

INDO-BHUTAN TRADE RELATIONS

c. 1774-1907

Thesis Submitted for Ph. D (Arts) Degree in History of
North Bengal University
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Dedicated to the memory of
my beloved aunts Mrs. Sandhya
Palit and Ms. Jyotsna Sen
whose blessings were my
inspiration to undertake this
work.

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Abbreviations

N.A.I - National Archives of India.
W.B.S.A - West Bengal State Archives.
Progs. - Proceedings.

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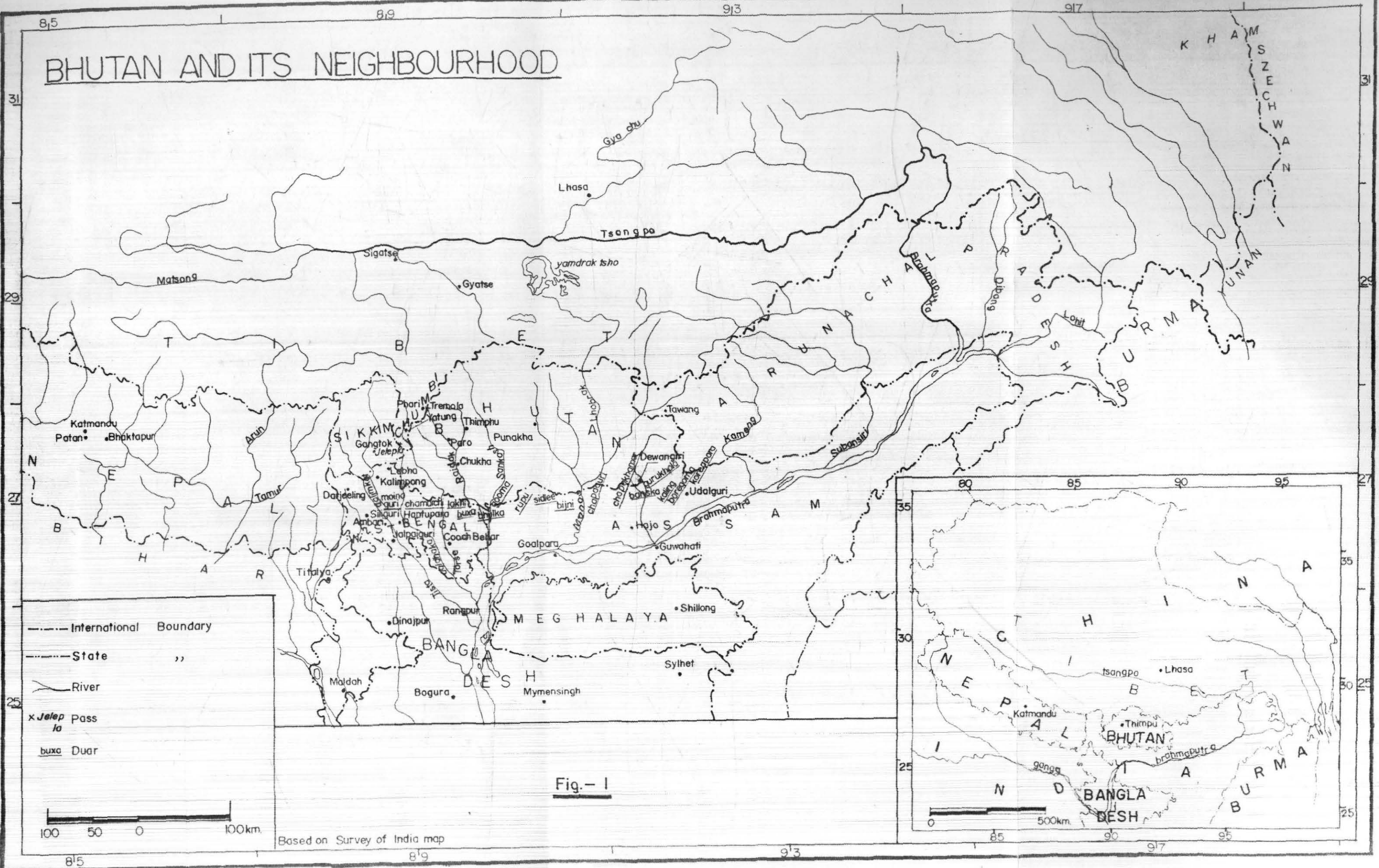
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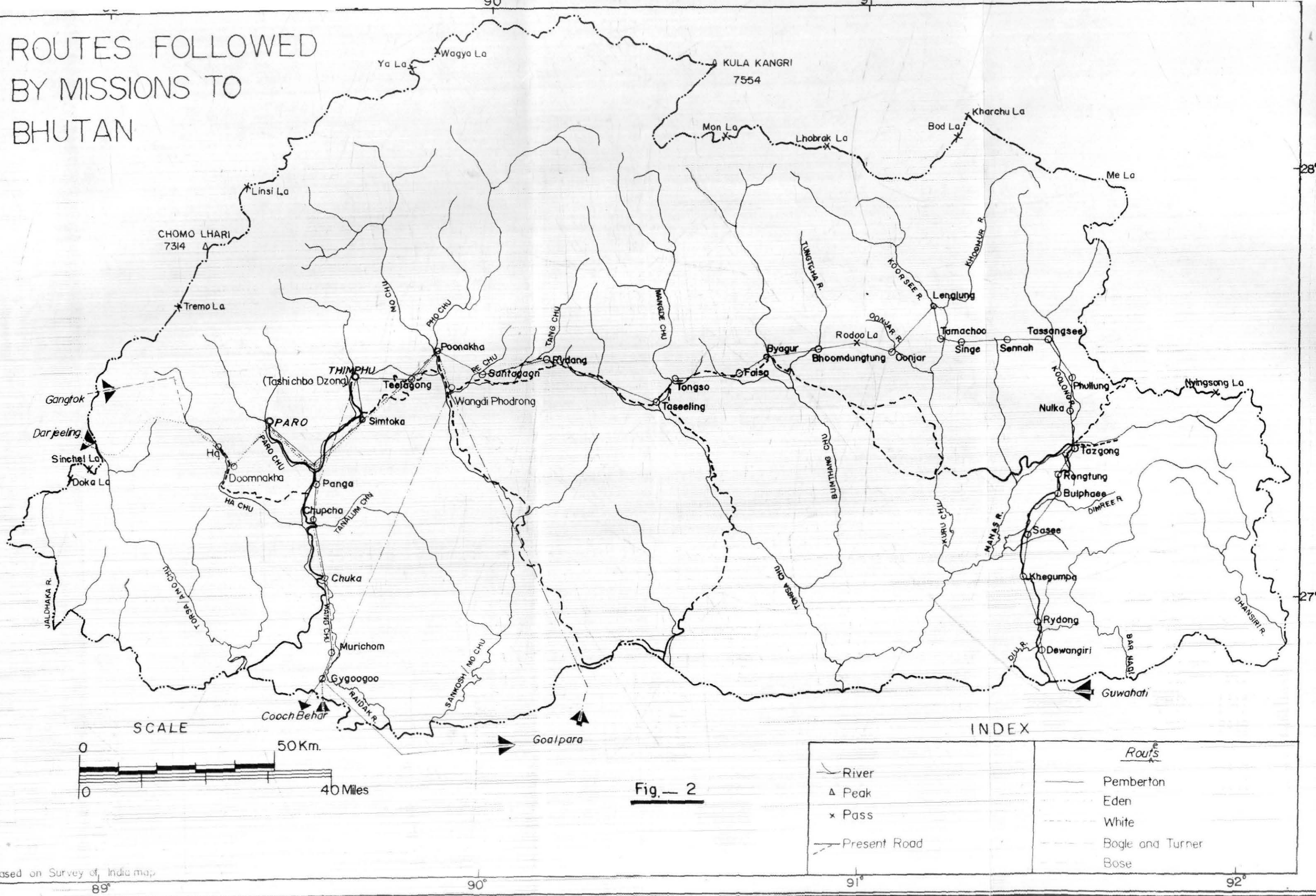
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BHUTAN AND ITS NEIGHBOURHOOD



ROUTES FOLLOWED BY MISSIONS TO BHUTAN



Based on Survey of India map

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The tiny Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan, nestled among the mountains of the Eastern Himalayas, had remained an enigma to the rest of the world for a long time. Bordered on the north by the Tibet regions of China, on the east by Arunachal Pradesh, on the south by the plains of Bengal and Assam, on the west by the Chumbi Valley and the Indian state of Sikkim, Bhutan has been aptly described as a 'mini yam between two rocks', hereby implying Bhutan's two powerful neighbours, Chinese Tibet and India. Though at times in the course of history her independence had been gravely threatened, she had succeeded in resisting the Chinese and the Tibetans, while the British did not consider it profitable to occupy the country.

As in the case of other Himalayan countries including Nepal and Tibet, a deep sense of preservation of her identity made Bhutan keep her doors shut to the entry of foreigners, particularly Europeans. Even in later times, after treaties of free and frequent commercial intercourse with India was signed, the Bhutanese were adamant in refusing the entry of European traders into their country. Naturally, therefore, her contacts with the world at large beyond her immediate neighbours were limited. Yet, within the Himalayan regions, and with her immediate neighbours, Bhutan maintained ^a fairly regular inter-relationship particularly in trade and in religious matters. But as far as her internal political situation was concerned, Bhutan exercised her own discretion. In this, however, she was aided by the British, who maintained by and large a policy of non-interference in her internal disputes. The Bhutanese authorities had in a few instances, solicited the help of the British in finding a solution to their problems but had found their appeals being politely but firmly repudiated.

Be that as it may, Bhutan did manage to remain independent and free. But, it has also been borne out that Bhutan was not entirely a closed country, guarded though her relations were with foreigners. In fact the train of events from the mid-eighteenth century to the early twentieth, which is the main focus of this dissertation, throw light

on Bhutan's commercial relations with British India. The narration ends in 1907, with the emergence of a new era for Bhutan — the era of hereditary monarchical rule. How far this political changeover was interwoven with her economic and social life is a problem which can only be satisfactorily analysed after a thorough investigation has been made into a number of related issues including Indo-Bhutanese relations, commercial as well as political, for a period spanning nearly about one and a half centuries.

Bhutan : Land and People

Bhutan has often been described by travellers visiting the country as being one of the most picturesque spots on the earth. The main characteristics of Bhutan are its rugged and lofty mountains with numerous rivers flowing through the mountains^{ou} terrain. An idea can be formed of the scenic beauty of Bhutan by a description given by Captain Turner who visited Bhutan in 1783 -

"The prospect between abrupt and lofty prominences is inconceivably grand, hills clothed to their very summits with trees, dark and deep glens, and the high tops of mountains lost in the clouds, constitute altogether a scene of extraordinary magnificence and sublimity"¹.

For the most part Bhutan's northern frontier followed the crest of the ^Ggreat Himalayas. F.M. Bailey in the course of his journey through Bhutan and southern Tibet made mention of a series of 'subsidiary' ranges which ran south from the main range. He further wrote that in "each of the main valleys between these ranges is one of the large dzongs or castles from which the country is governed"². Amongst the major Bhutanese dzongs mention may be made of the following (i) Punakha dzong, (ii) Tashichhodzong, (iii) Parodzong, (iv) Wangdiphodrang-dzong, (v) Simtokadzong, (vi) Tongsadzong, (vii) Tashigang dzong, (viii) Hadzong. These dzongs have lost some of their historic role as feudal strongholds since the consolidation of Bhutan under the monarchy in 1907. But still they function as combined administrative centres and monasteries. They are the focal points of the social, religious, economic and political life of the surrounding country³.

In accordance with the physiographic setting and also according to considerations of relief, drainage, climatic conditions and natural vegetation, Bhutan can be divided into three broad basic geographic zones. The Himalayan foot hills which are often described as the Lower Himalayas, north of the Duar plains constitute the first zone. This area adjoins the basin of the mighty river Brahmaputra. The second zone lies to the north of the first and is often described as the Inner Himalayas or the Higher Himalayas.

It is the central or middle region of Bhutan which lies between the foot hills to the south and the small, narrow Great Himalaya zone of high peaks to the north. The latter is the third high mountainous zone which borders Tibet and comprises the snow-clad ^Ggreat Himalaya range⁴. The Merung-La separates Bhutan from the Chumbi valley of Tibet. From the Kulakangri group of high peaks the 'traditional border cuts across the Lhobrak drainage basin', which is in the Tibetan district bordering on the north of Bhutan, and runs north to the high peak of the Kharchu.

Numerous rivers together with their tributaries flow through the mountainous territory of Bhutan. Almost all the rivers flow from the Great Himalayan range which is the northern most high mountainous third zone and traverse down south into the plains, and eventually they drain into the Brahmaputra. This first zone therefore is an area which has the most cultivated land in the entire state, and the main crop is rice which grow in the plains as well as at heights upto 4000 feet⁵. As far the second zone is concerned which is also described as the Inner Himalayas or the Higher Himalayas, it may be said to constitute the central belt through which the rivers pass in narrow files producing innumerable cataracts. The principal rivers of this region are the Manas, Tchinchu, Amochu, Kuruchu, Dharla, Wongchu, and Mochu. The swift flowing Manas and its tributaries

drain eastern Bhutan. The valley of the Manas contains a wild life sanctuary and is on the tourist map of India. Another important river, the Amochu cuts across in a south easterly direction and passes by the market town of Phuntsholing on the Indo-Bhutan border. In the plains it is known as the Torsa. The waters of Ha, Paro and Thimbuchung unite as the Wong chu and reach India as the Raidak. The Mochu or the Sankos runs for more than two hundred miles within Bhutan and passes by Punakha and Wangdiphodrang⁶. Important trade routes run along the valleys of the principal streams. Moreover the valleys of these rivers also produce excellent cultivable lands in central Bhutan. Rice, buckwheat, barley etc. are the crops most commonly grown. Another remarkable characteristic of the central zone is that it contains the most valuable forests of the country. Fir, spruce, cypress, as well as hard wood such as oak and maple can be found in this region. Again timber is found in abundance at an higher altitude of about 13000 to 14000 feet with birch predominating the heights below the timber line. The third zone which comprise the Alpine region of the ^Great Himalayan range, has climatic conditions akin to the Tundra, and the natural vegetation is Alpine. Cultivated land is restricted to a few isolated plots in the high mountain valleys. Just below the snow line between 14000 and 15000 feet grassy vegetation is provided by nature for yak grazing⁷.

The geography of Bhutan is therefore rugged and not very conducive for easy living. This difficult terrain has therefore tended to make the Bhutanese a hardy race - capable of effort and industry in their struggle for existence. Even though this terrain has also contributed to a certain degree to Bhutan's inaccessibility, the river valleys and mountain passes have also provided important trade routes, which have been used by traders since time immemorial.

Bhutan can by no means be said to be a densely populated country. Even though there was no accurate census of the population of Bhutan prior to 1870, the various approximate estimates put forward by different authorities, range from 300,000 to a figure of one million during the years 1957-66. In 1864, the population of the country was estimated at 20,000. In view of the census of 1970 it may be said that the present population of Bhutan is 1.31 million in an area of 18,000 sq. miles, giving thereby a density of about 73 persons to a square mile⁸.

The population of Bhutan may be said to consist of four major cultural groups, namely the Bhutanese, the Tibetans, the Nepalese and the Indians. The Bhutanese of the Drukpa sect, are the most numerous, and it is they who are politically dominant and have given Bhutan her peculiar cultural identity. The Tibetan inhabitants of Bhutan may be

classified into two groups - the earlier migrants who represent various sections of the Mongoloid people and the later Tibetan refugees, who have sought refuge and rehabilitation in Bhutan since 1959. In the southern regions of Bhutan, and especially in the southern central region of Chirang, the original inhabitants of Nepal predominate. The people of Indian origin are said to be concentrated in the region beyond the Pele-La. They have been described as being not of Tibetan origin and not speaking Tibetan dialect either. They were 'allied to the people of the Assam Valley and to those living in the hills to the east beyond Bhutan'. They were said to be of a different type from the other inhabitants, of the country, smaller in stature, their complexion being darker with finer cut features, and their dress was also different. They were also said to profess Buddhism, though they were not so observant in its customs, and there were fewer monasteries and Lamas in this part of the country as compared to other regions⁹. It may be presumed that these people were originally inhabitants from the neighbouring state of Cooch Behar. In fact they were supposed to have been the rulers of Bhutan who were finally usurped by the first great historical figure of Bhutan, Ngwang Namgyal, who assumed the authority of Bhutan in the sixteenth century.

Besides their racial divisions, the people of Bhutan can also be said to be divided by virtue of their

professions. The Imperial Gazetteer of India has the following interesting account of the people : "The population consists of three classes, the priests, the chiefs or Penlows, including the governing class, and the cultivators. The people are industrious, devote themselves to agriculture, but from the geological structure of the country, regular husbandry is limited to comparatively few spots"¹⁰.

As far as the distribution of population is concerned, it may be said that the most densely populated areas are the Inner Himalayan valleys of the Central region, which may also be said to be the most fertile area in the whole of Bhutan. The towns of Paro, Thimphu, Wangdiphodrang and Tongsa are inhabited by about 5000 to 10,000 people. Tashigang situated on the banks of the Manas on the eastern side of Bhutan is also quite densely populated. Besides, concentration of population is also noticeable in the low lands where there are areas of productive soil, as for example the town of Phuntsholing which touches the plains of India has a population of over 10,000¹¹. Besides fertility of the land, climate also plays a part in determining the distribution of population. For example the Great Himalaya region in the north has a very sparse population because of extreme climatic conditions. Difficult terrain and inaccessible slopes also contribute to low density population areas, such as the Black Mountain and other

ranges in southern Bhutan where also incliment weather, steep slopes as well as poor soil make habitation physically impossible¹².

The population of Bhutan therefore is essentially of a mixed type. However, in spite of their divergent origins the people of Bhutan have succeeded in carving out for themselves definite national characteristics, which give them an identity of their own. Their habits of dress and food, their customs, religious practices, Pantomimic dances, are their very own, quite different from those of their neighbours, and have contributed in giving them a feeling of togetherness, and of belonging to one particular country, and helping them in preserving their identity and fostering their national consciousness.

A few words may be added here regarding the origin and early history of this country. Claude white had remarked that "the early history of this remarkable country is enveloped in great obscurity, for unfortunately owing to fire, earthquake, flood and internecine wars, its annals which had been carefully recorded were destroyed"¹³. Leo E. Rose says that, "the history of Bhutan as an integrated political system commences only in the first half of the seventeenth century with the establishment of the authority of Ngawang Namgyal, the first Shabdrung (Dharma Raja in

most non-Bhutanese sources). The early history of the area now comprising Bhutan is murky at best,¹⁴. Another well known authority of the early history of Bhutan, Michael Aris, sums up the situation thus : 'For a long time there was a good deal of confusion surrounding the origins of this state',¹⁵. After a thorough investigation into a number of primary sources, Aris has tried to prove that it was only in the 17th century that traditional theocracy in Bhutan was established after Ngawang Namgyal set himself up as the first Dharma Raja, and laid the foundations of a unified and theocratic Bhutan.

Ngawang Namgyal was supposedly born in 1594 in Tibet in a family of hereditary prince abbots of the Drukpa school of Buddhism, located at its main seat at Ralung monastery in Tibet. Together with his parents, Namgyal himself wished to be recognised by the king of Tibet as the rightful reincarnation of the founder of the Drukpa school, Tsangpa Gyare Yeshe Dorji (1161-1211). However, realities forced otherwise, and Namgyal was not recognised as the reincarnation. This conflict, moreover threatened his position as the head of the Ralung monastery, and therefore, at the age of twenty three, in the year 1616, Namgyal set off on his fateful journey across the natural barrier of the Himalayas to take refuge in Bhutan. In Bhutan he defeated the reigning Koch prince¹⁶, and his political success enabled him to claim

the status of the reincarnated Lama, and acquire the title of the Shabdrung. The term Shabdrung however, does not carry the meaning of Dharma Raja or one who rules by reincarnation. It is simply an honorific address for a noble man or a high civil officer. Be that as it may, the Shabdrung had wanted his family rule to continue in Bhutan. Unfortunately, his only son was an invalid, and unable to rule by himself, whereupon prior to his death in 1651, the Shabdrung appointed a Drukdesi or a Deb Raja ^{to} ~~is~~ superintend the administration of the kingdom¹⁷. Thus originated the dual system of administration in Bhutan — the offices of the Deb Raja and the Dharma Raja, which continued upto the beginning of the twentieth century when it was finally abolished.

It may be concluded that Ngawang Namgyal was indeed the first great historical figure of Bhutan, and that the system of dual administration was started under him. However, it will not be judicious to accept conclusively that the theocratic setup of government was primarily established by Namgyal and that there is no evidence of a definite state formation in Bhutan in the pre-Shabdrung era¹⁸. In fact, concrete evidence of a king ruling in Bhutan has been found in an account given by an English merchant traveller, Ralph Fitch, who had visited many regions adjacent to Bhutan, as early as in 1584-85. In his own words Fitch says, 'There

is a country 4 daies journey from Couche or Quichen before mentioned which is called Bott^aonter and the citie Bottia, the king is called Dermain¹⁹. This 'Dermain' may be interpreted as being the Dharma Raja of Bhutan, thereby signifying that the institution of Dharma Raja predated the emergence of the first Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal.

Aris and many other scholars have briefly dismissed the period before the first Shabdrung as a period of legendary kings, religious Lamas or clan rule²⁰. But evidences go to indicate that Bhutan had a ruler in the form of a Dharma Raja even in the sixteenth century, and Ralph Fitch's allusion to this 'Dermain' does deserve a more serious consideration. A Dharma Raja is the supreme ruler by reincarnation, who can rule till death, and the whole concept of rule by incarnation owes its origin to Tibetan Buddhism. It may be inferred that such an institution based on the rule of reincarnation and having its roots in the Drikungpa sect of Tibetan Buddhism may have been prevalent in Bhutan from the 12th century onwards, when this particular sect had gained paramountcy.

Buddhism was first introduced into Bhutan by the Indian saint padma Sambhava in the 9th century, and the Nyingmapa sect, which traces its origin to the Guru's teaching, gradually started spreading among the inhabitants of Bhutan.

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In the 11th century the Kagyudpa was propagated by a disciple of Marpa, who came to the Bumthang areas. In the next century, Lama Lhapa Sangye Rinchen alias Zejipal, disciple of Jikten Goenpo, founder of the important Drikung school, made attempts to gain a broad measure of control over western Bhutan. During the 13th century there arrived the first Drukpa mission under Phajo Drugam Shikpo, and the authority of the Drukpas was established after several centuries through a protracted struggle against the Drikungpas, with the arrival of Ngawang Namgyal²¹. The head Lamas of the Drikungpa school which was predominant before the Drukpas came on the scene, were succeeded by reincarnation. It will therefore be in perfect agreement with the known facts to assume that a system of rule by reincarnation was introduced in Bhutan during the Drikungpa rule prior to the political supremacy of the Drukpas.

Nevertheless the system of dyarchy in Bhutan, was introduced during the rule of Ngawang Namgyal. The post of the Deb Raja was elective and of a fixed tenure. He had an effective hold over the secular administration of Bhutan, and performed his duties in his judicial, military, financial, and mercantile capacities. The important position which the Deb Raja held, however, did not reduce the Dharma Raja to the position of a mere titular head of the Bhutanese dyarchy. His concern in things spiritual, as head of the priestly order, raised him in popular estimation.

During the late eighteenth century, it was reported that subordinate to the above mentioned two authorities of government, there were two councils. The council under the Dharma Raja consisted of twelve Gylongs. These Gylongs were ordained priests and were 'often possessed of wealth which they collected as charity and as fees of office and by trade'. These priestly councillors were not solely concerned with religious or literary pursuits but at times exercised an 'efficient control over less spiritual objects'. The council of which the Deb Raja was the head consisted of six Zimpes or councillors and was called Lenchan. The composition of the council showed that it consisted of lay and lamaist elements. The Lam and the Kalling Zimpes were devoted to the interests of the Dharma Raja while the Deb Zimpe was faithfully attached to the secular chief and was described as the 'private Dewan' of the Deb Raja, looking after his trade and other concerns while the Donnay Zimpe was his 'public Dewan'²².

Besides, enormous powers were also wielded by the provincial governors, or Ponlobs, who were six in number, and were in charge of the six main forts or the Dzonas of the country namely Paro, Daka, Tongsa, Taschichhodzong, Wangdi-Phodrang and Punakha. Among them, the Tongsa and the Paro Ponlobs were the most powerful chiefs of the eastern and western division of Bhutan respectively. The

other Ponlobs were also endowed with ample power, and the policing of the country, the levying of taxes and the administration of justice were committed to them. They kept the machinery of the Bhutan⁹ Government in motion with the help of a host of subordinate officials like the Dzongpons, the Subahs and the Zinkaffs²³. The authority that these provincial governors exerted were really great, and the Deb and the Dharma Raja were powerless to act without their acquiescence. Their power increased as time went by and the post 1865 era in Bhutan saw a constantly raging civil war amongst these councillors for the attainment of real authority, with the Deb and Dharma Rajas being reduced to mere puppets. In fact Ugyen Wangchuk, who emerged in 1907 as the first hereditary monarch of Bhutan, had himself originally been a Tongsa Ponlob.

