
ENIGMATIC TIBET

Experiences With My Tibetan Family

by

Dr. Lily Eversdyk-Smulders

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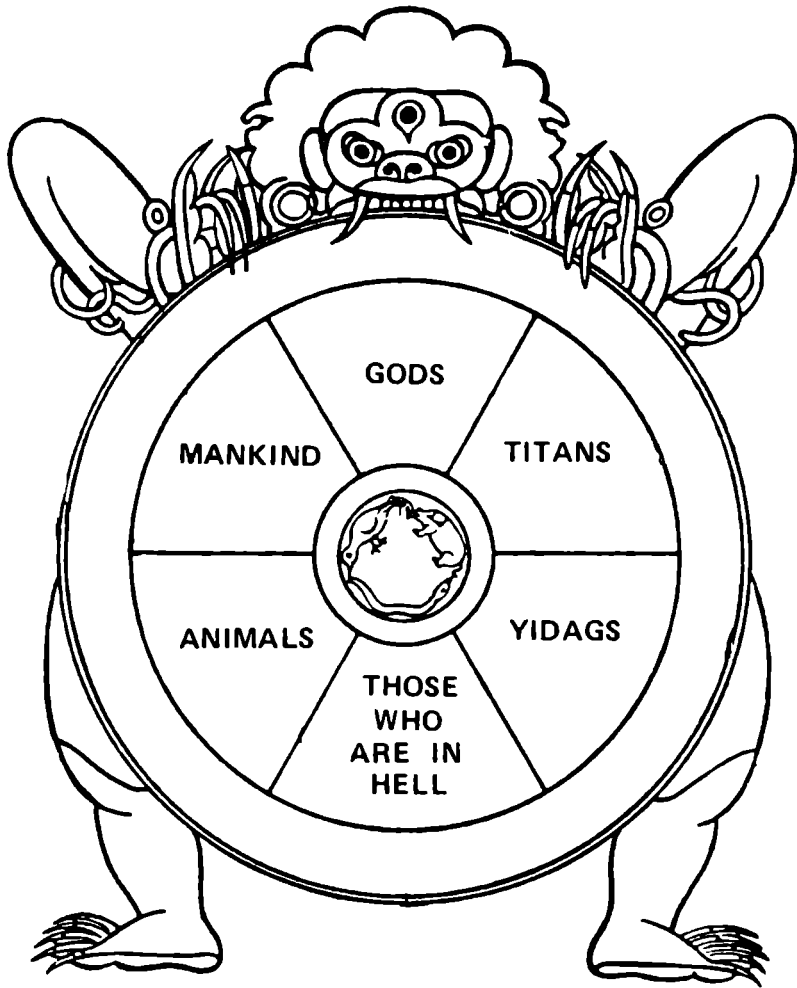
by Dr. Lily Eversdyk-Smulders

Lily Eversdyk-Smulders, portrait painter and lawyer, through a curious set of circumstances was adopted as a daughter by a Tibetan Redcap lama. He belonged to a sect whose members are allowed to marry, and lived with the fifty-five other members of his family in an eleven-room house in the hamlet of Bodnath high in the Himalayas close to the frontier of Tibet. Here the author lived with them.

In a lively and humorous manner Lily Eversdyk-Smulders describes her life in this strange household—her “pappa,” the lama, who reigns “like a French king,” her elder brother, married seven times, her kind-hearted sister, “Darling,” and the many pilgrims who come to visit the sanctuary of her father.

The author comes to know Tibetans rich and poor and Tibet—its history, philosophy, and mysticism—we hear words of profound wisdom from the mouth of an ascetic monk. We meet a mysterious yogi, a Tantric magician with a ritual doll made out of the skin of an eight-year-old boy, a hermit in an attire of sculptured human bones.

Come with the author to seek adventure far away: in *Enigmatic Tibet*.



GODS

MANKIND

TITANS

ANIMALS

YIDAGS

THOSE
WHO
ARE IN
HELL

ENIGMATIC TIBET

Experiences With My Tibetan Family

by

Dr. Lily Eversdyk-Smulders

(the adopted daughter of a
Tibetan lama)

VANTAGE PRESS

New York Washington Atlanta Hollywood

Dedicated to my dear Friend Alexandra David-Neel (†),
the well-known Tibet explorer.

FIRST EDITION

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Cover illustration:

Redcap-lama, with a silver marriage-badge on his pointed cap, during temple-service blowing on the human-thighbone-flute ("Kang-ling").

FOREWORD

In this book I have related my experiences while staying with a Tibetan family who had adopted me as a daughter. My Tibetan "father" was a man of great importance: a Redcap lama who was the priest-officiate of the holy stûpa of Bodhnâth, situated not far from the Tibetan frontier.

Properly speaking, all events in our family were romantic, extraordinary, and absolutely different from anything we in the West could possibly imagine. How could it have been otherwise when after many wanderings through the Himâlayas, one finally arrives in a hamlet which merely consists of a circle of houses, built around a semi-spherical sanctuary? On its golden top were painted four pairs of penetrating eyes uninterruptedly gazing down on the inhabitants!

However, my adventures were not limited to my family-circle. Many Tibetan refugees had pitched their tents in and around our hamlet and I was soon welcomed in their midst.

I also stayed in some other Tibetan centers of Nepal. So I became acquainted with town-dwellers and nomads, with mendicants and princes, with merchants and monks, with story-tellers and mysterious magicians. I also met "earthly incarnations of celestial saints"! But above all I loved to sit at the feet of wise old lamas in order to learn something about the wondrously profound mysticism of the Tibetan religion, which opens many unknown vistas to the Western mind. . . .

No preconceived plan, but sheer chance brought me to these regions where I had such strange encounters. As so often in the past I had merely started out to reconnoiter unfamiliar lands beyond the far horizon. For I never cared to live in big cities in whose dull and cheerless streets nothing unexpected ever happens. So I used to leave my home once in a while and wander off—all by myself—where fate was leading me: in search of the place where earth and sky touch each other. . . . Somewhere in the far bluish distances.

PROLOGUE

For a long time now Tibet has enjoyed a great popularity, and literature concerning this land and the religious conceptions of its inhabitants is enormous. To many people Tibet is the country of mystic speculation, to others a country of unverifiable miracle stories. The recent events in these highlands, sometimes wrongly called the "Roof of the World" (as a matter of fact this appellation only applies to the Pamir mountain chains) have again, and this time more imperatively than ever, fixed our attention on the fate of the Tibetans and the annihilation of their culture. Moreover, one is faced with the plain truth that it is impossible to relieve the need of the population in Tibet itself, nor to undertake anything worth mentioning to preserve its remarkable culture. The only thing we can do is to offer some material help to the refugees from Tibet and to record the occasional data of a culture doomed to destruction.

Now this is not a work just anybody can achieve. It is not enough merely to know the fundamentals of this strange culture, chiefly dominated by mystical conceptions of late Buddhism, as it flourished in the eighth and ninth centuries in India, and as it has been preserved in Tibet up to our days. One has besides to have the faculty of sharp observation and a sure grasp of proportions, together with an indispensable fund of humor and self-derision. All this is necessary when getting into contact with the representatives of this culture whom we may yet be able to meet.

Now this is exactly what Lily Eversdyk-Smulders has done. With her undeniable talent for portrait drawing and with the exertion of all her personal abilities and her intensely human personality, she has set herself to sketch the life of the Tibetans who flocked together in and around the holy hamlet of Bodhnâth, when the circumstances in their own country did not leave them any possibility of keeping up the familiar ancient standards of reasonable existence. Many of these people had lost practically everything they possessed, and knew they

would have to sacrifice still more to be able to live in straitened circumstances in a foreign country. Lily Everydyk-Smulders has lived among these people and borne the rough and the smooth with them. What will certainly strike the reader is that she has succeeded in becoming one with her Tibetan family. She did not do her work in their midst like an influential foreigner, as it were from a high place of observation, but she moved naturally among them and mixed with them quite intimately in their private lives. The demands that such a life in the family circle makes on a person who from early childhood has been accustomed to very different standards of living can only be realized by those who have tried a similar thing for a shorter or longer period.

Lily Eversdyk-Smulders has achieved an exceptionally important feat with her work. With it she has penetrated ever more deeply into the mentality of her Tibetan family. Back in Holland she has consulted a great deal of the available literature about Tibet, its inhabitants, and its religious conceptions, and on this basis she has produced a book which all through in its kaleidoscopic design brings into prominence almost playfully all the aspects of the life and thought of this section of the Tibetan population whom she managed to approach with such warm-hearted humanity. In various conversations a number of extremely complicated presentations of Tibetan Buddhism are advanced and a review is given about the history and the social circumstances of the Tibetans. This has, however, been done with such a delicate touch that it would be easy to overlook how much work has been done on this book.

It seems to me that the authoress offers us herewith a piece of work which, on account of its human approach and its sparkling sense of humor ever manifesting itself amid the tragedy of the situations described, gives us an exact insight into a strange culture, more exact and truthful than many so-called scientific books of more pretentious design.

With this book Lily Eversdyk-Smulders has achieved something vastly excelling those travel stories which, with or without photographs, enjoy such popularity. It is not her personal reaction to a foreign country and a foreign people that is stressed, but she shows how by her friendly approach and by employing every aspect of the knowledge she acquired, she could actually be integrated into her Tibetan family. So from being a foreigner she tried gradually to develop into a member of the family and made an eminent success of it.

That she manages besides to relate her experiences in a vivid

manner and has a real genius for drawing, stamps her book as a work of extraordinary significance.

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*ENIGMATIC
TIBET*

PART I

1: Four Golden Faces

How well I remember the circumstances when for the first time I visited the holy hamlet of Bodhnâth which later on was to be my residence. The previous day I had arrived at Kâthmandú, the capital of Nepal. As it happened I came at the time of "Holi," the boisterous Hindu spring festival which is yearly celebrated for one week in the northern part of India and the Himâlayan kingdoms. Throughout these seven days everybody is allowed to go out into the streets with large buckets of liquid paint and to throw ladles full of it at any passerby, thus thoroughly and effectively spoiling his clothes. During one of my former sojourns in India I had learned from bitter experience what fate would be awaiting me and consequently I did not leave my small hotel where I shared a room with hundreds of flies. The only other guest at the place was a sturdy young German who had arrived a few hours after myself. "Oh, it is quite safe to go and walk about in Kâthmandú," he said to me, "as the authorities have forbidden the population to besmirch foreigners with the colored concoctions. Anyway the Nepalese wouldn't dare to treat us Westerners in a disrespectful manner!" Then he went out to have a look at the town.

Late in the afternoon he was brought home in a police car, a protection which cost him one pound. Dear me! What a sight he looked! His face had been smeared with red and yellow paint, his fair hair was blue and green, and his suit showed all the colors of the rainbow. "At first everything went all right," he said. "Then all of a sudden one of those Mongolians in the street prepared to fling a big ladle of colored liquid in my direction. "Please don't do that, sir!" I said politely. "I am a European travelling around the world and I have only one spare set of clothes with me for the trip." I had hardly finished when he threw a large portion of red paint at me! I became furious, jumped at him and socked him one on the jaw. At once I was attacked by a dozen men who seemed to come from all direc-

tions. I am strong and can put up a good fight, but they were too many for me. Fortunately the incident took place in front of a shop in which I was able to take refuge. Immediately a crowd of ruffians, shaking their fists, assembled in front of its door. 'Just you dare to come out! We are waiting for you!' they shouted. I asked the Nepalese owner of the business to ring for the police to protect me, but he didn't like the idea at all, being afraid to lose all his customers. 'I advise you to offer your apologies to the leader, sir. It is your duty, for after all it was you who started the fight! These men are Gurkhas (or Gorkhális) with the kindred tribesmen Mágars, Támangs, and Gúrungs, the most famous, the most brave, and the most cruel fighters in the world. Their "kúkhris," the curved daggers they wear on their girdles, stick very loosely in their sheaths, I assure you! Such a kúkhrí, once drawn, must cause blood to flow. It is a *must!* One blow, and your head will be rolling on the ground, sir.'

"There was no alternative: I was caught in a trap. I asked the shopkeeper to call in the leader of the gang and very unwillingly offered my apologies. 'All right,' he said, 'I guarantee your safety. If you are no coward you will come outside now.' However, no sooner had I set foot in the street than I was grasped from all sides and smeared with paint from top to toe, while he and his cronies scornfully roared with laughter.

"At that moment—too late, unfortunately—a police car happened to pass by. The constables rescued me from my tormentors and brought me home to safeguard me from further unpleasantness," concluded my German acquaintance.

That same night an Indian came to see the owner of our hotel, on his way to the hamlet of Bodhnâth where he was to have a business talk with the Tibetan priest-officiate of the sanctuary. This gentleman invited me to accompany him. "It will be interesting for you, Mem-sahib," he said, "to meet this Buddhist lama. His religious title is 'the Chinya lama'. One has to address him as 'Rimpoche', i.e., 'Precious Jewel'. You needn't be afraid that your clothes will be spoiled," he added. "There are hardly any people in the streets at this late hour and my car is right in front of the hotel entrance". I gladly accepted the invitation and we left right away. Kâthmandú was deserted indeed. Its inhabitants had obviously put off their paint throwing until the next day.

It was a beautiful night. The moon was shining brightly. We left the city and drove along the bumpy, narrow roads of the "Valley of Nepal." After forty-five minutes we came to a spot where a few shabby houses stood on either side of the road. On the left the row

was interrupted by a large ornamental gate of white stucco. We passed through it and there I saw a strange and imposing monument before me, built on an irregular-shaped terrace. It rose quite high above the circle of houses around it: an enormous whitewashed dome, crowned by a golden cube. On each of its four sides a pair of eyes had been painted. They were meant to represent the all-seeing eyes of the Buddha. The nose of the square face resembled a question mark. The mouth was wanting, but on its forehead a red spot had been painted, a "tika" (officially called "tilaka") in the place where—according to an ancient myth—man once used to have his third eye, the "eye of wisdom" which has been lost long since. . . .

Each tika was lit by a small lamp so it seemed as if the searching eyes underneath looked even more radiantly into the night. On top of this strange golden cube there was a spirelike golden step-pyramid, consisting of thirteen square terraces, each smaller than the one below. Over them was fixed a decorative golden parasol, the symbol of reverence due to royal dignity throughout the East. From the top of this monument numerous ropes with pennants of various colours hung down in graceful curves. Their ends were fastened to the roofs of the surrounding houses. This impressive building was the famous "Holy Magúta-Stúpa of Bodhnâth."

The moon shone upon the great white dome, on the golden cube with its four pairs of eyes, on the golden pyramid and the golden parasol, in a haze of bluish light. The colored flags were fluttering in the faint breeze. The sky was ablaze with countless sparkling stars. It was beautiful beyond compare, but unreal and fantastic like a scene in a fairytale. . . .

The house of the China lama was situated on the other side of the stúpa. It was painted a golden yellow. The façade was "embellished" with three plaster lions, the middle one over the front door holding an electric lightbulb in its mouth.

Following a servant, the Indian and I mounted the dark stairs leading to a long, low room where we were kindly greeted by the Tibetan lama, a short, thickset man with a clean shaven face and close-cropped hair. With his contented portliness he was the very image of a well-fed Western parish priest, though with Mongolian features. He was anything but impressive, dressed in a lemon colored shirt and white trousers. We were offered little balls of dough with strongly peppered meat inside ("momos"). Shortly afterwards the two gentlemen left me and went to another room to have their business talk.

A quarter of an hour later the Indian returned and told me that

the China lama was putting on his religious attire as he was due to officiate in the temple. When my host reentered I had the surprise of my life: He wore a long, rust-red coat of heavy Chinese silk hanging down to his feet and a mandarin cap to match. Round his waist was tied a broad orange sash. The short, thickset lama was transformed into a man of such worthy and decorative appearance that I could not refrain from asking his permission to paint his portrait. He seemed quite flattered by my request and we made an appointment for the following day.

That is how, after that first night, I came to make daily trips to the golden yellow house-with-the-lions in the holy hamlet of Bodhnâth, a fact which was to have far-reaching consequences.





2: The Flame in the Lotus Flower

Before telling about my experiences in the holy hamlet of Bodhnâth—the ground plan of which resembled the letter omega, with the stûpa as a dot in the center—I should like to say a few words about the “Valley of Nepal” in which it is situated.

Many thousands of years ago this valley in one of the southern ranges of the Himâlayas was an enormous crater lake, named Nâgavâsa. Cākyaṃuni, the Buddha, is said to have visited it during one of his former incarnations, when he had not yet attained Enlightenment, so that at that time he could but be called a Bodhisattva. He threw a lotus-root into the lake and prophesied that the Âdi-Buddha, or primordial Buddha, Svayâmbhû (He-who-has-originated-out-of-Himself) would one day rise “as a flame” from the first flower of this plant, and that subsequently people would settle down in the deep hollow which was now covered by the waters of the lake.

A few centuries later another wise Bodhisattva, the Chinese Mañjuçrî, meditating on a mountain with five peaks, the Wu-tai-Shan (in China), had a vision of the same crater lake: out of the waters a lotus bud lifted its golden cup and unfolded its thousand petals. From this, rising upwards as a flame, Svayâmbhû—the primordial Buddha—manifested Himself.

Mañjuçrî, also known as “the Sweet-Voiced One,” speedily gathered his disciples around him and together they crossed the barren highlands and the Himâlayas, finally to arrive at the lake Nâgavâsa, where indeed they beheld the Âdi-Buddha Svayâmbhû. He looked like a flame rising from a golden lotus, the stem of which grew *above* the water. The wise Bodhisattva, who used to hold a book in one hand and a sword in the other, walked around the entire lake all the time praying to the wondrous Apparition. Then he heard a Voice commanding him to cleave the rocks with his sword at a certain spot. He did as he was told and through the narrow gorge thus springing into existence, which to this day is called the “Sword-Stroke” (the

2. Pappa, prayer-wheel in his hand, said: “Daughter Lili is lucky to have me for a father. I am so learned I am able to answer literally all her questions.” And so he could, but not always correctly. (Part II: 38)

“Chóbar”), the lake Nâga-vâsa (i.e., the “Lake-of-the-Serpents”) emptied itself. Its waters streaming to northern India joined those of the holy river Ganges, or “Mother Ganga” as the Indians call her. Where once had been a lake there was now a beautiful valley: the “Valley of Nepal.”

From that day onwards the narrow “holy” river Bâgmâti sufficed to lead the water of the surrounding mountain streams through the “Sword-Stroke” away to the Indian plains. The pious tribe of the Newáris came and settled down in this sheltered vale. They were thankful to the gods for the fertile alluvial land and raised 2733 temples and shrines in their honor. The first sanctuary was, of course, consecrated to Svayâmbhû. It was built on the only hill rising from the valley and they called it Svayâmbhûnâth. The second, a large temple, was built on the shore of the holy river Bâgmâti, on the spot where the Hindu god Çiva had shown himself in the woods as “Paçu pati” (i.e. “Lord-of-Animals”) in the shape of a magnificent deer. This temple they called Pâçupatinâth.

The third sanctuary they built was the stûpa of Bodhnâth.

As later on I lived for a long time opposite this fascinating building I should like to say something about stûpas in general. A stûpa, also called a “Çaitya,” is *not* a temple because, being a solid structure, it cannot be entered. It is a shrine containing a relic of a Buddha, nearly always of Çâkyamuni, the historical founder of Buddhism who lived about 500 B.C. When this great Teacher-of-Humanity died his mortal remains—as the story goes—were divided into eighteen thousand particles, so that it would be possible to build eighteen thousand stûpas throughout the East in commemoration of Him.

Architecturally speaking, a stûpa consists of three parts: (1) the cylindrical base, the so-called “drum,” (2) the massive “dome” forming its main structure, and (3) the cube called the “box” on top of it. The latter is usually crowned with an odd number of stone or metal “parasols” which are sometimes pressed together into the shape of a pyramid or a cone, as are, respectively, the stûpas of Bodhnâth and of Svayâmbhûnâth.

One never knows the exact spot in such a building where the relic has been hidden. For as a rule the original stûpa has been “renewed” many times by adding a further layer of stone all around it. Thus the transverse section of the “dome” can best be compared to that of an onion: numerous concentric layers encase the original (the oldest) part in the center.

To return to the pious Newáris: they founded three kingdoms in the Valley of Nepal, the capitals of which were Pâtan (or Lalitpur),

Bhàtgoan (or Bhaktapur) and Kàthmandú. After many wars these three states were united into one kingdom: "Nepal," which is a corruption of "Newár." The new settlers were a most artistically gifted people. They decorated the doors and windows of their numerous temples, palaces, and houses of the rich with an abundance of wood sculptures. In addition they made marvellous bronze statues of their gods and their kings, using the following method: Around a kernel of clay they modeled in wax the entire figure they had in mind to its tiniest details. Then the wax figure was neatly covered with a layer of soft clay and subsequently with a layer of heavier clay, leaving a few holes in the bottom. The whole thing was then dried and very carefully baked. This caused the clay to solidify and the wax to melt, so that it flowed away through the apertures. Thus the mold came into existence. It was then turned upside down and liquid bronze was poured into the holes. When hardened, the baked clay enclosing it was broken into pieces to bring out the statue. For each new work of art to be made it was necessary to repeat the whole process all over again. This way of casting is known as the method of "cire perdue." The more delicate parts of the statue were forged independently and invisibly attached to it. Finally the finished whole was gilded over with gold leaf and incrustated with precious stones. These wonderful artistic statues are found everywhere in Nepal.

The temples built by the Newáris were always pagodas. As regular commercial relations had existed between China and the Himálayan countries (Tibet, Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan, and Ladákh) long before the Christian era, the influence of the ancient Chinese culture is still clearly to be seen in all of them. Among other things in this "pagoda architecture," which consists of an accumulation of cubes, diminishing in size towards the top. Each of them is separately provided with a protruding slanting roof. This style was eagerly adopted by the artistic inhabitants of the country. The fact that the pagoda roofs had to be supported by rows of wooden poles afforded them with new opportunities to vent their passion for wood sculpture.

However, the Newáris did not remain lords and masters in the Valley of Nepal: in 1768 the Gurkhas (or Gorkhalis) captured this territory. These intruders were the descendants of a group of Rájputs from Chitór in Central India who had migrated to the Western Himálayas in the sixteenth century, as they refused to submit themselves to Ákbar, the great Mógul conqueror. Since then they had mixed with indigenous Mongolian tribes. Both peoples were bellicose and not in the least interested in art. The newcomers adhered to Hinduism, whereas the more peaceful Newáris adhered to Mahâyána-

Buddhism. For these reasons the two ethnic groups in this Himâlayan country never mixed.

The Tibetans, their northern neighbors, had been Buddhists ever since the seventh century. Between the two peoples of the same religion a close relationship originated. Many pilgrims from the "Land-of-the-Snow" paid yearly visits to the holy Buddhist places south of their border, especially to Lumbinî, the hamlet where the Buddha was born.

So it was no wonder that after the Chinese had invaded Tibet (in 1951) and the fourteenth Dalai Lama had had to emigrate to India (in 1959), many thousands of his subjects also fled to Nepal where 35 percent of the population are followers of Mahâyâna-Buddhism. Part of these Tibetan refugees settled temporarily in the hamlet of Bodhnâth where the stûpa enclosing such holy relics had been built.

But now I am anticipating my story. . . .

3: The Precious Jewel

The China lama, the priest-officiate of the Magúta-stúpa was seventy-two years old. His priest-name was Púnya-Bàjra (a corruption of the Sanskrit word "Vajra," "diamond," which is "Lord of the Precious Stones"). But it is considered bad manners to call a person by his name when he has a title. So the Nepalese addressed him as "Mémé" (i.e., "Priest") and the Tibetans as "Rimpòche" (i.e., "Precious Jewel").

The title was hereditary. His father had been the China lama before him and his grandfather had been the first China lama in Nepal. At the beginning of the last century the latter had lived as a pilgrim near the holy stúpa of Bodhnâth. The Nepalese had given him this honorable surname as he was a native from the eastern part of Tibet, where the inhabitants quite resemble the Chinese. Owing to his wisdom and piety he soon won the hearts of the population, even to such an extent that—when he prepared to return to his own country—they would not allow him to leave until he had begotten a son by a Nepalese beauty who was to continue his dignity as priest-officiate of the sanctuary.

This priest-family belonged to the most ancient Buddhist sect of Tibet: the "Nyingma-pas." Together with some other sects they are known as the "Redcap lamas," the followers of the so-called "Red Church" of the "Land-of-the-Snow." The Reformed Church (which is the state church) is known as the "Yellow Church," the followers of which are the more ascetic "Yellowcap lamas." They are the so-called "Gelúg-pas," meaning the "Virtuous-Ones." The Nyingma-pas are the least ascetic of all sects. They can have alcoholic drinks if they want to and are not bound to a vow of celibacy. As a rule *all those belonging to a Redcap sect can get married, provided they have no leading function.* However, only a few will actually do so. The Tibetan clergy without exception wear high caps.

The present China lama, though the priest-officiate of the holy

Magúta-stúpa, had made ample use of his questionable privilege of noncelibacy. Apart from numerous extramarital relationships when he was still young, he had been legally married to four wives simultaneously, three of whom were still alive. He now had many children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. *Only a small number of his offspring and some relatives—altogether fifty-five persons—were living with him in the house-with-the-lions.* In the beginning when visiting there I never had any idea who was who.

As is generally known, time is of no importance at all to Orientals. When I arrived from Kàthmandú to paint the portrait of the priest he was still having his morning tea, prepared with much care in the traditional Tibetan manner by one of his wives. To begin with she boiled a handful of Chinese tea leaves (pressed together in the shape of a briquette) for ten minutes at least. "Chauri" (yak butter) and salt were added to it. The butter (usually over a year old) was a bit rancid, and as it had been packed in a yak-skin bag with the hairs on the inside, one sometimes found these floating in one's tea. However, who cares about such trifles! The salt consisted of large unpurified crystals, broken off the glittering white crusts which used to be scooped up from the shores of the many inland lakes of northern Tibet, whilst the unpurified soda, of which a small quantity had also been mixed with the beverage, lent it a reddish color. After having been boiled, the concoction was churned for a quarter of an hour in a long, narrow churn and finally transferred to a large red earthenware jug with a spout which was kept hot over a small charcoal fire. Tibetans who can afford to do so drink some thirty to fifty cups of tea a day!

The breakfast of the China lama consisted of two boiled eggs and numerous cups of this nourishing liquid. As is the custom of his country, he put into some of them a few spoonfuls of "tsampa," i.e., roasted barley flour, thus changing it into a thick kind of porridge which he gobbled down smacking his lips. It was in his house that I tasted this Tibetan national beverage for the first time. It does not in the least taste like the tea served in other countries, but more like some kind of good soup. From the very beginning I appreciated it very much.

After his morning meal my host leisurely started dressing himself in his official robe. For this portrait he did not wear his mandarin cap, but a beautifully embroidered kind of hat meant to represent a lotus flower. The top was crowned by a gilt brass ornament shaped as a single "dorji" or "vajra," a mystic symbol which at that time I was still unable to understand. The Precious Jewel used to wear this or-

namental headgear only at very solemn rites in the temple. In its colorful embroidery was fastened the emblem of Nepal: a silver crescent moon turned upwards and cradling a small sun made of pure gold.

Thus attired, the priest took his gold and silver prayer wheel in one hand and a Buddhist prayer chain of a hundred and eight beads in the other. He seated himself in an armchair, his short, fat legs crossed underneath in the so-called lotus-posture (in which the meditating Buddha is also often depicted). Not until then could I begin my work.

However, with all these preparations it had got rather late in the morning. But don't think that from this moment I was able to work uninterruptedly! One should know that my worthy model—passing himself off as the representative of the Dalai Lama in Nepal—was primarily a sharp and (according to rumors) even a very unscrupulous businessman and only in the second place the priest-officiate of the holy sanctuary of Bodhnâth. Verily: It was Mammon who dominated the thoughts of the Precious Jewel!

Not only did the already very wealthy China lama see to it that nearly all the large contracts of his government—such as those concerning various public works and the like—were signed through his personal mediation, affording him each time a tidy sum in the shape of a commission, he also traded daily for himself in a smaller way. He bought up all kinds of art objects and worthless souvenirs to sell at a profit of several hundred percent to the many tourists continuously sent to him by the owners of the large hotels of Kâthmandú, of which the "Hotel Royal" was actually a modernized palace. Armed with cameras and movie cameras these visitors would come and see the fairylike Magûta-Stûpa, after which, conducted by their guides, they inevitably entered the yellow house-with-the-lions to have a conversation with "a *real(!)* Tibetan lama" who could speak a childish sort of English.

My host had mastered the art of impressing sightseers to perfection. He achieved it not only by his amiable personality but also by the background he had "created" for himself. The long, low room in which he received his guests (and in which I too was seated working at his portrait) in fact deserves a description. Walls and ceiling had been painted a turquoise-blue. In the longer wall there were three small, glass-paned windows (such a luxury!) looking out over the square with the high, dome-shaped sanctuary in the center. Between the windows were two armchairs, one for the Precious Jewel himself, the other for an exceptionally honored guest. Flush with the opposite wall—like soldiers standing at attention—were ranged eight uncom-

fortable chairs for ordinary visitors. Against one shorter wall stood a divan on which nobody was ever allowed to sit. Many handwoven Tibetan carpets of all sizes with large, coarse flower patterns, the colors of which clashed with each other in a fearful manner, covered the entire floor. They were never the same, for every time anew (with tears in his eyes) the China lama sold "his own dearest carpet" to some tourist "only because he considered him his best friend in the world." After such a person had left, another "dearest" carpet out of a large stock in a storeroom was put in its place.

On the turquoise-colored walls hung half a dozen magnificent "t'hangkas" from Tibetan temples and monasteries. These works of art are religious scenes painted on specially prepared cotton framed in brocade. Like Chinese and Japanese scrolls, they can be rolled up. They, too, were sold to the tourists for quite a lot of money and replaced by others out of a considerable stock. Between these artistic temple-paintings were ugly, cheap pictures representing the Dalai Lama in gaudy silver frames.

In a corner of the room near the window there was a Philips radio on top of which had been placed a large cardboard poster of the KLM airlines showing a loving couple from the Dutch village of Volendam in their national costume standing amongst fields of tulips (which could never flower in that particular region of my country). "Come and see Holland" its inscription said. No one in the family could understand its message, but to the eyes of the priest-officiate the poster was the summit of artistic expression from the Western hemisphere.

This variegated jumble in the room was emphasized by what could be seen of the next room through the open folding doors in the fourth wall: the high bed-of-state belonging to the master of the house. It had to be climbed like a throne. The canopy, with its curtains in the five holy Buddhist colors, was adorned with eight silver stars. The orange mosquito net, neatly drawn apart, granted the tourists a view of the brocade bedspread and the many hand-embroidered Chinese cushions which had the honor to support the Precious Jewel when resting. Who would not be impressed by so much splendor?

Who would not listen with sympathy to the words of this amiable Tibetan priest exerting himself to elucidate in a few simple sentences the complicated tenets of the Tibetan religion, even if the explanations were not entirely correct? Who would be able to resist the temptation to request the China lama dressed in his rust-red silken robe and wearing his impressive headgear, to step outside for a moment and

have his picture taken with the wonderful stúpa of Bodhnáth as a background?

Moreover, who would have the courage to leave, after his friendly compliance, without buying one of his expensive curios (never daring to bargain, of course)?

Working at the portrait of my host I had to suffer many long interruptions from the visiting tourists. Consequently I made but little progress; but on the other hand I came to know my picturesque model rather well. All things considered, I quite liked him, and evidently the feeling was mutual. For, when I had at last finished my product, the Precious Jewel proposed to adopt me as his daughter for as long as I was to stay in the Himâlayas. I eagerly accepted his unexpected offer and thus I became a member of a Tibetan family.

4: The Members of My Tibetan Family

As soon as I had been adopted by the China lama as his daughter—for that matter without any ceremonies—I came to live with my newly acquired family in Bodhnâth.

Apart from a Tibetan father, I now all of a sudden had three Tibetan mothers as well. The fourth wife of the Precious Jewel had died and, of the remaining three, one lived in the high Himâlayas. I never made her acquaintance. As my two mothers residing in the house-with-the-lions, always referred to as “the mummies,” only spoke Tibetan and Nepalese, I could never have any conversation with them. Nevertheless I soon became quite friendly with those two dears. When together they always quarrelled. To win my favor both used to slip some sweets into my hands every now and again. They themselves ate sweetmeats most of the day and consequently had become enormously fat. I liked them equally well. Of my new brothers and sisters, living in Bodhnâth, only my brother Ganèsh (named after the Hindu god with the elephant’s trunk) and my sister Sûrya (i.e., “the sun”) spoke English, so I got to know them much better than the others. My elder brother Pûnya-Jola also knew a few words of English.

Ganèsh, the youngest son of “pappa,” was a gay, plump youth of twenty-one. As yet he had only two wives. The Tibetan one was called Chring. My brother had fallen in love with her when he was thirteen years old and she twelve. He had secretly married her without delay: in the high mountains, none of his relatives being present. On hearing about it, my Tibetan father had flown into a rage, for it had been his plan to choose a much better match for his favorite son. The unwished-for daughter-in-law could neither read nor write and as she became pregnant at once she could not be sent to school. To make matters worse, Ganèsh who had that year been a pupil at the mission boardingschool in Darjeeling (India) could not be induced to return there after this holiday romance. So in point of fact he lacked

the general education required for his future position as priest-officiate of Bodhnâth's holy stûpa. It is true the Chinya lama himself had instructed him in reading and reciting melodiously the holy Tibetan books, thus training him to be a priest, but in reality lama Ganesh was not interested at all in religion. Trading "in order to accumulate as much money as possible" was the only thing that appealed to him, as he repeatedly told me. When not yet of age my Tibetan brother was the father of four little girls!

Just before I had come to Nepal, the Precious Jewel had succeeded in procuring yet another wife for him, a girl after his liking in every respect: rich, lovely, and young. Moreover, she had been to school for some time! It had taken pappa quite a lot of trouble to find what he wanted, for the families who came into consideration did not mind their daughter becoming the second wife of the future priest-officiate of Bodhnâth, it is true, but they disliked the idea that the first marriage of the prospective bridegroom had been a love-match! Would their own child stand any chance of winning her husband's affection? Moreover, a marriage not resulting from a businesslike agreement between the respective parents—like that of Ganesh and Chring—was a disgrace in the eyes of distinguished families! But finally my Tibetan father had succeeded: The bride elect was a young girl from the tribe of the Tāmangs, ethnologically related to the Tibetan people. Her name was Kāmala, meaning "Lotus." The marriage had been concluded with pomp and splendor.

When I was introduced to Kāmala as her sister-in-law, she was radiantly happy with Ganesh. I heard that Chring, whom I had not yet met, had departed to spend some time at the house of her parents in the Himâlayas after a furious quarrel. It had come about this way: The bride's parents had said to their daughter, "You know the first wife of your husband will live near you all your life, so be sensible and strike up a friendship with her as soon as possible. Such a thing will come off quite easily if, being the younger one, you start by offering her a beautiful present." They had given her a costly sari to that purpose.

Now seventeen-year-old Lotus had typically Mongolian features. She somehow made one think of those improbably fragile, smart women which the Chinese used to paint on their blue porcelain vases. Moreover her skin was very light, more or less like the tint of a banana, and this is considered a great asset all over the East. The skin of the Tibetans is light, too, especially in their youth, but afterwards they often get deeply bronzed where they have been exposed to the scorching rays of the sun in the high mountains. Such was the case

with Chring. Besides, after the birth of her four children, her figure was not as good as it had been formerly, certainly not when compared to that of the young girl Kámala. The poor woman was consumed with jealousy of her rival. She threw the sari offered to her on the floor and trampled on it: War had been openly declared between these two and was likely to continue all their lives.

Ganèsh was a kindhearted fellow. Of course he fell in love with the beautiful newcomer, but that did not change his affection for his first wife. How often did I hear him sigh: "Why can the three of us not enjoy a happy marriage together! I really adore them both equally much!"

My sister Sûrya was pappa's favourite. He never called her anything else but "darling," and "Darling" had become like a Christian name to her. Such she was called by everybody who spoke to her. Like her father she had somewhat Mongolian features, but in quite a different way from Kámala. For Sûrya was not slender or fragile at all! On the contrary, she was quite stout. Her fair face was nearly as round as the moon, and her coal black eyes, friendly and intelligent, which she used to rim with kájal, (the mascara of the East) to accentuate their expressiveness, always sparkled. She had the rare good fortune to be the only wife of her Nepalese husband. A year ago her first baby had been born.

I liked Darling extremely well. The two of us used to walk round and round the stûpa, many times. My sister's mouth never stopped talking. Like a babbling brook her words would continue to flow on uninterruptedly, skipping from one subject to another without a single pause! "Yes, sister Lili." (My name in Dutch is written this way and pronounced like "Lee-Lee." So my Tibetan family also called me such at my request. Afterwards, this became the reason the Tibetans wrongly thought I was Chinese.) I have passed through the whole mission boarding school in Darjeeling, the same Ganèsh used to be a pupil of, only I attended the section for girls, of course, but my brother didn't want to return there when he was thirteen, for Chring was beautiful at that time. So stupid of him, wasn't it, and my best girlfriend at the institute was Sun-yèn, also a Tibetan, the daughter of the Dalai Lama's first minister Surkhàng, in Lhasa. You should meet her some time, very much nicer than that other friend of mine, the daughter of the Indian mahârâja who used to write the love letters for her servant girl to the sweetheart of that servant girl, and afterwards on account of them was blackmailed by him, as he said she had been his sweetheart herself, but you see, in the end I had trouble with my eyes, otherwise I should have been willing to go on studying to be-

come a teacher, but daddy needed a trustworthy person to help him (you know how he is) with all his business transactions, and I too love trading; it would have been quite a success to work together, but yes: *love comes*, doesn't it, because, elder sister, I have to tell you something in confidence—my mummy was quite friendly with the sister of the wife of the Brahmin priest at the court of our king, who isn't such a prominent figure as the former monarch, though he too dislikes the Ranas, for all the children of the Ranas receive the rank of general at birth. Did you ever hear such a crazy thing—their sons, not their daughters of course, but finally His Royal Highness king Mahendra realized *he* was the boss of his ministers of state, but to tell you some more about the sister of mummy's girlfriend—she had a son, and because he had seen me here in Bodhnâth during the holiday of our school, he told his mummy as a deep, deep secret he had fallen so-o-o-o terribly in love with me, but I said 'Nothing doing! I don't *think* about it. I am not my brother Ganesh. I will stay at school because of my girlfriends, no, I mean because I want to learn. Pshaw, he presumes too much, that young man.' I said, 'I don't *want* him! Ne-e-e-e-e-ever!' Although he would have been quite a good match, very rich and learned too, and do you know, sister Lili, once I say a thing I always stick to it, always, for I am extr-e-e-e-e-emely firm. . . ."

The young man in love had become her husband!

Yes, Darling was truly a very nice sister, whose company never bored me!

5: The Temple-City

As I said before, my Tibetan father was trading in a variety of wares. For instance he owned several cars bought secondhand, for hiring out or selling again at a profit. He himself and my brother Ganesh often went to town in one of them and they took me along so I could have a look around there.

The beauty of Kàthmandú does not lie in its more than twenty colossal white palaces. One of these boasts of one thousand and eighty rooms and nowadays is used as a government office; another—much smaller—as a hotel, a third as a cinema, and a fourth as an American aid-mission. Most of them still are the residences of their original proprietors, all of whom belong to the Rana-family. For during one century the members of this clan, occupying hereditarily the positions of ministers of state, held all power—hence all the tax money—in their hands, while actually the legal king of Nepal was no more than their prisoner. Being the real rulers, at the culmination point of their power in the beginning of this century they had had these monstrously pompous palaces built for themselves by Italian architects. But when in 1951 the former monarch, Tríbhuvána, succeeded by a trick in recovering the royal power for himself and his dynasty, the Rana-supremacy was put to an end once and for all! However, their members were allowed to keep most of the riches they had gathered, as well as their high positions.

No, Kàthmandú's beauty was certainly not enhanced by those palaces of white stucco, nor by the senseless needle tower, over a hundred and eighty feet high, built in 1930 by the minister Bhim-Sen "to astonish the people"! It is the stylish old temples with their carved doors and windows and most of all the numerous slender pagodas which make Kàthmandú unforgettably beautiful. In the center of the city, on the irregular square called Hánuman-dhoka, rise not fewer than three big pagodas and half a score of small ones. The beams of sculptured wood supporting their many roofs are the most

photographed ones of the world, because of their strange representations. On the upper part of such a beam the face of some terrifying demon is always depicted, and on the long middle part a standing, many-armed deity, while the lower part shows—quite realistically—a sexual act in which two, three, or sometimes four persons take part. The stretch of imagination of the Nepalese as to the latter subject seems inexhaustible. Among the many hundreds of its variations which one sees everywhere around, no two are identical. It stands to reason that Westerners consider these images pornographic, but the inhabitants of the Himâlayas look upon these things in a different way. For because of the Tantric tendency of Mahâyâna-Buddhism every thing concerning sexual life—as a symbol of fusion of the male and female elements—forms an integral part of their religion. They see it as the union of antitheses which are able to reach the Highest only when embracing each other.

Countless interesting details of woodcarving give evidence of a playful imagination joined to good taste and skillful craftsmanship, thus adding to the beauty of the temples. For instance one of these has a splendidly sculptured gilt middle window out of which lean two images, presumably looking down on the bustle in the street. These lifesize wooden statues, painted realistically, represent the god Çiva and his spouse Pârvatî: he has his right arm round her shoulders and his hand touches her breast, fondling it, thoughtlessly, as it were.

In this Himâlayan city art, religion, and business thrive side by side. The stair shaped terraces of the pagodas are used to exhibit all kinds of goods for sale: big pots of rough, red earthenware, colorful woven materials, fruit, flowers, and glass bangles. While waiting for customers the salesmen smoke their waterpipes and the saleswomen nurse their babies.

In the center of the market-square rises a monstrous statue of painted stucco, four or five times the size of a live person. It represents Kâli-Bhairâvi, the "Terrifying Black One," that is, the goddess Kâli, the dark or unmanifest aspect of the celestial spouse of Çiva—the-Destroyer-Regenerator. In her light or manifest aspect she is called Dûrga, a goddess of sheer loveliness and sweetness. As a rule, the creative power of any god is named Çakti. The word "goddess" or his "female aspect" being in fact synonymous with it.

Here in Nepal Çiva's spouse is mostly represented and worshipped in her dark aspect. The statue mentioned depicts her as black-skinned, trampling on a man lying on his back. She holds a club in her hand. A necklace of human skulls is hanging round her neck, her mouth is red with blood she has lapped up. Is it not a wise thing to

try and coax the Terrifying Black One to show more gentleness by offering her flowers? No one who passes her image will neglect to do so. In former times people used to sacrifice human beings to Kâli, always men. Such a thing is prohibited by now, but less than ten years ago, in a remote village, members of the Sàmbara-sect were caught in the act of ritually slaughtering a man as a sacrifice to Kâli. Several times during the previous years in the hamlets of its vicinity little boys had vanished. . . .

But in Kàthmandú, even nowadays, the Nepalese will sacrifice a hundred and one buffaloes to Kâli once a year. With one blow of the kúkhri, the beasts' heads are severed from their bodies. On the anniversary of the Terrifying Black One the whole city is reeking with blood. . . .

In the narrow, tortuous streets around the square even the doors and the paneless windows of the ordinary loam-houses are beautified with an abundance of sculptured wood. Their big balconies look especially splendid. With endless patience and love of this art *the industrious Newári woodcarvers of yore* have adorned them with animal figures and decorative floral ornaments. Through their work *the name Kàthmandú has come into existence. It means "Houses-of-Wood."* Unfortunately this artistic way of building is considered old-fashioned nowadays. The population pulls down the older parts of the town, uses the lovely sculptured wood for fuel, and builds houses in Western style instead.

In among the houses of former times there are everywhere small sanctuaries with gilt copper roofs on which gilt copper birds are fixed by way of decoration. Their feathered fellows seat themselves next to them, for they know that the pious population will offer grains of rice at each of their visits, and though these grains are generally painted red to make them more sacred still, they are considered dainty titbits to little birds.

The monkeys are not far away either: on the roofs of the neighboring houses. They too, insolent and greedy, watch their opportunity to get some food. Finally even the dogs, roaming in the streets, come across something of their liking near the temples with the statues of the many gods. For nowhere in the world do people offer their deities so much as in this country. Between six and eight in the morning the Nepalese hardly seem to occupy themselves with anything else! Men, women, and children, each of them brings his or her own offerings to the sanctuaries on a copper tray. On it is seen the aforementioned grains of red rice, a small bowl of clarified butter ("ghee") to burn before the altars, another bowl of holy water, a few flowers, paste of rubbed, fragrant sandalwood, some small fruit or homemade sweetmeats, and a pinch of red powder to be sprinkled

over the holy statues. Red is the sacred color in Nepal, and red, too, is the special Protecting God of the country: Matsyendra, the lord Matsyendra. He is honored in a high pagoda with gilt copper roofs and beautiful gilt copper statues. Before the entrance gate two big copper temple-dragons are keeping watch. Because the pious ones feel thankful to the dragons for this service they often hang flower garlands around their necks. However, this Matsyendra-sanctuary is so well hidden by the surrounding houses that tourists are seldom able to find it.

At the corner of a narrow lane the trunk of an enormous tree is protruding from underneath a temple: literally thousands of nails are driven into it. Everybody who has a toothache will come here to drive yet another nail into it, to cause his pain to vanish.

I never got tired sauntering about the streets of Kathmandu among the bustling crowd. The men wear black or flowered little caps, and tunics, closed on the side with a bow. The upper part of their trousers is quite wide, but the lower part fits tightly around their legs. The women wear voluminous skirts and colorful tops, also closed on the side with a bow, while a long white piece of cloth is wound many times around their hips to support their body. Dozens of strings of tiny beads are hanging around their necks and countless colored glass bangles adorn their slender wrists. Many wear big, copper, disk-shaped rings in the lobes of their ears, or a row of many small rings all along their auricles. Some of them have one or two rings hooked in the nose. On their front they do not stick just one single red "tika," as is the custom of the Indian ladies, but a vertical row of three to five tikas in different colors. Other persons, men as well as women, paste some red-painted grains of rice on their front. There is no woman or girl who has not stuck flowers in her black, shining hair: cornflowers, sweet peas, big daisies, camellias or whatever is to be found along the roadside.

The mountain dwellers who come to the city are all carrying enormous loads in huge baskets, balanced on their backs by a broad band around their foreheads. They walk bent forward, for the loads are extremely heavy. To prevent galls from forming on their backs they put twigs with fresh leaves underneath the loads. Just like the other Nepalese, these indigent carriers too are always friendly, gay, and fond of laughter. Usually they have travelled many days to the Valley of Nepal to try and sell bundles of wood from the forests, or the products they have cultivated themselves near their homes high up in the mountains.

The more one observes life in Kathmandu, the more it strikes one

as strange, fantastic, and unreal. It is quite unique: as if still taking place in the Middle Ages! For since Nepal has developed all by itself in the barren Himâlayas, practically without any contacts with other parts of the world (except in religious respects) it cannot be compared with anyplace else.

Transport by vehicle is a thing unknown in all the Himâlayan countries. Monarchs and learned men probably knew about the principle of the wheel, but they always carefully kept it a secret. Why? From love of nature: they wanted to keep the superb mountain scenery unspoiled. A cart on wheels which could take over the burden from people would need a road, and roads—so they rightly reasoned—would spoil the beauty of the landscape, which is not done by paths. So let people carry their heavy loads on their backs! They are not unhappy for all that! Would they otherwise be so friendly and so fond of laughter?

In among the crowd in the streets the "holy" cows saunter about everywhere. Their holiness is a Hindu conception. Of the population of Nepal, 60 percent are Hindus, 35 percent Buddhists, and the remaining part Christians and Mohammedans. But in this state not only the Hindus but also the Mahâyâna-Buddhists consider the animal as holy. In India the "killing" of a cow is considered a "murder," a crime for which one is decapitated, in Nepal its "murderer" is only imprisoned for twelve years.

6: Truth and Fiction

In the beginning when staying with my Tibetan family I slept in the turquoise-colored room on the divan upon which during daytime nobody was allowed to sit. "We must try and think of something else," said the Chinya lama. "This way you can never go to bed as long as I have visitors, but the house is so full of people that I wouldn't know where to find another place for you. It is a good thing that you are always up so early, for some of my business relations arrive at dawn."

"That is how I have come to know them all, pappa. Several of them have already posed for me." I thought of the portrait I had drawn of the young Sher-pa, a yak-cowboy who had come to pay the Precious Jewel the rent for his meadows in kind, to wit in "chauri" (i.e. yak butter to be used in tea). Of course in his girdle was stuck his kúkhri, the curved knife which, once drawn, *must* cause blood to flow before it is returned to its place. "May I have a closer look at it? Is it very sharp?" I had asked him. Reluctantly, but from sheer politeness towards me, since I was the adopted daughter of his priest—something I realized too late—he drew the weapon from its leather sheath and handed it to me. The blade was as sharp as a razor. When I returned it to him he deliberately cut his finger: blood had flowed and now the kúkhri could be restored where it belonged.

I also thought of the picturesque Yellowcap monk whom I had drawn when he paid my Tibetan father a visit. He wore an imposing headdress with an enormous woolen fringe reaching upwards all along its high crest. It reminded me of a Roman helmet. With exception of the tourists, the visitors of my Tibetan father were always worth looking at.

I met many other interesting personalities too. My brother Ganèsh, for instance, accompanied me one day to the "Living Goddess of Nepal," a nine-year-old girl in whom the essence of the goddess Dûrga had incarnated. Her life was spent in isolation, for she was practically imprisoned in a temple at Kâthmandú, together with

her relatives whose duty it was to look after her. They, of course, could go out whenever they liked, but the "holy girl" was to sit outside (on a throne) only on the anniversary of the god Matsyendra to see the pageant of his statue. (NOTE: The complete story has been described in *A Year with the Yogis of India and Tibet* by the same authoress). The child was referred to as "the Kumârî," i.e., "the Virgin." Being a "divinity" her word was law. Even the word of Nepal's king had to cede to hers. As soon as her body would come to maturity she would cease to be a goddess. At that moment a new Incarnation of the Celestial Dûrga had to be sought, as ever in the "caste of the silversmiths" (the Daaba-caste). This happens more or less through elimination by putting eventual candidates between the age of two and five to specific tests.

It is said that he who marries a former Kumârî will die within a year, and that is why no young man would dare take her as his wife. However, an ex-goddess will have many passionate lovers!

Together with Ganesh I also visited the stûpa of Svayâm bhunâth built on a hill outside the capital. More than three hundred steps lead up to this sanctuary which, just like the one of Bodhnâth, has four golden faces with the all-seeing eyes of the Buddha. Next to this structure there was a monastery of Tibetan Yellowcap lamas where we had tea with the learned abbot who, together with his little dog, was seated on a throne while we respectfully sat down on the floor.

Owing to the influence of Hinduism on the doctrine of the historical Buddha, one will generally find statues of Hindu gods set up around Buddhist shrines. Here, on the premises of Svayâmbhunâth I saw for the first time a little temple dedicated to Shîtâlâ, the goddess of smallpox. Mothers always go and pay her a reverential visit with their newborn babies, so the goddess herself has no need to come to see them at their homes and leave the terrible illness as her gift

Another time we went to Pâçupatinâth, the holiest Hindu pagoda-temple with its golden roofs. It was situated on the shore of the river Bâgmâti. However, being a Westerner, I was not allowed to enter. Inside is worshipped the emblem of god Çiva: an enormous "linggâ" (phallus), raised vertically in the center of a horizontal "yoni" (uterus). Outside the temple is a gilt copper statue of Çiva's mount, the bull Nandi. It is represented lying down full length, measuring over twenty feet. A hundred and odd small temples with stone linggâs inside and stone Nandis outside have been built on the site of this enormous sanctuary. Amongst them lived several Hindu yogis in their "kûtirs" (small stone cabins). One of them used a human skull to drink from and claimed that he ate human flesh occa-

sionally. Along the shores of the Bâgmâti as a rule there were many cremations. But since generally insufficient wood was used for the pyres, it often happened that the bodies were not completely consumed by the flames when cast into the river. The yogi mentioned was said to pick the food for his horrible meals from these cremation platforms.

In the woods on the shore opposite to the temple we visited another yogi, a hermit of the name Shiva-Puri-Baba, who was 133 years old. Later on I became great friends with this high-principled and learned monk. I often called on him and once he told me the wondrous story of his life. He also explained to me why he had become so old. (NOTE: The complete story is described in *A Year with the Yogis of India and Tibet* by the same authoress).

One day my Tibetan father asked me: "Do you know who was Nilakantha, daughter Lili?"

"I know that the word means "Blue-Neck," pappa."

"Sometimes the god Çiva, in Nepal often identified with the god Vishnu, (who is also called Nârâyana) is referred to by that name," the priest explained. "This appellation is connected with a myth the 'dénouement' of which is said to have taken place in the Himâlayas, five days' travelling away from here: When the gods were churning the world-ocean in order to distil from it the 'elixir of immortality,' Çiva came along and took a sip of the ocean water. Unfortunately the poison had not yet been churned out altogether and some of it got into his system. His neck turned blue and the god in his suffering got so terribly thirsty that he drank and drank. . . . He just could not stop drinking! But it was of no avail. At his wits' end Blue-Neck climbed up the mountain Gozainthan in the Himâlayas, knowing that in its highest ranges there was a crater lake. He submerged himself completely in its icy cold water that he might go on drinking forever. The seven-headed hydra-serpent took pity on Nilakantha. It slipped into the lake and curled itself up so its long, lithe body might serve him for a soft couch to rest on. Thus the unfortunate deity could continue drinking to his heart's content. Every year thousands of pilgrims from India, Nepal, and Tibet come and visit the place: Through the crystal-clear water they gaze at the thirsty god reclining on his serpent-bed in the depths of the lake."

"I should love to see him too, pappa."

"Gozainthan is much too far away from here for you, daughter. The journey is so fatiguing and dangerous that even many hardened pilgrims die on the roadside. However, something can be done about it." And he called: "Ganèsh! Take your sister to Nilankantha's image in the Valley-of-Nepal!"

And so my Tibetan brother and I travelled by car over the bumpy roads leading to the "Buddhanilakanth." "One day, when a farmer was digging here," Ganesh told me, "his spade struck a rock which began to bleed. Frightened to death, he called in the help of the village priest, who had "the stone" excavated with great care. It proved to be a large statue of Nilakantha lying down at full length on the curled-up hydra-serpent. Because people realized this must be the god himself—since he had been bleeding—they were sure he was thirsty. So a pond was dug out all around his image and the villagers took it upon themselves always to keep it filled with water."

In the meantime we had arrived at the foot of the mountains. We walked across the hamlet to a kind of tank lined with lovely tiles in which, almost completely submerged, the petrified Nilakantha lay on his seven-headed couch. He was nearly twenty feet long, serene and impressive to look at. The pious population had adorned him with many beautiful flower wreaths and red powder. I stood there gazing at him for a long time. Then I heard the voice of Ganesh again: "It so happened one of the kings of Nepal came and visited this place. As you know, sister Lili, each of our kings is an Incarnation of Vishnu. And Narayan-Nilakantha also is Vishnu. So this king dropped down dead when he faced himself lying there alive."

The "so" of the story was not very clear to me, but I did not ask for an explanation.

"However," my Tibetan brother continued. "our people realized that later kings could not be denied the bliss of seeing this splendid image. That is why a smaller copy, also in stone, was carved and let down into the artificial lake of the Baluju-park. That statue, of course, is not "alive," and our kings regularly go and look at it without risking their lives."

In the Himâlayas, I mused, truth and fiction go hand in hand. Statues bleed, a smiling little girl is kept imprisoned in a temple because she is a "living goddess," a lama in a high position shares his throne with a dog, a yogi eats human flesh, another appears to have conquered death, the goddess of smallpox is visited by every mother in order to prevent her from calling on them herself with her gift, and a knife refuses to return to its sheath before it has drawn blood. . . .

Do these people living in the rugged mountains really know the difference between what is true and what not? Oh well, they just do not analyze things as ponderously as Westerners do! Maybe that explains why they are always so friendly and so prone to laughter!

3. The nomad-women ("dómo") sometimes plait in their hair three big pieces of yellow amber (the size of a small apple) each topped with a red coral (the size of a cherry.) These ornaments symbolize the Buddhist "Three-fold Jewel" ("Norbu"): "Buddha, Dharma, Sanggha" (i.e. the Buddha, his Doctrine and the Congregation of his Followers). (Part II:6)





7: Women, Not Allowed to Be Seen

Once, when taking a walk all by myself, I had a remarkable encounter. I heard music and saw a group of men coming in my direction: one was beating a little drum, two others were playing on flutes and two others again were carrying a long pole between them on their shoulders on which was hanging something that made one think of a cradle-for-grown-ups, covered by a many-colored carpet. I stopped them. "What is this, what are you doing, friends?" I wanted to know. "It is no corpse, is it, underneath that rug, which you have to take to the Bâgmâti to be cremated? For in that case you wouldn't be playing any music. Is it a sick person that has to be carried some place? Do you hope the unfortunate one will fall asleep being rocked to and fro to the accompaniment of your music?"

They smiled shyly. "No, no, but nevertheless it is a secret, something that is not allowed to be seen. For look at it yourself: It is hidden." By this time I had grown still more curious, and I started my plea which had so often been useful to me on my many travels: "Oh, what does it matter, I am only a woman, hence somebody of no consequence at all. Women are allowed to see things which are forbidden to be seen by men, are not they? They may even push aside the curtain of a harem! Please let me have a look at whatever you are carrying."

They consulted together. "Well, all right then, if you want it so much," and their faces beamed. Carefully I lifted the carpet from the "cradle" and there was lying . . . an adorable young girl, almost a child, who looked at me friendly, with black-rimmed, slanting eyes. She lay there completely motionless, arrayed in her most beautiful dress and adorned with many gold necklaces, countless bracelets, and a variety of rings. She also wore a gold tiara in her hair, in which sparkled red rubies. Garlands of colorful, fragrant flowers were artistically arranged all around her. "How lovely she looks! Where are you taking her?" I asked.

{ 4. Young Yellowcap-monk wearing his gala-headgear, and holding in his hands the lama-sceptre and temple-bell ("dorji" and "dilbu") in the ritual way as prescribed during services. (Part II: 48)

“She is a bride” I was told by her companions, probably the members of her family, for they seemed to be quite proud of the girl and obviously enjoyed my admiration. “We are carrying her to the house of her husband-to-be. She has never seen him yet and he has never seen her. How happy he will be with this sweet little bride!” I smiled at her and put the many-colored carpet over her again, lest the eyes of those who were of consequence, i.e., of men, should see her. Then I thanked the carriers and the musicians and continued my walk.

In this book I want to tell especially about the Tibetans and about all I saw and did together with them. But I should like to say a few words about one Nepalese, because he was a very noteworthy and influential man in this environment. I am thinking of slightly built eighty-year-old Kaiser Sham Shir Jung Bâhadur Rana, like the other sons of the Rana-clan born with the rank of general, and soon afterwards raised to the rank of field marshal. Every Rana was a millionaire, but none of them had nearly as many millions as old Kaiser. This gentleman had travelled many times to Europe to buy works of art in all fields. As he never entrusted the transport of his acquisitions to any shipping or air company, he used to charter an airplane for his personal use and kept guard over his treasures in the cabin all by himself when transporting them to Kâthmandú. His collection of ancient manuscripts in diverse languages made his enormous library one of the most famous of all Asia. His collection of invaluable paintings of old masters and modern filled many large halls and galleries of his colossal palace. For several hours he personally showed me around. Perhaps he prided himself most of all on his two lifesize, full-length portraits, painted by the famous painter Laszlo. On these masterpieces the field marshal was wearing a splendid red uniform with many gold braids. Countless resplendent orders of knighthood adorned his breast. A sword in a sheath set with precious stones was hanging at his side. But obviously his headgear was more costly than all the other things put together! It was a kind of crown, worthy of a king, its rows of big shining diamonds alternated with rows of long, pear-shaped emeralds. A high plume of precious feathers of paradise-birds was fixed to its top, gracefully hanging down his back.

“Did you order Laszlo to paint a counterpart picture of your wife, too?” I asked. At that time I did not yet know the field marshal had had a great number of legal wives—simultaneously—not to speak of the illegal ones.

The old gentleman hesitated for a moment before he answered: “You see, my wife . . . hm, at my twelfth year, hm, I got married to a sister of the then king. She was eight years old. Here you see the

photograph taken on our wedding day." On the faded photo he handed to me I saw two children standing stiffly side by side, dressed in brocade clothes and literally covered with jewels. "Our marriage got consummated three years later," he continued, "when I was a youth experienced in the ways of love. Unfortunately my wife did not grow up as beautiful as her sisters. She was already quite old when she finally got her first baby: nearly eighteen. Now she is—hm—no more. I have—hm—a second wife," he said nearly apologetically, skipping at least half a dozen of legal wives in between the two he mentioned! Then, all of a sudden, enthusiastically he cried: "Oh, *she* is beautiful! Do come with me, her portrait is hanging in the next hall. No, she has not been painted by Laszlo, but by a lady painter. She would have been too shy to pose for a man!" He led me to her portrait, which was quite lovely, and then to herself. She was still lovelier, a very young, ethereal looking woman of slender build with a fair skin and fine features. Her big black eyes were almond-shaped and lustrous. In her private sitting room she was reclining on a settee gazing quietly in front of her, a baby on her lap, already her third, my host told me, full of pride. And I understood that the field marshal, like many Easterners, had been too jealous to have his beautiful wife—even in his presence—looked at by a male painter. Such a thing was only permitted to a woman, to somebody of no consequence at all, such as I was! This great art collector had never entrusted his precious treasures to others. He had always kept guard over them himself with the utmost care!

Later on I was told the romance of the last love of Kaiser Sham Shir Jung Báhadur Rana. When all his elder sons had been long since married, he still had the youngest at home. He had betrothed him to a five-year-old girl. Now it is the custom in distinguished families that sometimes the little bride-to-be is made to live in the house of the boy's parents to be educated to become the ideal spouse, familiar with the habits and wishes of her future husband and reacting accordingly. Moreover this way of educating her has another advantage: if the child should grow up into a girl neither beautiful nor sweet-natured enough in the eyes of her future family-in-law, she can always be sent back to her parents. With this thought in mind, the field marshal had taken into his palace the little girl his son was betrothed to. But here the reverse happened: She grew up so extremely handsome and sweet that her future father-in-law thought it would just be a pity to cede her to his dear son: He married her himself! In the beginning this marriage caused a rupture between the youth and the old gentleman, but time heals all wounds: Kaiser's inconsolable son has now found his happiness in five other legal spouses!

So there was always something interesting or peculiar to be experienced this first period I spent with my Tibetan family, but nevertheless everything was somehow superficial. I did not really get absorbed in the psyche of the people into which I had been adopted. It was as if during this visit the stage was merely set; on which during my next long stay I was going to live through their tragic fate together with them. . . .

PART II

1: The Chinese in Tibet

Even in 1950 Red China had sent word that Tibet should now come under its rule, bringing forward as a motivation that since 1700 the country had factually been but their vassal state.

The government of Tibet, however, naturally wanted to keep independent. Moreover, on account of the nation's conservatism and aversion to modern civilization it anticipated many difficulties in consequence of this new move by their powerful neighbour and took a firm stand. Therefore they proclaimed that the then sixteen-year-old Dalai Lama had come of age, two years before the correct date, so he might be in complete possession of his ecclesiastical and worldly power when, before long, important decisions would have to be taken.

Within a few months the Chinese front troops invaded the east of the country and as early as 1951 they had reached Lhasa, where His Holiness the Dalai Lama resided, as always in the summer months, in his garden palace called "Nórbu-Lingka," the "Jewel Park." He used to spend only the winter in his stronghold-palace on the Potala-hill.

The Tibetans, true to the Buddhist doctrine, had for centuries stuck to the tenet of nonaggression. Besides, since they were peaceloving by nature, they had not been able to check the onslaught of the Chinese. It was not only because of their numerical majority and better armament that the enemy made a rapid progress, but also because it had been inculcated in them that they had a mission of bringing happiness and prosperity to all humanity. For this reason they believed themselves to be Tibet's "liberators" and were proud of the title.

In every district they occupied, the Chinese appointed their own officials who, supported by the Red army, from that moment held all key-positions. The nobles of the country, who because of their rank had filled the important government-posts, now were sternly control-

led by the new authorities. The invaders made their sons and daughters go to Peking, where they were allowed to study free of charge at the "National University of Minorities." This served a double purpose: On the one hand these young people received daily tuition in communist ideologies, and on the other hand the parents in their own homeland would not dare now to act in the political field for fear it might harm their children abroad.

However, in 1951 in the eastern provinces of Kham and Amdo, the inhabitants had offered vehement resistance to the Chinese forces. Since ancient times these Kham-pas and Amdo-was had been renowned for their spirit of independence and liberty. They had even resented the interference of their central government, to whom they used to refer as "that Lhasa-clique." Amongst each other there had never been a strong sense of unity either: the thirty-nine seminomadic tribes of Kham and the twenty-five of Amdo had quarrelled with each other for as long as one could remember. The supreme rulership of Tibet had never been able to weld them into a unity, for the journey from the capital to their territory right across almost impassable regions without roads took about two months. But now that they were facing a common enemy, the East Tibetans all of a sudden were in great sympathy with the Central Tibetans. Were not all of them Mahâyâna-Buddhists! Was not the beloved Dalai Lama, as an Incarnation of a Celestial Bodhisattva on earth, their priest-king and the head of their church! Mutual feuds were forgotten and they joined in a fierce guerrilla against the invaders. Galloping at top speed on their small, strong horses, they would suddenly come down from their mountainous hiding-places and shoot at the soldiers of the Red army—never missing their victims—after which they would vanish just as unexpectedly without leaving a trace. Many Kham-pas and Amdo-was were well-practiced in such feats. They enjoyed the doubtful fame of being successful robbers attacking the peaceful commercial caravans of their own compatriots.

As soon as the Chinese found themselves in the Land-of-the-Snow they realized they could never hold their own in these inhospitable regions unless they were able to shift their military forces at great speed. That is why they started building airports, as well as a long, modern highway where until then there had never been anything but a caravan-track leading from the most eastern border townlet of Ta-chien-lu via Bathang, Lithang, and Chamdo to Lhasa. As their own people, unaccustomed to the rarified air of the high plateau, about twelve thousand feet above sea level, were not able to cope with the heavy labor, the "liberators" forced the inhabitants liv-

ing in the surroundings to work for them, men as well as women. They had to hew out the rocks where previously there had only been narrow footpaths skirting the precipices, to harden the marshes and sandy desert regions with blocks of stone, and to construct more than a hundred bridges across the roaring mountain-brooks and deep ravines, so the broad thoroughfare right across the country would be suitable for motorized traffic. The invaders paid the recruited laborers high wages in silver dollars. However, they soon found out that in infertile, cold Tibet, the crops did not yield enough to feed its own population as well as the Chinese. Thus the road made thousands of victims who, in spite of silver dollars, died from undernourishment.

The men in power, filled with modern ideas, started to build hospitals and schools in various places. It is a lamentable fact but there it is: a vanquished people always loathes the improvements in their own homeland when made by a hostile dominator.

One would think that the resistance of the Tibetans against the enemy, started in the eastern provinces, would quickly have spread westwards, but as the inhabitants in those parts were more peace-loving, it was eight full years before all the nation actually revolted.

Meanwhile, in 1956, the Dalai Lama had visited India on the occasion of the twenty-five hundredth memorial year of the Enlightenment of the Buddha, having taken place in that country in Bodh-Gayâ under the holy Pipal-tree or Bho-tree (the *Ficus Religiosa*). As the priest-king feared the Chinese might get the upper hand and drive his subjects to abject obedience, once they could lay hands on himself as a hostage, he secretly expressed his desire during this visit to be allowed to stay in India. But Pandit Nehru, afraid of being suspected of complicity leading to political entanglements, requested him earnestly to give up this plan. So the Dalai Lama returned to his kingdom to face the coming events.

2: The Flight of the Priest-King

The situation in Tibet, especially in Lhasa (pronounced Lassa) gradually became unbearable. The occupying forces threatened to bomb the capital at the very first sign of open rebellion. About the middle of March 1959, the Chinese authorities invited the Dalai Lama to come and attend a theatrical performance in their headquarters. They stipulated explicitly he should come all by himself without his usual following of government-officials, as was prescribed by protocol. As mentioned before, the monarch was staying in his summer palace "Nórbu-Lingka," situated just outside Lhasa. The Tibetans having heard of the strange invitation realized it might be a stratagem to abduct their beloved sovereign and "in order to protect the Dalai Lama" they pitched their tents around the royal abode. For days they remained there and refused point blank to return to their own homes. It was actually an impossible situation. At the time there were some forty to fifty thousand Chinese soldiers encamped in the capital, but less than fifty miles away from it the resistance troops were awaiting their chance.

On the seventeenth of March the enemy shot shells in the direction of "Nórbu-Lingka." What was their purpose nobody will ever know. The munition crashed into the mud near the lake without causing any damage. All the same, this fact brought about a great upheaval, not only amongst the masses assembled outside, but also amongst those who were in the palace. Was this the beginning of the end? What would be the end? How did one have to face it? Passively? Or was there a chance of leading the events to the good? The decision was to be taken by the Dalai Lama, who did not know anything about worldly affairs, for his education had exclusively been directed towards a life of religion.

In any case, the people in their tents risked being bombed if they did not disperse, the young sovereign reflected. They would certainly spread if they knew he were not present in his summer quarters

anymore. Besides, as their monarch, he would be better able to negotiate with the Chinese if he were residing with a small group of official persons in an impregnable place up in the high mountains than in his capital, where he found himself, so to speak, in a trap. Anyway he had to try and make his escape from "Nórbu-Lingka."

However, if he were to leave Lhasa, he could not carry with him the money of the treasury, which was kept in his winter palace on the Pótala-hill. So it would fall into the hands of the enemy, as would the immense wealth in gold and jewels which formed his personal possession. To this he would consent if there were no other way out. But could he leave behind his ministers, his two teachers, his court priest, besides his mother, sister, and youngest brother, who were just then with him? Never! For if the Chinese should keep them as hostages, what would be their fate? All of them together were too big a company to manage to leave his residence secretly. And stealth was essential. There might be spies amongst the waiting masses, and even if the fugitives would manage to break away through the garrison, they should under no condition suspect *who* he was! Supposing they *could* leave the palace unseen, they would—in order to stay forever out of the enemy-hands—yet have to travel for hundreds of miles across the high, barren mountains south of the river Kyi, the "Kyi-chu." ("Chu" is Tibetan for "river.") Unfortunately, Nórbu-Lingka had been built north of this stream. There was a bridge, of course, but they could not use it, for the Chinese had pitched their army camp just at its side. Was it feasible to ford it somewhere? It was near sunset by now. Time was pressing. A decision *had* to be made.

The Dalai Lama decided to take a chance. Together with his faithful ones he forged a plan. Further down, the Kyi-chu flowed through a deserted region where it might just be possible to cross it in small boats. One of the Tibetan army commanders was sent with his men to this place to guard it. An abbot of a nearby monastery who happened to be visiting the ruler at the time took it upon himself to have a number of good travelling-horses in readiness on the southern shore of the river. The three ministers and the two teachers left the palace on a wagon, hidden under a piece of canvas. The members of the family of the monarch, dressed like Kham-pa nomads, walked right through the waiting crowds in the dusk without being recognized by anybody. When all these persons seemed to have escaped successfully, the young priest-king too prepared to leave Lhasa. He went to the temple part of his residence, offered a "kha-ta," a white scarf, to the image of the deity called Mahākāla as he was wont to do whenever going on a journey. He also took leave from the images of

the other gods. Subsequently going to his private quarters, for the first time in his life he took off his priestly garb. It was half past nine in the evening at that moment. At ten o'clock he would leave the summer palace. He dressed in an army coat. The last half hour before his flight His Holiness spent in his praying cell. There to read the life story of the Buddha. By chance he hit the page where the Enlightened One impressed it upon one of his disciples ever to be courageous. This seemed to the monarch a favorable indication. Then it was time and he went on his way according to plan.

An ordinary soldier awaited him at the first inner gate, another at the next one. The monk-king in his shabby army coat, the royal lama who was not allowed ever to kill even the smallest creature, now carried a rifle. He also took off his glasses, for people had always seen him *with* glasses, so this might betray his identity. The three men crossed the courtyard together. They approached the outer gate where the commander of the bodyguard stood waiting with the high chamberlain and the court priest, who was dressed as an ordinary citizen. The outer gate was locked with a gigantic lock and guarded by a few sentinels who did not suspect anything. "I have to go out for a moment on inspection with my escort," said the high chamberlain to the sentry, who of course knew him and the commander of the bodyguard by sight. So the heavy gate got unlocked at once and the small party went out. By this time it had become quite dark. Groups of people were scattered everywhere. They saw the court dignitary followed by the commander and a few soldiers and greeted them politely, but nobody took any notice of those soldiers. . . .

Quickly marching on, the six men reached the Kyi-chu and crossed in light crafts made of skins waiting in readiness for them on the river shore. On the opposite side, the three ministers, two teachers, mother, sister, and little brother of the Dalai Lama were already present. The horses of the abbot were standing there as well and everybody mounted. Thirty Kham-pa soldiers with three commanders of the resistance army were about to escort the small company. There was no road here, and the night had become so dark now that the narrow winding track which they had to follow was barely visible. The thud of the horses' hoofs seemed to be unnaturally loud. . . .

Quite near this spot there was a quarry and, as was customary even at night, the Chinese wagons rode to and fro to collect stones. However, none of the drivers took any notice of the group of silent horsemen. Three hours after midnight they reached a scanty dwelling and here the monarch rested awhile. It was the first of the many humble abodes in which he was to find a temporary shelter. Some-

times the owners knew who he was, sometimes they did not.

Four hundred Kham-pas were waiting at the lonely place to defend the fugitives against Chinese attackers if necessary. After a short stay, all of them were marching on in the direction of the extensive mountain mass southeast of Lhasa, through which only little-known footpaths led. All well-known footpaths of the country were closely guarded by the enemy. Further down to the south in this wild, inhospitable region there was one of the greatest gathering places of Kham-pa and other guerrilla-combatants. From there, various barely trodden tracks led to the borders of Bhutan, Sikkim, and Nepal. Through these countries one could—if one liked—travel on to India.

To reach the center of resistance one had first to ascend the high, steep Ché-la, the "Sandy Pass," ("la" is Tibetan for "mountain-pass") and afterwards to cross the river Tsang-chu (on Western maps wrongly designated as Tsang-po). If the invaders had by now discovered the disappearance of the priest-king they would—by the direct path—have sent patrols to the other side of the pass in order to prevent the Dalai Lama from crossing the stream. So it was advisable to leave this broad water behind them as soon as possible.

Early in the morning the party started the difficult ascent of the Ché-la, which took them over four hours. Subsequently they had to cover ten miles through the Tsang-chu Valley, a sandy stretch, in order to reach the one and only ferry across the foaming river. Then, suddenly, a fearful storm arose. The sands whirling upwards blinded the fugitives. But they took consolation in the thought that a Chinese patrol, if sent to this place, would—like them—have been deprived of all sight. So the howling winds were regarded as a boon from heaven, filling them with hopeful confidence. Another possibility was that the enemy would be waiting for them at the very spot where they had to cross the Tsang-chu. But no: The ferry-boat lay moored there, forlorn in the wilderness.

Only much later they were informed that the occupying forces had not noticed the disappearance of the monarch until a few days after, so that none of their troops had been sent to the Tsang-chu in pursuit of them.

What had happened in Lhasa in the meantime? The few people let into the secret of the ruler's intended flight had guarded it so well that even for some time in the palace itself nobody was aware of it. They took it that His Holiness had retired into his private quarters for deep and prolonged meditation.

Two days after his departure, on the nineteenth of March, in Lhasa an open battle of rebellion against the Red army had started. It

lasted for forty-eight hours. From the very beginning the outcome was to be expected. Thousands of Tibetans were killed and seventeen bombs fell on the Pótala. Also the three monasteries of Dè-pung, Séra, and Gá-den in the neighborhood of the capital, where quite a number of political intrigues had been forged, were bombed. Countless precious manuscripts and treasures of gold and costly jewels got lost, as is always the case in wars. More than ten thousand monks "vanished." Some maintain that they were deported as forced laborers by the Chinese, but this is by no means certain. The two hundred men of the royal bodyguard, left behind in Lhasa, were taken prisoner and executed. . . .

But let us return to the fugitives. After having crossed the Tsang-chu, when at dead of night they had gone to rest in a small mountain-monastery, the unfortunate party had been mounted nearly eighteen hours at a stretch. From here onwards they were protected by three hundred and fifty Tibetan soldiers and fifty resistance combatants marching along with them in their immediate vicinity. Many separate groups of Kham-pas, knowing these mountains as their mother's backyard, cruised about them on all sides, led by the guerrilla commanders who came and went to keep contact with each of them. Thus the Dalai Lama was always surrounded by faithful and courageous men ready to sacrifice their lives for him.

The region stretching in front of them was exceedingly wild. The face of the earth showed forth a broad row of parallel wrinkles closely surging up. The tired company had to cross the mountain-chains in transverse direction. This meant climbing each of the steep passes—some of them more than eighteen thousand feet high—covered with thick layers of snow, in a cutting wind. Each time anew they had to descend into the valleys in between, where the thaw had changed the soil to a great pool of slippery mud. The narrow track they followed had been made by the many sturdy traders who, year after year, with their wares on their backs had been marching southwards.

At last they reached Lhuntsé-jong ("jong" is Tibetan for bulwark on a hill), the mightiest stronghold of southern Tibet, built on a barren rock. Here the Dalai Lama with all appropriate ceremonies constituted a new temporary government. A sealed proclamation, formally signed by each participant, was sent in many copies to every district of the country. Originally it had been the intention of the sovereign to stay here and start negotiations with the Chinese. But in the meantime the news had reached him that both his palaces had been bombed and the houses of Lhasa as well. He realized that indeed he could not achieve anything in the political field for his people. . . .

When, moreover, the fugitives saw a plane circling over the fortress they understood that the enemy were sure to locate them wherever they chose to hide themselves. So remaining in Tibet could but lead to endlessly renewed battles and the death of courageous men. That is why the Dalai Lama finally made up his mind to leave the country. He requested asylum of the government of India. When it was granted, the company went on its way once more. . . .

As the crow flies they now found themselves at some hundred and thirty miles from the Indian border, but the winding path made the distance twice as long. From here the trek became still more difficult. There was hardly any fodder left for the poor horses and many of the men would have become snowblind if they had not covered their eyes with strips of coloured material or with their long plaits. When the group was traversing an immense stretch of snow, once more a plane passed overhead. Against the white background all of them were clearly to be seen to its inmates. There was no place to find shelter anywhere. However, as luck would have it no bombs were thrown. Was it a Chinese machine sent in search of them? It has never been found out. . . .

Mang-mang was the last hamlet in Tibet which they passed through. Crossing the border was not a dramatic event. There were no frontier posts: On either side, the territory was utterly wild. In Tezpur, the first village in India the fugitives reached, they were welcomed by an enthusiastically cheering crowd! Thousands of congratulatory telegrams were awaiting Tibet's priest-king. Newspapers all over the world had sent their reporters to learn about his experiences from his own mouth.

In Peking it was reported: "The Dalai Lama has been abducted from Lhasa by Tibetan rebels. . . ."

3: Return to My Tibetan Family

Eight months had gone by since my sojourn in Nepal with my Tibetan family. The events in the world, which accelerates its rhythm so alarmingly, had also caused great changes for the people of Tibet. Many of them, refusing to acknowledge the Chinese government, had preferred to leave their homeland and seek refuge with their southern neighbor India, there to live in freedom. The Indian government had accommodated the refugees in camps, some of which were situated in the hot, humid plains of the great peninsula. The mountain dwellers, accustomed to cold and dry air, could not stand this kind of climatic conditions. Many got ill and died. In the mountain camps things went better.

However, some Tibetans could not get used to living in close proximity. The nomads pitched their tents just anywhere in the Himálayas wherever they found a suitable spot. The city-dwellers often settled down in North Indian villages high up in the hills, renting part of the houses of the inhabitants. What little money they had with them was spent very soon on food, and then poverty stared them in the face. Besides, there soon was a shortage of room in the camps as well as in the mountain-villages, while the number of immigrants carrying their last possessions on their backs was ever increasing.

Such was the situation when I flew once more from Amsterdam to India. Because of the bad weather, our plane arrived hours overdue at the Palam airport in Delhi. The aircraft which was to take me to Nepal was ready to take off, but at the Sáfdar-jang airport, about six miles away. Officials telephoned to inquire if the machine could not oblige and start a little later. So a taxi driver wearing a huge turban took me in his rattling vehicle and drove away like mad to the place of destination. On our way we passed a camel slowly trodding onwards in a dignified manner carrying on its back a motionless rider wrapped from head to toe in a red cloth—even his face was





covered—for it was formidably cold. In this way East and West met in the early morning-haze of India, each travelling at his own speed.

At the other airport the Indian officials advised me urgently to cancel my flight to Kàthmandú. The previous day king Mahendra of Nepal in a "coup d'état" had thrown all his ministers and all members of parliament into prison. Military patrols crossed the city and nobody's safety was guaranteed. But I had made up my mind to return to my Tibetan family without delay and shortly after I was sailing in a cloudless blue sky along the snow-covered mountain-range of the Himálayas. Dhaulagiri, Anapúrna and Mánaslu rose up high above the others in all their majesty. Finally we landed in the sheltered "Valley of Nepal" of which I carried such wondrous memories.

Because of the coup d'état, the royal Gurkha-forces had drawn a cordon around the airport of Kàthmandú. In the city itself, armed guards stood on duty at all crossroads. There were not as many people in the streets as usual and a depression seemed to hang over the inhabitants, otherwise so gay and carefree.

I met my Tibetan father in the lobby of the Snowview Hotel, as arranged. We greeted each other cordially, and in his big car he drove me at once to Bodhnâth, to the house-with-the-lions. It was not long before I was seated, as formerly, on the floor of the turquoise-colored room drinking salted butter-tea together with my Tibetan relatives. All of us were talking at the same time, for I had to be informed about the changes and events in our family, as we had not written to each other in the meantime.

Nearly all the changes were additions: Kámala, the second wife of my brother Ganesh, had become the proud mother of his first son. "I have called our baby Jigmé-Dórje," she told me, "after the prime minister of Bhutan." The behavior of the lovely young woman had completely altered since the day when, as a newcomer, she had competed for the favors of Chring, the first wife of Ganesh, offering her an Indian sari as a present. Now her position was forever assured by having produced a male heir, a future priest-officiate of holy Bodhnâth. Her former rival, pregnant at the same time, probably ardently wishing to give birth to a son this time, perhaps even to precede Kámala in such a deed which commanded respect, had to her grief and bitter disappointment merely produced a daughter, her fifth! I deeply pitied my disillusioned sister-in-law Chring. Her last chance to get the better of the young Támang wife she hated so much was lost forever. She kept herself very much in the background and as before rejected all my endeavors to make friends with her. Their communal husband Ganesh did not seem to notice these undercurrents. He was now in

{ 6. A Tibetan mother with her baby. Child-mortality is considerable in Tibet.
As a rule women have few children. (Part II: 11)

his twenty-second year, the proud father of six children, and he looked portlier than ever. His European suit had become so tight that it stretched round his fat body in transverse folds.

My sister Sûrya—"Darling"—was radiant. In her arms she carried her second son, only a few weeks old. Her Brahman husband did not live with her in Bodhnâth, but in Kâthmandú in the house of his father, the court priest of king Mahendra, whence he came to visit his (Buddhist) family once or twice a week.

My two mummies exhausted themselves in silent friendly smiles patting me on the shoulders and on the knees all the while. My elder brother Púnya-Jola also entered the room, accompanied by his gay Gurung wife Chini and his young Sherpa wife Tö-dong, both of them pregnant. His two other wives were temporarily living in the mountains. Mithu, Púnya-Jola's daughter, had not yet been married off, although she was now fifteen years old and considered a beauty. She was a very sweet, shy girl, always ready to be of service to anybody and quite fond of good clothes. Most of the time, however, she was poorly dressed. Her own mother had died and her four "little mummies," as she called her stepmothers, did not grant the child much. Obviously they were a bit jealous of her. Mithu should get married as quickly as possible, they thought, so her father would not always be reminded of his deceased wife by her presence. "What do you think, daughter Lili," pappa asked, "is it not time to find a good husband for this young lady?" But Mithu expostulated vehemently: "No, no! No marry! Men-men, baby-baby, cry-cry!"

Her brothers and cousins, having stealthily sneaked into the turquoise-colored room, started to romp and were sent away. The servant girls Quisang and Kipa were allowed to stay. They were more or less accepted as members of the family. Quisang was middle-aged, but there still was something girlish about her. The whole management of the house was entrusted to her. Kipa was young, churlish, and seemed to have a chip on her shoulder, as if she bore a profound grudge against the world in general. Nobody seemed to worry about the cause.

In the midst of us all the Chinya lama sat enthroned, like a pasha in his easy chair, his short, chubby legs crosswise underneath him. At special gatherings he did not give up his right of being seated higher than all the others as priest and head of the family. Sitting in a chair is, of course, not so easy as sitting on the floor, but much more dignified. My Tibetan father never forgot what he owed to his position on such occasions. Automatically he turned his gold and silver prayer wheel round and round with his right hand, while clasping his ivory prayer chain with his left. He cleared his throat with a disgusting noise,

(so Quísang respectfully held the copper spittoon in front of him) and said: "Now tell us, daughter, about what happened to you before you returned to us? Have you perhaps met our Precious Sovereign, the Dalai Lama?" The question was put more or less rhetorically, so everybody was extremely surprised when I answered in the affirmative: "Yes pappa, I have visited His Holiness in the 'Birla-house' in Mussoori where he was staying with his court. Of course you have paid your respects to him in person too, haven't you?" "Uh-uh, no, I have not so far, daughter. I have been very busy all these years, I, uh, oh well, I will go of course, but no, not just yet. You understand, the services in the temple and, uh, my duty towards the refugees. It is not a simple thing to leave here for somebody like myself. And you, uh, were you admitted to him at once, without any difficulty?"

"Sister Lili," interrupted my sister Sûrya, "did you happen to meet my Tibetan girlfriend Sun-yèn too? Don't you remember, she was the daughter of minister Surkhàng. We were pupils at the mission school in Darjeeling in the same years. And I told you. . . ."

"Hush, hush, darling, we were talking about his Jewel-Precious Majesty, about the Very-Innermost," pappa reprimanded her.

Naturally I had first to answer his question, and apart from that it was far more interesting to talk about the Dalai Lama than about Sûrya's mission-school friends. Anyway, how could she suppose that I should ever meet them! But indeed: fate sometimes plays us strange tricks. With dramatic effect I could now answer: "Yes, pappa, yes, darling, everything has come about in a most surprising manner: It was Sun-Yèn Surkhàng who made my visit to His Holiness possible. In a street in Mussoori I stopped her to ask the way without knowing who she was and she told me she was doing secretarial work in the Birla-house. For the interpreter who had to translate the correspondence of the monarch from Tibetan into English was not quite sure of the English spelling and, knowing that the daughter of minister Surkhàng had been at school in India, he had begged her to assist him at his office. At that moment I had already presented my petition for an audience with the Dalai Lama, but I was still waiting for the reply. It was thought strange that I had not claimed an interview with him on behalf of a newspaper or a periodical, as did the other visitors, but that my purpose was merely to procure the unfortunate ruler a pleasant half hour by a display of my portrait-drawings of Indian yogis. I knew, of course, that like all Tibetans he was very much interested in other religions and still more in those who consecrated their lives to their faith. Anyway my request was apparently considered and Sun-yèn, who at once invited me to her home, put in a word for me with His Holiness. Two days later I was summoned by the beloved

sovereign. I showed him what I had drawn in Hindu temples and Hindu monasteries and begged his permission to make a portrait of Him too." "And were you allowed to?" everybody asked at the same time. "Alas, no I wasn't. They told me that such a thing could not possibly be granted to a non-Buddhist. Moreover I was given to understand it was not fitting if perhaps later on I were to exhibit a portrait of His Jewel-Precious Majesty hanging next to that of ordinary people. However, they gave me consent to portray his teacher, the famous tülku-lama Yong-Dzin Trichang-Rimpoche. This I did, of course." "Oh what a pity you were not allowed to draw the Very-Innermost," all cried in disappointment. "But quite understandable, after all."

"Dear sister," Sûrya said, "do tell us what the Ocean-wise Dalai Lama looked like."

"He has a beautiful young face, Darling, with a very light skin and friendly dark eyes twinkling all the time. His voice is melodious and we laughed quite a lot during that half hour which I spent with him very informally. When taking leave he shook hands with me and presented me with a photograph signed by himself. I felt honored and touched. One just *has* to love the unfortunate monarch!"

"Can't you show us the portrait you drew of well-known Trichang-Rimpoche?" Ganesh asked me, "Of him who holds everything in his hand: Yong-Dzin? Do you know it signifies 'very learned professor'?"

"I didn't take the drawing itself with me to Bodhnâth, but here is its reproduction. I say, brother, he never stopped chatting gaily with me while I was at work, of course in Tibetan. I didn't understand a single word!"

In this way we went on talking for a long time. Later on that day I went for a walk around the stûpa with its four golden faces and its golden step-pyramid. In the open circular space, in the center of which it was built, there were more people than ever before. Formerly one used to see mainly Newáris, Sher-pas and Támangs. Now it was mostly Tibetan refugees. The tourists from the hotels in Kâthmandú came only to look at the sanctuary in the morning or the early afternoon. Now, at four o'clock, there was no one to be seen anymore, so the Tibetan souvenir sellers were sitting idly amongst the merchandise in their minute shops. They were waiting for sunset in silent company of their friends. It was quite peaceful in our hamlet. I decided I would wait until tomorrow to see who or what there would be for me to draw.

4: Around the Magúta-Stûpa

Early one morning when having tea together with the China lama—he in his easy chair and I on my knees before the low window to enjoy the view as much as possible—it crossed my mind I should never get tired of gazing at “our” stûpa and all that took place around it. Only now I realized how many Tibetans had come to our hamlet, mostly for a short sojourn. But others had settled down for a longer period, either in the houses on the square owned by my Tibetan father, or in their own tents pitched in the neighboring fields. It is especially at sunrise that these devout people are accustomed to attend to their religious duties, among which going around a sanctuary (the “circumambulation”) is considered most important. So all of them in groups or by themselves went around the Magúta Stûpa, as the whitewashed “dome” with its golden “box” and “step-pyramid” (constructed on top of the polygonal terrace), was officially called. They always did so in clockwise direction, consequently having the building on the right.

Followers of Mahâyâna-Buddhism, as are the Tibetans, believe that constant repetition of “mystic words” or short formulae (called “mantras”), supposed to possess magic power, is also a meritorious act. Turning around paper on which are written these sacred words or sound-combinations is considered of similar merit. So is waving to and fro certain holy phrases written on cloth. This concept has led to the use of the so-called prayer-wheels and prayer-flags. The former are perpendicular cylinders easily moved around by the hand. They contain long, concentrically-wound paper bands on which these formulae are printed thousands of times. The latter are long, narrow banners printed with sacred letters or symbolic representations which move in the wind. As a rule, close to every sanctuary there can be seen a number of either. The European appellation of prayer-wheel and prayer-flag is not quite correct since their texts are never composed of prayers directed to some deity, but always of mantras.

Numerous festoons of prayer-flags are used to decorate the stûpa of Bodhnâth. In the 145 shallow niches (whose backs were painted with images of the Buddha) of the white terrace-wall with its many corners there were fixed 837 prayer-wheels. These artistically wrought bronze cylinders were of the same size: about fourteen inches high with a diameter of six inches. In bas-relief the most important mantra of Buddhism was inscribed on them: "Om Mani Padme Hum." When such a cylinder is turned around once, each of the formulae within will send out its power into the ether—such is the conviction of the pious people. One who performs this action will thus gain spiritual merit. The wheel has to be turned to the right, for turning it to the left would have the reverse effect: the mantras would get swung into the dark depths, directing their power towards evil. These practices are performed by the Bon-pas, the followers of pre-Buddhist Bon-animism. They are used to perpetrate all Buddhist religious rites vice versa. Not only do they walk around a sanctuary in counterclockwise but the Tibetan lucky sign of "Yung-Trung" (the swastika) symbolizing "Eternal Becoming" ("bhava"), LIFE, represented by the Buddhists with the hooks pointing clockwise, is represented by the Bon-pas in opposite direction. The Bon-priests celebrate their ceremonial services for preference at night or in subterranean caves and grottoes.

But think how much merit a "good" Buddhist will gain when walking around our Bodhnâth stûpa while turning all its prayer-wheels, and such ever anew during his many daily circumambulations! These and other creditable acts are sure to bear fruit in this life and a next life on earth for the agent: perhaps in the form of easy and agreeable circumstances! Such is the unshakable conviction of ordinary people. The clergy, often erudites advanced in philosophy, of course view these things in a different light!

To return to the Tibetans walking around the sanctuary whom I saw from my seat at the window: Many did not turn the wheels in the prayer-wall, but their own hand prayer-wheels, while continuously muttering "Om Mani Padme Hum." The small cylinder of such a ritual object is mounted on a short stick and provided with a little weight on a chain causing the cylinder to revolve still quicker by its centrifugal power. The hand-wheels, also filled with printed mantras, are usually made of beautifully and artistically wrought metal, sometimes set with turquoise and coral. As a rule there is at the top an ornament having more or less the shape of a lotus bud. This is the symbol of ether as well as of the "spiritual flame of Enlightenment" (called "jyoti").

It is not uncommon for Tibetans to fix a piece of shell (the rich

ones prefer a piece of ivory) between the stick and the cylinder. By continually turning their prayer-wheel around, in the long run a circular hole is ground in it! People like to wear these shell rings visibly, on a necklace or in the hair to show everybody how many hours they have "prayed."

During the circumambulation others will repeat the famous mantra without making use of the prayer-wheel. Instead they count over and over again the 108 beads of their prayer-chain, slipping them one by one through the fingers. At an advanced age some very pious people have pledged themselves to go the whole round (repeating "Om Mani Padme Hum") three hundred, five hundred or even a thousand times a day. Some of them have kept their vow for so long that the round beads have turned oval owing to this passing through the fingers.

As regards counting the rounds, a special device has been fixed to the chains, composed of two narrow strips of leather with ten small silver disks each, one of them ending in a miniature "dórji" (lama scepter), the other in a miniature "díbu" (temple bell). The disks on the dorji strip represent units. When all the disks have been pushed up from below (or vice versa) in ten rounds, one disk on the díbu side may be pushed up. So when the ten díbu disks have changed their places, the devotee has finished a hundred rounds of "prayer" and calls out "Hri," a mantric syllable which is generally considered as a war cry against the evil forces. On the deeper significance of it more is to follow later on.

From my window I watched other men and women performing their circumambulation in a yet more meritorious way: raising both hands they brought them together first over their head, then at a level with their throat and finally at a level with their heart, standing motionless all the while and muttering their mantra. Subsequently they threw themselves down full length, their forehead touching the soil, their hands holding the prayer-chain stretched out in front. Leaving the string of 108 beads to mark the place they had reached, they got up again and walked unto this exact spot where they started the same ceremony over again. In this manner they covered several times the whole course around the sanctuary. It took them many hours and they frequently incurred wounds on their front and handpalms.

Next to our house there was the Redcap temple where my Tibetan father as its priest used to celebrate the services. Facing it and forming a part of the many-cornered stûpa-wall there was a minute sanctuary flanked by two huge prayer-wheels. Although its front was merely closed off by trellis-work, it was so dark inside that one could

barely see the outlines of the one single statuette of a deity.

As I was wondering whom people were worshipping at this gloomy place, I heard voices behind me, and turning round I saw, as often before during my previous sojourn in the house, how all the members of my family, usually getting up much later than the China lama and myself, entered one by one and bowed their heads to be blessed by pappa laying his hands on them. The servant girls too came in to receive the morning blessing. They took the children with them: carrying the babies tied in a cloth on their backs and leading the bigger ones by the hand. The "Precious Jewel" acquitted himself faithfully of his task of blessing, but in reality he felt hardly any love for his offspring, as once he himself admitted to me. Amongst the numerous tots Baba-Raja, Darling's elder son, was his only favorite. Without rebuke the child was allowed to play any pranks arising in his dark little head.

When everybody had gone back to their own apartments one of the servant girls entered once more, swinging an iron censer in which glowing coals were smouldering. On top finely ground dried juniper-bark was burnt by way of incense. This was supposed to have a purifying influence on the atmosphere of the room.

Having watched all these ritual morning performances, my glance was caught by a big "t'hangka," a temple painting, hanging on the opposite wall. It represented Sin-jé, the god of the dead. He was completely red and had a terrifying appearance with three eyes and a sneering mouth from which tremendous fangs were protruding. With his clawlike hands and feet he grasped an enormous "Wheel," a circle with a variety of queer figures inside, the so-called "Sipa-Khorlo" (spelled "Sidpa"). This image of Sin-jé with the Wheel is quite common. It is to be seen everywhere: in all temples and in many houses. The "hub" in its center is a small circle showing three animals. The space around is divided by the "spokes" into six sectors in each of which is depicted a different kind of beings. In a concentric band, the "rim" of the Wheel, enclosing everything, there are twelve symbolic pictures.

The China lama had followed my gaze and said "Daughter, now that you have returned into our midst, you should really know more about our religion."

"That is what I would love myself, pappa. Could you explain to me the meaning of Sin-jé's Wheel? It has always fascinated me."

"It is extremely profound, daughter Lili," the priest answered. "An outsider (a "chi-pa" or non-Buddhist) will find it hard to understand. But I will elucidate it to you."

5: The Six Groups of Living-Beings

We both sat down before the t'hangka and the Precious Jewel began: "The 'Wheel of Reincarnations' or 'Sipa-Khorlo' as we call it, is clasped by Sin-jé, Death. In other words: The six groups of Living-Beings existing, each of whom is represented in one of its sectors, are never able to free themselves from its claws. They die and are reborn in the same form of existence or in a different one—according to their former behavior—to suffer another sorrowful span of life and die once more, such forever and again in neverending cycles. So Sin-jé clasps the symbol of the Round or the Circular Course of Reincarnations, 'Samsâra,' which applies with equal force to a multitude of forms-of-existence. *'Existing' is not viewed by us Buddhists as a more or less static condition for a delimited period—for instance the life of a man on earth—but as a concatenate series of changes, a continuous motion from one form of existence to the next, while in the meantime every part of the Living-Being, viewed in itself, also is subject to changes. The fundamental changes sometimes suddenly taking place, we designate with the words 'birth' and 'death'. They are, as it were, 'milestones' in the endless cycle of our Samsâra-existence.*

"According to our view, man as a phenomenon is merely one of a number of forms-of-existence of the Living-Beings. *Not a single Living-Being will ever remain as he is; he is becoming continuously.* Even so, he is not evolving in a straight line—nor in a curve either—towards one certain point. No: he rotates in a vicious circle, for notwithstanding all his changes he will never escape from the grip of Sin-jé, Death. So the circle is the very symbol for this process, reaching backwards to an endlessly far past and reaching forward to an endlessly far future. In fact the word 'Wheel' does not aptly describe these changes, for the parts of an ordinary wheel will continue in the same place respectively while revolving, whereas in the Round-of-Reincarnations they will also change places once in a while in regard to each other. For a clear mental picture of the movement inside the

circle itself, one might think of a whirlpool. In the extreme change of form a god might become a devil, or vice versa. Can you follow me so far?" I nodded.

"The conclusion of this exposition is: to be liberated from suffering and death—which is the purpose of the Buddha's doctrine, is it not?—one has to escape from this vicious circle! Can we do it? In order to find out let us look at the Wheel in close detail.

"Say, we start with the "hub", the small circle in the center. You will see three animals depicted in it: a pig, a bird (according to some people it is a pigeon, according to others a cock) and a serpent, biting each other's tails, thus forming another circle themselves. The pig is the symbol of Ignorance or Sloth, the bird is the symbol of Lust-Desire, and the serpent is the symbol of Hate-Anger (biting the pig in his tail). These are *the three primary vices or "fires"* out of which arise all the others. The color of Ignorance is always black, the colour of Lust is always green and the color of Hate is always red. Of the three Ignorance is the main vice. About these three animals more later.

"Now let us proceed to the six sectors of the Wheel, formed by its six spokes. Up in the center is the abode of the gods. Our concept of 'gods' is different from that of the Westerners: According to our doctrine, gods too are mortal. They are not so short lived as other Living-Beings, but they too die: at the end of a "Kalpa." I expect you know what a Kalpa is, don't you, daughter, since you have received instruction in Hindu-yogi-monasteries for such a long time?"

