the little doorway through which we had to pass, not having made enough allowance for the extra height of the bale topping my head. An impatient shove from the man behind me, however, released me, and I made the short journey to the kitchen courtyard successfully, there to drop the bale to the ground, only to have to heave it up again on to the stack which had been made.

Now the courtyard was becoming filled with sacks and bales of wool, and I wondered what was the purpose of bringing them here. They were certainly Rizong produce, but wool, if it

was to be woven, would be needed at the nunnery rather than with us, and the tsampa, if for sale, would surely be better taken to the village. However, they must know their own business best, and when I came up from lunch I saw a dozen Ladakhis with Rigdol, weighing the sacks and bales and obviously doing a deal over them. During the course of the day when I was not looking they all disappeared, but, so far as I know, we did not have the task of reloading them.

That evening a khaki-clad figure arrived to take a census of the inmates of the gompa. Apparently he was on a round for the Indian Government. The questions were almost more fatuous than usual on such occasions, and I was asked, *inter alia*, of what religion I was, when in my Buddhist monk's robes, what village I came from (to which I always reply 'London!'), and what languages I knew. It puzzled the census-taker somewhat to write down in Urdu the words Latin, Greek, and French, and of what value it would be to anyone to know this, it would be hard to imagine!

But the question still so often asked on questionnaires which always irritates me is: What caste are you? despite the fact that the Government has officially abolished castes. The really snooty answer to that, of course, is: 'I am English, castes are only for Indians', but it does not make one more popular, especially as all foreigners rank in Indian eyes with the Śudras or Untouchables! However, he spoke some English, and we had a chat over a cup of tea, for he was not responsible for the questions he had to ask.

Next day we had a strange new puja, held this time in the dining room and with a number of laymen present, one or two of whom I had seen the day before buying the goods. Rimpoche was not there, but Kushok sat on his box seat at the end of the room, and there was little space even for our tea-kettle on their stoves, so many were crowded in. And then I made a *faux pas* which might have been forgiveable in my first week but was not after three months' training. Afraid that my teacup might be knocked over or trampled on on the floor, I put it up on the small shelf behind the door. At once a titter arose from the gelongs and a laugh from Kushok, and I realized my mistake. There was a getsul's cup perched far above the tea bowls of all the gelongs and even of Kushok himself! Blushing I hastily

removed it and put it on the floor beside a pillar which Samten indicated. It was difficult to remember these niceties of strange customs, when no one in England would worry in the least about the height of cups or seats.

There were a number of strange faces among the gelongs, and one of the ex-getsuls who had disappeared directly after his ordination, and whom I had completely forgotten, was there. Another who had come from Spituk told us that Lochas Rimpoche was definitely not coming, although he gave no reason.

The puja was of the uninspiring variety with no music and much tea drinking, and the large size of the congregation made many journeys to the kitchen necessary. Only Gyatso, who was looking after the tea there, and Za-wa, whose face was still not its normal size, were absent. When the puja was finished the gelong who had come from Spituk got up and made a short speech, showing some account books, and finally he laid a bundle of rupee notes on the table in front of the senior gelong, and handed the books over to Kushok to peruse. Apparently this was a puja over the sales of the Rizong produce, such as it was, and when I served the tea I tried to make a rough calculation of the money he had brought. It was mostly in ten-rupee notes, and seemed to be about 250 rupees (£18) altogether. This could be of little use if it was an annual income, but everyone looked pleased at the result, and after taki had been brought in for the visitors, but not for the gelongs, tea drinking began in earnest and conversation flowed freely.

It was now within a week of the time by which I should have to leave Ladakh, and I must think about moving. Kushok, I was told, was going to Leh the very next day with old Rimpoche, who intended going down to the plains for the winter, and Kushok himself might or might not come, but in any case he had to go to Nubra gompa first to spend a few weeks there, and this was three days' journey on horseback from Leh to the North.

I consulted Kushok on how I had best go, as with my bedding and a bag, heavy with two dictionaries and a grammar, I could not very well walk and carry them down the mountain by myself. He told me that the day after he was leaving three geshés and Dam Chhös would be coming down to Leh, and I could go with them. There would be some horses for us. This

seemed a very good suggestion, and I liked the idea of unorthodox travel as a new experience. But I was sad at the thought of going at all, although it was now becoming colder and would soon be arctic in temperature and impossible to stay in any case. All I could hope was that, if the Chinese did not come down this winter, I could get a new permit in the spring and be back again as fast as a horse or a jeep would carry me. Kushok now promised that next time I came it would not be as a kitchen getsul, but with raised status, working in the library and reading and copying whatever books I would. Kushok Bakula would give me the Higher Ordination and I should be a full Rizong monk.

CHAPTER TWELVE

The Way Back

On the morning the Principals were to leave I was assigned my last tea-kettle for my last puja, which was to be held in the Lama temple. Whether it was a routine one or for a safe journey I do not know, but not being certain whether I should have an opportunity later, I sought out Kushok to say farewell. There was a strong affinity between us, and I was as reluctant to part from my long-sought Guru as from Rizong itself; so for the first time I found myself making the triple obeisance with some depth of feeling, whereas previously it had merely been a form of exercise for me. Instead of going forward and making the last bow in front of the table, I went round it and knelt on the mat at his feet.

But even this did not satisfy me. I felt I had also to express my feelings in the way that was natural to me. Would he shake hands, I wondered? Tibetans do not like to as a general rule, but those who have spent some time in India are becoming accustomed to the convention, although it amuses them intensely.

Tentatively I held out my hand. Kushok looked at it uncertainly for a moment, as if not quite sure what it was there for, and then grasped it firmly in his own.

'Goodbye, sir, and thank you very much,' I said in English, for by now he understood the conventional forms of speech.