It would now be worthwhile to dwell a little upon the historical significance of the name Bhutan. Leo Rose, in his book 'The Politics of Bhutan', has mentioned that the name 'Bhutan' is Indian in origin and has come into general usage in that country only recently. Some are of opinion that the modern name of Bhutan, or 'Bootan', as it was some times referred to in British documents, is perhaps a derivation from 'Bhotanta'. 'Bhot' is the Sanskrit name for Tibet and 'Bhotananta' meant the end of the land of Tibet or Bhot²⁴. According to Bhutanese scholars like

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Lopen Nado and Lopen Pemala, the name by which the Bhutanese themselves referred to their country was Lhomon. The Bhutanese used this expression Lho meaning 'the South' in various combinations such as Lho Yul, Lho Rong, etc. The term south has been used because it is the state which lies to the south of Lhasa, the centre of Tibet. The term Mon has a religious connotation. It has been said that in ancient times in Tibet, besides Buddhism, some kings of the royal dynasty followed the principles of the Bon religion, and were, therefore, exiled beyond the border. Some of these Bonpas wandered beyond the frontiers and established themselves in the southern region which was presumably Shutan, and gradually started spreading the Bon practices, in which the sky and earth, and the various cosmic gods and goddesses, such as those of fire, wind, sun, and moon were worshipped. Because of this, it was felt by the followers of Buddhism in Tibet that these people were deprived of the enlightenment of the teaching of Lord Buddha, and not comprehending the principles of action and retribution, and of merit and sin, it was as if they resided in a pit of darkness or mun²⁵. Therefore the term Mon may be taken to be a corruption of the word mun and together with Lho, or south, the etymology of the term Lho Mon would appear understandable. For this reason, the oldest inhabitants of Bhutan are also referred to as the Monpas, and the country as Mon Yul or Lho-Mon.

Historically the name Lho Mon was replaced by Druk Yul, on the land of the Drukpa. It is not easy to date the adoption of this term with precision though it is clear that it was certainly not earlier than in the 13th century. As mentioned before, it was in this century that the Drukpa school of Buddhism, was introduced in Bhutan by Phajo Drugom Shikpo, though this red sect did not attain supremacy till the seventeenth century when Ngawang Namgyal who happened to belong to the same sect, acquired paramountcy. It is more likely that the term Druk Yul was used more frequently from the seventeenth century onwards though some scholars tend to think that this name became common from the thirteenth century itself.

Survey of Research and the Objective of the Present Study

Systematic research works on Bhutan are limited in number, even though scholars both in India and abroad have conducted some studies on this country. Strangely enough it has been noticed that books bearing the title of South Asia generally do not contain even a mention of Bhutan. It is only natural to expect that a country like Bhutan, situated in South Asia and one which has always succeeded in retaining her independence, should be receiving a more critical appreciation in the eyes of the world. But

international attention on Bhutan has been curiously lacking.

Richard L. Park has noted that "Scholarly work on current South Asian themes ... rests upon older academic traditions that emphasized principally the philosophy, religion and classical literature of these ancient civilizations"²⁶.

However compared to other South Asian countries, emphasis on Bhutan's ancient philosophy and religion have been relatively less. That contingencies of various sorts, and not the disciplinary demands, often play a decisive role in the selection of research problems was emphasized by Lucian W. Pye. He said, "Far Eastern area studies have been strongly historical, concentrating on the impact of ancient religions, great traditions of civilization, and the development of formal schools of thought. African studies have been closer to the anthropological tradition, while South and South East Asian studies have emphasized political movements and nationalism and, when not concentrating on the contemporary scene, they have stressed the analysis of colonialism"²⁷.

Be that as it may, inspite of the limited coverage being given to Bhutan, some useful studies have been conducted on that country in recent years, and of these a number of them concentrate on Indo-Bhutanese relations, which in turn throw light on the attitude of Britain towards colonial India, thereby stressing the aspects of colonialism, as referred to by Pye. Apart from Indo-Bhutanese relations

some other relevant studies having a bearing on various social aspects of Bhutan have been published in recent years. It will serve no useful purpose to present a review of all such works, but reference may be made to the following in particular .

Nagendra Singh's Bhutan : A Kingdom in the Himalayas - a Study of the Land, its People and their Government (1972) makes a good text book, providing a fairly comprehensive description of the political and economic development of Bhutan over time. To know about the geography and environment of the region, P.Karan's Bhutan - A Physical and Cultural Geography (1967), may be referred to. Another useful addition is, Bhutan : Development Amid Environmental and Cultural Preservation (1987) written jointly by P.Karan and Shigeri Jigma. To know about the contemporary political dynamics, The Politics of Bhutan (1977) by Leo.E.Rose is indispensable. As far as the culture and religion of Bhutan is concerned B.Chakravorty's Cultural History of Bhutan Vol.I and II (1979) provides interesting information. The author's Ph.D. thesis entitled, 'Some Aspects of Religion and Culture of Bhutan', has been incorporated in the two volumes of this book. The first volume deals with the tenets and practices of the four Lamaist Sects of Buddhism

and their differences with each other, about Guru Stonpa, the great Buddhist preceptor of the 5th century, and other aspects of Tibetan Buddhism. The second volume too concerns itself mainly with the various Buddhist sects and rituals and ceremonies ^{of} Bhutan. Another book dealing also with the Tibetan traditions existing in Bhutan is Ancient Bhutan (1979) by Blanche C. Olschak. It contains, besides oral information, films, photographs, Bhutanese texts in archaic Tibetan language and exact maps with precise inscriptions in Tibetan orthography.

As far as the historical works on Bhutan are concerned it will be noticed that comparatively more number of research works have appeared in print. Michael Arts in his book, Bhutan - The Early History of a Himalayan Kingdom, (1980) deals in the main with the origin of the state of Bhutan, the religious intrigues between various Buddhist sects of Tibetan origin and a critical survey of some old extant Bhutanese texts having a bearing on the early history of Bhutan. Ram Rahul has written a number of useful books, including Royal Bhutan (1989). As the name suggests the book provides a synoptic political history of monarchical Bhutan. A concise narration of Bhutan's history can also be found in Bikrama Jit Hasrat's History of Bhutan - Land of the Peaceful Dragon (1974). The author was invited by the Royal Government of Bhutan in July 1974 to plan and

write a history of that country. The book was subsequently published by the Education Department of Bhutan. The work outlines the country's historical legends, introduction of Buddhism and the unification under Ngawang Namgyal's dual form of government in 1651, and the history of its fifty four Deb Rajas. An objective account of the establishment of hereditary monarchy by Ugyen Wangchuk in 1907 and changes brought about by his three successors in the nation's constitution and social and economic spheres are also broadly outlined. Another book, said to be unique in several way is, The Dragon Country, the General History of Bhutan (1974), by Nirmala Das. It is a history of Bhutan written basically from original sources which were hitherto not available to foreign scholars. This was possible mainly due to His Majesty Jigme Wangchuk who made the material available to the authoress. The first part of the book dealing with the general history of Bhutan from the origin of that country upto her relations with post independent India, is rather inadequate and sketchy. The Dzongs and Monasteries of Bhutan occupy a large portion of this book, and Das believes that no history of Bhutan can be written without a good knowledge of the history of the two most important sectors in the country's life-the Dzongs and the Monasteries, around which the life of the country centres.

But coming to the specifics of Indo-Bhutanese relations, mention may first be made of British Relations with Bhutan (1974) by Shantiswarup Gupta. The author wrote this volume for his doctoral dissertation from the Allahabad University in 1946. Interestingly enough the author who served in the Indian Foreign Service tried several times to secure the official permission to publish the thesis, but it was only after his retirement in December, 1971, that the permission was granted. Gupta could give an account of British relations with Bhutan only upto 1880 because under the rules in force at the time of his work, the records were made available only upto that date. The choice of the end date was thus made not on the basis of any academic calculations but due to pragmatic considerations, based on institutional limitations. But in any case it is possible that Gupta is the first to undertake any comprehensive and systematic study of Indo-Bhutanese relations during the British period of Indian History.

"India and Bhutan" (1974) by Kapileshwar Labh, is another valuable book on Indo-Bhutanese relations. The information available from this book is exhaustive, together with a lucid and analytical narration. This study ^egrew out of a doctoral dissertation and provides an interesting account of Bhutan's first contacts with the East India Company in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, and

her confrontations with the various British missions. Labh brings the narration right up to the coronation of Jigme Singhe Wangchuk in 1974. The main emphasis of this book is essentially on the various British missions and their logical culminating point - the treaty of 1910. It is on the whole, a useful pioneering effort, and can be termed as a comprehensive study.

A subsequent study in the same vein is that by Arabinda Deb, Bhutan and India, a study in Frontier Political Relations (1772-1865), (1976). This is also a fairly comprehensive volume on the subject even though the emphasis throughout has been on the detailed narration of political events, intrigues and strategies leading upto the Duar War of 1864-65. This book was presented as a Ph.D. dissertation at the University of North Bengal.

Another study of the same type is that by Manorama Kohli India and Bhutan : a study in Interrelations 1772-1910 (1982). This also originated as a doctoral dissertation in which the authoress discusses in detail as to how "led partly by a desire to reach almost the inaccessible region of the Himalaya combined with the objective of building up a secure north east frontier, Bhutan was discovered as a 'Gateway' to Tibet". She also finds that "a closer examination of the Indo-Bhutanese relations, particularly from the last two

decades of the nineteenth century onwards would indicate that the geostrategic location of Bhutan did constitute a serious strain in the thinking of the British Indian leadership in the formulation of their policies towards Bhutan and other Himalayan Kingdoms".

Another work concerning itself with Indo-Bhutanese relations is Britain and the Himalayan Kingdom of Bhotan (1984) by A.B. Majumdar. The author asserts that most of the work on Bhutan does not deal with earlier Indo-Bhutanese relations during the British regime. He says that it was only in the first quarter of the nineteenth century that the British became conscious of the realities of their eastern Himalayan frontier and hence the object of this book was to analyse and deal with the relations of the British with one of the Himalayan Kingdoms - Bhutan, during the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries. The book ends in 1899. Yet another book dealing with the complexities of Indo-Bhutanese relations is Bhutan and the British (1987) by Peter Collister. Based mainly on the diaries, records and letters of the main participants of the various official missions sent to Bhutan, this book is not a history of that country but a narration of the two hundred years of association between Bhutan and the British. The author admits that this is a book about Bhutan as seen through British eyes. He has dealt at great

lengths on political relationships between India and Bhutan as these were generally either the cause or the out come of successive missions. Towards the end he has attempted to summarize the benefits accruing to both sides from this long relationship. It is neither a history of Bhutan, as mentioned before nor an account of the countrys' complex and distinctive culture which is woven into the history and religion of that region.

One thing however needs specially to be mentioned, partly as a justification for undertaking the present study. It must have been noticed already that more than one researches have been undertaken emphasizing upon the political dimensions of Indo-Bhutan relations. Studies on the commercial relations existing between the two countries are practically nonexistent. The above mentioned books do contain passing references to the trade carried on between the two countries, but nothing substantial can be obtained. One particular book however, needs to be mentioned, which do provide some information on trade relations between the two countries. The book is Trade through the Himalayas - the early British attempts to Open Tibet (1951) by Camman Schuyler.,

Originally the work was undertaken as the writer's Ph.D. thesis at John Hopkins University, but it has since

been extensively revised in the light of further research. It starts with a historical background of Tibet upto 1774, and reflects the commercial minded diplomacy of the eighteenth century English Company members. Even more important from the point of view of diplomatic history, these events form the background for the later, better known British efforts to open Tibet in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Though providing some information on Bhutan, the emphasis is on Tibet and the book ends with the complete closure of Tibet to the British in 1793, following the Sino-Nepalese war. There is thus a complete lack of information on Indo-Bhutanese economic relations especially during the post 1865 era. There is thus a gap in our knowledge and the present work aims at reducing this gap as much as possible.

Though Bhutan did have contacts with the outer world contacts which included commercial exchange and religious propagation - it was nevertheless with the advent of the British on the scene that relations between India and Bhutan became much more definite and systematic. The East India Company, as is well known, came to India along with other European trading and commercial companies, as a mercantile body and their main interests were admittedly in the field of trade and commerce. But with the acquisition of political authority in Bengal they were secure enough to further their trading and commercial interests, and wished

to extend these interests to Sikkim and Bhutan and indeed as far north as Tibet. In an effort to do so they felt obliged to strengthen their northern frontiers and to consolidate their position all along the line. Thus a position was soon reached when commercial and political interests became coterminus²⁸.

These interests slowly and inevitably brought India into closer contact with Bhutan. The complex course of relationship between the two countries during the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries has not yet received a complete and adequate coverage. Material however, are not lacking but it cannot be claimed that all information have been collected and subjected already to a searching and interpretative study. The present work does not claim to have done that either. Here only an attempt has been made to review the commercial aspect of the Indo-Bhutanese relations, by a reconstruction and reinterpretation of the data already available. However, political and commercial relations being so closely interrelated, it is difficult to concentrate entirely on one aspect while completely ignoring the other. Therefore, though commercial relation between the two countries is the main problem to be studied, the political intricacies have also been dealt with to some extent, whenever necessary.

It is said that by trade a country flourishes, and the Bhutanese must have accepted this theory very seriously since nearly the whole of the population of Bhutan were engaged in commercial activities to a greater or lesser degree. The commercial minded diplomacy of the British led them to exploit this serious profession of the Bhutanese to suit their own ends, and through Bhutan, gain access to the more lucrative markets of Tibet and China. How this relationship of confrontation, between a great and perhaps the strongest colonial power of its time, on the one hand, and one of the smallest countries of the world on the other, came to influence the entire eastern Himalayan region and to frame British policy in these parts, deserve some attention.

It is admitted that there is a certain amount of arbitrariness in the choice of dates. But it is unavoidable at the present state of our knowledge. Even then a few explanatory words are definitely called for. As far as the beginning of the study at 1774 is concerned, it may be said that the first conscious and systematic effort at regularising trade relations with Bhutan by the British East India Company was made in that year. The trade flourished through many vicissitudes, and in 1907, Bhutan emerged into a hereditary monarchy for the first time in history, in the emergence of which the British India government, also

contributed its mite. How far the British participation even though indirect, was owing to economic and commercial factors, and also, to what extent Bhutan's own changing commercial fortune dictated a change in the form of government are proposed to be examined. Whether such conjectures are meaningful in the present context can only be judged after the material has been collected carefully and presented faithfully in line with the sequence of events.

Sources of Data

The sources of data for the purpose of this dissertation may broadly be classified into three categories. In the first category may be placed the printed reports of the various British missions which visited Bhutan. The reports of George Bogle (1774) and Thomas Manning (1811-12) on Bhutan were edited by Clement Markham and first published in 1875 in the form of a book entitled Narratives of the Mission of George Bogle to Tibet and of the Journey of Thomas Manning to Lhasa (1875). The report of Samuel Turner who visited Bhutan in 1783 was published much earlier in 1800 in the form of a book entitled An Account of an Embassy to the Court of Teshoo Lama in Tibet containing a narrative of a journey through Bhutan and part of Tibet (1800). Later the reports of Babu Kishen Kant Bose (1815), Pemberton

(1837-38), Griffiths (1837-38) and Ashley Eden (1864-65) were compiled together under the title Political Missions to Bootan edited by H.K.Kuloy (first published in 1865).

Among other books, which by virtue of their providing first hand information, may be regarded as primary source material, mention may be made of Bhutan and the story of the Doar War by David Rennie (first published in 1866, reprinted in 1970). Rennie was the surgeon and medical in-charge of the 80th regiment, that was sent to Bhutan during the war of 1865, and gives a detailed account of the military strategies of the Duar War. It also does mention occasionally the traders both of India and of Bhutan, and their trading activities as well. The next book which was again an account of Bhutan by the author, who was physically present in the country and noted down his experiences and observations was Sikkim and Bhutan - twenty one years on the North East Frontier (1887-1908) by Claude J.White (first published 1909, reprinted 1971) White was the first Political Officer to Sikkim and had been sent to Bhutan to present the insignia of knighthood of Ugyen Wangchuk, the then Tongsa Ponlob of Bhutan. This book is more of a travelogue and again provides first hand information about that country. Lastly India and Tibet - by Frances Younghusband (1971) is again ^aon account by Younghusband himself of the famous expedition led by him to Tibet in 1903, and there are important references to Bhutan as well.

Primary

This is as far as the published ^{primary} source material are concerned. The authors of these books had themselves been present in Bhutan, and hence the information provided in these books are not based on any secondary source material. Coming to the second category of data, references have exhaustively been drawn from the secondary source material, that is the various books and journals available. It may be noted here that not only books on Bhutan, but also on Tibet, Nepal, Sikkim and the North Eastern frontier of India, have also been referred to. Besides Parliamentary Reports and the Correspondence between Fort William and India House, have also received due attention. It may be worth while to mention here that the bulk of this work of collecting secondary source material has been done at the library of the University of North Bengal, and the National Library, Calcutta.

As far as the third category is concerned, archival data has been used extensively. It may be mentioned however, that archival data has been mostly used only for the latter part of the dissertation that is from 1865 to 1907. The National Archives in New Delhi has been the main centre, though some material have also been collected from the West Bengal State Archives in Calcutta. At the National Archives, the whole of the Foreign, External Index, has been more or less thoroughly investigated. Besides, the various reports

on the external trade of Bengal with Nepal, Tibet, Sikkim, and Bhutan from 1878-79 to 1906-07, have also been examined. These volumes provide valuable information regarding the quality and volume of the goods imported and exported to and from Bhutan and India. Lastly occasional data from gazetteers and newspapers have also been collected to some extent.

A word or two might also be mentioned as far as the Bhutanese records are concerned. In the first place, original Bhutanese records are not very easily available. It is known that the fire at the Punakha Dzong in 1832 and the great earthquake of 1897 destroyed practically all the historical records that were probably there. Apart from these the difficulties of obtaining official access to Bhutanese data are also practically insurmountable. However, in the British records itself, there are occasional translations of letters and documents written by the Bhutanese themselves which provide their point of view. However, it has to be admitted that the main dependence have been on the British records, mainly due to their availability. Nevertheless, in spite of this dependence, an impartial opinion has been endeavoured to be given, as far as possible. It cannot be claimed that any historical writing will be completely freed of bias. But to have a distorted lop sided view is what destroys the essence of narration. Thus, here

even though the bulk of the material are derived from British sources, the Bhutanese view point has not been overlooked altogether.

Synoptic View of the Study Frame

It has been decided that the present work undertaken would progress along the lines of the much tried and tested method of chronological narration. Hence the various incidents in the history of commercial contacts between India and Bhutan have been enumerated and carefully examined as far as possible. This whole period from 1774-1907 has been further subdivided into smaller periods of time on the basis of fluctuations in trade and the vicissitudes in the trade relations between India and Bhutan.

Though the work in the main starts from 1774, it has been thought necessary to provide a brief background of the commercial contacts existing between the Himalayan regions and other countries, before this date. Though it is true that with the advent of the British on the scene, Indo-Bhutanese relations took on a more meaningful and systematic form, it must be remembered that trade relations had existed centuries before the advent of the British on the Indian soil. However, credit goes to the British for

reviving up this trans-Himalayan trade, even if it was to serve their own commercial interests. Chapter II therefore, besides providing the backdrop of pre-British contacts of the Himalayan kingdoms, also attempts to elucidate how certain events combined to facilitate British contacts with Tibet and Bhutan, and culminate in the sending of a first ever commercial mission to those countries.

The third chapter has been entitled as the 'High Tide of Commercial Intercourse 1774-88'. The first commercial missions achieved a fair amount of success and certain other events combined to prove that this was indeed a period when Indo-Bhutanese relations reached an all time high.

However, the ebb of this tide started soon after 1788, and thus began an 'Era of uncertain prospects' as Chapter IV has been designated. Lack of statesmanship on part of the British, as well as certain misfortune which befell them, together with the lack of cooperation on the part of the Bhutanese made this period an uncertain one for the British, as far as commerce was concerned. It may be said of the British that attempts were made by them to improve matters by the deputation of various missions to Bhutan, during this period.

The differences could not in the end be amicably resolved. Repeated outrages and hostilities, which were

not at all conducive for trade finally saw the British government of India on the war path. This broke out the Duar War or 'the battle over land for tea and freedom for trade', as the fifth chapter has been named. The Bhutanese were very much at the receiving ^{end} in this war, and the treaty of Sinchula signed at the end, put a lot of power into British hands.

Nevertheless, peace was not in sight. Frequent violations of the treaty of Sinchula, together with a constantly raging civil war in Bhutan, served to vitiate further the relations between the two countries. It was also at this time that the British were seeking to establish more closer commercial ties with Tibet, with Bhutanese help. Chapter six namely 'Centralisation in politics, for the sake of commerce', serves to emphasise the British desire for a strong and centralised Bhutan, that would help them to gain access to Tibet and Central Asia, while at the same time strengthen the Indo-Bhutanese commercial ties as well.

In other words the British wanted a strong man to be at the helm of Bhutanese affairs and also appeared not to favour the dyarchy. It seemed that their wish was fulfilled when the Tongsa Ponlob Ugyen Wangchuk assumed the authority of that country. Relations with Tibet also seemed to improve with the sending of the Younghusband Mission in 1903. Thus

it seemed that the commercial dream of the eighteenth century British statesman was at last about to be fulfilled.

Obstacles and barriers were still prevalent as the seventh chapter 'Fulfilment of commercial diplomacy', would show, but nevertheless with the crowⁿing of Ugyen Wangchuk in 1907 as the first hereditary monarch of Bhutan, promises of a long lasting friendship with that country was in sight.

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CHAPTER II

Commercial Contacts with the Himalayan Kingdoms — the Prelude

The lure of trade and commerce have drawn men to the most inaccessible parts of the globe, and the mountainous regions of Tibet, Nepal and Bhutan were no exceptions to this rule. Though the mighty peaks of the Himalayas and the forests on the mountain slopes made human intercourse difficult, yet the pilgrims and traders constantly passed to and fro through the river valleys and the narrow passes that provided links with the outer world.

Pre-British Trade Relations with the Himalayan Kingdoms

Since very ancient times, Nepal enjoyed intimate commercial contacts with India as has been confirmed by some ancient texts. Nepal was connected with one sub-way branching off from Pataliputra, which was then one of the centres of the world civilization, with links spread as far as Europe. From Pataliputra three great roads radiated to the frontiers of the empire, with the northern road going to Nepal via Vaisali and Sravasti. Kautilya, in his Arthashastra, has made a mention of Nepal as the principal exporter of woollen goods, pepper, nard, sugar, copper, etc. These goods were in turn exported by India to many outside countries including Rome¹.

Kathmandu played a crucial role and served as an important entrepot in the ancient trade system. Two very important passes, that of Kuti and Kerung, were near the Kathmandu valley connecting Kashmir, Kathmandu, Patna, and Lhasa routes. In so far as the climate in Kathmandu was concerned, it was good and rather congenial for both highlanders and plainsmen². During the medieval period, although not much is known about the nature of Indo-Tibet and Indo-Nepalese trade, nevertheless, there can be little doubt that some kind of contact, presumably through trade and commerce was maintained. Though communication between

India and Nepal was not as smooth and frequent as it had been in the ancient times, apparently due to religious differences of the ruling dynasties, trade between these two countries still continued, though probably not as much as in the ancient times. It was also during this period that Nepal developed and maintained close and intimate relations with Tibet³.

Contrary to the traditional belief that Tibet was a closed country especially to the west, evidences go to prove that the western world had acquired a considerable knowledge about Tibet from a very early period in history. During the reign of Augustus Caesar of Rome, a trade route ran across the Himalayas, by which silk from China reached India through Tibet and thence found its way to the Roman Empire. Ptolemy also knew of the Tibetans whom he called the Bautae probably from the Tibetan Bod. Several travellers in the middle ages, both from Christendom as well as from the Islamic lands had described Tibet in some details during the course of their travels, among whom Marco Polo and Ibn Batuta deserve mention⁴. Tavernier had observed that several sorts of drugs were brought from Tibet to Patna, particularly rhubarb and musk. The merchants from Patna carried back to Tibet precious stones such as yellow amber, bracelets of tortoise shells, and other sea shells. Tavernier also described in some detail the caravans that

set out from Patna to Tibet. These caravans, after reaching the foot of the mountains, travelled through thick forests, and ultimately passed through Nepal to reach Tibet⁵. Even in later years, civilians were permitted to go to Tibet as may be made out from an account of a wealthy and adventurous Dutch merchant, Samuel Van der Putte, who travelled between 1725 and 1735 from India to China and back again to India. On both the journeys he had passed through Lhasa where he is said to have stayed a long time⁶.

Another interesting description of Lhasa has been given by an anonymous writer, a gentleman who resided in Lhasa for many years. This account has been found in a volume by Bartholomew Plaisted, entitled, 'A journey from Calcutta in Bengal etc. etc. to England in the year 1750'. A map of the countries, cities and towns adjacent to Bengal, was prefixed to this volume and Lhasa (or Lossa, as it was spelt then) was placed on the northern side of the map and was described as the capital of the kingdom of Tibet. It was said in this account that not much was known of the plants and animals of Tibet, nor what advantages could be drawn from that country by way of trade. It was however, mentioned that Bengal was in close contact with this country and that the road from Bengal to Lhasa had been known since a long time⁷.

In fact, till as late as 1792 when the war between the Tibetans and the Gurkhas resulted in the closing of all passes through Nepal, substantial trade was carried on between India and Tibet. The chief Indian exports to Tibet comprised of cotton and silk fabrics, spices, broad cloth, hardware, pearls, coral, amber, ~~and~~ chank (Shankha) etc. and the imports were gold, musk, woollen cloth and tails of cows⁸.