"Yes, pappa, a Kalpa is an era, lasting from the beginning of a Creation until its end, its disintegration. The yogis say: Creation comes into being by an 'exhalation' (Sanskrit 'rechaka') of the One, Ineffable, Unimaginable, Formless 'IT' or 'THAT,' sometimes called Brahman. According to them 'Creation' is *Causing-Forms-to-originate from the Formless, from Chaos. Creation-out-of-nothing is not accepted in Asiatic religions.* Out of 'THAT' emanate the cosmic energies causing solar systems to come into existence with all the forms inherent in them and also the various kinds of Living-Beings, of whom Man is one. *In every form that is created there is the Seed-of-Life. That is how Life exists. However, there are different forms of 'Life', for no part of creation is devoid of it, as some people erroneously maintain.*

"Neither the material part nor the spiritual part of things created will ever get lost. This applies to man as well. Every single part constituting man will pass into other forms of existence. We call his great transitions birth and death as you said yourself just now. The constant mutations of all that lives extend over the immeasurable period of a Creation, but finally the moment will come that whatever is created disin-

tegrates: when *THAT* detaches itself from the Form. This is called Its 'inhalation' ('purâka'). (The interval between one creation and another is called 'pralâya.') Owing to this a period of complete Formlessness, Chaos, will arise, which may last as long as the period of Creation, the Existence-of-Forms ('Samsâra'). But in Chaos, formless, invisible, the Seed-of-Life, potential Life, is inherent. And when at last Chaos ends in its turn to make place for a new Creation, another 'exhalation' of 'THAT', this Seed will once more cause Life in the forms-created. Thus it will go on and on in never ending cycles. A Kalpa is said to embrace 432 million years.

"The Indian yogis call such a period of Creation 'a Cosmic Day' and a period of Chaos 'a Cosmic Night.' Three hundred sixty Days and Nights of Brahman form 'a Cosmic Year.' This knowledge has been extant for many thousands of years, for according to the Upânishads it used already to be passed on from mouth to ear in the following way:

Brahman, Glorious One, Supreme One,
Thou art formless, yet createst
A million forms and then Thou drawest
Back these forms within Thy Being.

"Quite, quite," said the Chinya Lama, "I see you know what a Kalpa is. That was all I asked. Now let us proceed! When we Tibetans speak of "Gods," we mean beings who live throughout a creation. They are of an undying splendor and never subject to suffering, unless—a thing of rare occurrence—their bliss should benumb their senses and Ignorance get hold of them. In that case they may fall from their lofty, divine state into one of the spheres of lower existence. In the extreme case such a god may become a devil."

"So this would be analogous to our Christian concept of the angel Lucifer, who fell to the deepest depths and became Satan? For your 'gods' are rather like our 'angels,' if I understand rightly." Without vouchsafing an answer, the priest went on:

"The sector on the right underneath that of the gods is the abode of the non-gods or the un-gods, who—as I heard say—are entitled "Titans" by the Westerners. They are a kind of supermen, superior by far to ourselves, and they might be entirely happy and contented if only they were not so pugnacious and dissatisfied. For they envy the gods because of their serene happiness.

"Still lower than these non-gods, in the sector on the left below that of the gods, is the abode of man. The life of man is such that generally his measure of happiness equals that of his sorrows. Their joys are not

great enough to stun their senses (in contradistinction with those of the gods), and their sorrows are not deep enough to make them suffer continuously, as is the case with those abiding in hell. *The fact that their joys and their sorrows are more or less equally balanced obstructs their desire to escape from the Cycle-of-Reincarnations. For they want their joys to exceed their sorrows and they think themselves able to effect this purpose through their own activity, their deeds.* That is why they exert themselves, and owing to their activity or 'Karma' (Karma merely means 'to do,' 'to act') they will never escape from the Wheel, from the Round-of-Reincarnations, hence never from Death.

"To the animals, which you see in the sector below that of man, finding their daily food is such a problem that they will probably never have the time of reflecting on higher things.

"Right underneath the non-gods or un-gods is represented the sphere of existence of a kind of beings whom we call the non-men, un-men, 'yidags' or 'pretas.' The Western appellation of 'ghosts' or 'wandering spirits' comes nearest to the true meaning of their names. These beings are continuously subject to ghastly torments as their desires have become so excessive they cannot be fulfilled anymore. So they suffer endlessly. That is why they are depicted with big bodies and with mouths as small as a pin's head. Naturally yidags are never able to eat enough to appease their hunger and worse still: whenever they want to drink the water will change into fire.' "

"These sufferings are called the torments of Tantalus in Greek mythology, pappa."

"Stop interrupting me, daughter, just listen: In the sector down below hell is depicted the 'World-of-Sorrows.' Its inhabitants are in a very bad plight, for they suffer untold agonies as if being scorched by flames. But in contradistinction to the concept of the West, this suffering in hell is not everlasting. We don't believe there is such a thing as "eternal damnation." When the results of the bad actions of these people are exhausted they will, owing to the rotation of the Wheel, be taken up into another group of Living-Beings.

"So the six kinds of Living-Beings are all of them bound to the Round of Reincarnations, to "Samsâra." The gods are fettered by pride, the non-gods by anger, mankind by passion, the animals by ignorance, non-men (yidags) by greed, and the inhabitants of hell by hate.

"Let us have yet another look at the Wheel: around the sectors you will see a circular band, the 'rim,' with twelve small representations on it. They are the symbols of 'the Twelve Links of the Interdependant Causes leading to Reincarnation,' to phenomenal-

existence, to 'Samsâra.' This chain is briefly called the 'Chain of Twelve Links.' The last link is fastened to the first or, in other words, the last cause is leading to the first cause of the next cycle. And so one can never escape from this vicious circle either.

"To cut a long story short, at first view it seems completely impossible for anybody to break away from the Wheel, or to get released from the concatenation of sorrowful lives, from Samsâra, impossible to enter the state of Nirvâna beyond.

Yet it is possible. For look, here outside the Wheel is the representation of a Buddha. Whoever has reached Enlightenment, like Çâkyamuni, has escaped from the "Wheel of Births and Deaths." Everything clear?"

"No pappa, this Chain is absolutely incomprehensible to me. Which are the twelve Causes-of-Reincarnation and why is the last link connected to the first?"

I realized that the China lama was getting tired of explaining things to me. The priest-officiate was never able to fix his attention for a long time on one and the same subject, to religious matters least of all. I knew by experience that he could expound the doctrine of the Buddha in simple, conventional phrasing, but that he was not at all apt at formulating philosophical concepts. Moreover he had already spent a lot of time on me, and more advantageous pursuits—the only ones he liked to lavish his attention on—were awaiting him.

"Do ponder on it yourself," he answered abruptly.

"Pappa, just one more question: do you yourself really believe in all these Gods, Titans, Yidags and such beings?"

"Think, daughter, think," and the China lama raised himself in his whole imposing shortness, in token of ceasing our conversation.

I am not able to think things out independently, but in the West we are inclined to consider all that is believed by simple Tibetans—who take everything literally—just "silly superstition." However, when elucidated by learned lamas in their symbolic sense, these very things prove to hide much wisdom. I wonder if one could not interpret the six forms of existence in the following way: "Gods" are the supreme souls who live in an ecstasy of serene happiness, (irrespective of whether they have deserved this as a result of their actions in a problematic former life-on-earth or not). The general consensus of opinion—their own included—may be that their ideal state will and can never end. But the chances are they might divert their attentiveness, and not try any longer to perpetuate their (right on this) bliss by actions of neighborly love, so they lose it. If tempted, they will not be able to withstand! Without anymore they will fall, quite deep!

“Non-gods” or “un-gods” or “Titans” are the good, high-principled people, but for all that being envious because of the serene tranquility of those who have attained a still higher rung on the ladder of spirituality than they themselves. Their peace of mind cannot reach the level of the serene ones, since it is obscured by discontent.

Like “animals” those people are living who are worried to such a degree by the material troubles of existence that—though not really bad—they will never think of higher things.

“Non-men,” “un-men” or “Yidags,” the hungry ones who are never to be satisfied, are those in whom lust and desire have grown to such overpowering passions that they view the whole world in that light. Their hunger cannot be appeased anymore and nothing will quench their thirst.

“In hell” those people live who are so engrossed in their suffering that nothing else can penetrate to them, not even a thought about higher things. However, better times will come to them, too. They will get another chance when the Wheel (and which of us is not thinking now of the “Wheel of Fortune”) takes a turn in their favor.

What about mankind whose joys and sorrows are equally balanced? Either state of mind will cause them to hanker after more joy. Man tries to gain happiness by force and to evade sorrow at the cost of everything. To reach this purpose he will exert himself and . . . get hopelessly entangled in the chains of his actions, carrying with them their effects in unending series, binding him to earth and to the Wheel-of-Existence, to ever continuing sorrowful reincarnations. Bad actions bind a man with fetters of iron; good actions with fetters of gold. All actions bind! That is why Hindus and Buddhists alike teach us that one should transcend sorrows and joys, for it is only detachment which leads to refraining from action: By less activity, the human mind with its ever-whirling thoughts will be quieted and receptive of higher things. The serene calm, then falling to man's share, is the first requirement for being able to approach things divine.

6: The Redcap Temple and the Nomads

"I have to go to our temple to see if everything is in order. Would you like to come with me, daughter Lili?"

"I would love to, pappá." It was early in the morning and quite cold. So the Chinya lama put on his beige woolen winter bonnet. It contrasted horribly with his beautiful yellow brocade coat with its golden floral pattern which he was wearing because he expected rich tourists from the Hotel Royal in Káthmandú. He hoped to impress them so they would be eager to buy his curios.

"Our" temple—that was the one of the various Redcap sects—was adjacent to the yellow house-with-the-lions. A steep stone flight of stairs led from the square to the spacious platform before it and here the heavy temple doors were always closed with an oblong padlock of a dozen inches except when the sanctuary had to be prepared for a special service or when, as today, it had to be shown to distinguished tourists. "I have always to officiate on the first and the fifteenth of the month, so at new moon and full moon. You know we Tibetans stick to the lunar year," said the priest. "In a few weeks' time we will celebrate an exceptionally beautiful ceremony: the 'Feast of the Thousand Lights,' daughter. You will be thrilled when you see it!"

We entered. The temple was a spacious square room with a ladderlike wainscot on which could be placed long rows of food offerings: little bowls of uncooked rice, and "tormas," kneaded cones of cooked rice or of "tsampa" (roasted barley flour) with water. Also the burnt offerings: small lamps filled with "ghee" (clarified butter). Over the wainscot the walls were decorated with many Buddha figures, but because of the smoke of the butterlamps and the joss sticks (which were burning constantly) these images were so darkened that one could hardly distinguish anything. There was a low bench along the right wall with at the far end a kind of throne for the priest who officiated. The altar on the wall right opposite us consisted

of a stone table on which were placed the drink offerings: little bowls of pure water. On either side of it stood a huge copper butterlamp, four feet high. Their wide, shallow cups on the slender pedestals could hold more than twenty pounds of butter each, offered of course by the pious temple visitors. In their center one small wick was ever burning.

The sanctuary had recently been cleaned and the China lama looked around with satisfaction. "Pappa, whom do those big statues behind the altar represent?"

"Well, the one in the middle is of course the Buddha, Çâkyamuni (i.e. the wise one of the Çâkyâ dynasty) as we mostly call him, and the smaller ones on his right and left are his two wives.

"The other statue is Avalokitèçvara; we Tibetans call him Chèn-resí. He is a Celestial Bodhisattva, the emanation or the 'spiritual son' of the Celestial Buddha Amitâbha (or O-pag-me, He-of-the-Eternal-Light). We depict Chèn-resí in two different ways. Pure white, as you see here. In that case he has four arms and hands, two of which clasp a jewel in front of him, while he raises his third with a lotus flower and his fourth with a prayer-chain of mountain crystal. We call the jewel 'Nórbu'; it is 'the mother of all precious stones' and fulfils all wishes.

"The other manner in which we depict Chèn-resí is with eleven heads, forming a pyramid on his neck. He then has a thousand arms extended to help the human beings and in each palm he has an eye! As a rule we call this Celestial Bodhisattva 'He who looks downwards.' In this way he sees all mortals and is moved by pity. He is the "Merciful One" par excellence, and at the same time the Divine Protector of Tibet. Each of our Dalai Lamas is an "Incarnation" of him!

One should know that in the Orient there is a difference between incarnation and "Incarnation." Everybody is time and again an incarnation during his lifespan on earth. But with an "Incarnation" is meant a Celestial Being, a Buddha or Bodhisàtha, or otherwise a saint (mostly a tülku) come to earth once more as a human being.

"The story of his eleven heads is as follows: Chèn-resí got so overpowered by seeing the suffering of the Living-Beings that his head exploded into pieces. His spiritual father, the Celestial Buddha Amitâbha, mended it and gave him a new head besides. The same thing, however, happened again and again. The eleventh head he finally received was the one of his own spiritual father himself. It could not explode and was placed on top of all the others.

"The last statue of the row represents Gyälmo Lòbsang Dakpa,

an "Incarnation" of our great and wonderful magician-saint Padma-Sambháva.

My head swam hearing so many names, but one thing had attracted my attention. "Pappa, the first thing you told me cannot be true. It doesn't tally with the facts: the Buddha did *not* have two wives!"

"Daughter Lili, what is the matter with you? You are always cavilling at my words. How often have I told you not to! Good gracious, I never experienced such a thing before: doubting my expositions, criticism!"

"No, pappa, no criticism, but don't treat me as a tourist, I want to know the truth: Who are the statues of those two women?" The dignified priest now looked like a martyr. He sighed heavily! Then all of a sudden he laughed, a little smile of secret understanding as of one conspirator to another. "They like to hear it so much this way, daughter Lili, those tourists! Why should I disappoint them! In a Buddhist temple they want to see the Buddha's statue in the place of honor: the image of prince Siddhârtha of the Çákya-dynasty who became Enlightened and since then preached the Buddhist doctrine. But in most of the Redcap temples there is no statue of him at all! The one you saw in the center is in reality Pádma-Sambháva, the 'Lotus-born,' who came to Tibet in the eighth century of your era and introduced there the special form of Buddhism which sometimes is called "Lamaism." Many of us think he is greater than the Buddha himself. This Jewel-precious Spiritual Teacher ('Guru-Rimpoche') of ours had two wives: Basádhara and Mandarava. These two we have canonized, like himself. Here you see them! Are you content now, daughter?"

"About the statues at the side walls you didn't tell me anything at all, pappa."

"Oh, they are just angels, all of them. Are they to your liking?"

"Red, blue, green, and yellow angels?"

"Why not?"

"You are right, why not after all? Thank you for your explanation, pappa."

We returned to our house. Through the open windows one could hear a violent dispute between two women who evidently had relapsed from the serene calm of the Buddhist ideal into a common human fit of passion. The Chinya lama knitted his brows, he heard of course who were taking on so awfully and what it was all about. But for me the scene in the turquoise-colored room was quite unexpected! My two mummies were seated on the floor each one in a corner, like

real furies with clenched fists, using abusive language against each other like ordinary fishwives. They certainly would have come to grips if it had not been so difficult for them to move at all because of their obesity. Both always looked as if they were on the point of having a baby the next day, but of course they were much too old for such a thing. Pappa set himself on his chair full of dignity and tried to soothe them, but he could not get in a word edgeways with all that noise around. He tried once more, raising his voice, but a few withering glances from either side silenced him. It was evident that whatever was put forward by the mighty and feared priest of Bodhnâth didn't have the slightest effect in the circle of his family! Without more ado it was ignored! In the meantime my brother Ganesh who had his quarters above the reception room mixed himself boisterously in the discussion across the thin boards of the ceiling and his two wives also contributed their mite. The furious screams of the five persons could be heard all over the square. My brother of course sided with his mother. But mummy Sûrya, whose daughter was not present, so she could not recruit any troops to her assistance, did not let herself be vanquished and without more ado doubled the volume of her voice. . . . I realized that this intimate family scene was none of my business. So I left the house quietly and unobserved, looking for adventure in the fields behind it.

Here the nomads had pitched their tents. One of these, a black one, was made of strips of woven yakhair and its long strings (also of yakhair) were fastened to goat horns stuck in the ground. The whole reminded me of an enormous black spider. The others were summer tents of white cloth adorned with decorative applications of blue material. Most of them were spacious, high, and of an oblong form with two wooden poles in the middle. In the roof was a hole for letting out the smoke. It could be closed with a cover of cloth.

The nomads mostly are robust, strong men, and their wives have sturdy, somewhat clumsy figures. The inhabitants of the tents greeted me courteously, for courteousness is a virtue of all Tibetans. They obviously liked to see me look with interest at how one of the women was dressing another one's locks. This work had been going on already for many hours. The hairdresser had first combed a small part of the glossy strands of her friend to the front and joined them there in a fine horizontal plait across the forehead. It looked like an extremely thin cord. In the locks on top of the head she now interlaced right and left an enormous piece of amber topped with a coral bead. Together with another piece of amber and coral on the back of the head, these ornaments formed the symbol of the "*Trirâtna*," the "*Three*

Jewels of Buddhism": the Buddha, his doctrine, and the congregation of his followers, officially known as "Buddha, Dharma, Sanggha."

The remaining hair was dressed in numerous thin plaits, together at their nether part embellished with three rings of white shell. But most nomad-women wore their locks quite simply in as many of such plaits as possible, without further adornment. The ideal is to have one hundred and eight of them, the holy number which is also that of the beads of the prayer-chains. Mostly friends helped each other with arranging their intricate appearance, about once a month or so.

Nomads are usually called "Dok-pas" (spelled "Drok-pas"), i.e., "people of the solitude." This group had up to now roamed through the ill-famed "Chang-Tangs," the northern highlands of Tibet where they lived in the wild barrenness of nature. Each tribe has its own region outside which (by unwritten law) it is forbidden to wander about. However, these various regions overlap each other. This is much the same as in the African Sahara and in the desert of the Arabian peninsula. To us it seems to be a life of poverty and destitution, but it is very peaceful without the hustle and unrest of the West. And quite in harmony with the deep devoutness of this people who firmly believe in the Law of Karma, the Law of Cause and Effect! That is why they accept their fate with a joyful calm, as one they deserve because of their own actions in a previous existence.

A nomad family forms almost an economic unity. They can provide for themselves nearly all necessities of life. The herd produce milk, butter, and cheese, meat also, of course. The latter is their main nourishment as the climate of the Land-of-the-Snow demands it. The hair of the yaks and the wool of the sheep is spun by the women as well as by the men. The women weave with it respectively the strips of cloth needed for making the tents and those necessary for their clothes. The men sew things. The whole fleece of the sheep serves for a warm lining of the winter cloaks. Bonnets are made of it as well, although for the latter purpose men prefer the fur of the foxes, shot or caught in traps. Every man is able to make boots of felt, string for the pitching of the tents, leather bags, saddles, and harnesses. Salt and soda, indispensable for preparing butter tea, can easily be gathered on the shores of the many lakes in the north of the country, where it is found on the soil, crystallized as glittering white crusts. The brooks that can not reach the sea have brought it from the high mountains, dissolved in their water as part of the alluvium. Once a year a nomad family goes to one of the bigger villages to barter their dairy produce and wool for barley and Chinese tea.

In the summer the dok-pas tend their flocks on the high moun-

tain meadows where the grass is short and stiff, but contains more food for the animals than the tender, succulent grass along the shores of the rivulets in the valleys. In winter they do not roam about, but pitch their tents for a longish time in a sheltered valley, often in the company of some other families who are their friends. Sometimes, but not very often, they make huts with turf covered by a roof of woven yakhair, which does not let through rain or snow. Around their camp they build a wall of stones, a "lhega," for the wind also blows icily cold in the sheltered vales.

The Tibetan nomads breed sheep, goats, and yaks. A "yak" (pronounced as "ya") is the male animal. The female is called "di" (spelled "dri"). These cattle of the central Asiatic highland look frightful with their immense horns and long straggling hair. Their movements are slow and ungainly, but as pack animals they are excellent, for they are surefooted and have the gift of always finding the best passable track, even in the most difficult snowy territories. They can only live in regions more than nine thousand feet high. Contrary to what one would expect because of their fierce looks, the yaks have not much physical resistance. Sometimes the nomads—and also the peasants—will cross a yak with a cow. The "Dzo" which is their offspring is stronger and tougher than the yak, while the "Dzu-mo" gives more milk than the di. This milk is richer than that of our cows. The offspring of the hybrid-cattle, the "A-ko," usually is killed at once since it is thought to bring bad luck to the herds.

The Tibetan yak-cowboys are as skillful with the lasso as their American colleagues, and the Tibetan cowgirls are specialists in handling the "David sling." From a big distance they are able to hit an animal with a small stone or clod of earth so precisely as to goad it into the desired direction. As everywhere in the world the herds are guarded, and if necessary driven together, by herd dogs, very fierce brutes. They also watch over the abode of their master and attack everybody who comes too near. Until his owners have recalled such a "home-guard" it is not advisable to come near a tent.

In Bodhnâth too I had to give these animals a wide berth. More than once they bit a hole in my clothes! When, on the day I was telling about, I returned home from my visit to the nomads Mummy Sûrya proved to have departed with all her possessions to the house of her daughter "Darling," situated a bit further down on our square. Nobody mentioned her name anymore.

In the evening Ganèsh told in the family circle what he had heard that afternoon in Kàthmandú. Nobody was allowed in the streets after nine o'clock in the evening. Great areas were closed off

7. I talked to the senile old man as if he were a dog (in Dutch at that!): "Now then, stop being naughty you. Stop wobbling and wriggling about! Be good and quiet! Then I can make a lovely portrait of you and I'll give you many coinies, so you can eat-eat!" It was simply unbelievable: it worked at once! (Part II: 13)





with military police. It seemed that one of the ministers had received a warning and had secretly fled before the "coup d'état." He was searched for everywhere to be put into prison with the others. "King Mahendra is right in acting this way," said my brother. "He thinks of the bad conditions of his subjects, especially of the peasants, and wants to ameliorate them. The ministers only think of the interests of their party." It seemed to me I had heard this latter statement somewhere else.

At this moment sacred music sounded outside. Probably something special would be in progress, and so it was. Some Yellow-cap lamas entered the turquoise-colored room as representatives of a high "tülku," the "Incarnation of a saint." He just had reached Bodhnâth and did not have anywhere to sleep. "Would the honored Chinya lama of Nepal graciously help their own honoured lama Si-ngo-Rimpoche of Tibet?" they asked.

"People had told them all the houses of the hamlet were his, weren't they?" "No, impossible! Try and find a room somewhere else where the tülku can sleep," pappa answered in a surly manner.

That evening after I had gone to bed I heard strange, penetrating sounds, low and long-drawn. They mysteriously and irresistibly seemed to call me! Whence did they originate? All Bodhnâth was as usual already fast asleep at such a late hour as half past nine! It was not long before I myself slept too. . . .

{ 8. The life these kind of nomads lead in the rugged Chang-Tangs (Northern Highlands) is so hard that even the inhabitants of Central Tibet are unable to comprehend how they can stand it. (Part II: 15)

7: The Primeval Monkey of Tibet

Now that I saw so many Tibetans around I became even more interested in their home country than before. So I asked my father to tell me something about the history of Tibet. "All right," he said. "Just listen: We are the descendants of a monkey. You would never have thought such a thing, would you?"

"Why not, we Europeans claim the same descent; anyway that is what Darwin says."

"Never heard of this Darwin. I am sure he did not mean the same monkey as the Tibetan one, for our great-great-grandfather monkey was really an Incarnation of the Celestial Bodhisattva Chèn-resí, the Merciful One, the Savior of mankind. You saw his white statue in our temple, do you remember?"

"Well then, to fulfill an old prophesy that he was one day to rule Tibet, Chèn-resí incarnated as a monkey in the barren Himâlayas. There was also a mountain ogress living there. She fell in love with him and implored him to allow her to become his wife. Out of kindness he consented and they together became the ancestors of the Tibetans. Of course their children looked a bit strange, but through eating a magic wheat which the primeval monkey caused to come down from heaven to feed them, they gradually took on a human form. These ancient inhabitants of Tibet were herdsmen all of them. They could not write but with the aid of sticks in which they made notches and of strings which they knotted in a special manner they rescued various events from oblivion for their progeny."

"For instance, pappa?"

"I am sure I don't know, but it is really true. The Chinese who from early times have described the manners and customs of foreign tribes, don't mention it. However, I think they did so on purpose, for they considered the Tibetans—wrongly, of course—as one of the most barbarian peoples existing. They even maintain that we were cannibals formerly! Now this is certainly not true! The Bon-religion, the an-

cient animist cult to which our ancestors adhered previous to Buddhism, probably did demand a ritual form of cannibalism. Anyway ritual slaughter occurred and subsequently some of the flesh of the slaughtered person may have been eaten. Who knows!

"In those times various tribes (all of them belonging to the Mongolian race) lived in Tibet, independent one from the other. They had migrated into our country partly from the east and partly from the northwest. Didn't you say yourself that there were so many different types amongst the Tibetans?"

"Yes, some of them have small, straight noses, others slightly bent or very long noses. But no one has a far-projecting nose. Nor have their slanting eyes an equal form, being either mere slits, or wide open, or almond shaped. And so I could go on. Besides, I have noticed that many must have Chinese blood. Physiognomic-anthropological study is my specialty as you may know."

"It is true: For several centuries Chinese occupational garrisons have been stationed in our country. They never had their wives with them. So what do you expect?"

"Well then, what I told you before is prehistory. How things proceeded later on I have no idea, as I went to school in India, not in Tibet. For centuries our family has not lived in the Land-of-the-Snow. That is the reason why I am not so much interested in its history!"

"Do you happen to know somebody who could tell me about it, pappa?"

"Just try the man who sells Tibetan articles in the newly opened small shop in the square, daughter. He is, or anyway was, a lama who got tuition in a great Tibetan monastery. Moreover he has made a pilgrimage all through India. So he has picked up some English."

I went to the minute shop. In reality it was not much more than a single room, at the most seven and a half feet square, completely open on the side of the square. I entered, greeted the owner and his guests, who were seated around him on the floor, and sat down among them. The Tibetans kindly moved a bit so as to make room for me. They knew whose adopted daughter I was. I looked admiringly at the display of coats worn by Tibetan noblemen. They were made of satin with ornamental velvet floral designs: in carmine red, golden brown, and a great many other colors, each of them with a mandarin cap to match. I looked at the hats with high brocade crowns and four fur-flaps, worn by men and women alike in the central provinces; at the "ga-o's," the charm-boxes incrusting with turquoises of the women; at the small wrought silver shrines which the men carry along. Through a piece of glass before their narrow opening can be seen a

representation of the Dalai Lama, of the Buddha, of Pàdma-Sambhàva, or of one's own protecting god ("yidam"). I looked at many other objects of art scattered about everywhere. "Does Mem-sahib want to buy things today or no?" the lama vendor asked. He used the word for "madam," which the refugees had adopted from the Indians.

"Not today, honored lama; my father, the China lama, said that you were well grounded in the history of Tibet. Would you mind telling me a little?"

"Certainly, with pleasure, if you are so much interested. I'll start at once if you want me to." All of us drew nearer, and without further ado the lama began: "It was the great king Srong-Tsan-Gàmpo who in the seventh century after the birth of your Christ united the regions of the various Tibetan tribes under his rule and thus established Tibet proper. Until then there had been thirteen small principalities, whose rulers with their feuds used to wage war among each other. In former times there had indeed been a royal dynasty reigning over a rather small territory in central Tibet. Srong-Tsan-Gàmpo was the thirty-fifth descendant of their line. The burial vaults in which the embalmed bodies of his predecessors had been entombed were to be found in the valley of the river Yálung (spelled 'Yarklungs').

"Commanded by their new king, the united princes of Tibet now conquered the Chinese provinces of Szechuan and Kansu bordering their domain in the east. In 611 they forced the Chinese emperor T'ai-tsung of the T'ang dynasty to conclude a peace on very disadvantageous conditions for him. Moreover they stipulated that he was to give a Chinese princess as bride to Srong-Tsan-Gàmpo. Subsequently they defeated the rulers of Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan, north Assam and upper Burma, and later on those of Ladákh and of a part of Turkistan. The Nepalese king Amçuvárman, belonging to the tribe of the Newáris, was required to send a Newári princess as a second bride to Srong-Tsan-Gàmpo.

"Our king made both princesses queens of Tibet, which had now become one of the most powerful states of Asia. Not only the Chinese princess Wen-Ch'en but also the Nepalese princess Bhri-kúti adhered to Buddhism and together they persuaded their communal husband to have it proclaimed as the state religion. Already several centuries ago in Nepal and even more so in China the 'True Doctrine' had gained a great number of converts. But since in the latter country the highest, hence the most powerful, class followed the tenets of Confucius (fifth century B.C.), Buddhism always had taken second place in the 'Celestial Empire.' In fact one century before the conversion of

Srong-Tsan-Gàmpo, Çakyamuni's religion had already made its appearance in Tibet, but not many adherents of Bon-animism had embraced it. However, now that a mighty king had accepted the 'True Doctrine' many thousands of his subjects followed suit. From the fact that through the intermediary of the two queens Buddhism spread suddenly to such an extent, it is quite apparent that they were no ordinary mortals, but "Incarnations" of the goddess Târâ. That neither of them got any children is added proof for it, if proof is needed. Târâ, whom we also call Dolma or Deuma (always spelled 'Drolma') is, like the Celestial Bodhisattva Chèn-resi, preeminently the Merciful One. She is a feminine Bodhisattva, the Queen of Heaven.

"I don't quite understand, honored lama, there were two Tibetan queens; are there also two Târâs, or is there only one?"

"Indeed, the Celestial Târâ is one, but she is honored in twenty-one different aspects, each of whom is called Târâ. The remaining nineteen are not so important as the two who incarnated as our queens. Wen-Ch'en was the 'White Târâ' and Bhri-Kuti the 'Green Târâ.' The White Târâ is worshipped above all in Mongolia; her image is always recognizable as she is seated on a lotus flower in the 'lotus posture' (upright with legs folded crosswise underneath the body) holding another lotus in the hand. The Green Târâ, Bhri-kuti, is also seated on a lotus flower, but one of her feet, stretched forward, is resting on a lotus bud. We Tibetans worship her above all. Sometimes we represent her with seven eyes. Apart from her physical eyes the 'Eye of Wisdom' appears on her front (the three eyes together symbolizing her ability to view 'the three worlds': that of the senses—in which we live—, that of pure forms, and that of formlessness). Moreover she has an eye on the palms of her hands and the soles of her feet.

"For that matter you will see in all our religious representations that the lotus takes a prominent place, although this flower does not bloom anywhere in cold Tibet. In due time I will tell you more about its symbolic significance. But at the time we are speaking of, the way of living in our country was still extremely primitive. We don't know much more about it than what the two great Chinese travellers Fa Hian in the fifth century and Hiuen Tsang in the seventh century (of your era) have written about it. Both of them were Buddhist pilgrims trekking from their own homeland via Tibet to north India to go and visit all holy places over there and also the other centers of Buddhism, such as for instance Bodh-Gayâ, where Çakyamuni became Enlightened under the pipal-tree, and the famous monastery-university

of Nālandā. The Tibetans were no more than barbarians in their eyes!

“Now when in the seventh century the great king Srong-Tsan-Gampo married these two princesses, both hailing from countries with a high culture, they did all they could to help their new homeland in every respect. Especially Wen-Ch'en, for since thousands of years there had existed a refined civilization in the Celestial Empire. She sent for Chinese peasants to teach the Tibetans how to make butter and cheese, besides how to cultivate and mill the barley they had imported. The artisans she had brought with her taught our people how to weave, for up till that time they were only wearing skins. They also instructed them in brewing beer and making porcelain. Alas, we did not continue practicing the latter art. The Chinese nobles who came and visited the queen introduced drinking tea, eating with chopsticks, and wearing silk and brocade coats—like the ones you see hanging here—. They have ever since been the costume of our nobles too. The queen's guests had brought paper and black ink with them to write their letters and, ashamed that her own subjects did not even have an alphabet of their own, Wen-Ch'en urged the king to have it composed. That is what the ruler did: in 632 he sent his learned minister Thon-mi-Sam-bhó-ta with sixteen erudite compatriots to India to study the various kinds of script in use over there. After the example of the Gupta and the Kashmir script (not of the Sanskrit—devanagari) a Tibetan letter system got designed, an italic ('U-med') and a capital ('U-chen') script, which has been maintained in our country unto the present day. It contains thirty consonants and four signs symbolizing a vowel sound.

“King Srong-Tsan-Gampo moved his residence from the Valley of the Yálung to the wide plain through which the river Kyí-chu flows. This plain is sometimes called the Valley of Milk; it is very soggy. But the ruler had part of it, situated at the foot of the 'Red Rock' (Marpori), drained with loads of earth thrown down into the bog. Goats were used for the transport. There it was that he built his capital, which at first he called Ra-sa, that is 'Place-of-the-Goats.' On the Red Rock he had a small palace-stronghold constructed for himself and his court in exactly the same spot where now our impressive Pótala palace is seen.

“According to a legend the city was even built over a subterranean lake. This is not farfetched, for wherever a well is dug one strikes water at a depth of about five feet. Here the ruler erected a temple for the marvellous Buddhist statues which the princesses had brought with them as part of their dowry. Subsequently the name of Ra-sa was changed into Lha-sa, that is 'Place-of-the-Gods.' Thus is written

in the book *The Clear Mirror of the Successions-of-Kings*. There were many images of various deities, but by far the most beautiful and precious of all, given by Wen-Ch'en, represented the Buddha as a sixteen-year-old youth when he was still 'prince Siddhârtha of the Çâkyâ-dynasty.' It is said this is the only statue ever made of him during his life. It was sculptured by Vishvakarma, guided by god Indra. Some time later it came into the possession of the dynasty ruling the country of Magâdha (present Bihâr in India), where Çâkyamuni (i.e., the wise Çâkyâ, as the Buddha often is referred to) had preached. One of the kings of Magâdha is said to have presented the emperor of China with it, as thanks because the latter had helped him to chase foreign invaders from his domain. It was an illustrious descendant of this monarch who in his turn had given it to his daughter princess Wen-Ch'en as part of her dowry. In this way the wondrous image finally came to be sent to Tibet. It was made of the five precious metals: gold, silver, copper, iron, and zinc. And it was encrusted with the five kinds of celestial precious stones: diamonds, emeralds, rubies, lapis lazuli, and 'indranil.' Oh, it hadn't been easy or simple to get this statue to its place of destination. One day on its transport from China's capital to Lhasa, a journey which of course took many months, 'Prince Siddhârtha' had suddenly become so heavy that it was impossible to lift him. At the moment its porters happened to be in one of the loveliest valleys in the east of our country and they realised that the statue which we are wont to call 'Jo-wo-Rimpoche,' the Jewel-Precious Lord, preferred to stay there forever. The Chinese, who have always been the best imitators of art objects in the whole world, then made an exact replica of it which was granted to stay in the grassy fields of Ménya. And there it still is, in 'Lha-goné,' ('goné' as well as "gômpa" means monastery in Tibetan) the 'Monastery-of-the-God.' Only then did the original take on its former weight and let itself be carried obediently to Lhasa. There, as I told before, it was given the place of honor in the new temple which we called the Jo-khang, that is the 'House-of-Jo-wo.' Unto the present day this sanctuary is the religious center of our capital. Jo-wo's statue is placed in the Holy of Holies of the temple with two other statues on either side: that of the first Buddha living on earth, Dipangkara, and that of the Buddha-of-Love, Maitréya (or Champa), who will be born later on in the West. Day and night thousands of gold and silver butter lamps are burning before Jo-wo. The wealth and splendor of what has been gathered in the Jo-khang throughout the centuries in gifts and offerings from pious pilgrims surpasses all imagination.

“On its next floor there is to be found yet another famous image: that of the goddess Palden-Lhamo (Whenever a word ends in “mo” it stands for the feminine form of this word), the Protectress of Buddhism. Dorje-P’hagmo (meaning the ‘Diamond Sow’ or ‘Thunderbolt-Sow’), as is the title of the abbess of the monastery ‘Samding,’ is according to us her “Incarnation” on earth. In this famous sanctuary Palden Lhamo is represented in her ‘angry aspect’: with a black body and a crown of skulls, seated on a white mule and drinking out of a human skull. Her three eyes, which she has in common with many other deities, symbolize she is gazing into the three worlds (see above). Around her statue hundreds of tame mice are scurrying. . . .

“Around each temple there is always a circumambulation path and around the holy Jo-khang in Lhasa there are even three of them! The procession-way one can go inside the temple walls themselves is called ‘Nang-khor,’ the ‘inner-circle.’ As many government offices are built adjacent to the sanctuary the next circumambulation way is to be found along some of the most important streets of our capital: we call it the ‘Par-khor,’ the ‘middle-circle.’ Finally the third circumambulation way is going all around the Place-of-the-Gods and also around the Potala palace hill and the Iron hill (the ‘Chak-porí’). This road should properly be called the ‘Chi-khor,’ the ‘outer-circle,’ but the word ‘chi,’ outside, has with us always the unpleasant significance of outside Buddhism. We designate a non-Buddhist as an outsider, a ‘chi-pa.’ That is the reason why we speak of this third procession way as the ‘Ling-khor,’ that is, the ‘park-circle,’ for lingkka means park.

“But look, now I am telling you about Lhasa, Mem-sahib, instead of Tibet’s history! So let me return to king Srong-Tsan-Gampo. This ruler died from smallpox in his eighty-second year. After his death it was said he had been an “Incarnation” of the Celestial Bodhisattva Chèn-resí, as a king leading our people to worldly greatness. He was to return fourteen times yet to be our saintly religious leader on earth: in the bodies of our fourteen Dalai Lamas.”

8: The Dance With the Black Hat

“King Ti-song Dé-tsen (spelled “Khri-srong lDé-Itsen), (755–797),” the lama-vendor went on, “proceeded along similar lines as the great Srong-Tsan-Gampo. In 758 he fortified the new capital of Lhasa with strong walls. Besides, he had many writings translated from Sanskrit and Chinese into Tibetan. But his greatest merit was that he followed the advice of his Indian court priest Çanta-rakshita and invited the most erudite professor of the famous Nalanda monastery-university, the north Indian center of Tantric-Buddhist learning, to come to Tibet to teach the True Doctrine to our people. For at the time there still were many Bon-pas, followers of Bon-animism, in our country. The great scholar, coming to the Land-of-the-Snow at the king’s request, was none but the wise mystic Padma-Sambhava, the ‘Lotus-Born,’ who by many Tibetans is considered even greater than the Buddha himself! Legend has it that, before being able to preach his tenets in central Tibet, he had first to conquer the Bon-demons by his magic art. Once they were in his power they even helped him with his conversion work! It can also be taken in this way that he incorporated the Bon-pas’ rooted belief in various deities and demons—be it in a somewhat changed form with different names—in Buddhism to make them change over more easily to the new doctrine. As a Tantrist the ‘Lotus-born’ introduced many tantras with short adoration and adjuration formulae which had a magic power through the ether vibrations they caused. The people adopted them willingly as there had been many magic formulae in the Bon-religion as well. The success of the Jewel-Precious Teacher (‘Guru-Rimpoche’) was overwhelming. Almost the whole population now became Buddhist. Only in the north and the west of Tibet were there still to be found a few groups of Bon-pas, and also in the western part of China bordering our country. In 870 Padma-Sambhava, ever surrounded by his twenty-five disciples, founded the first Buddhist monastery called “Sámyè” (spelled bSam-yas). Çanta-rakshita was appointed its abbot. This monastery has always been famous because of its gigantic library of unique

handwritings. However, in 1810 most of these got destroyed by an enormous fire. The storms of the Gobi desert now have in part buried the buildings under layers of sand.

“The institution of monasteries was something quite new in Buddhism. The inmates, the monks, got thorough instruction in the ‘holy scriptures.’ *Only those who had passed all their examinations with good results, after their Ge-long-initiation, were allowed to be called ‘lamas,’ while the others remained ‘tra-pa’s,’ pupils, all their lives.* The special form of Buddhism, introduced by Padma-Sambháva is also known as ‘lamaism.’ Guru-Rimpoche is honored by all Tibetans to the present day, also by those who in later times have changed to a somewhat modified form of his doctrine. The reason of their awe is that it was he who perpetuated the “True Doctrine” in our country.

“Finally, when his task of conversion was finished—at the end of fifty years according the Tibetan chronicles—the Lotus-born left the Land-of-the-Snow to go and spread Buddhism on the island of Langka (Ceylon). These are the historical facts. The legends spun around the magician are far more romantic. I will tell you another time.

“Before we proceed, a few more words about the religious background of this mystic. He hailed from Udyána or Úrgyen (‘Garden’), a small country situated in the northeast of present Afghanistan. At the time in those regions a variety of religions had got mixed. Although people officially were followers of Buddhism, this doctrine was not only strongly influenced by Indian Tantrism, but also imbibed the ideas of Persian gnosticism, of the Mithras sun cult, and of Manicheism. The double thunderbolt scepter, in Tibetan called ‘dorji’ and in Sanskrit ‘vajra’ (diamond), the thunderbolt templebell “dílbu” (spelled ‘drilbu’), the magic thunderbolt dagger with its three blades ‘p’hur-bú,’ the double human skull drum ‘damaru,’ and the human thighbone flute ‘kang-ling’ played a great role in the mysterious rites in the course of which alcoholic drinks were passed round from a human skull-bowl ‘kapâla.’ There was immense adoration and adulation of many-armed and many-headed monster deities, of ‘Çakti’s’ (feminine deities), of ‘Dâkíni’s’ or ‘Kadhóma’s’ (fairies possessing magic knowledge, also called mothers), of witches, and of the ‘Horrible-Great-Black-One’ (‘Mahâkâla-Bhairáva,’ an aspect of Çiva). And bearing in mind that Padma-Sambháva, come to preach Buddhism, on entering Tibet had incorporated a few Bon-deities in his pantheon, it is easy to see that his Lamaism was far removed from the simple tenets of the Buddha! That which Pàdma-Sambháva brought was a mystic doctrine, for the initiates saw these deities as

symbols of smaller and greater cosmic forces. However, non illuminated people will take everything literally, a fact leading to a lot of superstition. But their devotion was real and deeply felt, at those times as well as nowadays. And that is what really counts! Now pay attention to what I am going to explain.

“Various kinds of ‘māṇḍalas,’ in Tibetan called ‘Kyil-khors,’ formed an integral part of the Tantrism taught by Pādma-Sambhāva. These magic representations symbolize the universe. They are constructed according to fixed rules in and around a circle, in which the four cardinal points take an important place. In each of these one of the metaphysical Buddhas’ (or ‘Buddha’s-of-Meditation’), symbols of primal cosmic forces, has its seat, while the fifth metaphysical Buddha occupies the center of the māṇḍala. Such a circular symbol of the universe serves mainly as an object of concentration in special meditations.

“Now the first Tibetan monastery, Sāmyè founded by Pādma-Sambhāva, is in fact nothing but an enormous stone māṇḍala. The colossal symmetric building in the center, symbolizing the mystic world-mountain Suméru (or Rírab), has four other buildings adjacent oriented East, West, North, and South, as are its great stūpas (Tibetan: ‘chörtens’). All edifices together are surrounded by a high circular wall. Here was the seat of the famous ‘Oracle of Sāmyè,’ for oracles too (originally pertaining to Bon-animism) were introduced into Buddhism by our precious Guru. We believe that a deity can take possession of the body of a medium fallen into a trance because of appropriate music and burnt offerings of special herbs. In that case the deity is speaking oracle aphorisms through his mouth. The well-known Bon-god Pé-har (spelled ‘Pe-dkar’) was thought to manifest himself through the medium in Sāmyè.

“From that time onwards the Tibetans started to build monasteries by themselves as well, although not in māṇḍala form. These many religious centers brought about quite a different social structure in our country. For we have only a few small cities: Lhasa, Shígatsé, and Gyántsé in central-Tibet, Dergé in the East, and Gártok in the West. The greater part of the population has always lived far apart from each other for the following reason. Try and imagine the territory of Tibet: arable soil is only to be found in the narrow valleys of the rivers winding their course between high mountains. The barren high plateaus are suitable only for cattle breeding. Here the nomadic tribes are wandering about with their herds. In these vast and lonely spaces were situated the mansions of the feudal lords. The rich landed proprietors received tribute in kind from those whom they considered their serfs or tenants, though they could only exert actual power over

the few living in their immediate surroundings.

“Far removed from the central government, the wealthy men reigned over their lands like petty princes, and it might interest you that, when such a prince died while his sons were not yet of age, his wife would take over and rule with an iron rod. In Tibet the position of women has always been an important one. Such it is until the present day!

“On account of the increase of monasteries, however, artificial compact communities, the state of affairs changed altogether. For in such a “gompa” often lived several thousand of monks close together, each of them working for his own sustenance. Like a little city, the building-complex was walled in. Adjacent were the (vast) lands, given to such a religious community by the crown, in order to keep the temples, lama-schools and meetinghalls in good condition by their produce. So it was not long before the abbots could stretch their actual influence over a much bigger territory than the feudal princes had ever been able to. Briefly, next to the few small centers of power of the nobles now many great centers of power of the monasteries came into being. Thus the point of gravitation shifted from the worldly lords to the ecclesiastical lords: from the nobility to the clergy! It has remained this way ever since. For one thing because greater knowledge—acquired from prolonged tuition and severe asceticism—is the prerogative of the lamas.

“King Muni-Tsembo (797–798) who ascended the throne after Ti-son Dé-tsen had great ideals, but not a very practical mind. He wanted everybody to share possessions equally. So he forced the rich to hand over everything they had and divided all their property equally among his subjects. But it was not long before all of the former rich had become rich anew and all of the former poor were poor anew. Once more the king ordered people to hand over everything they had and redivided it the same way. This caused a lot of discontent for you should realize, Mem-sahib, that all Easterners—Hindus as well as Buddhists—believe absolutely in the Law of Karma, the inexorable impersonal Law of Cosmic Order, by which all actions will return to the one that performed them. Whoever amongst us is in poor circumstances in this life sees it as a result of wrong conduct in a former earthly existence and wants to “sit out his punishment,” as it were, while people who are better off, convinced that their circumstances are well deserved, will perform as many good actions as possible: just to earn once more a comfortable existence in their next life on earth. The immediate effect of this conception of life will be contentedness shared by all alike. In Tibet one is not jealous of

another, and if a ruler should encroach upon the rightful order of things as settled 'from above,' even the less well-situated ones profiting from his interference won't actually agree with it. Thus everybody turned against the king. It goes without saying that after the second redividing the rich ones became rich again and the poor ones poor again. When Muni-Tsem-po tried to repeat the procedure for the third time he was killed. He had not occupied the throne two years yet.

"Our last *important* king was Ral-pa-chen (817-836), a great champion and propagator of Buddhism. He encouraged people to build monasteries. Moreover he sent Tibetan lamas to India and China to learn Sanskrit and Chinese in order to translate the numerous holy Buddhist books from those languages into Tibetan. At the time there were very few writings left in Pâli, the language spoken by the Buddha.

"Unfortunately king Ral-pa-chen got murdered, by his brother Lang-Darma, at that! The latter believed in the old Bon-deities and was hostile towards Buddhism. The fratricide managed to usurp the royal crown. Being a 'chi-pa'—an outsider—as the Tibetans are wont to call somebody who does not belong to the community of the Buddha's followers (the 'sangga') he did everything to oppose the spreading of the new doctrine which made his people happy. In contradistinction he tried to restore the honor of the former animistic religion. Lang-Darma deprived the monasteries of their landed property so their power was annihilated and the monks had to disperse all over the country. He burned as many holy manuscripts as possible. In the three years of his rule this monarch struck such a heavy blow to Buddhism as to eradicate all progress for many centuries. Through him priceless knowledge got lost forever.

"And now, Mem-sahib, something occurred which every Tibetan knows. Parents will ever tell this story to their little children. Everybody hated bad king Lang-Darma, the lamas more than anybody else. So one of them, called Pal-Dorje, thought of a ruse to free the country from this evil ruler. Wearing a black coat and a black hat (in the way Bon-priests are dressed) he waited for the monarch near the so-called Do-ring. This is a memorial stone in the city of Lhasa on which the treaty is chiseled—on one side in Tibetan characters and on the other in Chinese—which was concluded between Tibet ('Fan') and China ('Han') in the year 836 by king Ral-pa-chen and emperor Tang-Te-tsung."

Here one of the men in our circle sighed: "Ah, in this place there is such a beautiful old willow tree. It has grown out of a hair of the Buddha." Another added: "It blooms in spring with thousands of fine

yellow flowers." "Yes," a third said in a sad voice: "Just across from the Jo-khang, the most beautiful and holiest temple in Lhasa." It was quite evident that the mention of a spot which all of them knew had awakened a nostalgic longing in these people for their lovely capital.

There was silence for a few moments. Then the lama-vendor went on: "At the moment king Lang-Darma was passing the Do-ring the pseudo-Bon-priest started a ritual dance and the ruler stopped to look at it, full of interest. Dancing on, the lama with the black hat came nearer and nearer, then—all of a sudden—he took out a bow and arrow from his wide clothes and shot the enemy of Buddhism through the heart! In the confusion that now arose he threw away his black hat, turned his black coat lined with white cloth inside out, and jumped on his horse which he drove to the river. The pony had been blackened with soot, and when it came out of the water on the other shore it was white again. In this way Lang-Darma's murderer escaped and everybody rejoiced.

"The ritual 'Dance with the Black Hat,' yearly performed in many Tibetan monasteries as a kind of historic-religious play, is the symbol of the final victory of Buddhism over ancient Bon-animism.

"Herewith the golden era of our *great* kings ended. It is interesting to know that it coincided more or less with the T'ang-dynasty in China (168–907).

"In this period Tibet was one of the mightiest states of Asia. Even China had had to pay a yearly tribute of fifty thousand rolls of silk to the rulers of 'the Land-of-the-Snow.' It is sometimes said, 'Tibet is the root of China.' If the root does not prosper, the tree cannot bloom.

"However, after Lang-Darma's murder the unity of our country came to an end, hence its power as well. Many petty princes ruled over parts of it. This splitting-up lasted for nearly three centuries. Thus you see, Mem-sahib, that the history of Tibet has always been the history of its religion, for whatever the Tibetans may do, it is interwoven with their faith. With us there are no 'unbelievers' or 'people who don't practice Buddhism.' The gentle nature of the lord Çâkyamuni, according to which one is not allowed to kill a single living being, not even to hurt one, has penetrated so deeply into our hearts for centuries on end, that the bellicose warrior-tribes we were before the seventh century have changed into a peace-loving nation. *Purposely we kept our country closed to foreigners, as we saw that wherever they came there arose envy, discontentedness, and war. That is why we wanted to be left alone! Only when our religion is threatened, as it is now by the Chinese, the Tibetans will seize their weapons.*"

It had become dark. As was the custom every evening the refugees went in big groups round and round the holy stûpa of Bodhnâth, singing all the time. It was as if in their song they wanted to give expression to the thought in their hearts: "Although we have been chased away from our homeland, none will be able to vanquish our spirit!"

9: The Legend of Pàdma-Sambháva

Once upon a time in the land Urgyen (or Udyána) in the north-west of India there reigned a blind king called Indrabódhi. He had only one son, who died as a boy. After this blow famine ravaged the country and the treasury became exhausted. Desperate because of so many catastrophes, the sovereign and his subjects implored all the Celestial Buddhas to help them and offered them their last possessions. Their supplications were heard in the Western Paradise, the abode of the Buddha Amitâbha, "He of the Eternal Light" (in Tibet called O-Pag-Me) who at once sent a miraculous Incarnation of himself to the earth in the form of a beam of red light which alighted in the holy lotuslake of Úrgyen. This happened in the year of 721 of the Christian era.

That same night the ruler dreamt that he received in his hand a gold "vajra" (literally "diamond," but this word also is used for the "dorje," the double thunderbolt scepter, originally the emblem of the god Indra, afterwards the symbol of Lamaism. Vajra, "diamond," is also the mystic expression for the Highest Truth.)

Early in the morning the court priest came and told His Majesty there was a wonderful light shining in the five colors of the rainbow over the holy lotus lake Dhánakòça, so dazzlingly bright that the three worlds were lighted by it: the world of the senses, (the desires, our world) the world of pure forms, and the formless (spiritual) world (in Sankrit: "kama-loka," "rupa-loka," and "arupa-loka").

Miraculously Indrabódhi suddenly had regained his sight after his dream. He took a boat and had himself rowed to the middle of the lake to the place whence the light seemed to shine forth. There bloomed an indescribably beautiful lotus flower and in its heart sat a lovable boy, about eight years old, with a vajra scepter in his hand. He radiated like a god. Kneeling down to honor the marvellous little being, the king cried: "Incomparable child, who are you, who is your father and from where do you come?"

The boy answered: "Only I myself know who is my father. I have come to fulfil a prophecy of Çâkyamuni, the Buddha, who said: 'Twelve hundred years after my passing away, in the pure lake of Dhânakôça in the northeast of the land Úrgyen, a boy will be born out of a lotus who will be called Pàdma-Sambháva, the "Lotus-born." He will teach my esoteric Mantra doctrine and liberate all beings from their suffering."

Such was the magical birth of the divine essence of Pàdma-Sambháva who could never have stayed on earth in a human body, soiled by the deficiencies of a mother's womb. His "earthly garb" came forth from the flower that, being pure and untainted, excels all the others, although rooted in mud.

When the monarch and his subjects had heard the words of the child seated in the lotus they realized he was a supernatural being indeed and they called him "the Diamond, born from the Lake," "Vajra," because their ruler had dreamt he received a vajra in his hand.

The wondrous little boy was to live in the palace of the king as his adopted son, and people honored him as a prince. From that moment prosperity reigned in the land Úrgyen and the holy doctrine of Buddhism spread more and more. The heavenly being was constantly sunk in meditation, seated in the "lotus posture" under a tree in the palace garden. To give him some pleasure His Majesty after a few years made him marry the Princess Bhasádharma, the daughter of the monarch of Singala. After this he stayed five more years at the court. Then, however, the gods descended on earth and declared that the Lotus-born was of divine origin, so he was not to be forced to live the life of a mortal. But still Indrabódhi did not want to dispense with him. That is why he did not allow the youthful prince to fulfil his heart's desire: to take leave of the worldly life and lead the life of an ascetic.

Now the young man killed by magic several of the ruler's subjects, who in a former earthly existence had done harm to Buddhism. Because of this the people complained to the king about the "crimes" of his adopted son and demanded he should be exiled.

So it happened to the grief of Indrabódhi and his family. Pàdma-Sambháva now traveled to the Shitáni-cemetery "in the cool forest" where he stayed amongst the corpses to rise above human passions and weaknesses, and to seek communion with gods and demons. For many years he roamed from one cemetery to another—eight in all—to meditate in each of them. The four kinds of Dâkinis removed him to their caves where these fairies taught him magic

practices. Also he came into contact with the "Rishis," the "Wise Men of the Ancient World" who had died long ago, but miraculously appeared before the royal pilgrim in their "earthly garb" and taught him their philosophical wisdom and their marvellous accomplishments.

Through his ascetic life in the remote woods he became a saint and a mystic, besides a sorcerer and a sage. Finally he even himself became a Teacher-of-the-Spirits and of the disaster-spreading Yakshas.

When at last he came to Záhör (generally believed to be Lahore) the beautiful and intelligent princess Mandaráva gave herself to him as a wife. In revenge her rejected admirers tied him on a funeral pile which they set fire to. But in the midst of the flames they saw the mystic seated serenely on a lotus flower. The fire did not consume him! Another miracle is told about this period: One day the Lotus-born sat drinking wine with his companions in an inn. As he did not have any money with him the innkeeper granted him a respite of payment until sunset. The youth prohibited the sun to set for seven days. So for a week it never became dark and nobody was able to sleep. At his wits' end the innkeeper let Pàdma Sambháva off his debt.

In 777 A.D. (according to others in 747 A.D.) the saintly magician departed for Tibet, invited by king Ti-song Dé-tsen. At one of the entrance passes to the country a demonic Bon-goddess tried to kill him by squeezing his body between two high mountains at either side of the narrow path. But by his magic powers the ascetic simply raised himself into the sky so the goddess had to admit his power was greater than hers and she submitted herself to him after he had given her a different name. She promised not to protect the Bon-religion anymore henceforward, but Buddhism.

The Tibetans mostly call Padma-Sambháva "the Guru" or "Guru-Rimpoche." Many are the victories this miracle-performing saint gained on the ancient Bon-deities. For instance when the mighty "White Female Enemy" harassed him with her thunderbolts—which did not harm him in the least—he caused her snow palace to melt until a blue lake was all that was left of it. In this she hid herself, but the Guru caused the water to boil, so the flesh fell off her bones. When still she did not come out of it he threw his "vajra" in her direction and therewith pierced one of her eyes. Then at last she recognized his superiority and offered him the essence of her life. The new name he gave her was "the Snowwhite Fleshless One-Eyed She-Demon of the Vajra."

Now he came into a region where housed an ill-famed demon

who had changed himself into a white yak as huge as a mountain. The breath he exhaled was like a big white cloud and his growling was like the rolling of thunder. But Pàdma-Sambháva grasped the nose of the monster with "the gesture of the iron hook," he bound his neck with "the gesture of the string," his feet with "the gesture of the shackles," and finally he reduced him to insanity with the "bell gesture." Thereupon the demon transformed himself into a youth dressed in white silk and offered the Guru the essence of his life: so he too had been vanquished

At the next mountain pass the magician was waited for by a demonic god who had disguised himself into a white serpent of such gigantic measures that its head was in one country and its tail in another. That is why he looked like a long chain of white mountains blocking the way to the heart of Tibet. But the Guru threw his "lingyi" over the giant serpent, which made it powerless. This kindled its anger so terribly that he attacked his enemy with thunderbolts. The Lotus-born, however, by his magic changed these into reptiles, frogs, and fishes. In the form of a youth dressed in white silk with a turquoise diadem on his head the vanquished one offered him the essence of his life and all his followers did the same.

Once when Pàdma-Sambháva sat meditating in a cave, a demon came to him in the guise of an old woman wearing a cap set with many turquoises. She lay her head in his lap and stretched herself till she touched the opposite mountain with her hands and another one still further away with her feet. Then she caused the ascetic sorcerer to be surrounded by many thousands of evil spirits who troubled him sorely. But now the victorious Teacher summoned the five fierce demons he had turned into servants and in this way he got everyone that harrassed him in his power.

After Guru-Rimpoche had hidden in caves many of his manuscripts containing revelations for which mankind was not yet ripe, he appointed a demon over each as a guardian.

In Lhasa the Jewel-Precious Pàdma-Sambháva rested some time after all his victories and then started on his way again. When he was traveling through the country king Ti-song Dé-tsen sent one of his ministers to him with an escort of five hundred mounted soldiers to hand him a letter. They also brought presents: gold, silk, and horses. When this group reached him everybody was thirsty, but it happened there were no rivers or lakes in that region. The Lotus-born, however, touched the face of a rock and out of it welled a jet of pure water. Even today there is a source in that place. It is called "Water from the Vessel of God."

From here the ascetic set out to another part of Tibet where reigned a king who refused to greet him first. The holy magician, who could look far back into the past, told the monarch the reason why they met here. It was by the power of their mutual prayers sent up in a former existence on earth near the Magúta-stúpa in the hamlet of Bodhnâth in Nepal. So the king really should be thankful that his former earnest desire had become fulfilled. He should lay aside his arrogance! To prove to him that he had supernatural powers at his disposal Padma-Sambháva then stretched his right hand in the direction of the ruler and out of the tops of his fingers a flame flashed which set fire to the other's garb. At the same time a terrific thunderclap was heard and the earth started to tremble. The monarch and his ministers prostrated themselves and the Lotus-born spoke: "King! Build five stúpas to atone for your lack of True Wisdom meaning: for your ignorance, your "ne-science" the greatest sin of Buddhism." With deep repentance his royal host hastened to obey this command and his five stúpas still exist!

Many years the great saintly mystic stayed in Tibet "to turn the Wheel" (i.e., to teach the Buddhist doctrine). When his task was finished in the Land-of-the-Snow he mounted his winged horse and flew to Langka, the island of Ceylon, there to subject the mandevouring Rakshásha's, or anyway to prevent their spreading all over the world.

This kind of story is told always with conventional-symbolic words. They do not contain "a secret language," but the expressions used are of such a nature that every initiate knows their purport at once, while a non-initiate takes everything literally. Let us look for instance at the last adventure in which it is brought to the light that the saint was a magic "sorcerer." It goes without saying that his magic "tricks" were based on his "siddhi's," his supernatural powers originating in the "Kundalínî-fire" in a strong measure and if he touches somebody else, this person participates in it. *That such is actually true I know from personal experience:* One has the sense of a flash of fire going through one's body. Many analogous cases of "miraculous touch" are historic. The one who participates of the Kundalínî-power of a highly spiritual yogi hereby gets a deep insight in Truth. For instance in the same way Çri Râma-Krishna made the unwilling Vivékananda—only by touching him—into his most devout pupil who put his whole life at the service of his spiritual teacher.

One has to consider this "Kundalínî-fire" as a kind of "cosmic energy of high voltage" pervading everything created. It is also present in every human being, but usually in a latent, a "sleeping" state. The people in whom Kun-

dalīni "has been awakened" are able to dispose of it for various purposes that may make a miraculous impression if their spiritual development is of a high order.

So this last story merely implies that the Kundalīni-fire of Pādma-Sambhāva was so strong that it was not even necessary for him to touch the king to make him participate in it! Only to point in his direction was sufficient to emit the "spark" from the tops of his finger and set fire to the "garb"—that is the body—of the monarch. A thunderclap sounded; lightning goes with thunder. This means all of a sudden, and just as clear as a flash of lightning, insight came to the arrogant ruler as regards the divine nature of the Lotus-born and this insight made him tremble so vehemently "as if there was an earthquake."

In the same way one has to consider the other occurrences in this mystic legend. *Its words form "the surface story" (the exoteric story) for the layman. But what the initiate understands is "the root story" (the esoteric story).* Doubtlessly Pādma-Sambhāva was one of the greatest and most gifted mystics of all times.

10: The Old Tulku

From our window I saw the Tibetan tülku Si-ngo-Rimpoche who had arrived the evening before and to whom the China lama had not been able (or willing?) to let one of the many rooms in his surrounding houses. The old man now sat on a chair in front of the stûpa. His back was bent, his head hung forward, and the underlip of his toothless mouth protruded. He dribbled constantly. Therefore a bib was tied around his neck. The refugees stood in a long queue to wait for their turn to be blessed by him. In Tibet the blessing of a crowd is unknown. One after another the people knelt down in front of the aged lama and he put his hand on their head. After this their faces had an exalted expression. "Aren't you going to bid him welcome, pappa?" I asked, a bit astonished.

"Why should I go to him, daughter? True, he is a "tulku" (spelled "trulku"), a recognized Incarnation of a saint, but after all I too am quite a high lama, and moreover the priest-officiate of the holy stûpa of Bodhnâth!"

"I thought you would perhaps go to him as he is so much older than you and as he has no place he can call his home." The Precious Jewel all of a sudden was terribly intent on other things so he did not hear my words. I went outside. The overtired grey-haired man roused my boundless pity. After the blessing the people had dispersed. He wanted to rise from his chair, but had not the strength to do so. The monk who had been standing on his right side was not able by himself to make him get up and the one on his left was nowhere to be seen. I rushed forward and took the place of the absent one. Nearly bent double, step after step, the unfortunate old tulku stumbled forward uncertainly, supported on either side by us. Finally a strapping young fellow came along who offered to carry him on his back to the small Gelug-pa monastery where the Yellowcap abbot had put a room at his disposal. Thus, on the backs of robust, youthful men he had been carried from the Land-of-the-Snow over the Himâlayas to Bodhnâth.

I had seen that in the morning a group of Kham-pas (people from the eastern province of Kham) had arrived in our hamlet. Many of them had brought big quantities of hides with them. They had piled them high over their heads in a light wooden contraption which they kept balanced with a broad band across their front. The heavy load made them stoop forward quite a bit. These nomads had settled in the fields stretching far behind our house. After having fetched my camera I too went there. I had to walk past the village well, right behind the row of houses near the stūpa. It was inside a sort of brick room without a roof, about fifteen feet lower than the level of the square. A broad staircase led downwards to the three sculptured stone "Mákaras" (fishes-with-an-elephant's-trunk) out of whose mouths flowed the precious liquid. Early in the day the villagers used to come here to fill their heavy copper jars with the water they needed for making tea and for cooking. Moreover several of them came back somewhat later to wash themselves, that is if they felt like it, which of course did not happen every day. There was no water supply in the houses of our hamlet. Only the residence of the China lama was so luxuriously arranged as to afford us our own washing facilities: on an open platform(!) where, on a wooden support, a petrol drum was placed. It had a small tap at the lower end. Our servants were supposed to replenish it regularly with water from the well. Once in a while they forgot it. But mostly it was possible for me in the chill of the early morning to fill an enamel bowl—which I had borrowed from a hotel—and have a wash in our home, in full view of everybody. (But as a rule at the hour I got up all my family were still fast asleep). However, as I told, the populace, men and women all together, had to go to the brick well-room for this purpose. They were not prudish in the least! Still later the women came back once more to wash their clothes, and while they worked on them vigorously with a big ball of "soap," for the greater part consisting of fine clay, their mouths were not silent for a moment: they chattered like magpies!

Just behind the well was the stubble-field of my nomad friends and still further, on a higher (terrace of) fallow land, the Kham-pas had thrown off their bundles. These men are all tall and of powerful build. They look quite imposing in their wide cloaks lined with sheepskin. One can always spot them as East-Tibetans because they cut their hair in front, the thick fringe reaching to just over the eyes, while the remainder is hanging down on their backs in two plaits. Around the waist they wear a cartridge belt studded with silver. A short sword is stuck in it, ever ready to grip! The women generally

have hefty hips. Many wore broad leather girdles, studded with silver too, on which sometimes—by way of decoration—two big plaques of wrought silver were hanging on red bands, and in between, on a narrow leather strip, something looking like a little copper anchor. This served to hold up their skirts when they were milking their cattle. In the ears they had usually silver rings, embellished with a piece of coral. The men, however, wore only one big copper ring set with a turquoise: always in the left ear. All of them carried small silver or bronze shrines on their breasts, fastened on an oblique band over the right shoulder. Inside these, through a piece of glass, one could see an image of their personal “protecting deity” (their “Yidam”). The shrine also served to keep their various amulets and written mantras in.

These newly arrived Khampas were very shy. Most of them made off as soon as they saw me. They refused point blank to have their photographs taken. One fellow adopted all kinds of strange positions just in front of my lens, probably to show his hostility or to be purposely disagreeable to me. It was a poor ugly chap with two adorable little daughters clad in rags. Later on I was to become great friends with him and his whole family.

Another man had installed himself with all his possessions around him in a separate little field. On a fire he cooked his tea, in the meantime brushing his hair with a thick bunch of stiff cut reeds, looking like a kitchen-sink-scrubber. He had beautiful long locks of which he was obviously very proud. All the women of his company looked at him admiringly. Yet another person, a poor lama, had instantly improvised a little altar with statues of the gods, bowls of holy water, butterlamps and an altar vase (“bum-pa”) with peacock feathers, everything exactly in conformity with the rules. In front of this he sat praying, while his little white dog scared away all visitors who dared come near this sacred spot. So there were a variety of interesting things to look at.

Finally I went back to the square. There I saw somebody from the western provinces dressed only in a few tatters, one of the poorest of the poor. Now the attire of a Tibetan is not complete without some ornament. This is a kind of obligation. The poor devil had only a single bead on a string around his neck, supposed to be a so-called “zi,” but it was a cheap imitation! He laughed merrily and put out his tongue at me, a thing which in the Land of the Snow is the common sign of politeness of the “ordinary man” to the socially higher ones. When beggars ask for money they also put out their tongues, at the same time holding up their thumbs.

Ever again it struck me how fond of laughter and how courteous the Tibetans are: Afraid to sadden somebody else with their own sorrows, they will never show their grief. The man who laughed so cheerfully did not possess anything in the world, and now he had also lost his home, but he would not dream of rousing people's pity to receive charity. I made clear to him he should come with me to the gallery and there one of my family told him that he had to sit still on a chair for awhile because I wanted to draw his portrait, for which service he should get well paid. Gaily nodding and once more putting out his tongue he seated himself opposite me on the drafty open corridor and stayed there until my sketch was finished. With the money he had earned he left our house, nearly dancing with pleasure.

"What a quaint type of model you prefer to draw, daughter Lili," said the China lama. "Why such a poor tramp? There are also better-situated, well-dressed people around who would consider it an honor to be portrayed by you."

"They too will have their turn in due course, pappa, but I never work according to a system. I choose whomever happens to inspire me at a given moment, which is not a question of beauty or of good clothes!" For the nth time it struck me that my Tibetan father, for a preacher of the Buddhist doctrine, set rather much value on the signs of material wealth and success. "Pappa," I said, "I wanted to ask you something about that pitiable tulku Si-ngo-Rimpoche who this morning blessed all the people on the square: Is he senile because of his old age?"

"How can you think such a thing, daughter? He is only exhausted with the long, strenuous journey across the Himálayas. Moreover, he speaks with great difficulty as he has hardly any teeth left. You would be surprised if you knew what this tulku is capable of: He has supernatural powers. It is a well-known fact to all of us. Do you know he has been immured in a cave during twelve years to meditate, at his own request? Realize such a thing: all the time without the warming sunshine in our cold Tibet! And only once a day a meal consisting of some roasted barley-flour and occasionally a raw carrot! The learned lamas have figured out exactly that this is the smallest quantity of food which is sufficient for one when meditating in the dark. It is pushed to the walled-in ascetic through a narrow passage hacked out in the rock with two elbow-curves, so through this opening never any light can penetrate. It is the custom to arrange that a little lightless channel with flowing water goes from one side of the abode to the other, so the inhabitant can always drink when he feels like it. At the same time it takes all impurities away. During long

meditation in absolute darkness the notion of time and space vanishes. Only then it is possible to do certain mystic exercises that even with a trace of light would be impossible. These will lead to development of occult powers. This is the reason why one lets oneself be immured. The cycle of waking and sleeping stops: a kind of intermediate state develops during which the hermit automatically eats and defecates.

"In no way is it allowed to try and come into contact with the cavedweller, because besides the fact that the life of a person, when "called back" from a deep meditation, is endangered, the purpose of voluntary confinement is that one is absolutely thrown on his own resources. In the beginning his guru may transmit a telepathic encouragement, but even this is exceptional."

"But if the isolated man should get ill?"

"Either he will recover or he will die. The latter becomes evident when his food will remain untouched."

"But this is inhuman, pappa!"

"Such are the rules. Nobody is compelled to let himself be walled in. It is one's free choice."

"Will a body be hewn out?"

"No, why? It is well entombed. Sometimes it is done later on when the abode is needed by another. Do you know, daughter, a walled-in hermit is not allowed to die when stretched out. He has a wooden rack with him and when he feels his death approaching he has to fasten himself therein with his sash: in the "lotus-posture", before he might fall down from weakness. Thus his soul (or better said: his "Knower" or consciousness-principle) can withdraw from his body in the manner prescribed for yogis: while the dying person is still in full possession of his consciousness. This has to take place through a very small hole in the upper part of the skull, called the "Brahmarándhra" (the aperture of Brahma)."

"In the heart of the seventh cakra, the highest situated one, also referred to as the thousand-petalled lotus, you mean, pappa?"

"Oh, you know about it? Then you have been taught about these things in the yogi monasteries in India where you stayed? Yes, indeed, this is what I meant. In fact everybody has to let his "Knower" evade from its earthly sheath in this way" NOTE: see *A Year with the Yogis* by the same authoress. .

"Do the ones who come out alive from such a cave ever tell about their spiritual experiences during this period?" "Very seldom, daughter, but it is known what they are like. The beginning of course is the most difficult. The immured monk has visions of landscapes full of

light and life. He must realize they are a mere delusion. Later on he sees but one moving luminous point. He has to make this stop through still deeper concentration. If he succeeds, it vanishes, also from his thoughts. The meditation can now reach its greatest depth. During the state of not-waking-not-sleeping he will methodically apply a spiritual training, which among other things includes an inquiry into occult knowledge. This goes on for years, and meanwhile the occult powers of the hermit develop. It is out of the question they won't! When finally the end of his confinement approaches, a very, very small opening is made in the masonry which walls him in, not bigger than a pinpoint. For after such a long time of deep darkness one would become blind with fearful pain by being exposed to too much light at once. Every day the opening is enlarged until the recluse can step out of his abode at the time appointed from the start."

"But, pappa, what would happen if he couldn't stand it to the end?"

"He is sure to stand it, daughter, because he is tested beforehand. A person who wants to be immured first gets special instruction, after which he undergoes a period of probation for three months to see if he can mentally endure to live in profound darkness and solitude. If after this experience he sticks to his decision he will be walled in for the shortest time established."

"That is how long, pappa?" "Oh, merely for three years, three months, three weeks, three days, three hours, and three minutes."

"Merely? That seems terribly long to me!"

"Many who come out of their dark, cold 'home' have the ardent desire to be immured once more, like the tulku you saw this morning. Some others implore to remain confined this way until the end of their life. For they cannot think of anything more pleasant than unbroken meditation in quiet, isolated from the world. The longest time such a person has been known to persist living in absolute darkness all by himself is fifty-nine years!"

I was really glad that my Tibetan father, in spite of his worldly inclinations, was so taken with this typical Buddhist idea.

"It was our great philosopher-poet Mila-repa who founded this order of the "Ones being Buried Alive (in caves)" continued the China lama. "Do you know who Mila-repa was, daughter? No? Well, let someone tell you his story!"

That evening I walked around the Stûpa in a pensive mood. I could not stop thinking about all I had heard. "Mem-sahib, Mem-sahib," I heard somebody cry. It was my friend the lama-vendor from the tiny shop. "I saw you this morning going for a stroll with that

famous tulku," he said. "What a wonderful saintly man, isn't he? You know, it was as if he were floating between the two of you, so lightly did he walk!"

Yes, we really are living in a "World of Phenomena," in a "World of Delusion," I thought. Everybody experiences the things around him in the way his own spiritual attitude *makes* him see them. I thought I knew for certain that the poor old lama tottered and stumbled, because I identified him with his deficient body, so I pitied him with all my heart. But the lama-vendor thought he was floating, because he admired and worshipped him as a saint. . . .

11: The Tibetan Calendar

It was not long before, when walking about our hamlet, I was greeted from all sides by the Tibetans, nodding and smiling at me. Nearly all houses on the square were the property of the China lama and he let them per room per night to the Tibetan families. They yielded him a substantial profit. In the early morning hours after the refugees had circumambulated the stûpa many times, they had got into the habit of standing in groups chatting with each other and I had a good opportunity to observe attentively the way they were dressed. The men used to wear their winter coats, quilted or lined with sheepskin, reaching down halfway the calves, draped around them obliquely. Right shoulder and arm were merely covered with a cotton shirt, while left shoulder and left arm were nicely tucked under the thick, warm coat. The empty right sleeve dangled far down the back as sleeves are always much longer than arms. The nether part serves to shield the hand, for in the Land-of-the-Snow, gloves are unknown. The Tibetans always wind their cloth sash very stiffly around the waist and have the front-part of the coat blouse over it. Thus a kind of pocket will be formed, the "ámbag," in which they are wont to carry the various things they need during the day. For instance a bag of "tsampa," a bag of dried meat, some hard lumps of cheese, perhaps a horn of snuff, their prayer-wheel, and of course a teacup. For if they are offered tea it is the custom to have it poured into their own cup. That is why it would be very greedy to carry a big one.

Some indispensable objects are hanging from their belt: knife, purse, tinderbox, container of needles, circular metal calendar and metal stamp with their seal (as most people cannot write their name, although those who can, carry a seal of their own all the same). The ones who are able to write and well-to-do will moreover carry a case containing a reed-pen and another with their "cutlery" (a knife to cut meat with and two chopsticks). The common man is illiterate and eats with his hands. Sometimes a tweezer to pull out beard-hairs is hang-

ing from the prayer-chain, worn about the neck or the left wrist. However, the growth of a beard is quite an exception in the Land-of-the-Snow.

The hose of the Tibetans reach below the knees. The high felt boots are tied with bands around them. These boots, adorned with patches of colored cloth, have soles of yak-skin and a slit at the back. But the hats—worn in central Tibet, that is—are more beautiful than any other item of their apparel. The high crowns are made of gold brocade interwoven with red and blue floral patterns and they have four felt flaps lined with fur to protect ears, front, and neck against the fierce cold. These hats contribute more than anything else to the dignified look of those who can afford to wear them. As far as I could verify those were the well-to-do citizens. The nomads often wore a fur cap and the small traders mostly went bareheaded. All the men had their long black hair, in plaits, finished off with red or pink tassels which they wound around the head. Only rarely one saw blue tassels. As mentioned already a big earring of gilt copper with a turquoise was customarily worn in the left ear. The lords-of-creation went about with seemingly nonchalant elegance, but actually they took great care in obliquely draping their clothes and, having arranged them satisfactorily in the desired fold, fastened them securely by winding their sash several times tightly around the waist.

The nomad women looked very simple in their obliquely draped coats of dark cloth and similar sash, merely brightened up with lovely colorful necklaces. But the way city women were attired was really a feast for the eye. They used to wear a sleeveless tunic ("chuba") of strong cloth, self-woven ("pulo"), on top of a blouse of contrasting color. It reached down to the feet. Their felt boots were identical to those of the men. A many colored, striped apron, occasionally adorned with brocade corners, was worn not to keep the dress clean but to give a smart look to their elegant appearance. Sometimes the ladies' hats were exactly like those of the men, with a brocade crown and fur flaps, sometimes made of flowered satin. But as a rule women went about bareheaded. Their black and glossy hair, parted in the center, hung down in two thick plaits on the back.

Both men and women wore ornaments. As said before, jewelry forms part of their outfit. If a Tibetan had not got anything agreeable to look at hanging round his neck he simply did not feel "decently dressed." Even the poorest of the poor would stick to this rule. Once, for instance, I saw a young man who, by way of adornment, had a tin medicine box (thrown away by a Westerner) and a little dead tortoise dangling on a string on his chest.

9. The nomad-women are always spinning and weaving, but it is the men who do the sewing. When vermin seemed to make my models itch, they used to hunt for them in their clothes and, when found, the creatures were carefully deposited on the balustrade so they might continue their happy life elsewhere. (Part II: 6)





The newly arrived refugees always looked pathetic. With their last indispensable possessions packed in a big basket on their backs they had for many weeks trekked across Tibet's barren highlands and the Himâlayas, not knowing what would await them on the other side. Freedom, to be sure, but under what conditions? Would they be able to provide for themselves? They reckoned they could live for a limited period on the sale of their jewels, but afterwards?

There were children, too, but not many, mostly robust little creatures, for those who were not strong had not lived to see the end of the journey. Anyway there has always been a high child mortality in the Land-of-the-Snow.

One day a group of Tibetans stood listening to a pilgrim. He was leaning against the prayer-wheel-wall of the stûpa, telling a story. At his side a mat was spread on the soil on which the public threw small coins. My sister Sûrya had mixed with the crowd surrounding him and later on she repeated to me the tale that had fascinated the hearers: "There was an old, old man who had never laughed all his life. One day he joined a number of people setting out to gather salt in the northern highlands of our country, the Chang-Tangs. When they had reached their destination they wanted to cook a meal and looked for suitable stones to put their pots on over the fire. One of them they simply could not lift. Everybody lent a hand, for it was just the kind they needed. However, their efforts were in vain. Then the old man who had never even smiled, all of a sudden roared with laughter and once he had started he could not stop. His friends asked him in astonishment what was the joke. "I am laughing," he answered, "because you try and lift a boulder rooted in the subterranean realm of the Nagas ("Lus"), the serpent demigods." Only at that moment they realized the old man must be a Buddha, for how else could he have known such a thing! May the gods forever triumph and may the True Doctrine spread ever further among humanity. Here my story ends."

Whenever I happened to find myself in a crowd I immediately looked about for types who inspired me to draw their portraits. If I was in luck I began chatting with such a man or woman, in my faulty way. That morning I got to know a poor lonely woman who did not seem to belong to anybody else. Her name was Pêma (another word for Lotus). I liked her at once for she was gentle and unassuming. We arranged for her to come and pose for me the next day.

Now during the first weeks of my sojourn in Bodhnâth the sky had been overcast, so there was not sufficient light, which hampered my work quite a bit. Moreover, it had been extremely cold. But the Chinya lama had enjoined me never to do my drawing in the big

10. Beauty from the Chumbi-Valley. "If you agree to have your portrait drawn," her husband screeched, "you shall go to hell, do you hear, and there you shall burn! But do you know what, little wife? Ask Mem-sahib if she is willing to pay you five rupees. If you cede them to me, I promise I'll arrange you won't go to hell." (Part II: 21)

turquoise-colored room, not even when the weather was bad. Of course he could sell his curios and keepsakes more easily to tourists, eventually dropping in to see him, when he had their undivided attention. Besides he received many Tibetan dealers eager to sell their wares wholesale to him. At such times there was a protracted haggling about the price, because to every Oriental this is the most pleasant part of any transaction. When the offer is too low the seller will indignantly pack up his articles and get ready to leave. If this does not bring the desired result he will hesitatingly unpack them once more, after which the bargaining will start anew. This way things go on nicely for a considerable time.

"There is enough room for you to draw on the gallery," pappá had said, and I had to abide by his words. Like an open corridor this gallery skirted all the rooms around our courtyard. It was also here I had portrayed the man-with-one-bead. But the day Péma was going to pose for me it was so freezing I just could not stand it outside. An icy wind was blowing from the snowy peaks of the Himálayas. So there was no other possibility but trying to draw in my bedroom (situated on the first floor at the end of the left wing). I doubted if I could work there at all as it had only one single small window without any glass.

Six and a half of us used to sleep there: mummy Ganèsh with a poor relative rushing at her tiniest behest (for my Tibetan mother was a most exacting woman), the two servant girls Quísang and Kipa, the young girl Míthu, and myself. Besides, as often as not, mummy smuggled little Kumári inside. She was her eldest granddaughter, a lovely child to see, but most unpleasant to everybody except to her grandmother. She did not even seem to like her parents! Early in the evening the old lady used to hide her in her own bed with a lot of sweets. At a much later hour, sighing and groaning, she hoisted herself in. I felt always frightened lest she should crush little Kumári under her weight of two hundred pounds. Míthu and I each had a bed to ourselves. The others were lying comfortably (!) on the floor.

As the room was rather small and badly lighted, even apart from being filled to capacity with bedding, it was barely possible to keep my model at the required distance to portray her.

Anyway I made Péma sit down as far removed from me as the space allowed. She kept quite still while posing, her big slanting eyes half downcast. Her necklace, obviously a remnant of better days, was her great pride. For it ended in a very big turquoise, cut like a flower, such as nobody else possessed. After some time my nephew Mani entered. Besides speaking Nepalese and Tibetan he had a fair command of English, which he had picked up during his two years' stay at the

mission fathers' boarding school at Pàtan. At the time he went to the Nepalese evening school in Kàthmandú, so he was free during the day. Apparently this nice boy had set himself the task to help me with my work as much as possible. He came round and asked: "Aunty Lili, can I do anything for you?" The woman spoke to him and he translated: "She suggests holding her prayer-chain in the offering-mûdra. It would look nice on the portrait."

"I would love her to," I said eagerly, "So far I have never seen this mûdra (symbolical ritual posture of the hands)." Pêma showed it to me. She held her hands palms-upward with the ring fingers pointing up close together, the thumbs clasping the little fingers of the opposite hand, and the indices the opposite middle fingers. Around all of them she arranged her prayer-chain. It looked quite complicated.

"Yes," said Mani, "this way we always hold our hands in the temple, especially when offering grains of rice. You know, aunty, this mûdra symbolizes the origin of the world. The two ring fingers rising upwards represent mythical Mount Méru (or Mount Rírab) and the four intertwined pairs of fingers stand for the four "gyátams" or continents, oriented to the cardinal points, everything washed by the world-sea.

At the moment Quisang came in with glasses of tea, but only for Mani and myself. "Will you please bring another glass for my guest?" I asked her. Hesitatingly she complied with my request. In the middle of the morning we always used to get sweet tea with a lot of milk in it from our own buffaloes. Pêma carefully dipped her ring finger (the holy finger) in the liquid and flipped the hanging drops away from it with her thumb, while muttering a mantra. After having thus libated thrice to the gods she drank herself and kept praying all during the pose until late that afternoon.

At dusk surly Kipa came round: "The China lama bids you to see him at once, Mem-sahib." "Look, daughter, what I have bought," said pappa as soon as I had entered the turquoise-colored room. He showed me a handful of concave copper disks each provided with a little ring by which to hang them. They had a diameter of two inches and in concentric rows I could distinguish—rather unclearly—small representations on them in low relief. They seemed to be cast in a coarse model. The most prominent row was made up of twelve different animals, the very small one inside was quite indistinct. "These are Tibetan-year calendars. Every man wears one fixed to his belt," said the priest. "I will explain their system to you. In 1072 we adopted it from the Chinese. Our way of counting years is constituted by a double cycle, one of five and one of twelve years. The first cycle is that of the five elements: earth, iron, water, wood, and fire. Each of

them comes twice in succession: in its masculine and in its feminine aspect. They get combined with the cycle of the twelve animals of the (Chinese) zodiac: dragon, serpent, horse, sheep, monkey, bird, dog, swine, mouse, bull, tiger, and hare. So we get the following names of the years: 1928 earth-dragon year (m), 1929 earth-serpent year (f), 1930 iron-horse year (m), 1931 iron-sheep year (f), 1932 water-monkey year (m), 1933 water-bird year (f), 1934 wood-dog year (m), 1935 wood-swine year (f), 1936 fire-mouse year (m), 1937 fire-bull year (f), 1938 earth-tiger (m), 1939 earth-hare year (f), 1940 iron-dragon year (f), etc. The combination comprises sixty years. In other words, it takes sixty years before a year of the same name combination will occur anew, roughly the time of a man's life. So from these small metal calendars one can always reckon what will be the names of the coming or the previous years. Do you like them, daughter? Would you care to possess one yourself?"

"I charge you ten rupees, my cost price you know; I charge the tourists fifteen rupees or more. All right?"

"Of course, pappa."

Later on the Tibetans in the streets often offered me these copper calendars at five rupees apiece. From which it shows that the priest of Bodhnâth never let an opportunity go by to do business.

12: The Abbot of the Gelúg-pa Monastery

Because there were so many things in Mahâyâna-Buddhism I did not understand, and because my Tibetan father apparently could not explain them to me, I tried to contact an erudite lama willing to expound the various tenets and also able to express himself in English. Now I had heard that the abbot of the small monastery in our hamlet which belonged to the sect of the Gelúg-pas, as a rule called Yellow-cap monks, was a very learned man, both in the theological and the linguistic fields. So I arranged with somebody I knew to ask him to be kind enough to have a conversation with me. I was told the abbot was very busy, but that he did not mind having a talk with me, provided I had some fundamental knowledge about oriental religions.

So at the appointed hour I entered his small office adjacent to the Gelúg-pa temple, where I was summoned. "Good morning," he said. Without wasting time he went on, "Before I start talking to you about things spiritual I first have got to know how far your studies have progressed." I felt as if I was going in for a stiff examination and got nervous, but it was not so bad after all. "Where are we now?" he asked.

I had to think quickly what he meant. "At the bottom of the former lake Naga-vâsa, Rimpoche?"

"Quite; well, what are Nâgas? According to some people, Nâgas and Nâgis are masculine and feminine serpents. Properly speaking they are a kind of semigods and semigoddesses, as a rule having the form of serpents, though they can assume any other form as well, for instance a human one. In Tibet they are called 'Lus' and 'Lumos' (spelled 'Klus'). I think that the mentally less developed tribes in the Nâga-hills, the southeastern spurs of the Himâlayas, call themselves Nâgas since they believe they are the descendants of these miraculous beings. A Hindu priest once told me that the Nâga semigods were the guardians of the celestial abodes of the gods, but that they themselves resided in the subterranean waters. They are said to determine the

course of brooks and rivers besides the places of wells. They also rule the winds and the waters coming from above: rains and snow showers. Moreover, they keep watch over the costly treasures hidden to the eyes of man. How could it be otherwise since they live deep down the dark earth, the "mother" of gold, silver, and precious stones! In fact, this belief in Nâgas corresponds to any ancient mythology. And in nearly all fairy tales dragons, who are nothing but serpents with feet and wings, are the jealous keepers of the treasures man wants to capture.

"However, there is still another conception of the appellation 'Nâga,' to wit, the man who within himself and outside himself—in the microcosm as well as in the macrocosm—controls the 'fire of Kundalîni,' the so-called 'Serpentfire.'

"So the word 'Nâga' is another title for an adept, an initiate."

"Right! And the reason why serpents who are or do something extraordinary play a role in different religions, Mem-sahib, is that many of these creeds originated in Asia. Each of them has drawn from the oldest-known religion of this continent: 'the Cult of Tree and Serpent.' After all, its remnants are clearly recognizable in various places. For instance: Simple people in India erect 'serpent altars' under 'holy trees,' don't they?"

I nodded.

"Serpent and Tree are always connected, but the mystic significance of their combination eludes the noninitiate. No doubt the Indian yogis told you that there is a mystic 'tree-of-life' (consisting of a triple channel) inside the etheric (or astral) body of man and that, once the 'Kundalîni' is awakened, it travels upwards like 'a fiery serpent.' It is only in the body of spiritually very highly developed people that she will rise through the etheric channel ('nadî'), called the 'Sushûmna,' up to the top of the mystic 'tree,' to the crown of the head, where is situated the 'seventh cakra,' the 'golden lotus of a thousand petals.' This is designated in mystic writings of another religion as the 'golden crown of man.' The serpent rises upwards like a fiery column of energy. She is the 'Divine Power-of-Love', in the language of yoga symbolism also defined as 'Çakti.' "

"Yes, Rimpoche, all these things I have been taught by the Hindu yogis."

"However, we Buddhists have other symbols and interpretations."

"Just the same, the Âdi-Buddha Svayâmbhû, the Self-born, the primal Buddha who in a certain sense was the 'creative power,' rose up as a fiery flame from the golden lotus with a thousand petals, unfolding itself in the

Serpent lake, Nāga-vâsa!" I ventured. "He never had any other form but a flame—it is taught by the teachers of the secret doctrine—and as such he was a symbol of Cosmic Energy."

"True, but now let us come to the point at issue," said the abbot. "What are the questions which you wanted to ask me?"

"First: is there a kind of creed in Buddhism?"

"But Buddhism is no religion, Mem-sahib! It does not matter at all whether a person does or does not believe in the tenets of Çâkyamuni! One has to live according to them: Only then man can call himself a Buddhist! Do you know expressions such as 'Entering the Stream' or 'Setting out for the Other Shore'? Either means: consciously and guided by a spiritual teacher—this latter thing to our mind is absolutely essential—treading upon the Noble Eightfold Path which was pointed out by the Buddha as the way by which to reach the Great Liberation: 'Nirvâna.' "

"Yes, I understand," I said, and proved at once I had not understood a thing about it. "With the Small Vehicle of the School of Hīnayâna in which only a few elect will reach the other side, or with the Great Vehicle of the school of Mahâyâna in which there is room for all the animated beings of the universe, isn't it?"

"It is utterly contrary to the doctrine of the Buddha, Mem-sahib, to suppose that the state of Nirvâna would be merely reserved to a small group of elect. So the idea that the Hīnayâna, the 'Small Vehicle' would be attainable only by a few people is absolutely wrong. The difference between the school called Hīnayâna and that of Mahâyâna is not as you suppose. The Hīnayâna-Buddhists only believe in the doctrine as it was preached by the historical Buddha. That is why they call themselves 'Theravâdin,' that is, the followers of the original doctrine. The Mahâyâna-Buddhists accept later additions in their creed as well.

"Before expatiating on this I'll say a few words about the origin of the appellations Hīnayâna and Mahâyâna. At the time a number of the adherents of Mahâyâna looking down upon those Buddhists who ventured to take a different view, called them 'Those of the Small Vehicle' with which they meant a 'despicable small vehicle,' while calling themselves 'Those of the Great Vehicle,' with which they meant 'our Great Superior Vehicle.' It stands to reason that the followers of the school of Hīnayâna never put up with this epithet thrust upon them. Anyway this took place a long time ago. Everybody who knows something about Buddhism will nowadays use the appellation Theravâdin, but the name of Mahâyâna-Buddhists held its own for the other school. The Theravâdin are still to be found in southern In-

dia, Ceylon, Burma, Cambodia and Thailand (Siam).

“We Tibetans, who all of us belong to the school of Mahâyâna, believe—as I mentioned before—in a further development of Çâkyamuni’s tenets. We justify these additions (if you insist on the word) because we hold that a doctrine always develops, evolves, grows, so changes. *For nothing in the universe is constant, persisting in the same condition. Everything is in a continual state of becoming, for such is life, isn’t it?* This is what the Tathâgata, as the Buddha is often called, pointed out repeatedly.

“Before I proceed to tell you about this growth, I want to outline what we exactly mean by ‘Vehicle.’ This is a collection of tenets and practical directives leading the believers *to the True Wisdom, to Spiritual Enlightenment, and so to Liberation from Suffering, the purpose to which the Buddha aspired first and foremost.* For you remember he once said *‘If the tears of sorrow shed on earth since the origin of man could be gathered, they would exceed the waters of the oceans. . . .’*

“Well now, the one who has mainly developed Çâkyamuni’s tenets—thus becoming more or less the founder of the school of Mahâyâna—is the famous scholar and mystic Nâgârjuna, who lived in northern India in the second century after your Christ. The word Nâga in his name is by no means a mere coincidence. This philosopher made a claim on the authenticity of his new mystic Buddhist ideas: He produced an apocalyptic revelation which he described to the Lord Buddha himself. This he called the ‘Prajñâ-Pâramitâ.’ ‘Prajñâ’ doesn’t signify only knowledge of the absolute Truth, but also a Deep Insight into the Nature of Things. ‘Pâramitâ’ means ‘that which is still going further.’ The two names together are sometimes translated as ‘Transcendental Wisdom.’ This scripture consists for the greater part of a discourse on the conception of ‘Çûnyâtâ,’ ‘the Void,’ i.e., *Nirvâna, which is empty from attributes. The Void is not ‘Emptiness,’* as some Westerners believe. But more about this later on.

“It was said that Çâkyamuni had placed the Prajñâ-Pâramitâ in safekeeping with the Nâgas, so popularly speaking with the serpent demigods, but in reality with a small group of adepts who throughout the centuries would pass on this Transcendental Wisdom ‘from mouth to ear.’ These initiates undertook to keep Çâkyamuni’s esoteric doctrine concealed from mankind until they would have advanced far enough in the spiritual field to understand such a profound religious system. A further explanation of the purely Buddhist tenets which Nâgârjuna elucidated in his scriptures was given to him—it is said—by the Celestial Bodhisattva Mañjuçrî himself, he who is called the Bodhisattva-of-Wisdom.

“Mahâyâna-Buddhism was disseminated by the Skythian monarch Kanishka governing northwest India from 120 until 180 after Christ with nearly as much enthusiasm as were the tenets of the Buddha by the great king Açoka, reigning in India from 274 until 234 before Christ.

“Owing to Kanishka’s efforts, Mahâyâna-Buddhism in a very short time found large numbers of adherents amongst the masses. To them its power of attraction lay in its many colorful gods, its symbolism, and its supernatural character. For in the new doctrine the idealizing of the Buddha and his attributes had led to the acceptance of five metaphysical Buddhas and five metaphysical Bodhisattvas, and besides, to the introduction of countless deities and demons as objects of adoration. The Buddha had not explicitly denied the existence of such beings, but he taught they were of less importance for the followers of his doctrine of Liberation. This doctrine was highly moral, though not theistic. However, Mahâyâna-Buddhism cannot but be described as a symbolic pantheism against a mystic-philosophical background.

“Just as Çâkyamuni had ordained his esoteric wisdom—afterwards disclosed in the Prajñâ-Pâramitâ—to be kept secret for some centuries from mankind, Nâgârjuna later on decided that his contemporaries had not yet reached the stage to receive his own progressive philosophical concepts. Therefore he is supposed to have concealed in grottoes the scriptures in which he had given an exposition of his teachings. In later centuries when the right time for them had come, they would certainly be discovered by somebody or other. In fact, lamas of later times did find manuscripts in remote caverns and offered them to the monasteries. They called them ‘termas,’ i.e., ‘treasures.’ These scriptures contained philosophical concepts and theories of greater or lesser value. Now I won’t say that writings of their predecessors—be it Nâgârjuna or somebody else—were never brought to light in this way. However, considering the frailty of man, it might just as well be possible that some persons have tried to give more publicity in this way to their own theories: by first writing them down, then hiding, and finally ‘finding’ them. There was even a time that ‘discovering termas’ was quite fashionable. However, let us not venture upon conjectures but rather look at the main issues of our subject.

“Beside by us Tibetans, followers of Mahâyâna-Buddhism—in the West also designated as ‘Lamaism’—our school is adhered to by two million inhabitants of Mongolia, three hundred thousand in Bhutan, and one hundred twenty-five thousand in Sikkim. In these countries

it is the state religion. In Nepal 35 percent of the population, so about three million inhabitants, adhere to Mahâyâna-Buddhism. In Ladàkh the number is estimated at one hundred and eighty thousand. We can take it that the three million people living in Manchúria belong to Mahâyâna-Buddhism, while in China there are at least one million followers, a few being in Peking and the remainder in the extreme western part of the country adjoining Tibet. Also in the Siberian part of Russia there are many to be found: amongst others most of the Cossacks living along the river Don, one hundred and ninety thousand Búriats around lake Baikal, one hundred and twenty thousand Kalmúcks in Siberia and Russia, besides eighty-two thousand nomadic Kirghése who have their spacious round felt tents, their 'yurts', put up for the greater part on the shores of the river Wolga. The latter have even movable tent-monasteries, so-called 'flying monasteries.' Some groups of Scandinavian Lapponians also follow our religion. All the people mentioned acknowledge the Dalai Lama as the head of their church, considering him as the Incarnation on earth of the Celestial Bodhisattva Chèn-resí. Is all this clear to you?"

"Yes, Rimpoche, but I don't know yet which things the historical Buddha prescribed his followers to believe?"

"Nothing whatever, Mem-sahib!"

"How do you mean 'nothing'?"

"Literally! The Tathâgata spoke: *'Do not believe the traditions honored by many generations, do not believe the word of former Sages, do not believe that which you have imagined yourself, thinking that it was an inspiration from on high, do not believe anything upon the authority of your masters or priests. Examine everything and believe only that which you think reasonable on the basis of your own experience, that which according to yourself is in harmony with what is good for yourself and for others. Be your own light and your own refuge.'*

"And now, Mem-sahib, I am sure you would like me to 'turn the Wheel-of-the-Law,' that is, to preach the Doctrine of the Buddha to you?! No, I have no time for such a thing."

"Above all, Rimpoche, it was my wish to ask you to explain the Round-of-Reincarnations, the "Wheel-of-Life" or "of Existence" clasped by Sin-jé, the god of Death. The China lama, my Tibetan father, has enumerated to me the six groups of Living-Beings, represented in its six sectors. However, about the outer circle, the 'rim' on which are depicted the twelve links of the "Chain-of-the-Interdependent-Causes-of-Reincarnation," he never said a word. Would you be so kind as to enlighten me on this matter?"

“Yes, the China lama, the dignified priest-officiate of the holy stûpa of Bodhnâth, is an excellent . . . businessman,” said the abbot. His face was inscrutable, but it was known to me that between the two most important lamas of our hamlet, the head of the Redcaps and the head of the Yellowcaps, there did not exist much sympathy.

“About the symbolic significance of this Chain there is a lot to say. I cannot expound all this to you before the service in the temple. You can come back to hear it some other time.”

13: Business

Business has never been my line. It was repugnant to me to see how my Tibetan father and my younger brother, both masters in bargaining, purchased all the beautiful things from the refugees for a mere trifle. These indigent people felt hungry and were driven to part with their last possessions for a few coins, to buy food. The China lama and Ganèsh sold all the objects, bought cheaply, to the tourists with a profit of many hundred percent. Mostly the buyers were Americans who came from the big hotels in Kàthmandú to Bodhnàth to see the holy stûpa and its decorative priest.

I too sometimes bought a little thing the refugees offered me for sale. Even when the price was too high I didn't bargain because I knew how poor they were. Such was the case with the nomad's knife. I was on a visit in one of the tents behind our house, from which the friendly woman had called out to me to come and have a cup of tea with them. The abode was high and spacious; as always the fireplace was in the center. The fire in such a tent never goes out. At night it lies smouldering and in the morning new life is blown into it with the help of a pair of bellows, made of the whole hide of a small animal. Cow dung, previously kneaded to round cakes which were dried in the sun, is laid on the cinders.

Some pots, pans, and a churn for tea are permanently kept in readiness around the fireplace, and along the walls of the tent are lying some skins of animals which serve for beds and blankets. Tibetans invariably sleep in the nude, and when sufficiently well-to-do they rub their bodies with butter before going to sleep, so their skin will be very soft and light of color. Moreover, it is said they will thus be better able to resist the cold.

Near the skins are piled up a few handwoven bags in which the roaming inhabitants carry their few possessions. While I was having my tea, the nomad opened such a bag and proudly showed me his bonnet, on which he had sown the fur of a fox. He wore this in wintertime in the icy cold Chang-Tangs, the notorious highlands of Tibet.

He also showed his wife's bonnet made of sheepskin mounted on black material trimmed with a broad red band. In among the other winter clothes I saw something glistening. "Let me have a look?" I asked, holding out my hand. It was a beautiful small knife. The sheath was partly covered with lizard skin. Like the hilt, it had various metal adornments: three big copper rosettes, each with a coral in the center, and a small silver flower with a turquoise in its heart. When I admired it the man inquired: "You buy?"

"All right, how much?" This question was not easy to answer. Husband and wife had a long palaver in their own language. When they finally agreed as to the price in Tibetan money they had to convert this into Nepalese rupees. Of course neither had been to school and converting by heart is not an easy task. So the prayer-chain was fetched and the required number of beads was counted carefully several times. Those on the right side of the big "last bead" represented the tens and those on the left side the units. Finally they could show me the price and though it was fairly high I paid with pleasure.