'I will see you in Leh,' he replied in Tibetan, which surprised me, for I had not known he would be staying there for

more than one night. Now I was satisfied. That firm handgrasp had meant much to me, and I turned to go down to my place behind the tea-kettle and left him continuing to sort out the puja books he wished to take with him. His saddlery lay in a heap in the courtyard outside, and reminded me of the time we went to Hemis Shuba. Then things were still new and strange; now I felt like an old hand, and perfectly at home in my surroundings. And tomorrow I would have to leave. Still, we might see Kushok for a few minutes again at Leh, for we would certainly go to pay our respects. That was some consolation.

The puja began, Samten leading and playing the cymbals while I served tea for the last time in company with Pugu Chung-Chung. After a while Samten sent the boy out on some errand, and when he returned later, breathless, he whispered something to the schoolmaster. Samten immediately picked up his cymbals and began the overture indicative of a break. The trumpets and horns joined in while Pugu blew on the conch shell, his pink cheeks bulging with the effort, and I hammered the drum lustily, watching the movement of the cymbals as I had learned to do. Then down went the instruments, and with one accord up jumped the gelongs and made a rush for the door.

'Kushok is leaving now,' said Samten to me in passing, seeing my mystified expression, and at once I joined the rush. We went upstairs first, and found our Head Lama in Rimpoche's room, helping him to drape his outer robe around him. We followed them down, and they took the back stairs and went into the kitchen, which surprised me, for never before had I seen Kushok in our working quarters. Perhaps it was to bless it or to say farewell to the kitchen staff in appreciation of their work, I do not know; but as soon as they were down the steps and through the stable, Gyatso, Lotus, and the genyens came out at a run and the kitchen was left abandoned.

The entire gompa went first to the chörten archway, where the usual recitation was made by those departing, and then we walked slowly down to where the horses were waiting by the well. Here we stopped, and Rimpoche handed the little red ribbons to the genyens and kitchen staff, while the gelongs came forward and bowed before Kushok, who touched the head of each in turn.

We might go no further, but watched the retreating figures as Rimpoche, now mounted, and Kushok, still preferring to walk, made their way down the sloping path and were soon out of sight round a bend. Then, in rather depressed spirits as it seemed, all turned to go back to the monastery, which felt that something was missing without its Head. There was no mistaking the affection in which Kushok was held, and he was only to be away for a month.

As I walked slowly back I thought how it was my last day at Rizong and how by this time tomorrow I should be on my way to Leh with the geshés and Dam Chhös. Having their company would at least be something; it would make the break less sudden. And then to see Kushok once again — well! It might have been much worse!

We went back to the Temple and finished the puja, and then I went in search of Rigdol to inquire if there would be a horse available for me the next day. Having heard that he was down at the Chulie Chan I asked permission to go there, and was thrown a *tuk-pa* or rope sling by Gyatso and told to bring some more firewood for stacking on my way back. Rigdol was sitting on the floor of the nunnery kitchen with Dubches and Dam Chhös, drinking tea amid a bevy of nuns of all ages, from wrinkled hags to the young genyen-ma.

But there could be no horse. Eight had gone in Kushok's train, and tomorrow there would be but two. Two horses and five men! We should have to walk to Leh! When someone had asked me once before whether I intended to walk to Rizong from there, I had looked at him as if he had been mad. The idea of walking when one was always accustomed to doing one's journeys by bus, train, or car, seemed fantastic. But now it appeared quite natural. Next day five 'lamas' would set out on safari, or at least four genuine lamas, for geshés rank as such, and one Imji getsul. It would be a thirty-six mile journey over at least two mountains, and would take us three days. I welcomed it as a new experience and adventure.

Collecting the branches and tying them in the sling, I hoisted it up, and started back again to the kitchen, for it would soon be time for serving the dinner and I must be back by then. It would be my last — that thought kept recurring and recurring through the whole day. Each time it recurred I tried to banish

it again, for this was merely a negative emotion based on self-pity of the very sort with which Gurdjieffian teaching deals so strongly. One cannot prevent negative emotions from arising, but one can stop them from continuing to torment one. It is strange how pleasurable self-pity is, and how mentally masochistic is the average human being.

In the afternoon, still feeling a little depressed despite all my efforts, I wandered along to Gelong Samten's cell and sat down on the floor beside him. He pulled a rug over to me, for the flags were cold. I watched him as he copied a text, and then he saw that my sandal had its sole detached at toe and heel. Taking a needle from the lapel of his toga and threading it, he pointed to the sandal, and when I had given it to him he laboriously stitched it together again. Then he gave me a notebook and told me to write down as many useful English words as I could think of, after which he wrote down their Tibetan phonetic equivalents. While I was away he was going to learn English! But he had still not mastered the alphabet in two months, so I was not very hopeful of his success.

It is strange how a foreign language makes such fools of us. The puja was very difficult for me to learn, and I would forget it again in a day, yet I knew a good deal of English poetry by heart. With them it was the other way round. For a year at Sarnath I had tried to teach Lochas Rimpoche English with little success. He was unable to visualize words, and therefore could not spell, nor could he grasp a grammatical rule. He had passed out first out of eight thousand monks in an annual oral examination in philosophy, where quick-wittedness and immense knowledge were the chief requisites, yet to me he seemed slow-moving almost to the point of stupidity. And so did I to them, whereas after a week of repeating the same verses daily I was still halting and stumbling over the words, Pugu Chung-Chung would rattle off a much longer passage in half an hour and not forget it again.

That evening my little room was full of gelongs and genyens who sat on the floor and talked. I was reminded of our first evening, but now I knew their faces and could understand them a little, and they had become used to my blue eyes and curious English mannerisms.

Next morning I decided to 'lie in'. Surely I should not be

expected to work on my last day? Alas, fond illusions again! When I did not appear in the kitchen Tshultim Dorje was sent to call me as I lay snug inside my blankets.

'Imji! Imji! Lüngs!'

'No! I go today, so I shall not work.'

'Imji! Imji!' There was a note of anxiety in his voice. 'Lüngs, Imji!'

'No!'

The boy felt his way into the dark room and fumbled for the matches and lamp he knew would be beside me. A dim light appeared. There was no help for it, and anyway by now I was wide awake.