The Trade and Economy of Bhutan

Bhutan was however, a comparatively lesser known country than either Tibet or Nepal. Yet within the Himalayan regions and with her neighbours, Bhutan maintained fairly regular inter-relationships, particularly in trade and in religious matters. In the maintenance of inter-Himalayan contacts, Tibet was the focal point, and her second closest neighbour of course was India. Most of the foreign trade of Bhutan to Tibet in older times was conducted through Paro by way of a low pass, the Tremo la, to Phari Dzong. The valley of Paro was very fertile, its principal crops being rice, wheat, millet and potatoes. Paro had direct trade links with Tibet, and so had the Tazgong valley in eastern Bhutan which was also very fertile with its products of rice, maize, silk and fruits. There was also another

route from Punakha to Gyantse and Shigatse in Tibet through the Mo Chhu (Sankosh river) valley. The Tazgong valley connected the Dozam valley to Shingbe. The trade from eastern Bhutan to Tibet generally followed the course of Lhobrak and Dozam rivers⁹. From very ancient times, this trade between Tibet and Bhutan was carried on through the above mentioned routes. Bhutan exported rice, fine silk, fabrics, dyes, brass utensils, musk, madder, coarse blankets & thin quilted cloths to Tibet, and brought in salt, soda, wool, gold dust, silver, tobacco, betelnuts and other articles of consumption¹⁰.

Bhutan also had direct trade links with India, particularly with Bengal. Paro had a communication with Bengal by the Dalimkot and the Buxa Diars. Indo-Bhutanese trade was also carried on through the Chumbi valley in Tibet. Some of the merchandise was carried on to Rangpur in Bengal, and some to other places through Dewangiri and Samchi on Bhutan's southern frontier¹¹. Herbs, spices and medicinal plants had always been a Bhutanese export. In some ancient Tibetan texts Bhutan has been referred to as the 'Lotus Grove of the Gods'¹², and 'Realms of Healing Herbs' which go to prove the popularity of the Bhutanese herbal medicines.

Bhutan was also referred to as 'The Four Districts of South Mon' in the old Tibetan texts. The significance of

the name of southern Mon has already been explained, and the four districts were as follows - to the north was situated Punakha, also known as 'the blooming vale of luxuriant fruits of the south'. As the name indicated there were an abundance of fruit trees in this region, which included mandarins, bananas, citrus fruits, together with sugar cane and bamboo. These trees were further surrounded by dense forests of fir, which had orchids hanging from their branches. To the south lay another district called Pasamkha (modern Buxa). It was considered a very profitable place for commerce and in the olden Tibetan texts had been referred to as 'the goal of all desire' or as 'the end of the rainbow district of all desires'¹³. To the west lay Dalikha or the region of walnut trees. It comprised of the modern town of Kalimpong, which had once belonged to western Bhutan. As the name implied, a large number of walnut trees were seen in this district and walnuts probably formed an export item from Bhutan. Finally to the east lay 'Dungsamkha' or 'the land of longing and of the silver pines', where a bazar was held later quite frequently¹⁴.

These elaborate and artistic names of the various regions of Bhutan, conjure up a vision of a place which was indeed quite a profitable trading mart, and carried on commercial activities, in the main, with Tibet on one hand,

and with Bengal and Assam on the other. There were routes connecting Bhutan with Sikkim and Tibet which led up as far as China on one side, and with places such as Cooch Behar, Rangpur and Goalpara in Bengal and Assam, on the other. The small town of Cooch Behar in North Bengal started developing as a commercial entrepot from the sixteenth century onwards where traders from Tibet, Bhutan, Sikkim and India met and exchanged their goods. This trade was in all probability the mainstay of Bhutanese economy and was supposed to have sustained her through out the centuries. From earliest times the inhabitants of Bhutan, namely the Mons and the Khens, were in contact with the people of the plains of Bengal and Assam. They used to bring their sheep and cattle down to the plains for grazing in winter, and also to barter their butter, yak tails, blankets and other hill products, for procuring their daily necessities like salt, steel etc. from the plains¹⁵. The place where these Mon people met the plainsmen and exchanged their wares was in all probability Cooch Behar, which has been mentioned as being an intersecting point in the trade route of India, Bhutan & Tibet.

The first definite reference to Bhutan's commercial activities with India in particular, can be found in the observations of an English merchant traveller, Ralph Fitch, who had visited many adjacent regions to Bhutan, as early

as 1583-84. Fitch's story of his experiences was first given to the world by Richard Hakluyt, in the second edition of his 'Principal Navigations'. Ralph Fitch arrived in Cooch Behar in 1583 after a long and adventurous journey. He had originally set out from London, to meet the Indian emperor Akbar, with a letter from Queen Elizabeth I. He arrived at Agra in 1584 and from there went to Fatehpur Sikri where Akbar resided. He sought an interview with the Emperor to present his sovereign's letter. But it is not known whether this interview ever took place or not. However, from Agra, he came to Bengal via Allahabad, Benaras, and Patna with a fleet of 180 boats laden with merchandize. He then came to Malda and thence on to Cooch Behar¹⁶. Fitch has given an interesting description of Cooch Behar, which he visited. In his own words :-

I went from Bengala into the country of Couche, which lieth twenty five days journey northwards from Tanda. The King is a Gentile, his name is Suckel Counse. His countrey is great and lieth not far from Cauchin China, for they say they have pepper from thence. The part is called Coochegate. All the countrie is set with bambos or canes made sharpe at both the endes and driven into the earth and they can let in the water, and drowne the ground above knee deaps so that men nor horses can passe. They poison all the water if any wars be. Here they have much silke and muske and cloth made of cotton. The people have eares which be marvellous great of a span long, which they draw out in length by devises when they be yong. Here they be all gentiles, and they will kil nothing¹⁷.

The above description, though meagre, and in some places prone to exaggeration, gives ample proof to show that Fitch had really visited Cooch Behar. William Foster, editor of the book 'Early travels in India 1583-1619', is of the opinion that Fitch's visit to Cooch Behar was a most interesting incident. He is inclined to believe that the term 'suckel counse' may be interpreted as white Koch (Sanskrit equivalent of white being sukla and counse may be interpreted as Koch). It should however, also be noted that Sir Edward Gait in his 'History of Assam', is disposed to regard this term '^cSukel Counse' as being equivalent to Sukladhvaj, a title borne by Silarai, the famous brother of King Nar Narayan. There is however the difficulty that Silarai had died a few years before Fitch's arrival. The statements about the proximity of Cochin China and the importation of pepper from thence, opined Gait, must be based on some misunderstanding, or a wrong information furnished to Fitch. '^{o o}Ca~~o~~chegate', according to Gait, was a tract of land on the north of Cooch Behar, forming the eastern portion of the present district of Jalpaiguri¹⁸. In fact the name Chechakh^aota is still borne by a taluk in that region, near the town of Alipurduar.

In all probability Ralph Fitch did not venture further northwards from Cooch Behar. He had not actually visited Bhutan, but was said to have 'heard' of that country and

of the quite extensive trade which existed between Bhutan and her neighbouring countries. A full quotation of Fitch's description of Bhutan, and the trade carried on by her at that time is reproduced here -

There is a country four daies journe from Couche or Quichen, before mentioned, which is called Bottanter and the citie Bottia, the king is called Darmain, the people where of are very tall and strong and there are merchants which come out of China and they say out of Muscovia or Tartarie. And they came to buy muske, cambals, agates, silke, pepper and saffron like the saffron of Persia. The country is very great, three months journey. There are very high mountains in this country and one of them so steep that when a man is six daies, journey off it, he may see it perfectly. Upon these mountains are people which have eares of a spanne long if their eares be not long they call them apes. They say that when they be upon the mountaines, they see ships in the sea, sailing to and from, but they know not from whence they came nor whether they go. There are merchants which come out of the East, they say from under the sunne, which is from China which have no beards and they say there it is something warme. But those which come from the other side of the mountains which is from the north say there it is very cold. These northern merchants are apparelled with woollen cloth and hats white hosen close and bootes which be of Moscovia or Tartarie. They report that in their country they have good horses, but they be little, some men have foure, five or six hundred horses and kine, they live with milke and fleshe. They cut the tails of their kine, and sell them very deare, for they be in great request and much esteemed in those partes. The haire of them is a yard long, the rumpe is above a spanne long, they used to hang them for braverie upon the heades of their elephants, they bee much used in Pegu and China. They buie and sell by

scores upon the ground. The people be
very swift on foote¹⁹.

The above quotation again in spite of some exaggerations and far fetched ideas, does give a picture of a country called Bhutan — 'Bottanter' or 'Bottia' — which was about four days journey from 'Conche' or 'Quicheu' which was modern Cooch Behar. An idea can also be formed of the commercial intercourse from the mention of merchants from China, Persia and Tartary, selling and buying articles such as musk, blankets, agate, silk, pepper, saffron, horses, and yak tails. The fact that these were all articles of commerce is all the more evident since in later times, these very articles were used as items of export and import. Even as late as 1815, Kishan Kanta^e Bose who visited Bhutan, reported that 'Bootan produces an abundance of Tangun horses, blankets, walnuts, musk, chowries or cowtails, oranges and manjeet (madder) which the inhabitants sell at Rangpore'²⁰. The similarity of articles mentioned by Fitch and later by Bose may be noticed. The mention by Fitch of merchants cutting off the tails of their mares and selling them at a high price (they cut off the tails of their kine^{and} sell them very deare) had also been reported by Samuel Turner, a British official who visited Bhutan in 1783²¹. Thus the similarity of incidents and goods mentioned above, may be construed

as implying that commercial contacts between Bhutan and her neighbouring countries were not negligible even in the last quarter of the sixteenth century. Moreover this trade was still being continued when the official British missions were sent to Bhutan in the 18th and the 19th centuries.

Two Portuguese Jesuit Fathers, Estevao Cacella and Joas Cabral were the first Europeans who actually visited Bhutan in 1626. At the time of their visit Ngawang Namgyal (1594-1651) the first great historical figure in Bhutan, was ruling. The Portuguese Fathers met this great ruler and presented him with a few guns, gun powder and a telescope. Their descriptions throw light on Bhutan's trade not only with the plains of Bengal and Assam but also with Tibet and China. Even though their fascinating account is not available in full, some of their observations can be obtained from Early Jesuit Travellers in Central Asia by C. Wessels. These two Fathers stayed in Paro and Thimphu and were cordially welcomed by the Bhutanese as the 'Pandits from the far western world'²².

Cacella noted that in those days a place called Hajo in Assam was very populous and rich. One factor which explained the importance and prosperity of Hajo was that it was the terminus of two important trade routes through the Manas valley and the Tawang pass. The latter did not

pass through Bhutanese territory and was a direct commercial artery with Tibet. In this connection it may be mentioned that Pemberton a British official who had visited Bhutan in 1838 found the Khampas of Eastern Tibet carrying on traffic along same routes. The Jesuit fathers had passed through Cooch Behar on their way to Bhutan and Cacella had described Cooch Behar as a flourishing trade mart. The town, he said was very populous and plentiful, provided with things which the country (meaning Cooch Behar) itself possessed, and some of which came from Patna, Rajmahal and Gaur (modern Malda). Therefore, at the time of the visit of these Portuguese fathers to Bhutan, both Hajo and Cooch Behar were undoubtedly focal points of Bhutan's trade with the plains. Regarding items of merchandise from Bhutan, Cacella further said that Bhutan was 'well provided with Chinese merchandise such as silk, gold and porcelain',²³ and these Chinese items available in Bhutan found their way to the plains as export items.

Trade routes had existed for many centuries on the north and west between Bhutan and Tibet, and on the south between Bhutan and the neighbouring provinces of Assam and Bengal in India. The inhabitants of Ha and Paro in western Bhutan traded with the Tibetan inhabitants of the Chumbi valley and Phari. The most important of all the trade routes between India and Tibet took off from Kalimpong in

the district of Darjeeling crossed south eastern Sikkim and entered the Chumbi valley by the Jelep La. Thence it proceeded up the Chumbi valley to Phari²⁴. From ancient times until the middle of the twentieth century, most of the trade between western Bhutan and Tibet was carried on by this route. A nineteenth century British treaty with Tibet provided for the opening of the Indian trading post at Yatung, which became the chief market for exchanges with India. Here the trade routes from Paro, Thimphu and Punakha met the Kalimpong-Lhasa route between India and Tibet. This trade was hampered to some extent by Bhutan's difficult terrain, dense forests, and lack of communications. The trade with Tibet also fluctuated with the political vicissitudes of Tibet. It was usually suspended whenever China established its effective control in Tibet²⁵. There also existed a number of routes between India and Bhutan for merchants to carry their merchandise to and fro. The entire mountainous territory of Bhutan is dissected by numerous rivers and their tributaries. The principal trade routes between Central Bhutan and India follow the valleys of the main rivers. The Manas river valley was one such important trade route connecting Bhutan with Assam and Bengal²⁶. Besides there was another direct route from Jalpaiguri to Dalimkot, which was a three day march and passed through Karanti and Chukladari. From the latter place another road led to Punakha. Similarly from Darjeeling too, a

six-day march route led to Dalimkot fort. From Dalimkot it was a fourteen day march to Paro, and the route passed through the Mo Chhu river, Sombe, Saibi, Tagong la and Ha, then a three days march led to Punakha through Pimethang, Tshalumarphi and Piumzend. There also existed another route to Punakha from Rangamati, a fourteen days march which passed through Kulduba, Kultab, Buxaduar, Chukha fort and Thinleygang fort. Besides the external routes, which connected Bhutan to the neighbouring countries, there existed various internal routes within Bhutan, connecting one district with another. Punakha was connected to Tongsa by a six day march route which passed through Phangyul Santigang and Tashding. From Bijni another route of eighteen days march led to Punakha passing through Brijhura, Sidli, Zalinghar, Bissusing, Dubleng, Chirang, Borgang and Wangdiphodrang. A six day march route also connected Sidli with Tongsa²⁷. It should be pointed out that the word 'trade route', does not connote a well made road. The tracks along which the caravans passed were some times very rough. But it also took a great deal to daunt the perseverance of the baggage animal be it yak, donkey, mule or sheep.

The various provincial rulers of Bhutan, who were endowed with enormous powers, had considerable rights to trade as well. The Dharma and the Deb Rajas themselves

also traded extensively, and were, in fact, referred to as the 'biggest traders' in Bhutan. The four main provincial governors namely the Thimphu Ponlob, the Paro Ponlob, the Tongsa Ponlob and the Punakha Dzongpon, were all endowed with considerable trading rights. It has been said that since the expenses of the Thimphu Ponlob was heavy, he was given a great deal of trading rights to enable him to meet some of his expenses. The Paro Ponlob was regarded as the gurdian of defence and of the trade routes to Tibet and India, on account of the strategic location of Paro. He held the rights of trade and taxation out of which he met the cost of the administration of his province. The Tongsa Ponlob also had extensive trade rights in India and Tibet to sustain the expenses of the government of Eastern Bhutan. The Punakha Dzongp^oan also had considerable trading rights to supplement the provincial revenue²⁸. Kishen Kant Bose, who visited Bhutan in 1815, corroborated the above statement, as to who the traders were. The local officials, ministers, councillors and provincial Ponlobs all held the privilege of commercial activities either privately or on behalf of the government. In the Bhutan Duars there existed an ancient custom by which a person could acquire the right of trade by a written agreement on payment of a tax named the gaongiri. Thus it is evident that all important factions

of the population of Bhutan were involved in trading to a greater or lesser degree.

Most of the trade mentioned above, was carried on by the barter system and money did not mean much to most Bhutanese. As a result of the barter economy, the dzongs which served as revenue collection centres in Bhutan were full of home spun cloth, rice, wheat, butter, and dried yak meat²⁹. However in the second decade of the nineteenth century the government of Bhutan struck a crude silver coin called Deba. The circulation of this coin was more or less confined to western Bhutan. In southern Bhutan it was the Narainee rupee, a currency of Cooch Behar, that was circulated. After the establishment of the hereditary monarchy in 1907, the government of Bhutan started getting its coins minted at the government of India mint at Calcutta³⁰. Thus coinage and currency did not play an important part in the trading pattern of the Bhutanese especially in the early period which was mostly by the barter system and exchange of precious metals.

Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal, the first great historical figure of Bhutan, had in fact laid down certain trade regulations to be strictly adhered to by all merchants. It was laid down in the code that all barter or trading should be carried on at fair and prevailing rates, and not at extortionate and preferential ones. Forced gifts of

butter or salt were also strictly forbidden. The other rules to be followed in the transaction of trade and commerce was as follows :

The headman should inspect the product of the country industries, and see that they are honest and solid in the make and texture. The merchants who have the responsibility of the import trade at the different marts must also satisfy that they get good things, and all traders must obey the state merchant in these particulars. Any one acting in defiance of these rules, or altering their meanings or attempting detention or miscarriage of such orders issued from the seat of the government shall be dealt with severely, in as much as they shall be deprived of their sight or life by decapitation³¹.

The desire of the Shabdrung to carry on commercial transactions in a free and fair way is evident from the above quotation which is also illustrative of the fact that trade must have occupied an important place in state management right from the very beginning.

Besides trade the economy of the Bhutanese has been based mainly on agriculture and animal husbandry. Small cottage industries also helped in making the Bhutanese economy largely self sufficient. It will not be out of place here to give a general description of these other mainstays of the Bhutanese economy.

Ninety five percent of the population of Bhutan lived on agriculture and cattle rearing. Diverse climatic conditions

allowed cultivation of almost all kinds of corn, and the main crops were maize, rice, wheat, barley, buckwheat, mustard and peppers³². It will be seen later that almost all the British envoys who visited Bhutan during the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries were fairly enthusiastic over the quality of crops grown in that country. Owing to the ruggedness of the terrain, however, farming on a large scale was not possible. Apart from some fertile valleys in central and western Bhutan there was not much arable land, but what ever was there, was put to the maximum use by the inhabitants.

Although pastoral activities were common almost all over the country they were practised mainly in northern Bhutan because of the availability of good pastures there. The Bhutanese especially reared Yaks which not only provided them with cheese and meat but also served as an important means of transport. Yak tails were used as items of export and Yak hair was even imported to England to be used in the plumes of the Life Guards³³. Besides Yaks, pigs and poultry were also reared in the central valleys and in southern Bhutan. Sheep were also raised especially for their wool, since traditionally their meat was eaten very little.

Small cottage industries, and arts and crafts, also played a role in Bhutanese economy. Especially the Mons of eastern Bhutan excelled in weaving both cotton and woollen fabrics, and their designs were always fascinating and

and colourful. Besides weaving coarse blankets, cotton cloth were also made by the villagers. Leather from the hides of cattle furnished the soles of snow boots. Bowls were neatly turned from various wood. A small quantity of paper was made from a plant described as the Daphne Papyfera. It was in great demand in Tibet and in other adjoining countries practising calligraphy. By the beginning of the twentieth century, the preparation of lac and rubber, both forest products, had become two important industries of this country. Swords, daggers and sheaths, iron spears, arrow heads, charm boxes, pan boxes, cauldrons and agricultural implements were also manufactured from iron, copper, brass or silver.

Besides bowls, which were turned out from wood available in plenty from the forests, baskets, and other bamboo craft also developed very early in Bhutan. Another important cottage industry which developed was clayware. The Bhutanese were excellent in this trade, and it has been presumed by some scholars that Assam, Bengal and Bhutan must have exchanged their product and technique from time to time³⁴. Another, somewhat unknown industry, was the silk manufacturing industry, the raw material for which was available from a number of cocoeneries in southern Bhutan.

The Nepal Imbroglia

It bears repetition that commercial relations between India and Bhutan existed long before the advent of the

English on the Indian soil. However, Indo-Bhutanese relation took a definite shape and was formulated on a definite policy when it came under the aegis of the East India Company. One is moreover, on surer grounds of historical evidence, while investigating the course of this complex Indo-Bhutanese relations, with particular reference to the commercial aspect. The East India Company being basically a mercantile organisation, extension of commerce was their primary concern. Soon after the British were granted the Diwani of Bengal on 12 August, 1765, by virtue of which they became the actual rulers of Bengal, they decided to extend the commerce of the state in every way possible. When the officials of the Company turned their eyes to the Himalayan regions of Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan, it was with a view to examine what these countries had to offer in way of exchange. They also looked towards these countries as trade routes, and as entrepôts for trade with Tibet and China, as well as markets in which to sell their own products.

The Company was further motivated in opening up commerce with these Himalayan states with the hope of augmenting its income. The various states of British India were, at that time, in a state of financial depletion. New sources of commerce were needed to replace the vast drains which were being made annually of the wealth and manufactures of the provinces. Another pressing factor which

probably moved the Directors to seek extension of trade in these Himalayan territories could have been the great Bengal famine of 1770. As a result of the disastrous effects of this famine, almost one third of the total population of Bengal had perished. Trade and commerce came to a stand still; there were no markets, no sellers, no buyers and no commodities either³⁵. The company was, therefore, obliged to look around for new pastures. Even though Warren Hastings played the predominant part in opening up Tibet and Bhutan to Indian commerce, events had conspired, as it were, to make this, possible even before Hastings assumed the Governor Generalship of Bengal. Eager to establish a more direct contact with the Newer rulers of Nepal, a British expedition was sent there under Captain Kinlock in 1767. This expedition though militarily disastrous had aroused considerable British curiosity in the lands beyond the Company's immediate territorial domain³⁶. Accordingly, the Court of Directors, on March 16, 1768, recommended the obtaining of intelligence as to whether a trade with Nepal was possible, and whether cloth and other European commodities could find a market through that country in Tibet and western China³⁷. Another incentive came through a surgeon James Logan who, in 1769, was sent on yet another mission to Nepal, ostensibly to deliver a letter to the ^UGorkha ruler. In reality, however, Logan had gone to lend support to the claims of the Newar

Chief of Kathmandu, who was then engaged in defending himself against the Gurkha invader Prithvi Narayan Shah. Logan's underlying aim was that by helping the Kathmandu Raja, the British would be able to have access to Tibet through the Raja's terrain, and the Raja's close association with the Tibetan Lama would help to establish trade relations with that country³⁸.

All these efforts however proved futile for in 1769, the Gurkha Chief Prithvi Narayan Shah captured the three Nepal capitals of Kathmandu, Patan and Bhatgaon, one after another, and assumed complete suzerainty of the country. Consequently, the trade which had subsisted for many years between Bengal and Nepal came to a stand still, since, though the Gurkha rulers were willing to cultivate friendly relations with the English, they jealously guarded their country against the English merchants. This blockade provided a vital setback for the commerce of the East India Company, and frustrated the officials who had hoped to link up their China trade through Nepal, and continue the Anglo-Tibetan trade through the same country³⁹. The company, determined to continue with this trade, cast about for an alternative route, and its eyes fell on Bhutan, which by its proximity to Bengal, its location in the eastern Himalayas and its closeness to the Chumbi valley appeared to provide the ideal, alternative trade route to Tibet, and

then on to China. It was thought by the Company that if access could be gained to the Chumbi valley through Bhutan, the losses it had sustained in the closure of the other routes could be made good.

Early British Contacts with Bhutan

It is generally claimed that the British East India Company first became aware of Bhutan in 1772, when this tiny mountainous country over ran the adjoining Indian state of Cooch Behar, forcing the latter to seek help from the British government. It is indeed a fact that it was this incident which ultimately led to more intimate contacts between Bhutan and India, but the British had been aware of Bhutan since quite some time back. In 1766, Major James Rennell was ordered by Robert Clive, who had by then laid the foundation of the British political power in India, to survey Bengal and the adjacent regions which had been acquired by the East India Company. Rennell, on completion of his survey, wrote, "We entered the Boutan country and crossed about seven miles of it. I had some thoughts of proceeding ... but finding the natives averse to it ... I judged it prudent to desist"⁴⁰. Thus, the British had come into contact with the Bhutanese as early as in 1766. Not only this, but Major La Touche, the editor of Rennell's

journal, reported that it was actually in 1766 that a conflict arose in Cooch Behar between the Nazir Deo, or the hereditary commander in chief, Khagendra Narayan, and the Bhutanese, over the succession to the throne of Cooch Behar, after the assassination of the infant Raja. Nazir Deo was driven out of the country, and appealed to the English for help, while the Bhutanese had hired the services of the Sanyasis. Thus it would appear that the company sepoys were fighting mercenaries of the Bhutanese, six years before the out break of the so called 'first' Anglo-Bhutanese War of 1772.

Whether the first military conflicts between the British and the Bhutanese occurred in 1766, or in 1772, is however of little importance here. The fact remains that the British were aware of the Bhutanese and looked towards this country with a view to extending their commerce. In 1769, a person named Will Mirtle was deputed to the Morung country, a territory near the Cooch Behar - Bhutan frontier to obtain wood for masts, tar, pitch and turpentine. On the death of Mirtle, this task was entrusted to Francis Peacock and James Christie in 1770, on the recommendation of the Directors, with elaborate instructions not to interfere in politics, or dabble in private trade. The enterprise was unfortunate, for they failed to enter Bhutan. Peacock interviewed the Raja of Morung 'Coran Singh' and got from him the sole grant

of cutting firs in his country. The timber he brought down to Calcutta however was pronounced to be inferior in quality - 'rotten at heart, and over weighty'⁴¹.