Afterwards the same nomad man came round to me to offer his tinderbox. Of course matches do not exist in Tibet. Apart from the impossibility of relying on small sticks with a phosphorus point on one end in such a cold and windy climate, matches would get moist in snowstorms or when people ford a river. If not, the gales are sure to blow out the flickering flame. So everybody carries a flint with him, packed together with some dry moss in a lovely primitive leather bag, similarly adorned with copper, silver, and turquoises or corals. Underneath, a piece of iron of a stylish form is fixed, because every utilitarian object of the Tibetans is made in an extremely decorative way. One strikes the flint wrapped in moss against the iron, and the spark sets the fibrous substance smouldering. No gale can blow it out.

From another man I bought a purse of the same kind. All these objects are fastened to a person's sash with a narrow strip of yak leather and beautify the wearer's attire.

But let me go on with my story about what happened on the day I had bought the nomad's knife. When I came home, the Chinya lama sat, dressed in an orange sweater and white trousers, on a wooden kitchen chair before the house-with-the-lions and granted an audience to the passing refugees and pilgrims. Rightly he felt very important, because everybody stood respectfully around him listening submissively to his wise words. He also issued a kind of homemade passport. I could not trace what privilege they entitled people to, as they were written in Tibetan and my father did not want to translate them to me.

There I saw a very old man. His face was lined with wrinkles and

he squeezed his eyes so much they also looked like mere wrinkles. The fur flaps of his dirty brocade hat hung sadly downwards on either side of his furrowed face. They appeared partly moth-eaten. He was the very image of touching extinguishment and hopeless misery.

"Pappa, please ask that pathetic fellow to pose for me?"

"Another beggar, daughter! Good gracious, what is it you see in him! Moreover it seems to me he looks a bit infantile, but very well! On your behalf I will ask him." It was a long time before his words partly penetrated to the old chap. Some other Tibetans also tried to make it clear to him that only by sitting still he could earn money for food and, courteously as always, they led him to my drafty gallery. There the white-haired man finally sat down on a chair, but obviously he did as yet not understand what was expected of him. At that very moment the servant came round to bring me my tea.

"Please, offer him a glass too, Quisang."

"No, Mem-sahib, the China lama has forbidden to give your guests anything to drink. He enjoined it especially upon me. You must realize: he doesn't make any money out of them!"

"Then please hand him my glass; I have had tea with the nomads."

The poor fellow drank contentedly, but afterwards stayed wobbling and wriggling because it was not easy for him to sit on a chair. He turned his head repeatedly, took off his moth-eaten hat and put it on again, scratched himself in places and even got up twice to have a look over the wooden balustrade at the fields behind our house. Having no idea that I wanted him to be completely restful, he never stopped doing these things. It was utterly impossible for me to draw his portrait while he stirred constantly. My nephew Mani came and explained once more to him he had to sit still, but no, the sense of what people said did not reach his poor old brains! Suddenly I got a marvelous idea! Can't we make something clear even to a dog by talking to him, although the animal does not understand the words? *I was taught in the Hindu monasteries that—without our realizing it—our brains send out the same message which we pronounce. This will penetrate the other's consciousness, while in such a case the sound and intonation of the voice will merely help as a kind of accompaniment. The party addressed will nearly automatically obey a given order. So why not try this on my wrinkled model! Whichever language is spoken in such a case does not matter at all.*

So I started to talk to him in Dutch: "Fie, you are very naughty. You should be ashamed of yourself! To sit there fidgeting and shifting all the while! How am I to make a good portrait of you? You silly old

thing, can't you just try and help me? If you do I'll give you many coins and you can nicely eat-eat! Now stop it, sit still, do you hear?"

It was incredible: it worked at once! The poor old creature nodded, took the prayer-chain from his neck, let the beads slip through his fingers, and muttered without stopping "Om Mani Padme Hum, Om Mani Padme Hum." He didn't fidget anymore! I sketched quickly and presently was surprised I had got on so well in a rather short time. I should be able to finish the portrait afterwards by memory. Mumbling contentedly the poor wretch left, clasping the money in his bony fingers. . . .

In the afternoon I went for a walk and coming back I met a Hindu monk right before our house, dressed all in red, as is sometimes the custom with these people when roaming about the Himâlayas. In India they always wear orange draperies. Both colors symbolize "the fire through which they have gone." This means: they have "burnt" their name, their caste, their family ties, all their possessions, the memories of their youth, the place where they lived, their feelings of sympathy and hatred, their desires, and their ambitions. Briefly they have detached themselves completely from everything, to go and tread "the Direct Path of Yoga," that leads to reunion of their soul with God, the "path as narrow and sharp as the edge of a sword." But a person will always remain human! Nobody can instantly vanquish all his qualities, good or bad, by taking an earnest resolution!

These roaming "Searchers-for-God" ("God-Seekers") are usually called "sâdhu's." If it is known they are ceremoniously ordained as monks one addresses them as "Svami," which actually means nothing but "Learned Sir." I had come to know this particular red-dressed monk during my first visit to Nepal. His abode was not far from the Hindu temple of Paçupathinâth and he lived on the alms the visitors of this sanctuary generally distributed openhandedly to all and sundry. Like some other yogis he slept in a small stone cabin in the forest on the other side of the river Bâgmâti where once in a while wild beasts roved about. But in these countries it is believed that such animals never will harm a "sannyâsin," (i.e., Sanskrit for: a person "who has cast everything away," not as a sacrifice, but because he likes detaching—liberating—himself from all earthly ties). In fact I have never heard of any yogi in the wilderness to have been attacked by a wild beast.

The one dressed in red came my way. "Good afternoon, Mem-sahib," he greeted. "Are you in Nepal again? I have just visited your honorable father. Oh that good man, that dear man! He always gives

me generously what I ask. He *always* does! Nobody is like him!" Perhaps it was not nice, but I felt a bit surprised at his words. I did not know this aspect of the Chinya lama! After the monk had made me promise I would soon come to see him and the other yogis in the forest, once more I went upstairs.

That evening the priest and I were in the turquoise-colored room having our rice with various seasoned dishes. Of the latter I never took more than politeness compelled me to, for they made my eyes water and my tummy rebel. We had barely finished when Quisang announced three Tibetan monks who wanted to pay the Chinya lama a call. They entered and after the usual formulas of politeness they told pappa they were so hungry they came to offer their last possessions for sale. Of course the things a lama wants to keep as long as possible are the holy ritual objects necessary for officiating in the temple. So the three of them still had a dorji (double thunderbolt scepter), a díbu (templebell), a dámaru (double drum, something like a tambourine) and a kang-ling (flute made of a human thighbone). These sacred implements were packed with loving care into torn old pieces of cloth. The Precious Jewel looked at each of them like the connoisseur he was, because naturally there exist all kinds of qualities in these articles. So for instance a good templebell has a more beautiful sound, vibrating for a longer time than an ordinary one, as it is cast from an alloy of "the five noble metals." For a dorji scepter different properties are required. One double drum has a sounding board of a better kind of wood than another, and its colorful satin "tail" (which one grasps with three fingers to balance the instrument between thumb and index) is sometimes embellished with lovely silver good-luck symbols. As for a human thighbone: here it is its antecedents that count. The thighbone of a criminal, of a person who is murdered or killed by an accident, of a pregnant woman, or of a Brahman virgin of sixteen years old are the most valued. The kang-ling which the youngest lama possessed was the finest specimen I had ever seen. It was wound all around with a thread of silver and set with turquoises.

"Well, this is nothing much," pappa said. "I am willing to give you for the lot . . . rupees!" It was a very small sum he offered. The monks smiled most amiably, courteously stuck out their tongues and shook their heads. "No Rimpoche, Precious Jewel, in that case we prefer to stay hungry." And they repacked their belongings. "Have not you anything better than that?" the priest-officiate ventured.

Finally the lama of the kang-ling said "I have something very, very beautiful, but I will *never* sell it! I would prefer to die from

hunger!" He took from his worn-out toga a parcel wrapped in a rag. Carefully he opened it and inside was another parcel in a silk cloth, inside this a parcel in a satin cloth and inside this a parcel in a piece of brocade. Of course we had all got curious by this time and crowded around him. A little silver box appeared. He smiled mysteriously, opened it, and there, in a kind of silken nest, lay a small gold statue, not quite two inches high. It represented the goddess Târâ, and was encrusted with tiny blue turquoises of the best quality.

Pappa took it in his hand, "I will buy this from you for. . . ."

"No, never, *never*, she is my 'yídam,' my protecting deity!" I too held out my hand to have a look at the precious trinket at close quarters, but with a quick motion the proprietor retrieved it and, greatly shocked, put it back in its silken nest. "No, no woman is allowed ever to touch this precious statue: my Târâ would lose her power!"

After this my pappa started bargaining about the other objects since he was very keen about them. The men did not come to an agreement. Still smiling and sticking out their tongues, the three monks declared anew they preferred being hungry to ceding their possessions to the Chinya lama at the still far too small price he offered. They then proposed to sing together a holy song to the accompaniment of their ritual instruments. "When the honorable priest likes the song, he will perhaps give us a very small present in money, yes, all right?"

"No, certainly not," said pappa, "I don't need to hear holy songs from others, I know them myself."

But the men started to sing just the same. They sang with ecstasy and rapture. It sounded deeply moving. At the end my Tibetan father, with a sour face, gave each of them a coin of about five pennies. I asked permission to do the same. It would have been very bad manners to give more than the worthy priest.

"Tomorrow morning," I said in my poor Tibetan to the three men, "come stûpa-wall? I to make photographs, I to give good money to lamas for photographs."

They nodded in consent, once more politely stuck out their tongues, and left.

Only much later I heard that one of them, the youngest, was a well-known tülku!

14: In the Yellowcap Temple

As I had observed everything so minutely in the Redcap temple of my Tibetan father I wanted to do the same in the Yellowcap temple of the little monastery ("gompa") in Bodhnâth belonging to the "Gelúg-pas" or—as it was said jokingly in Kàthmandú—to the "rivals" of the China lama. The sect of the Gelúg-pas, i.e., the "Virtuous Ones," is the reformed sect of Tibet. In the fourteenth century it was founded by Tsong-Khà-pa (literally "the Man from the Valley of Onions"). He purified Buddhism of the greater part of the Tantric influences and of the Bon-practices that had sneaked in once more. As much as possible he reverted to the teachings of the historical Buddha which (then and now) were preached in south India and Ceylon. As the attire of the monks in those warm regions consisted exclusively of yellow draperies, Tson-Khà-pa would have preferred to take this over in its entirety for the reformed clergy of the Land-of-the-Snow, as an outward sign that they belonged to the purified sect. But yellow is a color on which each spot shows. It would have been impossible to keep the clothes of the Tibetan monks stainless as they always made long pilgrimages through barren regions, the more so as there was hardly any opportunity of washing things in the dry, rough, climate of their homeland. All ecclesiastical people there were dressed in dark, garnet-red material which was quite practical in every respect. So the "Great Reformer" merely introduced a yellow cap for his followers. It would distinguish them sufficiently from the various other Buddhist sects, which had a red cap to match their skirt and toga. For this reason all those belonging to the nonreformed and half-reformed sects are called Redcaps and the ones of the reformed sect Yellowcaps. As for the rest, the whole clergy went on being dressed alike.

Bodhnâth is only a small hamlet, so the Gelug-pa monastery was situated quite close to our house. When I had got there I crossed the front yard, took off my shoes in the open vestibule of the temple, as is prescribed for everybody, and looked at the many mural paintings.

First there was the one of Sin-jé, the god of the dead, clasping the Wheel-of-Existence. "Next were to be seen the "Protectors of the True Doctrine" who looked forbidding, just as the deities who were depicted here in their "angry aspect," in reality the converted Bon-demons. It was the duty of them all to intimidate the evil spirits. Also the god Kâla was represented in his wreath of flames and there were still others, lugubrious and picturesque at the same time.

After this I entered the sanctuary. It was, like many Christian churches, divided by two parallel rows of pillars into a midship and two side aisles. The plain red walls were hung with beautiful old t'hangkas framed in brocade silk. On the red pillars were painted rosettes of lotus flowers and in between were hanging tube-shaped canopies of satin strips in various colors. The only light—as is the case in most Tibetan temples—came through the big door-opening. So there always prevailed a dusky twilight which, according to Western taste, was to the advantage of the fierce color scheme. Against the wall at the back of the sanctuary were placed three golden statues of more than life-size wrapped in brocade draperies. They were so smooth and shiny one would think they were made of metal, but in reality they consisted of clay, the surface of which was polished with great care before being covered with gold leaf. The tallest one in the middle represented the Buddha. At its right (from the spectator) stood that of the Celestial Bodhisattva Chèn-resí and at its left that of Tsong-Khap-pa. Sometimes one finds Padma-Sambháva's statue instead of Tsong-Khap-pa's in a Gelúg-pa temple. Most Westerners think this strange since the former was a Tantrist and the latter (the founder of this sect) tried to eradicate the greater part of Tantrism. But it was the degeneration of Tantrism the reformer waged war against, while without Padma-Sambháva (as mentioned before) Buddhism would never have been able to hold its own in the Land-of-the-Snow.

Inside nearly each Tibetan statue are inserted strips of paper covered with holy mantras and the principal tenets of the Buddhist doctrine. It is really the presence of these writings that gives "life" to it and makes it worthy of veneration. Generally some grains of consecrated rice and filings of the five noble metals are added as well. *In every prominent statue of a big sanctuary are hidden the five precious stones, which are the symbols of the five most important organs of the human body. Therefore hostile invaders often knocked them to pieces: They wanted these jewels for themselves!*

Over and on either side of these sacred images the back wall in Bodhnâth's Yellowcap temple was covered with rows of small wooden niches in each of which lay an oblong parcel wrapped in a

silk or brocade cloth. They were the holy books in their "dresses," which invariably are held in great honor in a Tibetan sanctuary, even to a higher degree than the statues of the gods or saints. So they are placed on the same level or even above them, but never below. For indeed, don't they contain the "Word" of the True Doctrine! *The Word is more valuable than the Body, the "earthly sheath"!* Every monastery possesses big quantities of "Holy Books," as many persons who wanted to perform a meritorious act "to better their karma" used to give a whole Kan-gyur or Tān-gyur to a monastic library as a gift. *The Kan-gyur is a book analogous to our Bible. It contains the "Tripitaka," the "Three Baskets" of the Buddha's preachings, as these were gathered by his followers. The Great Teacher himself never wrote down anything, anymore than Moses, Jesus or Mohàmmed did.*

As a rule the Kan-gyur consists of 108 volumes—the holy number—each of 1000 pages with six or seven lines on each page. Such a volume has 500 leaves of strong Tibetan paper, about thirty inches long and ten inches wide, printed on both sides. Unbound, they are laid between two wooden boards of the same size; sometimes the upper one is sculptured. Around them the piece of silk, the "dress" is wrapped and the whole is kept in the niche of a temple or of a monastery library.

Besides commentaries on the Kan-gyur, the Tān-gyur contains a compilation of proverbs, biographies of the saints, treatises concerning grammar, rhetoric, logic, poetry, justice, medical science, astronomy, and astrology. All these things are considered as the fruits of religion. This work usually consists of 225 volumes of the same measurements as the one mentioned before.

It may happen that part of the volumes of a Kan-gyur or of a Tān-gyur are annihilated by fire. In such a case they will never be replaced by others. The remaining ones are, so to speak, "pensioned off." They get an honorable place in one of the monastery halls where they are never "disturbed" anymore by being read. Besides these two holy books a monastery has various other manuscripts, for instance the Prajnâ Pâramitâ of Nâgârjûna, Tsong-Kha-pa's expositions, and many other works about Buddhism which are not printed but written by hand in Tibetan as well as in Sanskrit and Chinese. Some of them are very valuable and contain profound wisdom. *Books dealing with nonreligious subjects do not exist in the Land-of-the-Snow.*

So it goes without saying that the monastic libraries are very big, and when spending a long time in them one always gets a headache. This is because *Tibetan paper is made of the bark of a poisonous tree, the "Daphne Edgeworthia Gardneri," so that insects will never eat it, a thing they actually refrain from.*

The city of Gyántsé in central Tibet is the great center of paper industry. The manufacturing is as follows: For several days the bark of said tree is soaked in water and then stamped to a pulp. A thin layer of this is poured into a wooden frame of the desired measurements which has a muslin bottom. This "box" is softly moved back and forth in streaming water so the pulp divides itself equally in a thin layer on the bottom. After being dried the piece of paper can be used at once. Sometimes it undergoes an after-treatment with milk in order to cause the ink never to run out at the sides of the printed letters. That milk has the ability to fix, every European or American painter knows. He uses it when making pastels or crayon drawings.

Formerly the holy books were written always by hand, but these latter two hundred years they have been printed. In Tibet the art of printing as we have it is unknown. Every page is carved out in its entirety in high relief from a piece of wood, sometimes with decorative drawings at the side or in the center. When a mistake is made, another piece of wood with the amendment is inserted in its place. At other times it is left the way it is. Beautifully carved letters are highly valued. So is a good handwriting, for that matter. The Tibetan letters are not suitable for typesetting separately, because one has to add certain determinatives and also handsome lines-of-communication above and beneath the letters themselves. In the present time there exists a simplified way of writing which can be typeset and printed in our way. It is used for a Tibetan newspaper edited since 1925 in the Indian mountain village of Kalimpong.

The Tibetans feel a great reverence for letters generally. A piece of paper with writing is never allowed to lie on the floor, irrespective of what is written on it. In the Land-of-the-Snow there exist holy books that are really magnificent specimens: On thick paper coated with black varnish, the letters are written with powder of real gold or silver, sometimes with pulverized turquoises or corals. They are exceedingly costly.

The best printing offices are found in the village of Na-tang (spelled "Nar-thang"), some miles beyond Shigatsé, the capital of the province of Tsang in central Tibet. There are also some in the city of Dergé in east Tibet, which is famous because of its marvellous art of forging in every field. The first set of metal blocks for printing—the only one existing—was manufactured here. It suffices for the Kangyur and the Tan-gyur in their completeness. No bookshops are to be found in the Land-of-the-Snow. When somebody wants to buy a book he orders a copy to be made for him in a printing-office.

But let me continue to describe the Gelúgpa-sanctuary. Before the statues stood an oblong altar. On this were placed a few small very

beautifully wrought copper stûpas, i.e. replicas of the Tibetan mausolea in which are usually kept the ashes of very holy men (usually a high lama). This way the stûpa has become the symbol of the spirit. By "spirit" is meant the most important part of a person, that part of him which will return to earth in another body, to assume anew his former function and title, for instance as the abbot of a monastery. (The Tibetan word for "spirit" is the equivalent of our word "conscious-principle." Later more will be told about the subject.)

Briefly, in a temple we always see three things together that have a symbolical meaning: (1) the statues symbolizing "the Body" of a person, (2) the books symbolizing "his Word" and (3) the stûpas symbolizing "his Spirit."

On the altar of course were also to be seen: the big bowl for scent-offering of incense, the shallow small cups for drink-offering of pure water, and the many lovely butterlamps for light-offering. Moreover, here was the place for food-offering (only at special religious festivities): not only little bowls filled with uncooked rice, but also cones several inches high, that were kneaded from cooked rice or from "tsampa" (roasted barley-flour), both more or less in the form of "stûpas."

The altar itself was adorned with representations of the eight religious symbols of luck: (1) the Wheel of the "True Doctrine," (2) the Royal Umbrella (protecting one against the "fire of the desires"), (3) the Temple-vase or "bum-pa" (containing the pure water of life), (4) the Banner of Victory (over oneself), (5) the White Lotus, (6) the holy White Conch Shell (of which the windings turn to the right), (7) the two Golden Fishes and (8) the diagram that depicts the Knot-of-Life-Without-End, but which people usually call "the Intestines of the Buddha."

Two gigantic ever-burning butter lamps flanked the altar. Now and then pious people would come in to offer clods of butter in them.

Before the altar stood a golden throne on which the Dalai Lama was to sit if he should ever be present here during a service. Now only his photograph was placed on it. On this throne lay a satin cloth on which were embroidered with gold thread two crossed "dorjis" (lama-sceptres), symbolizing the coming-into-existence of the universe (cosmogony).

In the nave of the temple the ordinary service is celebrated, the monks seated in the lotus posture (upright with their legs crossed under them) on the two long, low benches before the rows of pillars. The place of the novices is in front near the entrance. Next to them sit those who have passed their first religious examination (the "Ge-tsul")

examination) and are ordained as Ge-tsúl. Next to them sit those who, after the final (the "Ge-lóng" examination) are ordained as Ge-lóng, so they are fully qualified lamas. (Whoever is no lama is called a "trapa," a "pupil," during his whole life.) At the end of the row, near the altar, are the higher, thronelike seats of the lamas who hold a prominent position in the monastery.

During my former stay in Bodhnâth I had often visited this small Yellowcap temple, but this time I had only entered the little office of the abbot on the day he had given me tuition. A few young monks now came in. They recognized me and said, smiling: "Why, here is Tásvir-Mem-sahib back again! In the whole Orient the word "tásvir" is used for a portrait drawing, hence my surname." We have already heard you were in Bodhnâth. Why didn't you visit us before? Do you want to make a sketch of one of us?"

"Today I have only come to look around in the temple."

Our talk was interrupted because some Tibetan ladies entered the sanctuary. From their dress it was obvious they were very rich. They wore their flowered satin hats stylishly aslant on their heads, as is the fashion with the noblewomen in Lhasa. Colored tassels were fastened at the end of their well-groomed plaits. Their "chubas," their sleeveless tunics, fastened at the side, were made of the finest Tibetan gabardine ("pulo") and their blouses of the best quality of Chinese silk. They wore long necklaces of dark red corals, interspersed at equal distances with big pieces of amber. Their striped aprons were bordered at the top and at the corners with gold brocade, while their felt boots were embroidered with colorful flowers. They looked very elegant and their faces were made up in the Western way. Notwithstanding all this, they prostrated themselves three successive times before the holy statues, touching the temple floor with their foreheads. Then they threw "kha-tas" (spelled "kha-tags"), thin ceremonial scarfs, over these images to honor them and they offered many rupees on the silver altar plate. Having thus fulfilled their religious duties, they apparently inquired of one of the lamas who I was, for I heard the word "tásvir" once more in his answer. Then he beckoned to me to come nearer. The youngest of the ladies said in broken English: "Mem-sahib is so interested in Tibet and the Tibetans. Would not you like to meet my husband? He could tell you quite a lot about our country. He is an important merchant and speaks good English. I also learned English at the mission school in Darjeeling (India) but I have forgotten most of it. We will be delighted to receive Mem-sahib as a visitor. We have rented some rooms of a European house in Yámbu (this is the name the Tibetans give to

Kàthmandú). Will you come to us in a few days' time, Mem-sahib?"

It goes without saying I was delighted to accept this unexpected invitation.

15: The Land of the Snow

From tourists who had had a look at the "Magúta-stúpa" in our hamlet I was given a lift to Kàthmandú and, as agreed, I went and visited my new Tibetan friend from the Yellowcap temple. She had furnished her rented room in the way of her home country: some cushions to sit on, colorful rugs along the walls, and two small, low tables. In a corner a kind of house chapel was arranged: A t'hangka had been hung on the wall and a high table before it served as an altar, adorned with some beautiful little statues of Lamaistic deities, a vase of flowers, a few joss sticks in a cup, five bowls containing holy water, and seven butterlamps. Only the wick of the middle one was burning.

The young woman presented me to her mother, a dignified matron looking somewhat despotic, and to her husband, who had cut off his plaits and was wearing a Western suit. After all of us had drunk salted butter tea from delicate China cups standing on high silver plates and covered with pagoda-like silver lids, the rich merchant asked: "What did you want to know about our country, Mem-sahib?"

"Everything interests me, Kúsho", i.e., "sir," (spelled "kúshog"). I answered. "Please start with what you think best."

He smiled in a friendly way: "Well then, of course you know that Tibet is completely surrounded by high mountains or nearly inaccessible marshes, with the exception of its eastern frontier. Thanks to this fact we have succeeded for many centuries in isolating the Land-of-the-Snow, in order to protect it from foreign invasions and exploitations, again with the exception of the east where it is bounded by China.

"Our climate is exceedingly dry. The southern slopes of the Himâlayas have a yearly rainfall of about two hundred inches, but in the whole territory north of their high and broad mountain ranges, the yearly downpour is no more than twelve to fourteen inches. Consequently in our country cultivation of crops is only possible along the riversides where there



is irrigation. In the enormous stretches of land in between there can never grow any crops from want of water. Only short, stiff grass will be found. Because of this, the Tibetan population consists of comparatively few peasants, but of numerous nomadic cattle breeders. For in the summer months the yaks, the goats, and the sheep get thick and fat on this coarse diet. So it stands to reason the slaughtering is always done at the end of the summer. Actually it is against the Buddhist doctrine to kill any living being and it is even worse if this is done with the purpose of eating it! But in such a fierce cold as prevails in our country, the human body now and then is in need of animal food.

“Generally one kills the beast by fastening a tight rope around its muzzle and then choking it so its blood does not get lost. Subsequently all the meat is dried and during a year at least it keeps its fresh taste. Because there is so little moisture in the atmosphere, it does not decompose quickly in Tibet: For five years it will keep well enough for consumption.

“Many regions of our country are fifteen thousand feet high or even more. It is possible for crops to grow there if they are sufficiently irrigated, but nothing will get ripe. Their green serves as fodder for the animals during wintertime. Together with a small ration of dried grass, it suffices to make them live through the cold season. However, by the beginning of spring they are frightfully thin! Notwithstanding this scanty food, they grow beautiful thick and heavy furs during these months which will be shorn as soon as it gets warm. Wool is Tibet’s main export product.

“In some places our country is even higher than fifteen thousand feet. The Himâlayas alone have more than seventy mountaintops reaching over eighteen thousand feet. But in the northern part of Tibet, a territory that has never been explored yet in the Western sense of the word, there even exist valleys of that height! The steep mountains on their sides stand supreme. The life the nomads in these barren regions are forced to live is so rough that we, in the central provinces, cannot comprehend how they can stand it! From the ethnological point of view, the tribes of those highest regions are the purest Tibetans. For they never have mixed with the Chinese—like the inhabitants of eastern and central Tibet—nor with the Indians—like the inhabitants of western Tibet. The original tribes of the Land-of-the-Snow were all cattle breeders.

“However, the greater part of our country has an average height of twelve thousand feet. Since cultivation is possible where irrigation is possible—as I said—arable land will but cover a small territory. At this height whatever is sown will ripen. In the early spring the peasants, the ‘rong-pas’ (literally ‘the people from the valleys’) break up only the



upper surface of the soil, which is cracked by moisture and frost. They do this with a primitive plough drawn by a yak. *The sowing is done in May and, as the sun is quite warm and powerful in summer, the harvest can be gathered as early as September, that is, provided no late frosts or summer hailstorms destroy the crops.* There are special priests, able to avert these calamities by offerings on the mountain-tops, by appropriate incantations, and by blowing on enormous horns. When their exorcism is successful they are generously remunerated by the peasants. However, if they fail they get heavily fined! All in all *one considers a harvest which yields sixfold of whatever is sown as quite good!* Besides some other kinds of grain, we cultivate sufficient barley for the sober needs of our people. All wheats, as well as peas and beans, are ground and roasted. These various sorts of flour we call 'tsampa.' People mix this in their own wooden bowls—for everybody, even the Dalai Lama, eats from a wooden bowl—with tea into a dough, called 'pa' which in Tibet takes the place of bread.

"The state possesses a special kind of granaries with copper floors. Moreover these buildings (in different parts of the country) are ventilated by holes in the floors and the walls. Grain stored in them will keep for centuries, also because our climate is so dry. These silos can be considered as part of our treasury, for the grain they contain is the tax-in-kind paid by the landed proprietors and the independent peasants (not by tenant farmers). In this way big amounts of food are reserved by the state in case of crop failure through natural calamities, war, or otherwise. The great monasteries have similar grain stores (grain depots). So we never need be afraid of famine in Tibet.

"But Mem-sahib, you do not drink your tea at all?"

"I am listening to you, kusho."

"One thing does not exclude the other. We have a saying about a person who is well-to-do: 'His lips are always moist with tea,' because such a one drinks something every ten minutes, all through the day. When you are in our house your lips have to be constantly moist with tea too!"

So I drank. "But please, go on with your tale, kusho. I never get tired of hearing about the Land-of-the-Snow!"

"Do you know what the word Tibet is a corruption of? Of Tö-Pö, that means Upper Tibet. By Pö is really meant the central part of the country consisting of the present-day provinces called Ü and Tsang. Lhasa, the residence of the Dalai Lama and the government seat, is the capital of Ü. And Shigatsé, the residence of the Panchen Lama (in the monastery Tashi-Lhünpo), is the capital of Tsang. *The Tibetans call themselves Pö-pa, the people of Pö, of Tibet.* The provinces of the eastern

{ 12. The lama who wore the artistic sun-shade had said to my pappa: "I have something very, very beautiful, Rimpoche (Precious Jewel), but I don't allow you to buy it! I prefer starving to parting with it." (Part II: 13) 133

part of the country, taken together, are called Kham. This consist of the actual province of Kham and those called (Kh)Amdo, Hor, Dergé and a few minor ones. The inhabitants of these parts are called Kham-pas. *The territory of our state covers about one third of the United States of America*, but it is populated far more thinly. At a rough estimate we have only four million inhabitants, of which not more than one hundred and thirty thousand live in cities and villages. According to others, there are about ten million inhabitants in Tibet. However, it is impossible to ascertain their number exactly. For how many people might live in the remote—nearly isolated—mountain valleys, probably never visited by anybody? It is maintained that some of those isolated groups of people only have tools of stone! Whether it is true that they 'still live in the Stone Age' is not an established fact. However, it is quite certain that these minorities are rather backward. They purposely evade all contacts with other Tibetans for fear of intrusion.

"As a result of the comparatively scant traffic in our country, many Tibetan dialects have come into existence. Sometimes it is said: *Every Valley has its own dialect and every lama his own doctrine!*" Of course the purest Tibetan is spoken in Lhasa. I have been told the Westerners consider our language as forming part of the Burmese language-group. Moreover there are really two varieties: Low Tibetan is spoken to one's inferiors, and High Tibetan to one's equals and one's superiors.

"But let me first tell you something more about our mountains and our rivers. Inside our frontiers are situated the northern slopes of *Mount Everest*, which we usually call the *Chomolúnga*, although it has some other names as well. The *Europeans* think it is the highest mountain of Asia. But that is an open question. Most probably in the northern part of Tibet which they have never visited so far, there exist perhaps mountains that are still higher, for instance such as the *Amné-Machèn*. In the northeast of our country the highest and *most holy* mountain is *Mount Kailas*, also called *Mount Tisé*. We usually call it "*Kang-Rimpoche*" or the *Snow-Jewel*. It is a place of pilgrimage for many thousands of *Buddhists* and *Hindus*. The latter consider Kailas to be the abode of god Çiva on earth. Incidentally, the mountain can only be reached during three months of the year. You know that it is the custom in Tibet always to circumambulate a holy place. Now there exist three circumambulation paths around the Kailas. The outer one, the longest, takes many days. The middle one—about fifty miles long—is covered by a strong man in one day. The shortest, which is nearest the summit, is very dangerous and has already claimed many victims who have fallen in the adjacent abysses. At the foot of Kang-

Rimpoche there is the holy lake of Mánasaróvar, the highest sweet-water lake on earth. It has more or less an octagonal shape. So it is a kind of natural 'màndala' or 'holy circle,' which is always circumambulated by the faithful ones as well. Quite near there is a second lake, but it is not as holy as the first. Geologists have discovered there is a subterranean connection between their waters.

"In the vicinity of this magnificent Mount Kailas three big rivers have their origin. The Indus streams westwards, The Sutlej (or Lang-chen-chu, i.e., the Elephant river) southwards, and the Tsang-chu (or Brahmapútra, meaning the Son-of-Brahma, as it is called by the Indians) eastwards. For many hundreds of miles the waters of the latter flow through the country of Tibet. On their maps the Europeans indicate this river as the Tsang-po, but we ourselves always call it the Tsang-chu, as our word for river is 'chu.' It is the highest navigable river in the world, leaving Tibet by the Abor-territory. This is the only region of our country which lies so low that its vegetation is tropical. So over a rather short distance the Tsang-chu has an enormous difference. However, it nowhere forms any big fall, but it has countless small cataracts. In the Abor-jungle live indomitable savages, the 'Möns,' also called the 'Lo-pas' (spelled "Klo-pas") i.e., People-of-the-South. They shoot with poisonous arrows. We Tibetans hardly ever go there. Only once in every twelve years a small number of pilgrims visit the holy mountain Tsari in this territory. Against payment of a considerable sum they are allowed to circumambulate the grassy mountain along an existing track, accompanied by Mön guides. Nobody would dare take the risk of deviating from this path and set out into the inland. It would mean one's certain death. Through this Abor-jungle the Tsang-chu streams down to Assam and then reaches the Indian plains. It debouches into the Gulf of Bengal.

"In the southeast of Tibet originate the two great rivers of Burma: the Irrawadi and the Salween. They debouch into the Gulf of Bengal as well. The Mekong, longer than these two, streams through China to Cambodia, where it debouches into the South China Sea. In the northeast of Tibet originate the two main rivers of China, the Yang-tse-kiang (or the Yellow River) and the Hoang-Ho. Both stream through the whole of the Chinese country towards its eastern shore and debouch respectively into the East Chinese Sea and into the Yellow Sea.

"All these rivers carry gold dust with them in their upper course because our soil contains a lot of gold. It is this gold that makes other states covetous of the Tibetan territory! Sometimes people 'wash' gold dust out of the river waters, earning only scanty sustenance with it. But never, never have we wanted to mine gold, for there is an ancient prophecy saying,

'When gold or other metals and precious stones will be dug up, no crops will grow and the Dalai Lama will not reign anymore over the Land-of-the-Snow.'

"It goes without saying that in a country encircled by mountains, as is ours, many little streams will not be able to find an outlet into the sea. They lose themselves in the sands of the deserts or they debouch into one of the inland lakes. Consequently these lakes increase in salt content. Big, glittering-white crusts of salt are found all along their shores and huge quantities of borax and soda as well.

"The great lakes are Koko-nor, or the Blue Lake, in the northeast and Tengri-nor, or the Lake-of-the-Sky, north of Lhasa. The fierce winds prevailing in Tibet whip up their waters and make them un-navigable. Koko-nor is situated at a height of nine thousand feet and fed by seventy-two mountain streams. There are five islets in it. On one of them is built a small monastery which is the home of twelve ascetic monk-hermits. They are vegetarians, but keep goats in order to have milk. They do not possess a boat. In winter, when the lake is frozen, the pious inhabitants of those regions come and visit the recluses on sledges to bring them tea, butter, barley flour and handwoven cloth for their garments.

"The holiest lake of Tibet is Mánasaróvar near Mount Kailus, which I have mentioned already, but the most beautiful of all our lakes, not too far from Lhasa, is 'Yamdo-tso,' (spelled 'Yamdruk'). ('Tso' is the Tibetan word for lake and 'nor' is the Mongolian word). This lake has the shape of a scorpion. Apart from salt, here also occur solutions of other chemicals which give the waters their wondrous shades.

"In the 'Chang-Tangs' (the 'northern Highlands') many small salt lakes exist, breeding-places for countless birds that come and alight there yearly in the month of May and migrate again in October. These highlands are divided into basins by ranges of low hills consisting of red earth on which there is no vegetation at all. Shells are found on the soil. The Land-of-the-Snow, once the bottom of a sea, has risen through the mysterious workings of the earth. Anyway, our mountains are what the Western scientists call 'a geologically young formation.' Their volcanic condition is also apparent from the many hot springs all over the country. Some of them contain sulphur, some others chlorides, magnesium, or potassium. Several are situated in the vicinity of Mount Kailas.

"Tibet is said to have suffered from a deluge which supposedly took place many thousands of years ago when the waters of the river Tsang-chu found no outlet into the Indian plains. Only when the

southeastern mountains had broken was it possible for the country to run dry again."

"You know everything so precisely, kusho. You would be able to write a book on Tibet's geography!"

"My husband has crossed the whole of it in all directions with his caravans," the young wife said. "For hours on end he can tell one about his adventures. He and his companions were always heavily armed when travelling, as there are so many robber gangs everywhere, bent on stealing the precious wares of a caravan!"

"We had better tell Mem-sahib something about the country itself, little wife," the merchant said. "My adventures are not significant. You know the Himâlayas from this side, don't you? With their leeches, mosquitoes, and little poisonous snakes, which in the rainy season change the wooded slopes and valleys into a veritable hell. Well, those vermin do not occur in Tibet since—as I told you—there is hardly any rainfall. But on the other hand neither can we boast of forests, except in the very south, (for instance, in the Chumbi Valley) where firs, rhododendrons, and wild roses grow in abundance. Also in the eastern provinces, the height of which is only nine thousand feet, there are some forests. But *the greater part of the Land-of-the-Snow is nearly without timber*. Only low willow trees and poplars grow here and there in the meadows. As there is practically no wood, we have a constant shortage of fuel. There is just about enough to cook our food, but that is all! Anyway, food is generally prepared over fires of yak dung. Whoever of us feels cold puts on an extra coat. One never has enough wood to light a fire to warm oneself by!

"However, we do grow some kinds of trees. In the gardens of the farmsteads are apple, apricot, and peach trees, but their fruit always are small. There are also walnuts. As soon as winter is over, flowers blossom forth: All along the riverbeds one finds primroses, larkspurs, snapdragons, lilies, and sky-blue poppies. And in the mountain meadows there are gentians, edelweiss, and various other alpine flowers in abundance. However, in all meadows—high and low—deadly aconites thrive in profusion as well! To prevent young cattle from eating them they are muzzled. When they get a bit bigger, we rub the plant against their nostrils, owing to which they develop a painful inflammation. As soon as they get over it, we have a serious talk with them: 'Now you have been initiated! Your grand-sire did not learn his lesson: He ate the weed with this scent, so he died! Be wise and leave it alone, so you will live and beget offspring.' Then the animals recognize the poisonous aconite and don't touch it anymore.

"Kham, our eastern province, sometimes is called 'Medo-Yul'

('land of flowers'). Its level is somewhat lower than the remaining part of Tibet, and more trees are found there: larches, plane trees, alders, elms, and oaks. The "holy mountain" Kakárho in that region is partly wooded.

"Various splendid animals are indigenous in Tibet: wild yak, wild horse, graceful wild donkey, wild sheep, and different kinds of gazelles and deer. Of the latter, a giant deer has antlers more than three feet in width. The musk deer is hunted because its musk is in great demand in China. Everywhere hares are seen frisking about and funny little marmots are sitting on their hind legs, looking at one inquisitively.

"Troops of wolves, to be found everywhere in our country, will attack the herds, but the fierce Tibetan dogs generally prove superior to them. Boars, foxes, jackals, snow leopards and snow lynxes are bent on prey too. And now, Memsahib I expect you want me to tell you about the famous snowmen, about the "yettis'?"

"I don't believe in them, kusho!"

"Well, that is all right then, for it is quite certain they don't exist! Some Tibetans spread such tales because they like to fool the Westerners! The footmarks that are found are those of a big kind of bears living in our snowy ranges."

Now the despotic matron entered with a Tibetan dish of meat and vegetables. In fact it was still far too early to have a meal, but the whole family exhausted themselves so much in cordialities towards me, I could not but take a generous helping. After still more tea "to keep my lips always moist" I finally took leave of them.

16: Mummy Ganèsh

In our "dormitory" where we slept with six and a half persons it was seldom quiet. Twice or three times a night mummy Ganèsh would sit up in her bed, loudly groaning, coughing, and gasping. She then tried to wake up the distant relation who had her mattress on the floor next to her. However, this woman placidly went on snoring noisily until she was shaken back and forth vehemently. "Help me, I am choking, ah, I unfortunate one!" Mummy expectorated and spat loudly. "I am ill, dreadfully ill, but nobody takes any notice of me! For years I have been suffering. Quick, the spittoon! Ah, everybody is fast asleep: My husband in his beautiful canopy bed in a room with glass windows, and all of you deliciously in bed or on the floor!"

All this in such a screaming tone that not only ourselves, her roommates, were wide awake, but also the families next to us and overhead. Only her little granddaughter Kumári, rolled together like a pussycat in a corner of her own bed, slept on undisturbed. "I can't stick it any longer, give me something to drink, oh, I miserable one!" she continued her monologue.

We kept silent, feeling depressed, for what can one say to help a woman who is aware she has lost the love of her husband—if ever she had it—and who now to console herself was eating sweetmeats all day long? So she could barely walk because of her fatness and became oppressed in the chest at night! Her colleague—if I am allowed to refer in this way to mummy Sûrya—was in the same boat, it is true! No love, sweetmeats by way of compensation, hence utter lack of physical activity owing to exceeding obesity. But instead of consoling each other, the companions in distress on top of everything also quarreled together. And my Tibetan father really was not the worst man to be married to! Did not many of his business friends, who also were past seventy, run after young women? He would not ever do such a thing! His only passion was making money, ever more money! Although he felt indifferent towards his wives, he always was quite

decent with them, for mummy Genèsh was the mother of his favorite son and mummy Sûrya of his favorite daughter. The China lama's third wife in the mountains was never referred to by anyone.

One night my mother's groanings had been worse than usual. "Pappa," I said the next day after we had drunk our morning tea, "shouldn't you send mummy Ganèsh to a doctor?"

"Mémé," she agreed with me triumphantly. "Daughter Lili says the same thing: I am dangerously ill!"

"All right, all right, I will send for the Indian doctor this afternoon, but you will see: He will tell you that you eat too many sweets."

"I think the European physician from Kàthmandú is much cleverer, pappa."

"Just as clever, but more expensive, daughter Lili! The Indian one will be sent for, and now I don't want to hear anything more about it!"

That morning I had a very interesting model. It was a lama whom I had met in the tiny shop of the lama-vendor. He belonged to the oldest Buddhist sect, that of the Nyingma-pas, and wore a red pointed cap with three flaps turned upwards. The front one, the narrowest, was adorned with a silver ornament.

"What does it mean?" I had asked.

"That he is allowed to take a wife," the lama-vendor had answered. "Anyway, you can see from his long hair he is a married man. All other lamas and trapas, those who have taken the vow of celibacy, regularly have a complete shave!"

"With the exception of my pappa, the China lama: He is shaved and all the same he has three wives!"

"Do let us not talk about him," said the lama-vendor.

"Could this Redcap monk blow on a 'kang-ling', a human thighbone-flute, while I am drawing him?"

The men in the tiny shop roared with laughter: "This Mem-sahib, always she wants something strange, first the history of Tibet and now a kang-ling! Why must he blow on it?"

"Because it is something typically Tibetan. In the land where I live people won't even believe such an instrument exists!"

"That is what I call a tall story! You can make one from every corpse!"

"Two," said another.

"No, only the left thighbone will be used," the first rectified.

"Quite, gentlemen," I said, "but we in the West don't take human bones from corpses to manufacture flutes, nor do we blow on

them for making religious music in our God's-houses." They had looked at me incredulously.

"I will show you something interesting; wait a bit," said the proprietor of the tiny shop, and he laughed mischievously. From a bundle of old cloths he unpacked some objects sculptured from yellowish bones. "Beautiful, don't you think so, Mem-sahib: two bracelets for the upper arms—the representations on their long center part are similar to those on the supporting beams of the Nepalese pagodas at the top the face of a demon, in the middle a deity standing upright, and at the lower end a coitus. All made from human bones! A kind of headgear goes with these, made of the same material; would you like to put it on your head?"

"No thank you very much, I prefer not to!" Again the men roared with laughter, they could hardly stop.

"This outfit isn't complete yet," the lama-vendor continued. "Here you see the ceremonial 'apron' going with it; well, that is. . . . anyway something one has to tie around one's body at the level of the breast and which hangs down nearly all the way. Oh, quite a number of corpses were needed to get these bones together, and how many months the sculpturing must have taken! Do you like it? Would you buy it from me for seven hundred rupees? Or do you prefer a ritual goblet, made from a human skull and lined with silver? Delicious to drink from! In our monasteries such a vessel is only used at special services in the temple, but we also offer our guests apricots in it by way of refreshment." Of course he was teasing me.

"Why," I said unperturbed, "I would simply love an apricot out of this skull!"

"Show her the prayer-chain," one of his friends suggested.

"Here it is: one hundred and eight slices with a hole in the middle, strung together, each of them cut from the skull of a different person. One hundred and eight corpses, Mem-sahib, you can take my word for it, because otherwise this ritual object wouldn't have so much power! And as for a double hand drum, a 'dāmaru': it has to be made from two skulls, a man's and a woman's, like the one you see here," and he handed me the instrument.

"The male-female principle, carried through in everything, obviously Tantrism," I thought while I turned the little double drum around in my hands. As usual it consisted of two faintly arched shallow bowls, actually made of human skulls. Both were tightly stretched with green-painted leather. These bowls have to be joined so they form a very small "waist" at their convex side. Together they have more or less the shape of a broad, flat hourglass. It is the cus-

tom to grasp this "waist" with thumb and index of the raised hand while holding the broad "tail" of the dámaru with the other fingers to keep it balanced. Its colorful decorative strips hang down from the raised arm for everybody to admire. By turning the wrist backward and forward the two little weights, covered with cloth and attached to the waist with a string, swish outward and strike simultaneously with a thud against the tightly stretched drum-leather right and left. It requires some practice to do this: beating time for the other temple music. Usually the officiating priest wields the dámaru with the right hand and the temple bell ("Dilbu") with the left.

I looked at the headgear, the bracelets and the "apron" of sculptured human bones once more: The designs were really artistic. "Is this macabre adornment especially made for Bon-priests?" I wanted to know.

"It may have been originally, Mem-sahib, but now the various Redcap sects use it at special Tantrical services. Moreover, you mustn't look at these kinds of objects as a 'memento mori,' but on the contrary as a *symbol of the unreality of death*.

"The kang-ling is used at the Redcap as well as at the Yellowcap services. You see how from the femur (thighbone) the upper end (with the globular-shaped protuberance that turns in the hip joint) is always sawed off, while the under end (forming part of the knee joint) is covered with leather. But enough! Anyway, I will see to it that the lama wearing the hat with the silver ornament will come and pose for you tomorrow with this thighbone instrument."

So now I was seated with my big drawing map on my lap on the narrow gallery opposite the lama with the redpointed cap holding the kang-ling against his mouth. The sun was shining today, but it was quite windy, so the women of my family had hung their washing to dry on the lines between the pillars of the wooden passage in front of the rooms. Now and then it fluttered against my face or against the face of the lama. "Quísang" I called, "This is impossible. How can I make a good drawing when every time a sopping wet cloth is flapping against my eyes! Please, go and remove the clothes that hang near us, will you?" The friendly servant hurried to fulfil my request.

"You allow me to pass you, don't you?" surly Kipa asked me a moment later, and she wriggled between me and the balustrade without awaiting an answer, and then back again. Bang! She had nearly overthrown me. I did not say a word.

"I want to look out here," said Àntaré, one of Púnya-Jola's sons, who lived with his young wife in the room next to ours. And whack, he dashed against my hand, so my crayon made a scratch across the

portrait. When returning, he caused my rickety chair to shake. I only sighed.

"Let me have a look, sister?" asked Kámala sweetly. Only a few minutes afterwards she pushed herself clumsily past the lama. His pointed cap went awry, but it was not her intention to do any harm. The little boy Jigmé-Dorji, whom she was carrying, set up a terrific howl. To quieten him the young mother made him dance up and down on her arm. The boards of the floor shook! "Now I am going" she announced, and wormed herself past me, bumping against my drawing map. I still kept silent, but I got agitated.

"I'll just have a look at the cows on the field!" and my nephew Sú-shil tried, stooping, to make himself small enough to force his way through and reach the very end of the gallery without inconveniencing me. In vain alas; this time my map nearly fell down on the floor. I was exasperated.

"When will you all stop pressing me against the wall while I am portraying somebody? Pappa has told me to go and sit in this place and nowhere else. The light is bad here anyway, but please don't disturb me without reason. Let me draw on in peace!" It worked, anyway for some time. About half an hour later a cloud of dust and dirt came whirling downwards between the broad clefts of the boards above me and smudged my paper. "Little wife of Púnya-Jola, what are you doing for heaven's sake??" I cried.

"Elder sister, I am sweeping the upper gallery, which is so dirty!"

"So I see. Couldn't you postpone your sweeping a bit?"

In this way I made nearly all my drawings in my Tibetan home. None of them got done without many, *many* disturbances. And this Redcap lama was sitting rather quietly. His beautiful hand—nearly all Tibetans have beautiful hands—clasping the kang-ling, let it rest against his lips. Now and then without moving he blew on it, producing a long, lugubrious tone.

Later on I had other models also. Some of them could not sit still at all; actually, most of them could not. But the difficulties I had to face continuously because of the extreme carelessness and lack of understanding of my relatives still pursue me like a nightmare in my memory. Their nature varied, but in the course of time they never decreased!

When I entered the turquoise-colored room late that afternoon I found the doctor sitting there: the Indian. He was a young man with pomaded hair in a gruesomely beautiful suit reeking of perfume.

"May I introduce my niece to you? Her name is Sarla" were the doctor's first words. For he made his call together with a young girl

whom he looked at tenderly and whose arm he now and then squeezed playfully. Then his face got an earnest expression and he turned, bowing and scraping, around mummy Ganèsh. It looked as if he was performing a dance! After he had felt her pulse all further examination seemed superfluous. He now had a clear insight into her illness.

"Look, here I have a prescription, Rimpoche," he said to the China lama. "When your wife takes this she will be absolutely cured in three days. Is it convenient to you to settle accounts at once, honorable priest?" He mentioned a fee of which no famous European specialist would have been ashamed. "You see, quite incidentally," the Indian added nonchalantly, "I have had to treat many patients who suffered from this same illness. It is, so to speak, part of my special professional knowledge."

"I feel a different person already," said mummy innocently. Naturally, because now at last some notice had been taken of the poor woman! The doctor bowed many times to take leave of all of us. Then he put his arm protectively around the shoulders of his "niece" and departed, followed by the admiring eyes of all my female relations and the somewhat envious eyes of my male relations.

The medicine turned out to be only a purgative and mummy's nightly groaning, gasping, and moaning did not diminish!

That evening I went to bed without undressing. This roused some astonishment amongst my roommates, as I was the only one who always did. The others used to sleep with all their clothes on, and got up in the morning in the same attire which they only smoothed down a bit. It was not long before deep silence obtained in the house, in the whole hamlet, for that matter. But I lay in bed waiting expectantly. Then I heard the long-drawn-out, melodious tones once more, *calling me*, and with one jump I got up. I went quietly downstairs, nobody noticing it. The front door of the house was not locked. There was no wind at all. Now I could hear clearly whence the music came. Anyway there was only one possibility of which I had been vaguely aware at the back of my mind: the Gelùg-pa sanctuary! Because of the new moon it was pitch dark. The lighted "tikas" on the four golden faces of the stûpa shone dimly. It proved to be very difficult to find the short way to the little monastery. I stumbled uncountable times over the bumps and holes of the square. Nevertheless I finally reached my aim. But the iron gates to the front yard of the Yellowcap temple had already been closed. Nobody was allowed to enter anymore! A shadow moved on the other side and came nearer. It was a young monk. He could not recognize me in the

dark, but he understood who I was, for who else in the hamlet was so interested in whatever happened in the Tibetan world but myself! He put his finger on his lips and silently opened the heavy bolts without a noise. Surreptitiously I entered, while the novice smilingly pointed upwards. I nodded to him gratefully, sneaked up the outer staircase, and set myself unnoticed in a corner of the high stone roof-platform.

Against the dark sky I could vaguely discern the still darker silhouettes of the four monks who wore their impressive ceremonial headgear which made one think of Roman helmets. Two of them blew on the twelve foot long "ragdongs" whose further end rested on a specially made wooden scaffolding. The music consisted mainly of their very long-drawn-out, low tones. These instruments are always blown on in pairs. When one of the musicians cannot keep up a note the other takes it over, so it makes the impression of continuing without interruption. Whenever there was a short interval, the two other monks were heard. They blew on small trumpets ("dung-chens") which had higher tones. Properly speaking, this "serenade to the gods" did not have a melody in our sense of the word. The dung-chens were a kind of accompaniment which had to set off the essential part of the concert by the ragdongs. It was a strangely moving music without any accents of passion: of an endless melancholy, like the weeping about the suppressed suffering of all living beings from the beginning of time on their pilgrimage through the world: a threnody of weariness and despair which touched me deeply.

For a long time I sat motionless in my corner of the dark platform. Finally, when the ragdongs were silent, I descended together with the monks, thanked them, and went home.

This was the first of the many delightful nights I was allowed to listen to the religious music on the roof of the Yellowcap monastery.

17: The Origin of the Sects

Every morning I walked at least once, but as a rule several times around our stûpa, and that—oh, shame—counterclockwise. For if I would have done so the other way round, I would have followed all the refugees and, encountering none of them, would not have known which newcomers had arrived in our hamlet. I always was on the lookout for interesting models to portray. During my rounds I did, of course, not *skirt* the prayer-wheel-wall for—going in the wrong direction—I would have hurt the feelings of the believers. So I kept as far away as possible, quite near the houses in our square. This way I could at the same time chat a bit with my Tibetan acquaintances, sitting before their doors. It goes without saying that one of them was the lama-vendor in the minute shop. I made purchases there a few times before I dared ask him if he had time to continue the history of the Land-of-the-Snow. He promised me to go on that afternoon as soon as the tourists—potential customers—had returned to their hotels in Kâthmandú lest they should miss their tea!

On my arrival at his place at four sharp I found the same Tibetans gathered there as the first time. It was evident they were just as much interested in his thrilling tale as I was myself, though actually I wondered whether they could follow him because he spoke English for my convenience.

“When after the murder of king Lang-Darma (840) Tibet as a state had crumbled into many small principalities,” the lama-vendor began, “everybody kept faithful to Buddhism. In the course of the centuries, various changes and additions had been made in the doctrine of the historical Buddha, as you know. In India Patânjali (150 B.C.) had conceived a system, called Râja-yoga, by combining certain mystic tenets with physical exercises, well known in Asia for quite some time (maybe even thousands of years). Similar mystic speculations also found their way into Buddhism. It was the monk Asângha from Gandhâra who connected the yoga theories to Buddhism in the fifth cen-

ture. Their ideas and instructions aimed at the ecstatic unity of the individual spirit with the One Universal Spirit, in profound meditation. As the 'Yogâchârya' school these tenets found gradually many followers amongst the contemplative Buddhists in Tibet. Asângha's younger brother Vasubândhu, also a great mystic, had propagated above all the adoration of the Celestial Buddha Amitâbha ('He of the Eternal Light'), somewhat analogous to the worship of the sun god in Persia and other countries to the West. Around 700 north Indian Buddhism had been pervaded—as we saw—by Tantrism or Çiva-Çakti mysticism, an esoteric doctrine founded on the male-female principle in which continuous repetition of mantras obtained an important place. In the tenth century this form of Tantrism grew into a separate sect of Mahâyâna-Buddhism, the "Vajra-yâna" or the "Diamond Vehicle." It even ascribed a Celestial spouse to each of the Celestial Buddhas with whom they were depicted in carnal embrace. It is easy to see that the profound mysticism of this system led to an appalling superstition among the ignorant. Such was the state of affairs when the Bon-practices started anew to conquer a place of their own in Tibetan Buddhism.

"Fortunately in 1038 one of the petty princes in the Land-of-the-Snow, seeing the danger of all these heterogeneous influences, invited the Indian Atiça to come to Tibet to purge Buddhism from all these taints. The pious teacher came without delay. He was sixty years old when he settled on the 'Tra Yerpa,' the 'Rock-of-Purity,' situated in the neighborhood of Lhasa. He started to preach at once and founded a reformed sect, called the 'Kadâm-pa,' 'the order of Those who are bound to the commands.' They abjured practically all Tantras and returned to the pure doctrine of the Buddha. After thirteen years Atiça died. Alas, his success had not been as great as had been expected, for he stressed *high* morals and committed all the clergy to celibacy, which was too ascetic for the taste of the Tibetans! His most distinguished disciple was Dom Teun (spelled Brom-sTon) who in 1058 founded the monastery of Ra-den (or Re-ting) whose first abbot he was. After his death, Atiça was proclaimed to have been an "Incarnation" of the Celestial Bodhisattva Mañjuçri, the Bodhisattva-of-Wisdom, or rather the personification of Transcendental Knowledge, symbolically represented as holding a book in one hand and a sword in the other.

"Although Atiça's efforts of purging had not met with much success, it was apparent that our people badly needed a reform of Buddhism, be it not in such a radical way as preached by the severe monk. For two other sects came into being. The first was the one of

the 'Sa-kyá-pa' (spelled 'Sa-skya-pa') founded in 1071 by a certain Kon-dkon-mch'og-rgyál-po. The name was derived from its first monastery 'Sá-kya,' meaning 'Yellow Earth,' situated in the province of Tsang in central Tibet. This sect acknowledged the correctness of part of the ancient Tantras and also of some new ones. Originally its followers specialized in developing occult sciences. Later on this tendency died down.

"The second sect was that of the 'Kagyú-pa' (spelled 'Kargyúd-pa'), 'those of the successive dispositions.' In it 'secret knowledge' was passed on from mouth to ear. It was founded in 1142 by Dvag-po Lharje, the spiritual son of Tibet's beloved poet-saint Mila-repa, who in his turn was the spiritual son of the famous yogi Marpa. The Kagyú-pa tenets were founded on the 'Mahâ-Mudrâ' (literally the 'Great Symbolic Posture-of-the-Hands'), a special mystic view. But neither Marpa nor his still more famous pupil Mila-repa had been enough of an organizer to found a sect for the followers of their tenets. To the contrary: both of them preached the solitary life of a hermit, preferably in grottoes on the high mountains.

"These two semireformed sects have played a great role in Tibet's history; and a third, the so-called 'Karmá-pa,' in Tibet's religion. That is why I simply had to mention them. I won't confuse you with the names of all the other sects springing from them.

"All the members of the clergy who did not go over to any of the new schools were from that time onwards considered as belonging to the sect of the 'Nyingma-pa,' that is, to the 'ancient ones.' Their monks and nuns sometimes lived together inside one and the same monastery. Any children born from them of course followed the sect too. This is for instance the case in the Rálung monastery near Gyantsé. The other sects have monks as well as nuns amongst their followers, but all of them will observe celibacy. As a rule they live in separate monasteries, only occasionally in two strictly separated parts of the same monastery as for instance in that of Sámding near lake Yámdo.

"During the three centuries of Tibet's splitting-up, when there was no central government, the abbots of the important monasteries became as powerful as petty princes. The mightiest of all was the Great-lama of the Sá-kya monastery, famous for its gigantic library.

"Now in the thirteenth century in the northern neighboring country of Mongolia there lived an enlightened monarch, Khúblai-Khan, a grandson of Jenghis-Khan. He saw that the Bon-religion of his people did not tally with the modern ideas of that time. The ruler was convinced that he would be able to bring his subjects to other

views by compelling them to change to a state religion of his choice. Only he was not sure in his mind which religion he preferred. In 1270 he sent for representatives of Islám, Christianity, and (Lamaist) Buddhism to make his choice, declaring that the guest able to perform the greatest miracle would be invited to teach his faith to himself and his subjects.

"When all of them were seated together, it was the Great-lama of the Sa-kyá-pas who by his magic forces caused a glass of wine belonging to Khúblai-Khan 'to raise itself from the table to the lips of the monarch to be emptied by him.' None of the other representatives of religion could outdo this miracle!

"So the choice of Khúblai-Khan fell on Lamaism, and he called many of the Sa-kyá-pa lamas to come to Mongolia to teach himself and his people Mahâyána-Buddhism. Besides, he appointed the Great-lama of the Sa-kyá monastery as ruler over Tibet! Supporting this abbot by his well-armed troops, he forced the Tibetans to acknowledge him as their first theocratic sovereign. The Sá-kyá dynasty in which every lama-ruler was succeeded by his son—for these Great-lamas *had* to be married now to have progeny—lasted for seventy-five years: from 1270 until 1345.

"And now Mem-sahib, we have at last arrived at Tsong-Khá-pa (1358–1418), literally 'the man from the Valley of Onions,' a district in the province of Amdo, quite near the Chinese border."

There was some agitation amongst the Tibetans around us in the minute shop. They nodded appreciatively and pushed a bit nearer. "Indeed," they said, "Jé-Rimpoche or the Great Tsong-Khá-pa." I understood that with him began the prelude which led to the rule of the Dalai Lamas.

"Where at the birth of this saintly teacher the placenta fell on earth," the lama-vendor continued, "there grew a miraculous white sandalwood tree. Each year anew all its leaves showed clear images of the Buddha! Afterwards a monastery was built around this tree, called 'Kúm-bum,' that is, 'A Thousand Images.' It is the greatest and mightiest monastery of east Tibet.

"A Christian missionary, a certain Father Huc, visited it in 1846, and in his description of our country he writes that he has seen this miraculous tree himself. On all leaves and also on the trunk underneath the bark, Tibetan letters could be discerned. He added that there was no question of deceit. Only he made a mistake, for they were images, not letters!"

"Did *you* ever see the tree, honored lama?" I asked.

"No, unfortunately it has been dead long since, but its trunk still

exists. Around it a three-storied temple has been built, for this is the holiest place of all the monastery. But I am straying from my story.

“Until his thirty-sixth year, young Tsong-Kha-pa, severely trained and ordained as a lama, went on studying the various aspects of Buddhism and probably also those of other religions. It is quite possible that he had a prolonged contact with the Nestorian Christians who at the time—in the beginning of the fifteenth century—had their settlements everywhere in Asia, even far into China. The Westerners always stress the point that the rituals of the sect, later on founded by Tsong-Khá-pa, have a strong resemblance to those of the Roman Catholic Church. Even if this is true—a thing about which I myself can’t judge—it is still no proof at all he derived them that way. For to start with, his ritual doesn’t differ much from any of the various Redcap sects (which have never been in touch with the Christians) and secondly, it stands to reason that any service is celebrated with such obvious rites as ringing a bell, singing a litany, burning lights and incense, offering, and so on. The same things happen during services of several other religions!

“It was the ideal of Tsong-Khá-pa to revive Mahâyâna-Buddhism in a purified form. To achieve his aim he went to central Tibet and, because he was an excellent orator able to explain his ideas clearly and with strong persuasion, he made a great number of converts. He radically abolished the Bon-practices which had crept in again. But whereas Atiça in the eleventh century had declared practically all Tantras to be null and void, Tsong-Khá-pa in the fourteenth century acted differently. After a thorough examination he composed a ‘Secret Collection’ of these mystic formulae, which he ascribed to the Buddha himself. They are of an esoteric nature and point out especially the *intrinsic unity of the five metaphysical Buddhas (also called the Dhyâni-Buddhas or the Buddhas-of-Meditation) symbolizing the five cosmic forces.*

“It is an open question whether the beloved Jé-Rimpoche in acknowledging these ‘highest of all Tantras’ compromised with the religious ideas rooted in Tibet in order to get more followers, or that he did so from personal conviction. Since I belong to his adherents it stands to reason that I am inclined towards the latter. Of course Çâkyamuni was not able to preach all his wise tenets to the masses. Part of them were intended to be heard only by the bhikshus, the initiates, those who had shed everything and were spiritually advanced to such a degree as to understand his deeper Wisdom. The Tantras mentioned are said to belong to these special teachings.

“It is certain that Tsong-Khá-pa with his flexibility made many more converts than Atiça with his severity. About 1407 this ‘Great Re-

former' of Lamaism founded the sect of the 'Gelü-pa,' the 'Virtuous ones.' All followers of the Kadám-pa sect (the converts of Atiça) went over and many adherents of other sects as well. The Gelüg-pa monks have to observe celibacy. The discipline and order in their monasteries is more severe than in any other. Before Tsong-Khá-pa's time all lamas were wearing red caps. However, he ordered the reformed ones to wear yellow headgear to mark them off from the various other nonreformed and semireformed sects. Since then we speak about the 'Yellowcaps' and the 'Redcaps' or the 'Yellow Church' and the 'Red Church.'

"In 1409 'Jé-Rimpoche' founded the first Gelüg-pa monastery: 'Ga-den' (spelled 'Gah-ldan'), the 'Abode of Happiness' near Lhasa. Not long afterwards, in 1414, his most prominent disciple Gedün-Dub (spelled 'Gedün-Truppa'), a distant cousin of his, founded the monastery called 'Dè-pung' (spelled 'Drè-pung') or 'Bràs-spungs', the 'Rice-Heap,' because its numerous white buildings spread over the slope of the hill within their surrounding wall made one think of a heap of rice, when looked at from afar. In 1417, another of his disciples, Khàs-grüb-je, founded the monastery of 'Sera,' 'Hail.' These two monasteries were at loggerheads. 'Hail' thought it could destroy 'Rice-Heap,' although it was smaller. According to others 'Sera' means 'Hedge-of-Wild-Roses.' All three monasteries were situated in the neighborhood of Lhasa.

"In Dè-pung there lived nominally 7700 monks, in Sera 5500 and in Ga-den 3300, although actually in each of them there were usually many more inmates. Together they were called 'the Three Pillars' (namely: of Buddhism). During many centuries these monasteries were the stronghold of Tibet's spiritual power and in fact also of its worldly power, for the might of the Dalai Lama was based on these enormous communities of monks. Alas, in these centers of learning, piety, and devotion, many political intrigues were spun. . . .

"Later in his life, in 1445, Gedün-Dub founded yet another big monastery: 'Tashi-Lhünpo,' 'the Mount-of-Blessing' (also called 'Mystic Mount Méru'). It was situated near the city of Shigatsé, the capital of the province of Tsang, and housed 4000 monks. From the reign of the fifth Dalai Lama onwards, it would be the seat of the high "Incarnation" which the Westerners sometimes called the 'Tashi Lama,' but whom we Tibetans always designate as the 'Pänchen Lama' or 'Pänchen-Rimpoche.'

"Besides founding this Gelüg-pa sect which was to increase in power in later times, the reformer Tsong-Khá-pa established one of the most important religious institutions: the 'Mon-lam,' the 'Great

Prayer' which during the first three weeks of the New Year ('Lósar') is celebrated in all Yellowcap monasteries and later on by the order of the Dalai Lama in the Redcap monasteries as well. In Tibet the new year begins with the first new moon in February.

"As regards the significance of the Mon-lam: We Tibetans believe that the period during which the doctrine of the Buddha can lead people to Wisdom will last for five thousand years. Its influence is growing ever more during the first half of this period, after which it will diminish and finally disappear into nothingness. It is like this with everything on earth: to start with things will rise in an upward line and then go down again. In nature the same thing happens: think for instance of the sun, the moon, the stars!

"Twenty-five hundred years ago the Buddha was born. We are now halfway through the period mentioned, at the summit of its uplifting influence on humanity. The second half of this period, during which it will gradually diminish, is now beginning, so we are on our way to spiritual darkness. However, in the end there will be reborn in the West another Buddha, called Maitréya, the Buddha-of-Love who with his doctrine will raise humanity to a still higher spiritual level than did the Buddha Çâkyamuni. The Mon-lam is our Great Prayer to implore the Lord Maitréya to have mercy on the ones falling into darkness and to hasten his arrival.

"Tsong-Khá-pa died in 1418 in his sixtieth year, on the twenty-fifth day of the tenth month (November). It is believed that he too, just like Atiça, was an "Incarnation" of the Bodhisattva Mañjuçri. On each anniversary of his passing away in his memory the whole palace-complex of the Pótala, the great temple of Jo-khang and the monasteries De-pung, Sera, and Ga-den are illuminated with thousands upon thousands of butterlamps. That day is considered the official beginning of winter. The eighth day of the third month of the Tibetan year (April) is considered the beginning of summer.

"The earthly remains of 'Jé-Rimpoche,' as we are wont to call the Great Reformer, were mummified and placed in a 'chörten' (mausoleum-stûpa) twelve feet high. It is built in a small chapel in the monastery of Ga-den which was founded by him.

"So you see, Mem-sahib, that we have monks of various sects in the Land-of-the-Snow. However, the real difference between them is of course not dependent on the sect they belong to, but lies in their character. The lama education of each sect only produces a small elite of fine men of letters, a few great mystics, and some ascetic hermits, also quite a number of brainy teachers, many good salesmen and amiable bon vivants, but the vast majority are lamas who after their

Ge-lóng examination just lead a lazy, easy life of it.

“It has become late again, Mem-sahib. Some other time I will continue our tale.”

“Please, honored lama, don’t let me wait so long for I am quite eager to hear about the Dalai Lamas!”

“Yes, yes,” the other men cried, “just when the most beautiful part starts, you stop!”

“All right, in a short time we will go on,” promised the lama-vendor.

18: The Tiara Set With Rubies

I always wake up early in the morning. In Bodhnâth I used to wait in bed until the others opened their eyes. As a rule, dutiful Quísang was the first. She sat up on her mattress on the floor, stretched herself, and gave lazy Kipa a good shaking. Then she rose without a noise, smoothed her clothes so she was "dressed neatly" for the day, folded her sheets and blankets, and put them with her thin mattress in a corner of the room.

"It is getting light, Kipa, I'm going to the kitchen now."

Groans.

"Quísang," I whispered, "please let me know as soon as the Chinya lama unlocks the door of the turquoise-colored room?"

She went to light the fire and to cook the tea, then she came back saying "Everything is ready, Mem-sahib. You can wash yourself now."

I jumped out of bed, put a towel around me, and went out to the open platform on the wing opposite ours to clean myself under the tap of the petrol drum. By this time the first rays of the sun colored the snowy mountaintops on the horizon a pale pink, but the valley, covered with hoarfrost, still lay in a bluish shadow. Smoke mounted from the nomads' tents.

After my ablutions I knocked at pappa's door, entered, and received the morning blessing. "Tsering," the old gentleman said absentmindedly, "Long Life," while he touched my bent forehead.

In the turquoise-colored room no fire was laid any more than in the other rooms. In the early morning it was freezing, but Tibetans never seem to mind the cold. When once in a while they do feel shivery they will put on an extra coat. Unless they live in a big city they seldom wash, because nothing protects the skin so well from cold as a layer of dirt! So the inhabitants of the Land-of-the-Snow are what we call "dirty," but nevertheless they do not spread any body odor—that is, as long as they are in their homeland—because the impurities do

not decompose in the dry climate of Tibet, as is the case in low-lying, damp countries. Moreover, one should realize that a person does not get ever dirtier and dirtier: it is not long before the maximum adherence of foreign particles is reached. After this the further dirt simply falls off the former accumulated layer, all of its own accord.

But when I am cold and there is nowhere any fire I cannot possibly follow the Tibetan custom. I could not draw or paint with an extra coat on top of my woolen sweater, since it would hinder the movements of my arm. And as to cultivating a warm layer of dirt: like all Westerners, I love hygiene. So I wash scrupulously and always am freezing. Once in a while, when in Bodhnâth, I felt a craving for a hot bath or a nice fire in an open hearth, as was to be had in the beautiful hotels of Kâthmandú. But then I reflected I would not ever exchange all I experienced in the presence of my Tibetan family for those luxuries.

The China lama was not given to gossip in the morning, but he expectorated lavishly and cried "Spittoon!" from time to time. The servants came running in with the requested object when hearing this order. Later in the day, when the windows were opened, my Tibetan father simply spat outside, just as my other male relations and both my mummies. Their constant clearing their throats with disgusting noises and spitting voluminously in any direction always kept disgusting me.

Now Ganèsh entered the turquoise-colored room to receive his paternal blessing and said: "Good morning, sister Lili, listen please: Kámala doesn't want to speak to me, she is terribly angry."

"Well, brother, probably you did something to deserve it! Were you unfaithful?"

"*My private life is no business of my wives. They must not interfere. No, I would not ever accept any reproaches about such a thing! Anyway, they would not dare to do so. No, the quarrel is about something else. Tell me, sister: Am I right or am I not? I want to sell Kámala's gold tiara, the one she wore when we were married.*"

"Is that tiara a gift of yours, Ganèsh? If it is, then of course you have a perfect right to sell it!"

This may seem a strange thing to a non-Oriental, but it is a common custom for men to buy ornaments of gold or jewels as an investment. Their wives are allowed to wear them. However, the husbands sell them again when they are in need of cash. No woman would ever object against the procedure.

"No sister, the tiara belonged to Kámala before I knew her."

"Then she is in her right: You are not allowed to sell it without

her permission. And the more so where you have no shortage of money!"

"But I prefer getting ever wealthier to seeing her with a gold tiara! It is a wonderful feeling to own lots and lots of dollars. You know—don't you—that I change all I gain into dollars?"

"Ganèsh, you are horrible: Money, money, that is the only thing you think about. Yesterday you told me you had made such an enormous profit on that party of t'hangkas you got so cheaply from the lamas who had fled from the Chinese, as you sold them piece by piece for 700 and 800 percent of their cost price to the Americans! Then you earn daily quite a bit with your little shoe industry, furthermore. . . ."

"Stop, sister, I know, but I need quite big sums for some very special plans I cannot disclose to anyone! And after all, what is it to you if my wives possess any tiaras or no? I give both of them enough to eat and a new dress every year, so they have nothing to complain about. Come on, be a sport, follow me upstairs to help me to bring Kámala to reason!"

I went with him to the upper room where my sister-in-law sat on the floor, a broad gold tiara, beautifully wrought, in her slender hands and hot tears flowing down her cameo-like face. The ornament had dozens of pendants, each set with a deep red ruby like a sparkling drop of blood.

"Tell him, sister Lili," she wailed, "that he has no right to sell my possessions." I heard a strange little noise behind my back; was it a stifled laugh? Chring sat in another corner of the room, suckling her baby. No joy is as sincere as that about somebody else's sorrow!

I was on Kámala's side. However, it was in vain I tried to bring my Tibetan brother to other thoughts instead of agreeing with him. He shrugged his shoulders and finally left the room.

But things always work out in a different way from what one expects: The next day the tiara was sold and . . . Kámala's sobs had changed to tender smiles. It was evident Ganèsh had the gift to preserve the love of his young wife under all circumstances. . . .

I had made the portrait of two of the three lamas who had sung for my Tibetan father not so long ago. Now it was the turn of the third, the proprietor of the little gold Târâ I had not been allowed to touch. Knowing I loved to see something special, he had taken with him a strange kind of headgear. Its purpose was merely to protect him against the sun. It consisted of five narrow strips of cardboard covered with artistically embroidered satin, and it could be folded together into a small, flat parcel. One could put it easily away in one's clothes if not needed anymore.

The lama posed for me holding his double drum ("dámaru") with its colorful "tail" in one hand and the temple bell ("dílbu") in the other. He was still a very young man, with a smooth face. A happy smile always hovered about his arched lips. His mouth, slightly turned upwards at the corners, reminded me of the expression on the Buddha's face as it is always represented.

The drawing I made involved much labor. Now and then my model got up to have a look at it and to inspect if I drew everything exactly as it should be. A few times he said: "No, not good this pose of the hand holding the instrument, but my way good, look, because this movement is supposed to follow." He showed it clearly. So I altered my sketch several times according to his directions until it finally met with his approval. All in all, I was busy for many hours.

Whenever it was time for our midday meal it was the custom that every member of the family was served where he or she happened to be at the moment. The food always consisted of a big plateful of rice with strongly seasoned side dishes, ladled out in the kitchen. So Quisang came with it to the drafty gallery. When still behind the back of the lama, she made signs to me that my Tibetan father had prohibited her to serve him as well, although she always cooked far more than was needed. The remainder nobody wanted used to be given to our buffaloes and cows. As I knew the smiling monk was badly undernourished and as I seldom felt hungry myself, it goes without saying that after having been handed my food, I just passed the plate, full to the brim, to him. I would not even have mentioned this unimportant fact if—some time afterwards—it had not had such important consequences. The young man ate with ravenous appetite, but when one-third of the rice was still left he stopped, and with a mimic talent in which many Tibetans are masters, he let me know he knew a little boy who was, "só hungry"—he put on a very sad face while rubbing his tummy—and asked my permission to go and take him the remainder of the rice. He would return at once, really, I could trust him! Yes, *with* the plate, and of course he *understood* that the China lama would never allow it if he knew, but that I did not mind. I should believe him: he would never get me into difficulties!

In fact he did not stay away a long time. After his return I went on drawing for another hour and paid him his fee. Subsequently I continued my work from memory, as always so intensively that nearly nothing of "the outer world" penetrated into my consciousness. However, all of a sudden I realized that for some time I had been hearing terrific shrieks and, looking in the direction they came from, I saw that in a field beyond the one with the nomads' tents a dreadful fight was going on. A new group of Tibetans had arrived

that morning and settled themselves under a big tree. Now the men were thrashing each other and some women were also involved in the brawl. All the members of my family stood watching the combat from the platform of our house. They seemed to be quite interested. Rather abruptly most of the fighters calmed down. Only one fellow still went after one of the women and pitched into her like a madman. Thereupon she started to scream and yell so terrifically that it pierced me to the marrow. She never stopped, but gradually her shrieks changed into a hysterical howling. I took a glass of water and a few soothing tablets, went down the staircase and through the back door of our courtyard on to the stage of the drama.

"Sister, oooooh sister, what do you care about that rabble?" my brother Ganèsh cried after me. "If they want to kill each other, why, let them!" The Tibetans received me silently. The woman went on screaming. In the meantime she had grabbed her baby and, pressing the child desperately against her, she suckled it. Of course this comforted her partly. None of the other women consoled her. I made the poor creature drink some water and swallow the tablets. Finally she quieted down a bit. Who knows how much misery these refugees had gone through! One never should judge people who have suffered so acutely.

This little incident led to another. The next day one of the men of that same group came up to me. He looked terribly ill and had a suppurating wound on his hand. His arm was swollen and had a greenish colour. He asked me if I could cure him, I had such strong medicines, hadn't I? The Chinya lama happened to be quite near. I said to him: "This is a very severe case, pappa, I could not possibly treat it! Please tell the poor fellow he should go at once to Kàthmandú, to the mission hospital! There he will be treated by a clever doctor without any charge!"

"Pooh, just let him wait four more days, then the weekly ambulance service will come round and the attendant can dress his wound."

"But by then it might be too late pappa, he may die from this terrible infection! Just think of the pain he is suffering!"

"Well, daughter, I have no time for you anymore, I have to go to town in the car."

"But that is just fine, pappa! You could take him with you to the hospital."

"I wouldn't dream of doing anything of the kind: a dirty fellow like that in my beautiful car. . . ."

Fortunately I found a Támang willing to take the wounded Tibet-

an to the hospital for a small remuneration. There the patient was allowed to stay until he was cured. My dependent position made it impossible for me to help the refugees really well.

As for the refusal of the China lama, I could have foreseen it, as being in accordance with the customs prevailing in the whole family where nobody ever did anything for anybody else! Apart from my Tibetan father, my two brothers were the only ones allowed to use the car to do their commissions in the town. This they did exclusively for their private needs and those of their wives and little children, but never for their grown-up children who lived in our house too. They had to manage for themselves if they wanted something that was not for sale in Bodhnâth. To render a kindness or a service to a person who did not belong to the family, of course, was out of the question. And that was that!

During the many months I lived in Bodhnâth I never saw a single sign of affection shown by any of my relatives to any other. The babies were cuddled until they could walk. Afterwards the parents barely seemed to take notice of them! The men only spoke to their wives in a commanding tone, and whenever they were not submissive enough to obey the behests of their lords and masters they were thoroughly abused. Only the China lama made an exception to this insofar as he was really fond of Ganesh and Darling. Moreover, he adored Darling's little son Baba-Raja. Towards all his other descendants he felt utterly indifferent, as he once confessed to me in so many words!

Since the day I had the man with the festering hand taken to the hospital the refugees often came to consult me about their ailments. I tried to help them. They got accustomed to my company and gradually some of the women started to call me "didi." This is Nepalese for "sister." Some of the men followed their example. I felt quite flattered when one of them gave information about me to a new arrival in the following terms: "This is *not* a Mem-sahib, a lady, but our didi."

Now I actually felt I was accepted as a member of the big Tibetan family.

19: The World of Phenomenal Forms

I found myself once more in the small office of the Abbot of the Gelug-pa monastery in Bodhnâth. He sat, crosslegged in the lotus posture, on a high bench. I myself was seated at a lower level as is befitting for a pupil. He who has the knowledge of the True Doctrine and is entitled to teach it to other people is greatly honored by the Tibetans, so he has the right to the highest seat. When a Dalai Lama is not yet of age and not proficient in the tenets, his teacher will be seated even higher than He Himself!

The Abbot of the monastery rearranged his garnet-colored draperies with meticulous care and started: "The Tathâgata (the Buddha) once said: 'I have discovered a profound truth, difficult to fathom by ordinary people and only accessible to the minds of sages. Man lives in the whirlpool of the World-of-Phenomena and is therefore chained by the Law of Karma, of Cause-and-Effect. Why should I divulge to him that which I have discovered at the cost of laborious reflection! For they who are in the clutch of desire and hate will never be able to understand this tenet, which is mysterious and abstruse, impervious to coarse-minded ones. By disclosing it there would only result unpleasantness for myself.' Pondering thus, the Venerable One did not feel inclined to preach his Doctrine.

"But a Voice spoke: 'There are beings whose mind is barely darkened by a thin layer of the dust-of-Ignorance; they will surely understand the True Doctrine. Rise, oh Glorious One, teach those who wander around as pilgrims in the eternal Cycle of birth and death!'

"Then the Buddha looked at the world and *saw*. Just as in a lake of marvellously beautiful lotus flowers, all of which are born in the mud at the bottom, some will unfold themselves while still in the dark depth of the water, and others not before they have reached the surface, while a few will lift themselves up yearningly, only to open their pure petals when protruding beyond, untainted by a single drop of the turbid moisture. Similarly the Buddha saw that on the earth there were people of obtuse minds, people of active minds, and people

whose minds were pure and untainted. Then he said: 'Let the gate leading to the path of eternity be opened to each one willing to hear.'

"These three kinds of human mind, Rimpoche," I ventured, "make me think of the three 'gunas,' Tāmas, Rājas, and Sāttva, the three cosmic forces driving mankind to action. Obtuse is he who is trapped by Tāmas—the-inert-force, the bad guna leading to delusion and darkness. Eager for action is he who is urged by Rājas—the-active-force, the guna which—neither good nor bad—ever kindles desires in a person, thus binding him to earth. Pure of mind is he who lets himself be led by Sāttva—the-harmonious-force balancing the other two, the good guna conducting man to the purest bliss. But all three gunas fetter man to the World-of-Phenomena, to Mâyâ."

"Such is indeed the view of Indian yogis, Mem-sahib. Anyway, man has to detach himself from the World-of-Phenomena, or rather from the "Round-of-Reincarnations" ("Samsāra"). As to this Hindus and Buddhists agree. We think that it is the doctrine of the Buddha which can liberate those with a pure mind—the lotus flowers striving upwards—from the "Wheel-of-Births-and-Deaths" and will enable them to attain the condition of Nirvāna. But to reach this aim their ignorance, their ne-science, has first to be removed. And here we arrive at the "Chain of the Twelve Links" or of the Twelve-Interdependent-Causes-Leading-to-Reincarnation, for its first and—if you like—most important link is Ignorance.

"Wasn't it about this chain you asked me last time? It is depicted in twelve symbolic representations in the outer concentric circle (the 'rim') of the Wheel with the six 'spokes' between which are to be seen the six forms-of-existence of the Living-Beings. This chain is one of the basic principles of the doctrine of the Buddha. This symbol is very difficult to understand for a Westerner. I was told there are not two Western scholars who explain the significance of each of its links in the same way. The reason is that they know only their names in Sanskrit and in Pāli (the language spoken by the Buddha) and that none of these names has a correct synonym in Western languages, while, moreover, each of them covers several meanings. Now one would think: each of the links could be separately elucidated, but there exist no Western equivalents for the Sanskrit or the Pāli words one has to use in doing so. For instance 'Karma' and 'Samsāra' embrace various concepts and no Western synonyms can cover completely all they stand for.

"Now this is the interpretation considered correct by our sect of the Gelūg-pas: The first link, Ignorance or ne-science is the fundamental cause of everything which all the others depend on. *We con-*

sider Ignorance in this case synonymous with the Unconscious Will, the Will hiding in the very depth of every human being which, owing to Ignorance, isn't even conscious of its own purpose. Now, what is the unknown, unrealized urge of this Unconscious Will? It is the urge-to-exist. So the Unconscious Will is in reality the Will-to-exist, the Will-to-Live. And what does 'exist' or 'live' imply? A condition of continuous change, of eternal becoming. We call this 'bháva.' One can only find oneself in this condition when forming part of the World-of-Phenomena. So the Unconscious Will-to-live is the very first phase or link leading to the phenomenon 'Man' in the World-of-Phenomena.

"Before this Unconscious Will-to-live has made its entrance there it causes (for will is a force) a kind of mental action to come forth, to wit a Desire-to-attract-something-to-itself. For without any kind of encapsulation around the urge-to-exist, "changing," or "becoming," or "living" in the World-of-Phenomena will not be possible. "Drawing-something-to-oneself" is the second phase, the second link of the Chain originating from the first. In order to make you understand this completely, Mem-sahib, I first have to elucidate in brief how we Buddhists view the World-of-Phenomena in which we are living.

"The Buddha teaches us:

"I. Not a single Living-Being or thing in the World-of-Phenomena is self-born, has originated from itself (is autochthonous).

"II. Not a single form-of-existence in the World-of-Phenomena exists only in itself (is 'simple') for everything is a combination of different aggregates of forces or activities. Which aggregates will combine is, of course, an effect of special causes, and each of these causes is the effect of a former cause. So each series of causes-and-effects reaches backwards into an endlessly far removed past and proceeds into an endlessly far removed future. The quest of the 'primal cause of things,' according to the Buddha, is completely senseless.

"III. None of the combinations of aggregates exists forever: after a certain time the aggregates will disintegrate. They fall apart: a form-of-existence, a being 'dies.' This does not mean that the aggregates in themselves will stop existing. Each of them recombines with other aggregates in order to build a next form-of-existence, another being. Thus it is and ever will be in the World-of-Phenomena, for nothing existing in it will ever get lost and nothing will arise that did not exist before.

"Inside the forms-of-existence the compound is never constant either. Some of the aggregates will be severed, others will be added, while inside the compound the aggregates themselves will, as it were, be swirling around, so as to occupy time and again a different place in respect to each other.

“At the moment we will especially consider their combination called “man” in the World-of-Phenomena. When we realize the severing, adding, and swirling of the aggregates—every one of which is different from the other—we are not amazed anymore that man often is such a bundle of contradictions.

“Now what is the quintessence of this doctrine about the temporal combination of aggregates? That not a single phenomenon has an eternal existence, that everything is in a condition of eternal-becoming (‘bháva’). Everything is changing continuously or in other words: everything is alive! However, the various manifestations of ‘life’ are countless!

“IV. The Buddha has always explicitly denied the existence of an ‘individuality,’ a ‘personality,’ an ‘I,’ or whatever one wants to call it! Nothing, nobody ever has an individual ‘I’ or ‘Self.’

“There is no warrant to accept the existence of a nucleus around which the aggregates would combine themselves, and least of all an eternal nucleus, moving from one earthly body into another and forming a long chain of lives throughout the aeons, like the string in a pearl necklace forming an invisible connection between each pearl and the next.

“V. Finally, the Buddha teaches: Each form-of-existence is subject to suffering.

“Now, Mem-sahib, you will ask, of course: What is that which you experience as your ‘I’? This is a nearly endless series of impressions following each other very quickly. These are made by the World-of-Phenomena on your consciousness, similar to the impressions on the retina of your eye, made by the show of a cinema.

“The impressions of the World-of-Phenomena penetrating into your consciousness will continually call up analogous memories. Comparing these with each other you will come to certain deductions, to ideas and also to volitions (desires and decisions). So all these things are products of your mind, which we Tibetans call man’s sixth sense.

“Deluded by your Ingorance as to the true nature of things you will perhaps think that your consciousness is your ‘I,’ but such a thing would not be possible because this consciousness is dependent on causes, isn’t it! For what could we become conscious of unless there were feelings, sentiments, impressions and ideas?

“Could your thoughts, ideas, and volitions together form your ‘I’? Such a thing would not be possible either, since they are the effects of your feelings and impressions.

“Nor could your feelings and impressions form your ‘I,’ since they originate from the contact of your senses with the sense-objects producing these feelings and impressions.

“Man is convinced mistakenly he has an ‘I,’ and besides he is convinced wrongly that this ‘I’ is the ‘master’ or the ‘owner’ of the body!

"In this connection you might think it interesting to know that according to us the body consists of 'the solid,' 'the liquid,' 'the warmth,' and 'the moving,' symbolized by 'earth, water, fire and air,' or sometimes by the four elementary forces: inertia (the nonaccepting), cohesion (the attraction), radiation (the shining), and vibration.

"Is everything I have explained to you clear or no?"

"I never thought about things in this way, Rimpoché. But this reasoning seems quite logical to me."

"It is not at all my intention to persuade you to our way of viewing things, Mem-sahib. However, the preceding discourse has to become *clear* to you, if you want to understand the theory of the Twelve-Interdependent-Links which are the Causes-of-Reincarnation (Rebirth), based thereon.

"Let us once more sum up the construction of things in the World-of-Phenomena: I. *Not one single phenomenon, nothing, has originated from itself (nothing is autochthonous).* II. *Nothing is simple (nothing is homogeneous) (or the other way round: everything is composite).* III. *Nothing is eternally constant (everything is subject to change).* IV. *Nothing has an 'I' of its own (there is no nucleus in any phenomenon, and least of all an eternal one).* V. *Everything is subject to suffering (for life, change, is irrevocably bound up with suffering).*

"In connection with what I am going to tell you now, I have to point out the difference of terminology between the East and the West which often gives rise to confusion and misunderstanding. *The Westerners are wont to call things 'unreal' which they think nonexistent, illusive, mere delusion of the senses. In the Orient we are wont to call things 'unreal' which are not autochthonous (not self-born) and not homogeneous (not simple, but composite).* So when we teach: the World of Phenomena is unreal, we want to imply that it is not permanent but in a condition of ever-becoming. We don't mean to state at all that the World-of-Phenomena does not exist! Of course there exists something! However, not what—viewed superficially—is taken for real things actually existing (reality).

"It is not possible to say 'the World-of-Phenomena exists' anymore than 'the World-of-Phenomena does not exist'!

"On this point there is a difference of opinion amongst the various sects of Mahâyâna-Buddhism. We, followers of Tsong-Khâ-pa, say: 'The world exists, but is unreal.' Others say: 'The World is a delusion of the senses, a projection of the mind. In reality nothing exists outside ourselves. For when awake we think—mistakenly—it is the world which causes us to experience things, but while asleep (hence unconscious of the world around us) we do experience all kinds of

things just as well: we can feel joy and sorrow, perform actions, take decisions, meet people, etc., etc.'

"To the Sage observing how the (ever-changing) phenomena in the world are originating and disintegrating (an Oriental says 'come and go') there is no difference between 'existence' and 'nonexistence.'

"After these philosophical reflections we will now proceed with our 'Chain of Twelve Links.' As I said before, this is one of the most important teachings of the Buddha. But never forget, Mem-sahib: the Tathâgata compared the wise tenets he preached to humanity to a bunch of leaves he was holding in his hand, while those he knew but did not reveal were equal in number to the leaves of the tree under which he was seated.

"Before this Great Teacher 'got liberated from his earthly sheath' (i.e., died), he had divulged another few of his wise tenets to those of his disciples who were spiritually farthest advanced. However, he only allowed them to pass these on to their pupils 'from mouth to ear.' In this way some of the truths revealed by him became the 'secret doctrine of the initiates.'

"For that matter, there is a theory that the Buddha, Çâkyamuni, 'never was,' for that he had merely been a phantom, a 'reflex,' sent out by a metaphysical Buddha residing in the Tushîta-heaven."

20: The Chain of Twelve Links

"The first phase (link) of the Chain of Twelve Links—as we saw—was the *Unconscious Will-to-Live, to participate in the Eternal-Becoming.*

"Driven by this desire-to-live, aggregates, or material and spiritual forces, collect around the Unconscious-Will in untold numbers. Each of these forces is the effect of a cause and will later on become in its turn the cause of another effect.

"The incalculable *milliards of series of Causes-and-Effects together causing the World-of-Phenomena to 'turn' (the Wheel)*—this I have to repeat in view of the following exposition—reach backwards into the unimaginably far past and proceed into the unimaginably far future.

"So please, realize that *not a single action, however small and insignificant, will ever get lost. It creates a tension (that is a force) out of which a new series of forces originates, for it is always the cause of an effect becoming in its turn the cause of the next effect.* Effects can also be seen as activities, manifesting themselves on a material or a spiritual plane. At no time the effect of an action can be annihilated. Don't think that a 'good action' will abolish the effects of a 'bad action.' Each has its own series of effects.

"The second phase (link of the chain), called 'samskâra,' is the *grouping of the mental and material aggregates around the formless and unconscious will.* This word samskâra can be translated as: forming, construction, structure, formation, but also as action, deed, and finally as impression, imprint. Think in this respect of a potter (in Egypt the symbol of the Creator) 'kneading,' together with the unconscious will, the formless material and mental aggregates (according to the "*Karmic Law of Truth Absolute*" or of "*Cosmic Order*" hence of *Cause-and-Effect*) into the 'Phenomenon Man.'

"Now the human aggregates generally are divided into five groups or into five 'Combinations-of-Aggregates,' so-called 'Skandhas': (1) (Rûpa) form, material or physical characteristics and attributes; (2) (vedana)

sentiments: (3) (sanna) abstract ideas; (4) (samskâra) inclinations or possibilities: (5) (vinnana) ratio. When all these material and mental aggregates are grouped around the formless, unconscious will, it is formless no longer. A new son-of-man has made his entrance into the World-of-Phenomena.

“So one could also indicate the second phase (link) with the word ‘birth,’ in the more general sense however, of something turning up, coming to the surface, making its appearance, both in the material and the mental plane.

“The third phase (link) can take place now: ‘vijñâna,’ which is the unconscious will getting conscious. The will-to-live of the newly born gradually gets conscious of its experiences.

“This leads to the fourth phase (link): ‘nâma-rûpa,’ literally translated as Name-and-Form. As a result of the experience one gets conscious of: the mistaken sense of ‘I,’ or ‘Self,’ originates. This is the feeling of separateness between self and not-self, between ‘I’ and not-I (the others).

“As the fifth phase (link) the self-conscious will, clothed (as it were) in a human form, briefly ‘Man,’ realizes that which comes to him by means of his senses and he starts to ‘understand.’ The contact with the not-self, with the world around him, effected by means of the senses, together with the resulting comprehension is called ‘chadâyâtana.’ With it the complete union of the passive will and the active factors of human nature has come about. This union is sometimes called by the Buddhists ‘the three fires,’ as a rule entitled: Lust-Desire, Hate-Anger and Ignorance-Sloth. (Sloth fundamentally is the same as Ignorance or nescience, spiritual darkness, but more about this latter item later on.)

“The phases (links) now following are not difficult to understand. The sixth phase (link) is ‘sparsa,’ the contact, to wit purposely bringing the senses in contact with the surrounding world.

“The seventh phase (link) is ‘vedanâ,’ meaning feeling, originated by this contact, physically as well as mentally. Its nature is: Joy, sorrow, or indifference.

“The eighth phase (link) is ‘trishnâ,’ the ‘Thirst’ (or the desire of living), the cause of which is joy or sorrow, for one wants to repeat past joys and to evade future sorrows.

“The ninth phase (link) is ‘upâdâna,’ that is, continuously yielding to one’s lusts and desires, the ever-present ever-stronger want of satisfying them, leading to greed, covetousness, etc.

“So far everything seems to proceed logically from the preceding, but the tenth phase gives occasion to different interpretations. It is ‘bhâva,’ usually translated by ‘existing’ (remember: ‘existing’ is ‘ever-

becoming'). If so, this means life *in its completest form*, enriched for instance by having a partner, a house of one's own, and the means of keeping it up.

"The eleventh phase (link) is 'jâti,' birth, not quite clear in this series either. Generally it is thought that it means that in the ripeness of life the *birth of progeny* takes place. With it the human being enables other Unconscious-Wills to be clothed in human form. Thus he contributes to a part of the second link, the formation of a physical sheath for a human being.

"The twelfth and last phase (link) is 'jarâmarana,' *decline and death*, owing to which the combination of aggregates forming the "*Phenomenon Man*" will fall apart and the various activities will gradually form new combinations. However, they are outside the scope of this discourse. *Remaining all by itself is the Will, once more formless and unconscious of everything but . . . craving to exist.*

"So the twelfth link leads directly to the first: the chain is a closed cycle. The process will start anew from the very beginning. Reincarnation is unavoidable and thus one will never get away from this vicious Circular Course of the Chain of the Twelve Interdependent Causes leading to Reincarnation.

"Realize that Ignorance is forever present, be it in its form of Unconscious-Will, be it as spiritual darkness or as mental and physical Sloth. The first link is the cardinal point from which all the others originate. The last word about all this is not yet spoken, for in the center of the 'Wheel' Ignorance is once more depicted as one of the primal vices.

"Should Ignorance be removed, then the other Interdependent Causes-of-Reincarnations would disappear as well.

"All this together, Mem-sahib," the abbot of the monastery ended, "will give you more than enough to think about for the time being." He raised himself from his seat, draped his garnet-colored toga around himself, and left the small room without another word. For a long time I stayed there, motionless, staring in front of me. . . .

21: The Hermit

There are yogis in India of a special order to whom it is forbidden to give any attention to their body—which indeed is considered to be merely the “garment” one wears during one’s short pilgrimage on earth. Therefore they allow their hair to grow without ever combing it, so it gets entangled into long, felt-like strands which as a rule they roll together in a slipshod way. On one of my walks around the stūpa I happened to see a Tibetan with his hair dressed in a similar manner. The dull, untidy locks were twisted into a high knot on top of his head and adorned with a queer silver ornament.

“Come!” (“Sho!”) I said, and took him with me to the lama-vendor.

“Have I got to tell him that his portrait is to be made?” my friend asked with a laugh.

“That is not all, honored lama,” I said. “I also want to know what kind of man he is.”

“Doubtless a ‘naldyórpa’ (i.e., a meditating hermit). I shall ask him” They exchanged a few words. “Yes, after this man had received tuition in a Redcap monastery where he passed his ‘ge-tsúl’ examination, at his twentieth year his heart felt inclined towards a life in solitude. He got permission to retire from monastic life to fulfil his ardent desire. In the mountains he met with a ‘guru’ (a spiritual teacher) who took him on as his ‘chéla’ or ‘sishya’ (spiritual pupil). Together with two other disciples, he served him—as one always serves his guru—and was taught by him.”

“In magic knowledge also?”

“I am willing to ask him, but he is obliged to deny it if it should be true, Mem-sahib. You know, the kind of tuition you mention takes the following course: first the pupil has to pass through many years of physical and mental training (on the one hand muscle and breathing exercises and on the other hand long, concentrated meditation) after which—if the guru finds him suitable for it—he gets a so-called

'àngkur' from him. This is an initiation, always in front of a special 'mándala' (in Tibetan 'kyilkhor'), a magic circle with various objects in it (or the images thereof), each having a symbolic meaning. This is always meant to be a representation of the universe, to concentrate and meditate upon. Such an àngkur does not consist so much of 'letting a person into a secret' as of ceremonially 'transferring to him certain powers' concerning that ability for which it is meant, always together with the appropriate powerful mantra. *The initiate (or adept) has to swear an oath of secrecy not only as to what magic knowledge he may now possess, but also as to the fact that he does possess it.* Sometimes it happens that one has been associating for years with somebody before accidentally discovering that he is initiated in some respect or other.

"There are various abilities one can obtain under the guidance of a guru: telepathy (sending out currents of thought and receiving another man's thoughts), clairvoyance (being able to see what is hidden from other people, for instance a person's 'aura,' i.e., the radiation from his etheric body), distant voyance (seeing something happening in a different place from where one is at the time), distant audience (hearing something in a different place from where one is at the time) and seeing in the past or the future. Furthermore there is the ability of raising one's own body-temperature (metabolism), so such an initiate can reside on a barren mountaintop wearing only a cotton garb. We call this capacity "tumo." And finally there is making oneself heavy, light, or invisible.

Then there is the ability of raising one's own body temperature (metabolism), so such an initiate can reside on a barren mountaintop, wearing only a cotton garb. We call this capacity "tumo."

"Many Tibetans strive especially to make themselves light, which enables them to walk very fast. For in that case their feet hardly touch the ground anymore. To a certain extent one can compare their movement to that of a flat stone skipping over the surface of water. We call such a fast walker a 'lung-pa' (wind man) or 'lung-gom-pa' (wind meditation man) ("gom" is to meditate). He can cover enormous distances in an incredibly short time and in doing so never follows the roads but goes straight across the most difficult ground towards his goal. Automatically he dodges trees and rocks, for he is moving in a trance caused by meditation. Without having any rest or taking any food he never stops until he has reached his goal. Such journeys may take more than twenty-four hours. Nobody is allowed to address a lung-gom-pa on his way, as all of us know: '*recalling' a person from his trance may cause his instant death.*'"

"Is this fast motion a sort of levitation?"





"Not a complete levitation, of course. That is another feat which can be attained, but it is extremely rare and seldom heard of. At any rate, it is true that very advanced lung-gom-pas grow so light in the course of time that they load themselves with iron chains if they want to go about in the ordinary way."

"I don't yet see how it can be possible to eliminate the law of gravitation."

"We do not accept that law in the western sense, Mem-sahib. We see it more in the sense of a magnetic force from which one can partially exempt oneself by changing the speed or the direction of the infinitely small whirling particles which constitute the human body. This is achieved by *putting one's body and mind into a special rhythm caused by a certain way of breathing combined with the continual repetition of the appropriate mantra*. Well, do you still want me to question this yogi concerning his magic abilities?"