'All right, I'll get up.' And I threw off the blankets, to his obvious relief. Down in the kitchen, I found myself rolling the pak back and forth with Gyatso just as if it had been any other day, and in due course taking the pots round, shivering in the morning wind. Not to Hla-ba and Yshé Gompo today, for they were gone, but to gelongs Zod-pa, Gyaltsen and Shés-rub, the 'Army Captain'. Then for one's own — last — breakfast. At least there would be no more radishes for a long, long time, thought I, as I scooped a baby one up with my finger. After breakfast Gyatso began to make taki. So there would be another puja today. I wondered who would be behind my tea-kettle.

My packing quickly finished, I swept the little room, from which, with the winter approaching, the fleas and lice were disappearing, and then went back and sat in the kitchen, feeling lost with no job to do. Samten and Wangyal, one of the new gelongs, came in ready for the road. They were going to Saspola on business, and we should see them there! Another small consolation that would make the parting easier.

Then I went in search of my companions of the road, and found the geshés and Dam Chhös sitting on their baggage in the sewing room. With Dam Chhös I went to the Temple, where puja was in progress by now, and we made our farewells to the gendun in the correct style. The gelongs bowed back and said they hoped I would come back, and I assured them that with spring — and a permit — I undoubtedly would.

We carried the baggage down to the kitchen courtyard and sat on the window-sills of the kitchen waiting for the horses. In

time they arrived, driven by the fat nun. But first they had to be shod for the road, and we watched Rigdol, whose job it seemed to be, hammering on light shoes while the nun held their heads. One had a half-healed sore on its back, and this was carefully padded and the saddle frame arranged so that it would not touch it. All the packs were tied on this horse except my bedding, which was unrolled and slung across the frame of the second horse so that we could ride in turns.

At last came the moment of departure, and we led the horses down the steep path, the kitchen staff waving goodbye from the courtyard. As I walked down over the familiar ground and took a last look back before a bend in the path hid the gompa from sight, I wondered if I would be able to return, or would the Chinese have invaded before the winter was out? Deep down I felt that I would return, but one can never be sure how far such feelings are due to wishful thinking.

I walked apart from the others at first, for despite Gurdjieff my heart was full. If I did return, would gelong Kanpo have succumbed to his disease, or would he still be struggling with the last stages that I had seen so often in hospitals and from which one could only hope for a quick release? And Lotus, how would he be? Would he have mastered his lung trouble? He was certainly not losing weight, so there was every chance that he would be rid of it without any of the usual treatment that would have been accorded him elsewhere. Tashi would be a getsul, for he had told me he was to receive the Lower Ordination in November. When we reached the main road I put all thoughts of Rizong from me and began to live in the present, despite the effort it took.

Because of the state of my sandals I was given first ride, and Dam Chhös held the horse while I tried unsuccessfully to jump on. So we pulled it to the side of the road where there was a large rock, and in the process it accidentally kicked my right heel. Still not near enough, I gave a tug as one of the geshés gave it a push from the off side, with the result that it trod on my left foot. This was not going according to plan, and when finally mounted I felt it might have been less painful to have continued walking. The bedding, which splayed one's legs too widely apart for comfort, swayed so that it was somewhat like riding a camel. Nor was there any intercom. between man and

mount, for the rope around its face had no reinpieces. It would be unlikely, however, to do more than walk.

Half an hour passed and I was so stiff that I dismounted and Dam Chhös had the next turn. He took a running jump at the horse and landed in a kneeling position on its back, and at once it broke into a sharp trot and he went off down the road like a circus rider amid roars of laughter and a cloud of dust. It was strange how everyone else could make his horse go, but when I was mounted they never did more than walk. Perhaps on the whole it was just as well!

On we plodded, meeting no one and being overtaken by nothing. Indeed for the whole three days we were to be on the road not a single jeep passed us; yet the day before, we were told, there had been as many as five! By midday we came to Saspola, which was only eight miles away in all, where we were to spend the night. There we found Samten and Wangyal, and in the afternoon I took a last walk with my schoolmaster who had been so longsuffering and, perhaps misguidedly, patient over my inability to learn my lessons.

That night I lay in the middle of a small room. On my left were two of the geshés, and against the wall on the other side the third geshé and Dam Chhös. Between them and myself Wangyal had put down a rug, and taking off his heavy skirt was using it as a blanket. Sleep would not come. Inevitably thoughts started wandering through my mind and would not stop. What was I doing here like this, lying on the floor of a small house in Ladakh, in the company of Tibetans and Ladakhis, in 'lama' robes? It was fantastic. My past loomed up, the University, hospitals, the ship, my club, my home that was no more. But try as I would it did not seem strange. It should have done, but it didn't. It seemed perfectly natural. I was at home among strangers who were not strangers at all.

No sooner had sleep eventually come than I heard an unexpected though familiar sound. Surely it could not be ... but yet, it was! 'Imji, lüngs!' What was this? There was no work today. But the two senior geshés were sitting up and rolling up their bedding. I looked over my head and saw the stars still shining through the window, and the moon had not yet crossed the sky.

'Mad! Stupid! What's the good of starting off in the dark?'

I protested vigorously, but they only laughed. I was not going to be pulled out of my nice warm bed so easily. We had only twelve miles to do. It was sheer madness. I snuggled down again. A Ladakhi layman came in with Tibetan tea, but I had always drawn the line at salty tea first thing in the morning, and it did not rouse me. Dam Chhös and the third geshé, meanwhile, showed equally little sign of wanting to be off, although Dam Chhös was sitting up in his bed shaking with laughter at the disrespectful epithets I heaped on my superiors.

Finally these two decided to set off on their own, and then it was I got the idea that perhaps they had heard of a jeep and intended catching it, especially as Dam Chhös gave each of them five rupees, which was often the charge made by a civil vehicle. But even that did not move me, for I preferred to continue the journey in what was to me a strange and unusual fashion, and anyway I had not got five rupees. Jam Yung had touchingly given me one rupee as a present, to buy bread, so he had said, on the way, and another one to send him a roll of sticking plaster, as there had been none left in the tin of first-aid equipment I had bequeathed to him. And gelong Kanpo had given me two rupees for some more sodium bicarbonate to be sent from Srinagar as soon as possible. This money they had somehow lured out of Rigdol. But that was all I had.