Again in 1771, the Directors made an enquiry regarding the possibility of the northern trade and of sending explorers to Shutan and Assam. They sent two public letters to Bengal dated 10 April and 3 May 1771, requesting John Cartier, President of the Calcutta establishment, to "explore the interior parts of Boutan (Shutan) and Assam and other countries adjacent to Goulparah", in order to determine whether Company's trade might not be expanded in that direction⁴². The letter written on 10 April, 1771 (reproduced below) may well represent the eagerness of the Directors to explore the commercial opportunities of Bhutan :-

It having been represented to us that the company may be greatly benefitted in the sale of broad cloth, iron, copper, lead and other European commodities by sending proper persons to reside at Rungpore and to explore the interior parts of Boutan, Assam and other countries adjacent to Goulparah, and as you well know our earnest desire to extend the vend of the staples of this kingdom to as great a degree as possible, we are surprised you have not already made an attempt to carry so desirable an object into execution. You are therefore, required to procure the best accounts possible and give us your opinion thereon⁴³.

The other letter written on 3 May, 1771, may be presumed to be much in the same vein, and expressing the same ideas.

The Bhutan-Cooch Behar Conflict

At this time, there occurred, most opportunely for the British, a dispute between the Raja of Cooch Behar and the Bhutanese, which led to a more direct confrontation between the British and Bhutan, and later afforded the opportunity of closer commercial relations between the two countries. The main brain behind this establishment of closer commercial ties between Tibet, Bhutan and India, was that of Warren Hastings, who assumed the Governor Generalship of Bengal in April, 1772. At about the same time, a particularly ambitious ruler of Bhutan named Desi Shidariva referred to as Deb Juddyr by George Bogle, probably enthused by the territorial claims of the Gurkha Raja Prithvi Narayan Shah, overran Sikkim, and then occupied Cooch Behar.

Now according to certain sources Bhutan's connection with Cooch Behar in fact ^{was} sent back into the middle of the 17th century. It was at that time that the Bhutanese had overran Cooch Behar and adjacent areas. They were expelled after a long struggle with the Cooch Behar authorities, who were assisted by the Mughal Viceroy of the Bihar province. The Bhutanese however retained possession of the Bengal duars, taking full advantage of the loose political control of the local rulers over them⁴⁴.

Even though the Bhutanese, had been driven out of Cooch Behar in the seventeenth century, they continued their control over the political affairs of Cooch Behar, by appointing their agent with a small escort of Bhutanese soldiers in the capital of Cooch Behar. Cooch Behar's dependence on Bhutan became again evident, when, in 1730, the Cooch Behar King Upendra Narayan sought the help of Bhutan against the Mughal intrusion in a family feud⁴⁵.

Whatever dependence and cordiality may have existed between the two governments in the seventeenth and the early part of the eighteenth century, open conflict occurred between these countries in the later half of the 18th century, leading the Cooch Behar government to seek assistance from the British once in 1766 and again in 1772. It was this latter incident already mentioned before, which ultimately led Hastings to decide upon the first commercial mission to Tibet and Bhutan. The Bhutanese led by Desi Shidariva as already said, invaded Cooch Behar in 1770, and took prisoner Maharaja Dhairjendra Narayan and his brother (Dewan Deo). An appeal from the minor king of Cooch Behar, Dharendra Narayan through his minister (Nazir) Khagendra Narayan, evoked prompt response from Warren Hastings, who immediately sent an army under Captain Jones, to subdue the Bhutanese, in the winter of 1773.

Hastings was motivated to send this army under Jones, not with the sole intention of driving out the Bhutanese, and thus liberating Cooch Behar from the clutches of this trouble some neighbour, but also to make sure that some lucrative gains were to be made by the company at the expense of Cooch Behar. In fact, in April 1773, even before the company's troops set out for the expedition, a treaty was signed between the Minister from Cooch Behar, Khagendra Narayan, and the President of the Council. In this treaty the latter 'from a love of justice and desire of assisting the distressed'⁴⁶, agreed to send a force consisting of four companies of soldiers for the protection of the minor king and his country against his enemies, under certain considerations.

Under the first stipulation the Raja had to pay fifty thousand rupees immediately to the Company's representative at Rangpur to defray the expenses of the force. Under the second, in case more than 50,000 rupees were expended, the Raja would have to make it good to the East India Company, but in case any part of it remained unexpended, it would have to be delivered back. Under the third stipulation the Raja, would have to acknowledge subjection to the English East India Company, upon his country being cleared of its enemies, and had to allow his country to be annexed to the

province of Bengal. Under the fourth, he had to agree further to make over to the Company one half of the annual revenue of Cooch Behar for ever⁴⁷. These four articles were the major ones in the treaty signed between the Raja of Cooch Behar and the East India Company, and it implied a virtual surrender of Cooch Behar into British hands.

Hastings had probably this idea in view that if trade with Tibet and Bhutan were to be extended, Cooch Behar as one of the doors to the north should definitely be under the control of the company. The whole of the treaty comprising of nine articles (Appendix I) ^Uth^Us afforded great advantage to the British since control over Cooch Behar signified not only territorial gains, but commercial ones as well. There was a centre of Tibetan trade in the town of Rangpur, and merchandise worth two to two and half lakhs of rupees were annually exchanged there. The only way of taking these articles was through Cooch Behar, and when hostilities broke out between Cooch Behar and the Bhutanese, this way was closed leading to a great loss to the Company, whose primary concern was that of trade⁴⁸. Hence they felt that by driving out the Bhutanese and establishing a control over Cooch Behar the way for commerce could also be made clear, and with such great advantages at stake, the Company could afford to risk a few military losses.

The outcome of the military expedition sent under Jones in 1772-73 was that the company's force drove out the Bhutanese and invaded them in their own territories. At the close of hostilities, Hastings received a dignified letter of intercession (Appendix II) from ^{the} Panchen Lama⁴⁹ of Tibet, requesting Hastings to pardon the Bhutanese. This letter was received by the English government on March 29 1774. A Hindu mendicant named Purangir Gossain⁵⁰ and a Tibetan named Palma brought the famous letter and some presents to Hastings. In this letter, the Panchen Lama claimed that the Bhutanese, who were a rude and ignorant people, were subjects of the Dalai Lama. This however, has been said to be an exaggeration and historically incorrect. It would seem that although Tibetan religious and institutional impact on Bhutan was considerable, at no time did Bhutan come under the political domination of Tibet. Coming back to the letter by the Panchen Lama, besides an appeal to forgive the Bhutanese the letter also entrusted the full task of explanation of the situation to the Gossain. This he did very well, and succeeded in winning the respect of Hastings. The presents sent to Hastings, together with the letter, included sheets of gilt leather, stamped with the black eagle of the Russian armorial, talents of gold and silver and some amount of gold dust. There were also bags of genuine musk, narrow woollen cloths manufactured in Tibet and silks of China. The chests which contained these were of good

workmanship and were joined together by dove tails⁵¹.

Seeing the excellent handicrafts of the presents, Hastings' desire to extend trading contacts with Tibet and Bhutan was further increased, and he resolved to give a concrete shape to this idea by sending a commercial mission.

Preparations for the Sending of a Mission

Soon after receiving this letter from the Panchen Lama, Hastings entered into a treaty with the new Deb Raja of Bhutan Tshenlop Kunga Rinchen. This treaty (see appendix III) known as the Anglo-Bhutanese treaty signed on 25th April, 1774, conceded great territorial advantages to the British. The Bhutanese offered to give up the whole open country, and limited their claim just to the woods and the lowlands below the foot hills. Moreover there was the promise to carry on duty free trade with Rangpur as before. The Bhutanese, under the clauses of this treaty, also undertook never to ingress into the British and Cooch Behar territories, or afford shelter to the enemies of the British. One of the enemies of the British included the Sanyasis, who had moved into the foot hills of Bhutan in 1772-73, and had strengthened the Bhutanese efforts to resist British advance into their own territory. Notwithstanding the stipulations of the treaty, the Bhutanese-Sanyasi alliance

continued. In fact, the Sanyasis were said to have operated against the British from their sanctuary in Bhutan during ~~as late as~~ the revolt of 1857. Coming back to the treaty of 1774, Hastings had nothing to lose by signing such an advantageous treaty, but he decided to make political capital out of the whole affair by announcing that his decision to come to terms with the Bhutanese was entirely due to his regard for the Panchen Lama⁵². Be that as it may, Hastings, now decided to be generous with the Bhutanese and take this opportunity of extending commercial transactions with Bhutan and Tibet.

Hastings was of the opinion that the opening of new channels of commerce was the only way of making up for the constant drain of money from Bengal. He pointed out in a memorandum that Tibet offered a promising field for commerce. The Lama was friendly; gold, and silver were the medium of commerce and Tibet carried on an extensive trade with her neighbours, Kashmir, Nepal, Bhutan and China. Therefore when an opportunity for coming into closer commercial contacts with Tibet was presenting itself Hastings realised the necessity of seizing it. Since the only road to Tibet, now open, lay through Bhutan, Hastings conceived the idea to enquire the measures by which 'the sales of British staples, may be promoted in the countries of Bhutan Assam etc.'. In fact this idea had been in his mind even before the conflict

between Cooch Bihar and Bhutan occurred and, in 1772, Charles Purling, Collector of Rangpur, was instructed to make some enquiries to the above effect. After the investigation, however, Purling came to the conclusion that Bhutan did not offer good possibilities for the establishment of a thriving commerce. 'The Boutans', he said, 'have never hitherto been accustomed to trade with us but in barter for articles which it will never be to the company's advantage to receive',⁵³. Hastings however, decided to go ahead with his plans for extension of commerce with Bhutan and Tibet in spite of Purling's unfavourable opinion.

Sammuel Turner summed up Hastings' intentions with the following words -

The Governor General himself more readily embraced the opportunity which he thought this occurrence offered of extending the British connexion to a quarter of the world, with which we had hitherto no intercourse, and of opening new sources of commerce, of which our provinces stood greatly in need, to replace the vast drains which were annually made of their wealth and manufactures in supplying the wants of our other establishments and the commercial investments of the company. What specific articles of trade might be drawn from the northern countries, or what physical or political accommodations or difficulties might be found to promote or obstruct it were even beyond conjecture, but under such circumstances it seems an object of much curiosity, well deserving the attention of government, to explore an unknown region, for the purpose of discovering in the first instance, what was the nature of its production, as it would afterwards be when that

knowledge was obtained, to inquire by what means it might be most effectually converted to advantage⁵⁴.

With precisely this object in view Hastings informed the Board of Directors that he had decided to reply to the letter sent by the Panchen Lama, which would include among other things a general treaty of amity and commerce between Tibet and India. For this purpose a mission was to be sent to Tibet, and George Bogle of the Bengal Civil Services was chosen as the envoy to Tibet and Bhutan. He was to be accompanied by a physician Dr. Hamilton, as well as by Purangir Gosain. Besides, there is also evidence of a Kashmiri named Mir Mohammad Sattar, who also accompanied Bogle⁵⁵. Bogle was carefully apprised of the objects of his mission. His ultimate aim would be to reach the court of the Panchen Lama in Tibet and negotiate with him on the prospects of increased trade and commerce between Tibet and India through Bhutan. It was also Bogle's responsibility to convince the Deb Raja of Bhutan that a passage of goods through his domains, to and from Tibet and Bengal, would only be to his advantage.

Bogle was supposed to meet the Deb Raja, on his return journey from Tibet, and negotiate with him for the passage of goods through his domains. In a letter, written on 9th May, 1774 Hasting's instructions to Bogle on the above matter were very explicit -

The great object of your mission is as I have explained in my letter to the Deb Rajah, is to open a communication of trade with Tassisudon and through that place to Lhasa and the most distant parts of Tibet. The advantages of such a plan to the Deb Rajah himself cannot escape him. His capital will become the centre of a commerce the most extensive and the most lucrative if properly improved of any in land trade, perhaps in the world and will derive the greatest benefits from it, by being the medium of communication between the communities of Tibet and Bengal. This country is too poor to be an object of conquest and the expense and difficulty of maintaining the possession of it, if it were subdued would be an insuperable objection to the attempt⁵⁶.

As far as Hastings instructions to Bogle for the Panchen Lama was concerned, the Governor General was equally explicit and precise. In the letter dated 13th May 1774, informing Bogle of his appointment as envoy, Hastings wrote -

- (a) The design of your mission is to open a mutual and equal communication of trade between the inhabitants of Shutan and Bengal.
- (b) You will take with you samples for a trial of such articles of commerce as may be sent from this country according to the accompanying list marking as accurately as possible the charge of transporting them.
- (c) You will inquire what other commodities may be successfully employed in that trade. And you will diligently inform yourself of the manufactures, productions, goods, introduced by the intercourse with other countries, which are

to be procured in Bhutan especially such as are of great value and easy of transportation such as gold, silver, precious stones, musk, rhubarb, munjit etc.

- (d) The following will be also proper objects of your enquiry - the nature of the road between the borders of Bengal and Lhasa, and the countries lying between the communications between Lhasa and the neighbouring countries, their government revenue and manners⁵⁷.

In addition Hastings also gave Bogle a note of private commissions dated 16th May 1774, containing ten items, pertaining to Tibetan life, communications and especially to trade. He requested Bogle to send back one or more pairs of the goats that produced fine 'shawl wool' from which the famous 'cashmere shawls' were made and one or more yaks since their bushy tails were highly valued in India and 'fetched good prices'. Hastings also asked for walnuts for seed, or a walnut plant, and any other valuable seed or plant, besides any other curiosities, whether natural productions or manufactures, especially the rhubarb and ging seng (Gingsang or Jin San was a drug much used in China for fevers). Another thing which Hastings asked Bogle to find out was, at what particular science or art did the Tibetans⁵⁸ excel.

In order to make Tibet and Bhutan acquainted with British Indian goods, Hastings, in addition to some valuable presents, gave Bogle a great variety of articles, chiefly

of British manufacture, which he could produce as specimens of trade in which the Tibetans would be asked to join. Unfortunately the exact nature of these articles sent, cannot be identified. The Tashilhunpoo records merely mention that Bogle offered the Lama 'presents of glass, bottles, etc. ,59.

Thus the stage was all set for the departure of George Bogle on a first commercial mission to Bhutan and Tibet. Though it is true that it was Hastings' quest for commercial adventure that ultimately saw the mission under Bogle set off, plans were afoot for such an undertaking during the Governor Generalship of Verelst. But it was Hastings who gave a practical shape to these nebulous ideas. Hastings seized an opportune moment to open up negotiations with Tibet and Bhutan, and by his conciliatory and cautious policy, succeeded in keeping the doors of commerce, between India and her northern neighbours open. He even tried to keep up his good work by sending a number of missions after Bogle's return and was quite successful in winning over the Panchen Lama and securing certain commercial privileges from both the countries of Tibet and Bhutan.

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CHAPTER III

The High Tide of Commercial Intercourse, 1774-1788

Soon after the conclusion of the Anglo-Bhutanese treaty of 1774, which in fact initiated a policy of wooing Bhutan in the interests of trans-Himalayan trade¹, George Bogle, accompanied by Alexander Hamilton, Porungir Gossain, and probably also a Kashmiri named Mir Mohammad Sattar, set out for the very first commercial mission, to these northern countries of Tibet and Bhutan. The sending of this mission has been described as an exercise in commercial diplomacy par excellence². On his way to Tibet Bogle stayed in Bhutan a month longer than he intended, due to delay in his obtaining the entry permits into Tibet. He has given a

detailed account of his travels in these two countries. From his account it is clear that Bogle succeeded, after tedious negotiations, in inducing the Bhutan government to allow the passage of Indian merchants and goods, through their territory, to and from Tibet and Bengal. He also secured the hearty co-operation and support of the Tibetans in the encouragement of trade.

Bogle's Description of the Economy of Bhutan

Bogle travelled by way of Cooch Behar and Buxa to Tashichhodzong. On the 9th of June 1774, he entered the hills³, and on his way to Tashichhodzong, passed through a number of places, such as Gygoogoo, ^UMirichom, Chuka and Chupcha⁴. The exact route followed by Bogle has been shown in the map attached (Map II). From his description a fair idea may be formed of the agricultural produce and generally ~~of the~~ economic condition of the country during the period of late-eighteenth century.

The climate of Bhutan, according to Bogle, changed rapidly, and as far as agricultural production was concerned, the place called ^UMirichom was said to be quite prosperous. ^UMirichom was situated at a distance of 'not above two days journey from the entrance into the hills'⁵, and produced apricots, peaches, apples, pears, mulberries

and even oaks. Potatoes, however, were not available in Bhutan. Hence at ^UMarichom, fifteen potatoe plants were planted by Bogle. This was done in accordance with Hastings' wishes, who desired that Bogle should plant some potatoes at every halting place, so that a valuable new plant might be introduced into Bhutan. Ten potatoe plants were also planted at Gygoogoo⁶. These potatoes plants, however, did not survive, and Samuel Turner visiting Bhutan in 1783, described them as being very poor specimens, no bigger than marbles. Turner attributed the failure of the potatoe crops to ignorance and idleness on the part of the Bhutanese⁷. Thus Hastings' experiment of planting potatoes in order to introduce a valuable new crop for Bhutan, appears to have failed. Nevertheless, other agricultural products were quite abundant in Bhutan, as per Bogle's report.

He described turnips, water melons, cucumbers and brinjals being cultivated at Chupcha (spelt^t Kepta by Bogle and Chupka by Pemberton). Markham, editor of Bogle's narrative, is of the opinion that Bhutan probably produced at that time the best ^turnips in the world⁸. Soon after Bogle reached TashiChhodzong he was cordially welcomed by the Deb Raja, and several copper platters with rice, butter, treacle, tea, walnuts, Kashmirian dates, apricots, cucumbers and other fruits, were set before him⁹. The

Kashmirian dates gave evidence of commercial transactions being carried on between that region and Kashmir. Bogle was suitably impressed by the palace at Tashichhodzong and by the immense quantity of timber that had gone into the construction of the building¹⁰. Bhutan was rich in forest wealth, and the abundance of timber did not escape the attention of Bogle. The low grounds near the palace of ^a Tashichhodzong were covered with rice, and wheat was also grown on the less steep slopes¹¹. It may be interesting to note that rice, husked as well as unhusked, constituted at one time a major export item of Bhutan, to which we shall return later.

From Bogle's account, an idea can be formed of the administrative structure of Bhutan as well as the life style of the people. In the dual form of government that existed in Bhutan the authority of the Deb Raja appeared to be quite complete and extended to the appointment of officials, the collection and management of the revenues, and the command and direction of the military forces. Considerable power, however, was also vested in the hands of the provincial governors of the various forts such as the Paro Ponlob, the Tongsa Ponlob and the Tagna Ponlob¹², without whose consent the Deb Raja could not take any effective decision.

The inhabitants of Bhutan, said Bogle, could be distinctly classified into three main classes--the priests, the servants or officers of government, and the land holders or husbandmen. But, there was hardly any distinction of profession in Bhutan. Every family was acquainted with almost all the useful arts, and contained within themselves, almost all the necessities of life. Even clothes, which were so important an article in the extreme climate of Bhutan, were generally the produce of the husbandman's industry. At one particular season, the husbandman and his sons, exchanged the produce of their land for the wool from the Panchen Lama's country, that is from Tibet. This wool was spun, dyed and woven into cloth by the women of the family, and the family were provided with clothing. The remainder of the wool brought from Tibet, were in most cases, transported along with musk and horses to Rangpur, and exchanged for hogs, salt, fish, coarse linen, dyes, spices, broadcloth and other articles¹³.

First Round of Commercial Negotiations

While at Bhutan, it was the primary duty of Bogle to interview the Deb Raja, and obtain from him the permission to allow men and merchandise from Tibet and India to pass through his domains. Without much delay therefore, Bogle

proceeded to open negotiations with the Deb Raja ^T Ashenlop Kunga Rinchen, and sent regular reports of the outcome of these negotiations to Hastings. Bogle noticed that the Bhutanese authorities were suspicious of the motives of the company. In a letter written to Hastings on 20th August 1774, Bogle mentioned that his servants were not allowed to buy even the smallest article, except through the Bhutanese officials, and that the Deb Raja himself seemed to be extremely anxious that he should leave Bhutan as soon as possible¹⁴. Bogle however, did not give up so easily. In a letter written on 8th October 1774, Bogle said that he had represented to the Bhutanese, Hastings' wish to extend commercial intercourse between Bengal and the northern countries. Bogle had further tried to impress upon the Raja the advantages that would accrue to Bhutan from this trade. Finally Bogle pointed out that a mutual commercial intercourse would serve to strengthen and cement the amity and good understanding, which had been established between the two countries. In answer to these proposals, Bogle received assurances from the Deb Raja that he would try to cultivate friendship with the British¹⁵. But, in spite of assurances of friendship, the Raja had his own reservations on the matter and was not very keen to allow merchants, especially European merchants, to pass through his territory.

Bogle, in the course of his negotiations, also elicited some information about the fair at Rangpur, which was the chief entrepot of trade between these two countries. In a letter written to Hastings on October 11, 1774, he described the fair thus, "the annual caravan from this to Rangpur is principally an adventure of the Deb Rajah, his ministers and provincial governors. Each of them sends an agent, with his tanyans, musk, cowtails, coarse red blankets, or striped woollen cloth half yard wide. The other Bhutanese go under their protection. The returns from thence consisting chiefly of broad cloth, spices, dyes, Malda cloths, go almost wholly into Teshu Lama's country either as tribute or in trade. In the last case they are converted into Pelong handkerchiefs, flowered satins, tea, salt, wool etc."¹⁶. Bogle mentioned that this trade between Rangpur and Bhutan was very beneficial to the Raja and his people, and that they were jealous of it. Bogle was a little perplexed as to why the proposal for the extension of this commerce upto Tibet, was not received very enthusiastically by the Bhutanese. The Bhutanese point of view might be understood by the fact that they were loth to encourage any new measures, which they felt might interfere with the monopoly of their trade with India¹⁷. In other words, they feared that the British Indian, as well as the Tibetan merchants, might claim a share in the profit of this trade, of which they had long been the sole beneficiaries.

With a view to assure the Raja further of British help and cooperation, Bogle wrote to Hastings asking him to issue a parwana (a permit) to the Deb Raja, with the assurance that Bhutanese caravans proceeding to Rangpur, would have free liberty to trade according to ancient custom¹⁸. Bogle also placed before Hastings another interesting proposition. He informed the Governor General that some of the Bhutanese merchants were desirous of penetrating further into Bengal, even as far as Calcutta, and purchase many articles of their choice, including fire arms. The war between the Bhutanese and the English over Cooch Behar and, later, the cordial treaty signed between them, probably, had broadened their minds towards the English, felt Bogle¹⁹. He realised the necessity of encouraging the Bhutanese to come to Calcutta and to other interior parts of Bengal for trade, which would be mutually beneficial.

On 28th November 1774, Warren Hastings, in a letter to the ^{Deb} Raja of Bhutan, expressed his desire to see commercial transactions being smoothly carried out between the two countries. As per Bogle's instructions, he also enclosed a parwana, which ran as follows -

Notice is hereby given to all the merchants of Bhutan, that the strictest orders have been issued to the officers at Rangpur and GHORAGHAT dependent on the Subah of Bengal (the paradise of nations) that they do not obstruct the passage of the Bhutan merchants to those places

for the purposes of carrying on their trade as formerly, but that they afford every assistance to their caravans. They are therefore required not to entertain the least apprehension, but with the greatest security and confidence to come into Bengal and carry on their traffic as formerly. Placing an entire reliance on this, let them act agreeably there to²⁰.

The issuing of the parwana, gives as indication of Hastings' eagerness to increase trade between the two countries, which brought great advantage to the company extending to about two, or two and a half lakhs of rupees a year²¹.

In another letter to the Deb Raja, written on the 6th of January 1775, Hastings, informed him of how he had expressed 'the strongest injunctions to remove some obstructions in the cotton trade'²² between the two countries. He further asked the Deb Raja to appoint a yakil (representative) at Calcutta, with a view to developing more intimate connections between the British and the Deb. In his own words "As the distance between us is so great that many obstructions to the trade of your subjects and causes of complaint may arise of which I may be wholly ignorant and as I wish to prevent any such, it is proper that a Vackil should reside here on your part to deliver your letters to me and to lay before me any representations you may have to make to me"²³. The Deb Raja, however, did not agree to the above proposal.

Bogle was of the opinion that the Panchen Lama of Tibet might be more inclined to this extension of trade with Bengal, than the Deb Raja. He felt that if he could convince the Panchen Lama of the commercial advantages to be gained, the latter would in turn exert his influence on the Deb Raja to do the same²⁴. The civil war in favour of the deposed Deb Raja Desi Shidariva, which was raging in Bhutan at that time might have caused the existing incumbent to the office wary about British designs, and, therefore, Bogle was not in favour of pushing the Raja any further before he reached some definite conclusions with the Panchen Lama of Tibet. Hence he decided to conclude the remaining agreement with the Deb, only on his return journey from Tibet.

After the conclusion of some preliminary negotiations with the Deb Raja, Bogle wanted to proceed for Tibet 'to endeavour to establish a free and lasting intercourse'²⁵ with that country. However, due to certain difficulties Bogle's mission never reached Lhasa. While waiting in Bhutan to obtain permission to enter Tibet, Bogle received a letter from the Panchenⁿ Lama, informing him that it was the order of the Emperor of China, under whose subjection his country lay, not to allow any Moghul, Hindustani, Patan or Firingy to enter Tibet. The Panchen Lama pointed out the difficulty of obtaining permission from China, because

of the distance between his country and China, and concluded that it would be best for Bogle to return to Calcutta. Porungir Gossain, who was down in Calcutta at that time also received a letter, explaining that the reason for delaying Bogle was the outbreak of small pox in Tibet²⁶. What ever be the pretext; it was clear that the Tibetan authorities were not eager to welcome Bogle.

