

LIFE OF
JUNG BAHADUR



BY
PUDMA JUNG BAHADUR RANA

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ASIA AND THE HIMALAYAS.

(ORIGINAL TITLE-PAGE)

LIFE OF
MAHARAJA SIR JUNG BAHADUR,
G.C.B., G.C.S.I., ETC., ETC.,
OF NEPAL.

BY
HIS SON
THE LATE GENERAL PUDMA JUNG BAHADUR RANA.

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H. H. THE LATE MAHARAJA SIR JANG BAHADUR RANA,
G.C.B., G.C.S.I.,
THONG LING PIMMA KO KONG WANG SIANG,
Prime Minister of Nepal and Maharaja of Kashki and Lamjang.

EDITOR'S PREFACE.

[1909]

The editor of a volume occupies a peculiarly difficult position, standing as he does between the author on the one hand and the reading public on the other. But of all editors the editor of a posthumous publication has the most difficult of literary tasks to accomplish, for in his work of pruning and clipping, weeding and trimming, he has to exercise a judgment which is only the technical judgment of a critic, unassisted by consultation with the author. The editor of the present volume has to labour under the further disadvantage of possessing merely a second-hand knowledge of the subject he is called upon to deal with,—a disadvantage which is but slightly counterbalanced by the opposing advantage of personal acquaintance with the author, with whom he remained in pretty close contact for several years, in his capacity of tutor to the young princes.

It was as a result of the above connection that the "Life of Maharaja Sir Jung Bahadur," in its manuscript form, first came under my notice six years ago. But the work was commenced much earlier, having been taken up as early as 1891 or 1892. Perhaps no work of recent times has undergone such vicissitudes of fortune before seeing the light of day, as the present life of Maharaja Sir Jung Bahadur. Interrupted sometimes for months together, partly through failure of materials, partly through pressure of time, it was written to the author's dictation by his Private Secretary, Pandit Bireswara Nath, and was then tossed from one scribe to another, till it was at last ready for the press in the closing months of 1905. General Padma Jung's sad death in June 1906 caused the work of publication to remain in abeyance for some months, till the still more melancholy death of his eldest son

Colonel Piush Jung Bahadur Rana, in the following April, necessitated a further postponement, so that it has only now been able to be got through the press.

It is not often that a work on Nepal issues from the press. And yet the country is interesting in many respects. Its natural scenery is amongst the grandest in the luxuriant East, the portion of the country technically known as the Valley of Nepal being a labyrinth of mountains, deep valleys and rivers, with the sovereign peak of Mount Everest towering above all. Nepal is the home of almost all the wild animals for which Asia is famous; the Terai, in particular, has for many ages been the favourite hunting-ground for big game of successive Viceroys of India and Prime Ministers of Nepal. The mineral wealth of the country must be very considerable, but a great deal remains to be explored in this direction. Nepal is also a great storehouse of ancient Sanskrit literature, and offers therefore a vast field for research to the antiquarian scholar.

The people are interesting too. The chief races that inhabit Nepal are the Gurkhas, or the dominant race, and the Newars, who constitute the subject population. The Gurkhas, like the Dorian conquerors of ancient Sparta, devote themselves chiefly to military matters, leaving the agriculture, the manufactures, and the trade to the Newars, who may thus be compared to the Helots of ancient Greece. The prevailing religion is Hinduism, but slightly different in form from the religion of the Hindus in India, owing to the admixture of Buddhistic elements derived from the faith of the neighbouring Tibetans. The main difference lies in the fact that the Hindus of the Highlands refuse to be bound by the shackles of Brahmanical law, which their brethren of the plains have not yet been able to shake off. But the Nepalese are essentially a pious people, as may be inferred from the existence of countless temples and shrines in the country,

there being no less than 3,000 in the Valley alone. The most famous of these is the temple of Pashupati, which is the seat of an annual festival, held early in summer, and attended by many thousands of pilgrims from all parts of the Hindu world. It is there also that the Nepalese carry their dying to be immersed in the sacred waters of the Baghmati, in token of a final purification. It is there again that the dead are burned, and *suttees* are immolated.

In a country where temples so largely abound it is natural that priests should form a high percentage of the population. These priests are generally indolent men, subsisting on the income derived from lands assigned for their living by pious bequests, or on the offerings of the people made at the temples in their charge. The State religion is controlled by a High Priest, styled the Raj Guru, who is a most influential personage in the country, being a member of the King's Council, and deriving a large income from religious endowments as well as from fines for offences against caste. But there is no spiritual hierarchy, no due gradation among the priests, who are more or less independent of the authority of the Raj Guru, except in so far as the latter wields supreme power in all matters pertaining to religion. Every family of rank and consequence has a special priest attached to it, whose office is hereditary. Akin to these priests is another class of men who exercise a large influence over the life of the Nepalese. These are the Jyotishis, or astrologers, whose services are in constant requisition among the people, for they are consulted (as the Greek oracles were in the ancient world), in every conceivable affair of life, from the taking of a dose of physic by an individual, to the declaration of a war by the State.