"No, you are right, honored lama, it is not proper to question a person about something he is not allowed to speak of. However, I am very much interested in something else: Why has he come to Nepal?"

The men talked again and the lama-vendor informed me "As I thought, the naldyórpa is a "gom-chen," a meditating recluse. After his guru had died, he lived for a long time in a secluded grotto. People in the neighborhood came to bring him food and to receive his blessing or ask his advice whenever they were in trouble. But the military road that the Chinese are now constructing right across Tibet, was not very far from his cave-dwelling. The blowing up of the rocks, necessary for the work, spoiled his quiet. And afterwards the traffic in the vicinity would completely destroy the solitude he loved so much. For that reason he came here as an 'ardyo-pa,' a wandering pilgrim. He wants to seek another 'cham-khang' in the Nepalese Himálayas.

"'Cham' means 'enclosure' and 'khang' means 'house.' The combination comes near to 'retreat.'" the lama-vendor explained. "Herewith is meant a sort of *spiritual enclosure* which must not be broken into. Even a room in one's own house in which somebody retires from the world may become a 'cham' if only a single person is permitted to bring in the meals or to put them down in an adjoining room. But for a retreat of more than a year it is the custom to settle in a sort of stone cabin, especially built for the purpose somewhere in a lonely place. The daily food is then placed from the outside into a recess with two hatches so that one never needs to see or hear anybody. There are various sorts of cham-khangs. Sometimes the ascetic can overlook the vast surroundings, sometimes he denies himself the delight of a wide prospect by having a high wall built around it. However, in

14. This handsome nomad ("dok-pa") from time to time looked in a weathered looking-glass inside his small medicine-box. Subsequently, he got up to have a look at my drawing and nodded contentedly. "But you are forgetting this!" he exclaimed, pointing at a little birthmark on his face. (Part III: 4)

such a case he can still enjoy the sun and the fresh air inside the rampart. Should he want to deny himself this pleasure as well he will never go outside and will barricade the lower part of his window so that he can merely see a small strip of sky. The severest form of cham is having oneself enclosed by masonry into a cave."

"The Chinya lama has recently told me about it. Would you, please, ask the naldyórpa what the silver ornament in his hair signifies?"

"I need not ask him, it is quite evident. The cylinder at the lower end probably holds a mantra and some charms. Next comes a smooth disc which is a 'magic mirror' (a 'mélong'), used by priests during spiritual cleansing rites. The round face with the grinning mouth above it is a devil's head, and on top there is the flame-shaped symbol called the 'jyoti,' the light of Spiritual Enlightenment."

I warmly thanked the lama-vendor for his explanations, took the hermit home with me, and drew his portrait. His face wore an intensely sad expression. It was clear he was yearning for his former unbroken solitude.

In this way I sometimes learned interesting things through my "model-hunting". Thus at another time I had a man sit for me who had a ribbon aslant his shoulder on which he had fastened two objects I had never seen before. One was a dagger with three blades. The lama-vendor afterwards told me it was a so-called "pur-bú," a ritual dagger for exorcising demons. This was a replica of the famous original Pur-bú which—as they say—"had come flying from India to the Land-of-the-Snow" some centuries ago. It has since been kept in the monastery of Séra as one of the holiest objects in Tibet. Every New Year's Day it is taken in procession to the Dalai Lama carefully wrapped in many pieces of silk for fear it may fly back again to India.

The other object my model had hanging on his breast was a very broad bone ring. He explained it to me himself, "This I wear on my thumb in the evening to protect me from witches. It is only meant for us ordinary people, Mem-sahib, for distinguished people don't frequent places where the witches come together at night."

At other times my endeavors to draw portraits led to funny conversations. One day, for instance, I met a lovely Tibetan woman in our square. She was a native of the village of Kirúng (the inhabitants of which are related to the Tibetan tribe of the Sher-pas). These people live in the wooded parts of the Himâlayas where the soil is sometimes quite moist. As a precaution against their dress getting damp when sitting down somewhere, they always wear a doubled-up woolen apron on their backs which they fasten in front with a so-

called semibelt ending in hooks on either side, or otherwise with a very broad clasp with hooks, like this woman's. Poorer people wear a goatskin by way of back-apron. Just the same their other (ornamental) apron in front will not be missing.

The young beauty in question was evidently well-to-do, for the clasp holding together the doubled up cloth on her back was made of finely wrought silver, and she wore a long chain of coral beads interspersed at equal distances by large pieces of golden amber. Furthermore, a typical Tibetan ornament was attached to her left shoulder, stretching down to her waist in front. It consisted of many strings of seed-pearls held at the ends by silver staves and in the center by a silver disk set with corals, causing them to hang parallel to each other.

At the time my nephew Mání happened to be with me and I made him ask the handsome woman whether she was willing to pose for me. "I shall first have to get my husband's permission" she answered.

And there he came! A tall, big fellow, a Kham-pa: "What is that foreigner thinking of!" he burst out indignantly to Mání. "A portrait of my wife? Out of the question! How dare she ask such a thing? And listen, you," he screeched at her, "If you let yourself be persuaded to have your portrait made you shall go to hell, do you hear! To hell, and there you will burn!"

"Mání, did you tell him that I always pay people for posing?"

"It is no good, auntie, you cannot buy off hell with money."

"All the same, let him know that I always pay," I persisted. "You never can know!"

Mání translated my words, after which the Tibetan's attitude changed completely. "How much money does Mem-sahib offer?" he asked eagerly.

"Three rupees," my nephew answered.

"I want at least five!"

I had understood him. "All right," I consented "you shall have five."

Then the potentate turned to his better half with a honey-sweet smile and said: "When you get five rupees for your portrait, little wife, you shall not go to hell! But don't forget to hand them over to me!"

22: The First Four Dalai Lamas

For the third time we were gathered with the same company in the minute shop of the lama-vendor. That morning he had sent a message to my Tibetan father that he was expecting me at the usual hour. This time there was even a big earthenware jar-with-a-spout in readiness from which our host poured out a cup of butter tea for each of us. We sipped pleasantly while regarding him full of expectation. He looked round contentedly, as one does who is at the point of giving a great pleasure to others.

“Indeed, it is a very peculiar story,” he began at last, “how it came about that the Dalai Lamas started to reign over our beloved country. To understand it we have to return for a moment to the most distinguished disciple of the ‘Great Reformer’ Tsong-Khá-pa whose name I mentioned last time: Gedün-Dub. He was born in 1391 in a cattle-corral as the third child of poor herdsmen. That same night a gang of robbers invaded the place. The mother hurriedly hid her newborn among some stones and fled with the remainder of the family. The robbers simply took everything they could grab and ran away. When next day the parents returned, they found to their utter delight that the babe was alive and in good health, in company of . . . a crow who acted as his protector, croaking loudly to keep away the birds of prey which were circling overhead.

“When this child was five years old, he tended the goats of a rich peasant, and to while away the time he chiseled the holy mantra ‘Om Mani Padme Hum’ in the neighboring rocks.

“When he was seven his parents sent him to the Náthang monastery as a servant, for they had not enough money to enter him as a pupil. But quite by chance a rich high lama visiting this ‘gompa’ discovered that the youthful servant was extremely intelligent and he had him educated at his cost. In the shortest possible time the young monk, who had received the ritual name of Gedün-Dub, passed all his examinations with good results so he was already a ‘Ge-lóng-pa,’

a full-fledged lama at the age of twenty.

"Not until then did the youth meet Tsong-Khá-pa, and it was not long before he became the most learned and trusted of all his disciples. He even became his 'spiritual son.' Seven years hence he founded the great Gelúg-pa monastery of 'Dè-pung,' the 'Rice-heap,' and he himself governed it as its abbot. In his later life, in 1453, he founded near Shígatsé the monastery of 'Tashi-Lhünpo,' 'the Mount of Blessing' which—as we saw—would in future be the seat of the Pànchen Lama. In 1475 he died.

"And now, do please listen, Mem-sahib! Long after his death this man was considered to have been the first Dalai Lama!

"In the monastery of Dè-pung, in a short time come to great wealth by the liberalhandedness of the pious Tibetan people, the death of their first abbot was deeply lamented. The high lamas who were its inmates just could not make up their minds whom to choose to become his successor. Nobody was talented enough in their eyes!

"You should know that the idea of reincarnation, hailing from India, had long since been adopted in the Land-of-the-Snow. But it was only now the conviction arose that the soul (actually I had better say 'the essence,' for the existence of a 'soul' as such is not accepted by us) of a great scholar or of a saint would come to birth again very soon after his death, and that it was possible to 'discover' in a certain way this essence in his new body. Such an 'Incarnation' (of an extraordinary personality) is called a 'tülku' (spelled 'trülku') in Tibet. The Mongolian word 'Hubilgán' is sometimes used as well, and in case of a very high tülku there is the Mongolian word 'hutúktu.' Westerners sometimes translate 'tülku' as 'living Buddha,' which is pure nonsense, for somebody who has reached Buddha-hood will never be Incarnated on earth anymore."

"I don't quite understand, honored lama, *why* such a tülku soul will ever anew reincarnate shortly after having passed away. For such is not the case with other souls, (essences) I take it?"

"The reason for it is this, Mem-sahib: a tülku is a soul (I go on using this word just to make things quite clear to you) who has taken upon himself to perform a certain mission on earth which will take a longer time than the duration of one single existence on earth. To be able to fulfil such a task—for instance governing an important monastery—he will need, as it were, an uninterrupted series of earthly lives. So he *has* to Incarnate within a rather short time after his death, while "ordinary" souls are having a period of rest and perhaps of learning (without instruction!) in the 'Bar-do', *which is a person's bodyless state (condition) 'Between-two' (nameiy earthly lives).* So, as

soon as the new-born body (the terrestrial sheath) of such a *tùlku*-essence (soul) has been discovered, by those who are considered able to do so (about which later on more), he is to be taken to the place where he can resume his former position (let us say as abbot of a monastery) and this as soon as possible. He will, so to speak, succeed himself. This is called the "hubilgánic succession". It has great advantages. Formerly, a Redcap-abbot, who was actually *not* allowed to marry, (for Redcaps in a *high* function are never allowed to) had in exceptional cases to be succeeded by his son (as for instance the mighty Sá-kya abbot). However, such a thing was once and for all impossible in the case of a Yellowcap-abbot, absolutely and undissolubly bound to celibacy. Now the decision, which grown-up lama was to take over the high position of a deceased abbot, would evidently each time anew have led to strife and intrigues. But the hubilgánic succession gave an ideal solution. Nobody ever rebelled against a *tùlku*, a child in whom—as people were firmly convinced—the soul of the former abbot had come back to this world. Moreover he would be brought up from his very youth (another advantage!) so as to be able to fulfill his function according to all requirements and traditions. As a rule the parents have to cede the child, discovered to be the *tùlku* of a reincarnated abbot, before his fourth year to the monastery in question."

"But, honored lama," I interrupted, "if they should not feel like it and prefer to keep their little boy at home, then what?"

"In such a case the child will die, Mem-sahib, for the soul of the abbot had chosen *that* little body, as a sheath, on purpose to continue in it his former function. If prevented by stupid parents, he will leave it in order to reincarnate as the boy of sensible parents who won't object to his following his religious destination, who on the contrary are proud to have been allowed to produce the earthly sheath for such an uncommon soul! It stands to reason, doesn't it?"

"We take it that at the earliest a *tulku* will incarnate forty-nine days after his death and at the latest two years later. As a rule, however, he will do so in less than one year. "Of course it is difficult for us to find out which newborn the soul of a certain *tùlku* has chosen to live in. Generally the deceased will in the course of his life have given some indications in what region he intends to reappear. Very often about the time of his birth all kinds of miracles will take place around such a spot. For instance: Close to the house there may be a tree abloom long before its time, or there are strange signs in the sky, or a sick person will suddenly be cured after having touched the mother who is expecting him. Moreover, the body of the child we look for,

nearly always has certain distinctive marks: a mole of unusual form or something of the kind. The various children seriously considered to be the *tülku* searched for will be brought to the monastery, when a little older, each of them will be shown ritual objects which belonged to the deceased, together with their exact replicas. When a child shows he 'recognizes' his own former possessions by grasping them, this is a decisive 'proof' he is the abbot himself. And if he doesn't, lots will be drawn indicating which of the little candidates is the one looked for.

"The idea on which recognizing an object is based is the deep-rooted conviction that a newly reincarnated soul will during the first years in his next body (or 'garb') still remember things about his former earthly existence. When growing older, his memories will fade away because of his new impressions and experiences. That is the reason why we never delay searching for a *tülku*. It is generally accepted that an ordinary person will only remember his former earthly existence during the earlier years of his present incarnations, whereas a saint or a great scholar *might* do so till he is seven or more. It stands to reason that all the abbots of great monasteries belong to the latter group.

"Sometimes it is realized after a man's death whose '*tülku*' he must have been. It was only *afterwards* king Srong-Tsan-Gámbo was looked upon as the "Incarnation" of the Celestial Bodhisattva Chènrési, and both Atiça, and Tsong-Khá-pa were thought to be "Incarnations" of Mañjuçri, the Bodhisattva-of-Wisdom.

"I had first to explain all this to you, or you might not be able to follow the rest of the story. Well then, after the death of Gedün-Dub in 1475 some very wise lamas got convinced that his essence had incarnated anew in a child born in a distinguished family in 1476. He became the second abbot of Dè-pung. It was not long before the example of this monastery, searching for the *tülku* of the deceased one who was to succeed him, was followed by nearly all monasteries. Herewith the question of the inheritance of his personal belongings was solved at the same time: the new abbot just 'recovered' his own possessions.

"The boy about to govern Dé-pung received the ritual name of Gedün-Gyátso. He was the first who had the word 'gyatso' in his name. It signifies 'ocean.' Under his rule the Yellow Church founded by Tsong-Khá-pa had an enormous increase of followers. So many lamas of the Red Church left the Land-of-the-Snow to try and make converts for their sects in other Himálayan countries. But the Yellow Church too sent out missionaries to foreign regions to convert people to Lamaism. By their work the famous Five-Pagodas Temple was con-

structed near Peking in China, and also the magnificent temple-monasteries on the Wu-tai-shan, the five-topped mountain on which one day Mañjuçrî in meditation had seen a vision of lake Nâga-vâsa where the golden lotus of a thousand petals was opening its cup, out of which—like a flame—had arisen the Âdi-Buddha Svayâmbhu.

“In Tibet itself the Yellowcap monasteries grew in wealth and landed property. During the absence of the abbot or when he was pressed for time on account of his many duties, a ‘treasurer’ managed the worldly goods.

“The second abbot of Dè-pung, Gedûn-Gyâtso, who posthumously was considered the second Dalai Lama, died in 1542.

“The child in whose body he Incarnated anew in 1543 belonged to the nobility and was given the ritual name of Sõnam-Gyâtso. He became a prince-of-the-Church of great energy and gifted with diplomacy. Through him many Redcaps in Tibet itself went over to the Yellowcaps. The mighty chieftain of Mongolia, Áltan-Khan, invited him to come to his country. This ruler was a conqueror of the old style. In China his invasions were feared to such an extent that it was against him that for the last time the famous ‘Chinese Wall’ got fortified once more. During Áltan-Khan’s campaign against the Tangûts, two Tibetan lamas fell into his hands. Their faith is said to have made quite an impression on him. According to others, they cured him when he was ill. For one of these reasons, or perhaps just from political considerations, he invited Sõnam-Gyâtso to come and teach the Buddhist tenets to the people of Mongolia who threatened to relapse into their ancient Bon-practices. The third abbot of Dè-pung came at once and addressed the population in this style: ‘When a man has died, oh Mongolians, you shall no longer burn alive his wife, nor his servant, nor his horse, nor his cattle. You shall not offer any human sacrifice or animals to your god Onkö. But from now onwards you shall offer “the three white offerings” to the Buddha: milk, butter, and cheese. Furthermore, from now onwards you shall keep fasts and not eat meat on the days of the full moon and the new moon!’ In this way Sõnam Gyâtso brought about the ‘second conversion’ of Mongolia, a feat which was greatly to influence the whole future history of Tibet. Áltan-Khan was extremely contented and gave him the honorable title of ‘Talé.’ This was actually nothing but a translation of his own name ‘Gyâtso.’ Either word signifies: ‘he who equals the Ocean’ as to greatness, virtue and wisdom. The appellation Gyâtso-Lama or Talé-Lama was afterwards corrupted by Westerners into the word Dalai Lama

• “But let us go on with the history: In Mongolia, upon the authority of Áltan-Khan and under the leadership of Sõnam-Gytso, all Red-

cap monasteries were transformed into Yellowcap monasteries, and besides, many new ones were founded. The nomadic tribes living in spacious circular tents of felt, so-called 'yurts,' became so enthusiastic that they even founded 'flying monasteries,' quickly transportable tent-monasteries, also in such yurts!

"Sönam-Gyátso returned to Tibet, but a decade afterwards he visited Mongolia once more. There he died in 1588.

"It was an extremely lucky coincidence (if a coincidence it was!) that his next "Incarnation" happened to be as a Mongolian prince. It is said that this wondrous child was born with a prayer chain of mountain-crystal in his little hand! Because the reincarnation of the head of the Tibetan Yellow Church had taken place in newly converted Mongolia, an undissoluble link was welded between the peaceful Land-of-the-Snow and the Land-of-the-Pastures, so much feared because of its armed forces.

The princeling got the ritual name of Yónten-Gyátso. In 1602 he left his homeland to assume his function of fourth abbot of Dè-pung in Tibet. The Mongolians didn't like to see him go. So the Tibetan lamas left a representative of his in the country of his birth, an "Incarnated" Great-lama, who became the abbot of the most important monastery in its capital, Urga. Later on he was considered the highest tülku (Hutúktu) existing after the Dalai Lama and the Pànchen Lama, known as the 'Maidári-Hutúktu': an "Incarnation" of the learned historian Târanâtha.

"From this moment onwards many thousands of Mongolians used to make a pilgrimage to Tibet, where they gave great presents in money to all the monasteries they visited. Yónten-Gyátso, the fourth Dalai Lama, was a gentlehearted abbot of Dè-pung and a docile Head-of-the-Yellow-Church. Alas, he died as early as 1616, not quite twenty-seven years old.

"During his life and that of his predecessors, the power of the Gelúg-pa sect had been steadily increasing without many setbacks. It had been a calm before the storm. The Yellow Church might have gone down if "the Great Fifth" had not been born in 1617."

23: The "Great Fifth"

"Now it is time to stop," said the lama-vendor.

But the protest of the listeners was unanimous: "We aren't going home until you have told us about 'The Great Fifth' (Dalai Lama).

Our historian did not need much pressing: "Once more I have to turn to the past for a moment," he said. "One of the eight best-beloved disciples of Tsong-Khá-pa's was Khas-grüb-je. He was born in 1385 and died in 1438, as the abbot of the monastery of Ga-den, founded by the "Great Reformer" himself. Since then he had reincarnated several times as a tülku, having the same function. He was in his fourth body, called Lòbsang-Tànpai-Gyàltsen when in 1617 the fifth Dalai Lama (the fifth "Incarnation" of the abbot of Dè-pung), called Nàg-dban Lòbsang-Thùbten-Gyàtso, better known as Lòbsang-Gyàtso, was born as the son of a Tibetan officer. As Lòbsang-Tànpai-Gyàltsen was a noble, artistically gifted, and very learned man, he was chosen to become the teacher of Dè-pung's new abbot. Mutual respect and profound friendship sprang up between the two. When the pupil had come to power he gave his older friend the title of 'Pànchen Rimpoche,' 'the Jewel-precious Teacher.' It was he who became the 'Pànchen Lama.' So posthumously his former "Incarnations," to start with Khàs-grüb-je, were henceforward called the first three Pànchen Lamas. Later on Lòbsang-Tànpai-Gyàltsen, giving up the function of abbot of Ga-den, was appointed abbot of the great monastery of Tàshi-Lhünpo, founded by the first Dalai Lama near the city of Shígatsé in the province of Tsang, and after him all the Pànchens held the same dignity.

"As everybody knows, Lhasa is situated in the province of Ü. Since the fourteenth century, a kind of royal dynasty had its seat in the adjacent province of Tsang. But now an ordinary stablehand, known as 'Tsang-pa,' that is, the 'Man from Tsang,' managed to draw all the power of these 'kings' unto himself. In 1630 he even built a castle near Shígatsé for himself to live in. He usurped, in fact, the

place of the royal ruler of Tsang. Since he was a follower of the Sá-kya-pas (one of the Redcap sects) and hated all Yellowcap monks he started to harass the latter from his stronghold. First he destroyed the monastery of Tashi-Lhünpo. Subsequently invading the province of Ü with his staunch followers, he chased away the monks from the monasteries of Séra and Dè-pung, the Fifth Dalai Lama, at the time the abbot of Dè-pung, made his escape to the monastery of Ga-den.

"It goes without saying that the ecclesiastical prince immediately turned for help to the Mongolian dynasty, quite well disposed towards Tibet. At the moment Gúsri-Khan (the chieftain of the Oelöt-Mongolians in the region of Kóko-nor) was its representative. Not long before, in 1640, he had granted the abbot the title of 'Dalai' ('Talé'), just as Áltan-Khan had in his days bestowed it on the third Dalai Lama. Gúsri-Khan, a fanatic champion of the Yellow Church, had some years previously dispelled the Khálka-Mongolians, followers of the Red Church, from east Tibet. It was meat and drink to him now to march against the mighty Tsang-pa who had set out to annihilate the Yellow Church. So he came immediately with his bellicose troops, defeated the usurper and occupied the provinces of Ü and Tsang, proclaiming himself king of Tibet. He had Tsang-pa sewn into a yak skin and drowned in the river Tsang-chu (Brahmapútra), after which *the Mongolian Khan presented the two central provinces to the twenty-five-year-old Dalai Lama Lòbsang-Gyätso. On this fact is based the right of all later Dalai Lamas to the secular power over Tibet.*

"Gúsri-Khan left a Mongolian garrison in the Land-of-the-Snow. From that time onward it supported the Yellow Church and caused Tibet's ruler to be considered a mighty king even outside his own country.

"Since the fifth Dalai Lama, Lòbsang-Gyätso, as head of the largest monastery, virtually was the head of the Yellow Church, he became the first monarch to wield not only the spiritual but also the secular power over Tibet. His position having become unassailable, on the strength of it he declared himself to be an "Incarnation" of the "Celestial Bodhisattva Chèn-resí," (Avalokitèçvara) 'He who looks downwards,' the Saviour of man, and from ancient times Tibet's Protector. On this declaration Lòbsang-Gyätso became the first priest-king viewed as a Celestial-on-earth. Being a tülku he was naturally 'the same' as the preceding four abbots of Dè-pung. So it naturally followed that all of them too had been "Incarnations" of Chèn-resí. As I mentioned before, they were posthumously considered to be the first four Dalai Lamas.

"In 1650 His Holiness Lòbsang-Gyätso had it publicly made known that his honored teacher, *the Pänchen Lama*, whom he looked

upon as his spiritual father, *was an earthly "Incarnation" of the "Celestial Buddha Amitâbha," 'He of the Infinite Light.'* For according to the metaphysical doctrine Amitâbha was the spiritual father of the Celestial Bodhisattva Chèn-resí, so of himself.

"Most Westerners do not understand this relationship. They say: 'A Buddha is superior to a Bodhisattva; a father is superior to his son. So the Pànchen Lama is superior to the Dalai Lama.' But we have quite a different view of these things: Chèn-resí is an emanation of Amitâbha, so the two are spiritually on a par. *Only as regards secular power is the Dalai Lama the higher of the two since the Panchen Lama has no secular power at all.*"

"Has a Dalai Lama a position analogous to that of the Pope, honored lama?" I asked, but I promptly continued: "No, of course not, for a pope is chosen and not born as such. Moreover, he has no worldly power like the Dalai Lama, neither is he viewed as a Celestial being on earth. But in any theological discussion the word of the pope is decisive, for according to Roman Catholics he is infallible. Is your priest-king as an "Incarnation of a Celestial Bodhisattva" infallible too?"

"No, not at all, Mem-sahib: as Chèn-resí He is omniscient, but in adopting a human sheath (a body), His knowledge has partly become obscured. That is why He has to be taught the holy Wisdom all over again from childhood onwards. There is no reason why we should consider His word infallible. As regards theological questions, the opinion of a very learned lama may even be better than His. But let us continue Tibet's history.

"The gifted and ambitious fifth Dalai Lama took the reins of government in his hands with great energy. Above all things it was his aim to consolidate the power of the Yellow Church for all times. To start with, he declared it to be the state church. From now on its followers were the only ones qualified for government functions. He simply forced many Redcap monasteries to change into Yellowcap ones. As often as not their holy books, founded on Redcap principles, were burnt. A real exodus of Redcap lamas from Tibet took place. As missionaries they spread all over the countries of Bhutan, Sikkim, Nepal, and Ladakh, but also over east Tibet, which is most difficult to be reached. In all those regions their influence has endured until to-day. Besides, the Great Fifth organized and centralized the whole secular government. He maintained discipline and order with an iron hand. Briefly, he laid the foundations for the state of Tibet as it is to-day.

"The priest-king had no time anymore to continue his work con-

nected with the dignity of abbot of Dè-pung. Besides his other activities, he aimed at construction. A great deal of his attention was directed towards this goal. To start with, he had the destroyed monastery of Tashi-Lhünpo rise anew in a more imposing style than before. He also enlarged the monastery on top of the steep 'Chàk-porí,' the 'Iron Hill' on the outskirts of Lhasa, famous for its training of lama-physicians and its hospital. At the time Tsong-Khá-pa had studied there too.

"The other hill near Lhasa was called 'Már-porí,' the 'Red Hill.' It was about three hundred and seventy-five feet high. In the seventh century the great king Srong-Tsan-Gámbo had built his small fortified castle on its top. The Dalai Lama changed its name into 'Pótala,' after the mystic mount of Pótala on an island off the Chinese coast, according to a legend the earthly abode of the Celestial Bodhisattva Chèn-resí, from where 'He looked downwards.'

"The Pótala palace complex which the Great Fifth had constructed here is one of the most impressive buildings of the whole world. With its walls slightly sloping inwards it seems as it were to rise upwards from the bare rock. The center part, thirteen stories high, with galleries around a courtyard, contains the palace proper: the private rooms and chapels of the priest-king. It was painted red. Hence its name 'Póbrang Mårpo,' the Red Palace. Forty artists were occupied for more than ten years to paint its innerwalls with historical and allegorical frescoes and its ceilings with various mândalas ('kyilkhors'), symbolical representations of the universe which serve to concentrate and meditate upon. In 1660 the flat palace-roof was crowned with golden pavillions, a present from the Chinese emperor. This Red Palace forms as it were the heart of the broad white buildings grouped somewhat lower at its sides in an architectonically very beautiful way. All of them taken together have a frontal width of 350 feet. Four hundred steps hewn out of the red rock lead up to the ornamental entrance gate.

"The other buildings, which are whitewashed once every year by pouring chalk from the flat roofs down the sloping walls, constitute the living quarters of the extensive palace staff as well as offices, storage rooms, and kitchens.

"Moreover there is a small monastery in the Pótala complex of some hundred and seventy-five monks, called Nàmgyal-Choide, the 'Triumphant Heaven,' whose abbot has always been the Dalai Lama himself. Only youths of the highest ranks of society are allowed to be educated here as lamas. Besides there is also a school for monk-officials in the palace where the most intelligent boys of the

country—not more than thirty as a rule—get their tuition for this very function. Actually the Pótala is a small city in itself. From the beginning, countless art objects have been collected in all its buildings. Later on the magnificent mausolea of the Dalai Lamas were erected inside, in the traditional form of stûpas, covered with gold and set with precious stones.

“When in 1644 the Manchu dynasty, with whom the Great Fifth had entered into a friendly relationship at the time when its seat was still in Manchuria, had dispelled the Ming dynasty from China, our priest-king acknowledged the newcomers on the throne of the ‘Celestial Empire’ as the rightful rulers. In 1652 he got an invitation from emperor Shun-chi to come to Peking, and set out with a picturesque caravan counting three thousand men and many hundreds of pack animals.

“As a Dalai Lama is never allowed to ‘pass underneath a vault’ the Chinese emperor had previously a special road built for his guest to enable him to enter the capital over the city walls. He also had the splendid ‘Yellow Temple,’ the ‘Hwang Sse,’ constructed for his abode. The ‘Son of Heaven’—who (like all later emperors of China) according to the Tibetans was an “Incarnation” of Mañjuçrî, the ‘Bodhisattva-of-Wisdom’—received the Great Fifth with unimaginable pomp and circumstance as one of equal status. This was the first but alas also the last time that a Dalai Lama was treated in China in such a dignified way. That the strong Mongolian forces, which the priest-king could count on at the time, made him into a doughty monarch is not to be denied.

“In Tibet the Great Fifth was faithfully supported by his first minister-regent (‘desî’), a certain Sàngye-Gyätso (supposed to be his natural son), a very able, learned, but perhaps not always conscientious man. He caused many scientific writings to be translated from Chinese and Sanskrit into Tibetan and wrote himself some books too: His *Blue Lapis-lazuli Mirror*, dealing with medical science, is to the present day used by our physicians. In his *White Lapis-lazuli Mirror* he treated astronomico-astrological subjects and in his *Golden-Yellow Lapis-lazuli Mirror* he described the history and the character of the Yellow Church. Finally in the *Mountain-Crystal Mirror* he codified and rectified Tibet’s civil rights. It was not until the former century we changed it somewhat. Moreover, Sàngye-Gyätso was a first-rate diplomat, a skillful builder, and an excellent financier. The Great Fifth left more and more tasks to this gifted man.

“The number of the Yellowcap monks increased during his reign to sixty thousand and the Yellowcap monasteries to 750. The Dalai

Lama endowed the latter with extensive stretches of land to keep their temples and other buildings in good condition. All fields together, the produce of which was tax-free, amounted to one-third of Tibet's arable soil. They were never used—as it is sometimes wrongly supposed by Westerners—to feed the monks with their yield. *The clergy always had to work for their own sustenance in case they were not financially independent.*

“The monarch decreed that all monasteries (Yellowcap and Recap ones alike) should from now on celebrate the ‘Great Prayer’ (‘Mon-lam’) instituted by Tsong-Khá-pa in the first month of the New Year, ‘Lósar’. (It starts on the first new moon day in February with us.) The Prayer will last about three weeks. The famous masked dances of the lamas, of mystical or religio-historical purport, were performed right after it. The ‘Dance-with-the-Black-Hat’ enacting the murder of the apostate king Lang-Darma was one of the most popular. In the capital itself the ‘Dance-of-the-Sky-walking Deities’ was always shown on the second day of the New Year. It consisted of a man sliding down a string of yak hair from the palace roof to the ground over a distance of a hundred feet. He had to be a native from the province of Tsang, so a Tsang-pa. Thus at the same time the fall of the historical Tsang-pa was commemorated.

“In this month of festivities more than fifty thousand people would come to holy Lhasa, the ‘Place-of-the-Gods’. Since at least half of them belonged to the clergy and as such would never and never allow themselves to be kept in check by laymen, the Great Fifth decreed that during this time the maintenance of discipline and order should be transferred from the lay-police to the ecclesiastical. It was usually entrusted to a lama from one of the three great monasteries near the capital. He would appoint tall, ferocious-looking monks, terrible fighters armed with heavy sticks and belonging to the monastery-forces, the ‘Golden Army.’ These so-called ‘dob-dobs’ were as a rule only too eager to rush upon the masses in the streets and beat them energetically at the slightest provocation.

“At the end of the Mon-lam the ‘butter towers,’ gigantic flat structures of wood in the shape of pyramids, completely covered with religious representations kneaded from butter, were partly displayed and partly carried about in procession in Lhasa. They were real artists who made their wonderful compositions. So as not to let the butter melt while they were at work they had to dip their hands over and over again in cold water. The images were painted and gilded. All inhabitants and visitors of the capital gazed at the splendid show in breathless rapture. The day after, the butter towers were burnt, be-

cause by the paint their substance had become unfit for consumption.

“These and other elevating scenes having come to an end, the worldly festivities immediately followed: impressive pageants, horse races, and contests in skill and dexterity. Every year anew it was a most wonderful time for everyone in our country.

“All institutions of the Great Fifth were preserved by later generations. One of them deserves a special mention. He moved the oracle from the old monastery of Samyè, founded by Padma-Sambháva, to the little monastery of Nè-chung (near Dè-pung) and had it proclaimed State Oracle. The (former Bon-) god Pé-har (spelled ‘Pé-dkar’) was supposed to prophesy Tibet’s future through its medium and to give advice concerning events to come. In case he prophesied falsely he could instantly be dismissed. As a rule the medium was—when in trance—consulted regarding the search for a new “Incarnation” of the Dalai Lama or the Pànchen Lama. Many of our oracle mediums die young. On the whole it is not physically strong people who are gifted in this way.

“It may interest you, Mem-sahib, that during the reign of the Great Fifth, in the year 1661, for the third time Westerners came and visited Lhasa: the missionaries Johann Grüber and Albert d’Orville. They were on their way from China to India and stayed in our capital for a month. The first European who had ever been there, in 1325, was the Italian Brother Odoric della Penna and the second—exactly two hundred years later—was the Jesuit father Antonio Andrada.

“The fifth Dalai Lama had gradually reached his purpose: the consolidation of the Yellow Church and that of Tibet as an independent state, able to compete with any country in political, economic, and scientific matters. He could have made his country mightier yet, but refrained from doing so, for a really powerful nation never remains religious-minded. All our priest-kings wisely preferred piety to mundane prosperity or greatness.

“Our people were happy, thriving, and contented. The severe monarch became gentle in his dealings, convinced that his capable first minister and regent Sangyè-Gyàtso would properly and faithfully take care of all state matters. In 1677, in his sixtieth year, he retired to his monastery in the Pótala to spend the rest of his life in meditation. Hardly anybody was allowed to see him henceforward. He died in 1682.

“Sangyé-Gyàtso kept the Dalai Lama’s death a secret, giving out that the sovereign continued to meditate in complete solitude. For many years he kept up the lie that the Great Fifth was alive. Why???

“All of you have to try and think out the reason for yourselves. I will continue my story next time.”

24: A Houseful of People

For quite some time I had a severe cold. I coughed and sneezed and my throat ached badly all the while. Considering that getting up always implied having to sit in the drafty gallery and that this way I should never get rid of my cold, I decided to stay in bed for one day, although the idea did not appeal to me at all! I always found it difficult to get through the time I did not spend on drawing, writing, or walking, because in Bodhnâth there were no books to be had and the conversation of my Tibetan relatives was not brilliant!

So, driven by sound common sense, I stayed in bed and (bored to death) I looked at the ceiling of our dormitory. In the room above us lived my fifty-year-old brother Púnya-Jola with three of his wives, his sons Mani and Sú-shil, a baby of one year old and a newborn. For a long time I had been thinking he was a pious man, as for many hours daily he would melodiously recite his prayers and parts of the holy books, but afterwards it became evident his piety never went any further!

Every other noise from Púnya-Jola's apartment was also clearly heard in our room, since the roughly hewn boards of his floor formed our ceiling. The broad clefts between them were filled up with twisted old rags. In the course of time a good deal of dirt had accumulated about them so that, if upstairs something was spilled, a pitch black fluid would come trickling down from our ceiling. The house-with-the-lions may have been built excellently according to Oriental conceptions, but the construction just did not appeal to my taste. Everybody used to hang his clothes on nails, for coatstands or hanging wardrobes were not available. But one day when I hung my coat on a nail near my bed, not only did the nail fall out of the wall, but also a big piece of the plastering. As far as I know it never was mended. In the East, a thing which gets out of order is seldom repaired.

The shutters before the few windows (without panes) and the wooden doors too were drafty because of their many cracks and crevices. One had always to stoop to enter a room, as the door openings

over the high thresholds were so low. Generally I thought of it in time, but once in a while I would forget to duck and I bumped my head, which invariably used to cause a roaring laughter from all the members of my family.

Our dormitory was chock-full of things, even if the three mattresses with their blankets cramming the floor at night were stowed away during daytime. As there were not any cupboards in the house, the inhabitants kept all their extra clothes and other possessions in iron boxes-with-padlocks which were piled towerlike on top of each other and filled every corner of the room. Only a narrow strip near the ceiling was left free. Here the walls were adorned with crudely colored pictures hanging close to each other. They were exceedingly ugly and fly-specked all over.

In the wall opposite my bed a peephole had been made into the room of Àntaré, one of the elder sons of Púnya-Jola. He was married to Isóri, a small Indian girl not looking a day older than twelve years, but in reality nearing fifteen. They had one child, Rénu, the quietest baby of the house. That was not saying a lot, because in fact all babies shrieked and screamed all day long. In the Orient children are never "educated" in our sense of the word. Whenever they want anything they yell for it, and as soon as they get what they want they prefer something else and start yelling again!

Next to Àntaré lived his half brother Shèrrap, who was married to Tènzang-Mú, a good-looking young woman with a pale, round face and somewhat slanting eyes. She was half Newári and half Támang of descent. A peculiarity of hers was that she often wore clean clothes. She evaded everybody bashfully as after three years of marriage she did not have any child yet.

As I mentioned before, Ganèsh had a big room over the turquoise-colored one. There he lived with his two wives, his five little daughters Kumári, Ghírzu, Súku, Híra, and Míra and with his baby boy Jigmé-Dorji. One day this young brother of mine confessed to me he looked forward with horror to becoming the priest-officiate of Bodhnâth, a dignity especially reserved for him. "I don't care for religion at all, sister Lili! Doing business and earning lots of money is the only thing I like," he said. "This way I could enjoy my freedom by doing nothing at all or by gambling!" In fact he often used to sit on the square with his nephew Shèrrap and a few other men playing dice. Pebbles, cowri-shells, little pieces of wood and grains of corn each represented a certain value, and afterwards the winnings and losses were squared up in real money.

I will not describe all the other members of my family who were





living in the house. There were fifty-five of us in its eleven rooms of which the turquoise-colored room and the small apartment next to it were reserved exclusively for pappa. The big stables for our cows and buffaloes were situated on the ground floor. The maids and manservants who tended them slept there too. We also had goats and for some time Ganèsh owned an Isabel-colored Tibetan pony with long mane and a thick tail. But he did not care the least bit for this lovely animal! He sold it as soon as somebody offered him a good price.

The floor of our bedroom formed the wooden ceiling of the stable, and although a thin layer of clay had been spread upon it—crumbling away constantly and producing much dust—the smell of the beasts freely rose upwards to us. But then there were so many smells in the house with all those babies! Some of them had their own “nurse maid.” This function always fell to small orphan-boys who all day long would carry about their charge on their backs. They did not have to change the clothes of the babies entrusted to them as the mites never wore anything but one short shirt. So they really should have changed their own clothes regularly, but that was impossible since they did not possess any garment other than they had on. The orphans only earned their board and lodging with this. The seven-year-old “nursemaid” of Rénu was very fond of me. Sometimes when he saw me sitting in the sunshine on the pavement before our house he carefully deposited his little charge (which rarely wore more than a pair of red leather shoes) down on the ground, settled himself close to me and, after having stared sadly into my face with his big dark eyes, he sighed wretchedly and put his head on my lap. He smelled terribly, a thing he could not help of course as it was due to his work. I did not have the heart to send him away, so I stroked his close-cropped hair. This somehow seemed to soothe him. He got up contentedly, swung sleeping Rénu on his back once more, and strolled away. . . .

Well, so there I was lying in my bed, aware of the pain in my fingers, for I had been bitten by a dog the day before, as I was standing queued up for the ambulance which the mission hospital in Pàtan used to send once a week to our hamlet, to attend to Tibetan refugees who were ill. Inside a lady doctor conducted a polyclinic. When it was my turn I had explained to her the condition of mummy Ganèsh and I had asked her as a special favor to come and examine my Tibetan mother in our house, which properly speaking was against the rules. The fact was that mummy had been refusing vehemently to go and wait outside amongst “that rabble.” The lady doctor had consented, but after the examination she declared it was absolutely

{ 16. A smart gentleman from Lhasa with a ritual, three-bladed dagger (“purbú”) to ward off demons and a silver shrine in which to keep the portrait of the Dalai Lama. (Part III: 6)

necessary the Chinya lama's wife should be X-rayed in the hospital owing to which statement the fat patient once more felt very important indeed!

While I was thinking about all these things my niece Mithu had entered the bedroom to have a look at me. The little dog Démon who, if he could secretly make his escape in the evening, used to pass the night at the foot-end of my bed had followed her. Mithu, which signifies "Sweetie," had a gentle disposition and loved to be of service to other people. She knelt on a cushion beside my bed, supported her elbows on my blankets, and said "Poor auntie Lili."

"I only have a bad cold, Mithu, I am not ill," I said, and looked into her round brownish face with the black beady eyes. She was only partly Tibetan. Her Nepalese descent was more pronounced in her appearance. Her aunt "Darling" had tried to teach her some English so she liked to have a chat with me for the sake of exercise, but she knew so little of this language it was hardly possible to keep up a real conversation with her.

"I two years in school Kàthmandú," she started, "I Nepali read and write."

"How clever you are, Mithu, I don't know your kind of letters at all!"

"No-agreeable school, always-learn!"

"Is it agreeable here in the house, Mithu?"

"No-agreeable the house, I no-like cook, I no-like clean."

"Would you prefer to get married?"

Vehemently she shook her head. "No-agreeable marry. I no-like men"

"But wouldn't it be nice to have a room of your own with your husband and afterwards a little baby?"

"No-agreeable babies, I no-like: all here cry-cry! Me sister Zaki marry India-man. He talk: "always why you dirty, why three days you wash one time? India-man he wash day-day, so mad! Nepali-man he more-better: he no-wash day-day! But I agreeable no-marry"

"Then what is agreeable to you, Mithu?"

"I dunno," she said.

"Would it be agreeable to you to live in Kàthmandú, or more-better in Bodhnàth?"

"I dunno."

"Always here and always do-nothing?"

A radiant smile brightened her pensive little face. "Yes-yes: agreeable always do-nothing, always!" I now had to think of something else to talk about.

“What do the colored pictures on these walls represent?”

“I dunno: perhaps Hindu-gods, perhaps beautiful ladies-of-film. Auntie Lili, you so beautiful, you skin so pale; I so ugly me skin so black.”

“Not black, Míthu, but nicely brown.”

“How much you pay you watch, auntie?” And after I had told her, her thoughts went on like a babbling brook: “Me mummy dead, me daddy sweet. I love me little-mummy Chini (little mummies are the other wives of the father). Chini jolly and fat! I hate me other very-little-mummy, she name Daula-mó, she Sher-pa woman with gold disks in ears, oh I *hate* her!”

This was indeed a very long conversation for Míthu. She did not have any more to tell. But during the further part of the day she came in once in a while and sat near my bed smiling.

When it became dark a fuse blew out and nowhere was there light anymore in the house. It was too late to go and buy another fuse in the city and in our hamlet no electric articles were for sale. So everybody sat in the dark. Only pappa had a candle. Just the same, he seemed to get bored and that was why he came round for a moment to have a look at me. “What is the matter with you, daughter Lili? Keep yourself warm and don’t take any meat! See you again tomorrow.”

I heard the Tibetan refugees going singing around the stûpa so I knew it was rather late. Thank God this day was over. My roommates came in a bit earlier than usual because of the lack of light. They went to sleep completely dressed, as always. The little dog Démon had managed to escape again. He pushed the door open with his head and jumped on my bed with a light plop. If the rats should come this night he would surely wake up and chase them away, barking furiously. During my many travels in the Orient I had got accustomed to rats in my bedroom, but I still felt an aversion toward the one that tripped across my pillow a week ago, as I was lying in bed. Since then, I loved having Démon in our room as a guard. Mummy Ganèsh of course would wake up this night as usual, groaning and expectorating. Like always she would try to wake her distant-relation, sleeping next to her on the floor, and call for the spittoon. By now, I sometimes managed to sleep on in spite of the noise she made. Across the chinks in our shutters I saw the stars shining brightly. Later on I heard the long-drawn-out tones of the ragdongs and the higher ones of the dung-chèns. I longed to sit on the monastery roof once more to listen to the music together with the friendly monks. Now it was full moon I would be able to look out from there far

across the lovely Valley-of-Nepal with its circle of silvery, snow-covered mountains.

It was Christmas Eve.

25: The Wicked Sorcerer Mila

To understand the Tibetan poet Mila-répa (spelled Mila-raspa) (to be pronounced Meela-Rápa) was a mystic, it is necessary to know a bit more of his spiritual teacher (guru) the Tibetan Mar-pa. He in his turn was a spiritual pupil of the Indian yogi Naró-pa and the latter had been schooled (taught) in mysticism by the great magician Tiló-pa who—as he said—had got his knowledge and his wisdom through inspiration: directly from the Celestial Buddha Vajradhâra! It goes without saying that the doctrine of them all was founded ultimately on the expositions of the learned philosopher Nâgârjûna who had developed Mahâyâna Buddhism in the second century of our era.

All these fundamental data seem pointless to us, but in Tibet it is the custom to tell precisely by whom a certain person is taught in mystical matters, or—as it is expressed in the Land-of-the-Snow—whose spiritual son a man is. Mila-repa certainly should be mentioned, as this yogi-poet is reckoned among “the eighty-four great siddhas” who lived in this world. A “Siddha” is someone who has various “siddhis”, supernatural powers, at his disposal. The biographies of these eighty-four men have been recorded and the stories affect Westerners as strange, nay often as a bit nonsensical. But many things have to be understood in a symbolic sense. For instance *when it says: “He was able to stop the moon and the sun” this has no reference to the heavenly bodies, but to the “ha” and the “tha,” the “moon-stream” and the “sun-stream.” These are the two streams-of-energy that are present in the etheric body of every human being. When they balance each other completely, a man is healthy.* However, most people are not even conscious of these streams-of-energy within themselves and—even if such is the case—they are hardly ever able to control them! Fortunately!

Mila-repa’s guru Mar-pa, (at least in the eyes of Westerners) was not a likable fellow. In his youth he had already visited India where he had learned to translate from Sanskrit into Tibetan. His surname became “the Translator.” Moreover, he was trained in Mahâyâna-

Buddhism and in the Tantras by the learned Naró-pa, a professor of the famous Buddhist monastery-university "Nâlandâ" in northern India. On his return to Tibet, Mar-pa himself accepted pupils, rich youths, by preference. He compelled them to cede him all their possessions in exchange for his tuition! On top of this he often made them perform heavy and stupid labor before passing on his learning to them. This behaviour was in accordance with the tradition of the Indian yogis. Many of them tested an aspirant-pupil for years on end with various unpleasant tasks to find out if the young man would resolutely stick to his chosen guru and to no one else.

Later on Mar-pa went back to India to receive still further instruction in the secret doctrine from his former spiritual teacher Naró-pa. However, it turned out that he had died. Such a trifle did not upset Mar-pa in the least. Through meditation joined to his occult powers he communicated with Naró-pa's spirit and thus was taught by him in the "Mahâ-Mudrâ," the "Great-Symbolic-Position-of-the-Hands." By his profound Tantric studies he had by now become a great magician. Four times it was seen by eyewitnesses how he projected his own life-essence into a corpse, by which act he brought it temporarily to life again.

Back in the Land-of-the-Snow for good and all, in his forty-second year, Mar-pa got married. Besides, he accepted eight female disciples as his "spiritual wives." Afterwards these nine ladies were said to have been earthly manifestations of celestial beings. About this time he came into touch with Mila.

Now we first have to know something of the early history of this romantic personality. Mila was born in 1038. He and his sister Pé-ta were the only children of well-to-do parents in a small Tibetan village. Mila in fact was the family name. The boy who later on became known as Mila-repa received the name Tö-pa-ga when born, i.e., "Delicious-to-hear." NOMEN EST OMEN also held good in this case, for the future poet had a magnificent voice.

Unfortunately his father died when he was only six years old, after he had entrusted the administration of his possessions to a married cousin of his for the benefit of his wife and children. However, it soon became evident these relatives were very untrustworthy people since they did not even give enough food to the poor widow although her land yielded quite a bit. Finally they chased her away from the property that lawfully was hers. Because of this wrong, Mila's mother was seized by such hatred that—in her powerless rage—she educated her son with one purpose in view: revenge! So when the youth had grown up he put off his marriage with gentle Dzé-sé (although he

had been betrothed to her for many years) and in accordance with his mother's wish he looked for a master in witchcraft to be taught by him the practice of destruction through black magic.

It stands to reason that such a master would not give his secrets away for nothing. However, Mila's family was so exceedingly poor! All the same a Tantric sorcerer with the surname of the Angry Victorious Teacher was found to be willing and take the youth for a pupil. How to reconcile these controversies? It came about this way: The widow owned just one very valuable object, which she had jealously hidden in spite of all indigence, for this very purpose: an enormous turquoise of the most wonderful quality. The chosen magician accepted it as a payment for divulging his magic knowledge. (From this it is clear that in the Land-of-the-Snow it was possible that a married woman had the right of personal "capital" on which nobody could have a grip.)

Mila's apprenticeship with the "Angry Victor" lasted many years. Finally he knew the art of making hailstorms approach from afar and of killing persons at a great distance through black magic. Armed with these horrible powers, "he who was delicious to hear" set his feet upon "the Path-of-Darkness." First he went back to his village and destroyed the harvest of all the inhabitants by calling forth a hailstorm. Then he concentrated on the house of his uncle and aunt at the very moment the wedding of their eldest son was being celebrated. It would be a good idea—thought the wicked magician Mila—to make it crash down within an hour over the heads of the feasting people. To achieve his purpose he conjured up big quantities of spiders, scorpions, frogs, lizards, and snakes that gathered in the inner courtyard of the building. As is the custom in Tibet, the ponies of the guests were tied underneath the house to the wooden pillars supporting its walls of stone. The vermin crept to this place. There, a gigantic scorpion started to gnaw at the main pillar. The stallions became nervous and, wanting to spring upon the mares, they broke away. The mares disliked it and pranced. They kicked against the supporting beams until the damaged main pillar began to waver and caused the others to give way! The whole house suddenly crashed down and buried thirty-five feasting people under its wreckage. The wicked uncle and aunt were the only survivors. . . .

But, now that Mila had achieved the aim his mother always had held before him, he realized all of a sudden what his deeds implied. He had caused poverty and death; he had brought unmentionable grief upon his fellow-beings! Remorse devoured him and he saw he should have to live through many lives fraught with sorrow until he

should have exhausted the fruit of his crimes under the inexorable Law-of-Karma. He now was eager to go in for any penitence, any punishment to atone for what he did and to perform the hardest spiritual exercises if—wicked sorcerer and black magician as he was—he might in this very life attain Buddhahood, hence the state of Nirvâna, by dint of which he would be freed from the endless "Circle-of-Rebirths."

Without delay he went and looked for another kind of spiritual teacher, a guru who could help him to set foot on the "Direct path" which is as narrow and as dangerous as the edge of a sword, the Path leading straight to Nirvâna. After his initiation from such a teacher he should have to follow this Path all by himself. The journey would be endlessly long and difficult, but deep within himself Mila knew he would have the strength to persevere unto the end: the Great Liberation, "Moksha." It was the famous mystic-philosopher "Mar-pa-the-Translator" whom he chose for his guru, now in his thirty-eighth year.

We know Mar-pa was not a man of gentle disposition. From the very outset he warned his new disciple that a long period of probation was awaiting him—He had to promise in advance to fulfil any task appointed to him. However, to his horror he was told at once to do away with certain persons and animals through his knowledge of black magic! Mila, who was already consumed with shame about his former sins, now suffered still a hundred times more by the order to repeat them in cold blood. But he never dreamt of disobeying Mar-pa. This might seem a strange attitude to a Westerner, but in the East absolute obedience is the first requirement for a good "chêla" (or "sîshya," i.e., spiritual pupil) to his guru (spiritual teacher). Only now "He-who-was-delicious-to-hear" realized the complete extent of his crimes, but *realization is the supreme aim of each spiritual training*. Fortunately Mar-pa afterwards restored the killed persons' lives by means of his occult powers.

Hereafter the Translator ordered him to build a big house entirely by himself. For this he had personally to fetch stones from the mountains. When it was nearly ready he was commanded to demolish it and bring back the stones, because it seemed better to build another house at another place. He had to take this second construction to pieces, too, as soon as it neared its completion. This procedure repeated itself many times. One of those houses had nine stories! Worse than the building itself was the transport of the stones. The poor pupil incurred blisters and festering wounds on his back. Notwithstanding all his good resolves he ran away several times from the

exacting Mar-pa in sheer desperation, but always anew he returned repentently. In his difficulties he was often comforted by his guru's kindhearted wife Dag-med-ma who was like a mother to him. Her only son had died and her heart was full of pity for her husband's chéla. "Put a blanket over your back when carrying stones," she advised, "with holes in those places where are your wounds, just as we do with our packing-mules, so the cargo doesn't press on the festering places."

"But that wouldn't be any good in my case: my whole back is one big wound," Mila answered sadly.

Sometimes Mar-pa was exceedingly quick-tempered and often he was terribly drunk. During these fits he was still more cruel to his pupil than normally. For many, many years Mila hoped in vain to receive the tuition from him he craved for. And at last, indeed, that great day dawned! Now it appeared that the guru's tantrums and drunkenness had merely been simulated, anyway that was what he now told. They had had a double purpose: to purify the young man of his sins by penance and to test his utter faith in him. The moment had come that Mila's constancy was rewarded! In front of a very special 'Kyilchor,' a holy magic circle, the great mystic adopted his pupil as his spiritual son by initiating him into his supreme knowledge and by transferring to him certain powers. Together they drank wine from a goblet made of a human skull, the symbol of the unreality of death. After this came the farewell, moving and tender, between these two men. And now, forty-four years old, Mila set his first steps on the "Direct Path," unguided.

It may be of interest to tell something here about the death of the Tantric lama Mar-pa. When his time had come, he took his wife Dag-med-ma in his arms and both got absorbed in deep meditation. In this condition the matter of their physical bodies dissolved into air. Nothing remained of them but their garbs. . . .

26: Mila, the One-Dressed-in-Cotton

As soon as Mila had taken leave of Mar-pa, he wanted first of all to go and see his old mother, but to his great distress he heard she had died long ago. He meditated for a week near her bones, which he found in their former house, now quite decayed. Because of this experience he became, more than ever, convinced of the deluding nature of the "World of Phenomena." However, he did see his uncle and aunt again. Since their house had collapsed they had lived in a tent of yak hair. They abused him with terrible curses, set the dogs on him, and pelted him with stones. Mila was extremely rejoiced at their behavior as he thought it a blessing to be allowed to atone still more for what he had once brought over them. From this time onward he led the life of a hermit in a cave in the high Himâlayas where he fed on the nettles growing in its vicinity. If he had gone begging for food in the hamlet in the valley nearby, the inhabitants would have been only too glad to give it to him, but he thought it a pity to waste so much time as he wanted to spend every moment in meditation! For the fruit of experiences-deeply-pondered-on will lead to Wisdom! Thus he freed himself from the last remnants of the three great poisons of the human mind: Lust-Desire, Hate-Anger and Sloth-Ignorance.

The only garment he now wore was a cotton shirt, and so he started to get known as Mila-repa, Mila the One-Dressed-in-Cotton. This sober life in solitude made him very happy, and with his sweet voice he, "Delicious-to-hear," sang about the beauty of the Land-of-the-Snow. It was quite evident he was a wonderful poet. In his poetry he also told about his former experiences and about the little things of daily life. For instance about the earthenware pot, his only possession, that suddenly broke. This poem ran: "In the same moment I owned a pot and I didn't own it anymore. In breaking, oh dear pot, you became my teacher: you taught me the transitoriness of all things. This marvel I will go on considering forever." Mila's poetic

talent was truly inexhaustible; he is said to have made a hundred thousand poems!

In the meantime the cotton shirt got tattered to rags and the cold was unbearable. But when his power of endurance had come to an end a goddess appeared to him in a dream and taught him how he could raise the natural temperature of his body with certain breathing exercises and mental practices. This is the art which in the Land-of-the-Snow is called "Túmo." Thus aided, the hermit-poet managed to live through the barren winters with icy snowstorms in Tibet's lonely high mountains. The last rags of his worn cotton shirt fell from his body and from that time Mila-repa went naked!

Now and then, half-starved hunters came to his abode hoping to find sustenance, but seeing the emaciated ascetic they roared with laughter and went away as soon as possible.

"I was as thin as a corpse," the hermit told later on to his disciple Rè-chung (spelled "Ràs-chung"), who wrote his biography, "as for nine years I hadn't eaten anything except nettles. My whole body had a greenish color and was covered with long, green hair!"

Mila did not always live in the same cave. Several grottoes in the vicinity of Mount Everest even now are indicated as his abodes.

Once his sister Pé-ta visited him to bring some food she had received by begging. She implored him to give up his solitary life in the icy heights, but her brother declined to leave them. Afterwards she came again, this time accompanied by the girl who once had been his betrothed. "Why did you never marry, Dzé-sé?" he asked her.

"I never wanted anybody but you, Mila, but indeed" she added naively, "I didn't ever get married because no other man dared to take me for his bride. Everybody knew you were an able black magician. So all young fellows were afraid you might revenge yourself in some mysterious way if I should consent to be the wife of somebody else!"

"Don't you feel any shame at all, Mila?" now said his sister Pé-ta, "to go about naked and show certain parts of your body to us? Look here, I have brought you a blanket, you can wrap it around you!"

The next time Pé-ta came to visit him the hermit had torn the blanket into small strips. When he saw her coming from afar he quickly wound one piece around the part of his body that had offended her. But he also wound up both his hands and his feet and dressed the top of his head with the remaining piece. "Oh brother," she cried, "why did you rig yourself out in such a strange way!"

"I remembered, sister, you wanted me to be ashamed of a certain part of my body, but I simply couldn't think which it was I had to be

more ashamed of than the rest. That is why I covered several of them." Then the woman realized how silly she had been and that Mila was a wise man. She let herself be taught by him and set foot upon the Noble Eightfold Path, which leads to liberation of all suffering.

It was not long before Dzé-sé followed her example. Even the wicked aunt was persuaded to convert herself. The wicked uncle had died, so he would have to wait for his final liberation through many other sorrowful lives on earth. Mila-repa also got some other disciples whom he personally taught the way he himself had been shown, the "Direct Path," by the wise Mar-pa. But he did not make them pass through a difficult period of probation before he imparted his wisdom. His most talented pupils were Rè-chung and Dorje-Tàgpo.

"Follow in my footsteps," preached the ascetic to all people, "and True Wisdom will come to you. Believe in the Law of Karma and realize that any moment may be your last in this earthly sheath you call your body."

During the long period Mila was a hermit, he performed various miracles. Once, for instance, he flew to the top of mount Kailas. No other magician was able to do the same thing! Of course some of them could fly too, but not one of them ever reached the top of the holy mountain in his flight! Moreover Mila was able to change his body into a flame or whatever other thing he might choose to. He could even multiply it into a hundred bodies and go in them to the celestial abode of any Buddha, to listen to his teaching in order to propagate it on earth. But then the One-dressed-in-cotton is regarded as one of the eighty-four "Great Siddhas" who ever lived. The poet was not at all proud of his supernatural powers: He just went on being the serene hermit who made one beautiful song after another. So he experienced the highest spiritual joys and finally he also realized the Unmentionable, the Unimaginable, Formless 'IT,' the Last Reality, the One Truth. In this way it is quite probable he attained Buddhahood and the state of Nirvâna.

By his indomitable willpower and his strong body the secluded saint with his high moral principles and his beautiful voice lived until he was eighty-six years old. He died a happy hermit in the magnificent high mountains of Tibet.

"Flowers and leaves," said his disciple Rè-chung when writing his biography, "hung sadly on their stems when they knew he had left the earth. The sky showed the five (!) colors of the rainbow, and the clouds adopted the forms of lotus flowers and of royal banners. . . ."

His tale ends in this way: "I, the ascetic Rè-chung who roam amongst the cemeteries where the corpses are being cut to pieces, I who wear ornaments made from human bones, have written this tale accurately and completely, while living in the wilderness. May my manuscript bring profit and bliss to all Living-Beings until the end of the Cycle-of-Rebirths. May each of you be blessed!"

Unto this day the Tibetan people recite the poems of their beloved saint Mila-repa.

27: Christmas Day in Bodhnâth

On Christmas Day, getting up again, I went and sat down in front of our house because a pale sun was shining. Nobody knew it was Christmas, but I decided just the same to make a special day of it with a present to myself, a beautiful model to draw and—in case there should be a service in the evening—a visit to our temple to think in the presence of pious people of the birth of the infant Jesus Christ. So I first went to my lama-friend in the tiny shop and bought a lovely “gao,” an amulet-box which Tibetan women used to wear around their neck on a string of corals. Most of these are made of silver and set with turquoises. Those of rich ladies are made of reddish gold and also set with turquoises, but with diamonds, rubies, and emeralds besides. I bought a square gao with a big greenish turquoise and a small bluish one. Then I went to the tent of my nomad friends behind our house and asked the woman to pose for me that day wearing her bonnet of sheepskin. She agreed with pleasure at once. For this special occasion she buckled on a broad leather belt adorned with pieces of wrought silver, each with a big coral in the middle. She was a rural beauty with a broad, friendly face, a big bosom, and enormous hips. With my warmest sweater on and two scarves wound around my throat I started to draw her portrait on the gallery. While posing for me she once in a while opened her coat lined with the fleece of a sheep—the only garment she wore—to look for the vermin that seemed to tease her. Every time she caught one, she put it carefully on the wooden balustrade so it could go and look for another place to go on living happily. For to a Buddhist, every life is sacred. One is not allowed to annihilate it on any account.

After some time, her husband came round to see how my work progressed. He had made himself as handsome as possible, wearing his bonnet of fox fur and a sword stuck in his belt. Of course he hoped I would ask him to pose too. The couple thought I paid ex-

tremely well for their "doing nothing at all." We arranged he was to come the next day for a portrait.

At noon I asked my Tibetan father if he would allow me to sit in his room during the afternoon because I did not yet feel quite well, and he consented graciously. "Four of your compatriots are coming to visit me. They want to buy all kinds of things, and I will probably do good business!"

"Dutchmen, pappa?" I asked, astonished.

"Certainly, two Swiss, an Austrian, and a German, that is. But you all speak the same language don't you?"

"Why no, not exactly, but I should love to be present."

The young men came. They had worked in Nepal for several years and were on the point of going back to Europe on leave, so they wanted to buy a number of presents for their relatives. The China lama displayed everything for them: Tibetan teacups, prayer chains, butterlamps, t'hangkas and carpets. "Look, gentlemen," he said, "these teacups are cut from the wood of rhododendrons. That is the reason why they have such a wonderful red color, for rhododendron means 'red tree.' The price is influenced by the incidental course of the grain their surface shows. This is sometimes more beautiful than at other times. The cups cut out of the knots are the most expensive, as they have the most capricious natural patterns. You know, of course, every Tibetan has his own teacup with him when traveling to drink from if he should be offered tea. Now, in the Land-of-the-Snow it happens once in a while that somebody wants to poison another, usually a passing stranger. In order to prevent this, the cups are lined with silver, as this metal turns black from the effect of certain poisons. They give one a general feeling of safety! Here, however, you see some porcelain cups to use in one's own house; none has ever a handle. They come from China, as our people don't know the art of pottery. But the accessory silver saucers—which always have a raised lower part—and the matching pagoda-like covers with their red coral on top are typically Tibetan. These other cups of pale green jade are very particular and precious. . . ."

And so it went on: temple bells, "dorjis" (i.e. lama-scepters), butter lamps, prayer-wheels, and other objects were extensively recommended. I had already heard these descriptions many times. The young men said everything was beautiful, extraordinary! However, purchases were not effected.

"Mithu, where are you?" pappa cried when business did not come off as readily as he had expected. "I told you to bring tea to the

gentlemen." Now things would proceed in real earnest. This was the case whenever the China lama offered tea to his clients, and especially so if he had it served by this granddaughter of his to whom he personally did not feel attracted in the least, but who never failed with the sterner sex.

She entered shyly with the tea tray and the men reacted promptly: "Mithu, please advise me which one of these things I should buy for my mother?"

Pappa looked radiant. "Listen, young men," he said jovially, "why shouldn't you marry this nice girl? Just hand me over the 'bridesmoney,' as is the custom in our country, and you can take her with you. It isn't necessary for you to keep her forever! I will also agree if you should want her only for a short time!"

"Which of us?" the gentlemen asked smilingly, for they thought it was a joke.

"But of course, all of you together! We Tibetans don't think there is anything wrong with polyandry. We often marry our girls off to a number of brothers!"

"But we are no brothers, Rimpoche, not even compatriots." They still laughed thinking the proposal was meant as a jest.

"Come along, who cares for such a trifle. You can enjoy her company in turn, as you are not likely to be at home all at the same time! Now I won't hear 'no.' I'll make the bridesmoney reasonable. . . ."

"Now you listen, Rimpoche," one of the guests said indignantly, "in our country one doesn't share a girlfriend or a wife with others. She has to be for one man alone and when she doesn't behave herself decently, she can scam!" The others nodded in agreement.

"Oh well, if you absolutely don't want her you need not take her, though it is a pity: She is still a virgin, something quite unusual! Anyway, she wouldn't be the first girl of my family whom—for a small amount of money from business-friends—I would be willing to. . . ."

"Yes, Rimpoche, *that* we know!" said the four gentlemen simultaneously.

"Well let us return to the presents you want to buy," the China lama soothed them, unperturbed. "Come on now! You are the best friends I have! Look, here you see my own most cherished carpet. I wouldn't think of selling it to anybody else, not even for a thousand rupees, but I am willing to cede it to you at a reasonable price. . . ."

At that moment Ganesh entered to bring his goods. In fact he had let the small room on the ground floor of the house-with-the-

lions to a shoemaker who made—according to his instructions—countless cloglike shoes of red velvet, of a kind I had never seen worn by a single Tibetan! To give them a “real Tibetan” appearance my brother had them stitched with decorative figures cut from pale blue plastic (!). These gave them a picturesque but still less-genuine Tibetan look. However, the tourists never dreamt my family just fooled them for the sake of making them part with yet more money.

In the end, the four gentlemen bought many expensive presents: teacups, t’hangkas, carpets, shoes, and so on. Both parties thought it a successful afternoon.

That day I was also fortunate enough to be able to visit the temple, as thirty passing lamas had rented the Redcap sanctuary from pappa to celebrate a special service with sacred music in the evening. They put a long row of burning butter lamps on the outside platform and three more rows on the ladderlike wainscot inside the building itself. With some imagination these numerous little lights might remind one it was Christmas. The monks sang beautiful songs to the accompaniment of the usual musical instruments: the double drum, the temple bell, the big and the small cymbals, the kang-ling (the human thighbone flute), the gya-ling (a wooden flute with silver knobs) and of course the big white conch shell.

During the service I was allowed to sit at the end of the row of monks, and I looked up to the golden faces of Chèn-resí and Padma-Sambháva behind the altar. They looked stern and impassive. But in the flickering lights of the butterlamps it seemed as if the red, blue, and green angels along the side walls smiled at me in a friendly way. Perhaps I only imagined it, as I thought of another host of angels who about two thousand years ago had sung over the stable in Bethlehem: “Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.”

28: Visiting the Yellowcap Monks

One day I remembered with a shock I had as yet not fulfilled my promise to give lama Chim-pa a photographic reproduction of his portrait I had drawn last time I was in Bodhnâth. He lived in the small Gelúg-pa monastery in our hamlet. I decided to make up for my negligence at once, took the reproduction out of my suitcase, and went on my way.

First I crossed the square. Like the few narrow streets, it was not paved and showed many bumps and holes everywhere. Into the bigger holes the villagers used to throw their refuse. Here and there between the houses in the slums there were open dung pits, swarmed about by thousands of flies which would afterwards settle on the sweets in the little food shops. These dung pits also were used as latrines, because apart from the one in our house, there were no lavatories or other sanitary arrangements in Bodhnâth.

Nor were there any gutters alongside the square or the narrow lanes, but in some places gullies had formed themselves in their centers as the inhabitants were accustomed to throw all liquid refuse they wanted to get rid of out of the front doors! About the smell I will keep silent! Children, cows, dogs, and chickens walked about freely everywhere. Among them, talking to some Tibetan boys, I saw my nephew Sú-shil. He attended the mission school in Pâtan, but just now he had his Christmas holidays. "Where are you going, auntie? Lili?" he called.

"I am taking a photograph to the Gelúg-pas."

"You want me to come with you?" he suggested obligingly, "So I can translate things for you?" I gladly accepted.

In the front yard of the temple some goats strutted about. In their ears hung faded ribbons of the five holy colors. I knew that animals adorned this way had been bought by some pious man in order to save them from being slaughtered. Such a meritorious act (which cannot fail to lead to favorable circumstances in a next life on earth for the one who performed it) is always coupled with the donation of a

sum of money to the administrator of a monastery, who will subsequently feed the ransomed animal until its death.

A monk came to meet us in the temple vestibule. I showed him the reproduction and asked for lama Chim-pa. "He is meditating in his cell. I will take it to him presently. He will be very pleased, Tasvir-Mem-sahib."

Now some other monks grouped themselves around us, most of them still quite young. One said to Sú-shil: "Latterly this lady has come to our abbot to get tuition from him, but does she know anything about our daily life in the monastery? Would she like us to tell her about it?"

"Yes, yes," the others concurred.

I myself was not even consulted, but of course I thought it a wonderful idea. We settled down on the low square mattresses lying on the floor along the walls of the sanctuary.

"Well, we get up quite early, before sunrise," the first monk began.

"As soon as we are awakened by the strident blows on the big conch shell which is as white as the mouth of a mystical 'mákara' (a fish with an elephant's trunk)" another added, "because in the Gelúg-pa monasteries those of us, 'Virtuous-Ones, discipline and severe order prevail!"

"Quite different from those of the unreformed Redcaps," another said. "They are allowed to stay in bed until well after sunrise, and not single either, ha, ha! Hm, yes, we mean married of course, like . . . hm!" They nudged each other giggling, with a sidelong glance at Sú-shil.

"But the Redcap lamas in a high position indeed are never allowed to be married!" said an older monk with the look of an ascetic, "and certainly not to have several wives at the same time! A certain person here in Bodhnâth is the first Redcap lama in a high position I met in my whole life who made an exception to this rule! And three wives simultaneously at that! It is unheard of!" and his black, almond-shaped eyes blazed.

"Be quiet, don't get excited, let us tell Tasvir-Mem-sahib everything calmly and soberly, as it is proper for a Buddhist," resumed the first. "The Redcaps are allowed to drink alcoholic drinks, but it is forbidden to us Yellowcaps. After having become ordained lamas we have to stick to the two hundred and fifty three rules for monks prescribed by the Buddha, the so-called 'Vináya-rules.' That is a good deal harder than the ordinary ten which are in force for everybody in the clergy!"

"What are the ten rules for everybody?" I wanted to know.

“The first five commandments hold for each Buddhist, for the ‘Grey Ones’ (i.e., the lay persons) as well as for the ‘Yellow Ones,’ by which (in this case) are meant all belonging to the clergy, Redcap and Yellowcap monks alike. These are: (1) not to kill, (2) not to steal, (3) not to lie, (4) not to drink intoxicating drinks, and (5a) (for the grey ones) not to have illicit sexual relations (illicit is, for instance relationship with a relative or with a young girl still living under the protection of her parents) and (5b) (for the Yellow Ones) to refrain from any sexual action.

“The next five commandments obtain for the whole clergy, but not for lay persons: (6) not to eat except during mealtimes, (7) not to dance, (8) not to adorn oneself with flower garlands nor to use fragrant ointments, (9) not to use high comfortable beds or seats and (10) not to accept money or gifts of commercial value.

“I will mention a few of the Vināya rules” said the ascetic-looking monk: “Not to slander, not to speak ill of anybody, not to be covetous, not to be cruel, not to be too lazy to fight one’s own ignorance, not to doubt the Wisdom of the holy books, not to disparage one’s teachers, not to ridicule other people for their misfortune, not to talk coarse language, not to carry on silly conversations, not to behave unpleasantly, not to get impatient with old people, and not to borrow without being able to pay back”.

“And you always stick to the first ten rules in any case?” I asked the men in general.

An eighteen-year-old monk with chestnut-colored hair—the only Tibetan I ever saw who had no black hair—said, “You see Tasvir-Mem-sahib, Çākyaṃuni made these rules for his ‘Bhikshu’s,’ his disciples, who had discarded everything they possessed ‘because they had stopped to desire anything.’ These ascetics went around with a bowl like beggars to collect their daily food, for they didn’t even want to *touch* money. But such a thing would be impossible in the Land-of-the-Snow. *We Tibetan monks do not take voluntary poverty upon us.* So we do touch money. We are even traders quite often to get more money into our hands! Many lamas are great merchants.”

The first monk interrupted, “Merely from a few trifles it is evident we are, so to speak, “Mahāyāna-Bhiksus.” Look, for instance, at some of our garments!” He showed his tunic (‘teuga’) by pushing aside his toga. “According to prescription this is sewn from many small pieces of cloth, to make it look like the mended garments of the ancient mendicant friars!” He took his prayer-chain, saying “And the beads of our ‘tengwa’ have to be cut from the wood of a Bho-tree (Ficus Religiosa), so that they have no value at all. You know, of

course, the Buddha attained his Enlightenment while meditating under this kind of tree! Besides, we of the clergy—from high to low—are only allowed to eat from an ordinary wooden bowl, never from a metal or porcelain one. Not even the Dalai Lama!”

“We also sin against the commandment of never killing any living being, as we eat meat,” now said the ascetic. “There are but very few monks in Tibet who refrain from touching meat, for it is almost impossible in our cold climate to eat only ‘Kar-cheu’ (i.e., white, bloodless food) or in other words: to be vegetarians. Of course eating meat is wrong, but we always pray that the souls of the animals, slaughtered for our food, may be reborn on earth in a better form of existence. In any case, we Tibetans will never eat fish or fowl!

“However, many of us eat vegetarian food on the sacred days of new and full moon and during the ‘Mon-lam-’ the Great Prayer, which is held during the first three weeks of every year. And some of us keep very strict fasts on certain days: Then they neither eat nor drink nor speak. Quite a number vow never to touch any solid food after twelve in the afternoon and others never before that time.”

“So with the exception of these two commandments, you stick to all the others?” I held on. There was a silence.

They looked at each other, then one of them who was somewhat older answered: “We are men, Mem-sahib, and *none of us has chosen to become a monk. We were destined by our parents to follow this kind of life before we knew the consequences.* So the commandment of celibacy is sometimes broken, I am sorry to say. It may happen that some of us quite occasionally have intercourse with women. I think this happens all over the world. Now, unless it occurs too often or quite openly, such a transgression can be overlooked. But if it were repeated several times or if delicacy were not observed, overlooking is out of the question! In that case *the monk who proves not to be able to keep the vow of chastity has to return to the ordinary life of a layman. Anyway he is free to do so at any time. Nevertheless, it is a rare thing for one of us to want this, Mem-sahib!* For, seen socially such a thing is considered to be a bad fall. *Everyone belonging to the clergy is held in great respect in Tibet, but this is not the case with a layman who is not of noble birth. What woman is worth such a degradation?*”

I saw from his face he meant: none is!

“*Moreover, to be a lama is the only way of making a career,*” another said, “in case one is not a nobleman, hence does not get an important function thrown into one’s lap. In our country there are but some thirty noble families. It is often said that our state is a typical feudal one. However, on the other hand it is exceedingly democratic as a

person of the lowest descent can rise to the highest position: by becoming a lama first and then by going on to study as much as he can! No, in the Land-of-the-Snow no one every looks down upon anybody else. And is it not possible the next Dalai Lama will be born in the lowliest family!"

29: Life in a Monastery

"We begin our career in our eighth year," said one of the novices. "In our seventh year on earth, properly speaking, for we consider a newborn baby to be one year old. At the time mentioned, our parents entrust us to a monk in our family, which is always possible as *at least one out of every five men—perhaps even one out of every three men—in Tibet belongs to the clergy. One out of every fifteen girls will become a nun.*

"The relative then will teach the small boy the first principles of elementary knowledge, of course in exchange for gifts from the parents in money or in kind. After two or three years, the teacher presents a petition to a monastery to accept his pupil. There the boy is examined to see if he has no bodily defects and does not stammer. If he is found to be all right physically—which is an absolute requirement—there will be a kind of inauguration ceremony and he receives his ritual or 'golden' name. By this he has become a 'Gé-nyen,' a 'friend of virtue' or simply, a novice. Now he has to study very hard for many, many years. Of course he will have to read and write fluently the small letters as well as the beautiful capital letters of our alphabet, but far more important is his learning a great deal by heart. He begins with prayers, ceremonial wishes for people's welfare, and mantras. After these he must become able to recite faultlessly thousands of pages of the numerous books of Wisdom. In the meantime it is his duty to perform small services in the temple such as fetching water, pouring tea, and so on."

Here the monk with the chestnut hair cut in: "We each have a cell of our own and it is compulsory to take our meals by ourselves. Our parents send us money for food or the food proper. *The lands and other possessions of a big monastery are not meant to provide for the sustenance of its residents. The produce serves to keep the buildings in a good condition or to renew them if necessary.* Briefly, it is used for all monastic expenses. Later on a monk who does not receive any money from his

relatives and does not have private means can go and work as a lay brother for the religious community he belongs to, or he can become the groom or servant of one of the rich lamas who have beautiful apartments, at times even whole houses inside the monastery walls. However, some of us prefer to learn a trade, for instance making shoes or clothes for the others, so as to earn a living. You see, in Tibet the 'gompas' (i.e., monasteries) do not consist only of the main temple, meeting places ('du-khangs'), school buildings and various kinds of living quarters for the inmates, but also of workshops where everything needed is made. Gompas are like walled cities. You should go and see them some day. . . ." At this moment, to my utter astonishment, he produced a young puppy from the folds of his toga and pensively stroked its head.

One of the youngest novices, a sturdy, well-built little fellow who was poorly dressed, said "We need not study here if we don't care to. And if we are poor—as I am myself—we can become something much better than servants or shoemakers!" His face radiated. He evidently had found his ideal for the future and looking around triumphantly he said, "Soldier! Yes I want to join the 'Golden Army,' once I am grown up."

"Gold," I knew, is held in Tibet as a color too, and especially as the color belonging to the clergy. The soldiers of the clerical army as a rule are superior to those of the army of the state. In former times, when the monasteries used to be assailed by foreign tribes eager for booty, they were the ones who defended them. The "golden soldiers," surnamed "dob-dobs," take a pride in looking as dirty as possible. Generally they let their hair grow. Every day they train in throwing stones at a target and they also practice all kinds of exercises in endurance. When high lamas go on a journey they take these men with them as a protection against robber attacks.

"Now you keep silent," said the monk with the puppy disapprovingly to the little sturdy one. "Mem-sahib here wants to hear about spiritual things, she is not interested in soldiers at all!" And to me: "Well, after we have been taught at the monastery for many years we go in for our first examination, the 'Ge-tsúl.' One is examined in the presence of the abbot for three whole days. I just passed mine. After that I received the ordination of the same name, so I have to stick to the thirty-six rules of Buddhism for a 'more advanced pupil' (a Gè-tsúl). Now I am going to study for the last the "Ge-lòng examination."

"The whole lama study takes at least twelve years," the ascetic said, "so it is impossible for anybody to become a lama before he is

twenty. Actually this hardly ever happens. Most of the monks pass their final examination, between their thirtieth and fortieth year! I myself passed it in my twenty-sixth. For this one has to know still more books by heart and also to train oneself in public theological debates. They have to be held according to fixed rules joined to the prescribed classic gestures. Apart from arguing about religious subjects we also have to learn to speak in public on general topics, for which there are four rules: (1) not too long, but not too short, (2) not too rough, but not too gentle, (3) courageous as a lion, mild as a hare, impressive as a serpent, pointed as an arrow and (4) completely balanced like the double thunderbolt scepter, the "dorji," the symbol of the authority of the lamas. Personally I always have loved to hold speeches. But let me continue my account: Right after the Ge-lông examination one receives the Ge-lông ordination. From that moment on, one is a finished 'lama' and has to stick to the two hundred and fifty-three 'Vináya rules' for the followers-of-the-Buddha. *'Lama' signifies 'He who has higher knowledge.'* All those who do not have the right to this title will stay pupils, 'trapas' until the end of their lives.

"I am here in Bodhnâth merely for a time. I want to go back to my country in order to study at a university. These are but to be found in big monasteries. There the holy books are systematically explained by very learned lama-professors. There are four different faculties: (1) theology (holy scriptures) and monastery rules, (2) philosophy and metaphysics, (3) rituals, magic, and astrology, and (4) medicine. The latter attracts me more than anything else. The eight 'Buddhas of Medicine' are the protectors of the physicians. In Tibet, laymen never can become doctors, only lamas can, as the cures mainly consist of performing certain religious rites appropriate to the fighting of special ailments, as all diseases are caused by demons. Sometimes it helps to repeat mantras, magic formulae which, by their rhythm and sound, effect the cure of certain complaints. Written mantras can be powerful, too. Either they have to be pasted as plasters on the painful place or they have to be swallowed.

"We always enjoin the relatives of the patient to see to it he never falls asleep during daytime because sleeping by day we consider to be very dangerous, even for healthy babies. We are convinced that evil spirits can take possession of one's body during that time. Beside the religious treatment we administer infusions of herbs or wholesome roots to the sick person, sometimes pills of any substance on which a high lama has concentrated his wishes of welfare so they are charged with his force. In special cases it may be we advise people to bathe in our natural medicinal wells. But taking medicines

or baths is only considered as auxiliary. What effects the recovery are the religious rites and the spoken mantras.

"First and foremost a medical doctor has to be able to diagnose a case. Not an easy thing to do! The Tibetan lamas get a training of eight to ten years before they are allowed to call themselves physicians! By that time they have a profound knowledge of anatomy and are able to discern two hundred and forty four diseases and affections of the skin. They examine the blood circulation of the patient by putting their fingers not only on his wrists, but also on five other places of his body, where the veins are connected respectively with the five main organs: the heart, the lungs, the liver, the stomach, and the intestines. Several times a day they also investigate the urine of somebody who is ill.

"The most famous university for medical science is that of the monastery on the Chàk-porí, the 'Iron hill' quite near Lhasa, but in a few other monasteries this science is taught too, together with the knowledge of herbs, which monks go and search for in groups in the rough, high mountains."

Here the "Gé-nyen" of the puppy unexpectedly cried "Woof," pretending it was the little animal in his arms which made for the ascetic. "Woof-woof, spiritual things for Tasvir-Mem-sahib! Stop whining about doctors, mister lama!" We burst out laughing, all of us.

"You didn't let me tell you about the order of our days," the first monk took up our conversation. "As I said before, we get up before sunrise, awakened by the sound of the conch shell. Ours is a very holy one because its windings turn to the right, while as a rule they turn to the left."

"Maybe," the soldier-to-be interrupted, "it has fallen from heaven!"

"Be silent, little one. That is what I told you before. The thing you mention is only the case with extremely holy statues or ritual objects. Yes, really such things do happen in Tibet, Mem-sahib, but quite rarely. That conch shell, of course, comes from the sea. But to continue my story: As soon as we are up we have a service in the temple, then we take our breakfast and around nine we have another service. The third is held before the meal at noon, the fourth at three o'clock, and the fifth at seven o'clock. We also must learn to play the temple instruments and to sing the litanies. To sing them well we have to train our voices, especially for the low tones, that are considered to be the most beautiful. We don't have a note script, like the Westerners, but we do have a kind of "wave writing" for our music.

"Apart from the services and the lessons, we can spend our time the way we want, but we have to be in before sunset. Everybody has to prepare his own food, but during the long services we get tea from the monastery. At special occasions there are "tormas" made of tsampa or rice, having served as food offerings in the temple. As a rule we are allowed to eat them afterwards. At a religious festivity we always get a few sweetmeats, but as this monastery is not a well known one we very seldom receive money presents."

"Is such the case in other monasteries?" I asked.

"Yes, rich pilgrims often give quite large sums to distribute amongst the monks. The share of the tulku and high lamas is of course, greater than that of us pupils (trapas). Mongolian pilgrims, especially, often give enormous amounts of money. Others treat us all to a good meal.

"The finished lamas have several other means of livelihood: If a person is seriously ill or if somebody fears a misfortune or wants to undertake an important business, the head of the family asks thirty to forty lamas to come and recite the Kan-gyur, as this is considered a meritorious act benefitting all the relatives. The monks who do the reciting get a good pay besides being served tea and food during the ten days or so they spend on this work. Other people have the holy book recited once a year. And sometimes a rich family keeps a lama as their house priest. He has to pray regularly for the welfare of the members and of the animals of the house. But it is forbidden to exercise such employment for longer than three years. After that period he has to return to his monastery. In his function as a priest, a lama is allowed to perform various kinds of ceremonies for lay people, for instance he can recite the 'Bardo-Thödol,' the Tibetan Book-of-the-Dead for a person who is dying or has just died, in order to serve as 'his spiritual guide showing him the way in the Bar-do' (i.e., the state of consciousness between two lives on earth). For otherwise the deceased might wander about there for endless times. Most of us write out amulets for a small remuneration. They serve against evil spirits or against a special kind of mishaps. Sometimes the mantra referring to it has to be joined to a drawing of the appropriate mystical diagram or mandala. Other lamas again prefer to exercise a handicraft inside the monastery walls in their free time or to carry on a trade. But some go on studying! The latter can go in for yet another examination and after they have proved a thesis in a public debate they receive the title of 'Gé-shé,' 'doctor,' so they might even become university professors. A lama who has studied astronomy is allowed to cast a person's horoscope for money. One who has qualified himself in astronomical

calculations can be attached as an expert in this field to a great monastery. He is called a 'Tsi-pa.' Only few go still further after having become a doctor. Finally such a one can be appointed as 'Ken-po,' i.e., a high monastic dignitary. But to reach such a position one has to be not only learned, but also ambitious, as this honorable function is based on merits as well.

"All high lamas retire for one month every year to meditate in solitude. Fortunately we tra-pas don't need to yet!" he added with a sigh of relief and he looked at me expectantly. It evidently meant the monks now had told me all there was to tell.

So I said: "I have learned quite a lot about monastic life; from everybody something. And I thank you all sincerely! There is only one amongst you who has not said a single word," and my eyes sought those of a young man dressed in rags with a gentle expression on his face. I had often seen him rendering small services to the others and doing all sorts of dirty jobs in the temple. Always there was a smile hovering around his lips.

"Just like you, Mem-sahib," he merely said.

I understood at once what he meant. "You also paint?"

He kept silent and looked shyly away.

"Yes, yes, he is our 'ula,' he is able to paint t'hangkas with deities, Buddhas and saints, oh so beautiful! But apart from that he cannot do a single thing!"

"Some other time I will show you," said the youth, who nodded curtly and went to sweep the courtyard.

The monks saw Sú-shil and me off to the gate. "What is your real name, Tasvir-Mem-sahib?" one of them inquired.

"Li-li" I said. They all looked at each other a bit uneasily, confused, taken aback as it were. I wondered why.

"But Li is a well-known Chinese name! You do not happen to be a Chinese?"

"No, I come from the West." I heard a few sighs of relief, and a shy laughter.

"Then go slowly, Mem-sahib Li-li" said the young monks politely as a farewell.

30: i. Caravan Trips

The Tibetan family who had so cordially received me in their house at Kâthmandú had promised to invite me again. It was not long before they sent their car to Bodhnâth with the message that they were expecting me that same day: Would I kindly come to them immediately? The young woman greeted me as if I were an old friend of hers: "We simply *had* to see you, Mem-sahib, before we leave for Calcutta where my husband—quite unexpectedly—has to do some important business. He wants to give you yet a few more details about Tibet so that you will be able to form a clear picture of our country in your mind."

The rich merchant came in and sat down on one of the square cushions on the floor, just like ourselves. "I don't know much about our religion, Mem-sahib," he said. "A lama will be able to inform you much better than I. But I can tell you various interesting things about our way of doing business. We Tibetans are a people of traders. It seems to be in our blood. A number of our lamas are even continuously buying and selling for, unlike the monks of the Buddha, the 'bhikshus,' they don't take 'voluntary poverty' upon themselves. Many monasteries, especially those situated along the caravan roads, are large centers of trade. Some of them even lend out money against interest and such all the year round. They function more or less as do the banks in Western countries. The transport of goods, however, only takes place during the winter months, for in that season no rain falls which might spoil them or make the loads too heavy for the pack animals.

"I already told you that we mainly export wool, but besides this, also many kinds of hides, the plume-shaped tails of our yaks, the musk of muskus deer and a velvety substance which, between April and May, grows on the antlers of the giant stag. The latter stuff is a highly potent aphrodisiac, much asked for in China. Moreover, we export salt and borax, both of which are found as sediments along the

shores of our lakes, and medicinal herbs that are gathered and dried by the monks of certain monasteries up in the high mountains.

'From China our caravans import tea, pressed in the shape of briquettes: some hundred and fifty million pounds annually! There are five qualities of tea. From the same country we also import incense—as powder or in the shape of joss sticks—as well as great quantities of silk, satin, brocade, and turquoises, the stones so beloved by our people. The coral beads, appreciated too by both sexes, are imported from Italy, and the amber the ladies wear from the shores of the Baltic Sea.

“The transportation through the wild regions of Tibet, along the difficult tracks—real roads are nonexistent in our country—is far from easy. Pack horses (always ponies) are not very suitable for this work. They soon grow tired and become hungry. Westerners think it strange that in such case we feed them dried mutton and salted butter tea. But I can assure you, they simply love it! Mules, however, are much tougher than horses. They are able to carry heavier loads and do not seem to tire, even when they get scanty food. One has to choose an intelligent animal for the lead mule. A large bell is often hung around its neck and it is adorned with tassels of yak hair dyed red, so it can easily be recognized from a distance. Donkeys too are good carriers, quite tough, but they do not give satisfaction on great heights. In many respects the yaks are the ideal animals for goods-transport. When the tracks are barely passable, leading along deep precipices and through high snow, they keep going on steadily and, led by a strange instinct, they will never fail to put down their feet in the right place. While crossing the highest mountain passes, where even we Tibetans breathe with so much difficulty that the uneducated drivers think evil spirits are spreading their poisonous gases, the yaks continue on their way unperturbed by the rarified atmosphere. However, in regions below nine thousand feet, they usually become sick. Unfortunately yaks are very slow, for they graze as they travel along. A yak caravan never covers more than nine miles a day, whereas mules will cover nearly eighteen miles.

“We Tö-pas’ (i.e., Tibetans) also have great stamina, at least up in the cold territories. Westerners have told me that this is caused by the fact that our lungs are much larger than theirs and that the percentage of our hemoglobin is far higher too. Therefore we can carry much heavier loads. But our bodies are less resistant to heat and dampness.

“When journeying with a caravan, we like to make short daily marches, not minding to be on our way for many months. We usually pitch our tents as early as eleven or twelve in the morning, for this is

the time when, without fail, heavy gales will start up which continue to lash the barren country until sunset. In order to cover a full day's march, we always break up camp at three o'clock at night. In Tibet the sunrise is unbelievably beautiful, *as on such high altitudes the atmosphere is very pure. For the same reason in the Land-of-the-Snow one can see much further than in lower regions. Even the most remote objects always seem quite near.*

"As a rule our drivers are Khampas, strong, big fellows with immense endurance, but very quick-tempered. Their quarrels—caused by mere trifles—often result in killing each other.

"Camels do not thrive in high altitudes. So they will never be found in our caravans. However, they are the ideal pack animals of our neighbor Mongolia, the 'Land-of-the-Pastures,' where the twin-humped camel is indigenous.

"In western Tibet sometimes sheep are used for the transport of salt and borax. They are able to carry loads of forty pounds packed in a double bag hanging on either side of their backs. Some rams are as big as small donkeys.

"As for that, boatmen always make use of a sheep when transporting people or goods over the water. You probably know that only very light craft can be used on our rivers, with their numerous rapids. They are made of bent willow or of juniper branches covered with yak hides, the seams of which are closed with a kind of wax, and can hold quite a number of people when going downstream. Of course, upstream transport is out of the question. On these journeys the sheep is taken along too. After the boatman has unloaded his passengers some twelve miles lower down than the spot they came on board, he walks back along the riverbank carrying the coracle on his head followed by the sheep, his loyal companion, on whose back are packed his personal belongings and his victuals.

"As I told you before, the tracks followed by our caravans lead across high, steep, mountain passes. When we reach their highest part we thank the deity-of-the-mountain by throwing another stone on the large heap of stones ('obo'), formed by those who were there before us. We often fasten a little vane with (or without) a written mantra on top of it. Such an obo is in fact nothing but a primitive kind of altar, (probably a remnant of ancient Bon-animism), where we always cry out: 'The gods have triumphed; the demons have been conquered!' Religion lives in our heart with everything we do. Near bridges and fords we fix up vanes as well, just to please the spirits who live there.

"Although our caravans have to cross numerous rivers and

mountain streams, bridges are extremely rare in the Land-of-the-Snow. At best they consist of two iron chains covered with boards. But in most cases the shores of a river are merely joined by a rope from which hangs a basket. It can hold two persons and has to be pulled towards the other side by somebody else. When the river-banks are formed by steep rocks, two ropes are used, each of them leading downwards (reckoned from the side one comes from, so they are sloping in different directions). From these ropes hangs a noose instead of a basket, seated in which a traveller slides across the river through his own weight. However, one has to cover the last short part of such an eery trip over the water pulling oneself forward to the other bank. (Since one's weight will make even a downward-sloping rope sag at the very end, this will have to be done by gripping it hand over hand.) People who are easily scared should think twice before starting on a journey in Tibet!

"Caravans, of course, have to find a fordable spot. Only at Chàk-sam, where the Tsang-chu (Brahmapútra) is very broad, is there a ferry consisting of two wooden rafts to carry men across (alternately) as well as beasts.

"The few bridges in our country remind me of a funny story. People tell about a saint, called Tan-ton Gyàlpo, living in the fifteenth century of your era who—while abiding in his mother's womb—was reflecting on all the suffering he would unintentionally inflict upon others. So he just could not decide to let himself be born. He thus meditated for sixty years and had already become an old man with grey hair, when it suddenly dawned on him that he was causing his poor mother much discomfort. So he immediately stepped outside into the world and started preaching the doctrine of the Buddha and building bridges to help people. Across the Tsang-chu alone he constructed as many as eight, several of which are still extant."

Here the handsome spouse of the merchant interrupted him: "Why don't you tell Mem-sahib something about the robbers?"

"No, little wife," he answered—using the appellation of every husband to his better half—"Mem-sahib would only come to the conclusion that our country is a very unsafe place to travel in and she would never want to go there."

"Oh kusho, there is nothing I would love to do better than visit Tibet, robbers or no! But you know very well that the Land-of-the-Snow has been always "closed" territory to all Westerners. And since the Chinese invasion it is equally impossible to obtain an entrance permit."

"It is true, Mem-sahib, my caravans have been attacked by rob-

bers more than once, but they have never ransacked us. For I always took a heavily armed escort along with me to fend off the assaults. And up to now we have each time succeeded in doing so."

"As if that were the only cause that everything has always turned out well," his wife exclaimed a bit indignantly. "Don't forget the charms that helped you too!"

The merchant looked a little shy. "I did not want to bring it up for discussion, Mem-sahib, but we Tibetans do believe in the effect of talismans to ward off all kinds of evil. The lamas sell them for a small remuneration. They are holy mantras and pictures of either diagrams or *kyilkhors* (*māṇḍalas*), effective against the dangers of travelling, against accidents in general, against attacks by robbers, against evil spirits, and so on. We are accustomed to carry these blessed pieces of paper with their magic formulae and representations, rolled up in tiny cylinders, hidden on various parts of the body. Other amulets which we always have with us may, for instance, consist of kneadings of consecrated earth mixed with the ashes of a famous wise man or pious lama. They are the so-called 'tsa-tsa's.' Again they may consist of a piece of cloth from the garments once worn by a saint.

"But to continue: Lhasa, the Place-of-the-Gods, is of course the most important trade center. It is situated on thirty degrees north latitude, as is, for instance, Cairo in Egypt. It has fifty thousand inhabitants. Sometimes our capital too is visited by robbers from the eastern provinces who have nothing against doing some honest business once in a while—provided they don't happen to be in their own territory! Moreover one sees in Lhasa the Tibetan Moslims, a small group of descendents from the people of *Ladákh*, formerly immigrated from our western province of that name, also known as 'Little Tibet.' For a very long time we have not encouraged other adherents of Islam to come and settle in our country. We are more in sympathy with the adherents of the Christian and the Hindu religions than with the Moslims, as these despise all statues and consider killing a non-Moslim a meritorious act! But we don't chase away those families who have lived peacefully in our midst for many generations. Quite a number of Nepalese and Indian traders have settled in Lhasa too. The latter belong for the most part to the *Marwári* tribe (people hailing from the district of *Mārwar* in the Indian province of *Rājastán*), who are notoriously cunning. Their specialty is moneylending. They generally demand one-third of the principal as yearly interest. I need not tell you they are not greatly esteemed with us! Fortunately in Tibet compound interest is forbidden once and for all!

"You might think it interesting to know how bargaining is done

with us: in absolute silence! The buyer and seller put their right hands into each other's sleeves, grasping the fingers of the other in various ways. Each kind of grasp signifies a certain number. This way nobody knows how small a price the owner—who may be in need of funds—is prepared to accept for his wares, nor how high a price the buyer—who may have set his heart on some article—is willing to pay for it."

"The Tibetans must have adopted this system from the Chinese, kusho! I remember visiting the market of the most precious jade, the 'apple-green' species, held once a year in Peking, where countless transactions were simultaneously being concluded by the most famous jewellers. However, it was so utterly noiseless in the big hall you might have heard a pin drop! But a thousand thanks for telling me so much, kúsho!"

30: ii. Trips in General

"All this was about merchants traveling with their caravans and trade in general," said my host. "But I have not yet told you about the things one sees during a trip, nor about the journeys of private persons. Would you like to hear some more?"

I nodded enthusiastically.

"Well then: On the barren plains, far from each other, are pitched the black yak-hair tents of cattle-breeding nomads. They are guarded by fierce, barking dogs which do not allow any stranger to approach. The peasants, far inferior in number to the nomads, live in hamlets near one of the rivers, since their fields need irrigation. These agricultural communities are so few and far between that it often takes several days' to travel from one settlement to the next. On approaching such a group of farmsteads, the path generally widens and is divided in the center by a 'mendong,' i.e., a wall in which many stone slabs are inserted, on each of which is carved the holy mantra "Om Mani Padme Hum" by somebody wanting to perform a 'meritorious act.' One has to pass such a mendong keeping it at one's right like any other sacred structure. It sometimes is a mile in length.

"The houses of the peasants are built with natural stones. When there are none available they are made from tamped earth (never from bricks), reinforced with twigs and straw. No nails are used in our country. The roofs are always flat. We are accustomed to dry grain and grass on them. Chimneys are unknown in the Land-of-the-Snow. The smoke escapes through the small, paneless windows, thus blackening the inside walls. When it is cold, wooden frames can be inserted into the windows. These are divided into partitions covered with oiled paper or oilcloth. However, they don't allow a great deal of light to filter through.

"Outside a dwelling one often sees a construction made of wood on which in an artistic way colored threads have been stretched, more

or less in the way of intricate cobwebs. Sometimes such contraptions are crowned with the skull of a dog or a sheep. They are meant to catch demons and other evil spirits causing illness. Passing through a hamlet early in the morning one sees the pious housewives on the roofs lighting their daily scent offering of fragrant juniper twigs to the gods. Near evening they will do so once more.

"These tiny villages are rather picturesque, but by far the greatest ornaments of Tibet are the monasteries, which can be found scattered about all over the country. We call them 'gompas,' meaning 'isolated places.' The large gompas are like superb walled townlets with their temples, assembly halls, schools for monks, and living quarters for lamas and trapas. Personally I prefer the smaller ones, some of which are founded by a wandering lama who became famous and obtained many followers, others by rich families wanting to provide a spiritual career for one of their younger sons.

"It stands to reason that nearly all monasteries are Buddhist communities. One rarely sees a small one belonging to the so-called 'White Bons,' usually in the eastern provinces. Though not converted to the True Doctrine, these adherents of Tibet's ancient animism have nevertheless been quite a bit influenced by it. They even dress exactly like the Buddhist clergy, with the exception of their headgear. Not more than two or three hundred monks will live in such a Bon monastery, with its tiny library of sacred Bon manuscripts. Their principal deity is Sipa-Gyälmo, the 'Queen of the World.' The few 'Black Bons' never live in communities."

"Tell me something about these Black Bons, kusho."

"Nobody knows much about them. They remain faithful to the ancient shamanist belief of their ancestors in central Asia. Like all other beliefs, it has somewhat changed in the course of time. Please do not think, Mem-sahib, that the 'Bon-religion' was sheer nonsense. From the same 'trunk' (so to speak) has originated the 'branch' called 'Taoism'. This is a well-known doctrine in China and has many adherents. The greatest 'Shamanist Master' was called Chèn-rabs. He lived so long ago that nobody knows anything for certain concerning his personal life. The shamáns were a kind of sorcerers. Sometimes their magic abilities 'remained in their family.' A father taught his son, or a mother her daughter. For there were female shamáns as well. None of them was ever bound to celibacy. They were looked up to with reverence by their fellow villagers. In parts of Siberia 'Shamanism' has still a number of adherents, while the tribe of the Lèpchas in the Himâlayan kingdoms still follow ancient Bon-animism.