Leaving their baggage to be put on the horses, the two madmen set out in pitch darkness and cold, while I lay down again secure in the wisdom of my decision.

'Five little lamas set out on a spree;
A jeep picked up two of them and then there were three.'

Funny how things like that come into one's mind. Funny how such a distant past should intrude itself on so odd a present. I looked at the stars and listened to the snores of the third geshé but again sleep would not come.

It seemed a long time before the first streak of dawn appeared across the sky, and then Dam Chhös extracted some taki from his bag and handed them to me. This roused me as nothing else would, for my insomnia had been chiefly due to hunger, as it always is. He must have been given them the day before by Gyatso, and so I made my breakfast off the hardened brown slabs and some 'Lipton char' with neither milk nor sugar.

It was still icy cold. We climbed a brown and barren mountain and came out on a desert-like plateau just as the sun began to shed a ray of warmth, and for several miles we walked along the flat, although it was covered by loose sand into which one sank at every step, making progress slow. Then the strap of my sandal came adrift where Samten had stitched it, and I had to lift my foot high at each step to prevent it falling off. This was the moment for riding again, and the geshé who was up dismounted and I continued the rest of the way on horseback.

The plateau ended, and we looked down on a tiny village far below, showing its green strip and resembling a toy farmyard I had had as a child. Now we had to descend a steep, dry river bed lined with rocks of all sizes and shapes. As the horse picked its way I held on to the tail girths to prevent myself being tipped over its head, at so acute an angle was its back. As it slipped and slithered on the smooth rocks I comforted myself with the thought that it was well used to this sort of terrain even if I was not, and if I just let it go where it would I might yet reach the bottom in safety.

As we approached the toyland village came to life, and the sound of music could be heard. It was harvest time, and the reapers were out stacking the golden crop in some of the fields, singing as they did so, while here and there a boy could be seen driving seven bullocks abreast in a confined circle, to trample on grain previously reaped. I was reminded of the Old Testament injunction not to muzzle the ox as it treads the corn, as every now and then one or other would duck its great head, snatch a few stalks, and continue the eternal round contentedly munching. Women and men worked side by side in the fields, and except for their costume it might have been a scene in the Cotswolds or Oxfordshire.

As we passed through the length of the village it seemed to be the strangest one I had ever seen, for everywhere there were chörtens, well-made chörtens. Some must have been thirty feet high. They lined the whole single street and were also in clumps; I counted nineteen in one group and thirty-three in another. I wondered why they had been erected *en masse* like this, for I had seen nothing like it before. Were they guardians of the ashes of 'the rude forefathers of the hamlet', or were they fulfilling the theory that there was merit in building a chörten to

the memory of the Dharma? I named it to myself Chörten Village, although its real name was Par-po.

Between here and our destination Nyi-mo there was a long stony track of about a mile, level and with yet another line of chörtens and a wall which connected the two villages. It was indeed a strange experiment in town planning!

At Nyi-mo we found, to my surprise, the other two geshés already ensconced in the gabra or hostel for itinerant monks. They had apparently never been expecting a jeep, and had merely started in the night and arrived at their destination by about ten o'clock, for it was only just noon now. Still more was I convinced that I had been wise to refuse to move till dawn. Only since then have I learned that it is a Tibetan custom to do all travelling before midday, though the rationale of this is not quite apparent to me. Personally I did not look forward to a long afternoon of doing nothing and would gladly have pressed on after lunch, being blissfully unaware that there was no other stop between here and Leh, sixteen miles away.

My lunch was rudely disturbed by the arrival of a khaki-clad constable bearing with him a copy of three telegrams the police at Leh had received from Delhi — whether he was on his way to Rizong or lying in wait at Nyi-mo I do not know. The telegrams were hostile in tone and referred to me as 'this foreigner', stating that the presence of 'this foreigner' in Ladakh was no longer acceptable to the Government and I was on no account to be allowed to overstay my permit time. What had happened? I could not understand it at all. I had done nothing to merit telegrams worded thus and had no intention of overstaying, which would have been a poor return for having been granted a permit in the first place. It did not augur well for the success of any reapplication the next spring. Still nothing could be done till we reached Leh. But the term 'foreigner' irritated, for I was not a foreigner but a Commonwealth citizen.

When we unloaded the horses we were shocked to discover that the one I had been riding had somehow acquired a huge sore on its back, fully four inches across both ways. The thick, hairy skin had been rubbed clean away, and only raw, pink flesh was showing. I wondered again, as I have wondered many times, at the patience of the animals of India. When one remembers how a slight scrape on one's heel from a hard shoe

hurts at every step, it was remarkable that the horse had continued to let me ride it without kicking me off or showing some signs of distress by nuzzling at the place when I was dismounted.

That afternoon I tried to stitch my sandal again, but as I had only thin thread it would not be likely to last. That evening we had tupa for supper, an additional meal we had not had the previous night, nor did the geshés forbear to eat, for after all one was travelling and needed extra food.

Next morning, having apparently repented of the day before, no one was astir even when dawn broke, and I had the satisfaction of being the one to say: 'Lüngs!' although there was probably an honorific form of the word I should have used to them instead, had I but known it.

Immediately after a breakfast of taki I cut a long strip from a three-inch bandage I had retained for emergencies en route and smeared it thickly with vaseline, the only medicament I had. Then we went down to the stable and, standing at arm's length, I gently slapped the pad on to the sore. The horse at once kicked out, showing my wisdom in having stood well away, and also that, despite its unmurmuring acquiescence the day before, it was very painful. The smaller wooden saddle was put on its back so that it did not touch the place, but the padded sacking had to go over it first, and there was nothing that could be done about that. Finally my bedding was made small so that as little pressure as possible would be exerted and nobody thought of riding that day.