Bogle attributed this reluctance on the part of the Tibetans, to have arisen from their suspicion of Europeans. The same suspicion was evident among the Bhutanese, particularly the Deb Raja, who also advised Bogle to follow the Panchen Lama's advise, and return to Calcutta²⁷. Be that as it may, ultimately Bogle did get the permission to proceed to Tibet and left, Tashichhodzong on the 13th of October 1774. He held his first interview with the Panchen Lama, at a place called Desheripgay on the 8th November, where amongst other things, trade and commerce were also thoroughly discussed. The principal articles of merchandise between Bengal and Tibet were broadcloth, otter skins, indigo, pearls, coral, amber and other skins, chank shells, spices, tobacco, sugar, striped satins, and a few white cloths mostly coarse. The returns were made in gold dust, musk and cow tails. This profitable trade had started declining, according to the Panchen Lama from 1769, after Prithvi Narayan Shah, the Gurkha Raja, occupied Nepal, and

stopped the passage of commercial goods through Nepal and forced traders to leave his country²⁸. Hence, the alternative route for the transportation of goods lay through Bhutan, and even this route was being closed, asserted the Panchen Lama, by the recent incursions led by Desi Shidariva, and the subsequent war.

On being asked by Bogle to apply some effectual remedy to remove this stagnation in trade, the Panchen Lama replied that there was no direct trade between Bengal and Tibet. The Tibetan merchants carried their goods upto Pharidzong near the border, where the Bhutanese subjects of the Deb Raja brought commodities from Bengal to exchange for Tibetan goods²⁹. It may be assumed from the Lama's reply that since trade with Bengal was carried on through the medium of the Bhutanese merchants, he could do nothing to improve the conditions, till the trouble with Bhutan had blown over. Not only the Bhutanese, but the Gurkhas as well, claimed the Lama, were hindering the passage of free commerce between India and Tibet. Not only had they (the Gurkhas) closed the passes into India and into Tibet, and discouraged merchants from residing in their domains, but while Bogle was in Tashilhumpo, they attacked Sikkim, thus closing yet another route. The Panchen Lama on one occasion seemed to suspect that the English might be having something to do with this invasion, but Bogle assured him to the contrary³⁰.

After conversing with various Tibetans as well as with the Kashmiri merchants at Tashilhunpo Bogle found that the merchants themselves were unwilling to come to Bengal because of the heat, and because the journey was unfamiliar to them. In spite of Bogle's repeated persuasions, the Panchen Lama refused to be drawn into any agreement with the British. The Lama said that though he himself was desirous of re-introducing the flourishing trade once carried on between Tibet and Bengal, he would have to refer to the higher authorities in Lhasa in order to do this³¹ and the recovery of trade would take about a year or two³². Thus no concrete result, emerged from Bogle's negotiations with the Panchen Lama. All this pointed to suspicion of foreigners, and a dependence upon the authorities at Lhasa. Chinese considerations probably also played a part in Tibetan reticence. Bogle finally left Tashilhunpo on the 7th of April 1775.

Second Round of Discussions

On his return journey from Tibet, Bogle once again stopped at Tashichhodzong, and on the 17th of May 1775, entered into negotiations with the Deb Raja. Realising the suspicion with which the Tibetans as well as the Bhutanese regarded the Europeans, Bogle felt that it would be useless to ask permission from the Deb Raja to allow

Europeans to trade into the Deb Raja's country. He therefore, decided to procure leave for Hindu and Muslim traders from India only, to go and come through the Deb Raja's domains, between Bengal and Tibet. The merchants would also be given the option of leaving their goods either at Paro, or carrying them into Tibet³³. Bogle was further of the opinion that if the merchants from Tibet were also allowed to come with their merchandise to Paro, it would soon become a central mart for commodities. But since a constant fear was prevalent in Bhutan of a recurrence of another insurrection in favour of Desi Shidariva, which the Bhutanese felt, would in all probability be supported by the government at Lhasa, Bogle felt that it would be impossible to apply for the Deb Raja's consent to allow Tibetans a freedom of trade to Paro³⁴.

Bogle had earlier got an impression that Bhutanese traders were eager to come further inside Bengal for trading purposes. With a view to help them do so, Bogle requested the Governor General to issue dastuks or permits to any trader willing to come to Calcutta. Bogle wrote, "I am convinced that after their people arrive at Calcutta, discover numbers of curiosities which they never saw before and find the price of broad cloth, coral, spices etc., much lower than at Rangpur, they will fall into the practice of purchasing their goods at Calcutta"³⁵. Hastings, in a letter

written to Bogle on May 9 1775, approved the remission of tribute or duty which Bogle had suggested. This concession ^t Haspings thought was to be the 'ground work' of Bogle's commercial transactions in Bhutan. He said that though the caravan paid about rupees two thousand to the government, the right of levying this tax might be interpreted by the Bhutanese government as a sort of exaction, while the surrender of this privilege, could be considered a great benefit to them³⁶.

With all the above considerations in view, Bogle drew up the following paper for facilitating commerce between Bengal and the Deb Raja's country. It ran as follows -

Whereas the trade between Bengal and Tibet formerly very considerable and all Hindu and Mussulman merchants were allowed to trade into Nepal, which was the centre of communication between the two countries, and whereas from the wars and oppressions in Nepal, the merchants having of late years been unable to travel into that country, the governor and the Deb Rajah, united in friendship, being desirous of removing these obstacles, so that merchants may carry on their trade free and secure as formerly, having agreed upon the following articles :

"That the Bhutanese shall enjoy the privileges of trading to Rangpur as formerly, and shall also be allowed to proceed, either themselves or by their gumashtas, (agents) to all places in Bengal, for the purpose of trading and selling their horses, free from duty or hindrance.

"That the duty hitherto exacted at Rangpur from the Bhutan caravan be from henceforward abolished.

"That the Deb Rajah, shall allow all Hindu and Mussulman merchants freely to pass and repass through his country between Bengal and Tibet.

"That no English or European merchants shall enter the Deb Raja's dominions.

"That the exclusive trade in sandal, indigo, red skins, tobacco, betelnut, and pan, shall remain with the Bhutanese, and that the merchants be prohibited from importing the same into the Deb Raja's dominions; and that the governor shall confirm this in regard to indigo by an order to Rangpur³⁷.

The terms of this agreement, being suitable to the Deb Raja, was accepted by him, all the more so, since the terms favoured the Bhutanese more than the Indian merchants.

The Bhutanese merchants, however, did not come to Calcutta but continued their trading activities at the fairs at Rangpur and Titalya, and registered their goods only at the frontier stations.

The Outcome of Bogle's Mission

George Bogle returned from his expedition to Bhutan and Tibet in June 1775. In a general report presented to Hastings, he gave a detailed account of his commercial venture, and enumerated the extent of his success. As far as Bhutan was concerned, Bogle seemed to have achieved a greater degree of success than with the authorities in

Tibet. He entered into a written agreement with the Deb Raja regarding commercial transactions between the two countries, which was something that he could not persuade the Panchen Lama of Tibet to enter into.

Some people have, however, labelled Bogle's mission to be a totally unsuccessful and fruitless one. S.C. Bajpaie has said, 'George Bogle merely passed through Bhutan without transacting any business there'³⁸. But to label Bogle's mission as 'unsuccessful', would not be doing full justice to him. Bogle had pointed out that the entire trade with Tibet was in the hands of native agency before Europeans had any thing to do with it³⁹ and so there was nothing unusual in Europeans not being allowed to enter Bhutan. He also believed that trade in this region could be promoted 'without the establishment of English factories and employment of English agents'. Bogle considered it an achievement to restore it 'back to that point', and believed that the connection he had achieved with the Panchen Lama and the Deb Raja would help to promote it further⁴⁰. The fact that Warren Hastings himself was pleased with the result of Bogle's expedition can be corroborated by the fact that the Governor General entrusted Bogle with yet another mission to Tibet in 1779. Unfortunately this journey could not be undertaken because the Panchen Lama happened to be on a visit to Peking at that time.

Besides securing commercial concessions, Bogle was also responsible for preparing the way for the establishment of extensive tea plantations in Bengal and Assam under European management. It was he who reported that tea was a universal beverage in Bhutan and Tibet, and this item was entirely imported from China. Bogle therefore argued that if tea plants could be cultivated in the British territory, this large and profitable trade could be captured from China⁴¹. Besides tea, a very considerable trade in other commodities was also going on between China and Tibet, which included rock salt, wool, sheep skins, and other Chinese commodities. The Chinese jealously guarded this trade, and were reluctant to allow any other country to share in the profits. It was probably out of respect for Chinese wishes that the Panchen Lama did not enter into any agreement with Bogle. The Panchen Lama, however, assured Bogle that he would try to persuade the Deb Raja to enter into free commercial transactions with British India, and would also write to the Raja of Nepal to reopen his domain as before.

The hesitant attitude of the Bhutanese was due to two reasons. First, they regarded the European merchants with suspicion, since they felt that they might lose the monopoly of trade they had since enjoyed with Tibet. There was also the lurking fear of losing their national

independence as well. This fear was not unjustified because Bogle himself had observed that 'the power and elevation to which the English have now risen render them objects of jealousy to all their neighbours'⁴². Some European merchants had complained to Bogle of the bad behaviour of the Bhutanese⁴³. This bad behaviour was really out of a fear for the British. The Bhutanese were also apprehensive that the insurrection which was going on in Bhutan during Bogle's visit, in favour of Desi Shidariva, was being supported by the Tibetans. Hence their reluctance to allow Tibetan merchants into their own territory. However, in spite of all these hindrances, Bogle did succeed in getting some concessions, and ended the General Report of his mission on an optimistic note by emphasizing on three main points - (i) With the death of Prithvi Narayan Shah and the accession of his son Singh Pertab to the throne, possibilities of trade through Nepal were brightened; (ii) Consent was obtained for the passage of Hindu and Muslim merchants through Bhutan; and (iii) ^tThe Tibetan merchants might be able to come to Paro and even to the interiors of Bengal to trade as soon as the fear of another insurrection in Bhutan supported by the Tibetans was removed.

Soon after the return of Bogle in June 1775, Hastings, in a gesture of courtesy and friendship, thanked the Deb

Raja for 'very kindly' receiving his envoy and for agreeing 'to allow the merchants to carry on their trade between Bengal and Tibet',⁴⁴. The rapport which Bogle had established with the Panchen Lama of Tibet, and the Deb Raja of Bhutan, pleased Hastings exceedingly, and he was determined to keep up the good work. Throughout his tenure, the importance of Bhutan as 'gate on the south that prevents entry',⁴⁵ was never lost sight of. It was with a view to furthering his project that he took several steps in that direction. These included the building of a small Buddhist temple at Calcutta to facilitate Tibetan traders, sending of several missionsⁿ to further cement the existing bonds of friendship, and finally making great concessions for the Tibetan and Bhutanese traders coming to exchange their wares at Rangpur.

Keeping in mind Bogle's proposal of extending facilities to Tibetan and Bhutanese merchants who happened to be visiting Calcutta, Hastings built a small Buddhist temple at Howrah, near Calcutta. This temple could be used by any Tibetan or Bhutanese merchant as a meeting as well as a resting place. This shrine 'still in a certain condition of active existence',⁴⁶ was rediscovered in 1887. It is on record that the Panchen Lama of Tibet had requested, in a letter sent through Bogle to grant him hundred bighas of

land on the banks of the Ganges opposite to Calcutta. In consequence of this request, the Governor General laid before the Board of Revenue on December 4 1775, the necessary papers, which he had obtained with the consent of the proprietors for some ground lying on the other side of the river⁴⁷. Thus hundred bighas of land were granted to the Lama, and it was on this land that the temple was built. Gourdas Basak had observed that it was 'for the first and last time that a living divinity in Tibet condescended to accept a sannad from the representative of the British power in India, and to become his jagirdar'⁴⁸.

Attempts to Keep up Contacts - the Missions Under Hamilton

Hastings decided to follow up Bogle's mission by sending yet another mission to Bhutan under Alexander Hamilton, who had accompanied Bogle. One of the main duties of Hamilton was to examine into the claims which was being made by the Deb Raja of Bhutan on the districts of Ambari Falakata and Jalpesh in the heart of the Bengal Duars. Accordingly, Hamilton set out in November 1775, and following the same route as Bogle, reached the frontier of Bhutan in January 1776. Thereupon he received a friendly letter from the Deb Raja inviting him to Punakha. He reached there on April 6, and was at Tashichhodzong in May 1776. After

examining into the claims of the Deb Raja, Hamilton came to the conclusion that equity demanded the restoration of ^{these lands} ~~these lands~~ to the Deb Raja. The recommendation was made more in the interests of furthering Warren Hastings' policies than on the intrinsic merits of the case. Hamilton hoped that if restitution was made, he would probably be able to induce the Deb Raja to fulfil his agreement with Bogle, and only to levy moderate transit duties on merchandise⁴⁹. Hamilton returned after insisting upon the agreement between the Deb Raja and Bogle being faithfully ⁶ observed. This agreement had promised, it will be remembered, in return for the free passage of non-European merchants of Bengal across Bhutan, freedom of access to the Bhutanese and their gomostas to all places in Bengal, the privilege of selling horses duty free, the abolition of all duty on the Bhutanese caravan in Rangpur, and the reservation for the Bhutanese exclusively on the export of indigo, tobacco, red skin, betelnut, etc. into Bhutan⁵⁰.

On Hamilton's recommendation, and in order to preserve the lasting effects of Bogle's mission to Bhutan, Hastings decided upon the secession of these territories of Ambari Falakata and Jalpesh which were eventually transferred to Bhutan in 1787. These areas had belonged to the Zemindars of Baikunthapur, under the Cooch Behar Raj. Ashley Eden

who himself was a later envoy to Bhutan, wrote, "I am afraid on this occasion the friendship of the Bhutanese was purchased at the expense of the Baikunthapur Zamindar". This transfer also went to imply that "history or geography, religion or language were subordinated to the company's own motive securing access to Tibet and through Tibet to China"⁵¹.

Be that as it may, in the effort to keep up friendly relations with Bhutan and Tibet, Hamilton was sent to Bhutan yet again in July 1777. This time it was to congratulate the new Deb Raja Jigme Singye on his assuming the temporal authority of the country after the death of the erstwhile Deb Raja, Tshenlop Kunga Richen, with whom Bogle had concluded the trade treaty. This Hastings availed of every opportunity keep up a constant communication with Bhutan in order to prevent the opening made by Bogle from being closed.

In 1778, the new Deb Raja sent his yakil, Narpoo Paigah to Calcutta, where he delivered, under the Deb Raja's seal, a declaration ratifying the agreement for a trade passage across Bhutan. One of the originals of this declaration is in Bengali, and confirms the articles of Bogle's treaty in a different order. In the English version of the ratification attached to the document, it was stated:

Formerly there were extensive commercial transactions between Bengal and the region of Lhasa. Hindus and Mussalmanas came and went for purposes of trade and carried on their business. Since some time however, there have been difficulties in the passage of merchants to and from on account of wars and disturbances. A hearty friendship has been established between Sri Sri Devadharma Lama Rimpashay and the honourable company and it has been written and agreed to on both sides that the Deb Raja shall not in any way hinder the passage and the trade of Hindus and Mussalmans. These however, shall not be allowed to carry sandalwood, indigo, 'googul', softened skins, betel leaves and betelnut. No English or Firingi merchants shall be permitted to go up to the hills. Those people of Bhutan who go to sell horses and other articles in Bengal shall be subject to no duties. On this side I myself give this agreement in writing. In this manner it will be put into effect, and there will not be any departure from it.

Dated in the year 269 (two hundred and sixty nine) answering to the Bengali year 1185, on the 9th Paush at Calcutta⁵².

This ratification of the treaty by the Bhutanese four years after it was concluded may be interpreted as a sign of willingness on their part to conform to the clauses of the treaty.

George Bogle himself was again appointed on a second mission to Bhutan and Tibet on 19 April 1779. The stated purpose of the proposed mission was to cultivate and improve 'the good understanding subsisting between the chiefs of those countries and government and to endeavour to establish a free and lasting intercourse of trade with the kingdom of Tibet and the other states to the northern

ward of Bengal⁵³. In the course of the summer of that year, however, the news arrived that the Panchen Lama had undertaken a journey to China, and the mission was consequently postponed. Later a novel plan was formulated with regard to having a meeting in Peking itself between the Lama, Bogle and the emperor of China. But the death of the Panchen Lama in Peking on 12 November 1780, and of Bogle in Calcutta on 3 April 1781, put on end to all these grandiose plans.

The Rangpur Fair

Prior to his death however, Bogle had been appointed to succeed Purling as the Collector of Rangpur in September 1779, where his main duty was to encourage commercial intercourse and to superintend the annual fair held there every year. Here it might be worthwhile to mention that while many have accredited Bogle with the establishment of the fair at Rangpur in 1780, the fact is that he gave encouragement to an already existing institution. Bogle was very much enthusiastic about his appointment and wrote thus about his future plans and intentions, "I have schemes and projects for introducing new articles of commerce through Bhutan, and of perfecting what ^hwas already cost me so much trouble. The narrow minded jealousy of the Bhutanese

opposes obstacles, but my situation here leads me at least to make an attempt"⁵⁴. Rangpur was the Indian terminus for caravans from Bhutan and Bogle was in a position to encourage the northern trade as well as to superintend the annual fair there. Bogle was ideally suited for the post, and maintained a regular correspondence with Hastings to apprise him of the state of affairs. Hastings too frequently sent him packets of tea, and on one occasion, some seeds of hyson tea or chinese green tea, so as to 'aid your benevolent plan of introducing the luxuries and elegances of our world into that of Bhutan'⁵⁵.

The annual fair at Rangpur, had been going on for a number of years before Bogle's appointment; but since his time it acquired significant proportions. Rangpur was situated on the river Tista, south of Cooch Behar, and the Rangpur records are also full of accounts of the annual trade caravans of the Bhutanese bringing skins, blankets, cotton chintz, musk, walnuts, gold dust, and 400 to 500 hill ponies to the value of Rs. 30,000 to Rs. 40,000. The traders carried back in return indigo, broad cloth, leather, copper, lead, spices etc. The trade had at one time amounted to upwards of ^a lakh of rupees, but the demand for ponies was gradually falling off⁵⁶. These caravans left Tashichhodzong and Paro in February and March, and returned in May and June. Previously they used to pay a duty of

about 2000 rupees at Rangpur, but Warren Hastings in his bid to facilitate trading conditions, had decided to abolish these duties. In 1780 the Rangpur fair was held under the supervision of Bogle. The expenses of the Bhutanese traders were paid by the government, stables were erected for their horses, and houses for themselves. Of this occasion Bogle wrote, "There was a great concourse of Bhutan merchants who have been excused all duties, and left to the freedom of their own will in buying and selling, went away very well satisfied"⁵⁷.

Even before Bogle was appointed as Collector, Hastings had asked Bogle's predecessor Purling to take steps to abolish all duties on the Bhutanese trade, and give every aid and encouragement to the merchants. In a letter written to Purling dated 6th April 1779, Hastings made this point very clear by saying, "Having determined to abolish all duties on the Bootea trade to Rangpore, either on the sales or purchases of their horses or other merchandise, we desire that you will carry this resolution into execution"⁵⁸. On the basis of a petition from certain Bhutanese merchants who complained that they were not being allowed to purchase oil and dried fish from certain places in Bengal such as Rangpur, Cooch Behar, Rangamati etc., according to ancient custom, and were not being assisted in recovering their

outstanding balances either, Hastings took immediate steps to remedy the inconveniences. He instructed Purling to 'issue Perwannahs to the zemindars and officers of the districts in which the Booteas have been accustomed to buy these articles to protect and assist them in carrying on their trade and to allow their oil and dried fish freely to pass the different chokeys and gauts '59.

Encouraged by these attempts on the part of the Government, Bogle, on becoming the Collector, also requested Hastings in a letter dated 10 December 1779, to abolish the duty on indigo which was equivalent to 4 rupees 8 annas per maund, and which he said 'tends greatly to discourage the culture and trade of indigo' ⁶⁰. This measure together with a number of others, had a most satisfactory effect, and the Rangpur fair was continued for a number of years. The unfortunate and untimely death of Bogle on 3 April, 1781, also brought to an end many grand plans, which he had in mind, regarding commerce with Bhutan and Tibet. The Rangpur fair might have prospered much more had Bogle continued as the Collector for a few more years. The fair nevertheless, was continued up to 1832, when at the orders of Nesbit, Economic Commissioner of Revenue at that time, it was discontinued and the result was a significant decline in trade.

Turner's Description of Economy and Trade

With both the British Indian Government as well as the Bhutanese government showing their eagerness to abide by the terms of the treaty of 1775, all seemed set for a longlasting and extensive commercial relation between the two countries. However the death of Bogle as well as of the third Panchen Lama, provided a temporary set back to this progressively increasing commercial contact\$. Hastings, however, was on the lookout for another pretext to send yet again another mission to Bhutan and Tibet, and obtain some further concessions in the way of commerce. Accordingly, when news reached Hastings on 12 February 1782, that the Panchen Lama had been reincarnated, he seized upon this opportunity to send a mission to congratulate the new Lama on his arrival.

On 9 January 1783, Hastings appointed Lieutenant Samuel Turner as the head of this mission, together with Samuel Davis and Robert Saunders, the former as draftsman and surveyor, and the latter in the capacity of a surgeon. It may be worthwhile to mention here that Poorungir Gosain who had accompanied Bogle also went with Turner and acted as his guide and interpreter. The Governor General thought it might be of "public utility at this time to renew and confirm the intercourse which had been established between the government and the Lama of Tibet"⁶¹. Earlier the

Governor General, had received some letters from the regent at Tashilhunpo, which had encouraged him quite a bit⁶². Moreover, the world situation was also quite favourable at that time, facilitating Hastings' attempt to renew contacts with Tibet. The American Revolution, and the Anglo-French hostilities had just recently ended and, as a result, sea commerce was beginning to flow freely once again. Hastings had thus reasons to anticipate a renewed flood of manufactured goods from Britain, and felt that it would be necessary to find wider markets for them⁶³.

Thus the fourth commercial mission set forth on its journey to Tibet and Bhutan under Samuel Turner, who had been recommended by Hastings as being 'well qualified to cultivate a good understanding with the Lama of Tibet, and possibly to open a communication and intercourse with the northern provinces as far as China'⁶⁴. Whatever may have been the real objectives behind this mission the ostensible purpose was to congratulate the new Lama. Accordingly the mission carried a number of gifts for the infant Lama on behalf of the Governor General. These included pearls, fine coral earrings, a jewelled watch, spectacles, two pieces of special Russian cloth, and silver cups containing spices, cloves, and nutmegs, while Turner himself carried some wooden hats, pieces of gold brocade, etc.⁶⁵. Turner, like Bogle before him, was asked to proceed first to Bhutan, and try to make further arrangements for trade with that

country. Notice of the Governor General's intention to send a deputation to Tibet had already been sent to the Dab Raja. This was necessary, since without his permission and assistance, it would not be possible for Turner to enter Tibet.

Turner proceeded to Bhutan, following exactly the same route that Bogle had taken and entered Bhutan by the Buxaduar. He too, like his predecessor, has described at length the agricultural and industrial productions of Bhutan. As mentioned earlier, the potatoes planted by Bogle did not thrive and Samuel Davis accompanying Turner, said, 'the potatoes which Bogle left must have been neglected for there were none on our arrival'⁶⁶.

Turner was, however, very enthusiastic about the cultivation of fruits in Bhutan. He has given a good account of the fruits grown in this country, and this cannot be said to be an exaggerated account, since fruits and vegetables did indeed form an important part of Bhutan's production and export. On arriving at a village near a place called Nomnoo, Turner observed, "I visited an orchard in the neighbourhood and found it well stored with walnut, apple, peach, pear, apricot and barberry trees"⁶⁷. He also mentioned that there were excellent orchards at Tashichhodzong, and these contained apples, apricot, peas, walnuts

and peaches as well. At Wangdiphodrang, a garden was found by Turner. Describing that garden Turner wrote, "We found orange, citron, pomegranate, peach, apple, and even mango trees, thriving extremely well. Of culinary vegetables it boasted no great variety. There were however, cucumbers, bangun and chilli "⁶⁸. At another place, Mirichom, he saw the inhabitants gathering raspberries and strawberries, and peach trees were also seen there in great abundance, all laden with fruit⁶⁹.

Besides fruits, Turner had also described a flourishing crop of barley, almost fit for reaping near Punakha. Rice was also cultivated in the valley of Tashichhodzong. In his own words --- "The valley of Tassisudon is most luxuriantly clothed with the most promising crops of rice which in defect of rain, all the spring of the surrounding mountains are artificially conducted to fertilize"⁷⁰. Rice cultivation had been mentioned by Bogle as well, and it bears repetition that rice, both husked and unhusked, formed an important export item.

Turner also mentioned that paper was produced from the bark of a tree, by an inexpensive and easy process called deah⁷¹. This tree grew in great abundance upon the mountains near Tashichhodzong and the botanical name of this tree was Daphne Pappyfera. However, the quantity of

paper produced was reported to be so small that it was not even sufficient for home consumption, leaving aside exports. Besides paper, other local manufactures included tents and ropes made from the yak's hair, and also some inferior quality of caps and jackets. Turner was full of praise for the yak, which he said was a very useful animal, their tails or chowries forming an important export item⁷². Besides they were very useful as beasts of burden and formed an important mode of conveyance in carrying goods from one place to another; the other alternative mode of conveyance being the backs of the human beings.