"However, let us return to our subject. We were talking about

the *monasteries*. It is estimated that there are about three thousand in Tibet. Some are built on practically inaccessible heights. With their inward-slanting walls, they seem as it were to be 'growing' out of the rocks themselves, thus forming a complete unity with their surroundings. Others are situated in lovely sheltered valleys. And others again rise up from the summit of some high, isolated hill, resembling small castles that dominate the surrounding country. But all are beautiful beyond compare! And moreover: centers of Wisdom, power, and wealth!

"There exist also real castles or strongholds. These are always situated on a rock quite near a village. We call them 'jongs' and they serve as the residence of the local governor and his staff. Some of them are very ancient. In olden times they were inhabited by robber-barons.

"In fact, even today there are a number of 'robber-knights,' especially among the Kham-pas. Sometimes the chiefs of these brigand gangs are quite distinguished persons. The tribes most notorious for their ransacking and looting (of caravans and private travelers alike) are the Nyaròng-pas and the Gològ-pas. Strange as it may seem, the latter—who are the worst—are always ruled by a queen. She marries and invariably gets but one child: a girl who eventually succeeds her.

"But to complete my description of the monasteries (which I gave you just now) I must say a word or two about the numerous structures in their vicinity which we call 'chörtens,' small stūpas. Like the big stūpa of Bodhnâth, they are shrines built to keep relics in, generally the ashes of a saintly lama. These chörtens always consist of five well-defined parts, one built on top of the other in an established order of sequence, standing for the five elements. The base is generally square and symbolizes the element earth. The sphere above it symbolises water (in the shape of a drop). The next part—a long, narrow cone—symbolizes fire (the stylized shape of a flame). It is crowned with the symbol of air (represented as the dome of our sky, turned upside down). Seen from the side it gives more or less the impression of the crescent moon lying on its back. But in reality it has the shape of a shallow bowl. The uppermost part symbolizes ether, to which is given the form of a small ball with a tapering point, the shape rather reminding one of the flame of a candle. At the same time this symbolizes the 'Jyoti,' i.e., the Holy Light of the spiritual Enlightenment. The height of a chörten varies from three to sixty feet.

"Everywhere in the barren country one comes across signs of the great devotion of our people: In many places along lonely torrents there are fixed prayer wheels revolving constantly under the impact of

their running water. More often than not, in the remotest wilderness one can admire representations of the Buddha carved in the sheer rocks. Festoons of prayer-flags are hung in front of them. And the caves of almost inaccessible mountains are quite often the abodes of ascetic hermits who spend their lives in meditation.

"Surely you have heard that Tibetans, whatever their class of society, are fond of making pilgrimages to some holy place far away. During these trips they will live like deer in the forest. Their skin, like the bark of a tree, will get covered with a dark layer of dirt. It originates from the smoke of their campfires, from the dust on the tracks, and from the earth on which they lie down to sleep, so these trekkers get the patina of ancient rocks. Wherever they have gone they leave a scent similar to wild animals. Therefore the Chinese speak of them denigratingly as 'those stinking barbarians.' However, the Tibetans have no regard for easy living! With good-natured cynicism they put up with their bad reputation for dirtiness.

"In fact, they are philosophers, these primitive people, isolating themselves from the world. They jealously guard their superiority of being able to live without needs, without physicians (in our sense), without laws, without judges, and without police. Since it is these things together which form the artificial and complicated structure that supports the hollow façade of our civilization, though creating the impression of a certain grandeur.

"They don't know our depressions, our insane hurry to achieve whatever we want, our morbid avidity of continuous change, of illusory gain, and of never-ending progress.

"They are veritable sages, these simple folk who eat with their fingers, who don't sleep in beds, but who have far surpassed all other nations in the exquisite wealth of their books on philosophy. *They apply their Wisdom in their way of living and write it down with letters of real gold* in their manuscripts, magnificent to look at and of an immense spiritual value.

"In spite of the attachment they cherish for their nice houses with thick walls and in spite of the hardships and dangers awaiting them on their inhospitable tracks, Tibetans are only *really happy* when traveling. Setting out on such a journey is a feast to them. They put on their best clothes and their new shoes. They hang their silver shrines around their necks and adorn themselves with all their jewelry. After a nourishing meal they will start, as a rule several families together—sometimes even half a hamlet—walking like geese one behind the other, in their hands a long staff with a bunch of flowers fastened to the top.

“Traversing the barely passable rugged mountains, they don’t make use of pack animals, as the paths are such difficult going. It is the women who carry the load of indispensable heavy copper pans. As they deny themselves the luxury of tents and rugs on a pilgrimage, it will be merely a few days before their lovely attire is in tatters. When reaching an ‘obo’ situated on top of a pass or at the side of a ford, they will not hesitate to tear pieces off their clothes to use them as sacred vanes to be tied to these primitive altars in honor of the deities. For why should they worry about material possessions on a trip so joyous: to a holy place!

“Having reached and circumambulated the object in view, they will return filled with bliss and contentment. As festive as was their departure, just as festive will be their homecoming. . . .

“Yes, these pilgrims, too, relish the beauty of our country, so wonderful to traverse! However, try as I may, no words will ever give you an idea about the serene rugged grandeur of Tibet, with its enchanting solitude, its absolute stillness, and its inexpressible peace. . . .”

Here the merchant sank into silence for a long time, absorbed in memories of his beloved homeland, lost forever. . . . For quite some time neither did any of us feel like saying a single word.

Finally he concluded: “Well, this is about all, Mem-sahib.”

“You have told me an enormous amount of particulars of the Land-of-the-Snow! I am really extremely grateful to you, Kusho!”

It was now time to take leave. I was already able to pronounce to my host and hostess the Tibetan phrase which is customary for saying farewell in a polite way: “Go slowly!”

Returning home to Bodhnâth, I realized yet again that nowhere on my many travels throughout the world had I come across such cordial and helpful people as the Tibetans.

31: The Village of the Tents

Sometimes I went out in the early morning "in search of adventure," as I called it myself. Without any special aim, I sauntered about the nomads' tents, hoping to see something interesting. There were so many tents now that they formed a kind of village behind our house. Thousands of refugees were living in Bodhnâth. Many of them knew me and were well disposed towards me. The medicines I distributed when necessary played some part in it too. The ugly Kham-pa man who had tried one day to prevent my taking photographs went out of his way to obtain my friendship, since I had made a sketch of his little daughter. As it was a good likeness, I had won his heart. He often invited me to his dishevelled abode and showed me how he made new felt boots for his children. Another time he was busy mending their coats of skin. His big strong needles, probably imported from China, he kept—as all men did—in a nice little needle-bag of leather hanging on his belt. He had cut a protector for his finger from leather in the usual Tibetan manner. Also the string-like thread for sewing was made by himself. He had "tanned" the skins by smearing their inside with butter and with the brains of yaks or sheep, through which they had become soft and white. As I was watching his various proceedings, his neighbors came round to look at me and they also invited me to come and see them.

Other Tibetans asked me to show them the portraits I had drawn of their acquaintances or relatives. At first I took them up to the house of the China lama, but as pappa was afraid some of these people might be robbers, it stands to reason he had rather I did not. From then onwards I used to bring along my map with drawings to the village-of-the-tents to amuse young and old. When the inhabitants recognized amongst my products some lamas they greatly respected, their feeling of reverence also reflected a bit on me. The childlike devotion of the Tibetans is quite touching.

They knew I was interested in all kinds of ornaments for their

hair. So they took me to a tent of rich Kham-pas where the women not only dressed their locks with the usual three big pieces of amber with coral, but had them joined on a band in the form of a T, set with turquoises and corals alternately. Sometimes this band was hanging far down their backs between their numerous thin plaits and was adorned with two, four, or six extra pieces of amber with coral, so that the total made up an odd number. For any even number is supposed to bring mishap. Some other women had a row of enormous pieces of turquoise sewn on such a band. In that case, there was mostly a silver ornament fastened at its end, representing a four-petalled flower with a heart of coral. Obviously it was a symbol of the "Muládhara-cakra" (about which more in another chapter). Women who were less well-to-do could but afford "ordinary" silver rosettes set with a coral or a turquoise on either side of the face. Their various ways of dressing their coiffure showed good taste.

In one group of Kham-pas the men as well as the women wore pointed caps of grey felt. The women from the Tromo valley had a kind of green cap with corners of brocade. Some nice village girls from Gyényèn boasted of broad bonnets of green wool, made more or less like a Smyrna carpet. And yet other women (hailing from Kong-po) had hats in the form of pillboxes, but with far-protruding, gaily-embroidered points, set rakishly aslant on their heads. With these latter hats, no blouses and sleeveless tunics were worn (as was the custom with the city people) nor obliquely draped coats (as was the custom with the nomads), but gowns without sleeves consisting of one oblong piece of cloth with a hole in it for the head, a sash being tied firmly around the waist.

Once when I was roaming about in the village-of-the-tents half the population ran out because sounds of music came from Bodhnâth. I went in the same direction and found that everybody had gathered in a wide circle in front of the Gelúg-pa temple around five men chanting to the accompaniment of drums and cymbals. The singers all wore long, wide trousers and a belt around their waist on which hung a close row of strings, each one ending in a tassel. Before their faces they put a kind of flat mask embellished with cowri shells. Then they started to revolve in time with the music, around their own axis and around a central point just like planets around the sun. Their whirling became quicker and quicker. The strings of their belts swung out horizontally so they made the impression of rapidly turning wheels. As with tops, the axis of the gyrating dancers became completely oblique. It has to be seen to be believed! This "Whirlwind-dance" of the Kham-pas is quite famous. At the end, they received a

storm of approval and many small coins from the spectators. The monks of the monastery gave them big baskets of rice with a few rupees on top, and the abbot handed each dancer a thin strip of red cloth with a double knot in it on which he had blown. With many thanks they tied these strips around their necks. Always when one has visited a famous lama or an abbot and has given him a gift in money or in kind—as these people had given a dance—one will get in return such a strip of red cloth, sanctified by his breath. This is a talisman for long life, called a “*sòngdū*.”

Among the spectators I saw a woman who already the day before had caught my attention. She was past middle age and had a sour, bony face with a venomous expression, but her type was quite characteristic. So I asked her to pose for me.

“No,” she said curtly.

The China lama, who happened to hear it, called her and said “Why don’t you agree, mother? Your portrait will be drawn in my own house and you will be well paid! Come on, say yes!”

“No!” she repeated in a rude manner, without observing the forms of etiquette that were due to a priest. So my Tibetan father became angry “Now I *order* you to do as my daughter asked you in such a friendly way! At once!” The woman got terribly frightened. Immediately she followed me to the gallery and sat down on a chair. But she kept on waggling and wobbling so this drawing took me more time than I usually needed. Finally the sketch was so far advanced I would only have to work on it for another half hour.

Then my model asked shyly “May I please go to the field?” This is the common expression when one has to obey a natural want. “I promise to come back in a moment” she added before she left. But she did not return anymore.

Some time afterwards her husband appeared. He was utterly surprised not to find her. “Where can my wife be?” he asked uneasily. An hour later he came once more and twice again. It was already dark by then, but the woman could not be found anywhere.

However, the next day, when circumambulating the stûpa (in counterclockwise direction) I saw her approaching. She ran along the sanctuary with big strides, turning around her prayer-wheel furiously. From afar she screeched to me: “My money, I must have the money you promised me!” Although she had not posed as long as she should have done, she had given me part of her time, so she had a right to be paid. And I would of course have given her the fee after the sitting if she had not left so unexpectedly.

“Wait a moment, I will take it out of my purse for you,” I an-

swered, but violently swinging her wheel she galloped on. That did not matter, because if two people are walking continuously around a building in opposite directions, they will go on meeting each other ever again. I kept the entire amount I had promised her in my hand and when she arrived, vehemently whirling around the sacred implement, I thrust it into her hand.

"No, no," she yelled wildly, with blazing eyes. The poor creature absolutely wanted to be a martyr: She threw the rupees on the ground and ran away, still flourishing her prayer-wheel (so "praying") in a rage. I never saw her again! I finished her sketch from memory. This was the only time I had difficulties with a Tibetan model.

I had other difficulties galore when drawing portraits. I have mentioned them already. Not only did the cold and windy weather work against me, but the members of my family seemed constantly to feel the urge to wriggle themselves between me and the balustrade when I was working, although I posted myself purposely at the very end of the gallery. The bigger children wanted to look how I drew, and with this aim in view they came and stood right in front of me so I could not see my model anymore. Of course they did not impede my view intentionally, but from ignorance. They played with my crayons, let them fall and then stepped on them accidentally, so they broke. They secretly "borrowed" my erasers and these too I never saw again. The wives of my elder brother always swept the wooden gallery above my head during my working hours so the dirt whirled across the broad clefts on my paper. And I was constantly afraid that one of the small children who were allowed to weewee in any place of the house they liked (with the exception of the turquoise-colored room and pappā's bedroom), would choose the spot above my head where the boards did not meet. Of course this actually happened one day when I was busy on a very laborious drawing. Whether I heard it, smelled it, saw it, or felt it first I don't remember anymore. I know only that as quick as lightning I pressed the drawing with the map stiffly against my body to protect it from getting wet. After all I could scrub myself clean, but my work would have been spoilt forever!

"Pappā, this is not possible any longer," I complained. "My bedroom is much too dark and too small! And really: it *is* not feasible to work undisturbed on the gallery in front of it!"

"Then go and try the upper gallery, daughter."

But I had bad luck: It turned out that some birds had made a nest exactly over my head, and their droppings spoilt the portrait of a nice little boy I had just finished!

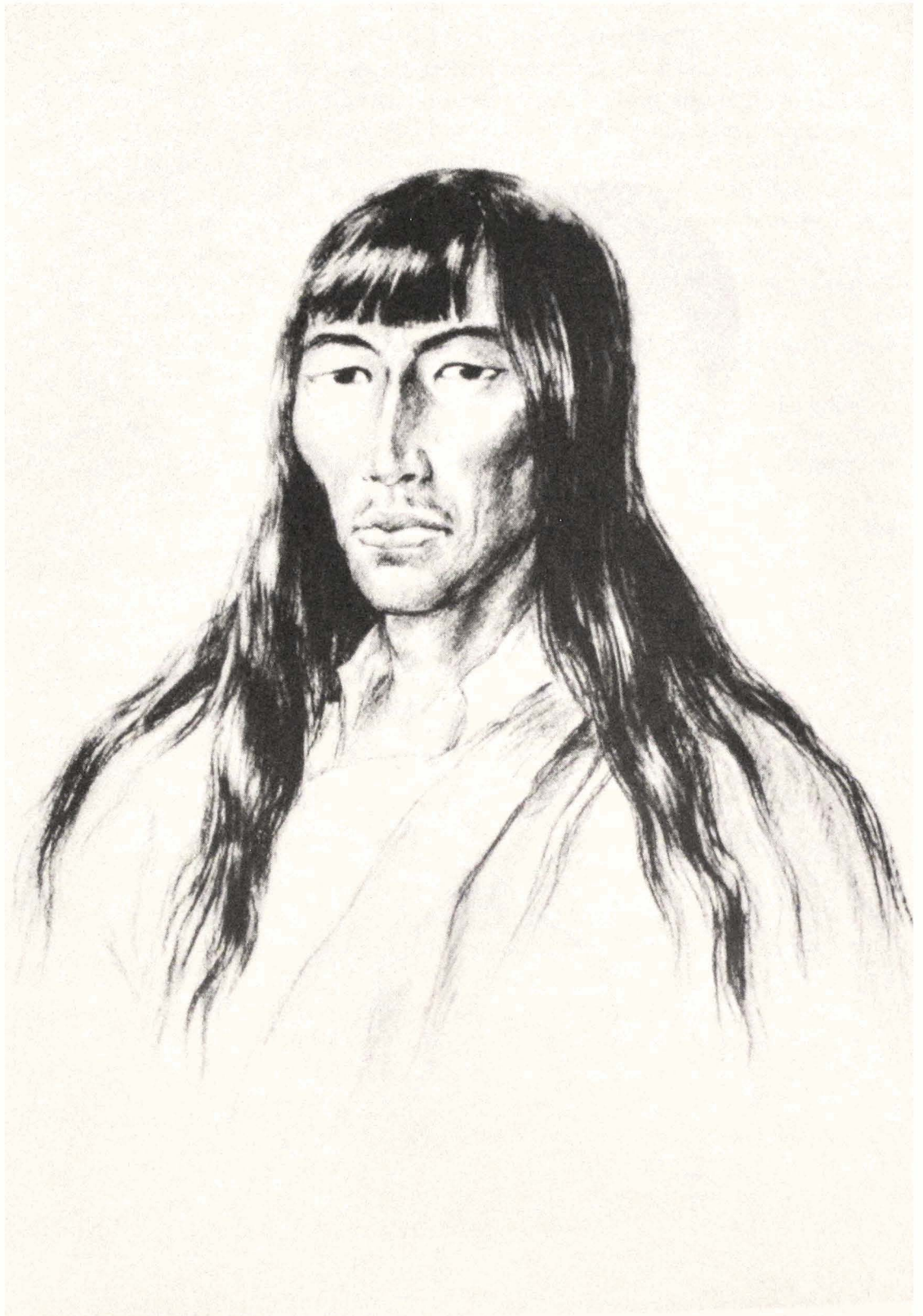
“Why don’t you go and work in our temple?” the Chinya lama suggested. I did, by way of experiment, but everybody was allowed to enter there freely. The curious ones came along in such crowds and stood around me so closely, I could not move my arms anymore. It was impossible to draw in the sanctuary at all! Some women leaned familiarly against my shoulders and thereby bent me half double with their weight, while the children standing behind me breathed and burped in my neck. It was even worse than on the gallery.

“Why don’t you let me rent a room in one of your many houses, pappa?” I asked.

“I have told you so often, daughter, I am accustomed to let those rooms to Tibetans.”

When I showed him all my spoilt drawings he said hesitatingly: “Well all right then, you can get the first room that will be free. You need not wait long for one! The refugees arrive and leave constantly. There is a chance I will have a place for you tomorrow or the day after.” But the weeks passed and every time a room became free this promise was forgotten accidentally. . . .





32: Ignorance

Oriental religions always have had an irresistible attraction for me. Çākyaṃuni, the Buddha, I reflected, lived in northern India about the same time as Confucius lived in China. Most Chinese, especially those of the higher classes, were converted to the latter's doctrine. Buddhism has always come second in the "Celestial Empire." At that same time Judaism, the Hebrew religion, embraced only a small group of the Semitic race. Christianity lay five centuries ahead, and Islām twelve. In his long life of peace and quiet—how different from the martyrdom of Jesus Christ!—the Buddha taught people how to overcome "Dukh," suffering. "For, if all tears shed by mankind because of their sorrow since their origin on earth"—such were the words of the Tathāgata—"could be gathered together, they would exceed the contents of all the oceans. . . ."

While such thoughts crossed my mind, I had been looking at the unperturbable face of the abbot. Once more I went to pay him a visit in the Yellowcap monastery. He continued silent for a long time. Finally he said rather unwillingly: "It is because Mem-sahib is pressing the point, otherwise I would certainly not give in." Did he expect me to abandon all hope for further instruction? As a matter of fact, I felt courtesy dictated immediate retreat, but my desire to hear more about Mahāyāna philosophy was too strong. So I never answered.

"The primal cause of suffering," the abbot started, "is Ignorance-as-to-the-true-nature-of-things in the World-of-Phenomena, from which arises desire, sometimes also called 'thirst' ('tanha'). To fulfill his desires, man starts to act, and his activity, 'karma' in the East, leads to ever more actions. Each of them calls to life a never-ending series of causes and effects. Actions create tensions, which are forces, and it is these very forces—these 'entities-of-energy'—which cause the Wheel-of-Existence to turn round. In other words: it is his own activity that leads man to ever new sorrowful reincarnations.

"The word 'tanha' ('thirst') also signifies 'fuel.' And Buddhists

18. It is quite certain that the shy minorities living in North Tibet's remotest, isolated mountain-valleys have a very low standard of culture. It is said some of them are still "in the stone-age." (Part II: 15, and 48)

sometimes compare a life on earth to a flame. So one might say: When there is no fuel, no 'tanha' anymore, there will be no reincarnation-on-earth anymore.

"Now you see that these three are undissolubly bound together: Ignorance→Desire→Action→Ignorance.

"The Wheel, clasped by Sin-jé, the God of the dead, represents the *World-of-Phenomena* which man can only experience by means of his imperfect senses. These senses do not and cannot give him a correct image of what actually exists, since this image is not complete in itself. For does not everybody know that only a very limited part of the colors and of the sounds penetrate into our consciousness, not to speak of other vibrations such as cosmic rays, etc.! For that matter, any of the things and events in the material world which do penetrate to our consciousness will be transformed and often distorted by the mind, by each in a different manner. For mind has come into being through various causes, besides being conditioned by man's earlier experiences. Never forget, Mem-sahib, that we consider the mind as the sixth (also imperfect) sense of man.

"From a person's point of view, one might say: *The material world is illusory, for it is a mere delusion of the senses, originating in the human mind, one's thought-consciousness, existing in it for an uncalculably short moment, and then becoming submerged in it once more. You agree, don't you?*"

I nodded.

"One of the wrong concepts which Ignorance conjures up in this *World-of-Phenomena* is the idea of 'pairs of opposites,' such as hot and cold, light and dark, good and bad, life and death, I and the others. However, in reality, opposites don't exist, duality doesn't exist. This too is a delusion.

"For on the one hand: *Where everything is composite and changes continuously, an absolute opposite is utterly impossible!* And on the other hand: *the World-of-Phenomena is a unity, since everything in it is built up from primal matter, from endlessly small particles—each equal to the others, but combined in different groups. Let us call them for the moment by the Western term 'atoms.'* Every atom in itself is a complete world in miniature, formed out of matter and forces. So it is a microcosm, peopled with Living-Beings, also subject to suffering. In such endlessly small worlds, Buddhas will be born as well: beings who attain Enlightenment. These many thousands of years we of the East have accepted the existence of microcosm. It seems that Westerners have only just begun to realize this Truth."

"Rimpoche, may I ask you how it is that sages of the East, lacking scientific schooling and technical resources, have fathomed this existence of a microcosm?"

"This is their intuitive knowledge, Mem-sahib. It has been revealed to them 'from on High.' No further explanation can possibly be given. Similarly, some other tenets of ours, not yet acknowledged as correct by the West, are founded on the intuitive knowledge of our saints and sages. But let us not stray from the subject '*I-and-the-others*' is just as much a delusion as all the other pairs of opposites, for '*I*' is nonexisting. Besides: the aggregates which at this moment form part of the human being one takes '*oneself*' for, will afterwards be part of another human being, whom one looks upon as '*the other*.'

"We will now once more take up the triad Ignorance → Desire → Action. In reality '*desire*' is not quite a correct translation of what the word embraces. One has to consider it more as an attachment of a man, be it to another human being, or to an object. It can be one of sympathy or one of aversion. In the first case man longs for the presence of somebody or of something, in the other case, man tries to avoid the person or object. It is like the two sides of the same coin. However, both sides lead to action, to deeds aiming at having the desired person or thing in one's neighborhood, or evading the hated person or thing.

"The root of the attachment lies in the concentration of one's attention on one's person, on the '*I*,' and in the fact—connected with it—that one ascribes reality and eternity to oneself. Instead of these stupid, wrong notions, a man should practice self-denial in the literal sense.

"Now what happens when Ignorance is removed by Wisdom? In the first place, man will realize that the concept '*I*' is based on delusion and in the second place, knowing the true nature of things, he ceases to desire or hate all these things. So he refrains from obtaining or avoiding them. In other words, he does not act anymore. Without action, no further '*karma*' is created. The Wheel in which man was imprisoned stops turning, or rather, when man becomes '*enlightened*,' i.e., attains True Wisdom, he is cast outside the Wheel into a psychic vacuum, Nirvâna. It stands to reason that Nirvâna is not a place, but a person's condition. There is no sense in trying to imagine such a condition, for whatever we imagine is derived from our experiences in the World-of-Phenomena. There is no Ignorance in Nirvâna, no '*Mental Darkness*' ('*Móha*'), hence no desire, and therefore no action. That is why Nirvâna is sometimes called '*the Extinction of the fire-of-desire*' and of all things connected with it, such as passion, hate, envy, and many other vices. But this is not a complete description of Nirvâna at all. First and foremost it means that *eternal-becoming* ('*bháva*') has stopped in Nirvâna.

"This '*bháva*' manifests itself in our earthly life as a series of continuously succeeding moments-of-consciousness which we sometimes designate as '*thought-consciousness*,' briefly, that which we wrongly consider as our '*I*.'

Since there is no I-consciousness anymore in Nirvâna and no desire-through-attraction-or-repulsion, it stands to reason that Nirvâna is a state of complete calm, peace, happiness, and purity, but above all: of freedom from suffering.

"In the West it is sometimes thought that Nirvâna is the annihilation of the person who attains this condition. But nothing is further removed from the truth, for how could anything be annihilated whose very existence-as-such is denied! A similar question was once directed to Çâkyamuni: 'Does a Buddha (one who has attained Nirvâna) still exist or doesn't he?' Çâkyamuni did not answer, but he explained his silence: 'Whether this is the case or no,' he said, 'has nothing to do with the correctness of my tenets. For the Sage, knowing the Ultimate Reality, there is no 'existence' or 'nonexistence,' neither 'to-be' nor 'not-to-be.'

"Sometimes 'attaining Nirvâna' is expressed symbolically as 'reaching the other shore,' for don't we designate 'living according to Buddhist principles' as 'entering the stream'? Well, once the goal of the journey, the other shore, has been reached, man—on looking backwards to the place where he came from has quite a different view of it. We can't imagine what it is like, because we are still 'on this shore.'

"Finally, Nirvâna is sometimes called 'the Void' because it is empty of the hypothetical 'pairs of opposites,' empty of hypothetical duality, and also empty of attributes. Once more the West makes a mistake when considering the Void identical with Nothingness. For here the 'fourfold negation' obtains: nor nothing, nor not-nothing, nor these two together, nor their opposites together. But you better had not lose yourself in this philosophical concept.

"I know quite well, Mem-sahib, that these abstract speculations, when heard for the first time, are very difficult to understand. That is why I want to tell you a parable, through which the concept of the apparent independence of man (of the 'thought-consciousness') and of his entering Nirvâna will be somewhat clearer to you. Just visualize a man (or a thought-consciousness) as a wave which thinks it is leading an independent existence. In reality, however, the wave merely rolls on, because it is moved by the wind. Wind is here the symbol of action (the action of the person in question). As long as the wind blows, the wave will be moving onwards, will continue to exist as a wave. In other words, as long as man acts, he will continue to exist in his quality of man in the World-of-Phenomena. But as soon as the wind, activity, stops (because man stops desiring) the wave will sink away in utter calm into the ocean of Nirvâna, of which—without realizing the fact—it had always formed part, for it never was anything but 'water.' 'Wave' was only a condition he had produced by his actions. In Nir-

vâna the feeling of being a separate entity ceases to be. One finally realizes being an integral part of the Unity of all.

"Now do you understand that Ignorance, the cause which leads to Desire, in its turn leading to action, is the axis round which everything keeps revolving? So it is necessary to be destroyed by Wisdom, the Knowledge of Truth?"

"That is why the Buddha teaches us: 'it is before all things Truth after which man must strive!'

"But Jesus Christ taught us: 'It is before all things neighborly love after which man must strive!'

"You had better not interrupt me, Mem-sahib. Let me talk on calmly. Enlightenment, Wisdom, Knowledge-of-the-Truth, or whatever one wants to call it, leads to the right understanding. Recognizing that duality is a delusion of the senses, the Sage realizes that all beings are one so that there will be no complete liberation from suffering, no complete happiness, for him 'personally' as long as anybody else is still suffering. That is why he will lovingly try and take away the suffering of other people. To put it differently: Love unto all beings without preference is the immediate result of wisdom! So every Sage practices love towards his neighbor as a matter of course.

"We Buddhists don't see suffering as essential, and therefore we don't glorify martyrdom. But we do know sacrifice: He who has spiritually advanced to such a degree that he can attain Buddhahood may yet deny himself this happiness for the time being by incarnating once more into a human body, with the special purpose of helping others by example and teaching, so they will tread the Noble Eightfold Path leading to Liberation from their suffering. Such a one is a "Bodhisattva" living on earth. *The Dalai Lama is the ever-returning "Incarnation" of the Celestial Bodhisattva Chên-resi.*

"Ignorance of the true nature of things causes a person to have his own ideas which—since based on Ignorance—are completely wrong of course. For instance, he will think transient things eternal and expect things which cause suffering to bring happiness. So the combination of his aggregates is very unstable in such a person: Deceived by his wrong views, he will have no control over his senses. This results in his passions obscuring his intellect. Hence he will inevitably come to covetousness, malice, and self-conceit. The mental darkness of such a one, originating from his self-sufficiency, can never keep his mind in a condition of attention. That is why he will always avoid those who might make him accept the four Noble Truths of the Buddha. They are: (1) 'Dukh,' suffering; (2) 'Anâtma,' not-self (not-having an immortal soul); 3) 'Anitya,' noncontinuing, the fact that whatever seems to 'exist' is transient (ever arising and van-

ishing); and lastly (4) 'Súnya,' the Void (that which is empty of all attributes, but just the same filled with the greatest possible potentiality, hence identical with Nirvâna).

"Ignorance or 'Mental Darkness' is considered by the Buddhists as the greatest vice of all, for it leads to all other vices. Ignorance is called a 'stain' polluting the mind.

"Unchastity is a stain on woman, thriftiness is a stain on the giver, performing bad actions is a stain in this world and the others. But the greatest stain of all is Ignorance. Purify yourself, oh man, from this stain! Be immaculate!

"Now it will be clear to you, Mem-sahib, that inside the 'hub,' in the center of the Wheel-of-Reincarnations, Ignorance is seen as the most deadly of the primal vices. It is true that there are three primal vices depicted in it, but without Ignorance the other two would not be.

"We saw just now that Ignorance of the true nature of things is leading to Desire ('Thirst'). And it is Desire that leads to Hate. Hate, outwardly expressed, is Anger. If one is angry with another 'because he is performing a bad action,' still it is wrong. For the Sage pities a person who, driven by Ignorance, is performing actions the bad effects of which will turn on himself! Even the most gentle form of anger, moral indignation, is blameworthy since it is not inspired by all-embracing love and charity.

"Finally, Hate-Anger will obscure the human mind, thus leading it to Ignorance.

"Herewith the circle is closed: Ignorance→Desire→Hate-Anger→Ignorance, and so on forever! The three symbolic animals (the pig for Ignorance or Sloth, the bird for Lust-Desire and the Serpent for Hate-Anger) are biting each other's tails!

"A few words more: Ignorance is sometimes called Sloth, which causes confusion to people in the West. However, to us Ignorance and Sloth are so undissolubly linked up with each other that to our mind there is no difference. Not only physical but above all mental sloth (inertia) is meant in this respect.

"As you know, the three primal vices also are called 'the three poisons.'

"For every poison there is an antidote. 'Wisdom' is, as we saw, the antidote to Ignorance. How does one get Wisdom? By uninterrupted 'Attentiveness.' One has objectively to consider everything one does and feels. The realization of one's actions and states of mind is the only thing which can lead a person to Wisdom, in the long run. The antidote to Desire is 'Detachment' and the antidote to Hate-Anger is 'Love.'

Only Love towards everybody without preference can lead to complete understanding and Charity.

“So now you have received an explanation of the complete Wheel-of-Existence (of Existence in Samsâra), grasped by Sin-jé, the symbol of Death. You know the significance of its ‘hub,’ with the three primal vices or ‘poisons’ or ‘fires’: of the spaces between its six ‘spokes’ (the six sectors) in which the six groups of Living-Beings are depicted; and of its ‘rim’ surrounding everything else in which is represented the Chain of Twelve Links, symbolizing the Twelve Interdependent Causes of Rebirth.

33: Portrait of the China Lama

Not only with his curios and his souvenirs, but also with "our" sanctuary the China lama did good business. It was possible to give him a donation in money to put up festoons with new prayer-flags to embellish the appearance of the stûpa. This was a "meritorious act," "to better one's karma" for a "next-existence-on-earth." In such a case my Tibetan father made his servants tear off hundreds of small pieces from bales of yellow, red, blue, green, and white cotton, (the five holy colors) and press these one by one against an inked wooden printing block. The priest of Bodhnâth owned several of these blocks, on each of which were carved in high relief the same three holy mantras. After having printed the flags in this way, the servants fastened them with a few stitches to long strings and hung these between the top of the stûpa and the roofs of the houses of the square. All these activities together only took one day. The amount one had to pay was substantial, very much more than the cost price. Where did the remaining money go? I could only make a guess. No part of it was spent to help his poor compatriots!

There were other ways one could contribute towards the adornment of the Magûta-stûpa: It was possible to have it whitewashed anew. I happen to know pappa charged five hundred Indian rupees for it (about forty pounds). He had this work also done by his servants, and the price of the lime required did not amount to more than fifty rupees, if even that much. A third way was to have the nether part of the white dome decorated with huge curves of yellow paint, which was considered exceedingly beautiful. The paint was drawn from dried herbs by Ganèsh. Walking around the highest circumambulation path of the stûpa-terrace the servants ever anew after so many steps, with a vigorous swing, threw a whole pailful of this liquid against the curving wall. It was done in less than no time. I think the price charged for this work was two hundred Indian rupees!

Early in the morning one day a Tibetan beggarwoman climbed

the staircase of our house. Only Quisang and I were on the broad landing. "Quick, quick go away! Begging is forbidden here" we called out at the same time. But the kind servant, first taking a handful of chura and putting it on a discarded cracked plate, thrust it into the woman's hands. The poor creature was so hungry she could not wait until she was outside. Like a famished animal she licked the dry, beaten grains of rice from the plate. . . .

Breakfast was not the same for all of us. My Tibetan father always had two eggs. Mummy Ganesh and my brothers got one each, and all the others—myself included—only received some tsampa or chura to put into our tea. Once, while pappa, mummy, and I were breakfasting together, three Tibetan pilgrims entered. They bowed their heads very deeply to be blessed by the priest, then they offered him a "kha-ta" (spelled "kha-tag"). This is a white scarf which in the Land-of-the-Snow one has to hand over to somebody at every formal occasion: when greeting a person or taking leave, when asking a favor or offering a present. It is the token of respect par excellence with the Tibetans. There are eight qualities of kha-ta's. But mostly they are made of loosely woven white cotton, reminding one of sterilized gauze. The offering of a silk kha-ta is a sign of very high respect. This one was made of cotton. The pilgrims bowed once more and sucked their breath several times as a mark of honor meaning "May my breath not defile the air that afterwards will be in your lungs!" Then one of the men pulled a dirty cloth bag out of the blousing part of his coat, his "ambag." It contained rice which he poured on a plate. Rice, too, has a symbolic significance: fertility. On top of it he put fifteen rupees and his friends did the same. All this they handed to the China lama with the request to divide it among the poor refugees. Similar donations the priest received quite often. I had seen many tourists giving him some money as well in order to buy food for his starved compatriots expelled from their homeland. . . .

I thought of the beggar woman of that morning, of the three singing lamas who were so hungry and of many others. . . .

On my daily walk around the stûpa I met my sister Sûrya. She had a copper tray in her hand on which were some flowers, twigs with odorous leaves, grains of rice, red powder, and a bowl of holy water. With this she entered the prayer-wheel wall that had an opening near Machásima's little temple forming part of it. "Come along, sister Lili," she cried, friendly as always, "Today I have to offer to god Ganesh-with-the-elephant-trunk. Did you ever see his small statue behind this sanctuary? He is very keen on the fragrance of these leaves."

"May I have one to smell at, Darling?" I knew a person is never allowed to hold something (even) near his nose that will be offered to a god, as it would be sacrilege! *He* has to be the first to inhale the scent. So Sûrya broke off a leave for me and put her offerings before the statue of god Ganesh.

"I don't understand you, Darling, after all you are a Buddhist! So why do you offer to all those Hindu deities?"

"You consider our religion too rigidly, sister. That the Buddha who obtained the supreme wisdom never spoke about them doesn't exclude the Hindu priests from knowing exactly which gods exist! But look, I still have so much left on my tray that—to please you (!)—I will also offer something to the Buddhist Machásima."

"Who was she, younger sister? I never heard about her!"

"She was a devout Buddhist bird-keeper. To honour Buddha Kâçyâpa she built this stûpa. It is a wonderful story. Come and have dinner with me tomorrow. You haven't been at my place for some time. Afterwards I will tell you all about her. You know, don't you, that my mother has been living with me ever since that big quarrel?"

We had agreed I would start this morning on a portrait of my Tibetan father. The one I had made during my first visit in Nepal I had taken to Holland, but this second would be a present to himself. After the priest had put on his most beautiful brocade coat and the headgear which was reserved for pontifical services in the temple—it was supposed to have the form of a budding lotus flower—mummy Ganesh double-locked the door of the turquoise-colored room so nobody could disturb us. Only she was allowed to be present. While I worked she sat on the floor munching sweets. Now and then she got up to inspect how far I had progressed and to criticize my drawing.

"Better leave out those wrinkles, daughter Lili! Formerly Mémé was much handsomer to look at! Please draw him the way he was before."

"What does the word Mémé mean? All people accost you this way, pappa, with the exception of my brothers, Darling, and myself."

"It is the Nepalese word for priest. Only my own children are allowed to call me pappa. Everybody else, including my wives and grandchildren, are never allowed to call me anything but Mémé. You know, don't you, daughter, that after my death Pûnya-Jola will be the priest-officiate of Bodhnâth and after him Ganesh? Their wives also only address them as Mémé. People have to respect us priests more than anybody else!

"Please daughter, let me see that sketch too, so I can tell you what I want to have my portrait look like. Yes, I see what I should

prefer to have altered. Give me a friendly, smiling mouth with lips that are fuller than I really have. Are you able to do that? And tell me something in the meantime: How old were you when you started your artwork?"

"When I was five, pappa, I used to depict kings and queens with crowns on their heads, because I thought it so becoming. But on the other hand I mostly made them wear slippers, as shoes were too difficult for me to draw. What did you do when you were a little boy, pappa?"

"I went to the mission school in Darjeeling, the same from which your brother Ganesh ran away when he had secretly married Chring in the mountains. Afterwards for some time I attended the school that the Indian poet Rabindhranath Tagore had founded: 'Shantiniketan.' On the grounds he had a small house built for himself into which he could retire when he felt like it. It was high up in a tree. One could only reach it by a ladder. May I have another look now, daughter? Yes, I am glad I put on my spectacles. Please, make it quite clear the frame is of real gold?"

"Certainly, pappa, this portrait is for you, so I will draw everything exactly as you want it. Have you yet another wish?"

"Could you represent my hands so that on each finger there is a ring set with a big turquoise?"

"Have no fear, I will take care of it!"

"And now, daughter, tell me something funny."

"Well, when I was staying in the palace of a maharaja family in Rajastan (India) one of the princesses said to me, 'My brother is in America at an university, but he doesn't like the Americans at all. They always want him to work. *My brother hasn't gone to America to work, only to get his doctor's degree at that university!*'"

"I don't think that is funny at all, daughter! The boy was right. *When his parents pay a premium during some years to such an expensive institution, the least thing it can do in return is confer a doctor's degree upon their son. The same thing is customary in every university in India, too!*"

Talking this way, the morning passed quickly. My portrait sketch got halfway ready and resembled the Chinya lama quite well. "I will have it framed beautifully and hang it here on the wall," said the priest. But . . . the future would teach differently.

He looked at his watch. "I have to go now, daughter Lili. Important business matters are awaiting me," and off he went.

Mummy Ganesh bent forwards leaning out of the window as far as possible to follow him with her eyes. "Pshaw, important business matters!" she cried indignantly. "He is going to that shrew!" I looked

out of the window too and saw pappa entering the house of Darling, where mummy Sûrya lived. So it was nothing but a visit in all honor and decency the Chinya lama paid to his legal wife! But I could not help laughing at the term "business matters." With men, it seems to be the accepted pretext everywhere in the world when they want to go and see a woman!

The day passed uneventfully. After dinner, about nine o'clock, a Nepalese with a long white beard, a friend of the master of the house, entered the turquoise-colored room. His hirsute appearance was striking, the people of Nepal generally being not hairy at all. So everybody accosted him as "Sheep," of which he was exceedingly proud. I knew him already from my last visit to the country. The Sheep blew alternatively the human thighbone flute and the conch shell in pappa's temple. The latter was a heavy job, for the Redcap sanctuary boasted of a conch shell at least sixteen inches long!

That afternoon the Sheep had left something in the temple and now he came to ask my Tibetan father permission to go and get it.

"Please lend me the key for a moment, Mémé?"

"Daughter Lili, the key is in the room of one of your brothers. Please go and fetch it for the Sheep."

"Can I enter their rooms at such a late hour, pappa?"

"Why couldn't you, after all you belong to the family! It isn't even necessary to knock!"

I went upstairs and knocked just the same at the door of Punya-Jola's room, although it was ajar. There was no answer. Cautiously I pushed it a bit further open and put three steps inside to look if the key perhaps was lying on the table. However, it was not. The room was empty. I had a perfunctory look around to make sure, still standing motionless quite near the door, as I happen to be a discreet person. From there a strange object struck my eye. There, in the middle of the floor, lay a huge, lumpy thing covered completely by a white sheet. What could it be? I looked and looked at it again. Then suddenly I realized it was obvious two people were lying underneath, locked in a tight embrace! I hastily retired and shut the door, for why should it stay ajar!

Then I went to the room of my younger brother. The door was closed, but inside I heard voices. I knocked and said "I am sister Lili; pappa sends me to fetch the key of the temple for the Sheep."

"Come on in, sister, you need not knock!" In this room another strange sight awaited me: Fat Ganesh was lying in a great double bed, practically undressed. Also in the bed sat at his one side his wife Chring on her knees massaging his bare back. At his other side sat

his wife Kámala suckling her baby. "Do come and sit with us too!" said my brother cordially. "There is enough place for you at the foot-end; wait, I'll put my legs a bit aside."

"No, no," I said hastily, "not today. The Sheep has forgotten something in the temple and now wants to have the key to go and get it."

"The key is over there on the table. Take it, but come back here afterwards, we have such a cozy gathering?"

"I am sorry, younger brother, I would love to some other time, but just now I still have some work to do," I lied, and hurried downstairs.

34: The Licentious Sixth

Again we were seated on the floor of the minute shop, the men and myself, looking at the lama-vendor expectantly. This time there was no jar-with-a-spout filled with tea on the charcoal fire. That treat had formed part, so to speak, of the story of Tibet's Golden Age, the reign of "the Great Fifth." He had died and his death had been kept a secret by his first minister Sangyè-Gyàtso, for many, many years, as our history teacher had told us. "Why?" had been his last word. Everybody kept silent. "Why?" he now repeated as if there had not passed a week since our last gathering.

"Because the minister-regent (the 'desí') had nourished a love of ruling our country to such an extent he did not want to stop anymore," ventured one of the men.

"No," another said, "Sangyè-Gyàtso was a noble character. The reason was that the Pótala palace had not got ready as yet. The project demanded an unbelievable amount of labor and our ancestors were quite willing to toil for this ideal of their beloved Great Fifth as long as he lived, but not to go on doing so after his death. That is why the minister *had* to keep his passing-away a secret. Otherwise the beautiful building-complex would never have been finished."

"Well, my own idea is it was because foreign policy required it," the lama-vendor told us. "The personality of the Great Fifth, his mere name, had a decisive influence on the politics of all East Asiatic countries. Even the Chinese emperor of the Manchu dynasty stood in awe of Tibet's priest-king, not for his minister-regent though. Moreover, there was unremitting trouble amongst the Mongolians. These fierce fighters were devoted followers of the Yellow Church and of the Dalai Lama representing it in such an able way. However, it is an open question whether Sangyè-Gyàtso could have kept a tight rein on their chieftains, who were so eager for power.

"A certain Gàlden, head of the tribe of the Jungárs, aspired to bring the other Mongolian tribes under his rule. But for obvious

reasons they refused to abandon their independence. Not long before, they had even appealed to the Dali Lama to help them against Galden. The Great Fifth had indeed managed to persuade the chieftain to give up his plans. But, covetous for power, his ideal remained: to found a mighty kingdom of united Mongolian tribes with himself as its ruler. Neither China nor Tibet was keen on having a new powerful state arising close to their own. They joined to prevent it at all costs. To attain their end in view, the fiction that the Great Fifth was still alive had to be kept up. For Galden always obeyed him *and* the Manchu emperor, as long as they formed a coalition, since he was no match against the two of them together.

“At first the cooperation of Tibet and China marched smoothly and excellently, even after the actual death of the Great Fifth, unsuspected by anybody at the time. However, when a delegation from Lhasa suggested the emperor should yield to the riotous tribal head on one point, namely to hand the chief of the Khalka-Mongolians and his brother over to him, the monarch of the Celestial Empire started to feel suspicious. Did the minister-regent of the Land-of-the-Snow play a double role? Was he in league with Galden? Might the rumor that the Great Fifth had passed away be true indeed? And did the government merely use his name to assure themselves of China’s alliance to accomplish their personal desires? The Son-of-Heaven sent some lamas to Lhasa by way of envoys to size up the situation. But Sangyè-Gyätso told them that His Holiness now lived in absolute seclusion for the sake of meditation. So they were only allowed to look at him from afar. Indeed, on the highest part of the Pótala-palace the Chinese ambassadors saw an old lama performing his devotional rites. However, at that distance they could not distinguish if he was really the Dalai Lama or no. After their report the emperor tended to believe that Tibet’s priest-king was still alive—anyway officially he kept up the pretense.

“Meanwhile, Galden subjected one Mongolian tribe after another. Several times China sent an army marching against him, but in vain. Not until 1696 did the mighty monarch succeed in definitely defeating him. After the victory, Tibet’s regent openly admitted the death of the Great Fifth to have taken place fourteen years previously. The fiction of his being alive could not be maintained any longer and anyway it was not necessary anymore.

“Now the question arises: *Was* it a fiction? It goes without saying that the Chinese emperor considered it wise to pretend he believed that the priest-king of the Land-of-the-Snow was still alive. But what did the Tibetans themselves think?

“After the Dalai Lama had passed away, the regent had to entrust the dead body into the hands of a few lamas to have it embalmed with a preparation of salt and butter, as was the custom. He had to confide in others to find his next “Incarnation,” for such a thing must never be postponed too long. When in 1683 the child containing his essence had been found as the son of a distinguished family in southern Tibet, other persons again had to be confided in to give the future ruler a religious education. This took place in the monastery of Nyè-thang. However, the strict discipline and the inculcating of a sincere belief in the Yellow Church were neglected, as appeared only too clearly later on. A secret shared by so many people could of course not be kept up in the long run. It may have remained a secret to the Mongolians and the Chinese for an indefinite time, as communications over long distances were still very poor.

“The young sixth Dalai Lama, Tsan-Yang-Gyätso, started his reign in 1696. He was intelligent and quite a meritorious man-of-letters, moreover having a great sense of beauty. Inside the Pótala-palace, on the Western side, he had a mausoleum-stûpa sixty feet high constructed in which was kept the mummy of the Great Fifth. This building was completely covered with gold leaf and set with precious stones. It reached upwards right through three stories. The new ruler also had some artistic features added to the palace complex. The most beautiful of them was a small temple, dedicated to the Nâga’s or ‘Lu’s,’ the serpent demigods. It was situated on the shore of a little lake south of the Pótala-rock. However, in this pavillion the monarch would sometimes receive one or the other of his beloveds, for celibacy was not at all to the taste of His Holiness. At night, dressed as a simple man, he would descend into the city to feast in the company of lovely women. He wrote some very sensitive erotic poems, too, which are to this day recited by the Tibetans with tender admiration. For example:

Though as a God-on-Earth
I live a lonely life
High on the Pótala,
In Lhasa down below
I’m known by ev’ry one
As all the wenches’ prince.

“In contradistinction to what you might perhaps suppose, Mem-sahib, the sixth Dalai Lama was greatly beloved by all his subjects. He was so intensely human.

“Sometimes it is said that the Celestial Bodhisattva Chèn-resí in his earthly form of “the Licentious Sixth” wanted to test the implicit faith of his followers.

“And do not for a moment think that this ruler never occupied himself with religion, although strange stories are told about him. Their correctness cannot possibly be vouched for. He is said to have turned away from the Yellow Church more and more, having conceived a sympathy for the Red Church, especially for the Nyingmapas, its most ancient sect. They actually did not differ greatly from the ‘Buddhified’ followers of the Bon-religion wherein everything the Tantric man-woman principle was adhered to, which coincided with the views of our Sixth wonderfully well. It is quite certain he indulged in the magic rites of the Red Church. As you know, Mem-sahib, there is black magic and white magic, but the interest of this priest-king has never been directed towards the former.

“Meanwhile, worldly rule over Tibet was still exercised by old Sangyè-Gyätso. In 1700 a certain Làtsang was the commander of the Mongolian forces, stationed in Lhasa since Gúsri-Khan’s victory over Tsàng-pa, in order to support the Dalai Lama in case of eventual attacks from surrounding countries. Now this commander started to agitate against the sovereign himself!

“In 1701 the licentious monarch (pressed by the Chinese and the Mongolians) had indeed no choice but to hand over his ecclesiastical rights to the Pànchen Lama. However, he kept his worldly power. The minister-regent, now about eighty years old, managed to protect the young ruler from Làtsang’s further intrigues. In 1705 the treacherous Mongolian decided—probably in concert with, but anyway with the sanction of, the Chinese emperor—to dispose of Sangyè-Gyätso. He besieged him in the Pótala-palace, fortunately in vain. The old gentleman escaped through a side door. But shortly afterwards he met his death by a stratagem of Làtsang. Now the commander had it all his own way. He would for preference have dethroned the Dalai Lama, but a Dalai Lama cannot be dismissed, nor can he be replaced by another person, not even by the Pànchen Lama. That is a thing non-Tibetans seem unable to understand. For our priest-king is not a monarch in the ordinary sense of the word: Whatever way he may behave, he is and will always be the “Incarnation” of the Celestial Bodhisattva Chèn-resí, and only such a one will be acknowledged by us Tibetans as the ruler over the Land-of-the-Snow.

“That is the reason why Làtsang had recourse to another intrigue: He tried to persuade some lamas in high positions to declare that the ‘Licentious Sixth’ was not the *real* “Incarnation” of Chèn-resí. But

since he had been 'discovered' according to the rules and omens, the lamas refused to collaborate, though the scandals caused by the youthful profligate took ever worse forms.

"When his endeavors to discredit the rightness of the "Incarnation" of the Licentious Sixth had also failed, in 1706 Lâtsang compelled the young monarch to go and travel to Peking for a so-called visit to the emperor of China. He thrust an unnecessarily strong Mongolian escort upon him, apparently not having much good in their minds. When this fact became known, the monks from Dè-pung broke out from their monastery, rescued their beloved priest-king from his unwanted 'liberators,' and put him in safety inside the monastery walls. But the perfidious troops stormed Dè-pung and led him away into captivity. While Tibet's ruler with his tragic disposition towards a merry life travelled with them to the northeast, more or less their prisoner, he suddenly passed away in the region of the Blue Lake ('Kóko-nor'), twenty-three years old. His 'lifeguards' gave out that he had died of dropsy, but most probably they murdered him treacherously.

"Anyway, the body of the 'Licentious Sixth' was never carried back to Lhasa."

35: The Next Six Dalai Lamas

"The power of the *independent state* of Tibet," the lama-vendor continued after some time, "had actually come to an end at the death of the Great Fifth. The Chinese empire had gradually increased its power and began to treat our country as a vassal state. The treacherous Mongolian Làtsang still maintained that the 'Licentious Sixth' had never been an "Incarnation" of Chèn-resí and tried to push the 'real' Dalai Lama on the throne. According to him it was the twenty-five-year-old Yèshes-Gyàtso from the physician monastery of Chak-pori near Lhasa. But neither the people, nor the clergy wanted to acknowledge him as their priest-king and everybody hated Làtsang, the accomplice of the Chinese.

"In spite of his obstinacy, the high lamas started in secret to look for the seventh "Incarnation" of Tibet's real sovereign. As a rule, during his life a Dalai Lama will commit himself as to the region where he is to be reborn. Now it was considered possible a hidden indication might be found in one of the poems of the monarch who had come to his end in such a tragic way. In this particular poem he was supposed to address a crane in the following way:

Lend me your strong wings, white bird,
To fly away with, but not far:
Only to Lithang I will go,
And very soon I will return!

"In the hamlet of Lithang in southeast Tibet, the search began, and soon the child was found, born there in 1708 which—considering the distinctive marks of his earthly sheath—was without a doubt the seventh Dalai Lama. However, as Làtsang who, of course, got to know about it, disputed the authenticity of the "Incarnation," it was arranged that the boy should find refuge in the mighty monastery of Kúm-Bum ('Thousand Images') in the province of Kham, there to re-

ceive an excellent and severe training in utter safety.

“Lhasa had in the meantime become the stage of commotion and intrigues. In 1717 an army of the Mongolian tribe of the Jungárs unexpectedly invaded the city. The inhabitants, thinking they had come to liberate them from hated Lâtsang and his self-appointed Dalai Lama, welcomed the troops with cheers. But at once it became apparent that the men were only bent on looting. For days on end, they pillaged the houses and sanctuaries, those of the Red Church as well as of the Yellow Church, whose followers they were themselves. Lâtsang fled into the palace-stronghold, but the Jungárs took this also and enriched themselves to their hearts’ content. While fighting, they killed the old commander but saved the life of the sham Dalai Lama Yêshes-Gyâtso when he gave up all his claims to Tibet’s throne and begged for permission to retire forever into a monastery as a simple monk.

“The invaders did not prepare to return to their own country, though. They ensconced themselves in the capital and misbehaved to such an extent that there was no other way out for the Tibetans but to turn for help to the emperor of China, whom they looked upon (as mentioned before) as an “Incarnation” of the Bodhisattva Mañjuçrî. The first army the mighty ruler sent to the Land-of-the-Snow on their demand was defeated by the Jungárs near the frontier, but in 1720 his second army defeated these Mongolians and chased them away. Their chieftain escaped leaving behind his tent of state, later used to adorn the mausoleum of the Great Reformer Tsong-Khà-pa in the monastery of Ga-den.

“Immediately after the seventh Dalai Lama, Kâlsang-Gyâtso, now acknowledged by the Chinese, journeyed from Kùm-Bum to the capital to take his rightful place. He was gentle-minded and of a retiring disposition.

“However, the Chinese did not leave Tibet anymore. The emperor Khang-Hsi considered himself the actual ruler of the country. He had Lhasa’s city walls levelled and a dam, more than five miles long, built with its stones. It protected the temples and houses against the ever-returning floods of the Kyi-chu, for the Valley-of-Milk in which the capital was situated had always remained soggy and was submerged time and again. The Son-of-Heaven also restored the demolished temples and endowed Tibet’s ruler with some golden roof-pavillions in Chinese style to adorn the Pótala-palace. For, like his father Shun-Chi, he wanted to be considered a friend of the Dalai Lama’s.

“All this looked most solicitous and amicable, but on the other





hand he stationed a garrison of two thousand men in Lhasa to uphold his own authority in the Land-of-the-Snow. These military forces maintained a regular connection with the Chinese headquarters in Ta-chien-lú on the eastern frontier via four smaller garrisons stationed in between. In this way, the road to Peking was always open to and by the Chinese. The soldiers of the garrisons never had their wives with them. Many entered into relations with the women of the country. This is the reason why so many Tibetans have Chinese blood in their veins.

"In 1727 our people rebelled against the Celestial Empire to liberate themselves from its yoke, but the insurrection was quickly repressed, ending in carnage. Subsequently the Chinese government banished the Dalai Lama for seven years to a monastery near Ta-chien-lu. They annexed a considerable part of our country, and moreover from that time onwards appointed two Chinese governors, so-called 'àmbans,' in Lhasa. Officially there was only one, but in accordance with the system-of-distrust, everywhere adhered to in the Celestial Empire, the second governor had to control the first. As both of them were responsible only to the emperor himself and as they had the mission to try and make Tibet gradually into a Chinese province, an independent ruler was not appreciated by them at all! They would have preferred not to have anything to do with a Dalai Lama, but merely with an ordinary regent. For one cannot bend a priest-king to one's will. His wealth is immeasurable and his position of power indisputable, whereas a regent is generally acquisitive. So the àmbans would always be able to bribe such a functionary with generous presents.

"A strong bodyguard of Chinese soldiers was given to the àmbans 'to protect the Dalai Lamas.' However, later on their government changed the function: they then served 'to protect the àmbans.'

"In 1746, the Tibetan people revolted once more. This insurgence, too, was repressed, after which the Chinese changed our entire inner administration. From now on it got entrusted to a 'Kàshag' or a Council of Ministers, constituted of four 'Kàlons' or 'Sha-pés' (ministers), appointed by the regent. Three of them had to be laymen and one a lama. A 'Sìlon' or first minister had to form a link between the council and the Dalai Lama. Besides the Kàshag, an Ecclesiastical Council of four high lamas determined in all affairs concerning the clergy. Moreover there was the 'Tsàndu,' the parliament, having merely an advisory voice. It counted about three hundred and fifty members, half of them laymen and half of them belonging to the clergy. All its members were representatives: on the one hand of the

{20. The Kham-pa woman with the pointed hat resented my Tibetan brother coming all the time and pinching her cheek, whispering tender secrets in her ear. (Part II: 42)

nobility and the provinces, on the other hand of the three most important monasteries, the 'Three Pillars' (Dè-pung, Séra, and Ga-den). Those of the monasteries had by far the greater influence in the Tsàndu, as they were the most cultured. This arrangement has remained in force to our days.

"The seventh Dalai Lama would never have been able to interfere with public affairs under these circumstances. He seemed to resign himself to the inevitable, not having much personality anyway. The only fact which gave him a certain notoriety was that he started building a summer palace: 'Nòrbu-Lingka,' the 'Jewel Park,' just outside Lhasa. In 1758, in his fiftieth year, he died.

"In 1759 the eighth Dalai Lama, Jàmbal-Gyàtso, was born from a distinguished family. He developed into a monarch of scant energy and wanting in firmness.

"During his reign the fifth British governor of India, Warren Hastings, tried and entered into negotiations with our country. He did so by twice sending an envoy with presents to the Pànchen Lama in his monastery of Tàshi-Lhünpo: in 1774 George Bogle and nine years later Samuel Turner. Neither succeeded in concluding a commercial treaty with the Land-of-the-Snow. For the Chinese emperor Kièn Lung had enjoined upon the Dalai Lama that Tibet should keep its frontiers closed to every foreigner (except the Chinese).

"In 1793 the warrior-people of the Gurkhas, already having conquered Nepal in 1768, invaded our country with a force of some eighteen thousand men. They captured and looted the city of Shígatsé and the neighboring monastery of Tàshi-Lhünpo. An army of Chinese and Tibetans, hurriedly brought together, defeated the invaders and chased them away forever. From this fact, the Celestial Empire drew the conclusion that it had now for the second time become evident that the Land-of-the-Snow was not able to maintain itself as an independent state without their help, and besides that its administration had to be changed fundamentally. From then on all our high officials, civil as well as ecclesiastical, before taking any decisions in important matters, had to submit them to the two àmbans who henceforward were also responsible for the defense of the frontiers and for the spending of the tax money.

"In 1793 yet another important change was established by the Chinese emperor. Latterly it had become more and more customary for not only the Dalai Lama and the Pànchen Lama, but for all other high (and therefore influential) 'Incarnations' ('tùlkus') to be 'discovered' amongst the respective relatives of those already existing, so that such dignitaries could almost be considered as heritable in rich, powerful

families: a real form of nepotism. To put an end to it as regards the highest "Incarnations," it was decreed that in the future, for the dignity of Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama, at least three candidates had to be found. Their names, written on separate slips of paper, rolled into a little ball of dough, had to be dropped into a magnificent gold temple-vase, a 'búm-pa,' presented to Tibet by the emperor himself for this very purpose. It was placed in the holiest sanctuary of Lhasa, the Jo-khang, and after a protracted service with many prayers, the amban had to draw one of them in presence of the regent and the inhabitants of the city. Only in this way was it to be established definitely who should be the next *real* "Incarnation" of the Dalai Lama or the Panchen Lama.

"The eighth priest-king passed away in 1804, forty-five years old, but the next four rulers all died when still quite young.

"The ninth Dalai Lama was born in 1805 as an indisputably real "Incarnation," so drawing lots from the vase was not necessary in his case. Even the Chinese emperor Kia-king was impressed by his wondrous giftedness. He received the name of Lúntog-Gyátso. The eccentric, adventurous Britisher Thomas Manning who, traveling in the train of a Chinese general, in 1811 visited the young monarch in Lhasa, described him as a touchingly beautiful, well-educated princeling. However, as early as 1815, in his tenth year, he left his earthly sheath. . . .

The tenth Dalai Lama was born in 1817. According to the rules his lot was drawn from the gold búm-pa. He was called Tsúltrim-Gyátso. During his reign a terrible fire broke out in the most ancient monastery of Tibet, Samyè, founded by Pádma-Sambháva. Rare and irreplaceable manuscripts and art objects got lost in the flames. In 1838 the monarch passed away. He was only twenty-one and just able to take a hand in ruling his country himself.

"In 1838 the eleventh Dalai Lama saw the light of day as a son of indigent parents. His lot was drawn out of seven candidates. This priest-king, Khas-grub-Gyátso was quite intelligent but of weak health. Having at an audience indicated a woman from the lower classes as his future mother, he died in 1855, seventeen years old.

"It was during his reign that the Jesuit fathers Huc and Gabet came from China to Lhasa. After a two months' sojourn in the capital they were sent back to where they came from.

"When in 1856 the child of the woman pointed out was born, it was of course unnecessary to look for the sheath of the twelfth Dalai Lama. The Chinese emperor confirmed the correctness of the "Incarnation." This priest-king, Trínlās-Gyátso, had a tragic fate. He con-

cluded a deep friendship with one of his four elderly chamberlains, for a young Dalai Lama never has any contemporaries about him. This chamberlain misused his confidential position to gain power and wealth, owing to which he got many enemies. Finally he had to make his escape, and on the way he was killed by them. His murderers then tied the body in riding posture to his horse and chased the animal back to the palace. Subsequently the fifteen-year-old boy was told that his beloved chamberlain had returned. Full of joy, he ran out to meet him, but seeing his friend dead in the saddle he became so horrified by the cruelty of his fellow beings that from that moment on he refused to see anybody anymore. He withdrew completely into himself. Like one demented, he wandered lonely through the huge palace for years on end. He could not cope with life any longer and died in 1875, barely nineteen years old. . . .

“Now the generally accepted theory, Mem-sahib, is that it was the regents who—presumably with poison—ended the lives of these four Dalai Lamas as soon as they had reached the age when they might have started actually to rule the country. For at such a time the position of power of a regent had of course come to an end. Alas, these gentlemen were generally covetous, and as they used to receive enormous presents from the Chinese ambans, who wanted to bend them to their will, they were never keen on giving up their position.

“All the same, it cannot be taken for granted that the four young priest-kings all died from poison. To start with, the mortality of children has always been high in the Land-of-the-Snow, and secondly, the training of a young Dalai Lama is exhausting and strenuous. He has to learn quite a lot and daily to attend long temple services. Besides, he often has to sit absolutely motionless for many hours during official receptions, while relaxation in the form of games in the open air is out of the question. One has to have a strong constitution not to succumb under the circumstances. Anyway, no future ruler of Tibet will ever have a pleasant youth. The other *high* “Incarnations,” destined to become abbots of important monasteries, receive a similar education. Since you always associate with us, Mem-sahib, I would not be amazed if you should come into contact with such a child-lama who is a high *tülku*. You will then see how he lives as a ‘religious princeling,’ surrounded by a kind of court only consisting of elderly priests.”

This thought had never occurred to me, but his words awakened a desire that such a thing might indeed happen one day. And later on it was actually fulfilled in an extraordinary way.

36: The Feast of the Thousand Lights

That night the rats had been at it again vigorously in our dormitory. With strident shrieks they had fought each other, and in doing so overthrown all our toilet requisites. But the idea of setting a trap for them crossed nobody's mind. For a Buddhist is forbidden to destroy any lives!

When walking round the stûpa in the morning, I met one of the Gelug-pa monks from the little 'gompa' carrying on his head a big basket of sweets which he served out to everybody. A rich Tibetan visiting their sanctuary had given a large amount of money to treat the refugees.

Today—a holy day anyway for the Tibetans, as the moon was full—the religious Feast of the Thousand Lights would be celebrated in the Redcap and the Yellowcap temple. In nearly every religion there is a feast of light about the longest night of the year to enjoy the fact that the days will lengthen once more. This is a remnant of the customs of the most ancient peoples all over the world. Our Christmas trees, too, are a form of it.

Everywhere in our hamlet activity prevailed. The China lama had gigantic pots of rice cooked in the square. His helpers kneaded hundreds of "tormas" from the sticky substance. These fat-bellied cones, five inches high, would be part of the food offerings of tonight's ceremony. Before being displayed in the sanctuary, they would be suffused with a tasteless red juice drawn from plants. It is said this takes the place of the pre-Buddhist blood offerings. Inside our temple itself, another kind of torma was kneaded from tsampa (roasted barley flour) with water. These thin, pointed cones were adorned with "jewels" of butter. Halfway up, a flat, round slice of it, probably representing a "mé-long" (magic mirror), and at the top a flamelike ornament, symbolizing a "jyoti" (the spiritual flame of Enlightenment) was pasted. Hundreds of copper bowls were filled with uncooked rice and embellished with the magnificent seeds of the

Oroxylum Indicum. I want to tell something about this peculiar tree: It blooms at night with rather insignificant, dark-red flowers. By their strong scent these attract the bats that flit from one to another, thus fertilizing them. The woodlike pulses of this tree grow to a length of some two feet, and when opened many hundreds of seeds drop. Two such seeds together, small and flat, are provided with a big, splendidly-veined transparent pellicle, finer than the wing of a dragonfly, serving to scatter them by the wind. All the Himálayan tribes think these pellicles so beautiful—and rightly so—they use them as decorations for all kinds of things. For instance, they tie big bunches of them to their hats and their musical instruments! And now it appeared they also use them to adorn the temple-offerings of uncooked rice.

It was a precise work for the helpers to fasten wicks in the thousand small butterlamps the "chú-gungs." They made them from a piece of reed wrapped round with cotton wool. Towards evening, the lamps would be filled with butter which during the day would be offered generously by the faithful ones—so the China lama hoped.

I also went to have a look in the monastery-temple of the Gelúg-pas. There prevailed a similar activity. The morning had gone by now and in the afternoon I should have loved to make a portrait drawing of somebody, but nobody felt like sitting for it. All people were preoccupied with that night's ceremony. Unexpectedly, surly Kipa came to me. She showed me one of her arms with a vague smile of contentment around her mouth. This was the first and only time she ever addressed me of her own accord.

"Mem-sahib look-look, beauty is these four bracelets. I them buy from bracelet-woman. She come Bodhnâth seldom for selling."

"Lovely, Kipa, but why didn't you buy some for your other arm as well?"

"No, Mem-sahib, money no-be."

"Then I'll give you some more as a present. Come and choose them yourself!"

The woman vendor squatted down in the square. She had enormous festoons of glass bracelets of all measures and colors hanging about her and on her. It is the custom for the vendors to slip the desired trinkets, usually four or six identical ones, over the hand of the buyer. This is not an easy feat, for they have to encircle one's wrist as closely as possible. So quite a bit of rubbing-and-massaging is required to ease the narrow, fragile bangles over the client's knuckles. When Kipa had made her choice, I wanted to please kind Quísang, too, of course, and after her my niece Míthu. A poor orphan girl of

about nine years old who was allowed to live in the house of my sister Darling in exchange for small services stood looking at the proceedings with big, yearning eyes.

“Come along you, choose some for yourself too, Dhármai” I said. “As you always tell us you want to find a husband as soon as possible, you have to look beautiful. Otherwise nobody will want you!”

Two other poor children I knew came and admired the bracelets. How could I pass them by, once I had started distributing presents? Anyway, those adornments did not cost very much. After them six more girls in rags came running towards us and then suddenly, I was encircled by countless women who did not ask anything for themselves, but who imploringly held up to me the little arms of their children-with-running-noses. The vendor, of course, did good business, but she became so nervous seeing she would have to serve all these customers, that she started breaking the bracelets by pushing them on too quickly. Still more mothers arrived from every side. They grew into a crowd! As the women at the back pressed the ones in front forward, these stumbled over the fragile merchandise and broke part of it. Although I made myself responsible for the damage, the proprietress got afraid of a mass breakage. With one unexpected jerk she jumped up with her tinkling, glittering festoons, dealt some smart blows here and there to the longingly waiting bystanders, and started to run away from our hamlet, accompanied by a general shout of disappointment “A-a-a-a-a-h!” We never saw her again.

The sun went down and colored the sky with a wondrous splendor. The wide Valley-of-Nepal was immersed in a reddish glow. It seemed as if Nature also wanted to celebrate a feast of light!

Time had come to put the finishing touch to the preparations in our temple. Already big mounds of rice were deposited on the space outside staked with ropes. They were embellished with various kinds of delightful things: pieces of sugarcane, leeks, long, fiery-red carrots, mandarins, bananas, sweet cracknels, inexpensive pralines, walnuts, very small edible seeds, and minute lumps of sweets. How these delicacies made the mouths of the little children of our hamlet water as they stood around gaping! For this was the “Feast of Abundance” for the poor and needy. Many rich Tibetans had come from Kâthmandú to give money to the China lama so he could purchase as much food as possible for the refugees.

To my great joy, pappa permitted me to assist with the displaying of the smaller food offerings—the two kinds of tormas, and little containers with uncooked rice—on the ladderlike wainscot of the temple. On the altar the drink offerings were placed: copper bowls of

pure water. And now we started to prepare the burnt offerings: to fill the little lamps with butter. The devout people had brought quite a number of gifts today, either in the form of ordinary lumps of butter or butter nicely sewn up in the stomach of a goat. This now had been made liquid over a fire. It was poured from an enormous can into the one thousand "chú-gungs." We lighted them; the little flames started to flicker and crackle. They spread some smoke and a delicious glow. For the first time during all those months of icy cold I felt myself nicely warm! When helping to light the long row of butterlamps mounted outside on the stone balustrade of the temple platform, I thought, "How strange, sometimes one lamp will cheerfully flare up, while the next produces only a tiny spurt of flame dying down time and again, though they have exactly the same kind of wick and they are filled out of the same can! Involuntarily I thought of the burnt offerings of Abel and Cain.

Lastly the scent offerings were kindled: the numerous joss sticks. They were placed before the altar in a big bowl filled with the ashes of many former times' incense.

Before the service started, the China lama came to inspect the temple. "How beautiful everything is, pappa!"

"Yes, daughter Lili," he answered, "Money is something wonderful; it is sweeter than honey! One can buy just everything with it."

Even in this consecrated place while he wore the garments of his ecclesiastical function the priest-officiate went on thinking like a merchant!

At the appointed time, he sat down on his throne and began to conduct the temple service. In his left hand he held the temple bell, in his raised right hand he turned the double drum rythmically back and forth. It set the measure for the temple musicians with its staccato sound. Next to him sat the cymbalist, then the conch-shell-blower, then the beater of the big drum, and finally the ones who alternately blew on the "gya-ling", (a kind of oboe) and on the "kang-ling" (the human thigh bone flute).

There were such crowds and the sanctuary was so small that only those that had given a donation in money or in kind, or those that were going to do so yet, were allowed to enter.

The faithful ones prostrated themselves full length on the floor before the altar, touching it with their flat hands and with their foreheads. They did this three times at least and then threw kha-tas in the direction of the five golden statues. Mummy Sûrya was amongst them. She was very devout and never would skip a single service! Dignified as always and constantly muttering mantras she

had come from Darling's house dressed in her best silk clothes. Notwithstanding her enormous size, she threw herself many times on the floor with great suppleness and just as easily and resiliently she rose again. Looking at me full of kindness she whispered: "God bless you, my dear daughter Lili." She had learned these English words by heart with the special purpose of saying them to me every time we met.

Near the end of the service pappā's special helper gathered all the delicacies lying on top of the rice—with the exception of the little seeds and the smallest lumps of sweetmeats—on a big copper tray. Then he went inside to dedicate this best part of the food offering once more to the gods, after which he took it to the house-with-the-lions, where the children of our family feasted upon these tidbits during the next days. My Tibetan father thought it a pity that "this costly stuff" should be given to the poor and needy. When the service was finished, the distribution of the remainder started. The musicians received the greater part of the rice. The China lama afterwards deducted this gift in kind from their salary. What was left was handed out to the crowd waiting outside, without any organization. Thronged together, many people stood on the temple platform and the stone staircase leading to it, in order to be nearer the food than those on the square. They came to blows with each other and the stronger ones, so *not* the poorest ones (for those did not have any strength left) went away with the lion's share.

I was the last to leave the sanctuary to greet the queen of the night for whose monthly appearance in her fullest glory the service had been especially fixed for this day. But she kept her luminous self hidden behind masses of clouds. . . .

37: Om Mani Padme Hum

The abbot of the monastery had once more allowed me an interview. "I understand quite well, Mem-sahib," he said severely, "you would like me to dish up to you all the Wisdom of our True Doctrine in the shortest possible time, to give you, so to speak, an emergency course in Mahâyâna-Buddhism. However, I don't feel like it at all, supposing it were possible to impart to anybody the first beginnings of Wisdom in a few discourses."

I nodded in embarrassment and said apologetically: "I am here only for a very short time and in my own country there is nobody able to teach me these things."

"No doubt you are serious in your quest. If you were a reporter trying to wangle out some 'secrets of the Far East' from me for a sensational newspaper article, I would have sent you away long ago. All the same, I wonder if there is not some spiritual laziness in your mind! Theoretically you might have thought out for yourself the things I told you, if only you had meditated often and long enough! Never mind, today I will divulge to you something about our great mantra: Om Mani Padme Hum. Do you know anything about it already?"

"Just a little, Rimpoche, Costly Jewel. In the Hindu monasteries in which I was taught. . . ."

"Just a little, that is quite true, Mem-sahib, a very little, I dare say. Let me hear how little!"

"For lack of Western synonyms, this mantra cannot be translated in its entirety. It is not utterly wrong to say: 'Om, the Jewel in the Lotus, Hum.' The translations 'Hail' and 'Amen' for the mystic sounds 'Om' and 'Hum' are completely nonsensical. Let me first tell you what the two words in the middle mean. They have a symbolic meaning. The advantage of a symbolic phrase over a literal one is that the former can always change its significance according to the spiritual insight of the person hearing it. The Jewel may signify the

Buddha, often depicted as sitting on a lotus flower. The Jewel also may be the Buddha's Doctrine originated in the lotus, meaning the world. According to a typical Hindu tenet, the Jewel is the 'Atman' (the divine spark or soul of man) hidden in the lotus of his heart. But the Buddhists deny the existence of an eternal divine soul ('Atman'). According to them, the Jewel is Truth Absolute, hidden in the lotus of the human mind.

"Quite apart from all this, one may view each of the six syllables of the mantra by itself. They are related to the six kinds of Living-Beings existing in the World-of-Phenomena: 'Om,' the gods, 'Ma,' the nongods, 'Ni,' human beings, 'Pa,' the animals, 'Dme,' the nonmen or Yidags, and 'Hum,' the inhabitants of Hell. According to the doctrine of colors each of the six syllables has a color of its own: 'Om' is white, 'Ma' is blue, 'Ni' is yellow, 'Pa' is green, 'Dme' is red, and 'Hum' is black. According to the doctrine of sounds, this wonderful mantra contains Words-of-Power.

"The word 'Om' is more important than all the others. According to the Mandúkya Upánishád it is a contraction of three sounds: A, U, and M. Pronounced in the right way, 'Aum' is a sonorous buzzing sound which—as far as producible in a human mouth—resembles the original Divine Sound-of-Creation: 'the Word that was with God, the word that was God.'" *The same divine sound Aum also reverberates within the microcosm, in the depths of our own being.* Besides, it is the primal Word-of-man, the "Word-of-words," potentially containing all possible words within its bounds. For does not it begin with the A, the most open, deepest, guttural sound, gradually changing into U, the sound proceeding from the very front part of the mouth. The M in which Aum ends is the closing of the lips. 'Hum' is a similar sound, but, so to speak, 'in a lower octave.' This is all I know."

"Now listen to me, Mem-sahib. *Aum Mani Padme Hum* is a mantra, as you said just now, a 'formula-of-power,' so a Force. Its words are equal to action. They bring about something. All things and beings are combinations of atoms which, 'dancing their own dance'—producing a certain rhythm, hence a sound—will stick together. Is the 'secret' of the mantra explained in saying: *Its sounds bring forth the correct vibration, that is why they cause forms to originate or (if aimed at the opposite) cause forms to fall apart?* No, Mem-sahib. For a mantra pronounced by an ignorant person has no effect at all! Its effect is dependent on the knowledge and spiritual ripeness of the one who pronounces it.

"For apart from the sound produced by the mouth of the mantrintoner, which can be caught by a man's ear, his mind too will send out something like a vibration, which can only be caught up by a

heart. Only those mantras have an effect which are pronounced by an initiate. He will have gone through certain spiritual experiences because of which he can fathom the essence of the mantra. He knows that it will be the means to awaken forces latent within himself, so that they will be able to influence his surroundings in a specific way. However, his spiritual forces have not come about in him by themselves. They are stored up purposely, not only by a very prolonged training in self-discipline together with one-pointed concentration and meditation, but above all by a great inner deepening. All this can only be achieved under the guidance of a guru. Not until the spiritual teacher after many years of preparation considers his pupil pure enough will he initiate him and at the time convey the mantra. Only then will the adept be able to work with it.

“Every human being, Mem-sahib, is what he makes of himself. Characteristics and forces which are worthwhile in somebody are only brought about by great exertion and by long training of stubborn willpower to reach the very highest.

“The mantras do not draw their force from themselves, but they are the means for rousing the forces existing in a person especially trained to these things. It is the forces within himself which bring about an actual effect on the surroundings. As an elucidation one could compare the effect of a mantra with that of a sunglass. The latter does not contain any warmth in itself, but just the same it can cause an object to be burnt to ashes. For the forces of the sunbeams will naturally be concentrated, thus causing the purpose in view, which they would never have achieved without the aid of the sunglass.

“Let us after this digression consider the mantra Om Mani Padme Hum, one of the cornerstones of Buddhism, in detail.

“Om is in itself a mantra too, even one of the most powerful mantras existing. It is undissolubly connected with the highest cakra at the crown of the head underneath the skull. Aum, or Om, as you said, is a triad: A symbolizes our waking-consciousness; U our dream consciousness including (in this case) our thinking, feeling, desiring, and willing (volition); and M our (deep) sleep consciousness (as undifferentiated Unity-of-all-Things). But as a whole Om is the experience of the Infinite, so of the Cosmic Consciousness (or the consciousness in the fourth dimension), a timeless condition in which no suffering exists.

“Mani is the Jewel. Already in the beginning of Buddhism mention is made of the so-called ‘Tri-ratna,’ the ‘Threefold Jewel’: Buddha, Dharma (His Doctrine) and Sanggha (the congregation of His followers). This Jewel, ‘fulfilling all wishes,’ can never be found anywhere except in the Lotus (Padma) of our own heart. Whoever possesses the Jewel will conquer the Cycle-of-Birth-and-Death (the Wheel embraced by Sin-jè) (or: Samsâra”).

“In later Buddhism, especially in Tibet, *the Jewel of the True Doctrine was materially represented in the form of the ‘Vajra,’ the Diamond scepter or the Thunderbolt Scepter, also called ‘Dorji.’* Originally this was the emblem of the Aryan god Indra, of his power in the sphere where he wielded thunder and lightning. However, it got sublimated to ‘the attribute-of-power of an Enlightened One,’ the emblem of the highest spiritual power, able to conquer everything, but itself unconquerable. Hence the analogy with the diamond which can cut all other precious stones but is itself uncuttable. The diamond is imperishable, unchangeable, and surpasses everything in purity. ‘Dorji’ is literally ‘Lord of Stones.’ So as king of precious stones ‘Dorji’ also means ‘Diamond.’

“You know, Mem-sahib, what a metal vajra scepter looks like. Every monk holds it in the right hand during temple service. But let us view it a bit closer: In the center there is a small globule. This symbolizes the ‘Seed of the Universe’ in its ‘as yet unfolded state.’ Opposite each other, fixed to the globule, there are two similar ornaments, representing budding lotuses. Out of them five metal ‘rays’ shoot forth joining each other further on in one point to a ‘Unity-of-Higher-Order.’ So the two sides of the vajra scepter form, so to speak, a three-dimensional Double Māndala. Their polarity symbolizes the apparent dualism of the World-of-Phenomena and at the same time the ‘Unity of Opposites.’

“Whereas Om symbolizes the experience of the Infinite, Mani, the Jewel, symbolizes the experience of the bond of all life in the *Cycle-of-Reincarnations (Samsāra)*. *Out of the egocentric feelings and experiences of man, the ‘Jewel of all-embracing Love (Māitri) and all-embracing compassion (Karūna)’ is born.*

“Padma is the Lotus, the symbol of the spiritual unfolding of man transcending the darkness of his Ignorance and passions. You told me that the yogis in India had taught you that *the power of Kundalīnī in such a person ‘awakens’ and ‘rises upwards like a fiery serpent’* through the etheric channel-of-power (‘nādi’), called the ‘Sushūmnâ,’ whence she ascends to the ‘seven lotuses’ or ‘cakras’ (to be pronounced ‘chacras in Tibetan called ‘khorlos’) (centres from which the Kundalīnī-power sets whirling outwards into the whole of the etheric—or astral— body). We Tibetans hold that the two lower cakras belong together and so do the two uppermost (situated in the head). That is why in Tibet we always speak of the five cakras or lotuses, instead of the seven (as they do in India).

“On either side of the Sushūmnâ are to be found the other important nādis through which the ‘prāna’ (the vital cosmic force, active throughout the Universe, which amongst other things causes us to

breathe) enters our body by way of the nostrils. Both join the main nâdi, the Sushúmnâ, in the lowest cakra ('Mûlâdhâra') where the Kundalîni-serpent, when asleep, lies curled up in three and a half coils around the so-called Svayâmbhû-linggâ.

"The nâdi beginning at the left nostril is called the 'Idâ.' The current-of-force passing through it is called the negative or the white or the moon-current. Its lunar energies represent the forces of the night directing themselves on the unconscious, undifferentiated, and regenerative principle of human beings and on the urge to union (the latter will express itself for instance in his impulses of love). These are the centripetal forces in man. We consider them as the feminine aspect of the vital (prâna)-force, also called 'Ha.'

"The nâdi beginning at the right nostril is called the 'Pínggalâ.' The current-of-force passing through it is called the positive or the red or the sun-current. Its solar energies represent the forces of the day directing themselves to the originating of consciousness, thoughts, ideas, discrimination, and volitions. These are the centrifugal forces in man. We consider them as the masculine aspect of the vital (prâna)-force, also called 'Tha.'

"The Sushúmnâ with the Idâ and Pínggalâ on either side form the 'tree-of-life' within man, in the straight center part of which the Kundalîni-serpent, the power of divine love, once awakened, will rise upwards.

"The Idâ does not lead downwards directly on the left side and the Pínggalâ does not lead downwards directly on the right side of the Shushúmnâ. They wind in serpentine coils now to the left, now to the right of it, crossing each other three times in the center. This emblem: the straight staff with the two lines coiling around it, whose mystic meaning is known to very few people, is found in many old religions. Did not the Greek god Hermes, the 'messenger of the gods' hold a twined staff in his hand? And do not Western physicians use the same emblem? They are the modern successors of the ancient medicine men, who possessed 'mystic knowledge' to heal the body.

"In the whole of the East it is believed that man will become sick when his solar and lunar currents do not balance with each other. Much more might be said on the topic, Mem-sahib, but we now will proceed to elucidate the great mantra.

"Hum is the magic sound pertaining to the heart. This needs an explanation. We saw that Om symbolizes the Kundalîni-power rising upwards to the cosmic sphere, through which the man in whom it takes place becomes an Enlightened One, a Buddha. When it has reached the crown-cakra (the 'Sâhasrâra-cakra' or the golden lotus of a thousand petals) the Kundalîni starts to "overflow," as it were, and

returns downwards back to the other cakras.

"Om is the breakthrough to the Absolute in the cosmic consciousness. However, to continue there is impossible for a being living on the earth. With the knowledge thus acquired of the Infinite, Timeless sphere, the Enlightened One has to go on to the end of his earthly life in the human sphere!

"The heart could be designated as the 'individual center of the human sphere.' As the Kundaḷinī flows back to the heart-cakra in the Enlightened One, Absolute, Transcendental knowledge is realized and becomes apparent in the actions of his everyday-life. Such is the Sacrifice of the Buddha to mankind. The sound of sacrifice, pertaining to his heart, is Hum.

"Om stands as the gateway to Transcendental knowledge at the beginning of the great mantra. As the gateway to the realization thereof in the life-on-earth, Hum is to be found at its end.

"Each of the five cakras (lotuses) of man represents one of the elements of the body, and such in the same succession in which a stūpa is built. The undermost (or root-cakra, the Mūlādhāra-cakra) at the beginning of the spinal column (coccyx, joined to the 'Svādhishthāna-cakra,' situated at the level of the genitals) represents the element earth. The plexus-solaris cakra (or navel-cakra, 'Manipūra-cakra') represents the element water. The heart-cakra ('Anāhata-cakra') represents the element fire. The Throat-cakra ('Viçuddhi-cakra') represents the element air (here to be considered as the equivalent of prāna, in Tibetan 'lung'). The crown-cakra (Sāhasrāra-cakra, joined to the cakra situated at the level just over the eyes, where the hypophysis gland is to be found ('Ajñā-cakra') represents ether.

"From this you will have understood that a stūpa, a sacred structure, is built this way to symbolize man with his five cakras and all that they stand for.

"The Tibetan mystics concentrate on the three uppermost cakras, those of fire, air, and ether.

"Each of the elements is joined to one of the five cosmic forces, which—as stated before—we are wont to designate (and represent) as 'the Five Dhyāni-Buddhas' (or metaphysic Buddhas). So each of the cakras is connected with one of these five Dhyāni-Buddhas as well. And since each of these Buddhas has a mantra-syllable of his own, undissolubly attached to him (symbolizing him, as it were), his mantra-syllable also belongs to the respective cakra. So here it is at the same time explained why each cakra has a 'magic sound' of its own.

"We have already seen that Om belongs to the crown-cakra and Hum

to the heart-cakra. Now the mantra-syllable *Ah* belongs to the throat-cakra, situated between them. We have also seen that this cakra represents air (*prâna*). It stands to reason that owing to this fact the throat-cakra is the symbol of sound (vibration, quivering), and when a person is Enlightened—a Buddha—this sound has become with him the 'Creative Mantric Sound.'

"According to the Tibetan mystics, the three uppermost cakras of the etheric body of man represent his three main principles. And these 'Three Main Principles of the Ideal Body,' the body of an Enlightened One, a Buddha, that is, are as a rule designated with their mystic sounds: *Om-Ah-Hum*. Only the initiates understand their deeper significance: the sounds *Om-Ah-Hum* symbolize the Enlightened Mind, the Creative Mantric Sound of the throat, and the All-embracing Buddhistic Love of the Enlightened Heart.

"Whereas for the Buddhist not instructed in these matters the 'Three Jewels of Buddhism' are: Buddha, Dharma (His Doctrine) and Sanggha (the congregation of His followers), for the one initiated in mystic matters the Three Jewels of Buddhism are: *Om-Ah-Hum*.

"Another very well known mantric sound is *Hri*. This belongs to the *Dhyâni-Buddha Amitâbha* (He of Infinite Light). Often 'Hri' is intoned loudly when one has 'prayed-around' one's prayer chain a hundred times in succession (saying: 'Om Mani Padme Hum'). This *Hri* is a kind of war cry against the evil forces, active or latent in human conscience.

"Now you know a few particulars about the 'Great Mantra of Tibet,' Mem-sahib, and especially about the mystic significance of the sounds at the beginning and the end. But don't imagine that by my summary account you know everything in this respect. There is endless more to tell about these wondrous symbolic words! But enough for today.

"You are trying to understand us Tibetans and you love Tibet. So never forget that *Om Mani Padme Hum* is the eternal melody of our country. We hear it in the murmuring of the brooks, in the thunder of the waterfalls, in the roaring of the storms, in the rustling of the winds of spring, in the. . . ."

"The voice of the abbot was dying down. His words were nearly inaudible. He let his prayer-chain glide through the fingers and from his soundless lips I read the words: "Om Mani Padme Hum, Om Mani Padme Hum, Om Mani. . . ."

On my toes I left.

38: The T'hangka Painter

Mummy Ganèsh really was not well at all. She looked pale and one day she just wanted to stay in bed, of course not in our "dormitory," because there always was a smell. This is not surprising when five unwashed women and one washed one (myself) sleep together in such a small enclosed space. So my Tibetan mother had the servant make a voluminous camp bed in the middle of the turquoise-colored room and installed herself in it with the spittoon at her side. That night she did not leave it, either, and as usual before she went to sleep she took little Kumári in her arms. For mummy considered the girl as her personal possession and did not grant her to anybody else, not even when she was ill. Good-natured Quísang laid herself down on the floor next to her mistress to be able to serve her during the whole night, while the priest climbed on his throne-bed in the small adjoining apartment and double-locked its door! The patient passed the whole next day too on her camp bed in the reception room. She groaned constantly, as is the custom of all Eastern women who do not feel well. Pappa's business visits went on as always, the visits of the tourists too. "The livelier the better, that brings money into my pocket," said the Chinya lama.

"It does not inconvenience me, either," his wife fell in with this opinion. She described the symptoms of her ailments in detail to all the visitors and told them how terribly nice it was to be ill in the turquoise-colored room. However, she was the only one who thought so! After five days pappa got so fed up with it he banished her to the upper floor until further orders!

Now mummy Sûrya's chance had finally come! As soon as she could she came to our house to visit her husband and pay him court unashamedly. She returned every day, sometimes even twice or three times a day, and pappa submitted to it with satisfaction like a kind-hearted pasha. And why shouldn't he: mummy Sûrya was a sweet woman! Yes, such is life: one disappears and the next one steps into her place. . . .

In our dormitory, too, the beds that had come free were without delay occupied by other persons. Gay Chini, one of Púnya-Jola's wives, had in the meantime given birth to a son, and as her husband did not care for a baby's crying at night he had quartered mother and child with us. Dharmai, the nine-year-old orphan who had eaten the bread of charity in Darling's house, was now raised to nursemaid of the newborn, although she was of the female(!) sex. So she came and slept with us too: on the rug underneath our little table, barely covered with a very small piece of blanket.

I had heard that a few days ago an old Yellowcap lama had died in our hamlet. He belonged to a small party of monks who had rented some rooms from the China lama. I had never met him. On the day he was to be cremated I wanted to go and look on the square to see the funeral proceedings, but around that time pappa called me, for once in a while he liked to show me off to the tourists. He presented me to them: "Ladies and Gentlemen, this here is my daughter from Hungary."

"Holland, pappa."

"Don't always be so accurate, daughter!" And to his visitors, "She is extremely lucky to have me as her father. For I am a learned man in every aspect. Anything she wants to know I can tell her!"

"So can I," my brother Ganesh, who was also present, interrupted him.

"You!," the China lama cried out angrily. "You know nothing, absolutely nothing! Keep your mouth shut!"

I suddenly heard sacred music outside and I was afraid I might miss the sight. "Please, may I go, pappa?" I asked politely, for it is the Tibetan custom always to ask permission to leave.

I ran downstairs. The procession accompanying the mortal remains of the lama was just passing our house. His body, fixed with cords in the lotus posture, was wrapped in yellow silk so now it looked like a big, triangular packet, placed in a sedan chair with a canopy carried on the shoulders of four monks. All those that wanted to honor him after his death had hung kha-tas, white scarfs, on top of it. One monk held a gigantic yellow umbrella over the sedan chair. Slowly and with dignity the ecclesiastic musicians strode in front. All lamas and trapas of our hamlet belonging like the deceased to the Yellow Church wore their big ceremonial caps for the occasion. They had lined up into two long, silent rows between which the retinue solemnly walked along its way to the cremation place near the river Bâgmâti, in which afterwards the ashes would be dispersed.

When at last the funeral procession had left the hamlet, most of

"our" monks returned to their monastery. I followed them together with my niece Mithu who had also been looking on. In the Yellowcap temple we saw the "ula," the t'hangka-painter, in his trashy, torn clothes. He had stayed at home, lost in his work. Now he looked up with a sweet smile. "Greetings, Mem-sahib Li-li," and to Mithu "Greetings, daughter." The Tibetans always accost a young girl as "daughter," "pu-mo." "Like to look at what I am making? I have not yet much progressed. We usually paint on cotton; that is more durable than silk. First it has to be prepared, to be given a good foundation for the paint. But meanwhile a t'hangka has to stay so supple it can always be rolled up without cracking. So we cover it with a thin mixture of flour and glue (drawn from a yak skin), by which its flexibility will not be diminished. Then we smoothe the surface of the cloth by scouring it carefully with pumice stone. This treatment has to be repeated several times. Finally we stretch the material as tight as possible by sewing it on a wooden frame, look, like this one. This afternoon I transferred the drawing to it with charcoal from a sketch I composed before. Next I traced its contours carefully with paint, as you see.

"These here are the various color powders with which we work. Each is made—as is the custom in China—from different sorts of stone finely pulverized. We mix such an opaque powder with glue-water, so we can put it on the cloth as an extremely thin layer of paint. The brushes we make ourselves from the hair of goats or cats.

"To begin with, we fill in the space between the traced contours equally with one of these paints, so each subject or object is plain colored. It goes without saying that opaque paint covers completely whatever is underneath. Therefore, when this foundation-surface is dry we are able to paint each detail on top of it. Most important of all are the faces. The gold paint for the ornaments is made with real goldpowder.

"In our composition we are not free, but bound by many rules, especially in regard to the appearance of the various deities and saints.

"Many centuries ago, by a Divine Revelation from on High, it was established which proportions of the human body are the absolutely ideal ones. The earthly sheath of the Buddha was of course ideal! It couldn't be possible otherwise, could it? You agree with me, Mem-sahib Li-li, don't you?"

I nodded.

"You see, as an artist you understand such things! For this reason we t'hangka-painters are obliged to give a Buddha figure those

prescribed proportions, even unto the smallest details. . . ." He smiled absentmindedly, took up his brush once more, drew a few lines with it, and presently was so lost in his work that he forgot our presence and all other things around him. We gently left without saying good-bye.

That afternoon I walked once more to the Hindu temple of Pāçupatinâth and on to the forest on the other side of the Bâgmâti river. In little stone cabins ("kútirs") amongst the trees there lived several hermits I knew from my former stay in Nepal. Far more than any of them I loved the 136-year-old Çiva-Puri-Baba. Along the winding path I reached his distant abode in front of which he sat meditating in the sunshine as motionless as a statue, his hair and beard forming a silvery halo around his brown face. Between the hundreds of fine wrinkles, his wise eyes looked gently into the world.

"Aum Svami-ji Mahârâj (monk-prince)," I greeted him with reverence as I sat down in the grass at his feet.

"So now you always think of Tibet, my child," he stated, although I never had told him. But words were not necessary anymore between us. "I made a pilgrimage to the Land-of-the-Snow, nearly fifty years ago now, in order to circumambulate the holy Mount Kailas, 'Kang-Rimpoche,' or the "Snow-Jewel," as it is also called. We Hindus consider it the earthly abode of god Çiva-the-Destroyer-Regenerator. The air in its vicinity is so clear and lucid! One feels the radiation of the pure thoughts of the numerous pilgrims. Towards evening, when the sun has set, the sky over the holy mountain is alight with wonderful rays. Perhaps they are the reflection of the many vast glaciers all around. . . ."

After some time I rose, as long visits tired the old yogi. "I'll come again, Svami-ji Mahârâj."

"It is well you come alone, my child."

That was all. As always after I had visited him I felt a different person.

At home I found the red-dressed hermit whom I had met some time ago on the square in such a cheerful mood. He was visiting the Chinya lama, but this time I did not like the expression of his face at all! He looked like an animal at bay, ready for a desperate act. The atmosphere in the turquoise-colored room was laden with quarrel and angry words. Because of my entry, a threatening silence now prevailed. Without a word pappâ got up and went to fetch something from the other room where stood his strongbox.

"There!" he shouted furiously, and threw a small, flat parcel at the feet of his visitor. "For the very last time, and don't ever come and show your face here anymore!"

Like a beast of prey the man grabbed the small package and was gone the same moment.

"That spineless wretch!" the priest panted, still trembling with rage. "Do you know what that was, daughter Lili? Opium! The miserable creature is an addict to narcotics! And such a one calls himself a God-seeker! He should be ashamed of his vice to the depth of his soul!"

"You don't smoke opium yourself, pappa, do you?" I asked uneasily.

"Of course not, it is quite a coincidence that today I happened to have a bit of that stuff in my strongbox. I got it from somebody for medicinal purposes," he answered. "You know yourself, daughter, that you and I are the only ones in this house who never smoke at all!"

Yes, that was the truth, but apart from the two of us, all the members of the family just loved to smoke. In the Nepalese manner they clenched a cigarette in their crooked little finger while doubling their hand into a fist. They sucked the smoke in by pressing the fist against their mouth, never touching the cigarette with their lips. In our family (and the nearest neighborhood) such a delicacy changed hands until it was finished. For although the China lama was a very rich man and both his sons were quite rich too, they saw to it that they kept all the others on very short rations. Nobody could permit himself a *whole* cigarette! So, looking out of the window on the square one day, I saw Quisang lighting a cigarette, inhaling twice, and passing it on to my nephew Antaré. After a few pulls he handed it on to the shoemaker who had rented the small room of our house downstairs. He sucked with gusto for a moment and gave the cigarette to my sister-in-law Kámala. She puffed at least three times before offering it to the cattle-servant who purposely smoked very slowly to tease little Kumári who stood trampling impatiently because she wanted the cigarette-end so badly!

No, my Tibetan father never smoked, not opium either, and I was intensely glad that he did not. However, all the same something did not quite tally! But I could not think what or where.

When the shadows became long and bluish I climbed to the upper circumambulation path of the stûpa-terrace—as I loved to do once in a while—and looked down on the houses in the square. Then my eyes wandered upwards to where the fleecy clouds in the pale sky slowly changed into a fiery red with the last rays of the sun. They made me think again of the red hermit. Today he had quarreled with the China lama, but when I came across him some months ago, he had only praised him. What was it exactly he had said? "That good

priest, that dear man, he always gives me generously what I ask." That must have been opium, I now understood! Not money, as I had supposed at the time. And he had added, "He *always* does! Nobody is like him!" So my Tibetan father *did* always have opium at his disposal in his strongbox. He did not "happen to have it only today!" as he had told me. Why? Medicinal purposes??? Fairy-tales! Anyway: strange things occurred sometimes in the house-with-the-lions!





39: The Younghusband Expedition

Our gatherings in the minute shop of the lama-vendor now had become a fixed rule. I liked them so much that in return I bought all kind of Tibetan objects from him. It was the least I could do for our "history teacher"!

"Now we are coming to the end of Tibet's history," he started. "Last time we saw that the four previous Dalai Lamas were probably poisoned in their youth. How is it that the thirteenth priest-king, Ngáwang-Lòbsang-Tubten-Gyàtso, born in 1876 was *not* poisoned? Some people say: because his personal physician had conceived a great love for the boy and guarded his life as if it were his own. Moreover, he saw to it that it was not until his twenty-fifth year that he was allowed to go to Chö-Khor-gye-tso, the "Lake of the Future," which every Dalai Lama *has* to visit once in his lifetime to behold in its waters, as if in a vision, all that will befall him, his manner of dying included. This is not the most pleasant thing for a young boy. On this same journey, the monarch has to go and see the monastery of Sàmding, situated on the shore of the scorpion-shaped lake of Yamdo (spelled 'Yamdruk'), for he has to make the acquaintance of its abbess in an interview at which no other person is allowed to be present. She is the only woman whom His Holiness blesses by laying one hand on her head. Any other woman will be blessed by his touching her head with a kind of tassel. But then this abbess is a female tülku, the only one in the Land-of-the-Snow. She is the materialized goddess 'Palden-Lha-mo of the Fighting Arms,' the Protectress of Lamaism, in her earthly sheath having the title of 'Dorje-Phag-mo' (the 'Diamond Sow' or 'Thunderbolt Sow'). As such she is supposed to possess magic powers!

"Another thing the ruler has to visit all by himself is the temple in the monastery of Samding, whose walls are covered with horrible paintings. All these things taken together seem to give a shock to a *young* Dalai Lama, a boy leading a lonely existence of excessive study

22. On the anniversary of the conception (i.e. the Incarnation) of the Buddha, the abbot of the Yellowcap-monastery was wearing a black velvet headdress with three balls, one on top of the other, symbolizing the three worlds. Over this he had mounted a kind of golden crown. (Part II: 50)

and strict ceremonial observances. It is certain that the four former monarchs who died at an early age were not equipped with sufficient mental strength to cope with the experiences of this journey. On the return trip to Lhasa it is the custom for the priest-king to swallow a special pill given to him by one of his escort 'to renew his vitality and make his countenance radiant.' Some people maintain that it was this pill that contained the poison from which the former four Dalai Lamas died. Whether this is true or not is impossible for us to verify now. In any case, in his twenty-fifth year the thirteenth monarch was old and wise enough not to get shocked, neither by the vision of his future in the lake, nor by the temple of abomination. Anyway, his pill contained no poison, for he did not pass away until his fifty-seventh year, and will live on in our hearts as a great and enlightened ruler. For that matter in the hearts of some Westerners as well, and this is the reason why I will tell you more about him than about the other Dalai Lamas.