It was cold and windy when we set out, and once more winding our way upward from the village, we climbed and climbed for a couple of hours, or so it seemed, until we came out once more on a plateau, and before our eyes there stretched what appeared to be a huge desert flanked in the distance on either side by brown mountains. There was to prove to be fully ten miles of this. Inevitably before we had gone far my sandal broke down again, not only the strap but also the piece that went across the toes, so that it became quite unwearable. I sat down on a rock, while Dam Chhös chased the loaded horse, which had a penchant for seeking the mountains instead of keeping to the track, and I searched in my shoulder-bag for some string, without which no one should ever travel. I lashed the sandal fore and aft in best nautical fashion, and further

pinioned it with a safety pin most fortunately found at the bottom of the bag.

Then somehow, somewhere, I lost my companions. Later it transpired that they had gone into one of the few little houses that were scattered about as we drew nearer to Leh, and they had expected that I would see them or the horses. But I saw neither, and continued with a growing conviction that I was now travelling alone. Leh could be seen in the far, far distance; the airfield, which was three miles nearer than the town, was more clearly visible, and Spituk gompa, my own destination, was perched on top of a crag, but so tiny that it was hard to identify it.

I looked back, but there was no sign of the geshés. Should I go back or go on? Not go back; I had walked too far already for one day! Anyway they knew I was going to Spituk and would be coming to pay their respects to Lochas Rimpoche there before going on to Leh. I plodded on with a feeling of loneliness, but soon there was some green in the scenery, for the river on which Leh was sited had emerged and the track ran beside it. It was hot now, as it had been cold before, and the sun blazed down while the sand entered my dilapidated footwear at every step.

Near to the airfield the Army, it seemed, had moved in since I had first landed there three months before, to counter any possible Chinese landing during the winter. Tents and huts were dotted about in profusion, and I passed a group of soldiers making tea — 'Lipton char' it would be — and looked at them enviously, but no one offered me anything, for what was one 'lama' more or less in this area where so many were coming and going? Jeeps too were running to and fro, but as I was not going into the town it was no use trying to cadge a lift.

At last I was climbing the rock on which Spituk gompa stood, and there I found my friend Lochas Rimpoche installed in one of the smaller temples, fat and beaming as ever, and obviously as pleased as I was to meet again. He had a torma or puja offering of sugared tsampa put before me, as is the custom, at which the visitor will nibble, but so hungry was I that I was eating my way steadily through it when he suggested to his attendant that it might be better to take it away and bring me some proper lunch, as he was about to have his own. So I

reluctantly relinquished it and saw the shattered remnants restored to the altar. But the lunch was worth the little extra wait, for it included minced meat, the first meat I had seen since leaving Kashmir. Down it went rapidly, and was followed by a second helping.

Hunger at last satisfied, I showed my sandal to Rimpoche and asked if he could lend me twenty-five rupees to buy a pair of Ladakhi cloth boots so badly needed. He immediately produced a cloth, and unrolling it, took out of his small store, not twenty-five but thirty rupees, and said, in English: 'I give, give.' It turned out to be just as well, for at the time I thought I would be able to repay him in Sarnath, but as it happened on my return there I was for four weeks without money trying to collect arrears from articles overdue that had not been able to reach me in my absence.

Fortified by the lunch, I tucked the money into my shirt and set out once more to finish the journey to Leh, intending to return and having told him that the others, so far as I knew, would be along later.

The three miles seemed to take longer than all that had gone before. By now my feet were tired and sore, but at last I found the shop that sold the boots, and shortly after emerged looking more than ever like a Tibetan monk. The next place to be visited was the police station, a mere quarter of a mile down the road, to report my return and obtain the permit necessary to board the plane to fly out.

I immediately brought up the matter of the three telegrams. What was behind them, and how could I possibly have offended since I had done nothing but work in the kitchen all day? The police officer was sympathetic. They had received them but also had not understood them. Yes, they knew quite well what I had been doing, working in the kitchen, and were perfectly satisfied. 'Why don't they ask us?' he said, 'we are on the spot and we know'; then he added sadly, 'But they never do!'

From there I went to see the D.C. whom I had last seen at the garden party. No, he had heard nothing against me from anywhere. Delhi had not communicated with him, only to the police. He thought it might be just routine panic to get me out in time before the winter. Regularly telegrams came when anyone's permit was near to expiring. Not to worry, and he

hoped to see me back in the spring. Slightly comforted but with a niggling feeling of apprehension, for, not wanting to leave, I hoped to return as soon as the winter was over, I left him. There was no good worrying about it. It was just a matter of waiting and seeing.

Deciding to stay the night at Sankar gompa, I turned my newly shod feet in that direction. Stumbling over rocks, secure in the new boots, I heard a 'Whisht!' behind me. Thinking I knew no one, and that it was not for me, and anyway too tired to bother to turn my head. I continued plodding on. 'Whissht, Whiisshtt!' it came again, so at last I did look round, and there to my surprise and delight I saw Kushok Shas sitting on a chair inside the garden of the Philosophy Institute, with a cup of tea in one hand while he waved to me to come with the other.

My footsteps quickened and I saluted him, smiling my pleasure, and was given a chair and, best of all a cup of 'Lipton char' also. He asked how I had come and where the others were; I told him as best I could, and that somehow I had lost them, but that they ought to be along shortly. Then he took me into a room in the Institute, and there was old Rimpoche, seated in one of those famous wooden boxes in the Principal's room with Yshé Gompo on the floor beside him. He beamed a welcome, and Kushok told the gelong in charge of the Institute to give me some food, despite the fact that it was evening. When it arrived I hesitated at first to eat it, for there was meat on the plate and I would not have thought it proper to eat this in my Master's presence, since he was such a staunch vegetarian himself.

But 'Eat up, eat up,' he said, moving his hand up and down to his mouth to make sure I understood, and, with no further scruples, I set to with a will, paying tribute once more to his breadth of mind.