Commenting on trade relations with Bhutan, which were agreed upon by the treaty entered into by Bogle in 1775, Turner observed, "The Deb Raja having acknowledged to me the validity of that treaty it became unnecessary to insist on the execution of another, since no privileges and immunities appear to be requisite, until the commerce can be established on a different footing"⁷³. Turner had also given a favourable report of the attitude of the Deb Raja towards the passage of commerce between Bengal and Tibet through his territory. As to who were the people engaged in trade, Turner said that the chief merchants were none other than the first members of the state, hereby meaning the Deb and the Dharma Rajas themselves. They together with their chief officers, or the provincial

governors, were said to monopolise the trade, and gain the maximum benefit from it⁷⁴.

The Bhutanese traders passed mainly through Buxa Duar, situated on the Cooch Behar-Bhutan frontier on their way to Rangpur fair. According to Turner, in the past, the Bhutanese traders, before they quitted this pass and descended into the plains with their caravans, cut off the tails of their tangun horses, which greatly disfigured their appearance, and depreciated their value. The British, after establishing a fixed station at Rangpur, persuaded the traders to abolish this cruel custom, by offering a liberal reward. These un mutilated animals earned so high a value, that the traders, repeated this procedure the following year, and hence the pass was styled the 'bounteous pass', or the Buxaduar⁷⁵. This theory was disputed, however, by the men who led the later missions, such as Pemberton and Griffiths (1837-38), who claimed that the Buxa Duar was too steep and precipitous for loaded animals, and, as such, it is difficult to visualise it as the most frequented route.

When Turner visited Bhutan, the Rangpur fair was going on at a brisk rate. In his own words, "From Bootan indeed a caravan now annually visits the district of Rangpur in Bengal bringing with it oranges, walnuts, and the coarse

woollen manufactures of that country with the horses that carry them for sale, and it returns after a month's stay, with the cotton cloths, salt and other articles of the produce of Bengal"⁷⁶. About these tangun ponies, Davis, who accompanied Turner, was of the opinion that the Deb Raja himself was the proprietor of these horses, and that "they are bred in most parts of the country, carefully reared and kept in the Rajah's stables, one of which adjoins to each castle, and from thence they are sent for sale to Bengal, Assam and Nepal". The imports of tobacco, betelnut, dried fish, etc. which were brought from Rangpur and the coarse cloths from Assam, were also said to be carefully lodged in the castles as in a public store, and sold out for the subsistence and use of the people⁷⁷. These places in fact served as the main shops and store houses of Bhutan.

All the above facts go to prove that the Rangpur fair was carried on in a flourishing manner even after Bogle's death. At Paro, Turner met a Mookhy or an agent who conducted a division of the caravan that went from Bhutan to Rangpur. Turner received a first hand information of the Rangpur fair from this man, who talked much of his journey to Rangpur, and strongly expressed his gratitude for the kind treatment and encouragement he had always experienced from the Collector of Revenue, the Commercial resident and other government officials residing there⁷⁸.

Turner stayed in Bhutan for about three months longer than did Bogle, and then proceeded to Tibet. There he paid his respects to ~~the~~ new Panchen Lama, as instructed. While in Tibet, Turner noticed that an extensive trade was carried on between Tibet and Bhutan. The exports from Bhutan included English broad cloth, Rangpur, leather, tobacco, coarse cotton cloth, including Guzzy (the Anglo-Indian term for poor quality cotton), paper, rice, sandalwood, indigo and ~~manjeet~~ ^{manjeet} or madder. From Tibet was obtained gold dust, tea, woollen cloths manufactured in Tibet, and salt⁷⁹. The surplus rice produced in Bhutan were also exported to Tibet. The returns from Tibet were carried on to Rangpur, while some items such as the Rangpur leather and English broad cloth were obviously carried up from India. Bhutan's trade was, therefore, essentially a carrying one.

Turner also, like his predecessor Bogle saw another lucrative market for Indian traders, in the establishment of tea gardens. He discussed the importance of Chinese tea and the vast profits that could be gained from it. This point put forward both by Bogle and Turner was one of the factors that might have stimulated the growth of the tea industry in Bengal and Assam in subsequent period. The huge profits that were being reaped entirely by the Chinese from this tea trade led the Indian planters to have extravagant notions of the profits that they themselves could gain⁸⁰.

Turner returned to India in March 1784, and met the Governor General at Patna, where he proceeded to give a fairly detailed account of his expedition. Some are of the opinion that though Turner stayed longer than Bogle in Bhutan, 'his mission also ended in a failure so far as the commercial part of it was concerned'⁸¹. This does not appear to be a correct assessment because Hastings was extremely pleased with the report Turneer presented to his^m on their meeting.

The Commercial 'Adventure' of Indian Merchants

Like his predecessor, Turner thought that 'security and protection were the essential requisites', in commercial intercourse and profit would prove 'its best encouragement'. It was, according to Turner, necessary to 'let merchants first learn the way, taste the profit and establish the intercourse'⁸². Turner extended the scope of Bogle's treaty with the Deb Raja by securing a promise from the Regent of the Panchen Lama of 'encouragement to all merchants native of India, that may be sent to traffic in Tibet on himself or the government of Bengal'. Every assistance 'requisite for the transport of their goods from the frontier of Bhutan'⁸³ was assured.

The cordiality with which the missions led by Bogle and Turner were entertained, especially in Bhutan, served to convince Hastings that even closer commercial contacts would be made in the near future. Suitable markets would be found for woollen and manufactured articles coming into India from abroad, now that the peace with France had rendered the seas safe for commerce, and so would a flow of bullion from Tibet and Bhutan help to reduce Bengal's chronic currency problems.

Turner, on his return from Tibet, urged the Company to do all it could to bring about a more profitable trans-himalayan trade. Acting upon this advise of Turner, Hastings instructed that an advertisement ~~be~~ circulated, inviting native Indian merchants to join in an 'adventure' trade with Tibet through Bhutan, where Turner's diplomacy seemed to have at least secured a promise of reasonable conditions of passage. The party of merchants were asked to assemble the following year, that is in 1785 in the month of February, with goods likely to find a suitable market in Tibet, which included second quality cloth, coating, cheap watches, clocks, trinkets, snuff boxes, smelling bottles, pocket knives, amber, gloves and coarse cotton, conch shells, indigo, coral, and large imperfect pearls. In return the merchants could bring back gold dust, silver, musk, yak tails, and wool⁸⁴.

The advertisement, which was published at the orders of Hastings ran as follows :

a promise of encouragement to all merchants, Natives of India, who may be sent to traffic in Tibet on behalf of the government of Bengal and a promise of yielding them every Assistance requisite for the transport of their goods from the frontier of Bhootan and of assigning them a place of Residence either within the Monastery or should it be considered as more eligible in the town the Native merchants of Bengal are hereby informed thereof and invited to engage in the trade receiving as they hereby do the promise of this government, that there shall be an exemption of all duties upon such articles as shall be taken out to Bengal to compose their first Adventure to Tibet

It is proposed that the Natives employed on this service should assemble with their goods at Rangpore early in the month of February⁸⁵.

In 1785, this 'adventure' took place according to plan, and a reasonably flourishing and profitable trade seemed to have resulted. It was at this time that Purangir Gossain was selected by Hastings to visit Tibet on yet another mission. This was in early 1785, just on the eve of Hastings' departure from India, and the actual mission was undertaken after Hastings left for England. The fact that harmonious relations were still existing between India and Bhutan at that time is testified by the ^General ^Letter written by the Court of Directors, dated 27 March, 1787, where they noted their gratification that 'in passing ^a through the country of Bootan, the Goss^ayn received the

most ample and voluntary assistance from the subjects of the Dabe Raja^{'86}.

Purangir reached Tibet on 8 May 1785, visited the infant Panchen Lama in October, witnessed the conglomeration of Indian merchants there and found the markets stocked with Indian and British goods. He then returned to Bengal in December and reported to the Honourable John Macpherson, who was then officiating as the Governor General, that 'many merchants had brought their commodities to market and others followed. The authorities were most heartily disposed to continue the commercial intercourse. There were no complaints of impediment or loss^{'87}. As it was the first venture every attempt was made to ensure that it was a success and no duties were taken. Purangir thus returned, to give a fairly satisfactory report of the success of this adventure and bringing with him 'protestations of friendship for the English from the chief men of the court of the Tashi Lama^{'88}. Hastings unfortunately was not present to witness the results of this novel plan of his. Even prior to Purangir's departure for Tibet Hastings had set sail^l for England, and to the many trials that awaited him there.

A Change in Fortunes

Soon after the departure of Hastings his enthusiasm for trans-himalayan trade was rejected. The indifferent policy of Cornwallis, so far as the trade with the northern countries was concerned, together with the wars and border strifes among the Himalayan kingdom themselves and India led to a complete reversal of policy from the one followed in the eighteenth century. Francis Younghusband very neatly summed up the situation following Hastings' departure when he said 'a contretemps occurred and all his good work was undone'⁸⁹.

Immediately after Hastings departure, however, attempts were made by John Macpherson acting Governor General, to see that the Anglo-Tibetan and Anglo-Bhutanese accords did not altogether disappear into oblivion. In January 1786, he remarked that the increasing trade with Tibet, and the steady flow of letters from the Panchen Lama's advisers gave good grounds for hope that a direct correspondence with the Emperor of China might soon be arranged through Tibet⁹⁰. Macpherson, thus, was still entertaining the grand hopes of opening up China through Tibet.

The Court of Directors too at this point of time, deriving their information from the satisfactory reports of Bogle and Turner and the Gossain, declared that a 'very

beneficial commerce with Tibet both in Indian and in British goods ought to be practicable, and Bengal would receive what was very much needed, a plentiful supply of gold.⁹¹

The Court of Directors were further, very keen that the people of these regions should not have the least suspicion that the interests of the British were in any way political. Their desire to keep up strict commercial relations with the regions of eastern himalayas was further corroborated by them in a letter written on 14 March 1787, in which they said, "Our views in forming connections with any new states or powers are merely commercial"⁹². The policy of the Court of Directors in this respect was evident as being in keeping with their keenness in general, for promoting trade with the countries to the north east of Bengal.

In another letter written on 27 March 1787, they reiterated this policy. They declared that it was upto the authorities in India to determine the mode of achieving the minimum commercial gains from Tibet and Bhutan. Whether trade was to be enhanced by encouraging the 'resort of Cashmarians, Gossains, Bootans and Tibetans to Calcutta, or by sanctioning regular caravans to go directly to Tibet, or by the establishment of a Commercial Factory in the Province of Bengal as near to the territories of the

Deb Rajah as possible,⁹³ depended upon the discretion of the Governor General; nevertheless, the Court of Directors repeatedly warned the British Indian authorities that they must "studiously avoid affording the least cause of suspicion to any of the country powers that we have any schemes of ambition to accomplish, which in truth, we have not, and we must here repeat the sentiment contained in our letter of the 14th March last, that our views in forming connections with any new states or powers are merely commercial,"⁹⁴ It was further observed by the Directors that as Bhutan still seemed friendly to the company and was placing no obstacles in the way of trade across the mountains to Tibet, it was all the more necessary that the Deb Raja should have no suspicions of this nature. Since it appeared difficult, if not impracticable, to open a communication with Tibet through the Dominions of Nepal, it was alone through the encouragement of the Deb Raja of Bhutan that the proposed intercourse of trade could be made to flourish⁹⁵. It was thus considered vital that Bhutan should not entertain any suspicion of imperialistic tendencies on the part of the British.

Therefore even after Hasting's departure, hopes of a commercial intercourse being carried on were kept alive by the British authorities both in India as well as in England. However the contretremps, or the unfortunate and unforeseen events of which Younghusband had spoken took shape in the

outbreak of hostilities between Tibet and Nepal, first in 1788, and then again in 1791, in which the British were victims of circumstances, and secondly by the recurring border disputes between India and Bhutan which were probably to some extent inadeptly handled by the British authorities. Whatever it may be the outcome was an appreciable decline in the commercial transactions.

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CHAPTER IV

A Period of Uncertain Prospects, 1788-1838

With the emergence of the Gurkha dynasty in Nepal, the political equations in the Himalayan region changed fast.

The expansionist policy of the Gurkhas had also been posing quite a problem for their neighbours. They had conquered the whole of Nepal and had for years been committing aggressions on the frontier. In 1788 they invaded Sikkim, and retired only after the Tibetan government had ceded a piece of territory at the head of the Kuti pass. The Tibetans, remembering the promises of friendship which the two envoys

of Hastings had made to them, hoped vainly that the British would come to help ^{them} in their hour of need, and protect them against the Gurkhas.

Hostilities Between Tibet and Nepal

On 9 December 1788, the Collector of Rangpur D.H. McDowell in a letter to Cornwallis, who had assumed the Governor Generalship in 1786, gave an indication of the intention of the Tibetans of soliciting British help. It seemed that two messengers from Tibet, Mohamed Redjeb and Mahomed Willie, had been deputed by the Dalai Lama of Tibet, and had arrived at Rangpur with a letter from the Lama, requesting McDowell to provide guides and attendants to these messengers in order to enable them to reach Calcutta as soon as possible. McDowell on questioning them had found out that Tibet had lately been invaded by the Gurkhas who had taken possession of several frontier forts and a large portion of the country. According to these two messengers, the Lama had offered to make peace with the Gurkhas but they had refused to listen to any terms unless the Lama consented to relinquish to them all the gold produced in his country, for the collection of which they insisted on appointing their own officers. McDowell, after having conversed with the messengers from Tibet came to the conclusion that the

purpose of their mission to Calcutta was to ask for help from Cornwallis¹.

The letter from McDowell introducing the Tibetan Embassy to Bengal did not produce any result. The British remained steadfast in their policy of non-intervention in the internal matters of Bhutan, Nepal and Sikkim. It was clear that Cornwallis did not want to be involved in a Himalayan war, nor take any action which might be construed as being hostile, by the Gurkhas. Hence he remained firm in his reply to Tashilhunpo and said that British assistance would be rendered neither to the Gurkha nor to the Tibetans for that matter. The excuse which he gave for this was that the Company could not afford the expenses of a hill war. Further, military aid by the English government, 'could not be afforded without a direct departure from the system of policy laid down for its general guidance by the Legislature'², the general policy referring to the policy of non-interference of British government into the private affairs of individual states. Lastly, the British government in India did not want to intervene in a matter which concerned a dependency of the Chinese Emperor, without first being asked to do so by that ruler. It was suggested^{ive} from this statement that Cornwallis was not much interested in the value of the local trans-Himalayan trade of which he was well aware, and which was bound to suffer from any increase in the power and

extent of Nepal³. The 1788 invasions by the Gurkhas stopped soon after the Gurkhas acquired some territory from the Tibetans but the seeds of discontent were sown, and four years later a more serious invasion took place.

It may be that it was the British inactivity and apathy that emboldened the Gurkhas to repeat their attacks, this time of a more serious nature, on Tibet in 1792. The pretext of the war was that the Tibetans had insisted on circulating a base coin, and refused either to withdraw it or to establish a fair rate of exchange⁴. The Tibetans panic-stricken at the unopposed advance of the Gurkha army, and realising the futility of appealing to the British for help, appealed for help to Peking. The Chinese responded immediately and sent an expeditionary force to meet the Gurkha army. The outcome was that the Gurkha army eventually ^{ex}surrendered to the Chinese, and peace was restored in September 1792. The Gurkhas had to submit to a humiliating treaty, by which they agreed to restore all that they had plundered, pay an annual tribute to the Emperor of China, and to send an embassy to Peking once every five years⁵. Throughout the course of this war, the British government in India remained a passive spectator.

In August 1792, even before peace between the Chinese and the Gurkhas was made, Lord Cornwallis received a letter

from the Dalai Lama informing him that the Chinese army had defeated the Gurkhas and warning him not to interfere on their behalf. In fact, when the Gurkhas ^{had} sought the military aid of the British ~~a little afterwards~~, Lord Cornwallis replied back on 15 September 1792 declining to give them Gurkhas any assistance. The reason given by Cornwallis was that the English Company carried on extensive commercial contacts with the Chinese and had a factory at Canton, and, therefore, it was necessary to preserve a good understanding with the Emperor of China⁶. It might be interesting to note that the Gurkhas had on 1st March 1792 also concluded a commercial treaty with Jonathan Duncan, the Resident at Benaras. According to the terms of this treaty a duty of 2½ per cent was to be reciprocally taken on the imports from both the countries. This treaty was however repudiated by the Nepal Durbar a few years later⁷. The British were thus following a policy of playing safe and refused to embroil themselves in any politics of the Himalayan states. As a compromise, Lord Cornwallis ultimately decided to send Colonel Kirkpatrick on a mission to Kathmandu with a view to mediate between the Chinese and the Nepalese. Kirkpatrick, however, arrived too late to effect any amicable settlement and even before his arrival, the treaty had already been signed between the Nepalese and the Tibetans.

However this policy of playing safe, and of waiting and watching did not in any way help the British and the

results were unfortunate in the end. Markham is of the opinion, that the wisest policy on the part of the British would have been to prevent or check the invasion of Tibet by the Gurkhas even by using force if necessary. Such a course would have ensured the gratitude of the Lamas, curbed the restless aggression of the Gurkhas, secured their respect, and obviated the march of the Chinese army⁸. As it were, the Chinese general who had invaded Nepal gave a very unfavourable report of the conduct of the English, and even suspected that the British troops were in the Gurkha army. The immediate consequence was that the Chinese closed all the passes into Tibet to the natives of India, and occupied all the frontier stations⁹. Tibet thus became completely inaccessible to the British and the commercial contacts, so carefully built up by Hastings were in jeopardy. This was thus an unpleasant and unexpected turn to the relations which had promised so much.

Differences with Bhutan

With Tibet closing all her doors to India the passage of merchandise between India and Tibet through Bhutan almost totally stopped. At this time relations with Bhutan also started deteriorating due to constantly recurring border problems and raids, which in its turn threatened to disturb

the commerce exclusively carried on between India and Bhutan.

The Bhutanese continued their raids into Cooch Behar and claimed their authority over certain areas of Cooch Behar. The Raja of Cooch Behar, Maharaja Harendra Narayan, who ruled from 1783 to 1839 was a strong ruler who was determined to preserve his civil jurisdiction and the right of issuing Narayani coins. With the help of the Raikats of Baikunthapur, who were also piqued at the loss of Ambari Falakata handed over to Bhutan in 1787, Maharaja Harendra Narayan recovered from the Bhutanese the lands of Chamurchi and Rangamati in the Duars. In 1808 the subjects of Cooch Behar and Bhutan were once again involved in armed clashes over the possession of a highly productive tract of land, known as Maraghat. This territory had been ceded to Bhutan by the treaty of 1774 and since then it remained a bone of contention between Cooch Behar and Bhutan. This was more so because the Raja of Cooch Behar retained his rights over a number of 'insulated spots', or farms in the Maraghat division. As a consequence of the armed clashes in 1808, this territory was given over to the Maharaja of Cooch Behar on the mediation of Digby, the British Commissioner, in 1811-12¹⁰.

Besides disputes with Cooch Behar, raids and robberies marred the tranquility of Indo-Bhutanese borders. The Bhutanese were also reported to be committing the offense of

giving asylum to Indian criminals. The company's several applications for the surrender of criminals were turned down by the Bhutan authorities. The ^Government of India in a letter dated 26th July 1810, wrote to the then Deb Raja, Jigme Dragpa, that the peace and tranquillity of the northern frontier of the district of Rangpur had been disturbed by the frequent robberies committed by the inhabitants of Bhutan. It stated that a daring and notorious dacoit named Mohunt Ram had sought refuge in Bhutan after escaping from India and that the Magistrate of Rangpur had repeatedly requested Bhutanese officers to apprehend and surrender that man for trial in India, but in vain¹¹.

Earlier in 1800, one Jadunath Ishwar of Bhutan together with a number of accomplices committed a dacoity in the house of one Baikuntha Narayan of Cooch Behar. The company's authorities apprehended a dacoit named Pullanu and sentenced him to death, but he escaped from prison into Bhutan. The application made by the British for his extradition was reportedly turned down by the ^Government of Bhutan¹². Thus constant conflicts were predominant in the relations between the two countries of Bhutan and India, and the sanguine hopes, which the Directors had entertained as late as 1787, were showing signs of not materialising. Their pleas to the authorities in India to try and appease the Deb Raja so as to obtain another agreement from him for the passage of

merchants through his domains, fell on deaf ears of the British in India who were not willing to give the Bhutanese a free hand. The Bhutanese on their part did not show much willingness to cooperate, and things were not very much better with Nepal either. In 1802 a treaty was negotiated with Nepal by Captain Knox, with a view to renew the treaty of 1792 which had become a dead letter, and the same year, that officer proceeded to Kathmandu as resident. But he could not stay there long. He withdrew in March 1803, and on 24 January 1804 Lord Wellesley formally dissolved the alliance with the Durbar¹³. Finally, with Tibet also closing her doors to India the whole concept of trans-Himalayan trade was endangered.

Unofficial Visits of Manning and Moorcraft to Bhutan and Tibet

It was not surprising, therefore, that with Tibet closing her doors, and the harmonious relations with Bhutan disturbed by raids and plunders, trade with the northern neighbours reached a low ebb in the first half of the nineteenth century. It also became very difficult to obtain intelligence as to what went on in Tibetan and Chinese minds, as the agents of the company were now banned from Tibetan territory. Lack of information however did not

prevent the British from taking an interest in Tibet¹⁴. It was this interest which induced an Englishman named Thomas Manning to break through the barriers and reach the holy city of Lhasa in 1811. He entered Bhutan by the Lukhi Diar and reached Paro dzong on the frontiers of Tibet in the guise of a medical practitioner. Manning's route was one never taken by any European before, being to the westward of the one travelled by Bogle and Turner¹⁵. Manning's venture however was an entirely private one, and he received no official help or encouragement for his trip. Manning returned in May 1812, and published an account of his experiences, concerned mostly with personal difficulties and problems, but giving an insight into the social life of the Tibetans and the relative positions of the Chinese and Tibetans at that time. The indifference of the government towards Manning's mission was felt greatly by him, and he lamented the short sightedness of the government for failing to take advantage of this opportunity of reestablishing contacts with Bhutan and Tibet.

William Moorcraft was another enterprising Englishman, who was also given no official encouragement in his ambitions to explore Tibet. He was a veterinary surgeon and, in 1812, made his way to Gartok in western Tibet. His main intention was to seek out new breeds of horses and to investigate the possibility of trade in the shawl wool of western Tibet of

which Gartok was the centre. To the government at this date, Moorcraft's journey seemed to be 'replete with danger ... and not likely to be productive of advantage to the public service'¹⁶. Therefore, the government did not consider it judicious to sponsor this mission of Moorcraft's either. This policy of indifference and neglect on the part of the rulers, with small wars being waged over petty boundary disputes, served to benefit no one. But then, Hastings' policy of 'watchful and constant vigilance, of firmness combined with conciliation and of persistent resolution to keep open friendly relations and to encourage trade'¹⁷ was not present in his successors.

But it was not always the British or the hill people who were at fault for bringing about this stagnation in trade. In 1812, there occurred an incident over which the trade between India and Bhutan was in danger of being interrupted altogether. Babu Guru Prasad, Diwan of the Cooch Behar Raja Harendra Narayan, detained the property of one Indian trader Mohammad Azim, and some other Bhutanese traders on their refusal to pay the duties demanded. The Diwan is quoted to have said, "We are obliged to pay annual money to British government, and without receiving the duties upon these goods we will not give them up"¹⁸. The Diwan's action in demanding duties from the Bhutanese traders amounted to a violation of Article 4 of the treaty

of 1774, which promised the Bhutanese the privilege of trading duty-free at Rangpur as formerly. However at this juncture, the British government's insistence upon the observance of the above article by the Raja of Cooch Behar, successfully averted the crisis. Not only that but steps were also taken to see that such actions would not be repeated in the future. David Scott, Magistrate of Rangpur, asked the government to warn the Raja against the repetition of such conduct by saying, "The Bhotia caravans have frequently sustained great inconvenience from the cavalier behaviour of the Raja of Cooch Behar or his people". In accordance with these recommendations a letter was written to the Cooch Behar Raja on the 4th May 1812, asking him to prevent his officers from making exactions when the Bhutanese had occasion to pass through his country¹⁹.

But the situation did not improve much with the outbreak of the Anglo-Gurkha war in 1814 when Lord Moira, later Marquess of Hastings, became the Governor General. The outcome of this war was nevertheless satisfactory, and the turbulent Gurkhas were subdued and confined to their territory east of the river Kali while at the same time their encroachments on the side of Sikkim was also stopped²⁰. It was decided however not to annex Nepal. Another result of this war was that Maraghat given over to Cooch Behar by Digby

in 1811-12 was reversed once again to the Bhutanese by David Scott in 1817, reportedly for their proclaimed neutrality in the Anglo-Nepalese war²¹. This war moreover once again impressed upon the English 'the seriousness of the Bhutanese claims and the necessity of prompt accomodation'. Since the border conflicts were showing no signs of abating, Scott sent a person named Kishen Kant Bose to Bhutan to effect an amicable settlement with the Bhutanese in 1815.

The Mission of Kishen Kant Bose

Kishen Kant Bose set out for Bhutan in 1815 accompanied by a person named Ram Mohan Rai. In all probability this person was the same as Ram Mohan Roy, the would-be founder of the Brahmo Samaj. It is on record that Ram Mohan Roy had travelled to Tibet in his younger days and had worked at Rangpur as sheristadar that is, assistant to the Collector of Revenue from 1809 to 1815²².