"The way in which his earthly "garb" was found is interesting. As is the custom, the state-oracle in the little monastery of Nè-chung near Dè-pung was consulted. By mouth of the medium the deity sent word that none but a highly ascetic lama from the monastery of Ga-den would be able to discover his "Incarnation."

"The lama elected for the purpose went into meditation for seven days, after which he had a vision. It was revealed to him that he had to gaze into the lake of the 'Triumphant Wheel' (of the Buddhist Doctrine), Mu-li-ding-tso. However, it was frozen and a thick layer of snow covered the ice. As the pious monk stood looking down from the top of a nearby hill, a gust of wind swept the snow away and in the crystal-clear surface he saw the image of a house in front of which there was a woman carrying her newborn underneath a flowering peach tree.

"And indeed, the identical house described by him was found some hundred miles away from Lhasa. There, in the year 1876, a peasant-woman had given birth to a boy one night when the sky had looked fiery with glittering colors while unearthly music was heard. Subsequently the water of the well had become milk-white and the villagers had seen a flame on top of a barren rock outside their hamlet. When the high lamas visited the house, nearby a peach tree was found blossoming although it was not springtime yet. They found the little boy sitting very dignified in the lotus posture. He seemed to recognize them, and from the objects shown to him he grasped without any hesitation those that had belonged to the former Dalai Lama. So drawing lots from the bum-pa proved superfluous. Without any ob-

jections the Chinese government acknowledged the child as the legal priest-king of Tibet.

"As is the rule, the title of 'kung' (duke) was bestowed on his father, together with the right of wearing the ritual red button and a double peacock-feather on his headgear. Moreover, he was endowed with an estate.

"One of the teachers of the young Dalai Lama, Dòrjieff, belonged to a Mongolian tribe residing in the region of Trans-Baikal, many of whose members were of fair complexion and grey-eyed. A century or more ago their territory had been conquered by Russia, so their nationality was Russian. Dòrjieff was a very learned lama who had come to Tibet to study philosophy and metaphysics at the university of the Dè-pung monastery. Because of his great erudition he was elected to become the tutor of our monarch. He got on very friendly terms with him, so much so that in 1897, some years after the ruler had come of age, he appointed this lama as his adviser in foreign affairs.

"As mentioned before, Lamaism had many adherents in Siberia. Also in Russia itself the Yellow Church spread ever more. Now there is a myth in the Land-of-the-Snow that the "True Doctrine" will expand all over the world as soon as the country of 'North-Shambhála' will have been converted to it. 'Sham bhála' is a mystic appellation of an as yet unknown territory, and the word 'North' has a mystic significance as well. Dòrjieff suggested to the Dalai Lama that Russia might be North-Shambhála. He hinted that the czar—who since the time of the czarina Katharina the Great was considered in Tibet to be an "Incarnation" of the goddess 'the White Târâ' (so a very high tülku indeed)—sympathized with Mahâyâna-Buddhism and seriously thought of embracing it himself, after which, of course, the majority of his subjects would follow suit. Dòrjieff is generally said to have been a Russian secret agent with special instructions from his government to coerce Tibet to enter into commercial relations with Russia. Worse still: to oust China as protector of our country so as to make room for Russiá. The czar knew just as well as the Chinese emperor that nobody could ever gain the confidence and sympathy of the Land-of-the-Snow without adopting their religion, anyway partly. That is the reason why he did not deny any inclination towards Mahâyâna-Buddhism ascribed to him. Whether Dòrjieff had indeed been a Russian secret agent from the very start is not at all certain. But most probably he was later on.

"In any case, the Dalai Lama sent him as his ambassador, escorted by ten others, to the court of the czar. They carried a letter personally written by the monarch and many presents for the Russian

ruler. The czar returned a number of gifts to the priest-king, amongst which there was a complete bishop's outfit. This happened although—as we know—China had stipulated that Tibet should refrain from contact with any other country. As the sovereign of the Celestial Empire had twice put his forces at our disposal to expel foreign invaders from our homeland, he considered himself entitled to exercise a measure of authority over it. Up to that time, conforming to Chinese instructions, the Dalai Lama had kept his frontiers rigorously closed to every foreigner: He had at once ordered the Christian missionaries to return to Bátang. And in the beginning of this century he had compelled the Swedish explorer Sven Hedín with the threat of force to leave our territory. As soon as rumors had reached his ears that the Japanese monk Ékai Kawagúchi, passing himself off as a Chinese, had secretly stayed for three years in the Land-of-the-Snow, he decreed that all his friends should be sent to prison. The same thing had previously happened to those who had helped Sárat Chandra Das, an Indian spy of the British, during his two short trips to Tibet in 1883 and in 1884. The beloved and honored tülku-lama Sen-cheng Dorje, who from idealistic motives—hoping to cause Buddhism to flourish again in India—had lodged him in his house, was condemned to death by drowning in the Tsang-chu! And to think that killing his body had not even been his worst punishment: in a special ceremony it had been made impossible for his essence ever to Incarnate again! So after his death it was not necessary to search for his next earthly sheath: He could never succeed himself as abbot of his own monastery anymore. Is not it tragic, Mem-sahib?

“But let me not stray from our story. With all this I merely wanted to stress the point that our Dalai Lama had kept strictly to the letter of his instructions from China. Even in his former “Incarnation,” as the eighth Dalai Lama—as I told you before—he had prevented India's governor Warren Hastings, as representative of the mighty British empire, to enter into commercial relations with Tibet. For—as you will remember—to this purpose he had sent George Bogle in 1774 on a mission to the Pánchen Lama, and in 1783 Samuel Turner with the same purpose in view. Both returned without any success, of course!

“In the beginning of this century, during the reign of the thirteenth Dalai Lama, India's sixth viceroy Lord Curzon started the same thing anew. This looked very suspicious to us! Was the hidden object of the United Kingdom to annihilate Buddhism and establish Christianity in its place? On no condition did we want to admit these Westerners into our country. Previously we felt sure that as long as their

queen Victoria was still alive we were safe from eventual invasions on their side. For indeed she too was an earthly "Incarnation" of the goddess Palden Lha-mo, the protectress of Buddhism. But when Her Majesty passed away in 1901 it became necessary for us to be on our guard against the British!

"So, when in that same year Lord Curzon, mentioned above, wrote an official letter to the thirteenth Dalai Lama requesting to enter into relationship with us, our priest-king returned his epistle with its seals intact, 'as he was not allowed to open an official letter from any other state without permission of the Chinese government.' Alas, the English had discovered that in the same year we had indeed entered into relationship with the czar of Russia and they decided—against the explicit will of our monarch—to enforce their plans.

"In 1903 they went a commercial legation with an escort of two hundred men headed by Colonel Younghusband to the Tibetan frontier village of Kamba-Jong. A small number of Tibetan deputies went there to inform him they did not *wish* to start negotiations. Now the frontier between India and Tibet is formed by the watershed along the mountain ridge of the upper Himālayas. In one place, however, our territory stretches south of it: all of the Chūmbi-valley, through which flows the Ámu-chu, belongs to us. There it was that the Young-husband legation entered our country for the second time. Our deputies told the English anew in the Tibetan frontier village of Yátung that we simply refused to conclude any commercial treaty, *urgently requesting them to return to India*. But this time the legation had the support of a great army, commanded by general MacDonald, and the English delegates answered they had been instructed to march to Gyantsé to negotiate there with us just the same. In the Tibetan village of Phag-rí ('Swine-hill') overlooking the northern part of the Chūmbi Valley, notorious for its dirt and its harsh climate, they stationed their troops during the winter of 1903/1904. Colonel Young-husband himself trekked over the Tang-la, the Tang pass, to Tuna, remaining there. We then gathered fifteen thousand soldiers and in the neighborhood of the next village on the way to Gyantsé, Guru, we built a strong stone wall right across the road in order to entrench ourselves behind it and thus stop the British army, numbering a hundred English and twelve hundred Indians (Sikhs and Gurkhas). They marched on in the spring of 1904 and close to the dam of Guru a battle was fought. One third of our forces were slaughtered. The opponents had only a few casualties. Our men fought courageously, but they were no match to the modernly equipped Westerners. Our old-fashioned muzzle-loaders did not carry nearly as far as the Euro-

pean rifles, and it took more time to load them. The lamas had distributed protecting charms to our soldiers, so they were convinced of their invulnerability. But you see . . . for some reason or other these charms did not work against British bullets which may have been of a very special kind, for it was certainly *not* the fault of the lamas!

"Then our enemies marched to Gyantsé, captured the city and its 'jong' (fortress on the hill nearby), after which they waited once more for the Tibetan deputies to establish a commercial treaty with them. We explained that the Chinese did not *allow* us to enter into negotiations with them and *implored them to return* to their own country, but in vain! Colonel Younghusband answered that, unless we signed a treaty, he would be compelled to go to Lhasa. For some time nothing seemed to happen, although later on it leaked out that MacDonald had returned to the Chúmbi-valley for reinforcements. We had decided to do everything to prevent the enemy from reaching our holy capital. To go from Gyantsé to Lhasa one has to cross the Káro-la, a pass more than fifteen thousand feet high which is quite difficult to ascend. There we built another magnificent wall of defense—for we are expert builders, Mem-sahib—completely blocking the way. It was two thousand one hundred feet long and boasted many fortifications. Behind it twenty-five thousand Tibetans were lying in ambush waiting for the foreigners. Colonel Brander, who had stayed behind with the garrison of the Gyantsé-fortress had apparently heard of the wall on the Káro-la. With two-thirds of his army he came marching up. We should certainly have been able to check him at our wall if the Gurkhas, almost as able mountaineers as ourselves, had not mounted the steep rocks on either side of the narrow defile, more than eighteen thousand feet high. Descending further on, they attacked us from the rear. It is only with *their* help the English managed to defeat us.

"In the meantime other Tibetan fighters assailed Major Murrey, who had been left at the "jong" with the remaining third part of the army. He repelled them but recklessly enough went in pursuit of them upon which another troop of ours recaptured the "Gyantsé-jong." The English forces now found themselves strewn all over the plain of Gyantsé where Younghusband and his escort had been camping all the time. Our enemies' position was precarious. However, they had high explosives at their disposal, a thing we ourselves were unacquainted with, and blew up many hamlets in the valley. Presently their reinforcements arrived from India. With Maxims they shot from three directions breaches in the "jong" and took it once more. Then we realized we were no match for them, ever!

“Their army now marched along lake Yamdo in the direction of Lhasa and reached the Tsang-chu. At this place the river is very wide. Here there is the so-called Chàksam-ferry, the only means to cross its water. Unfortunately we had left our two big ferry boats on their side. If this had not been the case, they would never have been able to reach the Place-of-the-Gods as quickly as they did, since they carried only some small boats with them on which not a single pack animal could be taken to the other shore. One of these crafts turned over at once and a few of the men got drowned. But for our big vessels, the one remaining possibility for them would have been to build rafts. However, in central Tibet there simply is no wood to be found. So it would have been necessary to go and fetch it from the Himálayan forests: a journey of weeks and weeks. We might have attacked their transports, even have destroyed them. Anyway, we would have been able to hold up the British punitive expedition—such it was after all—for years and years. . . . Here, at Chàksam we *implored the enemy for the last time to return to their own territory and to leave us in peace.* However, they were inexorable!”

He sighed deeply. All of the men sighed. I was very much moved by his story. Here was a courageous, pious nation which loved its freedom and only wanted to be left alone. They just did not fancy—for whatever reason it may have been—to conclude a treaty with the mighty British empire, but were cruelly forced to. What needless tragedy!

Finally the lama-vendor said: “Now don’t think, Mem-sahib, that we did not know that the fair-skinned enemy were coming in Lhasa in the Wood-Dragon year (1904). Many years ago our state-oracle had prophesied: ‘The English will arrive in our capital when there is no snow on the mountains, no water in the lakes, and when rice is growing in Phag-ri.’ Now this winter, indeed, very little snow had fallen in our country. Otherwise the foreigners would never have managed to cross the passes. When snow on the mountains is not high there will of course not be much water in the lakes, so their surface was exceedingly low. As Phag-ri is too high and too cold for cultivating rice, we never grow any there. However, one of the English officers stationed in the dreary village for such a long time got bored and thought “Let me have a try and plant some grains of rice.” To everybody’s amazement they sprouted, as the weather was so extremely mild. . . .”

“But as the Tibetans knew that in 1904 the invaders from India were to come to Lhasa anyway, then *why* did they try and check them so vigorously?” I asked.

“Indeed, why does everybody always resist their fate, even when knowing that it will be in vain? Why does one never accept something inevitable without kicking? Such is human nature! It is lamentable, but there it is!

“The Younghusband expedition, now grown to four thousand men, arrived in Lhasa in August and pitched their tents on the outskirts. The three great monasteries, Dè-pung, Séra, and Ga-den were summoned to provide victuals for them. On the whole, the troops behaved rather decently, although we were absolutely *shocked* to see them hunting and fishing as a pastime! Just imagine, Mem-sahib, *killing animals to amuse oneself*, and such in the surroundings of our holy city, where all killing is forbidden once and for all!

“The Dalai Lama had left Lhasa as he refused to receive the enemy in his capital. He had handed over his seal to the old Ti-Rimpoche, as is the title of the *abbots of Ga-den*. He was a very learned lama, as all the abbots of this monastery had been. In contradistinction with the abbots of *all* the other important monasteries, they *are not tülkus*, but are elected from a number of lamas who combine great erudition with the gift of leadership.

“The commercial treaty was of course enforced. It was practically dictated to us by the English. We had no choice! It got signed and sealed by either party, on which occasion the Ti-Rimpoche acted as the representative of our priest-king. This took place in the Pótala-palace in the presence of the Chinese àmbans. The Tibetans bound themselves not to object against English commercial agencies established in Gyantsé, Gartok, and Yátung. Moreover, they pledged themselves never to enter into relationship with any other states.

“Once the treaty was signed, Colonel Younghusband, unattended climbed a high hill offering a wide view of the ‘Place of the Gods’ with all its magnificent temples and the Pótala-palace. There he had a marvellous inner experience, brought about by the thought-power of our *high* lamas. It was a wondrous, unearthly feeling of happiness, of being completely detached from the World-of-Phenomena, coming over him. For the rest of his life the memory of these blissful moments remained with him.

“This was Tibet’s answer to the great amount of suffering he had brought over the country. . . .”

40: The Exiles of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama

“Because the thirteenth Dalai Lama did not wish to meet the English in Lhasa, he went with a small escort to Urga, the capital of Mongolia, where there was a Great-lama as well, the ‘Maidāri-Hutúktu’ who in religious rank came right after himself and the Pān-chen Lama.

“When the priest-king had left the ‘Place-of-the-Gods,’ the Chinese declared him deposed and asked the Pānchen Lama to take his place, but he refused and the people too went on considering the Dalai Lama as their sovereign ruler.

“In 1906 the monarch returned from Urga to Tibet, but not to Lhasa. He took his abode in the famous monastery of Kūm-Bum in the east of the country for eighteen months. From here he made a pilgrimage to Wu-tai-shàn, the five-topped holy mountain in the province of Shansi in China where one day in meditation Mañjuçrī had seen a vision of lake Nāga-vāsa. While the priest-king was staying there, the Chinese emperor invited him to come and visit him in Peking, though his chief eunuch had urgently advised him not to do so: ‘I warn you, oh Lord, if you—the Son of Heaven—will stay with an “Incarnation” of a Celestial Bodhisattva in the same city, one of you will die!’

“In 1908 Tibet’s ruler with his retinue traveled in great state to Pao-ting-fu. There the imperial train was awaiting to take him to Peking. The beautiful Yellow Temple, the “Hwang-Sse,” which the emperor Shun-Chi had constructed for the Great Fifth was now arranged to serve as a residence for the thirteenth Dalai Lama. He was going to be received officially, but alas . . . how different was this reception from that which in 1652 the first Manchu emperor had prepared for the former, the greatest priest-king of Tibet! Our monarch was told that protocol demanded that he should make a ‘kówtow’ for the ‘Ruler of the Celestial Empire’ sitting on the ‘Dragon-throne.’ This is a mark of honor in which one has to fall on one’s knees and bend for-

ward touching the floor with the head for three successive times. Our thirteenth monarch refused to do this once and for all. He brought to memory that, when in his fifth "Incarnation," he had agreed with the then-emperor ever to aid and abet each other. On account of this the priest should never get into a position inferior to that of the layman. In token of favor he was granted to bend only one knee for the Son-of-Heaven and to touch the floor with the right hand instead of with the head. Thus it happened. After this our precious sovereign was made to sit down on a couch which was lower than the imperial throne. Oh, the shame of it! Indeed, he received rich gifts from the emperor and his stepmother, the empress-dowager: two splendid images of the Buddha, gold temple implements, two hundred packages of gold dust, art objects made of jade, a coral prayer chain, costly furs, bales of yellow silk and brocade, besides a magnificent yellow-coated horse.

"All the same, the Chinese government deprived the Dalai Lama of the titles of 'Universal Ruler of Buddhist Faith' and 'Holder of the Sceptre.' Instead of these he received the title of 'the Sincerely Obedient One' which was, of course, very humiliating.

"Not long after the official reception, the empress-dowager had her anniversary. Our priest-king complied with her request of personally celebrating in her presence a special service in order to 'obtain a long life' for Her Majesty. While singing holy hymns, he was holding in his hand the ritual 'temple vase ("búm-pa") of long life,' filled with consecrated pure water. (When not in use during service this vase was always 'dressed' in its 'garb' of yellow satin). The Dalai Lama performed the liturgic actions with such earnest devotion that the empress got deeply moved and presented him with a prayer-chain of marvellously beautiful pearls.

"Afterwards, the emperor as well as the empress-dowager assured our beloved monarch that he was to keep his royal state in Tibet and that no sorrow would ever befall his subjects. However, strange events followed: Under doubtful (and never cleared) circumstances, His Majesty died eleven days later. The prophetic warning of his chief eunuch had come true!

"The next day the empress-dowager died. The long-life ceremony had not had any effect. Evil tongues maintained that the ambitious lady so covetous of power, when she felt her death approaching, had caused her stepson, whom she had anyway completely robbed of all authority, to be poisoned since she grudged him the satisfaction of succeeding her.

"After the Dalai Lama, assisted by one hundred and eight lamas

(the holy number), had celebrated a great mourning service for the emperor and the empress-dowager, he made known his wish to return to Tibet. Concerning political affairs our monarch had now to negotiate with a Chinese regent. However, he was not able to get from this gentleman what he might have gained otherwise, at least partly, from the members of the imperial family, who were both well disposed towards him. Before his departure he was told that the government had the intention of making Tibet into a Chinese province.

"The thirteenth priest-king hurried towards Lhasa and arrived in December 1909. Twenty years previously the state-oracle had prophesied that in the year of the Iron Dog—that was 1910—the Land-of-the-Snow would be at war with the Celestial Empire. So he wanted to be on his post before it started. He had then been away from his capital for five years.

"However, it appeared that meanwhile—without his prescience—Chinese officials had traversed Tibet to survey it, to examine its soil, and to hold a census. The Dalai Lama accused the then Government of the "Celestial Empire" of thus, by underhanded means, violating the treaty which guaranteed his power in his own country. Actually all worldly power had already been taken away from him: the council of his ministers was strictly kept watch over and the state-oracle of Nè-chung had been dismissed by the enemy!

"In the beginning of 1910 the Celestial Empire had sent still another army of twenty-five thousand soldiers to invade Tibet. General Choa-erh-Fêng, surnamed 'the slaughterer,' was its commander. He destroyed several monasteries in the eastern provinces, killing hundreds of monks, and subsequently marched against Lhasa. As his advance guard entered the city, the Dalai Lama secretly left his palace at night and fled with three ministers and an escort of two hundred men in the direction of Gyantsee to go to India. He had been in his capital a few months only. Since 1904 the general anti-British feeling had subsided a little. In Peking, where our monarch had come into contact with Westerners for the first time, he had realized that they were no unreasonable beings. Moreover, at this time there was not much choice left, if he was to escape from his persecutors. To reach the European part of Russia he would have had to cross the whole of Siberia. The way to India, governed by the British, was considerably shorter and another possibility did not exist.

"The Chinese went in pursuit of the exalted fugitive, for their government had promised a reward to whoever could lay hands on him, dead or alive. A small group of his faithful ones remained be-

hind on the road as a rear guard and attacked the pursuers. With their blood they gained their ruler a start, enabling him to cross the border safely and find refuge in India.

"In 1907 the United Kingdom and Russia had concluded a treaty and agreed neither would interfere with Tibet's foreign policy pact of nonintervention. So the British government maintained a strict neutrality. They allowed our sovereign to take up his residence in the mountain resort of Darjeeling but did not comply with his request to help him against the Chinese.

"After his departure, the enemy had once more declared the Dalai Lama deposed and asked the Panchen Lama to take his place. The latter had refused anew, and of course this time, too, the population remained faithful to their priest-king. Three months after, however, the Chinese government sent word all of a sudden that our Precious Ruler could return to Tibet, provided he abstained from meddling with politics. Since a force of two thousand men was stationed in Lhasa, he did not feel disposed to accept the proposition and quietly stayed in India.

"Fortunately, at the end of 1911 a great insurgence broke out in the Celestial Empire itself. The revolutionaries rebelled against the adherents of the Manchu dynasty. Sun Yat Sen was elected president of the provisional government. In the beginning of 1912 the Manchu emperor was dethroned. Confusion obtained in all of China. In Tibet their soldiers started a mutiny and the cruel general Chao-erh-Fêng was killed. Thus the Tibetans were once more lord and masters in their own country. So in June 1912 the Dalai Lama returned in great state to Lhasa for good and all.

"During his stay in India he had concluded a lasting friendship with the British political plenipotentiary for Tibetan affairs, Sir Charles Bell. In prolonged conversations with him and also because our intelligent priest-king had got fully informed about the administrative methods of the English, his knowledge concerning the exercise of worldly power had considerably increased. This was a great asset, for his education had nearly exclusively been directed towards things spiritual.

"At his arrival it became apparent that a few monasteries had sided with the enemy when our country was occupied. They were destroyed and their treasures were sold. Hence it is clear that in Tibet every monastery is considered an independent institution, and only in the second place a part of the Church. The head of one of the most distinguished and wealthiest families, called Tsaròng, too, had lined up with the Chinese. He was put to death and his possessions

were given to a favorite of the king. This was a man of humble origin who had faithfully stood by him. Among other things, he had fought against the enemies when they pursued the royal fugitive in order to give his lord a chance to escape. Now he married Tsaròng's daughter and the widow of his son, by which he himself—as the adopted son-in-law—got the name of Tsaròng. Later on, as prime minister, he became one of the prominent men of the country. It is not an exception in the Land-of-the-Snow for one of humble birth to rise to a high position. Have not many of the mightiest lamas too originated from the common people?

“The Pànchen Lama had also sympathized with China. For that reason he had emigrated at the return of the priest-king. For more than twenty years he remained in China. Only after the death of the Thirteenth he decided to go back to his homeland. However, he died on his way, in 1937.

“In 1912 the new Chinese government telegraphed to the Dalai Lama, now completely independent, that they had decided to bestow on him a high rank and title, but he answered he had no need of any ranks or titles from his former enemy.

“When returned to Tibet our ‘Costly Presence’ took the worldly power of the country in his hands with all his might, in order to strengthen the state within and without. It was his ideal to ‘open the three doors of activity, impartiality, and justice.’ He could not brook sloth, covetousness, and suppression. So he had his officials severely controlled to see whether they were corrupt, easily bribed, or liked to impose heavy fines which eventually found their way into their own pockets. All those who misused their positions to enrich themselves were dismissed. Formerly it had been no exception that a nobleman would send a representative to the district where he was nominated as governor, so his delegate could exercise the official duties in his place, while the appointed gentleman himself was leading a life of leisure in Lhasa. This was no longer permitted by the ‘Great Thirteenth,’ as he was referred to now.

“A Dalai Lama had always had his secret agents all over the country to control things. It was never known whether he was aware of abuses or not. However, as a rule the Great Thirteenth proved well-informed, although Tibet is so extensive that it takes two months to travel from the outlying districts to the capital. He used to send his instructions through a special messenger to the region in question. These royal couriers, whose function is hereditary in a few families, are trained for it from early childhood. They are accustomed to ride without resting from one halting-place to another, at each of them

changing their ponies, which the peasants, by way of special tax (called 'ula,'), have to put at the disposal of whoever is journeying in government service. In this way they cover in one day a distance any ordinary traveler would need three days for, across very difficult territory at that! It is said that these people tie themselves to their saddles from fear they might fall off if sleep should overcome them, and that on the way they will merely eat two raw eggs at every halting-place. All of them die young, even those who do not drop into a precipice or perish in a snowstorm.

"However this may be: After his return our monarch took care that order and discipline obtained in the country. When his commands were not obeyed he imposed severe but just punishments. All those who thought they had suffered any injustice could submit their complaint to him in writing. If it appeared well-founded, the grievous wrong was redressed. If not, the plaintiff was fined.

"The Dalai Lama raised taxes—except for monasteries; their fields remained tax free—and he established a standing army. Every landed proprietor had to furnish a fixed number of soldiers and provide them with an outfit. Their pay was defrayed from the treasury.

"Some people thought that our beloved sovereign had better leave 'the dirty work of worldly government' to a regent and that he should concern himself exclusively with spiritual affairs. But about this the priest-king had his own ideas.

"For that matter, His Holiness did not forget either to bring the clergy up to the required standard once more. He compelled the lamas, many of whom were slothful, to keep up their studies and to continue practising theological debates. He curbed their love of money and their inclination towards politics. Thus he heightened the spiritual level of Buddhism.

"Owing to his protracted sojourn in India, the monarch looked upon the English in quite a different light than before. His friendship with Sir Charles Bell lasted throughout life. When in 1914 the First World War broke out, our priest-king assured the United Kingdom of his sympathy. He offered to furnish one thousand men as auxiliary troops and to hold regular prayer services for their victory.

"This sovereign of ours was a champion of modern techniques as well. At his request the telegraph cable laid by the Younghusband expedition from India to Gyantsé (1904) was in 1922 extended to Lhasa by the English.

"However, finally our beloved ruler felt his end approaching. We Tibetans hold that a Dalai Lama need never die, but only does if he feels inclined to do so. And it happened that in 1933 the Great Thirteenth found pleasure in departing for 'the Honorable Field.' "

41: The Bride and King Mahendra

The Tibetan women who continued their sojourn in Bodhnâth now really began to get settled. This was evident from the fact that they started to pay more attention to their appearance. Not only did they often wear their best clothes, but they stuck red, green, blue, or black paper circlets, the size of a dime, on the temples, on either side of the nose, on the chin, or anywhere else, always symmetrically placed. I once saw a woman with a dozen of these patches on her face. When asked what they were meant for, she answered that they contained a sort of medicine against various ailments, sometimes a decoction of herbs and sometimes a mantra (written by a lama) possessing healing power. And yet there was also an element of coquetry in all this patch-sticking, for the fair sex would choose colors to match their blouses.

A few of them wore bracelets made of a large white conch shell, pierced lengthways, narrowly encircling their wrist. It had been thrust on the arm when they were very young and their small hand could pass through the narrow opening. Once grown up, they could not take off the fragile ornament anymore, so they had to be very careful not to break it.

Many women applied a kind of rouge to their cheeks which they made themselves by wetting the red paper in which the Chinese tea briquettes used to be packed. Some others preferred circlets of felt imbued with similar paint made especially for this purpose in China. These were moistened and, when pressed against the cheek, there appeared a fiery circle not in the least resembling a natural blush. Rouge for the lips had been unknown in Tibet. Now only the rich ladies in Kâthmandú started to buy our lipsticks. Never did any Tibetan rim her eyes with black, while all Nepalese and Indian women always abundantly applied eye-black ("kajal"). Once in a while the refugees from the Land-of-the-Snow would smear a dark brown, nearly black ointment on their faces, just as they had been wont to do at home. Western people who had wandered about there in their travel

stories gave all sorts of strange explanations for this custom. They generally maintained that the fair sex deliberately tried and spoiled their good looks with this "cutch" (which seems partially to be made up of loam) so as not to be a temptation to the many priests who had sworn to celibacy, or some such nonsense. In reality, this ointment serves not only as a skin protection which is necessary in the rough climate of their country, but as a beautifier as well. Women willingly accept going about for a few days with blackened faces, confident that this treatment will make their skin paler. A fair complexion is considered a great asset. When going for long journeys across Tibet, city ladies will often wear leather masks. For the violent daily storms blow up the fine, sharp sand of the Gobi Desert with such an enormous force that it sometimes causes the skin to bleed. I experienced similar storms in Manchúria and I can testify that they have quite a painful effect on one's face!

One could see all kinds of pleasant sights in our square. One day a new refugee arrived. She was a farmer's wife with a broad, flat face. On top of the basket crammed to capacity which she had carried on her back all the way from Tibet, there was a darling baby of which she was justly exceedingly proud. Every now and then she turned her head, waved to the child, and at the same time made funny cooing noises to coax a smile from it. "Is it a pu-mo, a daughter?" I asked her.

"No, a real pu, a son"!

Some more women had gathered around us. A mother and her grown-up daughter were wearing long capes, the upper part a vivid green and the nether part black, with a few red triangles sewn on it which gave the garments a smart touch. "Come," the elder one said to the other, "show Mem-sahib your little baby too." The younger woman did not carry a basket on her back and both her arms were hanging down. I wondered where she could possibly keep her offspring. But amidst the general laughter of the bystanders she put her hand in the overblousing part of her coat (the "ambag") and took out a newborn!

Having looked about for some time in the square I went to Darling's house. She had let me know that she had a fine model for me, one of her Tibetan boarding school friends from Darjeeling who had just been married. She happened to stay for some days in Kàthmandú and was willing to sit for me in her bridal clothes, with all the finery she had worn at the wedding. This Pàsang Dolma had just arrived at the house of my sister Sûrya. She was wearing a blouse of sky-blue silk and a sleeveless tunic ("chuba") of wine-red satin. A servant for

arranging her hair was with her. Like all Tibetans, Dolma was perfectly natural. She began at once to chat with me while her companion started to work on her coiffure. Over her mistress's thick, straight locks she first tied a black band to which had been fastened two stiff protuberances about eight inches long. All along these had been sewn strands of long black hair exactly like that of the young woman. The servant intertwined these with Dolma's own locks, on her back. It grew into a real work of art! "On festive occasions we ladies of Lhasa all wear added hair imported from China," Dolma explained. Then she handed me a kind of tiara and said: "This is my 'patú' (spelled 'patrúk'). Did you ever see one before, Mem-sahib Lili?"

"No, I never saw one."

I had a good look at the ornament. It was a rather long stuffed roll of red material, entirely covered with close-laid strings of seed pearls. Four enormous beads of red coral had been sewn in its center with two more on either side, further on. Turquoises had been sewn in between the corals. The extremities of the roll were much thinner and could be hooked into the hair.

"Have a look at the projections on my black band," Dolma now suggested. "Sometimes we bend them so they form a horizontal line over the head. In that case we fix the patú also horizontally on top of them. But we can also bend them slanting upwards as if they were two horns. The patú is always bent in the same direction as they are. As for me, this is the manner I prefer. Both ways form a flattering background for one's face. It looks fine, doesn't it?" she added coquettishly.

"Superb, Dolma, so decorative!"

"Now I fasten my earrings, not in my ears of course, for they would get torn with the weight, but I hook them in my hair on either side of my face."

They were gold ornaments of about six inches covered with large blue turquoises, in the beautiful classic Tibetan style which is still in use more than any other.

Then the young woman put a thin chain around her neck on which hung a large gold star incrustated with precious jewels. "It is a modern 'gao' (amulet-box) of the latest Lhasa fashion. And this here is an heirloom my husband gave me as a present," and she showed me a long string of light green jade beads interspersed at regular distances with big, dark corals.

In the meantime my sister Sûrya had been going to and fro pouring out salted butter tea. Finally she settled down on the floor at my side to feed the baby. She was glowing with pleasure because she

had been able to provide me with such a beautiful model.

"Tell sister Lili about your wedding", she asked her friend.

"Well, in Tibet bride and bridegroom don't know each other beforehand. It is the parents who draw up the marriage-contract between them with the help of a go-between, not, of course without previously having consulted a lama astrologer to see whether their children form a good combination. Surely you know that with us every year is called after an element and an animal? The elements of the years of our birth have to be 'on good terms' with each other. For instance, water and fire are no friends, wood and earth are. The respective animals have to go on well with each other too. I have got sheep in my year and my husband horse. They always harmonize. After my bridegroom's parents had paid my parents 'the price of the mother's milk,' by which is meant the cost of the upbringing of a daughter (so of myself), the day of the wedding was fixed. I myself did not yet know anything of it! *A girl is never told until the day before she is getting married* for fear that otherwise she will grieve knowing so long in advance that her sheltered and happy life in her paternal home will come to an end. Though, to tell you the truth, I had come to realize from several unusual activities that my wedding would soon take place. The previous day the girl's relatives and friends are invited to her home. They bring *khá-tas* and presents for her. Her future husband will send the bridal dress with the jewels which she is to wear when going to him. On the great day itself, the bridegroom's relatives and friends come to fetch her. This *has* to take place very early in the morning, for anything that happens when the sun is rising ends better than when the sun is on its way down (i.e., after midday). As is our custom, the oldest servant of my future family circle (who will also join the party) fastened a fine turquoise in my coiffure and a ritual arrow in the hair at the back of my neck. The latter is an old tradition hailing from the time the bride was stolen, signifying that a man claims his wife, and is ready to fight for her, if other suitors might oppose him. Apart from this, an arrow stands for masculinity.

"The relatives and friends then gathered in a group around me and I mounted a beautifully bedecked horse. Of course a bride *has* to ride a horse (never a mule, since this animal cannot conceive, so it would be a bad omen). We went in festive procession to my new home. However, its gate was locked, as it ought to be, for when a girl has left her parents' house for good and all, she is no longer protected by her domestic deities and therefore evil spirits may have followed her. That is why she is not allowed to enter without pre-

liminaries. First a ritual dagger (a 'purbú') of dough must be thrown at her, to chase them away with, and only then are the gates opened. The bride is now cordially welcomed by her new family. Together with the bridegroom she seats herself on a raised platform in the reception room and a short ceremony is celebrated by a priest to introduce her to her new domestic deities. The parents-in-law offer khátas and presents to the young couple and the numerous guests follow suit. There is a good deal of eating and drinking, accompanied by general merriment. The feast will continue at least for three successive days, sometimes even for three weeks!

"It happens that a girl will also have to marry the younger brothers of her husband—never his elder ones—, when this has been stipulated in the contract. In that case, her marriage with the following brother is concluded a year later in the family circle when the first husband is away travelling. And a year after, it is the turn of the next brother. Polyandry serves to avoid too much cutting up of family property, since all the boys cannot have more offspring than one woman can bear. But fortunately there was a monogamic marriage arranged for me and we are a very happy couple. . . ."

Darling had kept silent all the while. Now she gave her friend an affectionate glance and said "That fine, untroubled time you have been speaking of, Dolma, belongs to the past. It is the future you have got to think of, so be wise and see to it that you soon have a couple of sons." At the moment her baby boy was lying asleep in one arm and she put her other arm around Baba-Raja, who was playing about. He was nearly three years old and dressed like a modern gentleman: in a miniature lounge suit. My sister Sûrya's future was secure! She had been "wise" in time.

When in the end my drawing was finished, I returned home. I found the corridor full of cow dung. Our cows used to wander from their enclosure behind the adjacent Redcap temple, where they "belonged," to the courtyard of our house. From there they walked through the open backdoor to the stubblefield with the nomad tents to go and visit the village well by its side. When they had had a drink from the puddles around they would stroll to the square to see whether they could not secure on the sly a mouthful of green leaves or carrots from the vegetable sellers. Generally they managed very well. Although people grew angry, they did of course not punish the holy animals, but pushed them with hard buffs into another direction. Here and there around the square there were rush mats on which the inhabitants dried their corn in the sunshine. The cows also tried and snapped up some of it on the sly, until once more they were chased

away. Satisfied with the windfall, they sauntered back to the "house-with-the-lions," got in through the front door, soiled the corridor with their excrement, and in the end returned across our inner courtyard to the supply of straw behind the temple where they had come from. As often as not the floor was not cleaned until the next day. Nobody was shocked at the dung in our house, for to start with the excrement of holy animals is also holy, and secondly (as I said before) all the little children of our family were allowed to use the passages and staircases as a lavatory.

I went upstairs. There was a visitor. Darling's husband was paying a call to pappa, an event which happened very rarely. He was wearing the national Nepalese costume: a tunic with long sleeves fastened on the side with a knot and a matching pair of trousers. This outfit may be of any color. His was of pale red (since he belonged to the Hindu clergy). With it he had the national obliquely sewn cap on his head. Baba-Raja, who had seen the court-priest's car arrive while playing in the square, now burst into the turquoise-colored room, prostrated himself full length on the floor before his father, and reverently touched his feet with the head. It is the custom with Brahmins for the sons to salute their father in this way.

"What a long time since you came to see me last," the China lama said to his guest.

"The reason is that I stayed for some time with king Mahendra in Darjeeling, Mémé," the young pandit (Hindu priest) answered. "It was just during the sojourn of our monarch in India that the holy day fell on which all Hindus belonging to the three highest casts (Bráhmíns, Kshâtriyas and Váishias) who are called the 'twice-born,' have to have renewed their ritual white cord, which is worn on a man's naked body around the left shoulder. For the king this ceremonial act has to be performed especially by the court-priest, so really by my father. However, he has grown so old now that he dares not fly to Darjeeling anymore. So I did it in his stead. You know, of course, that I have been educated for the priesthood, as afterwards I have to take over his high function, though at the moment I am the proprietor-manager of a prosperous import and export business in Kàthmandú.

"For that matter, Mémé," he continued, "I must tell you something funny about the return trip I made with His Majesty in his private plane. It is well known that the king is set on always looking spic and span. His wardrobe is supposed to be larger than any monarch's on earth. However, he can never determine *what* to wear for the occasion. We were already flying over Kàthmandú when at the





last moment our ruler decided to put on a different suit. When he had finished dressing this second time, he altered his mind again and it was only after the third change of clothes that he allowed his pilot to land. Meanwhile, I saw 'Their High-and-Mightinesses' in full regalia waiting for us down below. They did not understand why we continued circling round overhead for so long! Anything new here in Bodhnâth, Mémé?"

"I have been told that one of the highest tülkus of the Ka-gyú-pa sect, who has had his headquarters in Sikkim these eighteen months, intends to make a pilgrimage to our stûpa," the China lama answered. "That will mean a busy week, for it is the widely beloved Gyälwa Karmápa. He will stay in one of my houses with his train of followers."

"I seem to remember there is something special connected with this tülku?" Darling's husband inquired.

"Of course: He is the one who possesses a hat made from fairy hair. When he puts it on, he can fly."

I looked attentively at my Tibetan father. Did he himself believe what he was saying? Not a hint of mockery was to be seen on his chubby face. He rounded his lips to a pout as he was wont to do when he was contented, cleared his throat vigorously, and called for the spittoon. . . .

{24. "I have got to do important business," mumbled the old minstrel after having prayed for three hours while posing for me. "I want to go and drink a bowl of barley-beer ('chang'). He was right: such a thing is important after long hours of incessant praying. (Part II: 51)

42: My Own Room

It was half past six in the morning. I sat on the floor in a corner of the turquoise-colored room giving the finishing touch to a drawing of the day before, as pappa had given me permission to sit inside till eight o'clock since the heavy rain made working in the gallery impossible. My two brothers had entered to discuss business matters with their father.

"To whom shall we let the upper rooms of Sûrya's house and to whom the room next to our temple?" asked Ganèsh.

"It is a pity that just now practically all the refugees in Bodhnâth are nomads who have their own tents with them. They don't need to rent a room from us" said Pûnya-Jola regretfully.

"The house where Darling lives with her mother I want to reserve for the high tülku (the 'Hutúktu) Gyälwa Karmápa whom we can expect any day in our hamlet," my Tibetan father decided after some consideration. "For I want to cut a good figure towards such a man who is so generally beloved by the people. But that small room next to the temple, indeed, what shall we do with it. . . ."

"Of course I am the one to whom you will rent it, will not you, pappa?" I joined in the conversation. "For many weeks past you have promised me a room! I would love to pay you a generous rent for it."

The China lama was discomfited by my unexpected proposition: "Yes, daughter, I promised you, it is true, and if you absolutely insist on working in that room instead of on the gallery where you are very comfortable (!) too, well, all right then! But you needn't pay me any rent. I can't get much for it anyway, as it is not very good."

"Do make her pay. Why shouldn't she? She never buys anything from you!" Ganèsh all of a sudden cut in snappishly.

"Be silent, son, you don't know anything about it: your sister regularly buys all kinds of Tibetan objects from me for two museums in her country and just now she has presented me with a very artistic portrait of myself. The other day she bought from you a Tibetan rag-

dong on which you made quite a good profit, and when she arrived here she brought many gifts for all of us!"

"Sister Lili declined to buy the beautiful nomad knife and the Kham-pa sword from me," said Púnya-Jola with a sour face.

"But elder brother, I have already bought two other knives from you and to buy a sword would be senseless, as it is forbidden to export it from Nepal. Moreover, I would love to pay rent for the room next to the temple, pappa, as I said just now."

Both younger men looked angered. They always wanted to pocket as much money as possible.

"I am the one who decides here," said the China lama. "It will be as I say. I will instruct the stableboy to sweep the floor and to put a chair for you into it, daughter Lili. Somewhere we still have a discarded mat I allow you to use. I suppose you own a padlock yourself to lock your room?"

"Yes, pappa, and thank you very, very much!"

I was overjoyed with the prospect to be able at last to work without any disturbance. I did not mind a bit where! A ladder led to my new abode, which did not quite measure nine feet square. It had an earthen floor and inexpressibly dirty walls. Two holes on the front side served as windows and the ceiling was so low that by standing upright I could just touch it with the top of my head. In fact, the stableboy had ladled (!) out most of the dirt after which I did the sweeping myself. The chair—the only piece of furniture—had three legs, but I found out at once how I could keep my balance on it, being accustomed—if need be—to sit completely motionless. So it turned out that, notwithstanding the the rain, I would yet be able today to start an oil painting of Tsipr which I had intended to do for quite some time. In the gallery it would have been impossible. Since my first friend, gentle Pêma (whose portrait I had drawn holding her hands in the "offering-mudrâ") had left our hamlet to make a pilgrimage to Lumbinî (the place where the Buddha had been born from the side of his mother, queen Mâyâ), I had struck up a friendship with two other Tibetan women: Pàrtiyi, of whom I will speak later on, and Tsipr. The latter, though being half a child herself, had already a baby. Her husband was well off. He had bought many big pieces of turquoise for her which she wore in her hair together with various other ornaments. Her clothes were made of the best Tibetan gabardine ("pulo") and the child too had a lovely red coat lined with sheepskin. Moreover, it wore a necklace of pink corals. The young mother had a madonna-like look. For hours on end she could stare dreamily in front of her, praying softly, while the child slept on her

lap, a scene which would have inspired any painter. She had a somewhat triangular face, typical of many Tibetans, and she could smile quite provokingly, her eyes sparkling with fun and her flat little nose wrinkling up. When she saw indigent people or anyone in pain or sorrow, tears would stream down her cheeks. Then she would become quite shy and dared not look at me.

I called for her at her place, installed her proudly in my own room, and without further delay started on an oil portrait of her together with her little daughter. Of course the Tibetans had found out at once I now had an abode of my own, so they could come and visit me. Formerly the China lama had strictly forbidden the friends of my models to come to the gallery too. Now things were different! First of all a Kham-pa woman from a tent some way off who once had posed for me came to have a look at my new quarters. She wore a pointed hat of grey felt with a partly upturned border. It looked quite coquettish. On her back hung an apron of goat skin to prevent her dress getting moist when sitting on the damp ground.

"Does didi (sister) want me to pose next to Tsipr?" my pointed-capped guest asked, hoping to earn some money. "Here I will sit without being disturbed," she added. She had disliked Ganesh coming each time to the gallery to pinch her cheeks and whisper naughty things in her ear.

"Not today Triomo."

"Then perhaps my little son?"

"No thank you, some other time."

There was somebody fumbling at the door; it was the father of the two little girls. His hair was hanging loose. It made him look quite wild, but I knew he was all kindness now that he had accepted me for a friend. He squatted on the floor but did not say a word. This way I received many other visitors who came and departed. In the meantime I went on working, feeling quite happy.

The Tibetan boys and girls I knew did not consider it a sporting thing to climb my ladder and enter my room by the door. Instead they clambered onto the balustrade of the temple-platform whence they caught hold of one of my window ledges and hauled themselves inside on the front side of the house.

"You may stay, children, but do not walk around, go and sit quietly on the floor." They crept close together in a row against the wall. Every time I let anything fall, all flew up simultaneously to hand it to me obligingly.

"I say, Tsipr," I asked, "couldn't I buy that little spoon of yours hanging on your necklace?" I always tried to buy something from the

Tibetans that were my friends to remember them by later on. Generally they were only too glad if they could sell anything for a good price. On the square I used to be accosted on every side with the words: "Please didi, buy from me, buy from me?"

But Tsipr said, "This spoon not for sale." and she smiled her provoking smile.

"Why not, little sister?"

"Because I-no-spoon I no-can-eat! I die-from-hunger!"

I pretended to be very sad, saying, "No, Tsipr, no die, please." "Here," she said "quickly take-you, all-right, all-right! Give Tsipr anything."

She knew quite well this was the most advantageous way of doing business with me.

In the middle of the next morning I had to go home to fetch a new tube of paint. The China lama called when he heard me on the staircase "Come here, daughter!" He sat on the floor of the turquoise-colored room practically without clothes while Quisang was washing him. A bowl of hot water (oh, what a luxury!) stood by his side and near it was a pile of clean underwear. The clothes just taken off were such as he wore daily, but his "best outfit" was lying in readiness for him on a chair: an ochre-colored cotton shirt, wine-red trousers, an orange sweater, a wind-jacket of light brown satin, high brocade boots, and a kind of jockey cap, also made of brocade but with fur trimmings. He used to put it rakishly on his head. Was it surprising a person dressed so exquisitely should draw everybody's attention in the streets?!

Some lamas paying my Tibetan father a visit were seated around him.

"How long have you been staying in our hamlet now, daughter?" asked the priest. "Isn't it time for you to have the residence-visa in your passport lengthened?"

"How good of you to remind me of it pappa, I will go into town one of these days to have it put right." I took in the scene before me. "Do you know what you make me think of, pappa? Of a French king! Those mighty monarchs also gave audiences while they were washed and dressed."

Exactly at this moment the China lama raised his short, chubby arms and the servant put a clean tricot shirt on him. His whole face beamed at my remark and he said contentedly "Yes, yes, you are quite right; so it is: Your Father-the-King!!!" After this he expectorated vigorously and spat in the spittoon.

Mummy Ganèsh sat near him on the floor with a small pair of

scales for weighing gold. She put something on them and asked imploringly, "Please, Mémé, do give it to me a little bit cheaper?" Then she handed me a beautifully wrought gold ring in which a large dark-red coral was set, and she inquired "Don't you think it lovely, daughter?"

"Pappa, does she want to buy it for herself?"

"Sure she wants to, but for less money than I charge her."

"But when she wants the ring so much, why don't you give it to her as a present? Of course you love your wives, don't you?"

"I would be crazy if I should give it to her or to my other wife! After all, they have both got money, so they have to pay for what they want. Now look at your mummy Ganèsh. There she sits weighing and weighing, but if she doesn't decide quickly to buy the ring, I will offer it to somebody else, for instance to an American tourist whom I can charge still more! Well daughter, don't forget about your passport!"

Of course I had to go to the capital for the visa, but I enjoyed so much painting quietly in a room of my own that I postponed going another two days. Then I went. It took me longer than I had expected. I even had to stay the night in Kàthmandú. When I returned to Bodhnàth my first glances went up longingly towards the house next to the Redcap temple. Out of one of the windows of my own room were leaning some Tibetans, and before the other, washed clothes were drying. I ran up the staircase of the house-with-the-lions.

"Pappa, what has happened to my *room*???"

"Your brother Púnya Jola has taken it back, daughter. He has let it to some of his friends."

"But I had it locked with my padlock!"

"He has forced it open."

I was speechless. My two brothers were present, smoking on unperturbedly. "Can I get my room back?" I asked Púnya-Jola.

"No" he answered.

"Pappa, will you please give me another room?"

"I am sorry, daughter Lili, there is not a single room free and there never will be a room free anymore. I allow you once more to work on the gallery."

"Please tell Púnya-Jola to *give me back my own room*, pappa?"

"He is a man, daughter, I cannot order him to do anything. Remember: it is not our custom that a single woman has a room of her own. I shouldn't ever have permitted you to have one. It was a silly thing to do anyway!"

I was thoroughly indignant, but at the same time I understood I had to submit to the manners and customs of the family to whom I now belonged. "In our country," I finally said, "one who forces the lock of somebody else's abode is put in prison!"

Now Ganesh, who had been silent all this time, started to roar with laughter "Hahahahahaha, yes, of course, in our country too! But dear sister, you forget two things: Firstly we belong to a family of priests so nobody would ever *dare* put us in prison. And secondly, our own cousin, that dark Gurkha you saw here last time, has been appointed as the head of the Nepalese police force. So whatever we might choose to do, he would always arrange for his subordinates to keep us, the members of his family, *out* of prison! *We are completely safe and can do whatever we feel like without being punished, now and forever!!! Hahahahahaha!*"

Afterwards when he was alone, pappa called me and said, "Your brothers aren't bad boys and really, daughter Lili, they don't dislike you. Still it isn't seemly in their eyes that a woman should behave as an independent person. My child, you truly are and will always be welcome here in our house, but stick to our way of looking at the things of everyday life. It is better so for everybody concerned."

I understood his point of view and I felt I had to accept things as they were, if I actually liked my Tibetan family, which I did! From that day on I worked again on the drafty gallery.

43: After Death

I visited my friend the lama-vendor once more. He was sitting all by himself in the minute shop. "It was such an exciting tale, Tibet's history," I said, and sighed. "What a pity we have got to the end. Isn't there anything more to tell now?"

"Just a few things if you would really like to hear them," he answered smilingly. "Our monarch who is in exile is the fourteenth Dalai Lama. After the death of the Great Thirteenth there was no reason *not* to go and look for his next Incarnation, and it was not long before he was found. But you know: many centuries ago our state-oracle had prophesied that there would be only thirteen "Re-Incarnations" of Chèn-resí as priest-king of Tibet, *no more!* How then could the discovery of this child, apparently housing His Celestial Essence, tally with the prophecy? For the state-oracle never makes a mistake. Finally it was realized that thirteen "Reincarnations" of the first Dalai Lama meant that there would be fourteen "Incarnations" in all. Indeed, it looks as if our Precious Sovereign, for the time staying in Mussoori (India), will be the last monarch of the Land-of-the-Snow. . . ."

"How was his earthly sheath found, honored lama?"

"When the Great Thirteenth had passed away, the abbot of Dè-pung, after a lot of fasting and praying, went and looked into the 'Lake of the Future.' On the surface of the water he observed the letters *A, Ka,* and *Ma.* Subsequently he saw a house with strangely formed drainpipes situated near a monastery with a turquoise-colored roof. A might very well stand for the province of Amdo in the north-east of our country, especially because there had come to pass a great miracle which could be explained in the same way: At the mummification of the Dalai Lama, his head had gradually turned in that direction! So three expeditions were sent to northeastern Tibet to go and search for his next "Incarnation." Each group found a child which might come into consideration; that is, who had all the outward

marks such as prominent shoulderblades (because Chèn-resí as a Celestial Being has four arms, the protrusions on the back of his earthly sheath are looked upon as their rudiments), great ears (bespeaking wisdom), a conch-shell-like impression on the palms of the hands (indicating holiness), and a few other things. However, the child found by the first group died, the child of the second group ran away crying, but the child of the third group behaved miraculously. The high lama leading this expedition had disguised himself as an ordinary servant; just the same, the little boy addressed him as 'lama.' When a number of objects was shown to him in order to see whether he 'recognized' amongst them the ones having belonged to the former monarch—so to himself—he immediately took the prayer chain and refused to give it back. The house in the hamlet of Tagster in which this wonder child lived had strangely formed drainpipes and was built near a monastery with a turquoise-colored roof. This had been founded by the fourth "Incarnation" of the beloved tülku Karmápa, which might explain the letter *K*. For the Letter *Ma* no interpretation was ever found. We called the boy Tenzin-Gyatso.

"The Chinese governor of Amdo demanded a sum of one hundred thousand dollars and later on an additional amount of three hundred thousand dollars for his permission to let the child depart from his district to Lhasa. Until this sum had been collected, the little boy was kept in the famous monastery of Kúm-búm, guarded by the highest lamas. On his fourth birthday he was taken to the capital, where he was installed officially as the fourteenth Dalai Lama."

"Could you tell me something about the Tibetan way of mummification, honored lama?"

"Only our most exalted lama—"Incarnations" are mummified. As a rule the corpse of such a one is immersed in boiling butter, after which it is dressed in ritual lama clothes, the face having been covered with gold leaf, the whole of it displayed inside a box with a narrow glass window. This kind of mummy is called a 'butter body,' a 'màrdong'. However, in case of a Dalai Lama or a Pànchen Lama, the mummification is altogether different. The earthly remains are placed in lotus posture inside a box that is then filled up with salt to which some secret chemicals are added. It will absorb all the moisture from the body. As soon as it is satiated, it will be sold at a high price as medicine for external use, because it has a miraculous power. For indeed it contains part of the sheath which served a Celestial Being to live on our planet. The salt is renewed many times until after three months all the liquid of the corpse has been drained from it. Since it has shrivelled up by then, its original form has to be restored. To this

purpose we fill it with a certain kind of clay, through which finely ground sandalwood and several herbs have been mixed. Now the mummy is ready. Its entire surface, polished until it is beautifully smooth, will be covered with gold leaf and placed inside a mausoleum. Such a structure has always the form of a stûpa ('chör-ten'). In several monasteries, costly stûpas containing 'màrdongs' or simply the ashes of former abbots and saints will be found, but of course none of them can be compared with those of the Dalai Lamas, put up in the western part of the Pótala-palace. The greatest and most precious is that of the Great Fifth. It is more than sixty feet high and reaches up across three stories of the building. It was the first mausoleum constructed there, as it was the Great Fifth who built this marvellous complex. The 'Licentious Sixth' died on his way to China, escorted by Làtsang's treacherous Mongolians. His body was never sent back to Lhasa, so he has no mausoleum in the palace, but the next seven monarchs have. The chörten of the thirteenth Dalai Lama is also very big. For all the gold and other treasures which a priest-king during his life receives, as personal gifts from other rulers and from pious pilgrims, will be used to adorn his last resting place. So if a royal ruler has a long life, as had our thirteenth sovereign, the amount of gold and jewels will be considerable and a high stûpa can be built for his mummy."

"Where are the sepulchres of the first four Dalai Lamas?"

"The first has his mausoleum in the monastery of Tàshi-Lhünpo founded by himself near Shígatsé. About the earthly remains of the next three nothing is known.

"The Pànchen Lamas are embalmed as well. Their mummies have a magnificent stûpa each near Tàshi-Lhünpo, since during their life they were its abbots. The mummified body of an abbess of the monastery of "Sàmding," the 'Hill of Deep Meditation', situated on the shore of the scorpion-shaped lake of Yamdo, is treated in an altogether different way. Do you remember I told you she is the tülku of the goddess Palden Lha-mo, the Protectress of Buddhism? Well, her mummies are just kept inside a room of the monastery which is kept locked all the time. Once in her life such an abbess *has* to enter it all by herself to behold her former earthly sheaths. However, she is not allowed to enter there more than once! This female tülku, the only one in Tibet, comes in rank right after the Dalai Lama and the Pànchen Lama. She is called 'Dorje-Phag-mo' (the 'Diamond Sow' or 'Thunderbolt Sow'). The best-known story about her magic is the following: When in 1717 a band of Tartars invaded Tibet, where they went marauding and pillaging all monasteries, they also came to

Sàmding and demanded entrance. When they met with a refusal they forced the gate open and saw in the courtyard . . . a gigantic growling sow who seemed to command a group of angry pigs of both sexes! Terrified, the robbers retreated as they were Moslims by whom pigs are considered impure animals! Moreover, they 'understood' that the "Diamond Sow" had changed herself into a real sow and that the pigs were the inmates of her monastic community!

"The tülku-abbesses of Sàmding have always been held in high esteem by the Tibetan population. In their monastery, monks of all sects live peacefully together. There is also a separate part for nuns. An exceedingly severe discipline obtains, and high morals.

"But let us return to our starting-point: What will happen in Tibet with somebody who has died? We conceive, Mem-sahib, of the human body as consisting of four elements: earth, water, fire, and air. The body of a deceased man or woman must be returned to one of these elements. To give it back to the earth, i.e., to bury it, is a very great exception in the Land-of-the-Snow, because even in summer the soil is frozen stiff a foot below the surface, so that it is practically impossible to dig a grave. Nor is giving it back to the water often done. Sometimes bodies sewn in a yak skin are thrown into a river, mostly of children or of those who died from a contagious disease (usually smallpox, which takes many victims in our country). The fish will eat them and that is the reason why we never eat fish. To our mind, they are impure. We also loathe drinking river water as it is. Since we prefer drinking tea anyway, we will always boil the water for ten minutes at least. The third possibility: giving a body back to fire, to cremate it, is exceedingly costly for wood is very scarce in our homeland. So we only cremate *high* lamas. Their ashes are kept in 'chörtens' (relic-stúpas). Sometimes they are previously kneaded with earth into small rounds and then stamped with holy images. These are the so-called 'tsa-tsas' to be given to pilgrims as amulets. Near big monasteries, several of such ash-containing chörtens are found. Giving back a human sheath to the air, and such by way of the birds, is with us the most customary procedure. Moreover, for ordinary people it is the only possibility. For this purpose the 'Ragyá-pas' take the body to a special place outside the city or village, where they will hack it into pieces and feed it to the waiting vultures. Subsequently they will feed the pulverized bones mixed with tsampa to the waiting wild dogs. At the same time, this procedure symbolizes a man offering his earthly sheath 'as a last sacrifice' to serve as food for animals. This hacking-into-pieces affects the Westerner as gruesome, but please realize the alternative: If we were to leave the bodies in their

entirety in a field, they would not decompose in the near future because of our dry climate. For does not the meat of slaughtered animals remain fit for consumption for five years! So we have to get rid of the bodies one way or another, and in this manner there will be nothing left of them. *The conglomeration of primal matter forming during a short time (the span of man's earthly life) a sense-instrument (an earthly sheath) for his 'Unconscious Will' now will be redivided and given to other 'sense-instruments': of animals which take it as nourishment. No part of creation will ever get lost!* In the Land-of-the-Snow the consumers are birds and dogs, not worms, as in the West. However, in your countries the process is hidden from view; in ours it is not. But the principle is the same.

"In Tibet, which is more than any other part of the world oriented on things spiritual, the essence of the deceased one will never be left to its own devices after having withdrawn from matter. We lamas will do everything to avoid its going astray or even losing its way completely in the 'Bar-do,' as we call the place—or rather the condition—in which one finds oneself between-two earthly lives. We, being initiated in the knowledge of whatever can possibly befall us after having left the body, do not have to have a guide just before or after death, but a dying person who does not know anything about his condition in the hereafter has to be told what to do and what not to do as soon as he has shed his 'earthly garb.' That is why the relatives will send for us when death is approaching, to come and show him the way in the labyrinth ahead of him. We will whisper in his ear the words of the Tibetan "Book-of-the-Dead" when he is on the point of dying and right after, for even then our words can still reach him. "Oh Nobly-born, listen attentively, don't be absentminded," and we let him know what is awaiting him and how he should react thereon."

"Please, honored lama, do tell me about it too?"

"To explain these things is more in the line of the Gelúg-pa abbot. He is a great mystic, very clever in elucidating esoteric knowledge. However, I will disclose to you *how* a soul should leave the dying body. I said 'soul' because this seems to be the name Westerners are wont to give to it, but we have a different term, to wit 'the Consciousness' or 'the Knower,' which is that part to which penetrates all one becomes aware of. Is it clear to you what I intend to convey?"

"Certainly, honored lama, for also in the Bhàgavad-Gíta, the holy book of the Hindu religion, 'the Knower' is described—'the Knower-of-the-Field' it is called there—and by 'the Field' is meant its

earthly sheath with all the attributes. Amongst these are the intellect, the mind, the ego, the essence (*not* the sense!) of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and feeling, besides joy and sorrow, hate, desire, and being able to make decisions. . . . This enumeration is, of course, not complete, but in any case I understand what is meant by 'the Knower.' " NOTE: The complete exposition is given in *A Year with the Yogis* by the same author.

"All right, when death is approaching this Knower, this consciousness-principle—according to us—is not allowed to leave the earthly sheath while it is asleep or unconscious, not even when a person is sinking away in a semiconscious state. Passing away is usually characterized by three phases: first an icy cold will penetrate each part of us, then the senses stop functioning, and finally we feel how all aggregates which constitute our body are disintegrating. That moment a dying man has to try with all his might and bring about the withdrawal of the Knower from him at a definite spot: through a minute aperture in the skull, called the 'Aperture-of-Brahma' (Sanskrit: 'Brahmarándhra'). It is to be found in the crown of the head between the two 'parietal bones,' in line with the spinal marrow (when a person keeps himself quite straight)."

"This seems exceedingly difficult to me, honored lama! How much more agreeable it must be in such an awful moment to surrender oneself completely to the inevitable and allow one's consciousness to sink into oblivion!"

"When in these circumstances one is losing one's consciousness, the Knower will withdraw from his body through one of its 'gates' (A body is sometimes referred to as "a house with nine gates" eyes, ears, nostrils, mouth, anus and urethra) This fact will have many disagreeable results, amongst others, prolonged wandering about in the 'Bar-do.' Knowing what is awaiting us, we lamas ourselves when death comes will see to it that our Knower withdraws through the Brahmarándhra, but the majority of dying persons are not able or willing to muster up the necessary force to achieve this. So we will bring about a correct withdrawal of the Knower for those who are not able to do so themselves, and such by the so-called 'Pho-a-rite.'

"It takes a very long training to enable a lama to perform it, to become a 'Pho-bo.' The relatives will call in his assistance when somebody is about to die and they leave the two to themselves. To start with, the Pho-bo will concentrate all his psychic forces on the patient until he has identified himself with him. Subsequently he will several times utter (push forth) a strange, penetrating cry which seems to come with difficulty and force from the nether part of his

body: 'Hik'! After this he adds a softer 'Phat.' This 'Hik' which he has called out on behalf of the other makes the Knower (his consciousness-principle) ascend gradually from a deeper part of his body to the top of his skull. Besides, it causes a minute aperture there, or in other words: it opens the Brahmarándhra. 'Phat' serves to make the Knower leave the body through it. Both 'Hik' and 'Phat' are mantras in the original sense of the word: They cause ether vibrations to bring about certain effects on mind and matter. The rising of the Knower is of course related to the Indian doctrine of Kundalíni, the 'fiery serpent' traveling upwards from the coccyx to the 'seventh cakra' underneath the skull, to the golden thousand-petalled lotus in whose heart the Brahmarándhra is to be found. In these things you have been instructed, have you not, Mem-sahib?"

"Yes, honored lama. Besides, the abbot of the Gelúg-pa monastery has recently told me about them as well. The Kundalíni-serpent is a symbolic term for the cosmic creative power. Since this is present in macrocosm, it is present in everybody as well—for man is a microcosm. However, with most people this fiery power is latent. It is 'dormant' with those who as yet have not attained the spiritual development, required to cause the Kundalíni to "awaken" in the nethermost cakra. From there it has to travel upwards through the main "nadi" (channel of power in one's etheric body), called the "Sushúmna," passing the other cakras unto its very end at the crown of one's head, where the Brahmarándhra is in the heart of the highest, seventh cakra, the so called thousand-petalled golden lotus. (Lotus is the symbolic name for a whirling-center to spread the power of Kundalíni all through the human body)."

The lama vendor nodded his head and continued: "As soon as the Knower by the Pho-a-rite has left the body in the correct way the Pho-bo will pull a few hairs from the upper part of the skull as if the aperture had come into being by this symbolic action. You should realize that it is not important whether the person in question has already died at the Pho-bo's arrival or no. For when the patient may not consciously have been able to let the Knower withdraw from the Brahmarándhra at his final heartbeat, his 'clinical' death, it will still be present for some time in the body. According to us, 'real' death has not actually set in until the Knower and its earthly sheath have separated.

"Only then the lama will start reading aloud the Bardo-Thödol.

"When the Pho-a-rite is finished, at the end of about an hour, the last remains will be tied in the embryonic posture, symbolizing that *the deceased is now being 'born' in the Bardo. We Tibetans think it quite wrong to try, as Western physicians do, and prolong the life of a person who is*

about to die. We consider it as an attempt at abortion of birth in the hereafter.

"I would impress on your mind that the Knower (in Tibetan called 'Namshé') is taking along a 'companion' on his way through the Bardo, whether he wants to or not. This is the etheric 'double' of the deceased one. The etheric (or astral) body (in Tibetan called 'jalus') does not have an eternal existence, but all the same it has a much longer span of life than the physical body of man. It feels a continual, burning desire to experience all over again the same feelings it has known in its life on earth. However, as it has no physical organs at its disposal, this desire will remain unsatisfied; which enormously obstructs the 'liberation' of the Knower.

"But let us return to the earthly remains. Tied up in embryonic posture and enveloped in a white cloth, they will after some days be taken by the 'Ragyá-pas' (those who dispose of the dead) to the place where they will be hacked to pieces. On this last journey one end of a scarf is fastened to the body while a lama accompanying it 'as a guide' holds the other in his hand. In the meantime he blows on a 'kang-ling' (a human-thigh-bone-flute) and rhythmically moves a 'dámaru' (a double drum back and forth. In the house of mourning, some other lamas will endlessly repeat the Book-of-the-Dead for forty-nine days, which is the time the deceased will spend in the first stage of the Bardo, called the 'Chikhai-Bardo.'

"Yet another few words about 'Hik' and 'Phat.' A lama training himself in the correct way of uttering these magic sounds, under the guidance of an expert, that is, has above all to take care never to pronounce them in combination with each other. For in that case they would make his own Knower leave his body, in other words: cause his death. This will not happen if he pronounces them in the presence of a dying person since he will previously have identified himself with that man, as I told you. When a lama has trained this 'Hik' for a considerable time a small opening in the upper part of his skull will then have come about. Sometimes its measurement is such that a tiny piece of straw, inserted in it, can stand upright.

"It does happen occasionally, Mem-sahib, that somebody purposely pronounces 'Hik' and 'Phat' for himself, with which he is committing suicide. When for instance the 'holy' hero Késar, the king of Ling, (who indeed was a Celestial Being on earth), after having fulfilled his task, departed from our planet together with his friends, they did so on a mountaintop by pronouncing 'Hik' and 'Phat' in unison. That very moment they were reborn in the Paradise they had come from."

44: The Doll of Human Skin

A tülku of the Nyingma-pa sect who had settled in our hamlet came to visit my Tibetan father once in a while. Quite by chance I could one day render him a service. Afterwards he asked me to come and see him in the small room he had rented in one of pappá's houses on the square. The front door was open. I walked through a narrow, murky corridor, climbed a rickety ladder, and reached a landing of half-rotten boards where it was pitch dark. The lama had told me the farthest door led to his abode. Carefully groping my way along the walls, I found it, knocked, and entered. It was a very small apartment, of course with an improvised altar in one of the corners. In another, the few possessions of the inhabitant were piled up. On the wall behind the place where he was sitting hung his "dámaru," his double drum. This instrument is always entwined by its own colorful satin "tail" adorned with silver amulets, and the whole is packed in its special cloth cover, because *any ritual object, for instance a temple vase ("búm-pa") or an instrument for temple music, when not in use, is kept in its own "garb."*

As I was seated on a flat mattress on the floor opposite to the tülku, my eye fell on the somewhat lumpy parcel of the dámaru, and to my boundless astonishment I saw a little brown foot hanging out of it! I jumped up to examine it at close quarters. It was made of leather and padded, the tiny toes being separately sewn on with extremely fine stitches. The leg to which it belonged hung down flat and limp.

"Oh please, let me see the whole of it?" I begged.

"No, no," my host cried in a frightened voice, and hurriedly he put the curious foot back into the garb of the dámaru. I never let myself be put off easily, and in the end, somewhat shy but full of pride—and apparently full of affection as well—the lama unwrapped a limp doll about three feet long from its circular hiding place. The padded little hands competed in genuineness with the feet. The stuffed

head hanging at the end of the limp body was proportionally on the small side. The face had more or less the triangular form so peculiar to many Tibetans. The eyes were beads, the nose, separately sewn on as well, protruded a bit. The mouth was open and behind the lips one saw the teeth . . . the indentations of a cowrie shell. From the tiny ears hung earrings made of shell. The back of the head was covered with the skin of some kind of animal, the closely planted hair of which gave it a realistic look. By this time I had become very keen to know more about the doll. I held it respectfully in my arms and said in my faulty Tibetan, "Sho Rimpoche, sho Gyá-Lama khang." One always addresses a tülku with "Precious Jewel" and a "Gyá-Lama," or Hundred-Lama, means a high lama. Where my Tibetan father was the priest-officiate of Bodhnâth, he was always referred to in this way when one spoke of him reverently.

It was evident my host did not feel like it at all. But carefully carrying his valued possession I opened the door and, not wanting to leave it for a single moment out of his eyes, he followed me reluctantly to the house-with-the-lions.

There I begged pappa to ask the tülku for information about the doll, after which they talked for a long time. Finally the Chinya lama told me the following: The little leather being—somehow the thing looked as if it were alive!—was made of human skin, as a matter of fact of that having belonged to a boy who had died in his eighth year. It was destined to play a role in a rite for the Tibetan Mahâ Kâla, the "Big Black One," a demonic form of the Hindu god Çiva whom many magi, by strange rites, try and make into their personal servant, so he will perform all kinds of "miracles" for them. "Would I be allowed to buy the doll?" I asked, thinking of the anthropological museums in Holland that had asked me to acquire some interesting objects from the Land-of-the-Snow for their collection, according to my own ideas. Pappa translated my request.

The lama pressed his cherished make-believe-boy against his chest, almost passionately. His face got a strange expression. Was it love? Was it hate? Was it both? All of a sudden he grasped the thing by its little feet and swung the limp body over his shoulder. "No," he said curtly. "Not for sale! He has for many generations been in the possession of my family." Then he greeted and left the house.

A few days passed. Again and again my thoughts wandered back to the doll made of human skin, wrapped around the dámaru hanging on the wall of the tülku's abode. The Nyingma-pas to which its proprietor belonged—I reflected—was the most ancient Buddhist sect of Tibet. The members, formerly adherents of the Bon-religion who

used to favor magic above all things, had stuck tenaciously to all the teachings of the great magician Padma-Sambháva and such practically without any changes, the more so since this learned preacher had accepted many "converted" Bon-gods into his pantheon together with their own specific rites (after of course having "Buddhified" them more or less). The Bon-pas had been accustomed to bring "red" offerings, that is they had ritually slaughtered animals as offerings for their services and in special cases even human beings. These always had to be of the male sex and preferably of a special age. But the "Precious Guru" had enjoined the people henceforward to bring only "white," i.e., bloodless, offerings. The converted ones obeyed, of course. But just the same they wanted to stick to their former traditions as much as possible, especially where magic rites to the "converted" Bon-gods were concerned. The boy whose skin had served for making the symbol of the forbidden offering had died when he was eight, a "holy" age (at which the Tibetans also start the monastic education of their sons). Everything tallied exactly: *the doll took the place of the human being formerly to be sacrificed at the magic rites.*

In any case, I wanted to get to know something more about it. Such kinds of strange rites will never take place, of course, in a temple. So it was clear the tülku perpetrated magic! But the ones who do this have sworn an oath of secrecy as to the essentials of their special knowledge. This tallied, too: The possessor of the doll never had talked about it to the Chinya lama although he often visited him. He had obviously disliked showing the ritual object to the priest and myself, once we knew about it.

So I paid the Nyingma-pa Tülku another visit. Without bargaining I bought a little statue from him, representing Padma Sambháva with his two wives. When he was in a very good mood because of this, I asked him what was the prescribed mūdra (symbolic position of the hands) when holding the rite for Mahâ-Kâla. "That I cannot show you without some preparations," he told me. With solemn mysteriousness he unwrapped from an old cloth a high, red cap with long slips lined with brocade, hanging down to his waist. From another cloth he produced a rectangular yellow silk prayer mantle. It consisted of the prescribed large number of separate pieces sewn together, to remind the wearer of the torn clothes of the bhikshus of the Buddha. At the top—in the middle—this prayer mantle was embroidered magnificently with stylistic flowers. Now the tülku sat down in the lotus posture, arrayed in cap and mantle. With his left hand he reached for his kang-ling, his human thigh bone flute, and with his right hand he grasped the remainder of the eight-year-old-boy by its feet, so its

head and arms hung limply downwards. At the same moment the face of this strange monk assumed a forbidding look: His change was such that he reminded me of the devils the Tibetan artists used to paint with such a horrible realism on their t'hangkas and temple walls. In his slanting eyes, now wide open and nearly round, the eyeballs rolled with a malicious expression from one side to the other. His mouth, of which the upper- and under-lips, drawn away, uncovered all his teeth, was deformed by a satanic grin! His smooth front suddenly showed deep wrinkles and the muscles of his neck were swollen to red cords! It was as if this man, otherwise so quiet and friendly, had undergone a general metamorphosis. . . .

At once I took out my sketchbook which I always carried with me (for one never knows what people or things of interest may be seen unexpectedly) and I tried to record this weird sight as quickly as possible. But I did not have much time, because here in his poor room without the appropriate exciting music and without the scent of incense—and perhaps of other fumes produced by burning special herbs—the lama could not continue very long being a devil. . . . Afterwards he seemed to be quite exhausted. But anyway for a few moments had been lifted a slip of the veil hiding the secret magic rites of ancient Tibet!

From that day I visited my new friend several times in his small abode, and once in a while he repeated his creepy metamorphosis for me, so I could make more sketches. Alas, he never let himself be persuaded to be photographed in his full pontifical robes together with his human-skin doll, which would have been of great interest to anthropology.

Meanwhile I had also become an almost daily visitor of the Yellowcap temple, where I could count on a cordial reception from my monk-friends. They gradually came to consider me nearly as one of themselves. The appellation of Tasvir-Mem-sahib had given way to the more familiar Mem-sahib Li-li. We had even got to the stage—against all the rules, of course—that during the service I had my place on their own benches at the lower end of the row, it is true, but still as one-who-belongs. When salted butter tea was served during the long services (which I always attended while drawing) it went without saying I too received a wooden bowl filled with the delicious drink. One or the other would hand me some of his own tsampa. As is the custom, everybody used the remainder of his tea to make the roasted barleyflour form into a dough which in Tibet takes the place of bread. I myself was unable to follow their example: It requires a certain skill. While turning round the bowl with the left hand, one

has to put the index of the right hand in the tsampa and turn this in the opposite direction until it conglomerates into a ball, called "pa." In the preparation of it the bowl becomes quite dry and clean. One can put it away without washing.

Sometimes I drew the monks wearing their "daily" pointed caps. It covers the ears and with high lamas it ends in very long broad bands on either side of the face. But sometimes I would beg one of my friends to put on their picturesque ceremonial headgear which looks so impressive. It has more or less the form of a Roman helmet, but it is entirely made of wool woven in the way of a fine rug. Its "comb" consists of a thick woollen fringe. Such a cap is said to have been worn for the first time by Gedün-dub, (the principal disciple of the Reformer Tsong-Khà-pa) who is posthumously considered the first Dalai Lama.

When the trapas or lamas were posing for me, I asked them to hold one of their ritual objects in their hand. There was, for instance, the five-pointed arrow ("dádar") the dagger with three blades for chasing away demons ("purbú") and the temple vase containing the pure "water-of-long-life" ("búm-pa"). But better loved by all of them were the lama scepter and the temple bell, the "dorji" and the "dilbú," which they had to hold during the services in their right and their left hand, respectively. In all monasteries these latter two ritual objects are always referred to in one breath, as they belong together. They are "married." In every one of their symbolic senses they are each other's complement, as are man and wife. The dorji is the phallus, the dilbu is the uterus, for the scepter is long and slender and the bell is hollow. *The dorji-scepter is the finished balanced form. One might call this "double thunderbolt": the "form of forms," while the temple bell, (dilbu) (crowned with a single small dorji) is formlessness, as it stands for sound, (the vibrations of which yet will produce forms out of formless matter.)* The dorji is "the Means" or "the Method" ("Upáya"), and the dilbu is "the Wisdom" or "the deep Insight" ("Prajñâ"). This latter idea requires further explanation: *The woman has the wordless wisdom in herself but is not able to apply it, while the man does not have this wisdom, but knows the means to apply it. So the one can never achieve anything without the other, but united they can obtain the Highest. In this comparison sometimes "the Means" is supposed to be identical with "Compassion" ("Karúna"). The combination of Compassion and Wisdom also can lead to the Supreme Ideal.*

These two, dorji and dilbu, together form the (complete) Truth. For there are two kinds of truth: the Phenomenal truth, such as it holds good in our (Phenomenal) World, and the Absolute or Transcendental Truth, not

bound to time or space. In the Mahâyâna-philosophy the Phenomenal truth is represented by the dorji, the male principle, and the Transcendental Truth by the dilbu, the female principle. But this exposition does not exhaust the symbolic significance of the dorji and the dilbu at all!

As stated before, the male-female principle also applies to the gods who symbolize the various cosmic forces. The static aspect of these forces is represented as male—as a god—and the dynamic aspect, emanated from it, as female—as a goddess. The “goddess” or “Çakti” belonging to a god is nothing but his own energy or creative power. So it is this way in Tibet: non-activity is considered male and activity female.

In the whole universe, a static cosmic force (a god) and a dynamic cosmic force (a goddess) can only reach the supreme when united. Now in Tibetan temples this union of god and goddess is always depicted as a carnal embrace. These representations are generally viewed by Westerners in quite a wrong way: as something sexual, aiming at the stimulation of the senses of the spectator! However, nothing is further from its purpose: The most tender (the closest) embrace, the “yab-yum” or the “father-mother posture” is for that very reason the symbol of the deepest and most beautiful mysticism, the cooperation of the nonactive and the active cosmic components. Intimately clasped in each others arms yab and yum form a unity, for multiplicity does not exist. Such is a delusion of ignorant man who takes Mâyâ (the Phenomenal World) for a reality.

The Chinese depict the male and the female principle, dominating the whole of creation, as “Yang” and “Yin,” together forming a circle.

While I sat drawing the monks during their service, they always sang superb litanies, reminding one of Gregorian chants. I never got tired of listening to them: it sounded heavenly beautiful.

Because of the insufficient light in the temple it was impossible to work out the various portraits at the place where I made them. Mostly I did this the next day at home. After the incident with “my own room” pappâ had connived at my drawing for some time in a corner of the turquoise-colored room: but only very early in the morning. I used to sit there so quietly on the floor I did not attract any more attention than a piece of furniture. So my Tibetan father often forgot my presence and banished me to the drafty gallery much later than he had originally intended to.

Owing to this fact something happened one day by which a secret was solved that had intrigued me for quite some time! Not long after the first sunrays had reached the Valley of Nepal, a merchant arrived to offer the China lama something packed in a very small box. I could not see what it was. Both men took it several times into

their hands, looked at it in the full light near the window, and smelled at it. The bargaining that followed lasted quite some time. At last the priest paid a visit to the strongbox in his adjoining bedroom and returned with a considerable pile of banknotes. The merchant opened a great bundle he had with him and many small parcels changed hands.

When he had gone I asked (from my corner) "Pappa, what did you buy?" It was obvious the priest was startled when hearing my voice.

"Medicines, daughter."

"I lived for one year in China, pappa, and I know the smell of opium only too well!"

"Opium is medicine for the opium smoker, daughter Lili! When he does not get it, he dies. So I perform a meritorious act in always having a substantial quantity in my house."

"If I understand you well, you traffic in opium?" I inquired quasi-stupidly.

"Sometimes you have not a friendly way of expressing yourself, daughter."

I was silent, but after a while I could not help asking, "But then, why were you so indignant, pappa, that the red-dressed yogi used to come here to get his opium?"

"Because he never paid of course!" said the priest, and at the recollection his face, usually so friendly, got an evil expression.

"Yes," I thought, "it is this way: All of us sometimes change into devils, but mostly we are not conscious of it ourselves, like the Nyingma-pa lama, trained in magic rituals, with his doll."

45: Man or Woman?

However strange it may sound, I often found it difficult—like all Westerners—to distinguish the Tibetans as to their sex. The clothes of the nomads are often the same for men and women, and as these are mostly quilted or lined with sheepskin they conceal the forms of the body. So one has to judge by what is not covered. Men and women wear their hair parted in the middle with two plaits on their back in which they fasten colored tassels, and men sometimes wear necklaces just as well as women. The faces of elderly women are often bony, and their complexion is rather darkish because from their youth they are exposed to the sun, which is quite strong on the Tibetan heights. Their skin is coarsened because the violent winds will blow the sharp desert-sand against it. On account of these things, old women sometimes look exactly like old men. On the other hand, the faces of young men have such soft curves and their skin is so delicate they sometimes look exactly like young women! The hair of boys and girls is often cut very short till they are twelve, so they, too, are difficult to distinguish from each other. The nuns whose hair is shorn every month and who are dressed like the monks, in their turn cause confusion. When they get older it may be one supposes it is an elderly lama one is addressing, until the voice reveals it is a nun.

Whereas we think it quite understandable of ourselves to make a mistake now and then, we think it strange that the Tibetans should have the same difficulty in determining the sex of us, Westerners. The haircut is not conclusive for our sex anymore, nor is the wearing of long pairs of trousers.

Once a woman of central Tibet was posing for me. She had come together with her husband, who was standing behind me (a thing detested by every painter) to make comments to his better half on each item I drew on my paper. My young nephew and friend Mani sat some distance away on the gallery to do his schoolwork, but most of the time he just looked dreamily in front of him. Afterwards he could

repeat word for word the conversation that the couple had carried on.

"The Westerner is still drawing your face," said the man. "A long time he needs for it too, but he has just finished your eyes. It is quite funny: they are staring into mine! Yes, now your nose is ready also. It looks exactly as if it protrudes from the paper. Your plaits are made too thick. He probably cannot see very well. Now he has done your mouth with red lips. He has started on your necklace: not a single bead is omitted, but they are so vague. Oh no, at present they are being filled in with color. However, the brown one is too big and the yellow one too small. I think the eyes of the Westerner must be ill." He bent forward to have a still closer look at the drawing, which frightened me a bit lest something out of his hair would jump across and nestle in mine.

"What would this person be?" my model asked her husband. "A man or a woman?"

"A man definitely, but I do not think he is a lama of the West (a Roman Catholic father), although he wears a skirt."

"Perhaps a woman after all?" mused his wife.

"Without an apron?" he asked in astonishment.

"Well, it might just be possible, but on the other hand she does not wear any amber in her hair, not even silver rosettes! So she must be a man after all, a terribly poor one."

"No doubt about that", the husband agreed. "His necklace is made of small white stones, very cheap, of course, not a single turquoise or coral strung with them! And no felt boots, but bare legs. His poverty is evident!"

"But the people in the tent next to ours declare they are not bare legs at all! They are covered with a thin kind of cloth which is not fastened to the nether part of his low leather boots. However, I don't believe such things, although their child insists she knows for sure, as she has been allowed to stroke that thin cloth. Yes, I think you are right: it must be a man. No woman would go about dressed so strangely."

It was about this time I got to know Pàrtyi, the wife of the Red-cap lama who had rented pappa's temporary garage with its earthen floor by way of a house. Pàrtyi was some thirty years old and had no children of her own. But she had adopted a little boy. Apart from this family, some unmarried men also lived in the garage. In one of the corners the inhabitants had fixed a small altar, in another an improvised kitchen. Some goatskins and self-woven sacks formed the rest of the furniture. The lama was not much to look at but quite good-natured. His wife, though not beautiful, was a very decorative person

with her red blouse and her black, obliquely draped coat. She wore many necklaces of the kind nomads string from various semiprecious stones and other stones which are just pleasant to look at. The women who wear them collect the beads one by one in the course of their life, whenever an opportunity presents itself. With inimitable taste they choose the right place in the necklace for each new acquisition where it will show to its best advantage. Pàrtyi had these artistic ornaments in common with the others, but they did not have her charming smile, which was always equally radiant! The first time she was going to pose for me it was raining cats and dogs so I could not work in our open gallery. A distant cousin of the China lama whose wife happened to stay with her mother in the country, put his kitchen at my disposal for the day. It was a small room built entirely with clay and awfully drafty. To get all the light I seated myself near the only big hole in the wall serving as a window. The balcony of the house nextdoor was situated exactly behind and it stands to reason that before long many Tibetans had gathered there—in the pouring rain—to have a good view of my drawingboard. Such unexpected fun: now they could at their ease criticize every line I put on my paper in the distant cousin's kitchen! At the top of their voices at that! Pàrtyi, who was sitting opposite me, consequently looked right into their faces and they into hers. Her smile became more radiant than ever because she was aware of being the center of interest.

From that day on, I bought some eggs for her once in a while, as she was so poor. I also gave her the fat-bellied tormas of cooked rice which the Yellowcap monks slipped surreptitiously into my bag when I had been drawing in their temple. These friends of mine were simply touching in their generosity.

But radiantly smiling Pàrtyi was touching too. One morning in the square she came up to me and, after she and her husband had taken my hand in both their hands and put their cheeks against it in childlike wordless expression of sympathy, my erstwhile model said to me with an air of joyousness, "Sho àji?" (Come, older sister). With gentle force she made me follow her to a narrow street of our hamlet where a man of the Tàmang tribe used to sell minute buns baked in oil. Poor as she was, my friend unwrapped a small coin from a piece of cloth, bought a bun, and handed it to me. "For you, àji! *Nowadays each of us is always hungry!*" She did not want to be backward in giving a useful present!

With my Tibetan sister Darling I also was great friends. I loved to listen to her prattle, for she did not realize herself how funny were the stories she told. Once pappà sent me to her house to tell mummy

Sûrya that her dark Gurkha cousin, who was at the head of the Nepalese police force, would come to visit us that evening. I went to deliver the message, but Darling said "Mummy is not at home, sister Lili. I say, sister, do you know where my mummy went?? To my auntie, the youngest sister of pappa, because that poor soul is a nun and just now she lost her only son, thirty-six years old, such a loss after she has spent so much money for his recovery! What a pity isn't it? You should know, sister, that when my auntie was young she was by far the most beautiful woman of Nepal, her skin was quite pale and her face was completely round, just lovely! Well, she married an 'A-Rana,' a man belonging to the very highest nobility of our country. Moreover, he was extremely rich. He just had a marvellous palace! Really: it was not true at all she came to live in that palace as a maid-servant! Oh no, he just got to know her accidentally and married her, but he was already married to a sister of king Tribhuvána, the one who is always referred to as "Triby," the father of our present king Mahendra. That sister of Triby was an awfully plain-looking person and so vile! She said to her husband, the A-Rana, 'If you let that woman with her son live here in the palace,' no, I make a mistake, she said, "If you marry that incredibly beautiful woman" (of course the son was born much later), "well, then I will just poison her." In that case you will kill us together" answered the A-Rana, "because every bite of food she gets, I will put into my mouth first!" You must know, sister, they just were inseparable. The A-Rana in those times always went away on long trips to India, all by himself. Of course in Nepal too he had many sweethearts—you know what men are—but my auntie was the only one he really loved. His wife, the princess, pierced a few of his lady-loves with a sword. My auntie did not think it quite nice, so she left the palace and went to stay with her mummy. It was not her own mummy but a later wife of her pappa, a thoroughly evil creature! Auntie put all her jewels which she had received from the A-Rana, to a value of hundreds of thousands of rupees, into a drawer, and with them she put all the jewels of her sister. That sister of hers was so terribly rich that she presented one of her servants—just because she liked him—with fields of a value of eight thousand rupees. But such a gift did not make any difference to her wealth. I only want you to know: her sister had wonderful jewels too. And then that 'little mummy' of hers never wanted to return the key of that drawer, such a perfidious person she was! So auntie got married to a man who was much younger than she herself: a great landed proprietor, who was even richer than the A-Rana and so marvellously handsome that, when later on he became ill and looked his

most-ugliest, everybody said, 'I never saw such a magnificent fellow in all my life!' Only, he had long hair covering his body all over! Well, then my auntie became a nun, because that man died. And when her son was sixteen years old his pappa—the A-Rana—did not want to give him anything, except a few hundred thousand rupees, of course, but in reality he had a right to millions! So my auntie wanted to bring a lawsuit against him, but people said 'You shouldn't do such a thing.' Because the youngest brother of that A-Rana—also with a palace of his own—loved her son so much that he paid for all his food and all his clothes. Also he gave him daily one hundred rupees. But the son of my auntie quarreled with him and then he stopped being generous. However, that did not matter as my auntie's son himself was so rich (didn't I tell you?), so enormously rich: he never stopped eating during the whole day. He ate daily four whole chickens and many pounds of mutton! Moreover, daily he got drunk too! He never wanted to marry, although he had many sweethearts, that cousin of mine. But one of them was so ugly, so monstrous, that my auntie did not want to receive her in her house, as you will understand! And every day her son asked her for money: five thousand rupees or so, because he did not possess anything! She just got fed up with giving him daily such a big sum. So the brother of her second husband said to her 'Give all your money and all your land to me, because after all you are a nun. And from now on I myself will be a monk,' as three of his wives had died anyway. 'Then the two of us together will give away everything we possess!' That is what my auntie did, but her brother-in-law never became a monk—how false-hearted isn't it?—and so she wanted to bring a lawsuit against him, for she herself did not own anything any longer! But her son got ill. Every day two or three different doctors came to visit him for six months. That made her spend a fortune! And finally, exactly at the moment of his recovery, he suddenly died! Well, to that auntie of mine my mummy has gone, to call on her."

"So the Gurkha-police cousin will come and pay us a visit this evening, Darling. Please don't forget to tell your mummy."

46: The Tibetan Book-of-the-Dead

"This is positively the very last time I shall allow you an interview," said the abbot of the Yellowcap monastery. All the same he looked more kindly at me than ever before. It seemed that my tenacity inspired him with vexation as well as sympathy, as far as he was still able to have any of these feelings, that is. "So you want me to tell you about the Bardo-Thödol, about the Tibetan Book-of-the-Dead," he stated.

"But I did not say so, Rimpoche?" I asked in astonishment.

"Do you think that I am ignorant of your conversations with other lamas?"

"No, Rimpoche."

"Then do not let us waste any more time. The Bardo-Thödol does not form part of the original teachings of the Buddha. The generally accepted theory is that it is a compilation of various sources by the great mystic Pädma-Sambháva. In any case, it was he who has introduced it into Tibet. That it contains certain elements existing already in Bon-mysticism, formerly adhered to in our country, is possible.

"Bar-do, as you know of course, signifies the condition of man in *between-two* lives on earth. The esoteric doctrine about Bardo is based on the sacred number of seven. For seven times seven days after death mystic appearances will come to the deceased in the form of Lights, reaching forth their rays, as it were, towards him in order to draw him unto themselves. Understanding their significance and surrendering himself to one of them without fear, he will be admitted into the heart of such a Light and by this act he obtains Buddhahood instantly. This doctrine is the *"Mystic Direct Path to the Great Liberation after Death,"* merely by hearing. For as soon as the Knower of a person has left the body by way of the Brahmarañdhra, a lama will start reading to him the Bardo-Thödol and subsequently many other lamas will recite the book ever anew in the house of the dead man, all through the next forty-nine days. In this way, by hearing, the Knower will learn everything about the Direct Path.

“As spiritual guides, the lamas explain to him all things which day after day he will see before him in the Bardo. They urge him to perform certain things and refrain from others, telling him why. When the Knower by surrendering himself to one of the right Lights (and so by having himself admitted into its heart) will indeed have obtained Buddhahood—and therewith Nirvâna—(then) all his remaining karma (good and bad) is annihilated: He does not need ‘to atone’ for it nor will he be ‘rewarded’ for it (if one wants to use such infantile expressions), for he will not return to earth anymore. Now you will of course think, Mem-sahib, ‘this is quite an easy solution! It does not matter at all what kind of life such a Knower has led so far. If only he will surrender himself after death to a true Light he will obtain Buddhahood without any difficulty and thereby be released at once from all further sorrowful lives on earth!’ But it is not as simple as all that! A Knower will be detained from his good intentions to do this by his desires which, in order to be fulfilled, require an existence-in-Samsâra. ‘Samsâra’—you know, don’t you—is the opposite of Nirvâna. It is the endless cyclic course of reincarnation in the World-of-Phenomena. Although the Knower may realize that he will suffer there ever anew, he will only very, very rarely be capable of giving up his craving for transitory joys and refrain from seizing upon the chances offered to him in the Bardo by which he would be liberated once and for all from suffering to enter a condition of complete harmony. When seeing the Lights and Appearances, he will fear with a great fear. In panic he will want to flee from them and by turning away he will at every next apparition lose his chance anew. As a rule the chance will only be seized by the yogis, who are spiritually very far advanced, having behind them many lives of good actions and prolonged training in detachment.

“Driven by their ardent, one-pointed desire for the Most-High, they will be able to surrender themselves completely to one of the Lights, so to be admitted into its heart, thus obtaining Buddhahood through hearing after death. However, also amongst “ordinary” people there may be one—who knows!—who, once the wonderful elucidating words of the Bardo-Thödol penetrate to his Knower after death, will be able to raise the devout courage to approach a shining Light and be received in its heart to attain thereby the “Great Liberation.” So this is one of the reasons why the Book-of-the-Dead is always read aloud. The other reason is of great importance to all who have died, since it is a warning. Simultaneously with the True Lights, other lights will appear. They have a fainter glow and are most alluring. But the Knower should not be tempted to entrust himself to them. These Will-of-the-wisps will lead him to other worlds, often to

regions of endless sorrow. In following them one may go astray in the Bardo for centuries on end. It may even take millennia before one stumbles on the right way out. So those who read aloud the Bardo-Thödol are warning the Knower explicitly not to follow the false lights. As long as one lacking the courage to surrender himself to the True Lights will in no case be led astray by the false rays, nothing worse can befall him than rebirth in the World-of-Phenomena. We lama-priests know the temptations awaiting us on the path of death. So nobody will read aloud the Book-of-the-Dead to us, and no lama will follow our body to the place where it is fed to the vultures and dogs as a last symbolic act of offering ourselves. . . .

“We divide the Bardo into three phases, the Chikhai-Bardo, the Chönyid-Bardo and the Sidpa-Bardo. At the moment when death is complete, that is when the heart has stopped beating *and* when the Knower has left the body (which sometimes takes place a little later), he will see a great shining Light before him. ‘Oh Nobly-born,’ the voice of the reading lama will sound in his ears, ‘this Light is shining for the Hail and Liberation of the six groups of Living-Beings! Surrender yourself to it and serve all these beings, for this is the glorious Primal-Light-of-Formlessness! At the same time you are hearing the powerful and entrancing Primal-Sound reverberating throughout the Universe. Recognize the Light: it is the radiance of your own True Nature. Recognize the Sound: it comes forth from your own deepest self! When at this moment you can make up your mind *to stay in this condition in which you see the Primal Light and hear the Primal Sound*, you will abide in it in all eternity.’ Alas, only very few Knowers are able to grasp this first chance coming to them immediately after their death. Yet for a second time, about half an hour later, this same Light will appear to the Knower, although slightly more faintly, and again most Knowers will let the chance go. As a rule, a deep unconsciousness will now descend on the Knower, for about three and a half days (half of the sacred number seven), and when he comes to he finds himself in the second phase of the Bardo: in the Chönyid-Bardo.

“At this point, Mem-sahib, I cannot proceed until we have talked about the five so-called Dhyâni-Buddhas or the Buddhas-of-Meditation. They are also called the Metaphysical or Celestial Buddhas. Do you know anything about them?”

“Very little, Rimpoche, I would appreciate your elucidation.”

“We Mahâyâna-Buddhists take it that the “Màndala” (magic circle, a symbol of the universe, serving as a means of concentration and meditation) of the Metaphysical Buddhas looks like this: In the center is the place of Vairocâna, in the east that of Akshóbhya, in the south

that of Ratnasambháva, in the west that of Amitábha and in the north that of Amogasiddhi. According to the Âdi-Buddha-school these five Metaphysical Buddhas have originated from the Âdi-Buddha or Primal Buddha, but this is outside the scope of our discourse. *Now we should on no account consider these "five Celestial Buddhas as Enlightened persons, once living on earth, although we represent them—symbolically—with a human body. They are in fact the five static Cosmic-Forces of the Universe. You know: a static force cannot create. That is why each Celestial Buddha has emanated a dynamic Cosmic-Force. We call their 'spiritual sons' the "five Celestial Bodhisattvas"; they can create.*

"The Celestial Bodhisattva Chên-resí, the protector of Tibet, has emanated from the Celestial Buddha Amitábha, 'He of the Eternal Light,' who has his seat in the Western Paradise. Your Western scholars maintain that this Buddha is closely related, if not identical with the sun god of other religions.

"In their original form we represent each of the Celestial Buddhas with his specific symbolic gesture of the hands ('mudhrá'), but without adornment. However, we also represent them in their 'Adorned Form': ornate with royal jewels. This way two of them change their name: Amitánha-of-the-Eternal-Light is now called Amitâyus-of-the-Eternal-Life, and Akshóbhya from the east now is called Vajrasattva. In their 'Adorned Form' the Celestial Buddhas are sometimes represented in carnal embrace with their 'yum,' their Celestial spouse or goddess. This is called the yab-yum posture, that is, the father-mother posture.

"Now I will call something else into your memory: we hold that our earthly body is constituted of four elements, earth, water, fire, and air. One can also express it as constituted of the solid, the liquid, the warm and the moving; or still differently as repulsion (the firm repels), cohesion (the liquid connects, attracts similar components), radiation, and vibration. Man has not got the element of ether within himself, for this element brings with it a super-mental consciousness and this is not present in our body. However, when evolved after countless millions of years into a higher kind of being, he will certainly be constituted of the element of ether as well and consequently be endowed with this super-consciousness.

"Each of the five Celestial Buddhas is connected with one of the elements. Vairocána (who has his seat in the center) with ether, Ratnasambháva with earth, Akshóbhya with water, Amitábha with fire and Amogasiddhi with air. Now let us trace the cosmic evolution of man. Originally our planet was like a ball of fire; we must have been beings-of-fire at the time. Then the air separated itself from the fiery

ball, surrounding it like a peel, and the beings of fire received a certain amount of the element of air in them. Out of the steaming air, water originated and fell down on the ball of fire, the beings of fire and air now received a share of the element of water in their adjusted phenomenal form. Water neutralized the activities of fire and this brought forth the element of earth, gradually shrouding everything with a firm crust. Herewith the planet of the earth had come into being in its present form and we earthly beings participate in the four elements.

“To this cosmic evolution of man each following element contributed its own aggregate. Out of the element of fire proceeded animal heat, and therewith the aggregate of ‘sentiment’ turned to evil, this will lead to attachment, passion, and lust. Out of the element of air proceeded the breath of life and therewith the aggregate of ‘will’; turned to evil this will lead to envy and jealousy. Out of the element of water proceeded the stream of life, blood, and therewith the aggregate of ‘consciousness’: turned to evil this will lead to anger and hate. Out of the element of earth proceeded the firm parts of the body and therewith the aggregate of ‘touch’; turned to evil this will lead to egotism.

47: The Bardo

“Let us return to the Knower awakening from the state of unconsciousness and finding himself in the second phase of the Bardo, in the Chönyid-Bardo. The voice of the lama, speaking to him from the earth, penetrates to his consciousness: ‘Oh Nobly-born, you are dead. Detach your thoughts from your earthly life which is now past. Detach yourself from your possessions and from those you loved. The body which you have at the present is completely similar to the sheath you have just cast off, but without its defects. It is an etheric ‘thought-body’ looking like the one you always wished for, originated from your thoughts and inclinations on earth. Realize that whatever you will see or hear from now onwards, Lights and Sounds, are merely reflections of your own thought formations. Have no fear, don’t fly from them! Recognize what you see. This is your first day in the Bardo.’

“The Knower will as it were raise his eyes to all that appears before him. In the center of the Universe the Celestial Buddha Vairocána is seated on his lion-throne. He symbolizes the Cause of all Causes: the whirling-into-forms of a complete universe from the formless primal matter, from Chaos, containing the Seed of Truth Absolute. The aggregate he once bestowed on man is the matter from which his sheath is constituted, physically and mentally, for both are encompassed in primal matter. Out of the heart of Vairocána shines forth a dazzlingly blue Light. ‘Don’t be faint-hearted, oh Nobly-born,’ thus does the voice of the lama penetrate to the Knower, ‘don’t be afraid because of the bad actions which you have once performed. Enter into the blue Light of Vairocána to obtain Buddhahood!’”

“But when the Knower fears all the same and takes to flight, the second day, in the East, the Celestial Buddha Akshóbhya will appear to him, seated on his elephant-throne. He symbolizes the element of water in its primal form and the aggregate he once bestowed on man is the principle of consciousness. Out of his heart shines forth a daz-

zlingly white Light. 'Don't be faint-hearted, oh Nobly-born, have no fear because of the hate and the anger, which you once felt. Enter into the white Light of Akshóbhya to obtain Buddhahood!'