The room was of medium size and had one of the wooden boxes, such as Zod-pa had made for himself, along each opposite wall. Kushok now hopped into the second box and sat down, and he struck me as looking so funny that I started giggling as I saw him. He asked why I was laughing.

'In England men do not sit in boxes; only horses have boxes,' I said. Somehow Rimpoche looked quite normal, but perhaps that was because he was swathed in a huge rug which

made the box less obvious, but Kushok looked exactly what he was — a man in a box, so that I continued to laugh every time I looked at him, but he did not mind and laughed also.

The term Philosophical Institute doubtless conjures up the idea of a large building like a college, with qualified lecturers and students. But this was far from being the case. The Leh Philosophical Institute was embryonic in form and structure, but newly conceived, and consisted of a row of about eight rooms joined by a covered verandah with a kitchen at one end. The students numbered about a dozen getsuls, all in their teens, and there was this one Gelong Principal who taught them philosophy from the Tibetan standard works by the simple process of having them learn the books by heart in the usual way. There were plans to enlarge it into a University, for there was none in Ladakh, but whether they materialized or not would depend on the political situation. If the Chinese showed signs of being contented with what they had already acquired by acclaim, then it might be worth while, but so long as danger threatened there would be little use in sinking any money in such a project.

Suddenly there was a sound of hooves and voices, and we went out to see Dam Chhös and the geshés arriving, having dumped my luggage at Spituk on the understanding that I would return there for it that night. It seemed they had gone into a house quite near the stream where they had left me, to make tea, and I had not noticed it and so missed them.

As it happened I was not destined to return to Spituk at all, and the leaving of the luggage there nearly proved disastrous. The others, it seemed, were to stay for a few days at the Institute, while Kushok and Rimpoche, with their attendants, were guests of the Ko-lun of Leh, the Ladakhi Governor, who was actually Kushok's uncle on his mother's side.

Kushok asked me where I was going, and I told him Sankar, as I was too tired to walk back to Spituk that day.

'Come!' he said, with a wave of his hand, and I followed gladly as they set out for the Ko-lun's house. This was a large farm building with fields in which the wheat and barley stood ripe and ready for harvesting. The house was in two parts, with a path running between, and later I was to see, and sit in, a little garden such as one might find anywhere in England, with

a long thin lawn and borders of English flowers, marigolds, hollyhock, roses, nasturtiums, asters, dahlias, and gigantic sunflowers.

That day bedtime came none too soon, for it had been long and tiring, and I was given a pallet on the floor of a small room with Ston-dūs beside me. Covered with a quilt and fur coat, I slept snug and warm, happy to be once more with my Lama so unexpectedly.

Next morning he told me that Kushok Bakula had arrived at Sankar gompa the night before, and we would go to pay our respects to him. So off we set after a breakfast of a much improved tupa served up by other hands, and with Ston-dūs in attendance, we went across fields and over walls, and found our Guru giving audience to a train of Ladakhis who had taken the opportunity of obtaining his blessing while he was there, for his stays were infrequent in view of all the other work he had to do.

Now I learned that I was to have company on the flight from Leh. Kushok Bakula, Kanzyur Rimpoche, and their respective attendants were all going to Srinagar, as also was one of the geshés, the one who had been the most active about setting out in the dark, geshé Chhösphel, who wished to go to Kalimpong. They would all be leaving on the next plane, which would go the following Monday, and for which I too was destined. Indeed, my parting was being made as easy as possible! If only Kushok Shas had been coming too! but he would have to leave for Nubra gompa a day or so after us.

Although it is chronologically outside the scope of this tale, the sequel to geshé Chhösphel's excursion into India proper is amusing. Ten days later Kushok Bakula arrived at Kalimpong en route for Sikkim, and was requested to call at the police station. There he found geshé Chhösphel quietly meditating behind prison bars. He had forgotten that he would need a new permit to remain in India, and under the emergency regulations the bus from Siliguri to Kalimpong is police-checked ten miles outside the town. As he had no proper papers he was removed from the bus and imprisoned, and it was only by the lucky chance of Kushok Bakula's arrival that his course of meditation was not prolonged, for there was no-one else to vouch for him. As Minister of State Kushok was able to arrange

for his permit and to secure his release, a wiser man in the ways of the world as the result of his enforced meditation.

Old Rimpoche went out but little. His two days on horseback had tired him and he rested as much as possible. He occupied the shrine room to be found in every Ladakhi house, where by day Kushok Shas would sit beside him. We could come in as we liked, sitting quietly on the rug against the opposite wall, while old Rimpoche gazed out of the window at the distant mountain range, with a faraway look in his eyes, thinking of the days that had been, of his beloved Drespung, Lhasa, and his Master the Dalai Lama.

In this room there were a number of photographs, one of which intrigued me greatly. It showed a group of five persons, a small boy in 'lama' dress, with a stern-looking Lama beside him, and two Ladakhi laymen on the other side. They were seated on the ground behind a long, low table and seemed to be having a picnic. The severe-looking Lama I had seen before, for a large coloured photograph of him hung in the Buddha Temple at Rizong, but I had never asked who he was. Now, however, one day when Kushok and I were alone and I was examining all the photographs, I asked him who the little boy and the Lama were.

'That's the baby Bakula,' he replied.

'And the Lama, sir?'

'Rizong Shas,' he said laconically.

I looked again closely with still greater interest; the picture of the little Bakula fascinated me. There was the same calm, gentle sensitive face that I knew, with an added childish innocence about it. Rizong Shas had a strong face, and though the eyes were kindly he could well also have been a disciplinarian. The story of the three Rizong Shas is told in the appendix. Meanwhile I wondered what it was like to look at a photograph of yourself as you had been in your last incarnation! Once again I deeply regretted my inability to converse freely with Kushok Shas; a talk on such matters, which one never encounters in the West, would be fascinating and invaluable – even if incredible to the average Westerner.

All good things must come to an end, and on the last evening we all sat in Rimpoche's room, silent, for there are times when polite talk for its own sake is uncalled for, and Kushok Shas

was as reluctant to part from his Guru as I was to part from my own – from him.