Kishen Kant Bose entered Bhutan through the Assam frontier. From Goalpara he reached Bijni, then on to Sidli and Chirang and so up the valley of the Pho-chhu and Mochhu rivers to Punakha (map II). Kishen Kant Bose did not succeed in reaching Tibet but stayed in Bhutan for some time, and from his detailed account of that country an idea can be formed, besides other things, of trading conditions

existing in Bhutan at that time.

According to Bose, the Dharma Raja of Bhutan headed the group of traders, trading with a capital of rupees 25,000 to 30,000. The Lam Zimpe or the household steward of the Dharma Raja was also supposed to exercise authority over the agents in trade. The Deb Raja who was the head of the administration of the country also traded with a capital of 30,000 rupees per annum. The Deb Zimpe or the private dewan of the Deb Raja superintended the trading and other concerns of the Deb Raja. Amongst the Bhutanese themselves, something in the nature of a private trade was also carried on. The Deb Raja presented horses, silk, salt and hoes to the petty land holders and farmers, and received much more than their value in return. The Dony or the public dewan constantly attended the Deb Raja and transacted the public business of the government. This public business must have also included the trade transactions of Bhutan with foreign countries. Besides, hundreds of ^aZinkoffs, or inferior officers remained in attendance on the Deb Raja. Their main functions included going to war and running errands of trade or private business²³.

Besides, the independent Councillors and the Governors of the different forts were also said to be engaged in trade to some extent. The ^Ggovernor of the Punakha fort the

Punakha Dzong^o traded with a capital of four or five thousand rupees. The Governor of Tashichhodzong was supposed to be trading to an even greater extent than did the Punakha ^Ggovernor²⁴. Kishen Kant Bose however does not mention anything about the ^Ggovernors of Paro, Wandiphodrang, Tongsadzong and Tagnadzong being involved in any trading activities. It may be assumed that they also did trade probably not on a very large scale but definitely to some extent. Thus from Bose's account it would seem that nearly the whole of the Bhutanese bureaucracy, together with their subordinates were engaged in commercial activities, be it internal or external.

The agriculture of Bhutan has also been described by Bose. The description is however not very detailed and corresponds mostly with what had been said previously by Bogle and Turner. In Bose's own words, "Bhutan produces an abundance of tangun-horses, blankets, walnuts, musk, chowries or cow tails, oranges and munjeet". Specifically on agriculture he says, "In Bhutan the grains produced are rice, wheat, dhensi, barley, mustard, chenna, muruwa and Indian corn. All sorts of fruits ripen between June and October. The fruits are walnuts, apples, peaches, oranges, pomegranates, choul limes, melons etc. Sugarcane is cultivated, and radishes and turnips are plentiful"²⁵. Most of these goods grown in Bhutan were items of export, as can

be known from the description given by Bose of the list of goods going down to Rangpur for the annual fair.

It is interesting to note, that in spite of border disputes and raids, the Rangpur fair was still going on at a fairly brisk rate. At least it seemed so from the way Kishen Kant Bose had described it.

The inhabitants take back woollen cloth, pattus, indigo, red sandal, assafoetida nutmegs cloves, nakhi, and coarse woollen cloths of which they used a part in Bhutan and send the rest to Lhasa, and from the latter country they import tea, silver, gold and embroidered silk goods. In Lhasa there is no rice produced and little grain of any kind, on which account rice, parched rice, wheat and flour of dhemsal are also exported from Bhutan to that country. The tea the Bhuteahs consume themselves, the greater part of the silk goods for clothing and hanging in their temples and with the silver they mix lead and coin it into narrainee rupees. The Bhuteahs also send the same sort of goods as they export to Rangpur to Nepal to Assam, and to the former country they likewise export rock salt. From the low lands under the hills and on the borders of Rangpore and Cooch Behar they import swine, cattle, pan and betel, tobacco, dried fish and coarse cotton cloth²⁶.

Kishen Kant Bose returned to India after a few months stay in Bhutan. The purpose for which he had been sent - namely ~~was~~ to affect an amicable settlement of the border problems, was not very successfully accomplished since border disputes still occurred frequently. However, it was his investigations that proved the neutrality of the Bhutanese in the Anglo-Gurkha war of 1814-16, and earned them the territory of

Maraghat. Bose's mission is also important because of the picture that he provided of commercial activity in Bhutan. Moreover by sending this mission the British government showed some willingness to improve the situation between the two countries. Nevertheless, with Tibet remaining inaccessible, the commercial treaty with Nepal being repudiated and border conflicts with Bhutan being a constant recurrence, trade with the northern countries was certainly not at its peak. Cornwallis was preoccupied with administrative reforms and the third Mysore war. He appeared indifferent towards extension of commercial intercourse in the northern regions, and might have been influenced by the feeling that efforts in that direction were not likely to yield fruitful results²⁷.

There is hardly any record of British communication with Bhutan, following the return of Kishen Kant Bose in 1815. There is ^{only} a mention of opium being brought in from Bhutan, which was incidentally an illegal item of trade. In a letter dated 13 August 1822, D. Scott, Commissioner of Cooch Behar, observed that this trade was, "chiefly by numerous petty dealers in salt, tobacco, sugar, etc., who proceed up the rivers into Assam and the Bhootan low lands in small canoes and hawk their goods about from village to village. The capital of the majority of these traders does not probably exceed ten rupees"²⁸.

British Annexation of Assam and Dispute Over the Assam Duars

In the first Anglo-Burmese war (1825-26), Assam was formally handed over to the British, following the defeat of the Burmese, by the treaty of Yandaboo in 1826²⁹. As a result of this acquisition the British territories were brought right up to the Bhutanese borders, and [✓]strifes over revenue payment and border conflicts became all the more recurrent.

It might be interesting to note that prior to the annexation of Assam, quite an extensive trade was carried on between this country and Tibet through the Kooreaparah Duar which was independent of the Bhutanese government at Punakha. The inhabitants of the Kooreaparah Duar, known as the Mambas, were governed by a Council of chiefs designated as the Sat, Rajas, who owed allegiance to the Tawang Raja, a tributary of Lhasa³⁰. At a place called Chauna which was situated at a distance of two months journey from Lhasa a mart was established, and on the Assam side a similar mart was set up at a place called Gagunshur, about four miles distant from Chauna. An annual caravan would proceed from Tibet to Chauna conducted by about twenty persons, conveying silver bullion to the amount of one lakh of rupees and a considerable quantity of rock salt, woollens, gold dust, musk, horses, chowries and chinese silk for sale to the Assam merchants. The latter on their part brought rice,

Assam silk, iron, lac, skins, buffalo horns, pearls etc. to be imported into Tibet³¹. That this route from Lhasa to Chauna was convenient and safe can be inferred from the small number of persons who accompanied the caravans, and which even carried silver bullion to the amount of one lakh of rupees. The trade between Assam and Tibet was quite extensive, and in the first decade of the nineteenth century, it amounted in value to about two lakhs of rupees per annum. Even in the year before the Burmese invasion the Lhasa merchants were said to have brought down gold amounting in value to Rs. 70,000/-³².

After the British annexation of Assam disputes arose between the British and the Bhutanese over the Assam Duars, of which Gharkhola, Banska, Chappagori, Chappakhamar and Bijni were in Kamrup and the Darrang Duars included the Buriguma and the Kulling. The weak Ahom rulers being unable to deal with frontier outrages and incursions of the Bhutanese had in the past decided to hand over the seven duars to them, for an annual payment of Yak-tails, ponies, musks, gold dust, blanket and knives of an estimated value of 4,785 Narayani rupees and 4 annas. All these articles were available to the Bhutanese in their own country or in Tibet, and were to be taken at a certain fixed valuation and upon an understanding that they would be of average good quality³³. Upon the British occupying Assam in 1826, the revenues for

the Assam Duars, would now have to be paid into the British treasury, by the Bhutanese. Almost the entire tract known as the Assam Duars were inhabited by the Mech and the Kachari tribes. The Bhutan government ruled these territories through local officials appointed by the Deb Raja, on the recommendations of the Dzongpons or the governors of the various districts to which these Duars were attached. The Meches were a hardworking tribe, and paid to the Dzongpons who lived in forts in the lower range of the hills, revenues in kind such as rice, cloth, betelnut, cotton, butter and ghee³⁴. These governors in turn paid their revenue to the British officials through a set of intermediaries known as the Sajwals. These intermediaries allegedly changed the articles originally sent, substituting them for others of inferior values. These articles being sold by auction on their arrival at the principal stations in Assam seldom realized the value at which they were appraised by the Bhutanese. Consequently each year's tribute fell short of the fixed amount, and a meticulous system of accounting showed an arrear every year, and thus a constantly accruing balance was shown against the Bhutanese³⁵.

The Bhutanese government refuted the British claim for the arrears of tribute on the plea that the British functionaries on the frontier were dishonest. The Deb Raja wrote to the Governor General's agent — "Your people sell these

articles at such very low prices that we must necessarily fall into arrears"³⁶. The ^Government of India, however, did not accept this plea and further demands for the payment of the supposed arrears were made. The lack of communication between the frontier officials and the central authorities in Bhutan further confounded the problem, and Pemberton noted during his visit in 1837-38 that 'The Bootan government appears to have been quite ignorant of proceedings on the frontier'.

Besides corruption in the revenue collection in the Kamrup Duars, things were not very satisfactory either in the two Darrang Duars, namely Kulling and Buriguma. These two duars were under a peculiar system of administrative arrangement. The Ahom Raj had administered them for five months in the year from July to November, and for the rest they were under the Bhutanese control. As a result of this dual system two sets of officials collected revenue from the hapless ryots, who were rackrented³⁷. Thus with the annexation of Assam in 1826 the British inherited the complex problems of the Assam Duars, to resolve which, they annexed them ultimately in 1841.

Obstacles to Trade and Some Attempts to Overcome them

The Burmese invasion of Assam, subsequently followed by the British occupation of that region, affected the trade

between Assam and Tibet. Trade through the Bengal frontier was not very brisk either at that time, with the abolition of the Rangpur fair in 1832. Some attempts were made to revive this trade, and in 1833, Lieutenant Rutherford, officer-in-charge of central Assam, opened a trade fair at Udalguri in the district of Darrang with a view to attract traders from Tibet and the neighbouring hills. To Rutherford's disappointment however, the response was far from encouraging³⁸.

T.C. Robertson the then agent to the Governor General, in a letter addressed to the government on 6 December 1833, entertained hopes that great benefits might soon accrue to Assam, if trade is restored. "The Booteahs not only require the produce of the plains for their support, but seem disposed to become the customers of the Assamese for various commodities which the latter can either supply by their own industry or procure from Bengal to be exchanged among other articles for gold, of which metal there seems reason to suspect that the regions to the north of Bootan yield no considerable quantity". He further expressed the view that this trade was likely to increase further in future, unless it was checked by any 'political misunderstanding'. He further suggested the deputation of an envoy to Bhutan to settle terms of commercial intercourse and if possible to effect the adjustment of tribute payable for the Duars, so

as to diminish the chances of misunderstanding³⁹.

On the other side the Bengal Duars were also creating problems. These Duars extended along the foot of the Himalayas between the river Tista to Sankos. From west to East the Duars were named Dalimkot, Mainaguri, Chamurchi, Lucki, Buxa, Balika, Guma, Chirang and Bagh⁴⁰. The Bengal Duars were under the jurisdiction of the Paro Ponlob, the Governor of the western division of Bhutan. Infringements and border conflicts were the main disturbances in the Bengal Duars. These conflicting claims continued until 1834, when an officer Ensign Brodie was deputed to settle and adjust them. While adjusting the boundaries of Balika, Guma and Ripu in 1834 Brodie noticed that Bhutanese officials in the Duars received payment for allowing their subjects the right to intra-duar trade. He came across a singular custom prevalent among inhabitants from a long time. In his own words. "In the neighbourhood of Bhulka, some of the inhabitants of Sangamma and other surrounding villages are in the habit of giving written agreements to pay what is called Gaongeeree to the Katma of Bhulka, who is the Deb Raja's Khas Tehseeldar in consideration of which they obtain the right to trade to all the different Dooars of Bootan. There are other kinds of Gaongeeree, but this is the principal one, and when it is not paid regularly the Katma has usually taken the law into his own hands and seized the goods of the ryots

in default and occasionally their persons"⁴¹. It may be noted that though the Bhutanese themselves often had an accruing deficit in the payment of revenues to the rulers of Assam, they themselves remained scrupulously vigilant of the revenues that were due to be paid to them by the inhabitants of the duars in lieu of trading facilities.

In 1834 a proposal was made by the Accountant General in a letter written on 23rd October to the Deputy Secretary suggesting the expediency of introducing the Furruckabad coinage into Cooch Behar instead of the prevalent Narayani coins. The Raja of Cooch Behar Maharaja Harendra Narayan was strongly averse to the adoption of this measure, which he alleged would be derogatory to his dignity and injurious to the agricultural and commercial interests of his territory, particularly in matters of trade with Bhutan. In a letter written on 9 May 1835 to Jenkins, the Governor General's Agent in Assam, the Maharaja asserted that should the Narayani coin be entirely done away with his ryots and merchants would be totally ruined as a very considerable trade was carried on between them and the Bhutanese, with whom none but the Narayani rupees would pass⁴².

Jenkins, however, refuted the objections of the Cooch Behar Raja saying that a change in currency was not likely to effect a falling off in trade with the Bhutanese, since

this trade was confined mostly to barter. Further Jenkins noted that a change in currency had already been introduced in Bhutan, with the Sonat rupees having been introduced into that portion of Bhutan bordering on the eastern side of Cooch Behar, and as far as Jenkins' knowledge went no objections whatsoever had been made to this⁴³. Ultimately, keeping in mind Jenkins' point of view, attempts were made to gradually abolish the Narayani coins, and replace them with the Sicca rupees.

In spite of these efforts the situation was not generally conducive to the promotion of trade with the northern countries. Besides other problems, the British government in India also attributed the deterioration in trading contacts between Tibet and Bhutan on the one hand and India on the other, to the jealousies of the Chinese government. In 1836 Jenkins wrote, "Our subjects have been excluded from the trade of Tibet and Bhutan through the jealousy and influence of the Chinese government against the wishes of the Lamas and inhabitants of either country, and though the favourable commercial treaty settled by Mr. Bogle in 1775 and subsequently admitted in 1785 by the Deb Raja has never been abrogated yet it has been rendered of no benefit and virtually set aside through the interference of the Chinese government"⁴⁴. The jealousy of the Chinese could be attributed to their desire to maintain a monopoly of trade with Tibet

and Bhutan, and their dislike of the interference of yet another country in this lucrative trade, which they felt would probably deprive them of securing a substantial profit. "There may be little hope", remarked Jenkins, "at present of placing the trade between the countries on a reciprocal footing as regards the permission of free entry of merchants ... from the influence of Chinese policy over these states .. yet some arrangements very profitable to us might probably be made for the promotion and extension of the present petty commerce by the establishment of periodical fairs along our frontier to which the Tibetan caravans might be prevailed upon to meet our merchants"⁴⁵.

Be that as it may, it was with a view to attempt at resolving all these aforementioned problems that the British government decided to send yet another mission to Bhutan in 1837. The leadership of the mission was entrusted to Captain R. Boileau Pemberton with Ensign Blake of the 56th Native Infantry as an assistant and Dr. Griffiths of the Madras establishment as Botanist and medical incharge. The objects of the mission were clear cut and precise and could be classified under three heads -

- (a) to settle terms of commercial intercourse between the two countries. In this regard Pemberton was asked to convince Bhutanese authorities of the sincerity of the company's friendship and to assure them that his

government sought no exclusive advantage from commerce, and that its main object was to introduce an unrestricted intercourse between the subjects of the two countries;

- (b) to affect a suitable system of revenue payment in the Duars; and
- (c) to attempt to know the extent of the Chinese power in these hilly regions, and the precise nature of the ties by which Tibet and Bhutan were bound to each other and to China.

Economy and Trade According to Pemberton and Griffiths

Pemberton entered Bhutan through Dewangiri in January 1838. He was led in a direction "nearly due north" to the confines of Bhutan and Tibet. From there he turned west to Punakha covering a distance, "rather more than two hundred and fifty miles" in "twenty six marches"⁴⁶. He returned through the Buxa Duar, arriving in Goalpara on 31 May 1838. (see Map II). On his return Pemberton presented a vast and exhaustive account of Bhutan, which dealt with practically every aspect of the country, including the trade routes to and from Bhutan, the manufactures and agriculture of that country, as well as some detailed description of the entrepôts of Bhutanese trade meaning hereby the fairs at Rangpur,

Hajo and Pitalya. Griffiths also presented no insignificant account covering some of these aspects.

Making reference to the Buxa Diar by which the caravans from Bhutan were supposed to descend into the plains, Pemberton wrote of it as being very rugged and precipitous. Especially in the north and south of Chupcha this path became a narrow ledge in the side of the mountains which was quite inaccessible even for ponies and other laden animals. He was convinced that it was not by this route that the caravans annually visiting Rangpur, travelled. Pemberton concluded that the merchants who conveyed their goods from Tibet and Bhutan to the town of Rangpur in the plains all travelled from the northern frontier to the latter country through the districts subject to the Paro Ponlo^b i.e. through the western part of Bhutan, and continued to travel straight along a route which led to a village called Doona situated between Dalimkot and Chamurchi Diars, and from there on to Rangpur on the south of the diars. Pemberton reported not to have met a single laden animal on its way from the plains, and very few men carrying articles for the use of the Deb Raja of Bhutan during his return journey by this route⁴⁷. This observation of Pemberton contradicts the one made by Turner who said that the very name Buxa Diar, meaning bounteous pass, had been given by the merchants who profited handsomely by trading through this pass.

Besides the above mentioned route there were also a number of routes through which intercourse was carried on between Bhutan and India according to Pemberton. One of these went by the valley of the Manas river via Tazgong and Dewangiri to Hajo in Lower Assam. This route was frequented by that class of Tibetan merchants called Khampas who visited Hajo for purposes of trade every year. There was another route also leading to Hajo which started from the Tawang territory and led to Hajo through the Kooreaparah Diar. This route however did not enter any part of the territory of the Deb or the Tharma Rajas⁴⁸.

As far as the modes of conveyance were concerned both Pemberton and Griffiths said that ponies and coolies were most commonly used. Yaks or chowrie tailed cattle were also used as conveyance, and Pemberton observed one that had come from the Kham country laden with salt of about a maund weight packed on a saddle⁴⁹. Griffiths observed that chowrie tailed cattle were exported to the plains, and were also used as beasts of burden. Swes, goats and mares, he said, were also used by the Khampas for carrying goods⁵⁰. Mules, sheep and goats, were used by the Bhutanese in the carriage of their produce, noted Pemberton. Salt was the article generally placed upon them carefully sewn up in small canvas bags which were slung over the backs of the animals⁵¹. Besides these beasts of burden, men carrying loads on their backs had also been observed by both Pemberton and Griffiths.

According to Pemberton the manufactures of Bhutan consisted mostly of the coarsest description of dark coloured blankets. The blankets which were ~~exported~~ exported to Bengal were however entirely brought from Tibet. Besides blankets, other manufactures of Bhutan included coarse cotton cloths, small circular bowls made of wood, Daos or straight swords about three feet in length, spears and arrow heads made from iron procured from the hills near Tazgong. Paper was another important article of manufacture. It was made, from a plant the botanical name of which was 'Daphne papyfera'. This plant was extremely tough and not liable to the ravages of insects. Pemberton thought that this paper, if made more extensively, could become an important article of export, but at that time, that is in 1837-38, it was hardly more than sufficient for the very limited demand at home and rarely found its way to the plains. Leather was also imperfectly tanned from the hide of the buffalo or the bullock, and principally used as soles for snow boots. Another softer variety made from goat and sheep skin was principally used ~~as~~ in making small leather pouches. As far as pottery was concerned, it was confined almost entirely to the manufacture of cooking utensils⁵².

Griffiths however, was not very enthusiastic about the manufactures of Bhutan. Tashi Yangtsi was said to be famous for its copper cauldrons, but Griffiths did not see

anything indicating the existence of manufactures there excepting for a small village which he said looked like the 'habitation of charcoal burners'. The only thing of any account, noted Griffiths, was clay that was available in considerable quantities in Punakha and the pottery thus manufactured was primarily used by the inhabitants⁵³. Of their other manufacturing skills Griffiths saw few or no instances. All the woollen cloths of ordinary quality were imported from Bengal or Tibet, their own manufactures being confined to the production of coarse often striped blankets, which were scarcely a foot wide. He observed that the Bhutanese made very little cotton cloth, and whatever cloth was manufactured was confined to the villages near the plains, and the article was of poor and coarse quality. The silks and other fine apparel of the Bhutanese were imported from China. The superior variety of utensils used by them were also of foreign manufacture, principally Tibetan. Griffiths however has corroborated Pemberton by saying that paper was made in some quantity⁵⁴. Finally he concluded by saying that the Bhutanese manufactures were so little that not much was to be expected in the way of commerce, and this would continue to be the case so "long as Bhutan derived everything from the plains and made no returns whatever"⁵⁵. It would however be wrong to say that Bhutan made no returns to the plains. Even though the trade had dwindled to some

extent, when Pemberton and Griffiths reached Bhutan, certain items such as cowtails, lac, wax, madder etc. were certainly being brought down to the plains in fairly substantial quantities.

According to Pemberton and Griffiths, the agriculture of Bhutan had been eulogised by Captain Turner when in fact a very large portion of the supplies were derived from the plains. Rice, wheat, barley, millet, maize, buckwheat, pea etc. however were grown, said Griffiths. But, very few turnips had been seen by Griffiths, and the Bhutanese were unaware of the value of the potatoe. This again went to prove the futility of the experiment made by Sogle way back in 1774. Cotton plants were very few since the population mostly were woollen clothes, and whatever cotton was required, was met with the supply from the plains. A few solitary specimen of sugar cane occurred in the villages, wrote Griffiths. The cane itself was imported from the plains, as well as gur or molasses. Tobacco was another commodity obtained from the plains⁵⁶. The most common dye in Bhutan was Manjeet furnished by the plant Manjistha (the botanical name of which has been given as Rubia Cordifolia). Griffiths observed that as the supply from the jungles were plentiful no attempts were made to cultivate it, and it formed one of the articles of export from the country and was generally exchanged for dry fish⁵⁷.

The main centres of commercial transactions between India and Bhutan were Rangpur and Titalya in Bengal, and Hajo in Assam. It may be remembered that the Rangpur fair had already been disbanded in 1832, when during the Governor Generalship of William Bentick, all privileges extended to the merchants at Rangpur and Dinajpur were discontinued to effect economy in administration. After the abolition of the Rangpur fair, A.C. Campbell, who was the superintendent of Darjeeling at that time, set up the Titalya fair. The fair at Titalya was great success while under Campbell's control.

Besides Rangpur and Titalya, another important commercial fair was held at Hajo in Assam, where the principal traders were merchants from Kham, a region in the south eastern portion of Tibet. Pemberton mentioned seeing several parties of 'Kampas', as he called them, on their way to Hajo. The parties were accompanied by some very beautiful asses, almost all of which were laden with salt. At Hajo there was an image (Muha Moonee) in a temple where the Khampas offered worship. Presents were made to the priests attached to the temple, and the Khampas worshipped and bartered with equal zeal. The goods the Khampas brought down consisted principally of red blankets, musk, gold dust, silver, rock salt, chowries, and a few coarse chinese silks, ^a ~~manjeet~~ and bees wax. These they exchanged for lac, raw or manufactured

silks, Assam cotton cloth, dried fish, and tobacco. They returned homewards during the months of February and March, taking care to leave the plains before the hot weather or the rains set in⁵⁸. The fair at Hajo has also been described at some length by Griffiths. Referring to it as 'Hazoo', Griffiths described it as a picturesque plain, with a temple which was considered very sacred to the Bhutanese and the Khampas. Griffiths has supported Pemberton by saying that the pilgrimage which the Bhutanese and the Khampas made annually to this place was connected more with trade than with religion⁵⁹.

Both Pemberton and Griffiths testify to the fact that at the time of their visit Bhutan's commerce with India had considerably lessened, as compared with earlier times. Even though the Rangpur fair was officially closed at the time of Pemberton's visit, the caravans nevertheless still conveyed annually to Rangpur with goods of a very limited variety. N. Smith, who was the collector of Rangpur at that time, reported that the caravans from Bhutan generally arrived at Rangpur in February and March and returned to their country in May and June. With the assistance provided by Smith, Pemberton formed a comprehensive idea of the items of Indo-Bhutanese export and import together with their corresponding volume and value (see Table 1).

Table 1
Indo-Bhutan Trade: 1837-38

Imports to India from Bhutan			Exports from India to Bhutan		
Name of articles	Quantity	Value in Rupees	Name of articles	Quantity	Value in Rupees
<u>Debang</u> (China Silk)	1 piece	50	Broad cloth	15 pieces	1,115
Blankets	300 nos.	600	Indigo	10 maunds	1,000
Hill Ponies	100 "	3,500	<u>Nukher</u>	1½ "	120
Cow Tails	4 maunds	160	Camphor	1½ "	40
Wax	30 "	1,000	Sugar	10 "	80
Walnuts	50,000 "	125	Copper	10 "	400
Musk	50 "	100	Goat skin etc.	1000 "	500
Lac	10 "	100	<u>Endy</u> cloth	50 "	200
Madder (or, <u>Manjeet</u>)	500 "	1,500	Coarse <u>Endy</u>	50 "	100
Silver	3 seers	240	<u>Googool</u>	10 "	100
			Sandal wood	10 "	100
			Country gum powder	2 "	20
			Dried Fish	10 "	50
			Tobacco	15 "	100
			Cloves	20 seers	30
			Nutmeg	20 "	100
			Cardamum	20 "	100
Total value		7,375	Total value		4,150

Note : One maund = 37 Kilogram
One seer = .94 Kilogram

Source : 'Report on Bootan' by Capt. R.B. Pemberton, in Political Missions to Bootan, New Delhi, 1972, p.225.