"But when the Knower fears all the same and takes to flight, on the third day, in the South, the Celestial Buddha Ratnasambháva will appear to him, seated on his horse-throne. He symbolizes the element of earth in its primal form and the aggregate he once bestowed on man is touch. Out of his heart shines forth a dazzlingly yellow light. 'Don't be faint-hearted, oh Nobly-born, don't be afraid because of the egotism, which you once felt. Enter into the yellow Light of Ratnasambháva to obtain Buddhahood!'

"But when the Knower fears all the same and takes to flight, on the fourth day, in the West, the Celestial Buddha Amitábha will appear to him, seated on his peacock-throne. He symbolizes the element of fire in its primal form and the aggregate he once bestowed on man was feeling (through touch) Out of his heart shines forth a dazzlingly red Light. 'Don't be faint-hearted, oh Nobly-born, don't be afraid because of the passion and the lust, which you once felt! Enter into the red Light of Amitábha to obtain Buddhahood.'

"But when the Knower fears all the same and takes to flight, on the fifth day, in the North, the Celestial Buddha Amoghasiddhi will appear to him, seated on his harpy-throne. He symbolizes the element of air in its primal form, and the aggregate he once bestowed on man is will. Out of his heart shines forth a dazzlingly green Light. 'Don't be faint-hearted, oh Nobly-born, don't fear because of the envy and the jealousy which you once felt! Enter into the green Light of Amoghasiddhi to obtain Buddhahood!'

"But when the Knower fears all the same and takes to flight, the sixth day the Lights of all the Celestial Buddhas will appear to him at the same time. But again almost every Knower will turn away, also when on the seventh day the Lights of all the good deities join those of the Celestial Buddhas. Then for seven successive days the Lights of the angry deities will appear to him. In reality these deities are good too, but in certain cases they will show their forbidding aspect. By surrendering himself to them the Knower will also be able to obtain Buddhahood, although the series of Lights is getting ever less intensive. Finally he will get unconscious, for the transition from one phase of the Bardo to the next will always be accompanied by a condition of total unconsciousness.

"The Knower, awakened once more, will now see before him Sin-jé, the God-of-the-Dead, who asks him which sins he has committed on earth. 'Not a single one' each Knower will cry out indig-

nantly. But Sin-jé, who is a judge as well, will hold a mirror before him: In this all his actions, good and bad, will be reflected. The mirror is the symbol of his own memory which—just as all the other capacities of his etheric body—is faultless. For the good actions white pebbles will be laid down in a row and for the bad ones black pebbles. Thus Sin-jé's opinion will be formed.

“Subsequently strange hallucinations will come to the Knower. In the darkness of the night, whipped by snowstorms, he is pursued by savage animals and other monsters. These terrors are mere delusions brought about by his bad actions. On the other hand, it may be possible that strange hallucinations loom up before him which are agreeable and make him feel happy. These are mere delusions brought about by his good actions. But either kind will end in the course of time. The Knower becomes unconscious once more. On awakening he will find himself in the third phase of the Bardo: the Sidpa-Bardo.

“He is alone. ‘Alas,’ he thinks, ‘Now I am dead, what am I to do?’ He cannot do anything at all, for not having an earthly body anymore he is not able to perform any action. For the same reason he is not able to rest or sleep. There only remains one thing for him to do: thinking. Thoroughly—for he has unlimited time—he ponders on his whole life to the veriest details. He will consider each of his actions, his words, his thoughts, and his feelings in all their consequences. For now his mental insight in the effects of things is faultless.

“To put it rather unpoetically: the Knower ruminates on everything until its very end. Whatever he has once experienced actively he now experiences anew passively with perfect insight. Realizing where he should have acted differently and why, he decides to improve himself, if he should ever get another chance. How? By once more being allowed to get sheathed in an earthly body of coarse matter, so he will be able to act. However, such a thing is not possible. Time drags on in endless boredom, now everything is considered to its very end. Or will the Knower gradually obtain a kind of final contentedness? Who can possibly tell! But anyway, the final upshot of his thoughts will have reformed his character. It has led to a result. Just existing the Knower will at last become passive. His memories will start fading away. Slowly even his etheric body will dissolve. . . .

“Then, finally, the chance comes: the Knower sees possibilities of a variety of earthly lives before him, one of which might become his next. Each of them has a different fate, pertaining so to speak to a different womb, on the point of becoming pregnant. He makes his choice. As often as not the Knower desists from choosing the most

agreeable and comfortable life, preferring one which is best suited to his progress. Subsequently he will become unconscious for the last time and on coming to he is reincarnated, that is enclosed in a human egg which is fecundated, to be reborn on earth, either in a male or a female body, a plaything of Mâyâ once more. . . .

"You know, Mem-sahib, that the human body will pass through seven phases of development: from cell to man. Analogously a Knower in the Bardo will also pass through seven phases of development in the spiritual sphere. In the beginning his experiences will be more happy than at the end, for right after his birth-in-the-Bardo first his good impulses will surge up (reflecting themselves in lofty visions) and afterwards his less-good impulses (reflecting themselves in ever less-agreeable visions).

"In our earthly existence also first the good and then the less-good impulses will present themselves. For doesn't the child, and in a lesser measure the adolescent, let himself be led by his heart? However, as a man gets older his decisions will be formed by his mind more and more. He reasons with himself before taking a line of action. When the deeds originating from these latter considerations are good, they will (for all that) be of less value than the good deeds formerly performed spontaneously from the heart. That is why good actions of later life make man less happy than those of his youth! Right?" I nodded.

"What I have just told you are the Bardo-experiences of the layman. A trained yogi or lama can cause himself not to lose consciousness for a single moment after death. From the one phase of the Bardo to the next he will proceed fully conscious, and he will incarnate anew when he thinks best."

"I believe, Rimpoche, that all you have told me holds good for a Tibetan, but will we Westerners see all those Lights too? We would not understand a thing about them?"

"It seems to me, Mem-sahib, that you have not grasped the essence of my words. It does not matter in the least whether *the glorious visions, seen in the Bardo*, present themselves to you in the form of shining Lights or in another glorious form. They are none but the reflections of the untainted primal matter within yourself; call it your 'Divine Soul,' if you as a Westerner prefer this expression. The point is to recognize them, i.e., to realize that whatever one sees in the Bardo are but phenomena originating in one's own self, and not things actually existing. Just as whatever you see on earth is not self-existent either. We talked about this exhaustively last time, didn't we! So: what I tried to convey to you is that *the existence in the Bardo is a continuation of the existence on earth, only in a somewhat modified form. Existence without a sheath of*

coarse matter and existence in a sheath of coarse matter alternate regularly, to all eternity but in essence they are equal, for both are 'karmic' forms of existence. In other words: both are enacted in 'Samsâra,' that is, the World-of-Phenomena. That is the reason why the Knower, the Consciousness to whom everything penetrates, will be able to obtain Buddhahood just as well in the Bardo as on earth, for what is Buddhahood after all but the realization of the unreality of what one thinks one sees!

"I might try and elucidate this in a different way as well: The existence in the Bardo is a prolonged dream-existence enacting itself as it were in the fourth dimension. However, in every dream the visions or illusions cannot but be the results of the mental attitude of the dreamer, surging upwards from one's own deepest consciousness.

"I myself can only tell you what we Mahâyana-Buddhists will see in the Bardo, What kind of things these are is absolutely irrelevant in my explanation. In the way any man has been taught, in that way he believes and in that way he sees the appearances in the Bardo. The seeds planted in the consciousness of a child will sprout and eventually bear fruit. Once they grow up they will always influence his spiritual life. It does not matter at all to which religion these seeds belong. Each religion can produce a deep spiritual life. This will cause the best part of a man to flourish.

"In the Bardo the spiritual life of the Knower will express itself in visions related to his own religion. That which one experiences after death is a purely psychological problem, depending on one's earthly personality and aspirations. A materialist will have visions which are negative and empty. A pious man will have visions of infinite beauty. Did my answer make you contented; was it clear enough for you to understand everything?"

"Yes, thank you, Rimpoche. I am beginning to see the deeper significance of the Book-of-the-Dead. I am very grateful to you. But I have yet another question?"

"You always have one more question, Mem-sahib, but this one must be the very last I shall answer, I am afraid. I am pressed for time."

"I am anxious to seize every chance to learn something about religion! I would love to know the symbolic significance of the two dorji scepters always represented crosswise?"

"The two crosswise dorji scepters symbolize our cosmogony, the origin of the cosmos. The place where they cross represents the mystic mount Méru (or mount Rírab), the pivot round which the whole universe has come into being, in a mystic sense, that is. The doctrine tells us: 'In the beginning there was the Wind.' Here you have to take

the word wind in the sense of motion. Whirling around mount Méru, it caused the matter available to unfold itself "like the petals of a lotus" on the waters of the all-embracing world-sea. Thus at first the four great 'gyátams' came into being. This word is sometimes translated as 'continents' by the Westerners, but that is not correct. Just listen. These gyátams were pointing North, East, South, and West. In between, like smaller petals, other gyátams unfolded themselves. All together there were twelve of them. Our planet, pointing south is the smallest of the four great gyatams. Its name is Jambuling. Its color is blue and its form is 'like the shoulderblade (scapula) of a sheep.' I have no time at the moment to elucidate these mystic terms to you.

"Each form as it comes into being has a sound of its own. This is the 'harmony of the spheres.' One can also express it in this way: 'Each form is singing its own sound.' And each of these sounds is creating another form-of-existence which in its turn has a sound of its own. Thus it will go on ever and ever further. In this way different forms have come into existence—all that 'is,' whether big or small. In the universe every star and every planet, and on our earth every mountain and every grain of sand has a sound of its own."

"A Western scholar would perhaps express it this way, Rimpoche: Everything has its own frequency-of-vibration. Is that what you mean?"

"I am not versed in the ways of expression used by Western scholars. According to us, *a certain sound will cause primal matter to stick together in a specific way.* The aggregates of a form, thus come into being, join and will stay joined by *that* sound.

"If anybody knows the sound holding together the aggregates of a certain form-of-existence—it does not matter if it is alive or no—he may easily find out the sound which will dissolve these aggregates. Now by producing this dissolving sound (your 'frequency-of-vibration') he will be able to cause the form in question to fall apart. There are yogis who are specialized in the 'Science-of-Sounds,' in India called the 'Shābda-Yoga,' practiced by the 'Rādha-Swamis.' It is a secret science, for if its knowledge were to come into the wrong hands, horrible crimes might be performed by it. One would not only be able to cause buildings to collapse, but to kill human beings as well. It is a well-known fact that certain sounds, if drawn out long enough, may cause a person's death. This is one of the principles of 'black magic' too. Black magic and white magic is the practice of the same secret knowledge, but in one case it is used for evil purposes and in the other for good. Power over matter is a thing for which man of today is not yet ripe."

25. The ecclesiastic princelet had a court of eleven lamas. Having set motion-
lessly for hours on his throne he would bend down and give the ear of his secre-
tary a good pull! The old chap smiled blissfully: "What a lovely little master I
have got!" (Part III: 8)





48: The Beloved Gyälwa Karmápa

"Auntie, have you already seen the baby boy who was cast away?" my nephew asked.

"Good gracious, what do you mean, Mani?"

"Then you don't know anything about it? A woman drowned her newborn child in the marsh on the side of the village well some five days ago. The police cannot make out whether it is a Nepalese or a Tibetan baby and they do not know who did it. Now they have pitched a tent there for a policeman to discover the mother if she might come to fetch her little son back."

I went to the marsh to have a look. The poor mite was decomposing already, and next to it the agent sat cooking his tea on a charcoal fire—not an inspiring spectacle! Of course the mother of the baby did not show herself and after three more days the police gave up all further investigation and buried the body.

Meanwhile life in Bodhnâth went on as usual. I drew the portrait of a superb Kham-pa man who had cut his front hair into a fringe, as is the custom in the east of Tibet. My model belonged to a pure Tibetan tribe, whose men often have their hair hanging down loose, whereas the women never wear it like that. He had a long, slightly curved but not protruding nose and a thin face with pronounced cheekbones. His appearance made one think of an American Indian. In the Chinese chronicles of 2700 B.C. by the anthropologists a tribe is described whose men looked exactly like my model. They were called "I's" which only means "savages." There was not the slightest doubt about it, but I had a pure descendent of these I's before me!

I also drew my friend the "ula" in the monastery-temple, while he was busy painting a t'hangka, and daily I gave lessons in English to my niece Mithu. The evenings were the least agreeable part of the day in the house-with-the-lions. Only in the turquoise-colored room was there any light, so bad it was impossible to read by it. Friends and acquaintances of my family (only men, of course) used to drop in

{26. Partyi, the wife of a simple Redcap-lama, always kept smiling. Her necklaces were her great pride. "Come elder sister," she said to me, "I will give you a present too: a little bun! For these days all of us are always terribly hungry!" (Part II: 45)

for a chat. With strident voices they talked with my brothers. During these discourses everybody got so excited that it seemed as if they were all having a violent quarrel! No one ever listened to anybody else. Each of them tried to convince the others of his own standpoint by shouting at the top of his voice. Of course the conversations were always on the topic of business.

As often as not my Tibetan father retired into the small room next to the turquoise-colored one to count his money. He left the door open and sat near his throne-bed on the floor with a petrol-lamp at his side. It cast a grotesque shadow of the priest on the wall behind him and made flickering lights on the many Indian rupees and silver Chinese coins. Stacks of American dollars and other banknotes were lying about by the side of the numerous checks on the banks of five continents. These were signed by the tourists who had bought art objects and souvenirs from pappa. After each item had been booked accurately, the Chinya lama took everything to the bank in Kâthmandú to have it exchanged or converted into cash. Subsequently he bought real estate with it. Day in, day out, the priest-officiate counted up the contents of his strongbox, as he just *loved* to count! Sitting there in the midst of his money he made me think of a half-forgotten picture I had once seen during my school years with the caption "The Miser." At the time it had seemed very improbable and quite exaggerated to me. But here it had come to life. . . .

My thoughts wandered off. "Pappa," I asked, "when will this famous tülku Gyälwa Karmápa come and visit Bodhnâth?"

"He will arrive tomorrow with his escort in Kâthmandú daughter, and stay there with a very rich disciple of his. Unfortunately he has given up his plan to reside for some time in our hamlet. But in any case he will come to this house as my guest for one day, to bless all the Tibetan refugees. Of course I'll go to town tomorrow to bid him welcome."

"May I come with you, pappa?"

"That would not be becoming, daughter."

"May I go to him all by myself? I would so love to get to know him?"

"Why not! But you will never be able to find his abode in the inner part of the town, and it would be too difficult to explain to you where exactly the residence is situated. The name of its proprietor I don't know either."

Late in the afternoon of the next day I begged some tourists for a lift in their car to the capital. Once there I had to ask endlessly in the

labyrinth of the small, crowded streets until at last I found the house in question in a pitch-dark alley. It was astonishingly big and lofty. As it is a general rule that nobody is ever allowed to find himself higher than the quarters of a distinguished Tibetan "Incarnation," such a person always receives a room on the top floor to live in. I climbed six narrow, steep staircases, each of them barely lighted by one wick floating in a little bowl of oil. After a bit of waiting I was shown into a low, oblong room. The "Hutúktu" sat in the lotus posture at the very end of it on a kind of throne covered with red silk. Behind him a gigantic t'hangka was hanging. Skirting the two side walls a long row of high lama visitors was seated on the floor. Amongst them was my Tibetan father, the priest-officiate of Bodhnâth, who looked at me in astonishment because I had found the dwelling of the rich disciple in spite of the fact he had refused to give me proper information about its whereabouts.

The tülku-lama Gyälwa Karmápa, the head of the Ka-gyú-pa sect, was a man of about thirty years, rather stout with a round head, of course completely shorn. I became impressed at once with his strong personality, which radiated kindness and love of all Living-Beings.

As is the general custom in India and Nepal, I approached him with bent head and hands folded together. The believers of lamaism, however, always prostrate themselves on the floor on such an occasion to show their reverence. The saintly lama put his two hands on my head pronouncing a blessing and begged me to sit next to him. His host offered me a chair as I was a Westerner, but I insisted on sitting on the floor like all the other visitors. Gyälwa Karmápa had an interpreter with him. He was the brother of the private secretary of the mahârâja of Sikkim, whom I knew.

"What do you come to pay me a visit for, my child?" the Hutúktu made him ask me.

"Because I want to make your acquaintance having heard so much about you, Rimpoche, Precious Jewel. I am not a tourist, but I live in Bodhnâth with. . . ." My eyes sought those of the China lama. "She is my adopted daughter," he said. "She draws portraits, also mine".

"Oh, then I have been told about her! How nice to get to know you," said the famous tülku cordially. It was of course but an ordinary formula of politeness, but spoken with such kindness and intensity that now I understood why this man was so much loved by everybody. "Next time," he added, "I would love to pose for you my-

self too. Yes, I really mean it but I have been ill. So during this short visit to Nepal it would be too tiring for me. Have you anything special to ask me, my child?"

"Yes, Rimpoche, Precious Jewel, have you got your hat made of fairy-hair with you?"

He laughed his attractive laugh. "That is what everybody wants to know. No, I am sorry, but I left it at home in Sikkim. Since my flight from Tibet some years ago, I live up in the high mountains in a monastery which the Mahârâja of Sikkim has put at my disposal. Do come and look me up over there, will you? I promise you I will put on that hat for you."

After this he spoke again to the lama-visitors. Ten minutes later I got up to take leave. I was blessed once more and left. I had my dinner in the big "Hotel Royal" in Kàthmandú. A White Russian prince called Boris was its proprietor. I was great friends with him and his wife and whenever I had to be in the capital my home was always with them. In the dining room some Americans sat at the table next to mine. I could not help hearing parts of their conversation. "I know for certain a lama-king is visiting somewhere here," an elderly lady said. "But nobody seems to know anything about it, neither the employees at the hotel desk, nor the many guides. I would give anything to see him, but how could I, as I have no idea what is his name nor where he stays!" Her voice sounded desperate. I turned round and said: "I will take you to him tomorrow, madam."

Because of this promise I had to spend the night in the hotel and next day I roamed about in the inner part of the city. All of a sudden I heard the click-clack of a small dámaru with which "holy men" often make their presence known to the public. I also heard the buzzing of many voices. Walking into their direction I saw a Tibetan yogi in the midst of an excited crowd. He was wearing a complete outfit of artistically sculptured human bones. The long ritual "apron" of that material was tied around his breast and the broad bracelets around his upper arms. But his headgear differed from the one shown to me by the Tibetan lama-vendor. Many strings of beads, made of human bone too, were hanging down from it in front of his face, so it was not possible to distinguish his features. My sketchbook was in Bodhnâth. The only thing I had with me was my camera. "Better a photograph than nothing at all," I thought, and asked the yogi if he would be so kind as to stand still for a moment. As answer he made his dámaru click-clack very quickly. "Of course I will pay you for it! How much do you want?" Slow click-clacking. "Please let me know?" I insisted. Now the yogi started to walk away. "He will never answer

you. He has taken the vow of eternal silence!" the public informed me. At that moment the bone-dressed man halted and raised his hand: two fingers upwards. "All right, I will give you two rupees." He pointed to a small temple some distance away, probably his temporary abode. On the square before it I took several shots of him.

In the evening the American lady awaited me. She was a tall, stout woman, a gay and friendly soul who could only walk with difficulty. We took a taxi to the neighborhood of the narrow alley and from there went on foot to the house where the Hutúktu was staying. Very, very slowly she climbed the dark staircases of rough wood. On the fifth she got a broad ladder in her fine stockings. As I said before: Tibetans do not know of the existence of our kind of stockings. They are convinced our legs are bare when they are covered with nylons.

When we came to the reception room I entered first and got blessed as before. I had told my companion I would do this to show her the exact behavior according to protocol in these circumstances, so she could imitate me if she felt like it. But notwithstanding her ardent desire to get to know the tülku she did not dare to come near him and allow him (!) to put his hands on her head as a blessing. So she bowed from the further end of the room in his direction and said, naively like a child, "Hello king! How do you do? I am glad to see you at last." A chair was brought for her, because—as was clear to everybody—she was a Westerner who stuck to her own customs. I sat down on the floor as before.

"Have you anything special to say to the Precious Jewel?" asked his interpreter.

"I will try and collect money in America for the Tibetan refugees and send it to this king," she answered cordially.

Gyälwa Karmápa bowed his head to thank her.

"Now I have got to go, king." The American lady got up and bowed too, awkwardly, unaccustomed to these things. But then her sense of humor got the better of her shyness. She lifted her wide skirt above her knees, stretched her leg with the laddered stocking forwards, and said "Just have a look, king, this is what I have been willing to sacrifice for you!!" Saying this, she started to laugh merrily.

I held my breath. She had no idea of what she was doing: to lift her skirt in full view of all these ascetic monks, to whom a woman who shows her "bare" legs purposely signifies the worst of the worst! How modest is the fair sex of Tibet in this respect with their sleeveless tunics reaching down to the ankles and their formless felt boots underneath! From the deathly frightened faces of the lamas I looked in agony at the face of the Hutúktu Gyälwa Karmápa, to see his reac-

tion to this strange event. But he was not for nothing looked upon as "the perfect one"! After a moment's consternation he realized that his guest did not mean any harm, on the contrary, that she was doing it in fun! He threw his head backwards and laughed loudly, in the beginning rather forced because he only wanted to be polite. But once he had started, he was caught by the humor of the situation and he just roared with laughter "Hahahahahahaha." His eyes became mere slits and the tears trickled down his cheeks. He just could not stop anymore. So the only thing the high lamas could do was to join obediently in his burst of breezy mirth.

They started to bleat in their turn: "Hehehehehehehe." But finally they, too, were infected by the merriment of their beloved saint and all laughed heartily. The nice stout American lady was radiant. Certainly no one else but herself would ever have succeeded in bringing about such an atmosphere of childlike fun with all these earnest men! Her visit was a great success!

49: "You-May-Do-Spoke-Mouth"

In the early morning there was a dense fog. When it slowly lifted I first saw the silhouettes of the leafless trees just behind our house rising up against a plain grey background. Then the featherlike groves of bamboo in the fields beyond came into view. How strange to see tropical bamboo in the Himâlayas! Next the nearest rows of hills appeared gradually, looking flat like the paintings of stage scenery, and finally the snowy tops of the high mountains standing out against a pale blue sky, surrounding our valley like a white wreath.

For quite a long time after Quisang was ready churning the morning tea, pappa still lay asleep in his throne-bed with silk curtains: in his wind-jacket, his woolen bonnet, and a red checkered shawl around his neck. All this covered with four blankets! On the other hand, my brother Ganèsh, who usually let himself be coddled by his wives with tea in bed, had risen today quite early to discuss money matters with his father. He did not dare to awaken him, so he chatted with me about the "other subject" of the two which interested him only: the fair sex (the "one subject" was money).

"Sister," he said, "if you only knew how many women I have loved! High up in the mountains the Sher-pa girls are willing and passionate! Of course I love my two legal wives Chring and Kámala too. However, what will keep a man younger and fresher than continual change! My ideal is to have yet another kind of permanent sweetheart here: a Western! Couldn't you arrange to procure such a girl for me?"

"No Ganèsh, impossible, put such a thing out of your head."

"Well, all right then, I promise you I will marry her! Find me a fair-haired girl with blue eyes, preferably from Holland. I am sure of your good taste in these matters, that is if you are willing to be my go-between? Moreover, you *know* that all women simply adore me!! Just tell her! This house is big enough to shelter one more person."

"No Western woman would want to be the third wife of a man,

whether legal or not! Besides, she would dislike to be the fifty-sixth inhabitant of the house-with-the-lions!"

"I don't believe a word of what you are saying! Why shouldn't she want to?? You don't *feel* like helping me, sister! That is why you talk this way!"

Fortunately pappa had awakened. He had heard the last words. "You and your elder brother are the limit: women, women, women, that is what you two have constantly in mind. Púnya-Jola has already married seven times and you in your twenty-third year have six children! And if you both would only stick to what you have got, but all these love affairs in between: It is really too bad! Because the China lama was indignant, he expectorated vigorously, so Ganèsh submissively dashed forward with the spittoon. The priest spat into it and continued "No, in my young years I was very, very different! I admit, I had four legal wives simultaneously, but I was never unfaithful to the four of them, never!"

Ganèsh winked at me. I thought I had better change the subject of conversation.

"Pappa, did you see that many more refugees have arrived?"

"I certainly did, and now I have a nice little plan, daughter! I want to show your drawings in front of our house to the people. Don't you think it is a good idea?"

"Of course, pappa."

One hour later the Precious Jewel had installed himself on the square to grant an audience to anybody wanting it. I stood next to him with my portfolio of drawings.

"First show them the portrait you made of me," he whispered, "and at the end show it once more." Quite a crowd gathered around us. The China lama explained while I held up my portrait-drawings one after the other. "This here is a poor fellow like you see, and this one too. . . . Here is a nomad woman from Kham, and now comes a lama."

All were recognized by the lookers-on, but only the portraits of lamas caught their interest! The crowd grew ever bigger. At the end, when I showed the first portrait again, the one of my Tibetan father, he said "And here you see myself, an Incarnated lama, a tülku, the learned priest of this holy pilgrims' place of Bodhnâth, wearing my lotus-like Nyingma-pa headgear, a replica of the one once worn by the great sorcerer-saint Padma Sambháva! Look at my gold and silver prayer-wheel on this picture and at my prayer-chain, made of turquoise of the best quality! I say unto you, Tibetans, my people, follow my example: Obey me! Because if you would give up your obedience

towards your spiritual leaders now you have fled from your own country, what would become of your souls? Our priest-king the Dalai Lama in Mussoori—may he once more govern the Land-of-the-Snow—would be ashamed of the disobedience of his beloved subjects, He who has suffered already so much! Now I will bless you all in His name.”

Of course it was a magnificent speech! All the refugees, one by one, came to the China lama and bowed before him. He touched their heads with his hand and each of them put a little coin on the table at his side!

That evening I had dinner at Darling's place. “Why doesn't your husband live in this house, younger sister?” I asked her.

“Remember, elder sister, his father is the court-priest of king Mahendra and very old. Whenever he is ill my husband has the duty to replace him. That is why he resides with his parents. You know, they had always wanted to have a boy, but first they got ten daughters, most of whom died anyway. Only the eleventh was a son! I could not possibly ruin the happiness of the old couple by taking their most beloved child away from them: by making him live here in pappa's house, could I? Of course I might go and stay with my family-in-law to be always near my husband, but Brahmins never eat tasty food: no meat, no fish, no eggs (potential life), no mushrooms, no garlic, all the things that I adore! No, I prefer to remain here where I can do whatever I like and refrain from whatever I dislike.

“But I promised to tell you about Machásima, whose little temple forms part of the prayer-wheel-wall around our Magúta-Stúpa: Well then, the Buddha who lived before Buddha Gótama (Çâkyamúni) was Buddha Kâçyápa. It is around his relics this stúpa was built. So this story deals with things of a remote past. The Celestial Bodhisattva Chèn-resí, ‘the Compassionate One,’ had prayed to his (spiritual) father, the Celestial Buddha Amitâbha, ‘He-of-the-Eternal-Light,’ to redeem the innumerable animals that, ignorantly, lived in the mud of the earth. After his prayer had been heard and their souls were redeemed, he returned to his abode on Mount Pótala on an island off the Chinese coast. Looking downwards from its top, he saw a great number of animals born in the meantime which in their turn lived unredeemed. And seeing this the Compassionate One wept hot tears. Two of those tears fell down in Indra's heaven and were born there as daughters to this god. They were called Kàn-ma and Kan-chún-ma (i.e., Little Kàn-ma). The latter stole some flowers in the garden of heaven and by way of punishment she was born on earth in a family of poor swineherds in the hamlet Magúta in Nepal. Her earthly name

was Sámvara (i.e., 'Supreme Happiness'). She married four times, however, each of her husbands died. From every marriage a son was born to her. Left a widow, she started to breed geese to sell to rich people and she earned quite a lot of money. Because of this occupation, she was surnamed Ma-pya-rdsi-ma, corrupted by the people her to Machásima, signifying 'little mother bird-keeper.' She was very pious and decided to use her money to build a stûpa to keep and glorify some relics of Buddha Kâçyápa. So she went to the king and asked him to put a piece of ground at her disposal to realize this meritorious act. She added, 'It need not be bigger than a cowskin can span.' The king granted her request. He said, 'Ja-rún,' i.e. 'You may do.' Cut into exceedingly thin strips, the cowskin spanned an unexpectedly big surface. Little mother bird-keeper started to build on it, helped by her four pious sons, a servant, an elephant, and a donkey. The stûpa became so impressive that it roused the envy of the ministers. They begged the monarch to forbid the erection of such a pretentious big building because its splendor made the structures of former kings and noblemen look small and insignificant. But the ruler replied 'Ka-sor,' i.e., 'My mouth spoke.' You will understand, sister Lili, that a royal mouth can never take back anything it said as being wrong! It would be the acknowledgment of an error, wouldn't it? And kings never make errors! Well, this is why the official name of our hamlet ever since has been 'Ja-rún Ka-sòr,' 'You may do, spoke Mouth.' And all the Tibetans call our stûpa the 'Ja-rún-Ka-sòr-Chörten.'

"When after four years of work only the nether part of the sanctuary was finished, little mother bird-keeper died. She was allowed to return to Indra's heaven. Her sons continued the construction. At the moment the relics of Buddha Kâçyápa were hidden in the building, he manifested himself in the opened heaven in a magic circle (a 'màndala'), formed by the five Celestial Buddhas and the five Celestial Bodhisattvas themselves, while a rain of fragrant flowers descended on earth. Because of the light, the Celestial Beings radiated, it did not become dark for five successive nights! Then Machásima's eldest son prayed, 'May I become a learned man in my next incarnation on earth, so I can teach humanity about the divine Wisdom,' and in consequence of this prayer he was afterwards reborn as Thonmi-Sambhóta, the lama-minister of Srong-Tsan-Gampo, (the first great king of the Land-of-the-Snow), at whose request he composed the Tibetan characters. Consequently he was the first of us all to write down the holy texts, translated from Páli and Sanskrit, in our own language! Machásima's second son prayed for the same thing and in

consequence of this prayer he was afterwards reborn as Čántarakshita, the court-priest of the Tibetan king Tí-song-Dé-tsen, and it was on *his* request that the great magician Pádma Sambháva was invited to come to the Land-of-the-Snow, and so *he* became the abbot of Sámyè, the first monastery founded there by the saint. But when the elephant, who also had worked hard for the construction of Machásima's stúpa, heard the prayers of the two elder brothers, he became angry and thought: 'Both of them forget all I did to help them! They have only pronounced wishes for themselves!' And he prayed, 'May I be able to destroy their work in my next incarnation on earth,' and in consequence of this prayer he was afterwards reborn as the wicked king Lang-darma ('Lang' is the Tibetan word for elephant), the prosecutor of Buddhism in our pious country. However, Machásima's third son had heard this prayer and prayed in his turn, 'May I be able to undo the evil things to be committed by the elephant in my next incarnation on earth.' And in consequence of this prayer, he afterwards was reborn as the lama Pal-Dorje who, wearing a black hat, as was the habit of the Bon-priests, killed the wicked king Lang-darma. It is a pity that nobody knows what Machásima's fourth son, the helpful servant, and the strong, patient donkey prayed for. . . ."

"A beautiful story, Darling"

"Oh, the most miraculous part of it is yet to come! In the shrine in the inner part of the Ja-rún Ka-sòr stúpa the relics of Buddha Kâçyápa increase in a magic way. Once every twelve years they bud forth on the surface of the building as small grains. Always a great ceremony is held when they have appeared. They are gathered by pappá and sold to the many pilgrims who come to see the miracle."

"But why *grains*, Darling?" I asked.

"Don't you know, sister, that when the body of a Buddha is cremated, no ashes remain, but that his earthly sheath swells and falls apart into sago-like grains? There are two kinds of them: small white ones coming from the flesh and yellowish ones—a bit bigger—coming from the bones."

"A human being daily learns something new, Darling! But why does Machásima's statue in her little temple hold a child in her arms, while trampling on a devil?"

"Well, that is just the way we represent her! Mothers whose children are ill will come and bring her offerings, as she is able to cure them. Once every year we celebrate big festivities in her honor. In the early night more than a hundred men, together carrying a gigantic embellished shrine with her statue inside, will run higgledy-piggledy over the square, yelling and screaming: "Liá,liá Machásima, liá,liá

Machásima! The joy about her holiness sends them into ecstasies. They push down everybody who dares come near them, they are mentally drunk, completely crazy, almost dangerous. . . .”

50: The Hat of Fairy Hair

There was quite a bustle in our house: The servants were busy cooking nice titbits, the women and girls put on their best clothes, and the boys were cutting narrow strips of red cotton in the middle of which they made a double knot. After lunch, the tülku Gyälwa Karmápa would come to our house to hold a reception, and his escort of high lamas expected to be given a real treat. The titbits were meant for them, and the ladies' array for the tülku, while the red cotton ribbons—after the "Hutúktu" himself would have breathed upon them—were going to be handed to the visitors at their departure as a talisman. For they would have become imbued with a special power by the breath of the saintly Redcap lama.

Meanwhile my Tibetan father went about in a state of nervousness. On the one hand, it was a great honor for him that the reception was to take place in his house, on the other hand it was the first time in his life he would not play the first fiddle there himself. Gyälwa-Karmápa-of-the-hat-of-fairy-hair who was able to fly was revered to such an extent by many followers of the Red Church that they wore brooches showing his portrait. The ones who followed the Yellow Church wore brooches showing the portrait of His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

Pappa had his beautiful yellow silk coat with golden flowers on. *In reality, as a lama, he was only to wear a sleeveless tunic of gold brocade with an ordinary lama-skirt of plain garnet-red material and a toga of the same color, obliquely draped over both together, so merely a corner of the lovely tunic was to be seen. To adorn this rather severe set of clothes a lama is moreover allowed to wear a "cháblu" of gold brocade on the front of his garnet-colored skirt. This is a small rectangular bag out of which protrudes the beautifully wrought silver stopper of a little metal bottle (containing holy water) fixed inside that bag. Even the Dalai Lama himself is never dressed differently: very simply but stylishly. However, if my Tibetan father would not have worn conspicuous clothes, different*

from other lamas, the tourists would never have considered him "somebody special," but just a "lama-amongst-other-lamas" (which in fact he was!). They would not always have wanted to take his photograph, nor have bought expensive souvenirs from him! Led by considerations of this kind, the Precious Jewel of Bodhnâth had made it his habit to look as striking as possible. Therefore he had purchased a selection of silk and satin coats reaching to the ankles which in Tibet used to be worn by noblemen and great landed proprietors—by rich laymen that is—on the understanding that the yellow color is exclusively reserved to the clergy. Of course all lamas would cut jokes about pappa's fantastic clothes, behind his back! And they laughed a bit contemptuously at his vanity, because *one of the ten commandments of the Buddha for all the clergy is the prohibition to embellish themselves!* But the priest-officiate of the Magûta-stûpa did not care a bit! What the deuce! He was who he was, and who could match him in earning such a lot of money??? Haha!"

Today my brother Pûnya-Jola had dressed himself in a national Nepalese outfit and my brother Ganesh who just *loved* to look like a "Westerner," wore a chocolate-brown lounge suit with a shirt of lemon-yellow silk, such as no European or American would ever have chosen! For this occasion the women of our family walked about in Indian saris with many rows of imitation pearls round their necks. They detested to be dressed like Nepalese, though by descent it was this blood they had for the greater part in their veins. The little girls were heavily made up by their respective mothers with eye-black, rouge, and lipstick. They wore Western frocks of variegated cheap nylon. The boys had merely put on clean shirts. They were the only ones who did not care for fanciful ideas.

Pappa's bed-of-state with a cover of yellow silk would serve as a throne for the esteemed guest. There he was, arriving in an expensive big car, followed by other cars with his escort. The refugees had gathered in crowds in our square cheering when the head of the Kagyû-pa sect got out to visit the house-with-the-lions. He climbed the dark staircase and entered the turquoise-colored room, after which he and pappa pressed their foreheads together by way of greeting each other. This manner of salutation means "We are of the same spiritual height." The one who in fact is the higher of the two—so in this case the Hutûktu—takes the initiative for it.

First the members of the family were blessed by Gyâlwa Karma-mápa, myself forming the rear. Then the tülku took both my hands in his and smiled at me with a glance of secret understanding. Also the twinkling of his eyes betrayed he remembered the silly incident of our

last meeting. After this tea and pastries were offered to him. Then the refugees poured in to be blessed by his laying hands on them, one after the other. Each one received a red ribbon which he tied round the neck. In the meantime the lamas of the escort sat in the turquoise-colored room talking together and being treated to tea and sweets. They seemed to have a good time. It was a tiring but successful afternoon!

"Think of all the money this reception has cost me," the China lama sighed when it was over. "The food and the tea I gave to all those guests!"

"Please, pappa," I asked, "now do tell me about the hat of fairy hair of the Hutúktu?"

"Well, daughter, you know that this Karmápa is the sixteenth "Incarnation" as head of the Kagyú-pa sect. So he belongs to one of Tibet's longest "Incarnation"-series! Or one could also express it this way: to the highest class of ecclesiastical nobility. His followers hold he is one of the Celestial Bodhisattvas in human form on earth. Not many people in Tibet are of an equal rank with him. As a matter of fact only one: a certain Situ-Rimpoche who is the fifteenth "Incarnation" of his series, as abbot of a very famous monastery in the eastern city of Dergé. He is still a very young boy and I have no idea where he lives at the moment. (Here I want to tell the readers that later on I was going to be great friends with him.) The Mahârâja of Sikkim has presented Karmápa with a monastery of his own in one of the wooded mountains of his country.

"Before these sixteen Tibetan "Incarnations," this same Karmápa had innumerable other ones, many in India. But in his earliest well-known earthly sheath he was the son of king Yung-Khòrsung in Central Asia. As a prince he meditated for years and years in the lonely mountains and thus acquired the highest occult powers. All the Celestial Buddhas and Bodhisattvas came to honor him and they endowed him with the so-called 'Vâjra-Mákut,' the 'Diamond Crown.' This was woven with the hair of a hundred thousand 'Dâkinis.' Each of these fairies had contributed one single hair. These wondrous beings are very learned in occult Wisdom and they are beautiful, too! Some of them have a blue skin and golden locks. Others, red as flames, are as graceful and slender as serpents. Others again are as black as night and as tall as giants. None of them ever indulges in sensual love.

"After the death of the prince all his successive bodies on earth wore the fairy hair headgear as well. So this finally came into the possession of the Tibetan "Incarnation"-series of this Karmápa. He who wears the fairy crown and therewith has received the special

mystic instructions of the Celestial Ones is able to fly. Of course only people who are very highly developed in spiritual matters are able to see the wonderful Mákut. They are the ones who have a pure heart and a great devotion. Ordinary people, however, do not see the Vajra-Mákut at all."

"Just like it was with the invisible clothes of the emperor in Andersen's story, pappa."

"I never heard of any emperor wearing invisible clothes, daughter! Are you sure you are not making a mistake? Well, anyway: Many people were not able to see the fairy hair crown of Karmápa. But when he was in his fifth Tibetan "Incarnation" the Chinese king Taming-chèn actually saw it, and he decided to make an earthly replica of it. This is a kind of black ceremonial hat he presented to the fifth Karmápa. Therewith he prayed to the gods that from that moment onwards the Hutúktu should be able to liberate humanity from their suffering. This prayer was heard. When Karmápa puts on the Vajra Mákut, the black hat, he simultaneously puts on the invisible crown of fairy hair. That cannot fail! Only it is not seen! All of us who honor and love him are a bit afraid that when wearing it he will fly away from us. That is why two lamas always will hold on to Karmápa as long as he has the Vajra-Mákut on his head so that, burdened by their weight, he could not possibly levitate. . . ."

This seemed to be the week of strange headgear, for some days later there was a service in the Galúg-pa temple during which the monks also wore special "hats." It was on the fifteenth day of the Tibetan new year. The Tibetan lunar year begins in February on the day of the new moon. The greatest religious festivity is celebrated on the first day of the full moon, as it is the anniversary of the "Incarnation" of the Buddha. In Lhasa for this occasion the Dalai Lama used to preach in person to thousands of monks on the big square before the Jo-khang temple.

That morning—alas not aware of the significance of the day—I went to the Gelúg-pa temple to listen to the singing of the beautiful liturgy. However, I saw at once it was a very special service, for all monks had their ceremonial yellow prayer mantle thrown over their toga. During a little interval they unwrapped a number of objects out of a cloth at their side. First of all there was a square satin cloth with a hole in the middle which they put over their heads like a short, wide cape falling down their shoulders. It was artistically embroidered as a four-petalled lotus just like the "muládhara" is represented, the nethermost cakra at the bottom of the human spine. This is the place where the Kundalinî—the divine creative power-of-love—is lying

“asleep” in each of us. At the same time this cakra (as we have seen) is the symbol of the element earth and Çākyaṃuni descended to earth on this day.

Together with the cape, the monks put on a black velvet cap that fitted exactly round their shaven skulls. On its top were attached three black velvet balls of diminishing size. They rose straight upwards one over the other and a silver, flame-shaped ornament—a “jyoti,” the symbol of spiritual Enlightenment—was fastened to the uppermost.

Around this black velvet cap the monks bound a kind of golden crown consisting of five lotus-shaped petals, symbolizing the five Metaphysical Buddhas, as I realized at once, for on each of them was written their respective mantra-syllable. Over this crown they draped a cord ending on either side in a magnificent long tassel hanging right and left of the temples down to the shoulders. It was a fantastic attire: as wondrous as a fairy tale. I gazed at it in rapture and quickly took my sketchbook to immortalize this sight. Alas, the service was too short to make anything but a few sketches.

Afterwards I asked some of my monk-friends to pose for me in this array, but they answered that it was impossible. After lunch they were to take part in various religious ceremonies for the rest of the day. In the evening their attire would be put away and locked up for another year.

Notwithstanding this denial, I decided to do my utmost to draw a big portrait of a lama wearing these splendid pontificals. So next day I returned to the monastery and asked for the abbot. To my regret I heard he had gone to another village for some time and I was referred to his temporary deputy by the monks usually spoken of as “our guru.” However, this lama absolutely refused to grant my request. I made an offering of a sum of money (not a small one either) and repeated my urgent wish, but without any success. “If I leave his cell now, my last chance is gone,” I thought. Couldn’t I think of something very special to get the guru’s permission? At that moment a Tibetan couple was announced. They asked him to hold a “mo” for them. A mo is a kind of fortune-telling, to be done by a high lama who is skillful in these matters, a so-called “mo-pa.” As a rule it will concern the outcome of some difficulty or of an enterprise that still has to be started. One can foretell the fortune by throwing down white and black pebbles or certain seeds, or by following various other systems. Amongst the nomads there are mo-pas who can tell exactly what is going to happen by the cracks of a sheep’s shoulder-blade put in the fire.

The "guru" held his mo in this way: First he meditated for some time, then he took three dice, pressed them against his front and threw them down on the table with his eyes shut. Subsequently he consulted the appropriate manuscripts. While I sat looking on, a sudden thought struck me. I could show him the book I had written about the Indian yogis! In this was reproduced a portrait I had made of Trichang-Rimpoche, the teacher of the Dalai Lama, on my visit to His Holiness in Mussoori. It might make an impression on the guru that such a learned Tibetan scholar had been willing to pose for me! Nobody took any notice of my presence, so I surreptitiously slipped out of the cell, fetched the book at home, and quietly sat down once more in the same place, holding it in my hands.

When the couple had gone, the guru looked at me severely and said "I thank you for your visit," of course a polite manner of sending me away.

"I first want to show you something, Rimpoche," I ventured, and without further comment I opened the book at my portrait-drawing of the famous and generally beloved tülku-lama Trichang.

He glanced at it for a second and . . . all of a sudden his whole attitude changed. He just radiated benevolence. He called for some of his lama-colleagues, showed them the portrait of this professor and they had a long conversation. The outcome of it was that one said to me, "Sho, Mem-sahib Li-li." I followed him and he led me up the inner staircase to a small room with a state-bed, probably a guest room for high visitors. On the wall hung a lifesize photograph of this same honored teacher of the Dalai Lama. "Because *he* consented to have his portrait drawn by you, our guru himself is willing to pose for you as well: in the black velvet cap and the golden crown you like so much," said the lama. "But not longer than for one hour!"

We went back to the cell and there he sat already waiting for me in full array. One hour is the shortest period in which I can make a resembling portrait-sketch. In such a limited space of time I cannot possibly permit myself to put down a single line which is not exactly right. In order not to do so I have to force myself to complete calmness and profound concentration. If I do not maintain this but would let slip myself, even for a single moment, my eyes do not register things absolutely correctly and my hand does not put down steady lines. In any case, it will always remain a "tour de force." The lamas looked at the clock when I started and, as luck would have it, an hour later I could show everybody a completely resembling portrait sketch, of which I afterwards had to work out the details.

"Now I suppose you will allow me to photograph one of the

other monks in this beautiful attire, Rimpoche?" I asked after he had expressed his satisfaction about my work.

"No, Mem-sahib," the guru said briefly. Just at this moment his meal was brought in. He put down the golden crown, the black velvet cap, and the embroidered cape. Having folded everything with meticulous care he put them at his side on the bench. I too sat down on the bench, a bit further away. Now the difficult moment had come! I took off my woolen sweater and quasi-carelessly put it down on top of the folded pontificals. "Well, I'll go now," I said hurriedly all of a sudden. I took up my sweater with everything that was lying underneath, put all together into my big bag, then, saying good-bye, I hastily left the cell.

Outside I accosted one of my monk-friends. "Come at once with me to some place where nobody can see us, to pose for a photograph?"

He understood the situation at once. "All right, we will go to the roof. Good gracious, the door leading to it is locked! There comes our ula. Ula, have you got the key? Quick, quick?" The door got unlocked and against the beautiful background of our valley I made a series of pictures of the monk who now wore the gorgeous garments.

A few moments later rapid steps sounded on the staircase. One of the others appeared: "The guru sends me. He is afraid that our Mem-sahib Li-li has smuggled the holy attire out of the monastery, but I told him she wouldn't do such a thing ever! I understood where the two of you had gone. Well, anyway the pictures are taken! Do give me the embroidered cape and the headgear!" And so we parted as a couple of conspirators, happy their plot had succeeded.

51: The Minstrel

Once more I was on my knees before the window. How many hours—all together—have I sat this way to watch the Tibetans in the square below? And a thought rose in me: In a strictly literal sense, I am doing the thing which a wise Oriental is doing in a figurative sense! He gazes meditatively from his (spiritually) secluded spot at the life and strife of the world without taking part in it himself.

Down there I saw numerous men, women, and children circumambulating the stûpa again and again. There were nomads, peasants, and city-dwellers, Yellowcap and Redcap monks and unassuming, friendly nuns. By this time I had got to know a great many of them and nearly all were aware of my being at the window of the house-with-the-lions. They looked upwards smilingly and raised their right hands in Tibetan greeting. Then they continued onwards around the sanctuary with the slow, sure, and somewhat rocking stride of mountaineers, mumbling their "Om Mani Padme Hum" and turning the prayer-wheels in the stûpa-wall so they buzzed and squeaked: a feast for my ears!

Pappa is so lazy nowadays he receives his first visitors, the Tibetan lamas who come to offer him their merchandise, still lying in bed (with his woolen winter bonnet and his red-checked scarf on!). When he is very keen on buying some object at a lower price than is demanded he jumps up, rushes to his strongbox, and thrusts some banknotes into the hand of the proprietor.

"Give it me, at once!" he cries, and grasping the desired treasure presses it against his breast. "The bargain is struck!"

But the amount of notes paid does not come to the sum demanded for it. "No, Rimpoche, Precious Jewel," the other says, frightened. "Not at this price. I am sorry, but really, I had much rather have my possession back!"

The China lama gets red in the face, throws the money on the floor, and cries angrily "There, be quick, pick it up and go! How dare

27. The headgear of this lama was a replica of a hat, once offered to the first Panchèn Lama by an ill-wishing person, representing nine mountains that should crush him. However, knowing nothing could harm Him, He put it on and wore it. This headgear (it is quite rare) is seldom seen. (Part III: 8)





you speak to me in this way!" And in nine cases out of ten the victim does not dare insist on his rights and leaves the room demurring vainly against his receivings.

I went to the square to have a look at what the vendors had exposed on their mats on the ground. In the course of time, quite a change had taken place as to these wares. At first they sold to the Western tourists the artistic Tibetan objects which the newly arrived refugees had left them at a small price so they could buy food. Now they sold European and Indian junk to the Tibetans. One saw in the display bracelets and thumb rings made from plastic "jade," also hair ornaments of plastic "amber," besides necklaces with corals and "zi"-beads, all from the same material. Furthermore, copper finger rings set with big pieces of colored glass and monstrous red, orange, purple, and green bracelets which they offered to the inhabitants of the Land-of-the-Snow as "modern European adornments." The beautiful hand-woven Tibetan tissues were substituted by machine-made imitations side by side with "Tibetan" belts of imitation leather! Sports hats for gentlemen after "the latest fashion" (of the previous century) and green-brown-white camouflage cloth (remnants from the war) were readily sold to the refugees at fancy prices. They looked impossible with all this trashy stuff on. It made one weep!

Here the very thing happened which the rulers had been trying to avoid so carefully: In an incredibly short time, a high-standard civilization of good and friendly people was disappearing forever! Their monarchs had been wise enough to keep foreigners rigorously out of the country, and with them all outside influences. Up to this time no machine-made mass products had spoiled the innate taste the Tibetans had in handmade artistic objects for daily use. Their ornaments too had always borne the stamp of the personal craftsmanship of the maker. And all this was changing now, the refugees barely being aware of it!

A wondrously beautiful fairy tale—perhaps the last on our earth—was getting lost in the levelling-down process of our time. . . .

It goes without saying that gradually pappa became more confidential with me, the more so as there was nobody (belonging to our family) to whom he could talk quite frankly. Anyway, it seemed as if he got some relief in thus entrusting himself to me once in a while.

"My grandson Shèrrap, one of Púnya-Jola's sons, does not differ from a pig," he said in one of those conversations. "Here in the house he filches all food he can get hold of. It is because of *him* we lock our larder! Never yet in my life have I seen him doing any work: He spends all his time gambling! For the matter of that, his wife

{28. The noble-woman wearing a gold, eight-pointed amulet-box—incrusted with costly gems had her baby-girl—born in exile—on her lap. (Part II: 2)

Tènzang-Mú isn't much better, quite nice to look at, but for the rest no more than a she-monkey! I am glad those two have no children! Of course Púnya-Jola's eldest son is worse still. You know him, don't you, that stone-deaf drunkard who comes here sometimes to be given a meal? He always was a ne'er-do-well! That is the reason I refused to have him about the house."

"Yes, pappa, I know him. The other night he begged me to take him along with me to Holland."

"Don't do it, daughter, don't do it: He is a scoundrel. If you want to take any of us with you, choose your niece Míthu, but no; that wouldn't be advisable either, because I never in my life saw anybody as asinine as that child! I will try and find a husband for her as soon as possible, for she looks as if she would enjoy being made love to more than anything in the world. Isn't that your impression too?"

"What a difference between her and her half-brother Sú-shil! That boy is so intelligent none of us can match him, but apart from that he is a surly youngster! He and Mani, also a half-brother of Míthu's, but from another mother again, are nearly the same age about sixteen years old. I am surprised neither of those two has got a child yet by some girl, out of wedlock of course! Your brother Ganèsh had already two children at that age and now he throws it in their teeth they are unmanly."

"I like Mani best of all, pappa, he is so well-behaved and always willing to be of service to anybody. He says the Roman Catholic fathers at Pàtan have taught him to be that way."

"Yes, yes," said pappa, and he expectorated vigorously, after which he spat out of the window without looking if anybody was passing underneath, "Mine is not an easy life in this house! If only I think of those horrible tourists! Did you ever realize, daughter, that all those that don't buy anything from me thinking the prices too high, are just common misers, niggards, skinflints, good-for-nothings, rogues, scoundrels, riff-raff! Well now, daughter, I allow you to eat the remainder of my fried egg."

This was a great honor when pappa presented whatever he left of his food to any of us, and I accepted the offer only too gladly, as eggs were never served to us, women. Moreover I often felt hungry as the too highly seasoned dishes did not agree with me, so generally I only took dry rice. Therefore I thanked him nicely according to the rules of the family. "Go and get a spoon for it from Quisang," the China lama added. The servant was busy on the landing. At my request she took a spoon lying on a little table. It had already been used and she removed the remnant of whatever still stuck to it with her not-too-

clean thumb, after which she wiped it on a smudgy curtain. As often as not "washing-up" was disposed of in this way, but as I had roamed around the East for many years I had got immune against bacteria.

In the turquoise-colored room I ate the leavings of pappa's egg and waited for the other topics he wanted to discuss with me. "After all, you are right, daughter, about refusing to eat all that spicy stuff," he sighed. "It always gives me pain in my tummy, too. How often have I told these women not to put so many peppers in every dish!"

"But pappa, you are the master in the house; just forbid them to do so!"

"The master, the master, pooh! That is what you think, daughter Lili, but let me tell you a secret: Things are not what they seem! Our servant Quisang is master here! She cooks for me, but only the way *she* likes to. She is a good woman, that isn't what I am complaining of, only I am no match for her. . . ." My Tibetan father sighed pathetically.

After this lament his thoughts wandered into another direction. "Do you know how I settled the succession of my dignity as priest-officiate of Bodhnâth, daughter?" he asked. "You see, my priest-name is Púnya-Bàjra—Bàjra of course is a corruption of Vâjra, 'diamond' or 'thunderbolt'—but nobody would dare call me so, for with us it is very bad manners to call somebody by his name when he has a title. Tibetans address me as 'Rimpòché (Precious Jewel) and Nepalese as 'Mémé' (priest).

"After my death, Púnya-Jola will take my place as 'the China lama of Bodhnâth.' His priest-name is also Púnya-Bàjra. I myself have educated him to become a priest. I am quite glad the fellow has left now only four of the seven women he married, as a priest-officiate with so many legal wives simultaneously would make a strange impression, don't you think so? Did I tell you already he sent his first wife away because she gave birth to a deaf child? And fortunately (!) two other wives of his have died! If only he will be wise enough not to marry any more women! That is what I am always afraid of: He is so terribly keen on marrying! But to proceed: After his death it is the turn of your brother Ganèsh to be 'the China lama.' His priest-name is Ganèsh-Bàjra. I have educated him as well to become a priest. However, neither one of these boys knows even half of what I know myself. But then what can one do about such a thing! It isn't given to everybody to be brainy! Next it would have been up to Púnya-Jola's eldest son to hold the dignity. But we have no use for somebody who cannot hear what people say to him, and who is moreover addicted to

drink. So I appointed his second son Antaré as the successor of Ganèsh. His priest-name is Sûrya-Bàjra and he will be succeeded by the eldest son of Ganèsh, baby Jigmé-Dorje, whose priest-name is Tej-Bàjra. Antaré has to see to it he too will get a son as quickly as possible, because what is the use of his baby daughter Rénu! So in the future the dignity of priest-officiate of Bodhnâth will not go over as an inheritance from father to son, as has been the case up to now, but from uncle to eldest nephew, to the end of time. . . . But enough daughter, both of us have our work to do!"

In search for a good model I walked round our sanctuary and I saw a strikingly handsome old man leaning against the prayer-wheel wall. His face was wrinkled all over and big tufts of white hair appeared from under his bonnet. He was seated upon a mat and had hung three small t'hangkas behind him. Underneath these he had set up a primitive little altar on which was placed the statue of a god and some rice and water offerings. In a melodious voice he recited something which gave me the impression of a poem. Once in a while he consulted a book. Many people stood around him listening, absolutely silent. Occasionally they threw a coin on the mat. Again and again I heard the old Tibetan saying the word "Késar" and I realized he was a minstrel reciting the famous epic about Késar, king of Ling. The men who are able to do this used to roam through the Land-of-the-Snow from one village to another finding an enthusiastic audience everywhere. This poem takes up a similar place in Tibet as did the Iliad in ancient Greece. Only the name of its composer is not known. The epic is a matter of common knowledge. The public are quite familiar with it, so nobody is curious as to what is going to happen next to the hero, but every time anew people are ready to listen to it in rapture.

With Mani as interpreter I asked the minstrel if he was willing to pose for me that afternoon and he consented graciously. As soon as he sat on the gallery he started to pray while turning around his prayer-wheel vigorously. He could not or did not want to understand my request *not* to use it when saying his prayers. It always is very difficult for a painter when constant movements take place in his field of vision, but I was left no alternative. The old boy had got it into his head this was what he wanted to do, so he did it. And more than anything it was my wish to keep him in a contented mood. Owing to such a handicap the portrait I made of him took of course more time than otherwise would have been the case. After three hours I had not quite finished the sketch. However, the minstrel apparently had had enough of it and said he wanted to leave. So I called Mani to do the

interpreting for me and inquire what was the reason of his sudden haste. "I have important business to do," he answered curtly. "Please ask him, Mani, what that important business is. If it is something really important, I will of course let him go at once, if not, he should stay a bit longer."

"Well, I want to go and pray," my model answered.

"No, I won't accept that reason for his leaving. By now he has been praying for three hours in my presence. If he wants to say some more prayers he can do here as well," I said to my nephew.

"You see, in fact it is something else I want to do, but that is very important too," the minstrel mumbled. "I want to go and drink a bowl of barley beer ('chang')."

"Of course, that is quite important for him after such a long sitting," I agreed.

"I will send for a double bowl at my expense, and I allow him to drink it here at his leisure. Meanwhile I will complete the portrait." No sooner said than done. The fellow with the handsome wrinkled face sipped contentedly for a long time, and meanwhile I finished my work. But I thought him so picturesque I wanted to draw him once more, only taken from a different angle. After I had paid him his fee, I asked if it suited him to return the next morning. "Impossible, tomorrow. I have some important business to do and the day after I am leaving Bodhnâth."

"Please, Mani, ask him what it is that prevents him from coming again tomorrow?"

"Yesterday I arrived all the way from Tibet across the Himâlayas and this is the very first time I am visiting a region where there are Westerners," he told us. "Now I have heard they own 'flying boats' which do not need any water to take off, but do so by air and land again when and where they like. So tomorrow I intend to spend the whole day at the "air-harbour" to have a look at them."

"Yes, that certainly is an important thing for somebody who has never yet seen it," I agreed. "In that case, it is really better the other portrait never will be drawn. . . ."

Késar, the hero of the epic this old man recited over and over again was, as I said before, the king of the land of Ling, but where this was situated exactly always has been a controversial point. Tibet, Mongolia, and China dispute among each other the honor that it was part of their territory, as the mythical Késar was not an ordinary human being but of divine origin, so a number of supernatural feats were attributed to him.

Somewhere between the eighth and the twelfth century a very

courageous man, called Késar probably was a historical chieftain of the region known as Ling. He may indeed have waged war against the chieftain (referred to as "king" in those times) of Hor. The motive for it was that the latter had stolen his extremely beautiful wife. Here we see another parallel to the Iliad where the abduction of Hélena, the beautiful wife of Menelaos, king of Sparta, became the motive for the war against Troy.

Just as around the historical mystic Pàdma-Sambháva a wondrous symbolical myth has come into existence, thus a wondrous symbolical epic has come into existence around the historical hero Késar. This poetic story is of such an enormous length that a minstrel, when reciting it completely, will have to spend eight hours daily on it during six weeks or more! As much abridged as possible I will give here its strange contents.

52: The Mythical Késar

The birth of Késar, king of Ling, took place on our planet under very remarkable circumstances, because the Incarnation of this divinity served a high purpose. In those times there lived a few kings in or near eastern Tibet—especially in the land of Hor—who were aiming at the annihilation of Buddhism. In reality they were incarnations of demons.

Now the great guru Pàdma-Sambháva abiding in the high heavens knew that only one of the Magi-sages (“dub-tobs”), residing in the Zàngdog-Palri-Paradise, would be able to conquer the demon-kings, i.e., in case he should agree to Incarnate on earth as a hero.

His name was Thúbpa Gawa, but when asked to he said, “During my last earthly existence I lived as a destitute Hindu hermit in the dark forests, constantly absorbed in deep meditation. Therefore I am allowed now to stay in this delightful place. I don’t feel like taking off the yellow robe of the monks to don the clothes of the “hero” Késar in the phenomenal world. Also I would then cause sorrow, and suffer in consequence. No, don’t count on me! I don’t want to go back to the earth.”

“None but you, oh golden god,” so Pàdma-Sambháva tried to persuade him, “will be able to conquer the demon-kings and rescue the True Doctrine, so that all living beings shall be liberated from suffering.”

Finally Thúbpa Gawa gave in on eighteen conditions. For instance, he wanted his father to be a god and his mother a “nâgi” (a serpent half-goddess). He wanted an uncle well-informed in strategic knowledge, three Celestial brothers-in-arms to help him in his fight, and a wife surpassing all other women in beauty. All these boons were granted. The divine As Kènzo would be his father, the demon Tàmдин (spelled “Tamgrin”) or Hayagríva (the protector of Buddhism) his uncle, three gods his brothers-in-arms and the goddess “White Dolma” (or White Târâ) his earthly wife.

The most difficult part was to find a *nâgi* willing to become his mother, but finally the *nâgi* Dzéden (i.e., "the beautiful One") consented and went to the country of Ling. As she asserted she had come from Gong-yul (the "Country-of-the-Night")—since the *Nâgas* live in the inner regions of the earth—people called her Gong-mo ("Woman of the Night"). Gyasa, the nomad queen of Ling, engaged her as a servant. But when her husband, the fifty-year-old king of Ling, Singlèn, fell in love with her, Gyasa became jealous and began to hate her servant. During a long pilgrimage of Singlèn she sent the girl all by herself into the barren mountains hoping she should never return. But Gong-mo did not go far. She sat down on a rock weeping, then fell asleep.

The god As Kèzo, destined to become the father of Késar, descended on earth along a golden rainbow, accompanied by six hundred other gods. Their marvellous pageant sent forth a radiant light which woke Gong-mo. Kèzo approached her holding in his hand a ritual chalice ("bum-pa") filled with holy water. Into this the magician-sage Thúbpa Gawa who was to be Incarnated as Késar had mirrored himself, as in a looking glass. So his essence had penetrated into it, by magic. "Sister *nâgi*," said the god As Kèzo, "don't be frightened. Know that the Precious Guru Pâdma-Sambháva sends me. This chalice contains the supreme among the hundred and ten magician-Sages. Drink!" The girl drank. Then the god ascended back to heaven. And Gong-mo thought she had dreamt.

She returned to the royal tent. The next night she saw a radiant white rainbow descending from the sky, one end touching her head, which opened. From this stepped a little boy, as white as a holy conch shell. He walked three times around her and said "Mother, after me one will come to reward you because you gave birth to me." After this he flew away to the "Western Paradise." The next night a radiant red rainbow descended touching the right shoulder of the *nâgi*. From this shoulder stepped a little boy, as red as a flame. He too walked three times around his mother, saying the same words as his brother, and flew away to the "Paradise of Mármizèt." The next night a radiant blue rainbow descended touching the left shoulder of the *nâgi*. From this shoulder stepped a little boy, as blue as a turquoise, saying the same words as his brothers, and he flew away to the "Paradise of Perfect Joy." On the fourth day at sunrise a sunray touched the heart of Gong-mo and from this stepped a lovely little girl. Around her neck hung necklaces made from human bones. Three times she prostrated herself before her mother, her forehead against the earth, saying the same words as her brothers, and she

flew away on a sunray to the "Paradise of Dolma."

On the fifth day a faint glow appeared above the navel of the nâgi and from this came forth a bag. The unfortunate young servant-girl, who had felt terror-stricken at each new miracle, now fell into a panic and called her mistress to look at the strange object she had produced.

"What can this terrible thing be?"

"We have to show it immediately to Tódong, my husband's brother," cried the queen.

In reality this Tódong was the Incarnation of Tâmdin, but his earthly sheath had obscured his memory as to his divine descent. He was as much afraid as Gyása and advised to throw the bag into the river. This was done.

That night Kurkâr, the king of the land of Hor, had a dream: He saw a marvellous jewel floating down the stream. Therefore he ordered his prime minister, who was a fisherman at the same time, to set out his nets and give him whatever he caught in them. When he had brought Gong-mo's bag to the royal tent, Kurkâr asked the wise lama Tíring "What is this thing?"

"A womb," the learned monk answered without hesitation, and taking a knife he opened the bag. First the red boy came out of it and then the blue boy. However, the third boy who stepped forth into the daylight was not white, but black as night! The three children were raised at Kurkâr's court. Nobody knew they were the "tùlkus" of the three gods who had promised to help Késar in his war against their "own" land of Hor.

The day after she had produced the bag Gong-mo heard a faint voice coming from her heart. It said "Mother, am I allowed to be born from the top of your head, from your "Brahmaráandra"? At once her skull cleft and an egg with three black spots came forth. It broke open by itself and the little boy who stepped out of it had three eyes. His skin had the color of barleycorn beer. But by this time the poor nâgi had become thoroughly fed up with all these strange children she had given birth to. Intensely fearing the anger of Gyása and Tòdong, she took the little one firmly into her arms and with her thumb she crushed the third eye on his forehead.

Then she questioned her newborn son and Késar told her who he really was and for what sublime purpose he had come down to earth as a human being.

In the evening Gyása came to Gong-mo's tent with a stick to beat her servant. But there she saw the child, wonderfully beautiful with his black eyes and his long, lustrous hair. He looked at her severely,

said he was the future king of Ling and added "If you resist me, oh queen, I will probably devour you!"

Gyása fled in panic to her brother-in-law Tódong who had read the prophecies in the family book. He understood that these were now going to be fulfilled and that the strange child was to become the great victorious king of the land of Ling who would be a stern, just, and holy man. Tódong detested just and holy men. Such a righteous monarch was certainly going to thwart his own ambitious schemes! Therefore he decided to kill the boy. He went to Gong-mo's tent, grabbed the little one, buried him alive, and rolled a heavy stone over his grave. Then he went away contentedly.

The nâgi wept as if her heart would break, but from under the earth a voice said to her, "Don't weep, woman, because for me death does not exist. In three days' time I will resurrect and return to you." And so he did.

After this Tódong banished mother and son to a barren, lonely region in the mountains where they lived for years, eating only roots of wild plants, until Pàdma-Sambháva let the boy know that the time for action had come. Then "Chori"—as Gong-mo's offspring was called—transformed himself into a raven and flew straight to Tódong's tent. He said he had come to confer a message from the "Precious Guru" in the heaven world: "King Singlèn had died on his pilgrimage and now he, his brother Tódong, should organize a horse race in which all men born in Ling would be allowed to enter. The terminal had to be a golden throne and the one who would be able to get seated on it first would be the king of Ling. Rich Tàmpal-Gyàltsen, who was the father of the most beautiful girl in the country, should bestow his daughter on the winner to become his wife. . . . Take your best horse, Tódong, you will win the race," added the cunning bird.

It goes without saying that the tribal chief who was so eager for power, wealth, and beautiful women, organized the competition at once. At the very moment this was going to start, young Chori came back from the wilderness. People supposed he was the natural son of king Singlèn by his servant. The boy was mounted on the horse his mother's mare had given birth to on the day he himself was born. Everybody laughed because indigent Chori insisted on joining the race since he was a native of Ling. Of course it was he who became the winner. No wonder: for his horse was in reality the Incarnation of a god! Seated on the golden throne, the fourteen-year-old youth declared that from now on he was to be called king Késar. The beautiful girl Sé-chang-Dugmo sat down lovingly at his feet.

After this the wedding was celebrated. The rich father of the bride gave a marvelous feast during which the lips of the whole population constantly "remained wet" with tea, beer, and brandy!

Késar had a palace built in which he went to live with his wife and mother. Everybody was happy!

About this time old king Singlén returned from his pilgrimage. Although he had an older son by his queen Gyása, called Gyátza, he conceived a great love and reverence for his successor king Késar whom he considered his adopted son. The two young men looked on each other as half-brothers and became close friends. After a short time in which enormous treasures fell to the new monarch and his people, Késar locked himself up in his palace, where he remained absorbed in meditation for many years. His wife brought him his food and once in a while he spoke a few words to his ministers when they visited him to ask his advice on government matters. Nobody else was ever allowed to see the ruler! One night the female messenger of the gods appeared before him. She usually was referred to as Manéné, i.e., "grandmother." "The time has come for the battle with wicked Lutzèn" was her message to Késar.

This demon-king of the north lived in the land of shadows where disease-causing fogs were hanging low in the valleys. The monarch of Ling saddled his miraculous horse and went on his way all by himself. Arrived in the country of the evil sovereign, he came upon his beautiful wife, queen Dumo, who happened to be alone in the palace.

"How is it that my husband has not devoured you?" she asked the intruder in astonishment. "Not even a bird flies around our castle. Not even an insect would dare to come near!"

"It is a mystery," the hero answered. "Know, oh queen, that I am Késar, king of Ling, a descendent of the Celestials, possessing immeasurable wealth. I am a follower of 'the True Doctrine.' If you will help me, handsome Dumo, I will take you with me to my country. This would be to your advantage, for as soon as the cannibal Lutzèn will get tired of you he will devour you too. But in my home you would be happy forever!"

To cut a long story short, Késar persuaded the queen to help him kill her own husband. And so it happened: The hero in the end felled the demon-king with an arrow from his bow. But after having done this, he helped his spirit, which was wandering about in the "Bar-do," to reach the Paradise of the Great Happiness.

Lutzèn's warriors came to the palace-stronghold to revenge the death of their monarch, but no sooner had they seen Késar with his

flaming sword than they all prostrated themselves before him and were converted to the True Doctrine. Now they wanted him to stay with them forever, but the courageous ruler of Ling declined. Then the disappointed men secretly made his head rest on a pillow on which others had previously placed their feet so it exuded impurity, owing to which the mind of king Késar became obscured. He forgot his mission and each night he sent forth a double of himself to share Dumo's bed. Thus six years went by.

This situation would never have changed if the Celestial Bodhisàttva Chèn-resí, the Merciful One, had not awakened the hero from his long stupor. He then saddled his miraculous horse without delay and returned to his kingdom. There he saw many chörtens along the road, which formerly had not been there. These sacred buildings are mausolea, and Késar wondered how it had come about that so many people had died since his departure. Now a falcon without a head flew down to him. In this bird his beloved half-brother Gyàtza had incarnated. He told him how Kurkàr, the demon-king of Hor, with his Hor-pas had attacked the land of Ling. Old King Singlèn had fought valiantly together with his elder son, at the head of the Ling-pas. But the hostile forces had proved too strong. Many of his warriors had been killed. It was Kurkàr himself who, after having cut off Gyàtza's head, had taken it with him to his country to hang it, as a trophy, in a dishonorable place. This was the falcon's sad story. The demon-king had also carried off Késar's wife as his personal possession. Tódong had gone over to the enemy and now reigned as Kurkàr's vassal over the tribes of his own country, belonging to the conqueror. He had taken the nàgi Gong-mo into his personal service!

The hero promised his half-brother to revenge him and all his other compatriots who had been killed as well. After this Gyàtza left his bird-body, which dropped down dead. That very moment he was born in the Paradise of the Great Happiness.

The king of Ling went to Tódong's tent without delay. When the coward saw him coming from afar he became mortally afraid and hid himself in a leather bag. The Celestial Ruler kicked violently against it several times and had the traitor put into prison forthwith. But the divine messenger Manéné came to warn him:

"Give your uncle his freedom, Késar, for he is the tülku of Tàm-din and his power is enormous. He is able to put all kinds of difficulties in your way. Pàdma-Sambháva and the gods are prepared to help you in your war against the three demon-kings of Hor, the extremely

powerful Kur-kàr, and his likewise powerful brothers Kur-nàg and Kur-sèr, the white, the black, and the yellow Kur. ("Kur" means "tent") Also queen Sé-chang-Dugmo has to return to the land of Ling.

53: War Against the Demon-Kings

Késar set Tódong free and marched with him and the other warriors of Ling against the land of Hor. After having lived through many adventures, the hero finally sent all his companions back home again. For it was his duty to conquer the demon-kings of Hor single-handed and subsequently to convert them to the True Doctrine.

To achieve this purpose, the ruler first created a magnificent caravan of many rich traders, nobles, and lamas with numerous servants, also thousands of horses and pack-mules laden with merchandise. But in reality they were all phantoms without earthly existence. This caravan pitched its tents in the grassy fields before the palace of Kurkàr. "Go and tell those people these meadows are reserved for my own horses. If they want to stay its leader has to pay me for the grass and the water they use," said the demon-king to his prime minister Dikchèn-Chempa, who was Késar's "red" brother, born from the right shoulder of his nâgi-mother. But his education at the demon court had partly obscured the memory of his divine descent.

When Dikchèn had repeated Kurkàr's words to the head of the caravan, the latter answered rudely,

"We won't pay a penny! Let your king send his soldiers to chase us away!" And he kicked the red horse on which the red-bearded ambassador was mounted so violently that both fell on the ground.

"This must be Késar, the king of Ling in disguise," thought the minister, and he told his lord and master about his suspicions.

Beautiful Dugmo, who now was the queen of Hor, overheard these words. In the course of time she had come to love Kurkàr. Moreover she had born him a little son. On no condition would she return to Késar.

"Let me go to the caravan leader," she said. "If he really is my former husband, I can recognize him because of a small white spot on his forehead." This was the scar of the third eye that the nâgi had destroyed at the birth of the hero. The chief of men and beasts re-

ceived Dugmo respectfully and presented her with a pair of very costly earrings. For the king of Hor he gave her a saddle, a sword, an iron chain, and eight copper nails. On his forehead there was no white spot.

"Apart from the saddle these presents are very strange," one of the other ministers said. He was a wise man. "They are no proofs of friendship, on the contrary: They contain a menace! I, for one, think they are gifts from Késar."

But Kurkàr answered that his gloomy suspicions were senseless. So everybody kept silent.

The next day there lay a dense fog around the palace and when it lifted, there was no caravan anymore! Not even a single blade of grass had snapped in the meadows where thousands of animals had grazed! Dugmo understood that all that had been seen were mere phantoms: nothing but a warning from Késar, to remind his enemies of his great magic powers, and she was afraid. In the meantime her servant Gartza had found an enormous heap of used tea leaves on the grassy fields. She kicked against it and saw a very dirty little boy sleeping underneath. Weeping bitterly, he told her he had been left behind, probably forgotten by the merchant who had hired him. Filled with pity Gartza took the child to her father, who was a smith. For nine months he taught the foundling everything he knew about the art of forging. It was not long until the young pupil surpassed his teacher to such an extent that king Kurkàr ordered him to work for him personally. "Do make whatever pleases yourself," the monarch said, not knowing he saw before him his arch-enemy in the guise of the apprentice of a smith! "However, it has to be something very, very special" he added.

"All right," said the boy, "give me gold, silver, copper, iron, and also shells."

Herewith he went into the smithy of the palace where he worked for three days, having locked the door. From the gold he forged a lama of natural size who preached Buddhism to a thousand gold monks. From the silver he forged a hundred young girls who could sing with silvery voices. From the copper he forged a general who incited his copper soldiers to be courageous. From the iron he forged a king who explained his laws to seven hundred iron officials. From the shells he made three thousand horses as mounts for the most distinguished metal persons.

As soon as these miraculous dolls appeared they walked out of the palace and started to perform several kinds of actions in the meadows before it. The king, his chieftains, and his court officials

kept admiring them all day long. They forgot to eat and drink. Késar used this opportunity to go to war against the four powerful guardian-gods of the demon-land of Hor, so afterwards they could not thwart his victory. The hero rode on his miraculous horse to the snowy high mountains where a number of gods and fairies joined him, each armed with thunderbolts and flashes of lightning. His Celestial allies harpooned these guardian-gods and he himself killed them with his miraculous sword, while king Kurkàr and his Hor-pas did not pay any attention to his whereabouts, for they were absorbed in the parade of the magic metal dolls!

More strange events occurred at the ruler's court, all of which were brought about by Késar. Queen Dugmo insisted on killing the strange little smith, so her husband sent him to the forest to capture a man-eating tiger in the hope this animal would devour him. "Bring him here and tie him to my doorpost to keep watch over me," the monarch had added laughingly. But the boy accomplished the instruction to the letter and after this he did not show up for three days. During this time Kurkàr happened to be in his room and did not dare leave it for fear of the monster tied outside to his doorpost. None of his servants dared enter. Meanwhile the unwilling prisoner became terribly hungry. Moreover he was compelled to satisfy his natural urges in the room. His anger was dreadful! Finally the apprentice returned, killed the tiger, and liberated his lord.

After this incident the three royal brothers of Hor bethought themselves what they were to do. They decided to summon a celebrated lama to let them know through divination (a "mo"), if the strange occurrences were a sign of Késar's presence. However, the hero knew that this famous lama was an extremely skillful "mo-pa." Would he even be able to see through his own transformation, to recognize him for what he really was? In that case, things did not look any too well for him! So he went out to meet the yogi sent for in the shape of a tribal chieftain with twenty-five phantom horsemen. "Our horses have been stolen. Would you be so kind as to tell us by a 'mo' where they have been taken?" the king of Ling inquired when he encountered the long-haired ascetic, just to put him to the test.

The mo-pa consulted his dice, a number of grains, and his books. Then he answered sadly: "The horses you mention don't exist, the twenty-six persons I see here before me are in reality only one person, called Késar. An accident will befall me!"

Then he continued his trip to Hor. The Celestial hero asked his divine brothers for assistance. They killed the lama with a flash of lightning. Then the king of Ling himself assumed the mo-pa's shape

and as such he went to Kurkàr to hold a "mo" for him:

"Only a short while yet, oh lord," he said, "you and your country will know happiness and peace. Your bad dreams are caused by the head of the royal Gyàtza which you took with you as a trophy from your campaign against the land of Ling and which you hung on the roof of your palace. It has to be taken down and this only by an iron chain that one has to throw up from the ground to the roof. Then the head will have to be buried at the foot of yonder mountain. If this is done, your sorrows will be over."

The demon-king sent straight for the little smith and said "I haven't enough iron in stock for such a long chain with the exception of that big lump in my treasury which contains 'the life' (with this the Tibetans mean "the vital essence") of the Hor-dynasty."

"Sometimes it gives forth strange sounds. No fire is able to melt it."

"Yet this is the very piece of iron we need to forge the chain from," was his answer.

"Leave it to me, but nobody is allowed to disturb me when I am at work." Kurkàr consented.

And with the help of his divine brothers, his god-friends and his Nâga-relatives, the hero finally succeeded. He melted the metal, forged the chain, and threw the heavy burden up to the palace roof on to which the trophy was hooked. Then he climbed up along the iron links and removed the head of his beloved brother from its dishonorable place.

The monarch of Hor sent the boy together with a general and a hundred soldiers to the mountain to dig a grave for it. He also sent his interpreter, called Tòngzeu-Yündub, who was the "blue" brother of Késar born from the left shoulder of his nâgi-mother. (In Tibet a person with a dark skin is called "blue.") His education at the demon court had partly obscured the memory of his divine descent, just as was the case with the "red" brother, the prime minister Dikchèn-Chempa.

When the soldiers were digging under the directions of the general, the little smith suggested to Tòngzeu-Yündub they should try and find a suitable stone for the grave. As soon as they had moved away he caused by magic a landslide that buried the hundred men and their leader. "Quick, save yourself!" he cried, using the confusion of the interpreter to transfer the head of the friend-of-his-youth Gyàtza to the Paradise of the Great Happiness, without being seen by anyone.

The three royal brothers of Hor were terribly frightened by what

had happened. Had not the famous lama said in his "mo" that all danger would be over after the burial of the head? And now it had vanished beforehand, while the lump of iron containing the life of the Hor-dynasty had been used to forge a chain!

After this event Kurkàr dreamt that a god ordered him to command some marksmen to shoot at a certain rock to cleave it. Once more the boy formed part of this group and so did a man called Tobchèn-Thúgeu. He was the "black" brother of Késar, born as the first child from the head of his Nâgi-mother, but the education at the demon court had completely obscured the memory of his divine descent. In all things he sided with Kurkàr against Késar. Therefore it was considered expedient by the Celestials that his earthly sheath should be smashed. The arrows of the marksmen did not cleave the rock, but it opened just the same and a wild, unearthly horseman galloped forth from it, swinging his lasso. Herewith he caught Tobchèn-Thúgeu and dragged him to the mountaintop where four demon-girls nailed him to the rockwall.

That same night Pàdma-Sambháva appeared before the ruler of Ling and said, "Wake up, oh golden king! Your time has come, because the year given you to annihilate Hor is drawing to its end. Before long the position of the planets will change to such an extent that the power of Kurkàr and his friends shall be indestructible, unless it is nullified beforehand. So hurry, Késar!"

The next day the smith-pupil changed himself into a wandering Hindu leading a dancing monkey and an emaciated pack mule. It was not long before the monarch of Hor asked him to hold a "mo" for him to foretell the future. The beggar from India complied with the request and prophesied: "An accident will befall your Majesty. You will not live long. However, it is still possible to change your fate if you put my hat on your head." It was an old greasy hat, but Kurkàr put it on his head for an instant. So did twenty thousand of his subjects after him. The thoughts fled from all of them and their reason became obscured!

A week later the hero came again to his demon enemy, this time in the shape of the tribal god of the Hor dynasty, and spoke:

"At sunrise seven white spiders will come and transform themselves into seven dancers. Tell your wife, your two brothers, your ministers, and all your subjects to go out and look at them, but remain in the palace yourself. On obeying these orders your life depends."

So the monarch, whose reason was obscured, stayed home when all the others went out to watch the "celestial" dancers. Their performance was so wonderful that the spectators forgot everything. Left

alone, the king of Hor got terribly bored. At last he fell asleep. All of a sudden a radiant light shone about the palace. With a bound he woke up and saw righteous Késar before him, clad in his shining armor, his flaming sword in the hand.

The hero asked him severely: "Do you know me, demon Kurkàr? You captured my country, you killed my subjects, you carried off my wife, you decapitated Gyàtza, the friend of my youth, and you hung his head on the wall of your palace! Here I am to call you to account for you acts!"

"Oh, how blind I was, not to recognize your hand in everything, oh you Késar, king of Ling. . . ." the great demon of Hor stammered. He could say no more, because with one stroke of his sword the just Celestial hero beheaded him. Afterwards however, he concentrated his powers on the spirit of this evil monarch who had brought him so much sorrow and he transferred him to the Western Paradise. Because the Sage from the Zàngdog-Palri Paradise, living on earth as Késar, king of Ling, always repaid other people's bad acts with good ones.

At that moment the others returned. Queen Dugmo was the first to see Kurkàr's body. "This is the work of my former husband!" she cried. "All the time he has been amongst us. I always knew!" Dikhèn-Chempa and Tòngzeu-Yündub came forward. The memory of their divine descent now enlightened their minds and they said "We have the same mother as Késar. Let all of us choose his side and convert ourselves to the True Doctrine." Some of the tribal chiefs consented and also part of the people of Hor. But others grabbed their weapons to fight the king of Ling.

At that moment Késar, the "supreme dub-tob from heaven," made his appearance in their midst, surrounded by gods and six hundred Celestial warriors. They killed those who opposed the noble-hearted hero, but spared those who took his side, after which they preached the True Doctrine, promptly converting all of them.

Kurkàr's brother Kursèr who did not want to submit, was destroyed with his Hor-pas. Kurnàg, the other brother of the demon, saw it happen from the top of a high mountain and said to his devoted friends, "It is senseless to fight against such an enemy, let us flee," and so they did. Of course Késar knew their hiding-place but, considering that seven evil men could not cause much damage to Buddhism, he decided to spare them. These seven Hor-pa giants are still alive, concealed somewhere in the high mountains. Towards the end of this earthly period they will rise and destroy the True Doctrine. . . .

Dugmo asked Késar to forgive her. She also implored him to save

her little boy. The hero promised, but before long it became evident that this demon child secretly made preparations to kill him. For this reason the gods caused part of the palace to collapse over his head, so he might die and not harm the Celestials on earth.

At last the king of Ling could say to his faithful ones, "Our task on this planet is finished! Let us return now to a lonely region. I know of a white mountain, the top of which nearly reaches heaven. In there are many caves." All of them went there and Késar gave a double initiation to each of his trusty followers, after which they had to meditate in a cave, each by himself, for three years. Twenty-five tribal chiefs, eighteen members of the Ling dynasty—amongst whom was old king Singlèn—and twenty-one women—amongst whom was queen Dugmo—thus meditated in their own caves. After the appointed time the hero called them together and spoke "Let each of you practice virtue, desiring the happiness of the six groups of Living-Beings. Only in this way you can achieve your own salvation. Whichever of you wishes to stay a hermit until his death can now return to his own cave." All of them returned there to stay forever.

However, Késar kept Dugmo and three other persons who also were "tùlkus" of gods with him. "Let the five of us," he said, "pass three days in profound meditation and then leave the earth." And so they did. After the time agreed upon, the king of Ling and his Celestial companions gathered once more and each of them pronounced the penetrating magic sound "Hik" and then the softer magic sound "Phat," the combination of which separated their consciousness principles from their bodies. In that same moment not a trace of them remained on the rock except their five earthly garments radiating a final glow. . . .

The Celestial Ones had returned to their Paradise!

PART III

1: The Red Cross Center

During my sojourn in Nepal I was invited to do some work for the benefit of the International Red Cross, which aimed at helping the Tibetan refugees. Needless to say I accepted joyously. But in order to be able to do so, I had to move to Pàtan where a weaving-center for them had been established.

Pàtan is a very ancient townlet. To the north, east, south, and west of it and also in its center are found the last remains of five stûpas built during the reign of king Açoka who lived about 250 B.C. Amongst their sacred ruins the Newáris had built several dozen temples, pagodas, and palaces, all of them adorned with beautiful wood-sculpture.

The Red Cross workers had rented a large, dilapidated house just outside the built-up area which served as their headquarters. It belonged to a "C-Rana," i.e., a gentleman who had Rana blood in his veins but who did not spring from a legal marriage of an "A-Rana." Consequently he was not born a general (!) like all A-Ranas (sons of an A-Rana and his first wife), nor a colonel (!) like all "B-Ranas" (sons of an A-Rana and one of his other legal wives). No, he was born just an ordinary major (!) like all "C-Ranas" (sons of an A-Rana and a concubine). This corpulent officer lived with his family in a pavilion next to the Red Cross house. The two buildings together were situated in a large garden, completely run wild and surrounded by a high wall. The only beautiful flower in it was the major's seventeen-year-old daughter who, dressed in a golden yellow sari, would every afternoon roam amongst the weeds, negligently swinging her hips and justly admired by all the male Red Cross workers. Alas! She was strictly guarded by her parents. . . .

The Tibetan weaving-center had been provisionally established some eight minutes further down the stony country road in a Nepalese house situated in a large area which, like ours, was surrounded by a wall. The dwelling was much too small for the ever-

growing group of refugees. So the Red Cross was helping them to build a hamlet on its premises for themselves.

Two Red Cross doctors had organized a center in our headquarters where all Tibetans, also those living in Bodhnâth and other places, got free medical treatment. On special days they vaccinated all applicants. As smallpox has always been a much-feared disease in the Land-of-the-Snow on account of the large number of victims, many people availed themselves of the opportunity now offered.

As a newcomer I wanted first to go and have a look at the gloomy Nepalese house in which—as I had been told—the women started their weaving at nine o'clock in the morning. The Red Cross bought the wool from passing traders and paid the workers their daily wages. The finished products were offered for sale to the tourists. As yet no profit had been made. However, as soon as the weavers would earn regularly, so that this group would be able to support themselves, the Red Cross intended to withdraw from the project in order to establish a similar center in some other place.

Would these refugees also be willing to make friends with me, I wondered. The first contact is always rather difficult. The rest is plain sailing, I mused, while entering the gate of the area which had been reserved for them. A woman ran up to me smilingly, and grasped my hands pressing her cheek against them. She proved to be one of the nomads from Bodhnâth who had posed for me. Now she had come to live here. These people long for friendship and are never ashamed to express their feelings in a sweet and artless manner. Full of pride, my former model showed me a width of material. She had woven ever-changing decorative black-and-white figures on a red background without making use of a pattern. This kind of work was her specialty and she did it with incredible speed. After I had been introduced to all the weaving women on the ground floor I climbed up the rickety ladder leading to the first floor where three large looms for weaving carpets had been put up in a big room. An instructor was teaching the art to a number of pupils. His wife and two grown-up daughters who had mastered the handicraft to perfection assisted him.

Two women were working side by side at each loom. They read the pattern from the back of a finished carpet. The fixing of the pile was not performed in the same manner as in Persia, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Turkey, where short pieces of woolen thread of various colours are knotted, one by one, on the warp (or where the end of the threads hanging down from the respective colored balls of wool—fastened at the upper part of the loom—are knotted on the warp, after which they are cut off). The Tibetans use an altogether different

method. After they have made a knot, they wind the thread once around a thick knitting needle and proceed to make the next knot followed by the next winding with the same thread. So the needle gets tightly fastened to the warp over its whole length. As soon as it is completely covered by the row of loops (which form part of the knotted thread on either side of each knot), the weavers cut all of them in the middle with a sharp knife. Then they start anew with a series of knots on the warp and loops around the needle (which has now become free once more). Having fixed the row of knots still more securely along the whole width of the carpet by inserting the next woof, they press this horizontal thread down firmly by tapping it vigorously over and over again with a broad weaving-fork, so the next row of knots will be as close as possible to the former one.

On the story of the carpet looms there were also two small side rooms. One of them was occupied by a shoemaker, the other by a tailor and his assistants, all of them Tibetans working for the community. They too received their daily wages from the Red Cross. On the top floor some women were weaving many-colored widths of striped cloth, three of which are always sown together to make an ornamental apron. Others specialized in narrow strips of decorative patterns to be used as sashes, and the smaller size to fasten the felt boots with, just below the knee.

Next I paid a visit to the tents where young girls and old women were carding and spinning wool. This was the easiest job, and those who could not do any other work were paid less than the weavers.

Then I went to the workshop to have a look at the men who were being trained as carpenters. They appeared to have a great talent for this craft. The timber was to be used for the five emergency dwellings which were being built for the group. They merely consisted of one large room with three earthen walls. The fourth side was shut off with hand-pleated bamboo-mats. The roof was going to be covered with straw and the floor with bricks. Each of these abodes would be occupied by several families for the time being. People were working hard to finish them as quickly as possible, for the rainy season was at hand.

Some Tibetans were carrying the stones and the earth for the houses. One of these men had a newborn tied to his back, for his wife had recently died. As he had been a smith—a trade despised in the Land-of-the-Snow, as a rule hereditary in certain families—and since there were no women of equally low birth amongst the group, none of them proved willing to look after his baby! Where could the poor fellow leave the infant except tied to his own back!

Suddenly my attention was drawn by a monotonous buzzing sound, like that of children together repeating their lessons over and over again. Evidently classes were proceeding somewhere near. I walked to the other side of the weaving house and there I saw a lama seated on a small mat teaching eight unwashed little boys. Where I stood I could only see this monk from behind. Nothing about him attracted my special attention. Anyway, such could hardly have been the case, for the voluminous robes worn by the clergy do not allow one glimpse of their figures. However, I looked straight into the faces of the children. Sixteen slanting, beady eyes were staring at me inquisitively. Now the teacher turned round. What a surprise! He happened to be the young lama who one day, together with two older colleagues, had sung holy songs to pappa and some time after had posed for me with his double drum and temple bell. Uttering a cry of recognition he jumped up and pressed my hands. With lively gestures, still holding my hand in his he started to tell his pupils how one day I had ceded my own meal to him. He rubbed his tummy with a sad face expressing the hunger he had felt at the moment. After this he described my drawing: He showed how he had held his temple instruments in the ritual fashion. "Look, boys!" he said. "Like this! A very large portrait made by 'Tàsvir-Mem-sahib.' Yakpo-yakpo, beautiful-beautiful!" I could not have made a more propitious entry into this community: I had the intercession of the most honored and beloved person of the group, the tülku-lama Sèppa-Dorje!

The moment to "close the school" had evidently just come.

"Look, Mem-sahib, I always end my lessons when the shadow of the building touches this stone," the teacher pointed out. "You may go now, children, but first let us once more repeat the formula which will sharpen your intellect!"

Uttered with pride and pleasure these words sounded from the mouths of eight little boys: "Aam ara ta tsa ma dhi di di di di di. . ."

"Enough, enough!" the lama smiled. And then, addressing me, "Will you please come with me to the tent I am sharing with an older colleague, under that tree across the road?"

It was a spacious white tent with decorative appliqué work on its roof. Inside I was greeted in a friendly way by the other monk too. Together the two men led me to their altar with the portrait of the Dalai Lama in a silver shrine, surrounded by some statuettes of Celestial Buddhas and gods. Nor were the burning butter lamps, the bowls of holy water, and a temple vase (búm-pa) with peacock feathers lacking.

“Didn’t you have to sell the beautiful human thigh bone flute, wound with silver thread and set with corals and turquoises?” I asked lama Seppa Dorje.

“No,” he beamed, “I came into contact with the Red Cross people just in time.”

“What about the little gold goddess Târâ which I was not allowed to touch?” I inquired. “I have still got everything” my former model answered, and produced all his treasures from a leather bag lying against the wall of his abode. At this moment some “ânis” (nuns) entered. At first I thought they were old men: With their shaven heads and wrinkled faces, these “Ge-lóng-mas” (accomplished lama nuns) seemed hardly feminine. After having regarded me scrutinizingly they nodded their approval and returned to the weaving-center. The meal for the two lamas was prepared by a few unmarried men in a separate kitchen tent. This reminded me that by now lunch would be ready at the Red Cross headquarters too. Promising to return one day soon I took leave of my old friend and his companion.

2: The Nobleman from Lhasa

It was not long until I made another friend in Pàtan: a nobleman who worked as interpreter for the Red Cross. Let us call him Chúdor. The young aristocrat had attended for some years the mission school in Darjeeling (India) so his command of English sufficed to convey the wishes of the Red Cross workers to the refugees in the weaving-center and vice versa. He could not, however, speak the language faultlessly nor fluently, so I offered to give him conversation lessons, and during the subsequent talks we had together I learned a lot about the life of the Tibetan "jeunesse dorée."

"I am a nobleman of the fourth rank," Chúdor told me. "All in all there are seven ranks. Only the Dalai Lama belongs to the first. Right after him come the 'kungs' ('dukes' one might call them). The father of a Dalai Lama is always given the status of duke and he obtains the right to wear a ritual red button on top of his headgear together with two peacock feathers. He is also given a large country estate, the proceeds of which make him a wealthy man. His descendants are dukes too.

"We, sons of the noble families (about thirty exist in the Land-of-the-Snow), are all of us obliged to fulfill an official government post for a certain time; this is not paid very well. In the first place because our estates yield us a good income anyway, and in the second place because it is customary that those who ask favors from us in our function pay us large sums in return. I know that Westerners are apt to call these emoluments 'bribery,' but we don't see any wrong in them as long as the the sums we accept are not too extravagant. We have also the right to keep for ourselves the fines we impose. After all, Tibet is a feudal state. The nobility has many privileges and the farmers are our subordinates. However, please don't think we treat them badly, madam! When for instance a young son of a landed proprietor is given a teacher—always a lama, of course, for only they are the erudite—to instruct him, the sons of the

tenants are allowed to attend the lessons too, if they feel inclined to do so.

“On the other hand, when a nobleman is traveling through the country in the service of the government, the farmers have to provide food and lodging for him, his servants, and his mounts, free of charge. Sometimes they are also obliged to transport his loads. When they do not possess pack animals they have to carry those themselves to the next stage. This hateful form of servitude—actually a kind of tax—is called ‘ula.’ It has been in existence for many centuries.

“Now I should like to tell you some things of interest about my own family, madam. As you know Tibetan women generally have not many children, but my mother had seventeen! They were not all of the same father, for her husband became a political prisoner for three years. During that time, she took another husband, for such is our custom. I am his son. As soon as the former was released, she returned to him. Of my five half-brothers who are still alive, one became a minister of state.

“As a rule, Tibetan noblemen try and prevent their estates from being cut up after their death. This is rather easy as one of two (or three) sons usually joins the clergy and consequently has no descendants. If, however, there are a number of boys they are often married off to one and the same woman. Thus all of them taken together can never have more offspring than this woman can bear. In that case only one son is actually married to the girl in question. His younger brothers (never his elder ones!) are merely mentioned in the marriage-contract. The eldest husband is considered the father of all their children. His brothers are called “uncle” by the kids.

“Apart from polyandry we also have polygamy in the Land-of-the-Snow. A man is allowed to have several legal wives at the same time as long as he has the means of keeping them. It is not unusual for him to marry some sisters, especially if there are no boys in their family. For then their father will try and find a suitable husband for all the daughters together, whom he will adopt as his son at the wedding. Should the girls have a surname—which is only the case in a few Tibetan families—he obtains that name too and later on he will inherit everything. This is what happened to me. When I was sixteen I got married to two sisters of a distinguished family without sons. Our mutual parents had made up the contract and I was only told shortly before the event. My bride was nine years my senior and her sister five years my junior. Of course my marriage to the latter was not consummated until a few years later, after a domestic ceremony. If a man desires to have several wives simultaneously, as I do, the

fact that they are sisters has decided advantages, for they will always love each other and it goes without saying the younger ones look up to the eldest and do as she tells them. So there will be constant peace and harmony in his home. Both my wives gave birth to a daughter. May I invite you to come and see us one of these days?"

"I should like to very much, Mr. Chúdor. But tell me: Why did you flee from Tibet?"

"Because a band of Chinese soldiers attacked my estate. They probably did so on their own account for the purpose of looting and pillaging. With the help of my servants, I succeeded in driving them away, but after the event I no longer felt safe in our country. So we packed the most essential objects we needed—to take more with us was impossible—besides the statues of the Celestial Buddhas and gods from our house chapel. Then we mounted our horses and trekked southwards. After wandering about the Himâlayas for a considerable time we arrived here in Pâtan. My work as an interpreter for the Red Cross is badly paid. I only accepted the job to be able to help my compatriots. If my superiors here only knew in what style I used to live in my home country!

"In my house at Lhasa we gave many wonderful parties. We Tibetans love receiving guests in large numbers as often as we can. The more they eat and drink, the more do we feel honored. On such occasions it is customary to invite a few pretty lasses of the lower classes as well to take part in the festivities. It is their duty to urge the other visitors to help themselves copiously! For the servants to do so would be improper! These 'chang-mas' (i.e., 'wine-girls'), as they are called, are dressed very well since the hostess always allows them to wear her own clothes and ornaments so—in a certain way—they are also a kind of 'mannequins.' This way people can see and admire what would otherwise remain hidden in our wardrobes. We Tibetans like to *show* the beautiful things we possess!

"The houses in our capital are exceedingly lovely. They are whitewashed on the outside. Inside, the floors, consisting of small, manycolored stones embedded in loam, have been rubbed with oil for months on end until they look like shining mosaics, while the ceilings are often covered with silk. In our walled gardens there is an abundance of hollyhocks, peonies, asters, and many other flowering plants. Roses, however, will not grow in the country as our climate is too cold!

"Lhasa itself is a marvellous city! In the center there is our largest and holiest temple with its golden roof-pavillions, the 'Jo-khang,' especially built for "Jo-wo-Rimpoche," the precious Lord Buddha.

Around it are three circumambulation roads: the Inner Circle, the Middle Circle, and the Park Circle. The latter is six miles long at least. It runs around the whole City-of-the-Gods, and also around the Pótala-palace hill and the Iron hill (the 'Chàk-poi) with its monastery of lama-physicians. Thousands of pilgrims daily pass along this holy circuit, ever in clockwise direction, of course. Among other things this Park Circle, the 'Ling-khor,' skirts the suburbs of our capital where a strange kind of dwelling is found. These are built with the horns of yaks and sheep cemented together in patterns by loamy earth, quite artistic to look at. It is, however, only people belonging to the lowest levels of society that live in them. They are: butchers and leather-craftsmen (those occupied with the killing of animals), blacksmiths and bow-and-arrow-cutters (those who fabricate the instruments for killing), Ragyá-pas (those who cut up the corpses of men and feed them to the birds and dogs) and also the beggars (who consider begging as a hereditary 'trade'). Oh, how much would I like to show you around Lhasa, madam! Anyhow, you must come and meet my family!"

A few days later the young nobleman came to take me for a visit to his home. He had been able to rent two rooms and a kitchen in a European house, furnishing them in Tibetan style with some square, flat cushions to sit on along the walls. Of course a house-altar was not missing either! In one of the corners I saw Chúdor's saddle. It was short, with a raised point in front and decorated with inlaid figures of gold and silver, a precious object which unfortunately he was no longer able to use.

His wives were wearing their most beautiful apparel for the occasion: brightly colored blouses with long sleeves made of Chinese silk with inwoven flower patterns of the same color, contrasting with their dark sleeveless tunics ('chubas') of the best quality of hand-woven Tibetan gabardine ('pulo'). Their decorative striped aprons were embellished along the upper part and at the corners with brocade. The elder sister wore the family jewels: a necklace of red corals interspersed at regular distances with pieces of amber as big as a fist, reaching down to her waist. Even more striking was her "gao," a splendid eight-pointed amulet-box with a diameter of some six inches made of reddish gold incrustated with sky-blue turquoises. These lovely stones were set in the shape of flowers with a cut ruby in the center forming the heart, the eight points of the gao ending in emeralds cut square. This ornament was attached to a very short necklace of corals ("sherús") and "zis," so it was worn rather close to the throat—where the collarbones join the breastbone—for the Tibetans hold that turquoises impart strength to the bones of the body. More precious than

any other beads are the zis, nontransparent cylindrical stones supposed to protect the wearer from blisters raised by burning. They are whitish with light-brown geometrical patterns and "eyes" (i.e., ovals with a dot in the center). Those with five eyes—the holy number—are extremely rare and very expensive. Sometimes it is said that the zis are agates, but this is decidedly not the case. The lines are clearly etched on them by hand. They have the patina characteristic of antique objects. There is considerable difference of opinion as to what these beads really are, but this much is certain: that they "come from underneath the soil." Maybe they were buried together with the bodies of aboriginals living in the Land-of-the-Snow long before the Tibetans.