Next morning we were up very early – Ston-dūs' watch said 3.15. I sat by the fire in the kitchen, for it was bitterly cold, and watched the tupa being made. Dawn broke, and the horses were saddled and brought round. I thought at first we were going to the airfield three miles away on horseback, which tickled my fancy as a novel way of going to catch one's plane, but no! they were to bring back the party who were seeing us off. We were to go in Kushok Bakula's jeep, and we had a rendezvous with it in the town. Farewells having been said by all the immense household, we set off across the fields, and then had a long wait, stamping up and down to keep warm, for the jeep was late. The sleepy people of Leh looked with some surprise at the odd party at the cross-roads; some of them came and bowed before Rimpoche to receive his blessing as he touched their heads, while Kushok Shas strolled up the road, kicking stones as he went, and then strolled back again.

At last a horn was heard, and round the bend stormed the jeep at breakneck speed, for the plane was due to take off in another ten minutes, although it would probably have waited for its distinguished passengers. Then came the job of fitting us all in. Kushok Bakula had with him his lay secretary and his gelong attendant, Thubsten. So on the left of the driver sat the secretary, Rimpoche on his right and Kushok Bakula next him, half in, half out, holding on to the windscreen with one leg dangling in the air. Four in the front seat was a tight squeeze. The back was filled with baggage piled on either side. On the lower of the two sides perched Yshé Gompo, fairly secure. Kushok Shas sat in the middle on a single suitcase. Thubsten was precariously situated on the back wall, holding on to the awning rail, and myself, the most junior, far above everyone else on the heap of luggage on the near side, also holding on for dear life to the awning rail as we started off with a jerk and a roar and swayed down the bumpy road over stones and ruts on the last stage of our journey. Thus was protocol thrown to the winds in the seating arrangements, owing to the exigencies of modern travel!

When we arrived we found we need not have hurried after all; the plane would be half an hour late. This too proved

fortunate, for my luggage, which had lain all this time at Spituk, despite my reminding people of it frequently and receiving promises of having it brought down, had to be fetched. Ston-dūs was sent off in the jeep to try to collect it on time, and just as the passengers were being marshalled across the strip of sand to the aircraft, the jeep returned and drew up with a screech and a thump. Ston-dūs hurled my bag and bedding at me as I was preparing to go without it.

Now I must bid a final farewell to my Lama. He himself was standing by the gangway, having bowed to Kushok Bakula and Rimpoche, showing his tongue, which I could never remember to do in time, and offering the traditional white scarf. I made him a right-angle bow and said, 'Goodbye, sir!' Instead of just touching my head, as is customary, he suddenly gripped it in both hands and squeezed hard. Then I was on the plane, and we were taxi-ing along the runway to the take-off. I saw Rizong Shas standing with Dam Chhös, the Principal of the Philosophy Institute, the two remaining geshés, Ston-dūs and others, for a moment, and then as we turned they were gone from sight. In a few minutes we were airborne and leaving Ladakh behind us, soaring over the icy mountains. But this time I was not anticipating the future with some apprehension; I was reflecting with gratitude over the past, intensely aware of my debt to all concerned, both seen and unseen, for the three months I had been privileged to spend at Rizong gompa as a Rizong getsul.

APPENDIX I

Rizong and Rizong Shas

In 1815, when momentous events were taking place in Europe and the French lust for world domination was being thwarted by the British Navy, a prosperous Ladakhi merchant-trader, all unaware of life outside his own surroundings, was driving his mule train, laden with goods from Tibet, through the scattered villages of Ladakh. His name was Tshultim Nyima.

One afternoon he was on his way from the village of Saspola to Hemis Shuba when a heavy thunderstorm broke. He pitched camp and dug a hole that it might fill up with water for his mules to drink. Ahead of him was the bare wall of a mountain facing south, and his camp was flanked by mountains on either side. Behind him was the winding track up which he had toiled.

Next morning the sky was clear again, and he went on his way. Several weeks later he returned along the same route after profitable trading, and when he came to the place where he had pitched camp he was surprised to find that the hole he had dug for his mules was still full of water, though there had been no rain meanwhile. He was so struck by this that, being a very devout man, he performed a puja on the spot and vowed to build a monastery nearby. That hole is the spring-filled well from which the water is fetched daily, now bricked around to avoid pollution.

True to his vow, he set about collecting labour and subscriptions to add to his own major contribution, and with the advice and help of a learned Lama from Likit gompa the new

monastery slowly took shape. Rocks and stones had to be hewn from boulders, and brought up on the backs of men or mules; wood had to be cut from the trees that grew profusely on the tall sloping cliffs of the river below. Since the land belonged to no one, he could claim what he wanted for his monastery, and thus Rizong came to own the valuable apricot orchards on which it so greatly depends. The name of Rizong is derived from 'ri', 'mountain', and 'zong', 'trade', since to trade it owed its being.

It is still the custom in Tibet and Ladakh for a childless man to pray to a Lama to grant him a son. Tshultim Nyima, therefore, went to his own Guru, a man of high powers and much learning, and asked for this boon while the gompa was taking shape. The Lama, who was an old man, told him that he himself was shortly to die, and would reincarnate as Tshultim Nyima's son. So it came about. The Tulku died soon after his prediction, and within two years a son was born to Tshultim Nyima and named by him Shas (in Tibetan pronounced 'Say'), which is the honorific term for 'Son', as opposed to the common word 'Bu'.

It is a recognized part of the Bodhisattva conception that when a man has reached a certain level of spiritual development he can choose where and when he will reincarnate, so that to the Buddhist this does not seem an extraordinary or incredible event; he takes it for granted.