The Government of Nepal is a pure despotism, but the King is a mere figure-head, all power being concentrated in the hands of the Prime Minister, who is styled "Maharaja," as distinguished from "Maharaj-Adhiraj," the title borne by

the King. The long succession of minorities from 1775 until 1830 favoured the growth of the Minister's power, and gave rise to a succession of brilliant autocrats like Bahadur Sah, Damodar Pande, and Bhimsen Thappa. The Premier's office has been theoretically hereditary since the accession of Jung Bahadur, but in practice it has gone by usurpation and bloodshed. A shadow of a constitution exists in the shape of a rude Cabinet, of which the Premier is the President, and which consists of the senior members of the Royal Family, the High Priest of the Realm, the Generals of the Army, and a few of the principal civil and military officers of the State, the former being called *Kazi* and the latter *Sardar*. This Council also acts as a court of appeal in disputed cases, but in most matters the Minister's word is law.

There is, however, a well-defined body of laws in Nepal, but these were, until very recent times, as barbarous and inhuman as the Code of Draco in ancient Athens. Jung Bahadur abolished the savage code with its old methods of trial by ordeal, and its forms of punishment by mutilation and torture. The current code, which is still substantially the work of Jung Bahadur, has reduced the criminal law of Nepal almost to a uniformity with the systems prevailing in countries under the sway of Western civilisation, but with certain striking differences. Treason, whether active or smouldering, rebellion, and desertion in time of war are punished capitally. Bribery and peculation by public servants are punished by dismissal from office, and a fine with imprisonment, the latter of which may be commuted into an additional fine, practically at the option of the offender. Cow-killing is in the eye of the law as grave an offence as homicide, and is punished by death; and even the maiming of cows is severely dealt with, sometimes by imprisonment for life. Offences against caste are punished by heavy fines, the sums thus realized being credited to the account of the Raj Guru.

No Brahman is ever punished with death, whatever his offence might be. He has his head shaved, all sorts of unclean things put into his mouth to contaminate his caste, and he is then taken to the frontiers and expelled from the country. Women also are never hanged ; they are imprisoned, branded, outcasted, condemned to slavery, or banished, but never executed. Political offenders are sometimes punished by confiscation of all their property and sometimes doomed to slavery, which is a common institution in Nepal to this day. The slaves are as a rule well treated, and sufficiently protected by the law of the land. Noble families keep regular establishments of slaves, who are chiefly employed for domestic service and field labour. In many cases slavery descends like a hereditary taint, and scarcely ever is a slave emancipated. They are bought and sold in the open market, much like cattle in other countries, and their prices range from Rs. 100 to Rs. 200, according to their age, sex, and fitness for work. They are often employed as beasts of burden for carrying loads of merchandise or human riders from one place to another.

This last office of the slaves is necessitated by the ruggedness of the country, where roads are few and communication between places extremely difficult. Vehicular traffic is practically unknown throughout Nepal, except in the Valley, and travelling is only possible either in palanquins or on horseback. In places where the road is a mere track worn on the hillside, even this mode of locomotion is not possible, and the only mode available is on the backs of slaves, who have to do the work of horses. And they do it well enough, with a distinctive saddle fastened to their back, and with a stoop in their gait, that makes the rough journey on "slave-back" a not very uncomfortable one.

The marriage laws and customs of the Nepalese are also very interesting. Polygamy is freely allowed, as among the Hindus elsewhere. There is nothing in the law of Nepal

prohibiting a woman from committing *suttee*, though the custom is now beginning to fall into disuse, and Jung Bahadur exerted all his influence to discourage it. An unchaste Gurkha woman is punished with imprisonment for life, though privately she is often chastised by her husband's cutting off her nose and turning her out of the house. In such cases the father retains the children, and the poor woman loses caste, rank, home, children, nose, and all. Her paramour, after his guilt has been proved in court, is cut down in public by the wronged husband. The culprit is given a few paces' start, and allowed to run for his life. If he escapes, his life is spared, but this turns out very seldom, as the on-lookers immediately overtake him, and the husband has the right to deal three blows with his *khukree*, the national weapon of the Nepalese. The Newars, who form the lowest stratum of society, or rather are reckoned as outside the social pale altogether, have a curious custom of "proxy-wedding," the like of which is heard of nowhere else. Every girl, while still an infant, is married with much ceremony to a *bel* fruit (held sacred among the Hindus and given in offerings to gods), which is subsequently thrown into some sacred stream. As the fate of this *bel* fruit is unknown, a Newar woman is believed to be immune from widowhood all her life. When the girl attains the age of puberty, the parents select a man with whom she is to live as wife; but the woman can at any moment sever the connection by taking her divorce, and all she has got to do to effect this is to place a *supari* (or betel-nut) under the man's pillow and go where she likes.

The early history of Nepal does not properly fall within the scope of this volume, though a brief outline may serve as a useful introduction to the narrative that follows. The chief glory of Nepal is that it has ever remained a purely Hindu state: "the virgin purity of her native soil has never been sullied by the foot of the foreign invader." Nepal also boasts