Because of their expensiveness, forgeries of zis are often made by etching ordinary stone beads, and nowadays even imported plastic ones are offered for sale. However, none of these can be compared with the real ones, such as worn by wealthy Tibetan ladies.

Around her sleek black hair—curls are considered very ugly in Tibet—Chúdor's elder wife wore a "patú," exactly similar to that worn by Dolma with her bridal clothes. But this noblewoman had simply wound it around her head without the addition of false hair imported from China. The tapering ends had been crossed in her neck and hooked onto her locks.

The younger sister wore fewer ornaments and nothing in her hair. When she saw me admiring the patú she quickly went to the other room to fetch a very decorative hat and put it on. It had a high crown of silver brocade with woven-in pastel-colored flowers. The flaps of Tibetan hats, usually lined with fur, here were lined with a thick fringe of orange silk.

Now the three-year-old daughter, also dressed in national costume, was brought in for me to admire. The other one, born that year in exile, was wrapped in white cloth entwined by crossbands like a European child in the Middle Ages. This is the winterwear for babies, but during the hot summer days they are often exposed to the sun naked and rubbed all over with butter. It seems to be an excellent way of making their skin strong and supple.

There was yet another woman in the room, simply dressed, whose hair reached down to her shoulders. I had observed that many boys and girls wore their hair cropped close until the years of puberty, after which it would *never* be cut again. That is: except when they might enter a monastery, but this always happens in their eighth year. As I told already: whoever joins the clergy will have to shave his head once a month. But why did this woman wear her hair

halfway long, I wondered. Such is never the fashion among Tibetans. How strange! We all drank many cups of salted butter tea and, after having promised the ladies to return and draw portraits of them and the children, I took leave.

"Who was that third woman?" I asked Chúdor on our way back.

"A servant," he answered curtly.

"Then I was mistaken after all. I thought she resembled your wives," I said without ulterior purpose.

The nobleman suddenly looked shy. "I hate telling lies, madam. It is true what you saw. She is the third sister of the women I married: This one I did not marry."

"Why didn't you, Mr Chúdor?"

"I could not: She was a nun at the time and had already taken the vow of chastity. However, when we decided to flee from Tibet, my wives did not want to leave her behind in the country with all those soldiers around. So we went to the monastery where she lived and took her along with us. Since then she has never shaved her hair off anymore, but allows it to grow."

"Why don't you marry her now?" I inquired.

"I should like to, but after all she is still a nun."

"Aren't you married to her just a little?" I asked rather indiscreetly. "Oh no, of course not . . . or rather . . . well, the three of them love me very dearly and compete with each other in pleasing me. . . ."

3: The Red God and the Living Goddess

One morning I was looking out from my window of the Red Cross house over the Valley-of-Nepal with its small reddish mud houses dotting the fields, now covered with the golden-yellow splendor of flowering mustard plants. Our Sher-pa servant came to me and said, "May I remind you, Mem-sahib, that today the festival of Nepal's tutelary god Matsyendra-nâth is celebrated."

"Why yes, of course, I quite forgot! I will certainly go and see the procession."

So I immediately made for Pàtan's main street. An enormous crowd, dressed in their best clothes and wearing flowers in their hair, thronged the narrow thoroughfare, while many others living in the houses on either side were leaning out of the small windows, framed by the lovely national wood-sculptures. From their point of vantage they looked down on the crowds. Hundreds of Tibetans too had come to attend the festivities.

At dawn the statue of the red "Lord" ("nâth") Matsyendra had been taken from its temple and washed in the holy river Vishnumâti. Afterwards the priests had wrapped it in a new garb and placed it reverently on a palanquin to be carried with much pomp and splendor to its coach-of-state waiting in readiness. The past weeks the populace had been busy assembling and putting together the several parts of this vehicle which had been separately stowed away since last used in the previous year's procession. It was a gigantic structure on four disk-wheels of more than human height. On each of them three eyes had been painted. The nether part of the coach-of-state itself was constructed like a narrow temple with carved gilt decorations. It was crowned with a high tapering tower made of osier twigs, fir branches, and red flags. Its peak, about sixty feet high, swayed dangerously in the wind. In front of the temple-coach a pole was fixed, fifteen feet long, its end adorned with an enormous copper mask representing the three-eyed goddess Kâli, the "black" or unmanifest aspect of the Great Mother.

The mask showed an open "blood-smeared" mouth (innocent red paint). Pious people had stuffed it full of boiled rice. Kâli also possessed two small copper hands, placed a little further down the pole. She held them up in a gesture of supplication, for this goddess always demands blood! Apart from the required hundred sacrificial buffaloes, also many goats and other animals are slaughtered for the Great Mother every year on the day of her celebration. I have already mentioned that in the past her fanatic worshippers used to sacrifice human beings—always of the male sex—in her honor. She seems somehow to be connected with the red god Matsyendra, for her image is always to be found on the temple-coaches carrying his statue.

After many lengthy and rather incomprehensible preparations, the flower-wreathed god was carried to the waiting temple-on-wheels and set up on a bench inside. Two Brahmin priests, dressed in long white robes with red sashes and turbans, seated themselves on either side of him, and everything was now in readiness for the procession. Heavy string cables, reinforced with wire, were slung around the hubs of the three-eyed disk-wheels. All the little boys of the townlet instantly grasped them with pious enthusiasm. They were only too eager to commence drawing the vehicle. While the two priests seated inside the temple-coach beat time, the drummers and the cymbalists lined up on either side began to make a deafening noise, and more than a hundred boys shouted: "Ai-ai ai-ai-ai: Zê-ê-ê-ê-ê!" (the Nepalese word for "Go ahead!") three times in succession, after which they started pulling the heavy cables for all they were worth. There followed a dreadful creaking, crunching din: the colossus had made a move forward over the bumpy stones of the road. The crowd approvingly shouted "Ah-ah-ah-ah-ah!" Now the men took over, for it is only the first tug that is reserved for the youngsters. Every day the towering vehicle, bearing the statue, had to be pulled one mile forward, for seven successive days. So: this feast lasts for seven days.

At some distance behind, a similar, although very much smaller, temple-coach of state followed. It carried the statue of Mina, the brother of Matsyendra.

While I stood looking on, a Nepalese suddenly tugged at my sleeve and whispered: "Aren't you the Mem-sahib who, eight months ago, was so much interested in the Living-Goddess of Kâthmandú?" NOTE: See for the complete story *A Year with the Yogis*—of India and Tibet—by the same authoress. "Then hurry and go in that direction over there: You will see the Living-Goddess of Pâtan, who only leaves her temple once a year. She has just seated herself on her throne in front of it!"

"Oh, thank you very much!" I said, and hurried down the main street.

I should explain that according to the Nepalese Hinduists, but *not* according to the Indian ones, the goddess Durgâ, the white or manifest aspect of the "Great Mother," longs to return to her virginal state. So she Incarnates on earth in the body of a very young girl, between two and five years old, belonging to the "Daaba caste," that of the silversmiths. People call this child "the Living-Goddess," the "Kumâri" (i.e., virgin) par excellence. The essence of Durgâ occupies her body until the girl has reached womanhood, which will happen when she is about eleven or twelve years old. Not a day longer, for after this one cannot expect virginity any more in the Himâlayas! From that moment the Living-Goddess is no longer considered a goddess. Another little girl in whom Durgâ's essence has Incarnated has to be found as soon as possible.

In Kâthmandú as well as in Pàtan and Bâtgoan—the capitals of the three former kingdoms in the Valley-of-Nepal—Durgâ thus Incarnates herself, so there are three simultaneous "Incarnations" of her divine essence. This may appear strange to Westerners, but Orientals see it this way: *the earthly sheath in which a deity Incarnates contains but a reflection of his (or her) divinity.* Otherwise he (or she) would not be present anymore in his (or her) Celestial abode for that period. The following simile will give the idea: At night the reflection of the moon in the calm water of a lake has the same shape and colour as the moon itself. The real moon, however, remains unchanged and undiminished where it has always been, no matter in how many places its image is reflected on earth.

I soon arrived at the temple of the Living-Goddess. On the outer steps—in order to be above the level of ordinary mortals—an eight-year-old girl was seated to watch the passing of the red god. Her seat was a copper throne, the top of which consisted of seven silver snakeheads next to each other, forming a kind of halo over her head. Such a strange and sad-looking little goddess she was, too: with her head bowed down and never a smile on her pensive mouth. Her black-rimmed almond-shaped eyes seemed too large for her peaked face, and a third eye—painted—adorned her smooth childish forehead. Her hair was combed back and wound into a tight knot on top of her head, with a wreath of flowers around it. She wore a dress of gold brocade and was literally covered with gems, one of them the classical Newar-ornament of women: a bronze cylinder of some six inches tapering at either end. Around her neck there was a silver chain of large, coarse links; a bronze one made of two inflexible parts to

form a lyre; a brass one of stylized flowers; and another representing a snake. To all this had been added garlands of fragrant flowers. Her upper and lower arms were adorned with numerous silver bracelets. Her tiny ringless hands lay folded on her wine-red apron embellished with little disks of silver. People crowded round her, touching her bare feet strewn with red powder with their "holy" finger—the ring finger—which they subsequently pressed against their foreheads leaving there a mark of the red substance coming straight from the "divine lotus feet." In return for this favor they paid a small coin which (in the girl's name) was accepted and placed on the throne's seat by a dirty little boy who wore nothing but a torn shirt. Meanwhile he kept driving the buzzing flies away from the goddess: with an ordinary kitchen fan!

I was fascinated by this strange oriental scene and could not keep my eyes from the pathetic child. However, after some time the bystanders urged me in hostile manner to walk on, so—as everybody seemed highly excited because of the religious pageant—I thought it advisable to obey. . . .

It was not long before the temple-coach arrived at its destination for that day, where the statue of the red god was received with offerings of flowers, grain, and sweets. Thus ended the initial day of this curious Nepalese feast.

The following week I went round occasionally to have another look at the temple-on-wheels of the Lord Matsyendra, swaying dismally and noisily on its way to the next stage. But the Living Goddess, the poor child whom I pitied so much, remained invisible.

Later on I was told that on the seventh day of the circular tour, before returning to its stationary holy abode, the statue of the red god—as was the custom—had been undressed in full view of the public. No foreigners were ever allowed to be present at this part of the ceremony. Underneath his magnificent ceremonial robes he is said to be wrapped in the original shirt he wore on earth when still alive. This being nothing but a dirty old rag it may possibly have belonged at one time to a very saintly yogi whose name was Matsyendra. Probably in commemoration of him the Matsyendra cult may have started in Nepal.

4: My Pàtan Models

Just as in Bodhnâth, so also in Pàtan many Tibetans posed for me. For instance the weaver Chungda, who excelled in making carpets. She put on her "patú" for the portrait, adorned with mother-of-pearl beads instead of seed pearls, as she was not rich. Being a native of the province of Tsang, she mostly dressed her hair in a way I had never seen: She used a big piece of flexible wood, bent into a semicircle, which she fastened over her head. This she did by tying her numerous thin plaits into two bunches on either end of it, in such a way that the hair was drawn tightly away from her face to the right and the left. They stretched the piece of wood just as a string stretches a bow. The span amounted to two feet at least. She put her patú horizontally on top of her head and fastened its ends to the wood as well. A band, adorned with turquoises, joined its top to the back of her head and thus kept the structure well balanced. (If this description cannot be visualized, please look at my drawing of it). Moreover the whole was embellished with many parallel strings of imitation pearls. I was at a loss to understand how a woman with such an enormous, unsteady coiffure could move about freely.

"All of us dress our hair this way in Shígatsé," Chungda told. "In Lhasa one doesn't see this beautiful hairdo! Pshaw, all those ease-loving women over there wear false hair! They are not willing to suffer a little pain in order to look really handsome the way we do. For the sides of one's head hurt a bit you see, as the hair is pulled away so tightly by the wooden bow! But wait a moment: Together with it I will put on my lovely new earrings," and she took from between her clothes a pair of monstrous gilt ornaments with a big piece of purple glass stuck in their center. She had just bought them from an Indian merchant in Kàthmandú.

"Oh Chungda, cheap Western rubbish doesn't go with your splendid hairdo nor with your Tibetan dress! Please take them off!"

"But Mem-sahib, do allow me at least to hold this in my hand on

29. "Our life in Lhasa was an unending sequence of festivities" were the words of the nobleman who was wearing the silk costume and prescribed turquoise-studded earring of a government-official. "When picnicking in the vast parks around Lhasa, we used to dance in rows to the accompaniment of our song, we played games and held dexterity-contests." (Part III: 6)





the portrait?" she asked somewhat disappointedly, and showed me an ugly plastic bag, as green as grass!

Another woman at the weaving-center belonged to a nomadic tribe. She could only spin, and did so all day long. From the moment she got up she went around with a big skein of wool under her left upper arm to twist a fine thread from it with her slender fingers. A wooden gadget hung down from her right hand and spun around like a top, thus winding the thread around it neatly. When this nomad woman heard about my drawings she fastened dozens of colored agate beads in her numerous plaits and also silver coins with a turquoise or coral in their center. Then she draped around her body a lovely coat lined with fleece and trimmed with beaver. On the black material she had sewn parallel bands of blue, green, and red. Thus she walked up and down in front of me spinning all the time, in the hope I should choose her for the next portrait I would draw. Of course I did, for she looked chic in her artistic attire!

Her seventeen-year-old daughter, Shérab-Únzang, was a vivacious and temperamental girl who tried to turn every man's head with her tender glances and alluring gestures. This purpose she achieved exceedingly well! With "childish" naiveté she took the hand of the young nobleman Chúdor and stroked it until the blood mounted to his cheeks. A moment later she tried her charms on the carpenter, swinging her hips as she walked about him, although meanwhile she glanced coquettishly at a casual passer-by.

"Do you want to pose for me too, Shérab-Únzang?" I asked her.

"Máré, máré, Mem-sahib" ("no, no madam"), she answered teasingly.

"Well then, do it just the same! Tomorrow I will be waiting for you in the Red Cross house," I stated without paying attention to her refusal.

However, she did not appear. So I went to fetch her and "quite by chance" she had her best clothes on while having borrowed the necklaces of all her girlfriends for that day! She sat for me willingly. Some days later I made yet another portrait of her in the way she used to go about in the weaving-center, dressed in a dirty red blouse and a dark "chúba" with an old moth-eaten hat on her head. Thus she looked prettier in my eyes because of her naturalness.

Who else posed for me during that time I worked for the Red Cross? Oh, I remember: a man with finely cut features wearing a big red cap embellished with fox fur. While I was drawing him he asked my permission, now and then, to come and see how his portrait progressed. Each time he looked at his image in amazement. Then,

{30. "Whoever wants to look beautiful has to suffer" is the opinion of the ladies in the province of Tsang. They have a *coiffure* for which they use a flexible stick, kept fixed by stretching it like a bow with a great number of thin plaits on either side of the head. (Part III: 4)

from the folds of his coat, he would produce a little box on the cover of which was fastened a weathered mirror and study himself in it carefully. After this he inspected my product again, nodded his approval and went on posing. Once he pointed at a tiny birthmark on his cheek and said: "You forgot this."

I also portrayed a nomad youth. He belonged to the type which during puberty—anyway in European eyes—looked a bit girlish, although when paying attention to his face one could clearly see from his rather heavy jaw he was a young man. He came from the Chang-Tangs where—as I mentioned before—lives one of the most ancient Tibetan tribes. His little protruding nose was slightly bent and his eyes were almond shaped. After his work he used to play a Tibetan six-stringed banjo while staring at me wistfully. Perhaps he saw I was filled with compassion thinking of all the suffering these people had endured. For he would stop playing, smiling in a shy apologetic way. . . . Thus I portrayed him. However, my product did not meet with the approval of the nobleman Chúdor: "This kind of nomad hardly ever plays the banjo," was his criticism. "Such a thing is mostly done in the cities!"

Of course the two monks had to pose too, the young tülku Sèppa-Dorje with his Buddha-like smile and the elder lama. Both were Ge-lòngs of the Sakyá-pa sect and at ceremonial occasions wore big red hats, with a brooch showing the image of the Dalai Lama fastened to them. His Holiness had made known his wish that from now onwards the lamas should teach all Tibetan children, those who wanted to join the clergy as well as those who preferred to remain laymen, in order that his whole people would afterwards be able to read and write their own language, so the profound religious philosophy of the Land-of-the-Snow would not get lost by illiteracy during their exile.

Both monks enjoined me to come and see them as often as possible, also when they were in the act of teaching the children. That was the reason I would come to their tent once in a while. There twelve little boys and four girls (!) had lessons. Their ages ranged from five to fourteen. The instruction consisted mainly of learning by heart wishes of welfare for the Dalai Lama, general blessings, the principal mantras, and the best-known texts of the holy books. Next came the Tibetan ABC consisting of thirty consonants and four signs representing vowel sounds. It is called the Ka-Kha-Ga-Nga. When the kids had made some progress, each received a little paper on which the lamas had written a simple mantra. They had to study the shape of the letters extremely well. Each of them was to pronounce the mantra over

and over again, indicating the written word as it was pronounced. It made quite a noise, all those young voices reciting at the same time. Everyone had his own intonation and rate of speed. This kind of "lesson" went on for hours at a stretch. The purpose of it was that the children should take in and remember the word-picture as a whole, without first learning its letters, as it is the custom in the West. In fact this method is best adapted to the Tibetan way of spelling, where many letters of a word are never pronounced, but must not be omitted in writing.

During my visits to the school, the children wanted to show me their affection too: One skinny little boy had the habit of taking my hand as soon as he saw me and jumping from one leg to the other alternately without stopping. Another whose special favorite I happened to be used to press my hand to his heart while staring at me continuously with pathetic eyes. The expression of his peaked face disfigured by birthmarks was most touching. Of course as soon as I came, the lesson was stopped, so I thought I had better stay away. But when I did the lamas several times sent one of the pupils to the Red Cross house to fetch me. The little ones wanted to know about me and asked "Memme-sahib ming?" (Madam's name?) And when I had told them they all greeted me with a long-drawn-out "Namàsetè Memme-sahib Li-li-i-i-i-i!" Thereupon everybody in turn pointed at himself and said "Ming Tashi-Tyíring" or "Ming Tsúngdo," or whatever he was called. The little boys thronged forward first, after them the little girls. "Ming Dawa" the oldest said in a solemn voice, "My name is Monday." It is quite common in Tibet to give the child for its first name the day of the week on which it was born. Her small fat sister said in a chirping voice "Memme-sahib, ming Pimpa!" ("Madam, my name is Saturday!").

When I sat working in my room in the Red Cross house, the children often came and visited me, uninvited, because our front door was always open. Mostly they came in groups. They were allowed to see my few clothes and other possessions, scattered about my room—strange objects, never seen by them before! If they wished they were allowed to stroke them too, even to use them, with exception of my toothbrush and my comb, that is. Every object was greeted with rapturous cries: "Yak-po, Yak-po Memme-sahib Li-li-i-i-i-i!" ("Beautiful, beautiful Madam Lili!").

Real conversation with my little friends was difficult as my knowledge of the Tibetan language was too limited. So one of the boys started, without my asking him to, to reel off his blessing-formulas learned at school, just to please me. And so did the others.

They wanted to convey to me: "Listen how well we have learned our lessons!"

If, after school hours, I was walking along the country road, the children loved coming with me. Two of them grasping my thumbs, two my three middle fingers together, two my little fingers, and two my wrists, the smallest clutching at my skirt at my back. So the ten of us proceeded carefully, everybody walking in the way of somebody else and, to diminish this difficulty somewhat, they all put their arms around each other's necks. This way we formed together an intricate human tangle which lovingly and harmoniously, but very slowly trudged along the uneven paths of Nepal. . . .

I will never forget these kids, because by their affectionate confidence I felt as if "my Tibetan family" kept ever increasing.

5: The Third Eye

One of the days destined by the Red Cross doctors for vaccinating the Tibetans, many of my lama-friends from Bodhnâth assembled on the lawn before our house waiting for their turn. Lama Chim-pa came up to me:

“Mem-sahib Li-li, the abbot of the monastery wants to see you.”

“Are you quite sure, honored lama? Last time he said he was too busy to give me another instruction.”

The monk shrugged the shoulders and said “I have conveyed the message to you.”

It was still early morning. I borrowed a bicycle from one of the Red Cross workers and started without delay on the long and tiring trip from Pàtan to Bodhnâth over the bumpy paths of the Valley-of-Nepal. It might be true that the abbot wanted to see me and I should not let his benevolent mood pass. Arriving in the holy hamlet, I refreshed myself in the house of my family and then had myself ushered in to my spiritual teacher of the Gelúg-pa monastery. As before he was seated in the lotus posture on the high bench in his office and I sat down on the floor at his feet.

“You called me, Rimpoche; here I am.” The abbot somehow always intimidated me. To the very end I remained in doubt whether this was his purpose or not.

“Has Mem-sahib any special questions to ask?” he inquired. “In a few days’ time I will be leaving for India.”

“The secret doctrine?” I ventured timidly. “I was told there were wise teachings in your country which are never to be divulged to outsiders? I heard the gurus are only allowed to pass them on to their chélas from mouth to ear?” The abbot kept silent for a long time. As a matter of fact so long that a deep calmness came over me. I sat there at his feet as it were without wanting or desiring anything, nor even thinking about anything, but all the same ready to take in whatever Wisdom he might decide to impart to me. It may have been his will-

power which brought me into this condition.

Finally he said: "You know the current concept of karma. Ordinary people, Hindus as well as Buddhists, explain karma this way: If somebody performs a 'meritorious action,' it will (in this earthly life or in his next) produce favorable conditions for him, on the material plane at that(!), while a bad action will produce unfavorable conditions. This is karma comprehended as a system of punishment and reward. An infantile idea of mentally underdeveloped people! Others hold that karma means that by the inexorable Law of Cause-and-Effect our own actions will sooner or later revert to ourselves, hence as a logic inevitably working for good or for bad according to the nature of the action in question. Such thoughts are of a considerably higher level. All the same, the old esoteric doctrine of central Asia is still quite different as to this current way of explaining karma. *We perform each action, driven by a force, don't we? We concentrate our thoughts on something, arrive at a volition, take a decision, and finally we perform an action. What is the effect of this process in our inner being, in the combination-of-aggregates which forms the Phenomenon Man? We change a very little by each action.* Many actions of the same kind will change us ever more in the same direction. Good actions make us good. This is quite easy to see, since by performing many good actions our good intentions and impulses will increase and get stronger in the course of time. They will gradually become a habit, a natural thing to the performer. Bad actions make us bad, according to an analogous way of reasoning. For instance a man who is inclined to perform cruel actions or to hurt others will derive ever more satisfaction from it: He may become a monster of cruelty. The same holds good for all kinds of other actions. He who gets pleasure out of learning will be eager to study and by losing himself ever more intensely in scientific matters he will sharpen his intellect, owing to which he will ever more easily fathom intricate problems. He who is calm and meets his fellowmen with friendliness, sympathy, and understanding will get ever more serene. A beneficent calmness will gradually emanate from him and influence everybody he comes into contact with, often bringing silent aid in other people's difficulties. He who is careless and gives in to it will become ever more careless, not only in regard to material things, but also in regard to mental ones and to thoughts. His mind will get filled with things not properly reflected on and not felt-out completely. The principles of such a person will weaken through negligence and his decisions will get confused. Finally his willpower deteriorates. This ultimately lands him into a mental labyrinth. Briefly: actions influence a person's nature.

"An action originated from strong concentration of mind and performed with great willpower, brings about a very intensive change (transmutation) or remodelling (transformation) in the agent. Moreover, such action will have more enduring effects as a rule. That is why mystic training is directed for the greater part towards concentration of the mind and strengthening of the will. Now considering the concept 'karma' (the word also signifies 'to act') in the light of this discourse, its "reward" (if one wants to use this not-very-sympathetic term) for a good action is none but an inner transformation benefitting the actor. After all, the training of a pupil merely aims at changing his nature fundamentally and leading it into a certain direction.

"Such a one will gradually come into harmony with all things around him and feel ever more happy. His transmutation or transformation will take place for the greater part on the spiritual plane, but in the long run also on the purely physical plane. For does not a man's spiritual attitude radiate from his face? What I have expounded here is the ancient esoteric concept of 'karma.'

"As for the "Secret Doctrine" it was already passed on from mouth to ear many thousands of years ago in the Land-of-the-Snow, long before the origin of Buddhism! As a matter of fact, it was not only secrets which were passed on in this way before any alphabet existed: also an extensive 'unwritten literature' (which was not secret at all). But the latter falls outside the scope of our discourse.

"I deem it expedient to tell you something about this oral passing-on of the Secret Doctrine, as there seems to obtain much misunderstanding concerning it in the West. To start with: how did such a Secret Doctrine come into existence? Let us leave the earliest teachers of humanity out of consideration. Since in all cases the origin of a series-of-secrets arose analogously anyway, I will tell you about the Buddha.

"You remember how the Tathâgata once spoke: 'Why should I divulge what I discovered at the cost of laborious thinking? It would only lead to unpleasantness for me.' Finally he decided to reveal some of his wise tenets just the same to whosoever was willing to hear them. Other wise tenets, probably esoteric yoga-tenets, he divulged in the course of his life of eighty years to the most worthy of his disciples (the spiritually highest developed), whereas he never breathed a word about many other things whose Wisdom he had fathomed. The elect among his followers, especially taught by him, were called initiates or "adepts." Since they had explicitly received his consent to do so, they afterwards initiated their own disciples in the Wisdom they had been taught, but only after a prolonged and careful investi-

gation into their earnestness, steadfastness, constancy, and reliability. *For the Secret Doctrine does not purport to divert the curious-minded ignorant ones, but to help those that are striving for Truth in their quest, after which they "tread the Path" all by themselves!*

"Now the point at issue is: does a guru actually 'reveal secrets' to his chéla? Not in the Western sense of the word. He does in its Eastern sense. *'Truth picked up ready-to-hand from somebody else is worthless,'* as those who teach the Secret Doctrine maintain. *'Only Truth, discovered by oneself, is valuable.'* Otherwise it would be sufficient to read a number of books, wouldn't it? And a spiritual teacher wouldn't be necessary at all!

"To discover Truth one must be able to see 'on the other side' of things, hence beyond what is seen by scientifically and intelligently minded people. In other words: *One has to try and open one's 'Third Eye,' the 'Eye of True Wisdom,' which the Tantric initiates are wont to represent symbolically on the foreheads of the statues of their deities.* Of course such an eye cannot be inserted on anybody's front by a medical operation. I was told this nonsense has been fabricated by a Westerner who wanted to make capital out of the credulity of the masses. *But in what way is one to try and open his third eye in order to see that which will remain concealed to the average man?*

"*One has to practice seeing in a different way, observing that which is hidden under the superficial aspect of the things. One can only realize this aim by reflecting upon a thing independently, not by a 'secret' imparted by somebody else. Contemplate everything around you as if you are looking at it for the first time, so without classifying and labelling it according to former remembrances and experiences. Just stop and think, silent and motionless, about the facts which up to now you have always accepted as self-evident. Are they indeed? Did you ever realize that your mind is constituted of two different series of impressions? The direct impressions originating from the pure contact with a sense-object without its perception being tainted or distorted by images stored in your memory, and secondly the impressions, originated in the mind itself, when coming-into-contact with a sense-object, influenced (hence distorted) by the memory of former images. They are the so-called mental formations (samskâras): the thoughts, the ideas and the various volitions (such as desires and lusts and decisions). All of the latter are rooted in ignorance as to the true nature of things. Therefore none of these impressions are truthfully 'recorded' in the mind (the way they actually are), and their influence contaminates later impressions.*

"Examine also who might be the one to whose consciousness all these impressions are penetrating, the 'spectator' of the World-of-

Phenomena, whom we wrongly call our 'I.'

"He who habitually thinks in the former way— has done so for many years maybe—might *little by little look right through the superficial aspects of things, realizing that his senses cause an impure image of them to reach his mind, an image which doesn't penetrate at all to their deepest depths. Such a one gradually comes to view things with his psychic 'Third Eye,' with the 'Eye of Wisdom,'* which we may have possessed in a premundane era, but which almost everyone of us has lost by the encapsulation of our essence in matter, forever becoming coarser: in our earthly sheath or body. . . ."

"Do you mean to convey to me, Rimpoche, that once we were beings who only possessed an etheric body and that at the time we were much wiser, seeing more and deeper than we do now? Is it owing to a 'fall' we got our present sheath of bones, muscles and blood, lacking the higher qualities of a former period?"

"I thought I had it made clear to you, Mem-sahib, that a person has to draw his own conclusions! But since you keep insisting, I will tell you a myth, perhaps connected with what you are driving at: It might be possible for man to wean himself gradually from eating solid food and subsequently also from liquid food. In the process he would become so light he could freely move through the air. The deepest, so the most hidden desire of each being is 'to return to its origin' and from this wish the myth will have originated. But let us come to the point!

"The 'opening of the Third Eye' is a symbolic expression. What does the Secret Doctrine aim at in ordinary words? Mainly at awakening the seeker-after-Truth from mental sloth. *The oral teachings consist in occasional conversations—usually few and far between—during which the guru suggests a subject to the chéla about which he has to think. This he has to ponder over or to contemplate deeply for a considerable time, finally to come to his own deductions and conclusions. In the next conversation it will appear whether or not he has reached an appreciable result in his meditations. If so, the guru decides the moment has come to guide the course of his thoughts still deeper in the same direction or, on the contrary, in a different direction.*

"Each of these conversations contains as it were a key, but one pupil is now able to open a door to a plane hitherto closed to him, while another cannot find the lock into which the key fits, and a third. . . . might even have his doubts as to the mere existence of such a door! The spiritual teacher cannot be blamed if the 'Secret' is not divulged in these conversations, only the one who is listening."

"I understand, Rimpoche, that you have now handed a key to me and I am convinced that the door exists. I will try and find the

lock in which the key fits: it will be extremely difficult, though!"

"We also have another sort of initiation ('angkur'), but this does not consist anymore in imparting secrets. One could consider an angkur as a psychic operation, enabling the pupil by a transference-of-power of an accomplishment, a skill, to do exactly that to the acquirement of which this angkur is appropriate. As a rule it consists in performing special actions or practices in consequence of which certain physical or intellectual abilities of the initiate will develop. However, he has to take an oath of absolute secrecy, both concerning the fact of his initiation and concerning the nature of the ability acquired."

"Yes I know, Rímpoche. The lama-vendor has told me quite a bit about these angkurs." Page 170 (II Chapt. 21).

"One more thing to wind up with. When a guru has taught the Secret Doctrine to a number of disciples, be it concerning deep spiritual knowledge or concerning special abilities, they are not allowed to instruct others in their turn without his implicit consent. As a rule he will only permit his highest-developed chéla, his 'spiritual son,' to do so. *In this way the chain of the Secret Doctrine has been continued without ramifications throughout the centuries, from the hoary past unto this day.* Through untimely death of spiritual teachers, many secrets have been lost."

The abbot of the monastery raised himself from his bench, nodded to me negligently, and left the small office. I never saw him again.

6: Life in Lhasa

Already several times I had been the guest of the wives of Mr. Chúdor. I had drawn their portraits with and without their children. Now the nobleman suggested he should pose for me himself too, in the Red Cross house. He wanted to do so being dressed in the way he had been in Lhasa. Around his roebuck-brown satin coat hanging down to his ankles he had wound a mauve sash. With it he had a superb brocade hat on topped with a ritual red "button" (made of intertwined strings of small red glass beads.). Its four flaps were of precious brown fur, the one behind being quite long. A costly earring was hanging from Chúdor's left ear. It is compulsory for all government officials to wear this special kind of earring. On the other hand, only *they* have the right to do so! It is nearly eight inches long and consists of a gold ingot set all around with blue turquoises and a huge pearl in the middle. Its rather long pointed end *has* to be made of imitation turquoise. This ornament is hooked into the ear, but—so as not to tear it by its weight—it is also hung around the auricle with a red ribbon. On the right ear a man doesn't wear anything.

Moreover there was a thumb-ring of jade on the hand of the young aristocrat. It was not quite an inch broad. "It serves to protect my thumb when practicing archery," he told me. "This is a well-beloved sport in my country.

"And please, Madam, another thing: Don't forget that my hair, partly showing underneath my hat, should be drawn on the portrait as if it were still long, not cut short like I have it nowadays. With this costume, cut hair would look extremely funny and out of place!"

"I will remember to do so, Mr. Chúdor. Did you wear your hair in two plaits?"

"Of course not, madam. Such is the hairdo of the common people. We noblemen wore our hair beautifully made up on top of our head, adorned with red ribbons or tassels. And in its center a costly ornament used to be fastened. For each rank of nobility a dif-

ferent one was prescribed. I will show you mine sometime at my home."

"I would like to see the exact way your hair was made up. Wouldn't that be possible?"

"Well, you ask for something very difficult! Because don't expect from me to dress the hair of one of the male refugees here in the Red Cross center in a way the nobility used to wear it! Moreover, even then such a fellow wouldn't ever look as we did! The faces of commoners are very different from ours! Sometimes we say (amongst each other) by way of a joke: 'Their faces have become short and flat because during many centuries their ancestors used to carry loads on the head.' In reality this doesn't hold good, for some of them have oblong faces just as we do. But wait a moment! I have an idea: I will dress the hair of one of my wives in the way of a nobleman. Then you will be able to see how my own style of hairdo was! Right? Will we make an appointment for tomorrow?"

So the next day in his own house Chúdor acted as a hairdresser with his younger wife. "Look well how I do it," he said. "The parting in the middle should never end in the neck: it bifurcates just a bit past the crown of the head continuing on either side to right behind the ear. From this place it is plaited and led upwards. But first the back part of the hair having been arranged separately in two plaits, should be joined with the other hair so to all appearances the plaits on top of the head begin down at one's neck. This way it looks stylish! I used to have much more hair than my wives and much more beautiful, too. It is really a pity I had it cut off!" Then he called his elder wife: "Cham!" (i.e., "little wife," an endearment. Tibetan couples never call each other by their first name. That would be very impolite! A wife calls her husband "lord").

When his elder wife came, Chúdor said to her: "Please hand me my hair-ornament? Nó! "And all of a sudden he raised his hand as if threatening her. "Over there on the table it is lying. Try and do something right *once* in a while!!" I was startled: why this unexpected outburst? One could not imagine a more friendly and considerate person than Chúdor! I didn't say anything but looked at him stealthily. His eyes brimmed with tears. For some time nobody said a word. Then the young man turned to me apologetically:

"I beg your pardon, madam, for talking so rudely. Such is not my habit. But when I looked at my lovely hair-ornament again I became so sad thinking of former times, I lost control of myself in this shocking way. Mostly I can wave aside my memories of those happy days at Lhasa, but all of a sudden it overwhelmed me. . . . The gay

and carefree life we noblemen led is a thing of the past. You can't imagine how enchanting was our existence in the holy capital. Our official duties did not make a heavy demand on our free time. From one party we went to the next, always dressed exquisitely in beautiful silk clothes and adorned with costly ornaments. We rode on splendid horses, people greeted us respectfully, and we were generous with money as we had plenty! Especially during the summer, life was one long, glorious feast. We passed that season for the most part out in the open where nature is at its loveliest, the servants pitching our tents in the big parks, the 'lingkas,' around 'the City-of-the-Gods' where groves of willows and poplars grow in the meadows. There we invited families with whom we were on friendly terms to pass the whole day with us, or we were invited ourselves. We used to eat laborious meals consisting of the best Tibetan and Chinese courses, drinking alternately tea and barley-beer ('cháng'). We chattered or played games together—hazard-games for preference—or we organized sports or contests in dexterity among each other. For instance, jumping over ropes as high or as far as possible. Also we practiced archery—shooting at a target with bows and arrows. When dusk set in we used to dance to the accompaniment of our songs: Masters with manservants and ladies with servantgirls, the two groups each in a row linked together always opposite each other. We know many love songs the stanzas of which are sung alternately by men and women. Late in the evening we returned home, tired and contented. So it went on day after day. . . .

"Well, talking about hairdressing: You see how I have tied together the plaits from either side on top of the head. I twist them back and forth over a distance of about five inches having plaited red ribbons in along with them, for their vivid color beautifully sets off the shining blackness of the hair. Subsequently I wind both plaits around and ever around the part of them that has been led back and forth, thus forming a kind of thick horizontal roll. But now watch how it is done: this roll has to be thin in the middle while on either side—where I wind the plaits on top of each other—it has to be as high as possible. This way, as it were, two topknots form themselves, one at the right and one at the left. Finally I sew this ornament in their center." First he showed it to me: it was a kind of brooch made of reddish gold—all gold found in Tibet is reddish—and of course it was set with blue turquoises. He fastened it in the coiffure. It really looked imposing. Then he let his hands rest in his lap and went on as if lost in thought:

"Winter and summer started in our country on fixed days, ac-

ording to the phase of the moon. It was a strict rule with us government officials to change our way of dressing on those dates. Even if an icy wind were to blow and it should be freezing on the first day of summer, we had to appear in our thin uniforms. Even if the sun shone so fiercely it made us perspire on the first day of winter, we had to turn up in our uniforms lined with fur. Tibet has always been a country of rigorous but magnificent ceremonial. Our people enjoyed colorful pageants with pomp and circumstance and mystic priest-dances in costly fantastic costumes, as no other nation.

“The culmination point was formed by our New Year’s festivities, which went on for more than three weeks. In the Land-of-the-Snow New Year, ‘Losar,’ starts at the first new moon in the month called February in the West. We do not give names to our months, we only number them starting with Febraury. Because we know that twelve lunar months don’t quite form a solar year, we add a short extra month every three years. In each month there are ‘lucky days’ and ‘unlucky days,’ but we generally skip the latter by counting the one before twice. We have weeks of seven days.

“The Losar-festivities really start on the last day of the year before. Then great dances are performed by the monks in all monasteries. At these symbolic-religious performances the dancers wear masks representing yaks, deer, and other animals. Those that don’t understand their mystic significance at least enjoy the picturesque show. To amuse the public, some monks make their appearance wearing funny masks.

“On New Year’s Day proper there is private dancing, singing, and feasting of the population in every house. One pays formal calls on one’s superiors while the Dalai Lama only receives his ‘Silon,’ (his prime minister-of-state) and his four ‘Kálons’ (or ‘Sha-pés’) (his cabinet ministers), and of course the very highest lamas from the surrounding monasteries as well.

“The great official reception of the monarch in the Pótala-palace is always held on the second day of the new year. In good time before dawn we, high government officials, set out for the royal residence. When all are gathered in the big ceremonial hall, the priest-king enters in state and sets himself on his lion-throne. A service is held by the hundred and seventy five monks of the Pótala-monastery ‘Námgyal-Choide,’ of which our Jewel-Precious Ruler himself is the abbot. Then all the guests prostrate themselves before our ‘Beloved Sovereign,’ the ‘Innermost,’ the ‘Costly Presence.’ Each of them offers him a white silk khá-ta (ceremonial scarf).

“Subsequently thirteen youths enter to perform a dance together.

Good-looking boys are selected for the purpose in the course of the year and trained in this art. Their show finished, it is the turn of the dance of the 'Protectors of the True Doctrine,' and next four sword-dancers make their appearance, each holding two gigantic swords. Meanwhile, tea is offered to all people present. On long tables dried meat, 'kànbār,' fruits and sweetmeats are put in readiness and the Dalai Lama blesses everything. However, this treat is meant for the numerous palace servants, so they too will have their share of the general feast. Finally for all the guests gathered theological debates are held by the most learned doctors of theology living in the 'Three-Pillars-of-Buddhism,' i.e., the three big monasteries in the vicinity of Lhasa: Dè-pung, Séra and Ga-den. Such debates are extremely interesting and instructive for us to listen to. For remember, madam, *Tibet is a theocratic state!*

"Then the Dalai Lama leaves the throne-hall and repairs to the roof of the palace to have a look from there at the Dance of the 'Sky-Walking Deities': the three inhabitants of the province of Tsang, who glide downwards along a string of yakhair from one of the lower palace roofs to ground level. At the close of these performances everybody goes home, enraptured by all the wonderful things they were granted to attend."

7: Ostentatious New Year's Festivities

"On the third day of the year, the 'Great Prayer,' the 'Monlam,' starts. As you know, it was established by the beloved Reformer Tsong-Khà-pa. It takes nearly three weeks.

"The most holy day of the whole year, however, is the fifteenth of the month, the day of the first full moon of the New Year. For on this day the Buddha Incarnated Himself on earth. (So on this day the conception of the body of Çâkyamuni took place). We celebrate this by the great Feast-of-Light, for isn't He the one who brought Light to the world! On this day at five o'clock in the morning in the icy cold of winter the Dalai Lama pays a ceremonial visit to the famous statue of the goddess Palden Lhamo, the "Protectress of Buddhism." Its place is on the second floor of the Jo-khang, the most holy temple of Lhasa. Subsequently our priest-king delivers his annual sermon in the big square in front of the sacred building, in the hearing of five thousand monks who have gathered there. By now it is six o'clock, and the pale winter sun is seen rising on the horizon. This is the best hour of the day, for in the early morning at sunrise the human mind is fresh and clear after the night's rest. During daytime the mind gradually becomes clouded! That is why we Tibetans always start important things at sunrise.

"After the sermon, all those thousands of monks are served tea, prepared in a few gigantic copper cauldrons (permanently) situated before the Jo-khang.

"In the evening of that day the 'Feast of the Butter-Towers' is celebrated. A person who has never seen these works of art himself can't possibly imagine their splendor! The 'towers' have the form of a sharp triangle, sometimes more than thirty feet high. On a thin frame of wood serving as reinforcement is molded very carefully and artistically a big bas-relief of butter, which covers it completely. It is always a religious representation, for instance a Buddha teaching in the midst of his devotees, surrounded by animals and plants, or something else

along these lines. Great artists devote three months at least on the modelling of such a butter-tower. While they are at work on it they have to dip their hands time and again in icy water to keep the butter from melting. The butter-figures are realistically colored and also gilded, in the places where their ornaments are supposed to be. The towers, obviously very expensive, are gifts from rich lamas or laymen. In the evening the bigger ones are put up in the streets in long rows while the smaller ones are carried about in a pageant. All the people run out to have a good look and admire them. It is really a magnificent show! But before sunrise they are destroyed. It is senseless to keep them, for owing to the coloring matter, the butter has become unfit for consumption.

“Five days afterwards the ritual igniting of the wheat offerings takes place in order to exorcise the evil spirits. And three days later again there is a solemn procession of all the clergy in their superb pontificals, accompanied by lamas playing sacred music. They beat the temple drums and cymbals, and blow on the beautiful ‘ràgdongs,’ the red-copper temple trumpets which (in this gala performance) may measure more than fifteen feet (being carried along on the shoulders of young monks when blown.)

“Finally a screen of over forty-five square feet is hung for some hours outside the façade of the Pótala-palace. On it are depicted Bud-dhas and deities in resplendent colors. It is quite an impressive and soul-stirring representation of great artistic value, at which pious people gaze in breathless adoration all the while it is shown! *Where in the world is one offered a succession of so many wonderful and sublime scenes?*

“It goes without saying that many thousands of monks from all over the country flock together in the capital with ordinary laymen to watch all this splendor. The number of visitors is generally estimated at some twenty-five thousand, while Lhasa itself has fifty thousand inhabitants. So every house has ‘billeting.’ Those that cannot find lodging sleep in tents at the outskirts of the city.

“When the religious celebrations are over it is the turn of the worldly amusements. Two noblemen are invited to be masters of ceremonies. It costs them a lot of money, but it is a great honor to be chosen for this function. The first thing they organize is the horse races. All government officials according their rank and station are expected to have a number of ponies entering this competition. This ensures a lot of participation. The animals, beautifully harnessed, start at sunrise from the monastery of Dè-pung to trot about six miles to a fixed spot in Lhasa. As they are not mounted, they often don’t know

in which direction they have to go. The grooms running behind them sometimes have quite a job to make them take the right way, a thing evoking much gay laughter from the spectators. The owner of the winning animal receives a ceremonial khá-ta, for in our country honor is the only thing that counts.

“After this follow matches, contests, and tournaments in wrestling, weight-lifting, footracing, archery, and so on. To wind up with there is another superb pageant of the noblemen with their ladies, all in incredibly costly attire lavishly adorned with jewels. Behind them march officers dressed for the occasion in antique uniforms. Here too, the winners, the noble couple wearing the most beautiful costumes, are rewarded only with a khá-ta.

“At the close of all festivities there is the ceremony of the ‘casting-out of the devil.’ A lama disguised as a deity chases a ‘devil’ wrapped in a goatskin out of the town. In reality this is a man from the lower classes who offers to play the part in return for a remuneration. The ‘devil’ show symbolizes all the evil of the past year which is now banished forever.

“About this time popular ‘demon-dances’ with a mystic significance are to be seen in nearly all monasteries. They might be called ‘mystery-plays.’ One of the best known has the following plot: First the monks with demon masks perform a wild dance while uttering raw shrieks. Then, wailing and wringing their hands, the ‘wandering spirits’ arrive on the scene. Besides their skull-masks they wear tight black costumes on which are painted the white bones of a human skeleton. Apparently these pitiable deceased, gone astray in the hereafter, will fall a prey to the evil forces. However, a magician willing to help them, then makes his appearance, wearing a black hat. He is the personification of our former Bon-religion (whose priests used to wear black hats), but notwithstanding his earnest endeavors and benevolence he is only able to chase away the demons temporarily. It is not long before they return! However, now the great mystic Pàdma-Sambháva enters the stage, the learned magician and saint who established Buddhism, unstable in Tibet at the time, into a strong, organic whole. It is he who in this mystery-play brings the ultimate liberation, driving away the demons forever and showing the deceased ones the way to the Paradise of the Great Happiness.

“I have just now described the festivities of the first two months of the New Year to you, madam, but throughout its twelve months one feast follows the other in our country. Not all of them are religious. For instance we have theatrical troops traveling around in the Land-of-the-Snow giving performances when invited to do so by the

rich landed proprietors or noblemen or even by the Dalai Lama. His Holiness will invite a large number of guests to come and enjoy the acting in His company. Every troop is only able to play one single drama, but it sometimes takes three days in succession. The children will later on step into the place of their parents as its actors. For these people are—more often than not—mere peasants touring the country between sowing and harvesting. Quite often they don't even own any costumes. They borrow them from the person by whom they are invited. Every spectator is perfectly familiar with the plot of every play, as there exist only a few. Most popular of all is the story about the king's son Visvantāra who gave everything away: his many possessions, the jewel which could fulfill all wishes, his children, his wife, and finally his own eyes. Nobody seeing this deeply moving play is able to keep back his tears. . . ."

8: Situ-Rimpoche, the Child-Lama

When my Red Cross work was finished I went to have a look at the North Indian village of Kalimpong, formerly part of Sikkim. The final stretch of the way to this mountain resort leads through the picturesque valley of the river Teesta—palms, bamboo, and wild banana trees growing in between high timber and firs. Mosses were hanging in graceful festoons from one branch to another, thus connecting the innumerable parasites that covered the giants of the forest. In the shade underneath everywhere daturas were flowering, their big white cups exuding an exotic fragrance.

To the Tibetan caravans which formerly used to travel Southwards, Kalimpong was the first little town in India, hence an important center of trade. Up to now the inhabitants of the Land-of-the-Snow continue to carry on a lively commerce here. Nepalis, Bhutanis, and Lepchas (the aboriginals of these regions who still adhere to the Bon-religion) represent the Himâlayan races in the muddy streets. Bengâlis and Marwâris represent the peoples of India. The latter two tribes have the reputation of being the most cunning and consequently the richest traders.

Also many Tibetan refugees had settled down here and almost at once I came into contact with a lama who wore a very special headgear consisting of many pieces of yellow felt trimmed with red.

The story goes that, during the life of the first Panchen-Lama, a (Tibetan) enemy of his presented this self-designed hat to him with the malicious intent of harming him through black magic. Its tips were to symbolize nine mountains that would crush down on the wearer. But the Panchen Lama, although understanding its meaning, accepted and wore the gift, remarking that it was very auspicious for him! Since then very few lamas have worn this particular hat.

The friendly monk in question whom I met in Kalimpong wearing this headgear at once consented to pose for me. He had a beautiful earnest face and a thin little beard, the wispy ends of which he

wore plaited together underneath his chin. As Tibetans can rarely boast of any growth of hair on the chin at all, a beard is considered extremely handsome so the lama was quite proud of it.

I had already visited Kalimpong before and I had then drawn the portrait of an old lama of the Dzong-chèn sect, belonging to the "Red church." It goes without saying I went to visit him again. He had three wives and many grimy looking children. Moreover, he was addicted to liquor. For all that, he enjoyed a certain fame. Many rich people used to send for him from Tibet to come and recite the holy books to them. If given plenty of arrack to drink, he would do this with such moving intonation that they all hung breathlessly on his words. However, he beforehand always stipulated that he should be allowed to stay in the room in case he had to satisfy his physical needs. People promised to comply with any request and moreover to pay him an enormous amount of money if only he would be so kind as to come! This time, however, my visit to him was not a success: My host was so drunk he simply could not keep his balance. . . .

Next day I boarded the bus from Kalimpong to Gangtok, the capital of Sikkim. One had to have a special permit to enter this little state. The way there wound ever higher into the mountains. The violent downpours of late had caused considerable landslides everywhere. However, the chauffeur of our vehicle drove undaunted over the mounds of soft earth on the road, a reckless feat which made the bus bank towards the deep precipice on the other side. Although every moment we ran the risk of sliding down into it and being smashed on the rocks in its depths, he would not permit the anxious passengers to alight during his dangerous maneuvers. "If I am to perish," he said drily, "I prefer to do so in company."

Formerly Sikkim had a much larger territory than nowadays. "Hordes of strong elephants came from the South, hordes of chattering monkeys came from the West, and hordes of crafty foxen came from the North. All of them seized part of our country," say the history writers. In fact, first the British, (at the time the rulers in India), invaded Sikkim from the South, then the Gurkhas (who had just conquered Nepal) invaded it from the West and finally the Tibetans (who laid claim to the wedge-shaped Chumbi-valley) invaded it from the North. All of them had without more ado seized large slices of territory from the defenceless little state for their own benefit.

As soon as I had arrived in the capital, Gangtok, I tried to pay a visit to the Hutuktu Gyälwa Karmäpa, because I had not seen his hat of fairy hair yet. But it appeared his monastery was situated so far away that I should have to travel by car for four hours, and for two

hours more on horseback to reach it. Moreover, the horses would be in danger of losing their balance on the slippery mountain roads, so the trip would be rather risky in this period of heavy rains. This was why I had to give up the plan.

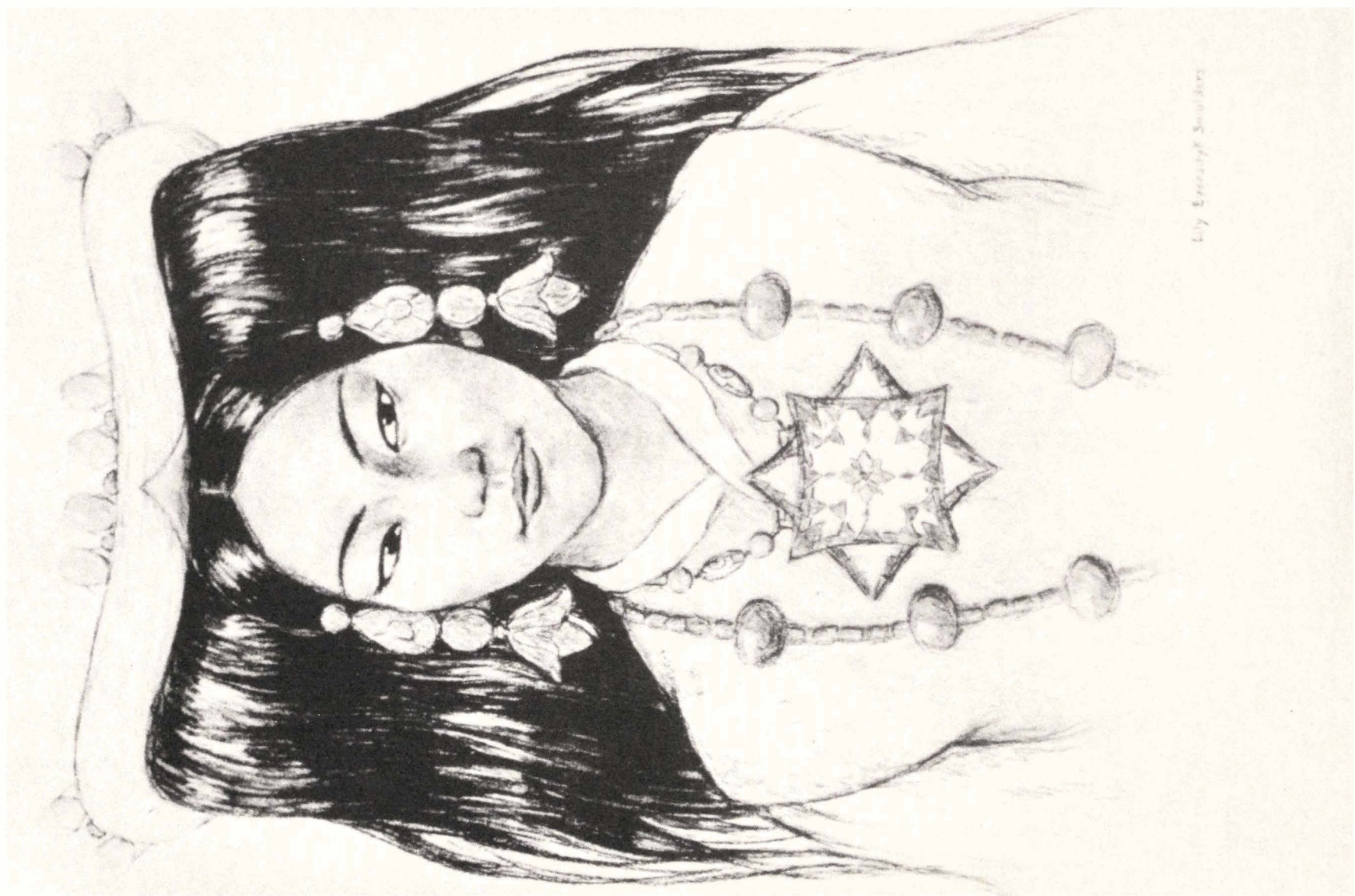
The Mahâraja of Sikkim, Nàmgyal-Tashi, who had heard about my portrait-drawings, invited me to come and call at his palace-bungalow. He was a slim, slenderly built old gentleman, dressed as a nobleman from Lhasa. For centuries the mahârajas of this country had married Tibetan noblewomen, so the dynasty can practically be considered a Tibetan one. The latest passionate pursuit of His Highness (his former ones had better not to be talked about) was painting quixotic, colorful landscapes with queer geometrical diagrams in the sky which he said he beheld as visions in the ether. . . .

Adjacent to the palace was his private monastery. I went and visited its abbot, a high tülku. Outwardly this stout lama had not an air of spirituality, but of course his erudition may have been very great. Amongst the many photographs representing other high tulkus which adorned the walls of his private room I saw one of a very young "Incarnation" sitting on an impressive throne. "That is the picture of the famous Sítu-Rimpoche from Dergé who has also emigrated to Sikkim," the abbot told me. "His rank is equal to that of the Hutúktu Gyälwa Karmápa. He is the fifteenth tülku in his series. I've just heard he is very ill. By now he may have left his earthly sheath!" His words gave me a shock, because when I looked at the photograph I had suddenly felt a deep affection for this child-lama and at the same moment I remembered my Tibetan father once having mentioned his name to me.

I asked for the address of this "holy" child and said good-bye to my host rather hurriedly. Going to the mission school I begged for a Tibetan girl to come with me and serve me as interpreter. Together we went straight up to the house of the little Hutúktu, in a muddy lane just outside the town. All around it high bamboo poles had been driven into the ground on which fluttered flags printed with mantras and religious representations. Apart from the eight well-known symbols of luck, I recognized the wind-horse ("lung-ta") carrying on his back the jewel ("nórbu") that fulfills all wishes. Besides there was the inevitable mystic diagram of "the Ten Powerful Ones." It consists of seven intertwined letters and three symbolic signs.

With palpitating heart I entered the house to inquire after the health of Sítu-Rimpoche. I was received by several lamas who told me to my immense joy and relief that the young Hutúktu had been very ill indeed, but that his condition had improved considerably! Ev-





erywhere one finds people who seem to enjoy spreading alarming tidings!

Eleven monks lived with the child-lama forming his lama-court, for high tülkus are considered a kind of ecclesiastic nobility by the Tibetans. Firstly there was the guardian of his earthly sheath, next his two spiritual teachers, his secretary, his treasurer, and finally some very learned old lamas who had to set him an example by their devout way of living and their asceticism. Moreover there were a cook, the cook's boy, and several servants.

The child-lama Situ-Rimpoche, all dressed in yellow—the color reserved for the clergy—was seated on his cube-shaped throne, behind which hung a magnificent brocade cloth. I had brought along a khá-ta to greet him in the Tibetan way and put it on his wrists he stretched forth. The monks were extremely kind to me when the Tibetan schoolgirl conveyed my request to make a drawing of their adored little saint. They consented at once. "We would love you to draw his portrait," they said, "as this will be a wonderful exercise for him to sit still. He has to become a very learned man, Mem-sahib! We always enjoin upon him it is his duty in this life to improve upon his former "Incarnation." The fact is that in his previous body he passed thirty-two years in continuous meditation! Do you want to see, Mem-sahib, what Síitu-Rimpche looked like ten years ago?" and they showed me a photograph hanging on the wall next to the throne of the child, representing a venerable old lama seated on an identical throne. I turned my eyes from the picture of the deceased abbot to the sweet, vivacious little boy: the child-lama glanced at me with a bewitching smile. There was a mischievous look on his face. At the same time he stretched forth his hand and pinched the ear of the old lama seated by his side on a cushion on the floor. The grey-haired man, already half-blind, raised his eyes to the child with an air of pure bliss and mumbled: "During all those years of his former life I was his secretary and I was so deeply afflicted when he died. Oh, how did I cry! But now he has come back again to us, our beloved master! There he is sitting in our midst, just as before! And all of us are happy in his radiating presence!"

The next day I returned with my paper and chalks and started drawing the portrait. The young tülku was dressed now as a grown-up. His toga was obliquely draped across his brocade tunic with its garnet-red collar and shoulder-caps jutting out majestically, and also over his matching garnet-red skirt. In his beautifully-shaped little hands he held a magnificent gold búm-pa (ritual temple vase) set with turquoises and corals. For an hour he sat motionless, for sitting mo-

(32. When they want to look beautiful the ladies of Lhasa tie a black band around their head, provided with two stiff protuberances on which hangs a lot of false hair (imported from China), just to give their face a nice "background." Over this they wear the special kind of Tibetan tiara, called "patú."

tionless is something in which every lama is systematically trained. But then he started turning about and playing with the búmpa, a thing any child in the West would have done long before! This incurred him a reprimand from his teachers, who walked in and out of the room. The little boy looked at me frightened, expecting I would be angry with him too. But I made it clear to him that I did not mind his playfulness at all, and that he could go on with it as far as I was concerned. It did not hinder me in my work. He understood me at once and again bestowed on me his bewitching smile. From this moment he did everything to show me his affection. The hospitable lamas insisted I should stay with them for the whole of that day. Apart from countless cups of salted butter tea, I received a wooden bowl of rice and vegetables. We had our meal together, everybody seated on his cushion on the floor. As soon as we had finished, each one licked his bowl so it was clean and nice again. For this is part of "good manners" in Tibet. I tried to follow the example, but as I had never attempted this feat before I did not quite make a success of it. Afterwards we got tea once more, this time with sweets. When I prepared to leave that evening and his guardians gave the child a khà-ta to hang around my neck when saying good-bye, he put his two little hands on my head by way of blessing and . . . he pressed his forehead against mine. This final gesture roused some consternation among the lamas of his court, as it was *not* according to protocol! For indeed, does not it mean: "Spiritually we are equally far advanced!"

When my drawing was finished the day after, I asked permission to make an oil portrait of little Sìitu-Rimpoche as well.

"But that would take many days," I added.

"That does not matter," said the monks, "our house is yours." So I became their daily guest. It did not take long before Sìtu, who, properly speaking, was never allowed to be touched by any woman—was he not even taken away from his parents as essential to his training!—climbed on my lap when I was having my tea. It was connived at, for his court-lamas realized this was a natural impulse of the child.

"Ah, you are like his 'ama' (mother) to him," the pious men remarked. "Would you like to adopt and take him away with you as your 'pu' (son)?" and they smiled at their little master with tenderness in their eyes.

Proudly Sìtu now showed me his schoolwork too. Tibetan children learn to write on a little black wooden board. It is brushed all over with oil and then covered with white powder. On this a child writes the letters with a short, obliquely cut bamboo-stick. His teacher

shows him how to draw them. They stand out black against the white surface. The board can be wiped clean any time and be dusted with powder anew. A beautiful handwriting is an ability valued highly in Tibet.

The utmost care is spent on the education of a *tülku*. Such a one does not get his title of "lama" when he is ordained as "Ge-löng" after having passed his final religious examination of the same name (as is the rule with ordinary monks) since he is *born* a "lama" because "it is a fact" he was one already in his former "Incarnations." For all that, it is admitted that "*clothing oneself in a new earthly garb . . . obscures one's knowledge*" acquired in a former existence on earth. So his teachers have to "*remind a tülku of what he knew already without remembering it.*" Moreover, the scientific education of such a child-lama is very severe since he has to be prepared (conditioned) for the high position awaiting him as soon as he is grown up. He is not allowed to play with other children so has hardly any enjoyments in his youth the way his age-group has, living in close company with learned old men exclusively. However, he is surrounded with the purest affection to make up for any want in this respect.

As I did not dare leave my unfinished painting behind in the house of the lamas for fear it might get smudged, I used to take it at nightfall to the dwelling where I was lodged. To reach this place I had to cross the bustling marketplace of Gangtok where pony caravans continued to arrive from Tibet every day. There was always a great stir. It was not long before the Tibetans saw whom my portrait represented and because they felt a deep reverence for Situ-Rimpoche they begged me to allow them to put their foreheads for an instant against the nether end of my painting. The crowds would queue up before me to perform this ritual action of adoration. Part of their reverence reflected on me as the maker of Situ's likeness.

Just because these people always are so exuberant in their devotion towards an "Incarnation of a saint," a child-lama is never allowed to walk in the streets by himself: He is carried by his lama foster-father. The fact is that every time he is seen a crowd will gather around him, people at the back pressing on those in front so impetuously the saintly boy would run the risk of being trampled underfoot from sheer adoration!

Finally my painting got finished. I am inclined to say, "to my regret." The lamas and Situ as well told me forthrightly they were sorry it had not taken more time. To have me around had brought some variation into their monotonous lives, evidently!

It caused me pain to say good-bye forever to this sweet lama-

child. He gave me as a keepsake a red satin ribbon with a double knot in it, on which he had blown (Tibetan: a "songdü," a mighty talisman guaranteeing "long life"), a white silk scarf, and a small piece of gold brocade.

I shall never forget him!

9: An Expedition Starts

After my wanderings I came "home" to my family in Bodhnâth. "What do you think, daughter," asked my Tibetan father, "of joining your brother Ganèsh on a little expedition in the Himâlayas and having a look at our house in Mèlèmji in the district of Helèmbu, near the Tibetan frontier? It is true, a rebellion against the Chinese has just broken out in the Land-of-the-Snow. Fierce fights are reported to take place in the mountains, but on this side of the border, in Nepal, things seem to be quiet so far. Probably after some time it will start here too. Nobody knows, but do not let us bother beforehand!

"Outside our Himâlayan village there is a cave in which I am accustomed to retire for a month every year to meditate uninterruptedly. Just think: without having any of my wives around me! The trek through the mountains is quite interesting too. One has to cross three passes, so all together it will be a climb of about five thousand feet. That is easily done in three or four days. Would you like to join Ganèsh?"

"Oh pappa, I would simply love to, but I cannot climb so much at a stretch!"

"Ganèsh, where are you? Take your sister with you to our house in the Himâlayas and show her our cave. But first send for two Sher-pas to carry her, for she says she cannot walk that distance." Then he said to me: "You see, everything is wonderfully arranged." My brother laughed: "Ah those Westerners, they are never able to walk! What is the difference after all between walking and sitting? The one is no more uncomfortable than the other. Moreover, Westerners seem to be very fragile: whenever they fall one of their bones is broken! Elder sister, please don't fall!"

"Is Kámala accompanying us, Ganèsh?" I asked. "No, uh, some other time perhaps, but just now she shall stay quietly at home, cosily with pappa and my mummy, because—you see—she has had another fearful row with my first wife whom I will go and collect on the way.

Chring is staying with the children at her parents' house in another valley not far from that of Mélémbji. My two wives are equally fond of me and I love them equally much. If only they would love each other, everything would be perfect all round! But when will they have the sense to see it?"

The day of departure got fixed. We were to start at five o'clock in the morning, but punctuality is of no account in the Orient. Even at ten we were not ready to set out. "I forgot to buy enough food to last us on our trip. And I have still to pack various things. Besides, I shall have to hire some Támangs to carry the luggage, because Púnya-Jola, who is at Mélémbji with his youngest wife, has not sent the Sher-pas," my brother excused himself.

"I thought you had asked him by letter to send them, Ganèsh?"

"Ah, sister Lili, what shall I say? Sure I wrote to him, but I forgot to tell him what date I needed them. You see, it would have been much better to have Sher-pas for this trek. They are so much stronger than Támangs, and don't forget: they are 'our' people!"

By now I understood this meant: "We don't have to pay them, we just command their services, for we are the feudal lords and they are our serfs."

"My Tibetan friend Nyíma" (which means 'Sunday'), Ganèsh continued "will join us for the sake of company and because he can cook so well. That will save me paying for a cook. Moreover I have hired a stone-cutter who is a plasterer at the same time. He will come with us too, as I want to build a house for myself in Mélémbji. Including our porters we will be sixteen people. You are the only woman. And of course the little dog Démon will also go along. He just loves trotting in the mountains."

Around twelve o'clock that day everything was ready at last. The China lama solemnly gave us his blessing in the turquoise-colored room. Then we descended to the front door where one of the servants stood holding a copper tray. On this were displayed a vase of "lucky grass," a glass of native wine (its rim adorned with three lumps of yak butter), and three little plates respectively with fruit, hardboiled eggs, and fried fish. "Do as I do!" my brother whispered. He smelled at the grass, dipped his ring-finger three times into the wine and scattered the drops in the direction of the stûpa in front of our house. Then he ate a tiny part of a fruit, of an egg, and of a fish. Thus he performed five ritual actions, as five is the holy number of Buddhism. After Ganèsh had acquitted himself of this religious duty he crossed the threshold full of dignity. Outside on either side of the door stood two copper vases with flowers. Red powder had been

strewn all over them as a sign they were "dedicated to the gods." My brother dropped a coin into them and I followed his example.

We boarded one of pappa's cars, which was to take us to the end of the Valley-of-Nepal, about ten miles from Bodhnâth, where the mountains all of a sudden rose steeply from the plain. The mother of Ganesh and his young wife accompanied us thither. Arriving at the mountainous part of our country, we all alighted. Mummy Ganesh took leave of her son with a brief nod, while Kâmalâ shed hot tears on my shoulder. Parting from her husband for the first time since their marriage was a great wrench. But it was not seemly for her to touch him when others were present. Finally she went up to him, hands folded and head bowed. He put his fingers on her sleek hair for a moment, and then we started on our journey without even once looking backwards.

The little dog Démon ran ahead barking merrily. At first the path was just a long, steep flight of stairs cut of rough stones zigzagging up the mountain. It was sweltering hot, and after a few hours of climbing I thought it might be a good idea to be carried by my Tâgangs, just for a change. I had imagined I should be seated in a swinging sedan-chair which they would carry on two sticks on their shoulders. But instead it appeared it was the custom to climb on the back of a porter and sit on a very narrow board, kept in balance with a broad woven band slung around his forehead. One had to bend forward as much as possible, leaning with the elbows on his shoulders. I did everything I was told, but without much success with either man. My Tâgangs were strong, muscular chaps, but much smaller than I. My long legs dangled down and impeded their walk. "You have to draw up your thighs as far as you can and press them against their body, sister," my brother told me with expert knowledge in these matters. "In fact, you have to adopt the posture of a frog!" I felt I was an unpleasant charge for either of the poor devils and I thought the frog-posture just as tiring as climbing myself. So I took a brave decision and refused letting myself be carried one step further. However, from then on my Tâgangs in turn took my hand during the difficult parts of the journey. They were a pair of nice but shabby fellows, each of them wearing nothing but a small loincloth and a filthy tunic. They probably did not possess anything else. One of them wore a little black cap grey with dirt and the other a little white cap grey with dirt. It took me three days to find out which was which.

Hour after hour we climbed on, now along narrow, cultivated terraces, the Valley-of-Nepal lying far down beneath us, lovely and

peaceful. At twilight we reached our first abode for the night, a rather spacious house where one of "our" Sher-pas lived. The word "Sher-pa" is the Tibetan translation of People-from-the-West. *In fact Sher-pas are Tibetans.* They have the same manners and customs and speak a Tibetan dialect. Their houses too are built in Tibetan style, sometimes with mud mixed with chaff and yak dung, sometimes with an accumulation of natural stone. The ground floor always serves as shelter for the domestic animals and the storage of goods, a steep, dark staircase or a ladder (or even a notched pole) leading to the first floor where the family resides.

In the livingroom of this dwelling the proprietor spread a little mat for me on the wooden floor and sinking down on it I immediately fell asleep. I was even too tired to look around. Later on I was awakened when the evening meal was ready. They handed me a plate of rice and a cup of tea. Only then I became aware I was in a large, unfurnished apartment where about twenty people were seated on the floor around a wood fire. They all seemed to be living in the house and they all were talking at the top of their voices. There was no chimney or even a smoke-hole. So of course the closed space was stuffy and filled with smoke (which had blackened the walls), since now—at dark—the small windows without glass panes had been closed with shutters. So I asked permission to pass the night outside. But I was flatly refused: many bears and leopards lived in this region. I then fell asleep once more on my little mat. The next day we would certainly start on our trek rather early, or so I thought.

But our company, lodged in a little storeroom downstairs, appeared to have been drinking a kind of self-distilled arrack, awfully bad stuff. All of them had a headache and the plasterer was completely "plastered." The Tibetan friend of Ganesh, the only one who had not joined the drinking, started to massage the laborer in an expert way. This Nyíma was a sympathetic, unobtrusive young man and—like all Tibetans—always willing to help anybody. He wore a somewhat strange combination of clothes, to wit a khaki-colored jockey cap, a blue Nepalese tunic, striped pajama trousers, and Tibetan boots. "Have a look at Nyíma," my brother said, who, when other people were working, used to restrict himself to gazing at them full of interest. "He knows how to do everything! His only fault is: he is no good! Because he is a gentleman and a fool! Now take myself," he went on. "I may not be a gentleman, I admit, but then I am no fool either! I know how to enjoy life. No prohibition of strong drinks nor vegetarianism for me! Not only do I love to eat meat, I love to eat anything, whatever it is, as long as it tastes good!"

“That is the reason why you have such a fat tummy, younger brother!”

“Oh shut up, sister Lili, I know that is the reason too I always have such a tummyache! But let me continue my speech about my attitude towards-life! Moreover, I love women, many women, ever-different women! And to think that Nyíma scorns all these wonderful things! He is a gentleman above his waist and an ascetic underneath! Pshaw! If he did not happen to be my friend, I would have a contempt for him, I, the future priest-officiate of the holy stúpa of Bodhnâth!”

10: In the Himâlayas

So it was not early anymore when we continued our journey on that second day. The first few hours we traveled through a lovely wooded region. After this we had to make another steep ascent. Roads or even paths (in our sense of the word) do not exist in the Himâlayas. One walks along narrow tracks originated where the mountain-dwellers are accustomed to go up and down continuously with their heavy loads. However, for the most part one has to follow the stony beds of the brooks. Climbing thus is not an easy feat because together with their water the little streams have carried downwards huge blocks of rock which, by their wild disorder, make it impossible to proceed regularly. But although for centuries these narrow riverbeds have served as paths to all people, nobody has ever taken the trouble to adjust their smaller stones so as to construct a more or less staircase-like passage. After all, why should one! Whoever lives in these regions is famous for his climbing: An easy path is not necessary. Moreover, according to our standard the people here are incredibly strong. Cargoes I could at best raise an inch above the ground are easily carried by the Himâlayan tribes on their backs! Besides, when doing so they run and jump along through the mountains! Only the loading and unloading gives them a lot of trouble. That is why along the most difficult tracks one will find sometimes—in unexpected places—a roughly built “resting-place for loads.” It looks like a very high and very long stone bench to sit on. However, the porters go and stand with their backs against it. Thus they need not lower their cargo more than four or five inches to land it on the oblong stone platform. Afterwards the loading too requires a minimum of exertion. Constructing such a high bench is extremely costly, as the strongest men are needed to carry a considerable quantity of big, heavy stones to these barely accessible spots. Therefore the resting-places are practically always gifts from persons eager to perform a meritorious act “to obtain a better karma” in a next life on earth.

In the afternoon of that second day we met a group of youths and girls, Sher-pas as well as Tibetans, all with enormous burdens, running down the mountain. My brother stopped them. "Some of my Támangs are no good carriers," he said, "and we have to make a rough climb. You are going downwards: please change places with our people and help me to get our loads to the top of the mountain." After some talk back and forth a few of them consented. I saw a young Sher-pa girl transferring the cargo of a grown-up man on her back without any trouble. She turned round and laughingly ascended back to where she had come from. Afterwards I got to know this sixteen-year-old child quite well. She was called Tó-Kelmô and had a nice round face with red cheeks, but in the near future her features would get hollow and sharp from poverty and too-heavy work, just like those of the other women of her tribe who lived on these inhospitable heights. Now she still enjoyed her carefree life, for she was brimming over with vitality and physical strength. Besides, she knew she was desirable!

During the many hours of climbing through the beds of the mountain brooks, my own two Támangs assisted me quite nicely. They pulled and pushed me whenever they could, excessively thankful I did not make them carry me, although I paid them for it. The Tibetans and Sher-pas never seemed to feel any fatigue, and as for the little dog Démon: he made many extra journeys of exploration in the rugged territory so he voluntarily covered the distance of our trek at least three times over, from sheer joy of life!

Now and then it suddenly started to pour and it was unbelievable how much rain gathered at once in the stony river beds. Sometimes we splashed up to our knees through the gushing waters, but we went on climbing astutely without any rest. After such a shower the sun used to break through once more with full power and our clothes got dry in a very short while.

That evening after Nyíma had prepared our meal we begged for permission to put up for the night in a shabby little mud hut. There we slept together with a dozen of its inhabitants, two calves, four goats, and a number of chickens, all in one room, of course with the windows closed! The next morning it appeared that halfway through the night Ganesh and his friend had moved outside to sleep on the porch, in spite of bears and leopards. "Generally we do not mind being troubled by vermin," was their comment, "but never have we been bitten so profusely as in this house!" And in fact they were literally covered with fleabites. I was quite astonished because, although one or two rats had scrambled across my body (a thing I had already

become accustomed to in Bodhnâth), the little insects of this abode had left me completely at peace. Probably it was my different smell-of-cleanliness! The Himâlayan vermin are used to a more pithy body-odor. During a long period of the year it is extremely cold up here, so the population does not wash—as it is much warmer to keep on one's clothes!—and in summertime everybody is so used to not undressing that the washing continues to be omitted.

I mused on the way in which the life of these poor hospitable people is spent. They cultivate part of the unfertile, stony soil for their own use and keep some cattle. Sometimes the men, the boys, and the unmarried daughters of a family carry heavy loads of wood on their backs to the Valley-of-Nepal to make a little extra money on selling it. When night falls, those who did not join the descent sit in their dark mud huts doing nothing, for they do not occupy themselves with home industries. They barely talk together, make love and go to sleep early. Their life is like an endless primitive treadmill without any spiritual aspect whatsoever. It nearly equals that of animals.

On the third day of our journey we first traveled along a mountain saddle. On our right and on our left, far below, we saw lovely valleys, completely uninhabited. Our way led over the top of the mountain on the other side. Through low-hanging clouds, depriving us of our view for some time, we reached a magnificent forest shrouded in a light fog. Nothing in nature is so wonderfully beautiful as fog in a woody, mountainous region. It is as if the world just stops not far away from us. But it does not stop suddenly: between the visible world and the invisible behind it all things assume forms which get ever more indistinct. Once in a while there was a gap in the shifting banks of mist and through this one saw quite clearly another part of the prospect, a great distance away and far higher up in the Himâlayas. Such a sight lasted only for a moment. Then the milky-white trails would shift once more and it was just as if one had had a vision of some planet which happened to pass ours.

My trek across these remote mountains is among my most beautiful memories. From their earliest days on, the stately trees in the forest had been deprived of their branches by the population, who had cut them off quite near the trunk to use their leaves as fodder for the animals and their wood as fuel for themselves. Polled in this manner, they had grown high and straight with strange knotty protrusions where once the ramifications had been, here and there a single twig on their bare, crownless trunks. But large lumps of dark-green velvet-like mosses covered their bark, softening their outlines. Moreover they were embellished by creepers and parasites, many of

them orchids blossoming with white, yellow, and pale violet flowers. Thus, adorned by bouquets and joined to each other by living festoons, these crippled giants-of-the-forest rose up proudly from a vivid green, dripping undergrowth. The trees quite near me—the ones in the visible world—I could admire in all their glory. It seemed as if their ghostlike brothers a bit further off in the foggy distance, showing but dark grey silhouettes, kept watch over them, while the brothers of these latter—still further away and ever paler—guarded the frontiers of the invisible world: a region full of mysterious potentialities. . . .

During our ascent through the misty wood hardly any sound was heard, with the exception of now and then the crunching of a dry branch underfoot, while the orchids spread a sweet, penetrating scent.

Near the mountaintop we found a few tunnel-shaped cabins made with reed mats which belonged to some simple shepherds wearing short necklaces of corals and picturesque shepherdesses wearing long necklaces of corals. The friendly people offered us buttermilk from their grazing yak-cows. At that very moment the fog changed into a heavy shower and we took shelter in one of the cabins. Its floor was covered with picked ferns and a little fire in its center spread a grateful warmth. It was so cosy inside that I would not have minded staying on there!

Going down this mountain was rather easy. At its foot, our group divided. Ganèsh with part of the porters went eastwards to fetch Chring from the house of her parents. He would arrive at Mèlèmji in a few days' time. We others went northwards. The little dog Démon simply could not choose whom to follow, my brother or me. Whining desperately, he kept running back and forth between the two groups over an ever-increasing distance, until finally Nyíma—who was to accompany me and the remaining men straight to our mountain-house—caught him and kept him firmly in his arms. We waved to each other for the last time. Then our comrades disappeared from sight.

Now the most difficult part of the trek was about to come.

11: The Last Straws

In the streaming rain we mounted steeply upwards. The almost invisible track led through a forest without any undergrowth. The decaying leaves made the clay-like soil so slippery that our feet kept gliding backwards. At its other end there was a still steeper rock, quite bare, where the track ended. The downpour changed into a tropical cloudburst, so the whole of the stony slope became, as it were a broad riverbed, the gushing waters washing our ankles. Meanwhile there was one flash of lightning after the other and the violent thunderclaps reverberated sevenfold among the high mountains. All of a sudden, big hailstones came showering down upon us, but nowhere was there any shelter. It became icily cold. I felt so tired that I would certainly have sat down on the rock amidst the torrent of water to take a rest, if white-cap and black-cap had not alternately dragged me along by my hand. At the top, fortunately, a shelter came into sight, an old, tumbledown yak stable. It turned out some Sher-pa woodcutters too had had recourse to it. They were seated on the damp soil inside round a small woodfire. Our little dog *Démon*, who had arrived first, lay down at their feet dripping wet but gaily wagging his tail. As soon as our group entered this dismal abode the men took off nearly all their clothes and held them up in front of the flames, so they got dried, steaming. But not quite, because from above they got wet anew by rainwater coming in through the leaking roof!

"Nyíma," the porters cried unanimously, "You are the cook, please make us some tea?"

"Unfortunately all the tea has been taken along by Ganèsh!" he answered, roaring with laughter. Tibetans always laugh at everything, what is the use of weeping about such small adversities? "We have left only some salt but no butter either! And there is nowhere a little shop in this neighborhood where we might buy something!" All joined in his laughter. After all it was quite a funny incident, or so they thought." We have only got some bread; do you want any

bread?" our cheerful cook asked. "But in that case we won't have anything at all to eat tonight! Ganèsh also took nearly all the bread with him." We voted against eating the bread now, but somebody found a paper bag with a few tea leaves in his pocket. We cooked them with rainwater, making the brew tasty with the last bit of salt. How we relished the weak, hot liquid! The men put on their clothes once more, and when the rain subsided we resumed our journey. "Only one hour more to the mountaintop," somebody said. We had still another hailstorm before we reached it. From here it was not far to a shallow, sheltered valley.

In the twilight two deserted yak stables loomed up. They were built of flat stones piled on top of each other and covered with rough boards. The first leaked terribly, the second much less. The men mended one roof with the boards of the other. With some twigs lying about inside, we made a fire and put the wet pieces of wood we found in the valley around it to dry. When the porters had taken off their loads, Nyíma inspected what we still had in the way of eatables. Once more he started to laugh uncontrollably:

"Ha ha, stupid Ganèsh has by mistake carried off all the food and also my blanket!"

What else could I do but offer the boy one of my own two blankets? I would not have slept a wink knowing that any of our party was suffering from cold. But I myself am such a chilly person that a single blanket did not suffice me during the night at a height of nearly twelve thousand feet in a yak stable with only three walls! Moreover, our tummies were empty and so it came about I was still wide awake at two o'clock in the morning. I got up and went outside. It did not rain anymore. Thousands of stars, other worlds, looked down upon us. Their sparkling silver light made our little valley look entrancingly beautiful. At four our men once more lighted a fire to warm themselves and at five we shared our one and only slice of bread and drank a few cups of hot rainwater.

In the full light of day I saw for the first time that everywhere an abundance of pilewort, windflowers, and primulas lifted their little heads among the blades of grass. We went on our way without delay.

From here the track led over the comb of a mountain chain, many hours of going up and down. On either side of the narrow path were deep ravines. After the rains, the view was quite clear: all around us the high, snowy Himàlayas arose majestically, silver-white against the pale blue sky, a glorious prospect. "Over there is our homeland, there is Tibet, Mem-sahib," the men pointed out to me, their faces radiant: "The Land-of-the-Snow, which can never be praised enough, the

realm of the holy Dalai Lama, our Precious Protector whose Wisdom is as deep as the ocean!" The occupation of their country by the Chinese and the rebellion of their compatriots against the invaders seemed to be forgotten for a moment as an incident of no value because—so they thought now they saw the overwhelming beauty of their "own" mountains once more—How could another nation cheat them forever out of this "impregnable citadel" of snow and ice? Impossible, of course!

Gradually we approached another woody region. Such trees as those growing here I had never seen in my life! I could not believe my eyes! We walked in a forest of high, high rhododendrons. Far over our heads their strong trunks branched out into wide crowns and . . . their wood was red! That is the reason why they are called rhodo-dendrons, (that is: red-trees,) because of their wood, *not* because of their flowers! From beneath we looked up against the enormous glossy leaves. It seemed as if their lower side was dusted with a film of white powder. Among them the big, loose flower-rosettes were in gorgeous full bloom in all shades of purple, magenta, deep violet, and lilac. Their reds were as bright as the flames of a woodfire or as dark as old wine. There were also pink flowers which made one think of the inside of a seashell and others that were as white as the Himâlayas, (that is: the "Abodes-of-Snow") themselves. Usually many trees of the same color of flowers were growing near each other, sometimes a whole mountainside was covered with one kind. They say that in this region there exist more than a hundred varieties of rhododendrons, and certainly I never saw as many different species as during this trip.

We walked very slowly through the fairy-like forest. Suddenly we heard shouts, strange long-drawn-out yelling sounds reverberating, and shortly afterwards many quick footsteps proceeded in our direction. A group of Sher-pas, youths and girls, all heavily loaded, came running and leaping up the slopes, enjoying the glory of their own strength, the wonderful scenery of their country, life itself! These people are so simple they do not sing, each of them merely giving utterance to his own zest-for-life in lusty shrieks. They are picturesque to look at with their black, almond-shaped eyes and their black hair, wearing their blood-coral necklaces. All had adorned themselves with the lovely flowers of the forest. This way the adolescent Sher-pas roam in small parties all across the Himâlayas, for there is always some load or other to be carried somewhere. They run and scream and laugh together. They mate when and with whom fancy takes them on the spot where they happen to be, just like healthy young animals. Sometimes the spreading companies call each other with

strident whistling sounds which they produce by blowing on a leaf, folded back between their lips, To-Kelmô, the sixteen-year-old girl that Ganèsh had taken in his service on the way, sometimes did the same. The few Támang-porters belonging to our group did not seem able to sing either, just like the Sher-pas. But the Tibetans sang various songs while walking, especially merry Nyíma, our Sunday-child (As I said: "Nyíma" is the Tibetan word for Sunday).

After many hours of alternately climbing and descending in the burning-hot sun, all of us got thirsty, but on the mountain ridge there was of course nowhere any water to be found. And we did not have any pots or bottles with us in which we might have saved yesterday's rainwater to take with us. We also began to feel very hungry. During a short rest just before the last steep descent, everybody turned his pockets inside out to look for a little bit of forgotten food left therein by chance. And indeed: one of our men found a few handfuls of "chura," grains of rice, first partly cooked and roasted, which are then beaten until quite flat. They can be kept for months. Usually one soaks them in tea or otherwise in water, so they become all swollen before they are eaten. Each of us received a handful of these white scales and ate them dry. They tasted exactly as they looked: like wood! They gave me a stomachache!

Silently we descended along a zigzag track. When this was nowhere to be seen anymore we had to climb down a gigantic slide of stone blocks. This was on a northern mountain slope, usually shrouded in fog. The combination of almost perpetual shade and great dampness had caused every bit of it to be overgrown with bronze-green moss. In broad, long patches this living carpet had spread over the angular stone blocks and over the many fallen giants-of-the-wood. As draperies it hung from one dead branch to another, forming mysterious caves and caverns with dark openings. It covered everything with a thick green "shroud of death." All other vegetation that once had teemed underneath seemed to have given up its struggle for life completely. Only white orchids flowered here abundantly. Nature, that always adapts itself to circumstances, ensures their survival by the fact that after fertilization the stems of these flowers start to grow unproportionately. This way their seed lobes will project far outside the moss so as not to rot in its moisture. Our footsteps were inaudible on the springy green carpet, and involuntarily we muffled our voices.

From the foot of this slide of stoneblocks we could see the hamlet of Mèlèmji lying far away. We still had to cross three ravines. Then—at last—our goal was reached.

12: The Bon-po Physician

On the outskirts of the hamlet stood the house of my elderly brother Púnya-Jola. He had seen us coming from afar and extended us a hearty welcome. His youngest wife took the baby from her breast and started at once to cook and churn the tea. She also fried an egg for each one of us, in an iron ladle. After this we all went to the double house of pappa's, somewhat further on. Púnya-Jola unlocked the wooden part thereof for our little group, since Ganèsh had sent a message he and his family would live in the stone part. The living-room meant for our use was situated above the stables. It was a big, unfurnished space with a cooking-place in its center, where the men and I had to eat and sleep as long as we were to stay in Mèlèmjì. The porters who lived in the hamlet itself took their leave and went to their own cabins. Nyíma cooked rice, and after the meal all of us at once lay down to rest.

The next day my younger brother arrived with his wife, three of their little daughters, and the other porters. "Clean our room in the stone house right away, Chring," he ordered. "The inhabitants may come any moment to bid us welcome. Sister Lili, you have got to receive them together with us, as you belong to the family."

It was not an hour later before the populace turned up, all those, that is, who did not live for the time being in the huts on the higher mountain meadows with their yaks. Chring and I were seated on the bench with Ganèsh in the middle. The men and women entered silently, greeted my brother reverently—after all he was a lama, although usually one barely noticed it—and bowed their heads to receive his blessings. Although exceedingly poor, they then offered him their gifts: bottles and jars of self-distilled arrack, each adorned at the rim with the three ritual lumps of yak butter. My Tibetan brother shed some drops of the strong drink on the floor as an offering to the gods and poured a very little into the raised hands of each guest. Respectfully sitting on the floor and looking up at him, they were only

then allowed to address him. "Is the honorable Chinya Lama in good health?" Subsequently—pointing at me—"And is this woman yet another new lamini (the wife of a lama) of yours?" Of course it was a great joke and all laughed uproariously. After some more talk they returned to their work.

In the afternoon Ganèsh took me up into the mountain to admire the "meditation-cave" of pappas, but I was a bit disappointed as inside it was partitioned off completely with boards. One was not aware any longer of being inside a rock. Moreover, the room was arranged quite comfortably. After all I should not have expected anything else, as my Tibetan father never had struck me as being an ascetic!

Life in a little mountain village generally flows calmly, and that in Mèlènji was not an exception. The populace—all Sher-pas—refused to believe (although I don't know why) that I was *not* a physician. They thought I denied the fact because I was unwilling to cure their diseases. To soothe them I just went and visited the sick. I disinfected and bandaged wounds, distributed aspirin or quinine, and I even had to give advice in a difficult confinement case. Since I firmly declined any payment, the grateful members of my "patients' " families insisted on pouring out a shallow bowl of their horrible arrack and made it clear to me they would feel mortally offended if I refused to drink it!

"Brother," I said to Ganèsh after a few days, "is there nowhere a small room where I could sleep all by myself? I hate having to spend night after night in the company of all those men! Just think: I never can take off my clothes!"

"But then, why *should* you?" he answered. "All this taking off and putting on again of clothes is completely senseless! However, if you insist, I will put a cubicle at your disposal."

In the course of our conversation we had come to the place where the Tàmang bricklayer-plasterer whom we had taken along from Bodhnàth was building the house for Ganèsh, but he had not made much progress. During the first two days he had to rest from the tiring trip, or so he said. In the afternoon of the third day he started indeed, and on the fourth day he had to have a rest on account of this strenuous feat. The fifth day—that was when we went to see him—he worked once more (!) in the afternoon. But he announced he had to take another whole day of rest not to become overtired! My brother patted him in a friendly way on his shoulder and said, with the sympathy one sluggard feels for the other: "Just take it easy, you are a real good fellow!" Not far away from him the Tibetan carpenter with his little son were busy indefatigably. Day after day I saw how

the two of them cut crude, broad boards from the felled trees. The saw is unknown here.

We looked at them for a while and then walked back. Ganèsh seemed to be thoughtful. Suddenly he asked me: "Sister, why don't you go and see the physician?"

"Why should I, brother, I am not ill. But what do you mean? Is there a *physician* in the hamlet? If so, why is it the people call *me* in when somebody is ill???"

"Oh, they have confidence in you and your medicines, but as soon as you are gone they will send for our 'bon-po' to come too, just to make sure! He is an adherent of Tibet's ancient Bon-animism. That is what the word conveys: he cures with music and by intoning mantras. His practices only have effect when it is dark. I heard that he has been summoned by our neighbors for tonight. Go and have a look at him while he is at work. It is something you are sure to find interesting!"

It was a chance out of a thousand: to see an adherent of the oldest known form of religion of central Asia at his magic practices! As soon as the sun had set I entered the house next to ours. All inhabitants were gathered around the cooking-fire in the livingroom. The head of the family offered me his own goatskin (for sometimes goatskins are used instead of little reed mats to sit on). It was a few moments before I could distinguish anything at all, as there was no lamp. In a corner the sick woman was lying on a bare wooden platform without a mattress. Her cheeks were sunken and she did not move. The fire was reflected in her wide-open eyes.

The Bon-po was an old man. Around his neck hung a leather band on which were fastened at least a score of different bells. He sat cross-legged, balancing with his left hand the drum which was poised on its single leg on the floor. The ritual instrument had a diameter of about one foot—just like a mandarin, only one half of it was spanned with leather. Such a "half-drum" is typical for Bon-pos. Later on I learned it is considered "the house of the goddess." With his right hand, the physician beat a quick ruffle on it with a curved stick: deng-deng-deng-deng! All intervals were the same. With this accompaniment he recited his mantras. Their ritual words, intoned as prescribed, are supposed to cause vibrations of ether which awake the healing power in the patient's body. It is quite possible that behind the ancient doctrine of the mantras there is much Wisdom and perhaps healing power too—both hidden to us Westerners—but in the course of centuries, unqualified ones have added inventions of their own and contaminated its original purity. Unworthy ones have

used it as a means to earn easy money from love of gain, speculating on the credulity of simple people.

Now and then the Bon-po felt "the deity descending into him." Then he jumped up and started to dance, all the while beating a ruffle and intoning his mantras on its cadence. The jingling of his bells became deafening until he gradually quieted down and sank back on the floor, crossing his legs. I wondered what good all this noise could produce to the sick woman. In any case she would *not* be able to sleep while it lasted. Anyway I saw she still had her eyes wide open till early in the morning. Then she closed them . . . forever.

I was glad she never had been a patient of mine!

In the afternoon of the same day, the cremation would take place. The procession circumambulated the hamlet and the surrounding fields. At the head went a man with a t'hangka. Those that made the funeral music followed him. The mourners sang a lamentation with reiterating motif. After them came the populace carrying the sedan-chair with the body. It was folded in the fetus position and tied up so as to form a triangular bundle wrapped in white cloth. On top of it was placed the hat of the deceased: a brown woolen winter bonnet with flap imported from Europe. Around this was bound the "crown-of-the-dead," consisting of five pieces of trapezium-shaped stiff oil-paper on each of which was painted the picture of a Celestial Buddha. On the chest were pinned some flowers and also streamers in the five holy colors. After the procession had three times walked around the small village temple, it set out for the cremation-place at the edge of the forest. Here the stick to which the t'hangka was fastened was driven into the ground and a flat stone in front was converted into an altar with ritual objects upon it. Standing near its burning butterlamps, the lama of the hamlet read out passages from the holy books. Then the deceased was pushed into a crudely built furnace in which the logs of wood had already been piled up. The body proper got covered with fragrant pine-branches. Not until all people had gone home did the lama ignite the wood in the furnace with the holy fire of the butterlamps. . . .

Some days after the cremation we set out on our return trip to Bodhnâth. It was not any less hard than the trek to Mèlèmji: storms, gales, pouring rains, and fog, mud, cold, and biting insects. But all this I barely noticed thinking that before long there would be an end of my wondrous stay with my Tibetan family in the barren Himâlayas. . . .

13: And So It Went on and on and on . . .

After my trip through the high mountains I returned to my home in Bodhnâth. It now was really full springtime and everybody was in mood of spring. My sister Sûrya and my sister-in-law Kâmalâ both were once more in the family way, and so was Daula-mô, one of Punya-Jola's wives. My niece Mîthu danced about the house, most attractively swinging her hips while she sang languishing songs of love in five-tone scale. "You should get married as soon as possible," pappâ said to her. "What a nuisance we still haven't been able to find you a suitable husband."

"No want, *no want*; men-men, baby-baby, cry-cry!!! I *no-like men!!!*" Mîthu answered excitedly.

"Sure you do," said pappâ, and to me: "On the contrary, it is the only thing she wants: a *husband!* She is in love with Mr. Müller and he is very much taken with her. Or is it Mr. Maier? It might also be that Mr. Schulz or Mr. Schmitt? Anyway, it is one of those four brothers from Germany or Austria, or Switzerland—I always mix up those countries—You met them here the other day, daughter Lili, don't you remember? They all spoke Dutch, no I mean to say French. Come on, Mîthu, don't hesitate any longer, it is quite simple: I will send for him. To marry him legally is not necessary as he is a West-erner. You just hang an ordinary wreath of flowers around his neck and he is allowed to take you with him for some time. The financial part of the business I will settle myself. And when you agree I will give you a new dress, all right?"

"No, Mémé, no all right! One time I telling already: Men-men, baby-baby, cry-cry!!! I *no-want marry none man, no-o-o-o-o-o!!!*" Her eyes brimmed with tears.

"But I want marry, yes!" the little girl Dhârmai, the "nurse-boy" of Chini's baby, said unexpectedly, joining the conversation. "I seen sweet India-man, I in-love him!" and her round face radiated.

"What is this I hear, Dhârmai, and you only nine years old???"

You are quite forward with your plans! What is the name of the lucky one?" I asked.

"He nineteen year old, he visit Bodhnâth, he guide to tourist England," Mithu answered in her place.

Dhàrmi put on self-important airs: "His name Uni, I already give kiss, but no-enough, tomorrow I more give kisses fifty. *I want marry him, now, now!!!*"

"Dhàrmai, did you buy those bracelets you liked so much, with the money I gave you, just to look beautiful for Uni?" I wanted to know.

Suddenly the child started to sob. "I ate all money in sweet-shop, now no bracelets, arms empty! Uni no-think Dharmai beautiful."

How much real shame there was in her words and tears I could not possible ascertain, but I gave some money to Mithu to buy bracelets for enamored Dharmai. "Don't give the money to her, she would spend it on sweets once more! And this is for yourself, what are you gong to buy with it?"

"An orange-colored ribbon for my hair!" she answered in delight. "Many, many thanks, auntie."

"Well boys," I asked Mani and Sú-shil who always had helped me so well, "Have you any wishes?"

"Yes, yes", they cried unanimously: "a red necktie!" "All right, I will send them to you!" I promised.

"Sister Lili," Kámala cut in, "of course you agree coming to the wedding of my brother?"

"I would love to," I told her.

"Pshaw," said pappa, "it is a monstrous bride: she has a dark skin!"

"My brother hasn't seen her as yet, Mémé, but I am sure he will not mind. The other day he confided to me: 'I want to have a wife of my own as soon as possible; I don't mind at all what she looks like!' And now my parents have signed the marriage contract with her parents, because the go-between has said the girl was GOOD, and that counts a lot!" Kámala felt disgusted with the opinion uttered by her father-in-law.

"Pappa," I asked. "did you have the portrait framed, the one I made of you? Because a pastel drawing always has to be kept behind glass, as I said to you at the time?"

"Yes, daughter, that is what you said and you see, I thought it was a beautiful portrait, a very good likeness, and everybody thought it was marvellous, so . . . m-m well, it is not here any more now. I m-m sol . . . , no I mean I gave it to . . . uh, to whom did I give it

now? Why, of course, now I remember: I sent it to the Dalai Lama in Mussoori. I am sure he will have been very glad to receive it! Because I myself haven't got the time to go and visit His Holiness, you understand, don't you, daughter Lili?"

"Yes pappa, I understand quite well! Anyway, one can do with a present whatever one feels like. As for me, I don't mind!"

"Then please, daughter Lili, draw another portrait of me so I can again sell . . . I mean give it to somebody else as a present?"

Meanwhile my two brothers sat down on the floor together with paper and pencil, calculating earnestly, their fronts all wrinkled with the effort. "I think I have made a profit of six hundred percent on that big group of knives and swords," said Púnya-Jola. "If I can do yet another good stroke of business, I will be able to marry yet another wife. I saw a very young girl in Mélémbji, and although I am fifty now, I don't feel a day older than twenty!"

"Don't tie yourself down every time," Ganèsh advised. "That is a thing I always shun, although I have just now made at least seven times the purchase-money for that group of Tibetan ponies which I resold to king Mahendra. I amuse myself ever again with a different girl. I have had them already from each Nepalese tribe and of course I have had fun with several Tibetan girls too. I now only want to try and find a white girl from the West to make love to. Once I nearly succeeded: she was an American tourist. I said I was a guide and took her to a lonely temple, but just when she had become willing I myself got too nervous. . . Such bad luck! And now she has gone back to her country." Then, turning to me: "Don't laugh so stupidly, sister Lili, there is nothing funny about such a mishap! Life's only purpose is lovemaking. Nothing else counts! Why don't you admit the truth?"

Thoughtful Quisang entered and served salted butter tea to all of us. "She has now twice as much to do as before," said pappa. "Have you heard already, daughter, that our servant-girl Kipa ran off with the stablehand? Unbelievable, isn't it? She had such a good life here with us!"

"But she didn't feel happy in this house, pappa. It was quite evident! For that reason she always was so surly. . . .!"

Mummy Ganèsh entered; she still did not look quite well. To my astonishment she was accompanied by mummy Sûrya. The companions-in-distress had perforce become reconciled, as during the period of her rival's illness the mother of Darling had once more established herself in pappa's house. I greeted both cordially. Mummy Sûrya took me aside with a mysterious smile: "Have a look, daughter Lili?" And she showed me her hand, adorned with a magnificent

gold ring set with a dark coral. "I bought it from Mémé!" she said triumphantly. It was the same ring that mummy Ganesh had coveted so much, but had thought too expensive!

I looked searchingly at pappà's face. The Chinya lama, the priest-officate of holy Bodhnâth, was seated "as a French King" in all his imposing shortness in his armchair, his fat legs folded under him. He wore his rust-coloured satin coat. With his right hand he turned his gold-and-silver prayer-wheel around and in his left hand rested, motionless, his turquoise prayer-chain. He looked at me in a friendly way and rounded his lips into a pout, as he always did when contented. "You never will agree with me, daughter Lili, as I know you by now," he said. "But this is true all the same: *Money is sweeter than honey!*"

Whenever I recall my Tibetan family, I have before my eyes this scene of our last reunion . . .

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