When Rizong gompa was finished, Tshultim Nyima renounced the world and was ordained first as getsul, then as gelong, and installed as Head of his own monastery. For it is a common practice for founders of monasteries, if they have had the drive and energy to raise the funds and supervise and assist in the actual building, to become their Head. A similar practice exists with the founding of Orders of monks and nuns in the Catholic Church. He himself would have received his whole education in a monastery and be thoroughly conversant with ritual and pujas. He had retained the status of genyen which he had received as a child, and would have continued to learn by heart whenever his worldly activities permitted. When at Rizong, I myself saw a Ladakhi peasant, who had stayed the night there, in the morning take out from his coat the necessary equipment and perform the same puja as Kushok Bakula

performs daily, so that Tshultim Nyima made no ignorant Head Lama, and the gelongs collected from other gompas to form the nucleus of the new gompa were content to serve under him. In due course his son was admitted to the monastery, a Tulku in his own right, and he became the first Rizong Shas.

Tshultim Nyima died, and a century elapsed before his successor was identified, for as a Lama of much piety and learning he formed the first of a line of Tulkus who would all receive his name and be the true Rizong Rimpoches or Head Lamas. Meanwhile Rizong Shas acted as regent, so to speak.

On the death of Rizong Shas I it seems that only a couple of years passed before his Reincarnation was identified, and it was he whose photograph hangs in the Temple at Rizong and who was also shown with his charge, the young Bakula, in the photograph in the house of the Ko-lun at Leh, when Kushok Bakula must have been little more than eight years old. His face is stern and determined but his eyes are kind, and the wrinkles at the corners suggest that he had a ready smile. His features are purely Western, and he must have been a handsome man in his youth. He was noted for his great learning, and he wrote many books as well as making abstracts of many of the large tomes of Tibetan philosophy. Part of the time he spent at Rizong and part at Nubra gompa, which was under the jurisdiction of Rizong; it was there that Kushok Bakula lived before he went to Tibet. It must have been shortly after that photograph of the picnic party was taken that Rizong Shas II died in 1925 at the age of 60.

During his lifetime, however, the second Tshultim Nyima was located, some time near the end of the first decade of this century. If the identification was correct he had made an unfortunate choice of parents, for he was born into a family with a strong Army tradition. His parents refused to allow him to become a monk, and after attending a Western-type school in India for his education he entered the Army, his father and uncle both being officers. He rose to the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel, and gained a reputation for the care he took of his men, but otherwise he seems to have followed the ways of many young officers and left a number of illegitimate offspring before he finally married.

While serving with the Indian Army in Indo-China after the Second World War, he was on reconnaissance flight one day in a helicopter along with a pilot and a sergeant navigator. The aircraft was coming down to land on the airfield which was built on the edge of a cliff. It was a clear, sunny day without a breath of wind as they descended. Suddenly from nowhere came a violent gale, and, to the horror of the ground staff, the helicopter was caught and whirled over the edge of the cliff and the three occupants lost their lives. The wind vanished again as it had come, and all was calm. From the technical point of view the accident was utterly inexplicable. From the Lamas' viewpoint it was the natural result of the parents of a Tulku refusing to allow him to fulfil his proper task for which he had incarnated. So the watching Forces or Powers decided that he was wasting his time and had better start again in another body, although he was still in the prime of life.

This story I first heard from Professor Guenther, and later from Lama Lobzang, and reference was also made to it by the Brigadier at the Leh garden party, for he had known the Colonel well. The story itself, therefore, is authentic. Whether the interpretation put on it is accepted or not depends on one's individual reactions and beliefs.

Rizong Shas III was born in the palace at Leh in 1927, just two years after he had died, a member of the royal family and now nephew to Kushok Bakula who had previously been his charge, so that he who had once been Guru is now disciple.

To the Westerner who does not accept the theory of rebirth this whole story will seem incredible. To the Easterner it is commonplace, and similar tales can be heard of many a Lama. Moreover once when talking to Kushok Shas, I quoted his cousin Stobden as having said that Tulkus are most often identified as the result of their prattling about facts and places of their former lives when they first learn to talk, but that as they grow up they forget. He immediately said 'No, they don't forget!' Lama Lobzang, when I told him this, said that he had once said the same to him when he had brought up the same point; so that it would seem as if the present Rizong Shas is one of those Tulkus who do remember their previous incarnations, although many do not. To be able to do so suggests a high level of spiritual development.

APPENDIX I

In Rizong library there is a history of the monastery, which I hope one day to be able to read and translate, but for the present these are all the facts that I have been able to glean of a fascinating and, to the Westerner, an unusual story.

APPENDIX II

The 36 Rules for a Getsul

1. Not to kill a man
2. – – – an animal
3. – – hit an animal
4. – – work an animal
5. – – take what is not given
6. – – do impure acts
7. – – tell a big lie
8. – – slander without foundation
9. – – slander even a little
10. – – cause a schism in the sangha
11. – – follow anyone who makes a schism
12. – – give laymen a bad impression
13. – – tell even a little lie
14. – – ascribe motives for the actions of gelongs
15. – – scoff
16. – – say that another preaches for the sake of obtaining food
17. – – accuse any gelong of one of the grave offences
18. – – cease from learning
19. – – take a large helping of rice
20. – – conceal a large helping of rice
21. – – drink alcohol
22. – – sing
23. – – dance
24. – – listen to music
25. – – put on ornaments
26. – – put on scented ornaments
27. – – hang on ornaments
28. – – sit in a large chair

29. Not to sit on a high chair
30. – – sit on a large rug
31. – – sit on a high-placed rug
32. – – eat any food after noon
33. – – touch gold or silver coins
34. To rejoice at saluting his teacher
35. – – – having given up a layman's life
36. – – – having received the effects of the Lower Ordination.

NOTE: The redundancy in this list is typical of both Tibetan and Pali rules, and allows for no loopholes. Some of the rules are included in the Ten Precepts taken at Ordination, and most of them are repeated in the 253 rules of the gelong (the Pratimoksha) No. 14 was impressed on me when, one day, I saw a gelong putting a taki down his shirt (as I myself was wont to do) and I thought he intended keeping it to eat unlawfully in the evening as I did. That afternoon I saw him take it out and give it to a beggar!

So far as I know these rules, which have no counterpart in the Hinayana School, have not previously been put into English.