Since no earlier tables of this kind are available a comparison is not possible. However, Pemberton said that the whole foreign trade of Bhutan, which was almost entirely confined to Tibet on one side and Bengal and Assam on the other, could then (i.e. in 1837-38) hardly amount to fifty thousand rupees per annum, although at one time it was estimated at two lakhs for Assam alone⁶⁰. Griffiths also felt that throughout the country there was but little evidence of frequency of intercourse. The Deb Raja was stated to be the principal merchant but Griffiths had met on his way only two coolies laden with the Deb Raja's merchandise.

End of the Era of Peaceful Negotiations

Pemberton's mission withdrew from Bhutan on 9 May 1838. As far as the objects of the mission were concerned, Pemberton failed to achieve them. After much tedious negotiations and discussions with the Deb Raja and his officers, a treaty was ultimately drawn up on April 25 1836 (See appendix IV). The Bhutanese authorities, however, ultimately decided to reject the agreement. Pemberton attributed this failure to the weak and vascillating Deb Raja, and observed that the real power was concentrated in the hands of the Paro and the Tongsa Ponlobs.

Briefly, the elaborate terms of the treaty drawn up by Pemberton included an agreement between the two governments for the extradition of criminals, a free and unrestricted intercourse of the subjects of the two countries, and the settlement of the arrears of tribute and its payment in cash. Article seven of the proposed treaty stipulated, "In the event of any Duar falling into arrears to the extent of one years' tribute, the British government shall be at liberty to take possession of and continue to hold such Duar, until the balance has been fully realised"⁶¹. Such peremptory terms were obviously not acceptable to the Bhutanese, and neither were they prepared to enter into an unrestricted commercial intercourse on the terms proposed. Pemberton had further insisted on the payment of the tribute in Narayani rupees, whereas the Bhutanese wanted to pay the tribute in Deba rupees, a local Bhutanese currency. The Bhutanese authorities stated that they would not be able to pay in Narayani rupees because the latter was not available in Bhutan⁶².

Besides, there was very little that Pemberton could do to relax the strong hold that the Chinese had upon Tibetan and Bhutanese trade. He felt that as long as Chinese policy and influence continued to reign paramount in either country, there was little hope either of any relaxation in the jealous restrictions imposed upon this trade, or of the admission of British merchants to Bhutan and Tibet⁶³. In utter despair

at the failure of his mission Pemberton wrote, 'A rigid policy under such circumstances would justify the immediate permanent resumption of all Duars, both in Bengal and Assam now held by Bhutan'. The Duars he observed, formed the most valuable portion of the Bhutanese territory supplying almost every article of consumption or luxury to the inhabitants of the hills. Their principal trade was also with the Duars and depriving them of these duars would cause their economy considerable harm. This policy would therefore exclude the Bhutanese altogether from their possession and would sever one of the strongest ties by which they might then be constrained⁶⁴.

Thus ended the mission of Pemberton. Though he could not succeed in concluding a successful negotiation with the Bhutanese, he made up for it somewhat by the exhaustive and detailed account which he gave of Bhutan on his return to India. Pemberton's failure to sign a treaty with Bhutan gave an indication of the rapidly deteriorating state of affairs between the two countries. With him ended the era of negotiations, heralding in its wake more hostile confrontations until the final showdown in 1865.

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CHAPTER V

The Battle Over Land For Tea And Freedom For Trade, 1838-1865

Pemberton's mission, as stated earlier, did not succeed in resolving the border conflicts between the two countries, nor did he succeed in effecting a commercial agreement with the Deb Raja of Bhutan. As a result, the relations between the two countries, rather than improving, continued to deteriorate. In fact, the history of British intercourse with Bhutan since Pemberton's mission has been 'one of complaints against petty raids and aggressions, and controversies about boundaries'¹.

British Annexation of The Assam Duars

After Pemberton's return it was felt by the British Government that the exclusive reliance upon moderation and negotiation in dealing with Bhutan should now be shelved, and a coercive policy, if necessary, should be embarked upon. In a letter dated 12 September 1838, the government directed Captain Jenkins, Agent to the Governor General in the North-Eastern Frontier, to prepare a plan for the settlement of all pending subjects of difference with the Bhutanese. The government was also of the opinion that this plan should be communicated later to the Bhutanese authorities as an 'ultimatum'. Jenkins after consulting Captain Mathie, who was the Collector of Kamrup, and Captain Vetch, Collector of Darrang, advised the Government of India on 15 September 1838 to endeavour to operate on the fears of the Bhutanese authorities as there was no chance of effecting any measure by an appeal to their reason and good feelings. He stated that the Government of India should extend no concession to the Bhutanese authorities since the concessions would bring nothing in return to the British. He mentioned that traders from India had formerly traded with Lhasa through Bhutan, but that Bhutan had been closed to them subsequently 'either from the jealousy of the government, or its ill conduct of the traders'². The Bhutanese continued in their policy of aggression by carrying away twelve British subjects in 1839, and again by seizing five British villages in 1841³. Jenkins

was, however, not sure of the merits of 'resumption' of the Duars, for he himself wrote in June 1841, "the deficiency of our troops, the nature of the country and the unknown consequences of a military operation render it very desirable to avoid this course except in the failure of all other attempts"⁴.

Obviously all other attempts had failed, and Lord Auckland, the then Governor General, finally resorted to the measure, which he himself acknowledged would be 'his painful duty to adopt'. Later in the year 1841, 'in consequence apparently of instructions from the Court of Directors orders were issued for the resumption of the whole of the Assam Duars'⁵. It was agreed that in compensation of the annexation a sum of Rs. 10,000 only should be paid annually to the Bhutanese chiefs of the Duars. Aitchison recorded that "this sum was considered to be equal to one third of the revenue of the Kamrup and Darrang Duars. No written agreement was made regarding this arrangement"⁶.

The absence of any strong central authority in Bhutan leading to misgovernment by local Bhutanese chiefs, non payment of stipulated annual tributes to the company, and finally the raids and outrages on the frontier must have facilitated the British decision to annex the region of the Assam Duars⁷. But the commercial minded diplomacy of the British also played a part, and made them realize the economic advantages that were

to be gained by the possession of this fertile tract of land. Tea was one item which was being grown extensively in Assam, and the increasing number of tea gardens led the British to believe that control of this area would provide them great commercial gains. Keeping in mind the advice of Bogle and Turner, that Bhutan and Tibet provided good markets for tea, and lucrative advantages could be wrested from the Chinese who were the sole agents of this tea trade, the British seized this opportunity of expanding the tea growing areas of Assam under their control. Besides tea, the Assam duars afforded an inexhaustible source of minerals and other products. In the words of Lieutenant Colonel MacDonald, "Limestone abounds all along the frontier, lignite is commonly found, the Bhutan hills hold iron and so coal must also be there, the coffee plants abound every where, the India rubber creeper is common, there is magnificent timber, the beauty and closeness of whose grain is well adapted for furniture, the trees can also be used for making boats, planks and beams, other valuable forest products include, gum, bees wax, lac, oil and incense, and the silk worm is there"⁸. If properly exploited these natural resources would bring in considerable amount of wealth for the British. Thus economic gains together with political considerations justified by Bhutanese aggressions, were more than sufficient reasons for the take over of the Assam duars.

Besides payment of compensation, the British government made one or two other concessions in order to reconcile the

Bhutanese to the loss of the Duars. Lieutenant David Scott, Magistrate of Rangpur, recommended the establishment of hats or market places at convenient locations in order to enable the Bhutanese to obtain supplies such as rice, cotton, dried fish, lac and tobacco. Hats were accordingly established at a number of places in the Darrang as well as in the Kamrup duars⁹. However these concessions did not completely reconcile the Bhutanese to the loss of the Duars, and as will be seen later, they continued to carry on raids and demand an increase in the amount of compensation money being paid.

The annexation of the Assam Duars in 1841, was 'an inevitable corollary' to the occupation of Assam in 1826. The plain fact of taking possession of the Duars has been described as 'resumption' of an old right by the British. The Bhutanese took possession of the Duars, 'at no very distant time'. It was a 'usurpation' of the rights of the weak Assam princes who had to 'compromise' without denouncing their 'sovereign rights over the people', whom they still considered their subjects. These sovereign rights were inherited by the British who wanted to make them a reality by resuming what had been usurped. By mismanagement and failure to pay arrear tribute the Bhutanese had forfeited their rights to take possession of the Duars¹⁰.

It appears that the receipt of a fixed sum along with certain other privileges in lieu of the control over and

management of the duars region sometimes suited the interests of the Bhutanese themselves. As it happened, in 1842, the management of the estate of Ambari-Falakata in the Bengal duars was taken over by the British at the request of Bhutan itself.

The Bhutanese of the Kooreaparah Duar in Assam who were under the direct government of a body of chiefs known as the "Sath Rajas", themselves subordinates of the ^aTowang Raja, decided in the winter of 1843-44, to relinquish all claims of the Kooreaparah Duar to the British in consideration of an annual payment of Rs. 5000/-. This sum very nearly represented the amount which they used to realise from the tract by direct collection during the eight months of the year for which they held it¹¹. (In 1852, a misunderstanding arose between the British and the Tibetan government over this region which was however resolved by a treaty signed on 28 January 1853 at Kooreaparah)¹².

Therefore neither peaceful transition nor forcible resumption would sum up the whole story.

Border Hostilities And Its Adverse Effect On Trade

In 1844 a conflict arose between Cooch Behar and Bhutan which was known as the Chakla Kheti dispute, and it lasted

till 1849. This dispute concerned the same old story of Bhutanese trespassing into a small tract of land called the Chakla Kheti and forcibly carrying off the produce. Campbell, who was then in charge of the Cooch Behar frontier, gave his verdict in favour of Cooch Behar¹³. Thus the relations between the two countries in the 1840's continued to be what can be termed as 'uncertain', and which has been described by Campbell as 'disgraceful'.

Campbell, however, in an endeavour to keep open the channel of communications, resorted to the only alternative policy of negotiating with the Bhutanese subahs on the frontier. He reported that the Bhutan officers had 'no disposition to openly encourage encroachment on us'. In his opinion, it was because of the political organisation of the Bhutanese state which was 'so unsteady, so rapacious and so unprincipled' that their border subjects had become almost uncontrollable¹⁴. Major Jenkins, who succeeded Campbell in 1851, was a man with different ideas. He recommended that "there ought to be no interference unless we are called upon to settle a dispute and then only as a particular case in question"¹⁵. This policy therefore did not envisage a settlement of the entire boundary through peaceful negotiations but kept the option of limited retaliation open.

When the Bhutanese realised that the prospect of restoration of the Assam Duars was bleak, an attempt was

made by them to increase the compensation money to rupees fifteen thousand, if not at least to twelve thousand. In March 1854, a meeting was arranged between the Agent to the Governor General at Guwahati, and the uncle of the Dharma Raja of Bhutan, and the Dewangiri Raja. But since the British did not accede to the demands of increased payment, the Bhutanese were reported to have committed several atrocities on their way back to the Buxa Diar¹⁶. While enquiries were being made on the above mentioned incidents, fresh reports arrived of outrages committed by the Bhutanese on merchants and British subjects. There were cases of kidnapping as well. A person named Aurung Singh, and another called Ramdollal together with his son wer^e_^ taken captive by the Bhutanese. All demands to release them were met by vague replies. Robberies were also common. A merchant named Uttam Chand was said to be plundered by the Bhutanese of property valued at rupees seven hundred or eight hundred. Another trader was also robbed of some cloth and sixty rupees¹⁷. The British government immediately directed the local authorities to close the passes from the hills, if the culprits were not surrendered, or the outrages were repeated.

Closing the passes and thereby effecting an economic blockade proved to be an useful ploy, which even in the

future was to produce satisfactory results for the British. Even at the present time as soon as the passes were closed, effective steps of retribution were immediately taken by the Deb and the Dharma Rajas of Bhutan, by removing the Dewangiri Raja from office who was suspected as being the main culprit. Even the Tongsa Ponlob who was in control of the Goalpara Diars and believed to be in compliance with his subordinates in committing atrocities, was heavily fined. Colonel Jenkins further proposed on 13 November 1855 that the value of property plundered by the Dewangiri Raja should be deducted from the revenue due to the Bhutanese. He also wanted to punish the Bhutanese by the immediate occupation of all the Bengal Diars, the only measure he felt 'likely to be effective short of invading the country'¹⁸.

However these threats appeared to be futile for again on 26 November 1856, another Indian merchant named Salgram Oswal who had gone to Mainaguri to trade was seized and detained on flimsy grounds¹⁹. One fact however emerged from the above mentioned incidents. In spite of the deterioration in trade recorded between India and Bhutan at this period of time, a trade still lucrative enough to lure Marwari merchants all the way from Rajasthan, must still have been going on.

Coming back to border disputes, the atrocities mentioned above include only a few amongst numerous crimes supposed to

have been committed by the Bhutanese. If British sources are to be believed, the Bhutanese continued their aggression on British territory from the borders of the Bengal Duars and on Cooch Behar. Ashley Eden remarked that during this period, scarcely a year had passed without the occurrence of several outrages, any one of which would have fully 'justified the adoption of a policy of reprisal or retaliation'²⁰. It would however be unfair to put the entire blame of these outrages on the Bhutanese in the absence of any account from their end. There were definitely causes for complaints on both sides and some of the stories of the Bhutanese outrages may be said to be exaggeration^s.

Be that as it may, the British government in India wanted to put an end to all these complaints against their 'meddlesome neighbour'. In 1856, Lord Dalhousie, the then Governor General, expressed the opinion that "if there should be a recurrence of such incursions the Governor General deeming it a paramount duty to protect the subjects of the British government will have no alternative but to take measures for the complete occupation of the Bengal Duars"²¹.

Meanwhile, in 1857, the Sepoy Mutiny broke out providing the first real challenge to the British rule in India. During the mutiny the sympathies of the Bhutanese were entirely with the mutineers, thereby revealing their hostility towards the British. When the storm of the mutiny

abated, it increased the debt of India by about thirty eight and a half millions and the military charges which ensued, augmented the annual expenditure by about eighteen millions²². An adventurist policy against Bhutan was now out of question. But the direct assumption of authority by the Crown marked no significant change in British policy in India. The decision made by the Company was endorsed by the government of India within a few years. Thus the districts of Ambari -Falakata, which it will be remembered were being managed by the British Indian government from 1842, were seized by the British, and their revenues withheld. Sir Frederick Halliday, Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, had proposed taking over these districts during the mutiny itself, but the turmoils of the uprising had prevented the execution of this order till 1860.

The unsettled state of affairs between the two countries must have adversely affected the trade as can be made out from the data presented in Table 2 and 3. Even though complete reliance cannot be placed on these data, they are nonetheless suggestive of the general pattern, and should be looked at accordingly. The total value of importations during the four years was estimated at Rs. 1700 while the value of goods taken in exchange amounted to Rs. 4200 only. Among the imports brought into Bhutan cloth including cotton goods were the only article worth mentioning²³. A suggestion

was forwarded by Ashley Eden, Secretary to the Govt. of Bengal, regarding the increase in the export of tea from India to Tibet, Sikkim, Bhutan and Nepal. Eden pointed out that the inhabitants of these regions were in the habit of drinking Brick tea, and it was this type and not the finer quality, which ought be sent to these regions from India. Brick tea, pointed out Eden could be prepared quite easily without interfering in any way with the preparation of finer tea for the European market, since the Brick tea was made from the coarse thick leaves which were not plucked for the ordinary manufacture and were hence useless²⁴.

In 1863 mercantilist intercourse between Cooch Behar and Bhutan showed some signs of improving, when the Raja of Cooch Behar wrote a letter to Major W. Agnew who was officiating as the Governor General's Agent in the North East frontier, informing him of his decision to reopen commercial intercourse with Bhutan. This transaction, reported the Raja had been closed for some time owing to quarrels on the Bhutan frontier. Since these aggression had stopped occurring for about a year, and the Deb Raja himself had requested the Maharaja of Cooch Behar to re-open communication^s the Maharaja thought it prudent to comply with his request²⁵.

Table 2
Imports from Bhutan, 1860-63

Name of articles	Unit	Rate in Rs. per unit	Quantity				Total value for 1860-63
			1860	1861	1862	1863	
Cattle	no.	15	10	10	10	10	600
Horses	no.	40	3	4	4	4	600
Knives	no.	8	5	5	5	10	200
Wax	md.	20	3	4	4	4	300

Source : General Progs. Dated July 1864, W.B.S.A.

Table 3
Exports to Bhutan, 1860-63

Name of articles	Value in Rs.				Total value for 1860-63
	1860	1861	1862	1863	
Broad cloth	1000	1000	1000	1000	4000
Coral	50	50	50	50	200

Source : General Progs. Dated July 1864, W.B.S.A.

The Mission of Ashley Eden

Hopkinson who was the Governor General's Agent in the North East Frontier, in a letter written to the ^Government of Bengal in 1861 emphasized the advantages of sending a mission to Bhutan. In his own words, "It must be remembered

that nothing could exceed the distinction, and marked respect and attention to all its wants, with which Captain Pemberton's mission was everywhere received and which were continued during the entire period of its stay in Bootan, and I see no reason to suppose that a similar mission would meet with a different reception now, while if successful, it might terminate in the establishment of a permanent agent at the Bootan court, and such an agency would be the best instrument for paving the way for friendly intercourse with Lassa"²⁶. Lord Canning too, prior to his departure from India, favoured this suggestion even though he is reported to have been 'doubtful as to placing an agent in Bootan' and wanted 'to leave this question to be decided after the result of the mission is known'²⁷.

In July 1862, a messenger named Mikunda Singh was despatched from Assam to the court of the Deb Raja in order to inform them about the intended mission. The Bhutan government was not enthusiastic to receive the proposed mission. The Deb Raja did not want the mission to come to Bhutan because it would be attended with much trouble owing to the cold weather, and bad state of roads, and also because the Shabdrung did not wish an interview²⁸.

It was not till the winter of 1863, that all arrangements for the sending of the mission were completed. Ashley

Eden, then Secretary of the Government of Bengal, was put incharge, accompanied by Captain Austin as his assistant, and Dr. Simpson as Medical Officer. Attempts to secure free commerce between the two countries was definitely in the agenda. But this was not given top priority, and was to be kept in subordination to the main political objects of the mission. The British, at this stage, were more interested in ensuring political stability between the two countries rather than in securing commercial advantages. They probably felt that commercial transactions would automatically go up with the improvement in the political situation.

Eden's mission started for Bhutan at the close of 1863, by way of Darjeeling and Dalimkot, and reached Paro through the Ha valley (Map II). At Dalimkot, there was, with the exception of the fort, only some six or seven little huts, but no place from where Eden and his party could expect supplies. The local men had been warned by the Dzongpon of Dalimkot that every man found selling provisions to the foreigners would be fined. The object of this order was to preserve the Dzongpon's trade monopoly. It was his practice and that of all the frontier officials to prohibit any trade which the hillsmen might have with the plains. These officials followed a practice of buying rice cheaply, or extorting it from their tenants in the Diars and storing it,

and later selling it at an exorbitant price to the ryots and to other people in the interior of the country²⁹.

After reaching Paro Eden discovered that a small market was held there every evening. Some two or three hundred people collected there every day, and as far as Eden could see, they never had anything to sell except walnuts, pears and radishes. However Eden saw great possibilities of converting this market of Paro into one of the greatest trading marts in the east. According to him the location of this mart, being surrounded by land capable of producing great quantities of wheat and rice, could make it one of the entrepots of the trade with Tibet, Tartary, China and India. Eden felt that Paro should be full of depots of broad cloth, cotton goods, cutlery, rice, corals, tea, spices, cincobs, leather and miscellaneous articles of European manufacture brought there to be exchanged for rock salt, musk, gold dust, borax and silks of Tibet. But Eden noticed a curious lack of communication between Tibet and Bhutan, and mentioned that not a single Tibetan merchant ventured into Bhutan³⁰.

Commenting further on the decline of Bhutan's foreign trade Eden observed that the manufactures of the country were at ^{so} low an ebb as to discourage any transactions with other countries. Of minerals it could be said that some iron was discovered at Paro, and some lead, which the Bhutanese claimed

they had obtained from the same mine at Paro. The fact that their supply was not equal to their demand had been corroborated by the fact that they brought lead and small quantities of sulphur from the plains³¹. Eden observed that there was perhaps no other condition in Bhutan in which the deterioration had been greater than in foreign trade. In 1809, according to Lieutenant Rutherford, the trade between Bhutan and Assam had amounted to two lakhs of rupees per annum, but during Eden's time this trade had dwindled considerably. The Rangpur fair had ceased to exist, and in 1864, trade at Rangpur was confined to the purchase of a little tobacco and indigo³². With Darjeeling too, Eden felt that the Bhutanese trade had become nominal at that time. There were no Tibetan merchants in Bhutan. The Bhutanese merchants, however were said to frequent the markets of Tibet but were not looked upon favourably by the Tibetans because of their habits. The roads between these two countries were suitable for the passage of goods but, due to the mistrust which the Tibetans had for the Bhutanese traders, these two countries were excluded from the mutual interchange of commodities³³.

Eden was detained at Paro for about sixteen days. At Paro, he learnt that Bhutan was in a state of anarchy. The Tongsa Ponlob was reported to have usurped all authority and turned the Deb and the Dharma Rajas into mere puppets in his

hands. Even though the conditions were not at all conducive for negotiations, Eden persevered, and on 15 March 1864, reached Punakha. The meeting with the Bhutan Durbar proved to be a disaster. The Bhutanese did not hesitate to humiliate the British envoy and forced him to sign a treaty. The Tongsa Ponlob asked for the restitution of the Assam Duars, and threatened Eden with war if it was not done. He also did not agree to the stationing of a British agent in Bhutan, and the freedom of trade. Eden and his companions were also reported to have been assaulted by the Bhutanese. In order to ensure his and his companions' safety, Eden eventually consented to sign an agreement drawn up by the Tongsa Ponlob, which provided for the restoration of the Assam Duars along with certain other tracts. The agreement further bound together the four states, 'Bootan, Feeringees (the English) Behar (i.e. Cooch Behar) and Sikkim' to the effect that if any of them committed aggression, 'the other three should punish it'. Eden signed the treaty with the words, 'under compulsion', written under his signature³⁴.

Thus ended ^{the} mission of Ashley Eden who thereafter returned to India through Paro, and what ever hopes might have been entertained of renewing friendly relations with Bhutan were shattered.

The Duar War And The Economic Blockade

But, the Bhutanese too possibly had causes for complaints, and their refusal to accede to the establishment of a British resident in Bhutan, and to free trade and commerce with India, had certain points in its favour. As an Indian newspaper reported on 28 May 1864, "If he (Deb Raja) has declined to enter into a treaty of trade, it is not to be wondered at. He knows every land in which the English begins to trade it is not long before they take possession of and to consent to it is to resign his crown after a time"³⁵.

Be that as it may, on the return of Ashley Eden, the Government in India found itself on the war path. The military strategies as also a detailed description of this war does not really come within the purview of this study. What is of real concern is the decline in commerce before and during the war, and the signing of the treaty of Sinchula after it.

Needless to say that with the deteriorating political conditions between the two countries, the commercial conditions also showed a downward trend. This fact was emphasized by a correspondent of the 'Calcutta Englishman' writing from Darjeeling at the end of September 1864.

In former years when the Booteahs were on friendly terms with our government, they brought their ponies, musk, wax, dogs, etc.

to Rangpore. Our government to encourage this trade provided suitable accomodation for these traders. Before however, the Booteahs could bring their goods into our territory they had to apply for a pass and chaprassies (official messengers) were sent to accompany them. This the Booteahs found degrading as well as expensive. Later when Lord William Bentinck visited Dinajpur and Rangpore, for the sake of economy he gave orders that no further allowances should be given to the headmen and left the traders to find accomodation where and how they best could. The trade between Bootan and Rangpur gradually fell off and finally ceased altogether. Then Dr. Campbell superintendent of Darjeeling established the Titalya fair which was a great success while under his control. Titalya however, was subsequently included within the Rangpore district, the fair gradually languished, and is now one in name only³⁶.

T.A. Donough, Deputy Magistrate of Jalpaiguri, in a letter dated 20 July 1864 to Colonel Henry Hopkinson, Commissioner of Assam, stated that there was hardly any trade carried on in the plains of Bhutan. The Indian traders he said, dared not venture into Bhutan. The trifling trade which was carried on was by the Bhutanese themselves, who came into Indian territory, and supplied themselves with whatever they needed from the Indian traders residing in the villages along the frontier. This the Bhutanese obtained by means of barter, exchanging the produce of their fields with whatever they needed, disposing off their surplus agricultural produce in the local hats or markets as rapidly as possibly by retail³⁷. Besides agricultural produce, Donough

mentioned in another letter to Hopkinson dated 1 August 1864, the other items brought by the Bhutanese included wax, manjeet or madde^h, ox tails, blankets, a very small quantity of musk, and a few ponies. In exchange for these, the Bhutanese obtained from Indian traders, cotton piece goods (principally consisting of stout longcloth and jean), broad cloth, dried fish, tobacco, and gur³⁸. This trade was in comparison to the one carried on in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, in reality a mere pittance.

Further evidence of this trifling trade is obtained from another despatch to the Secretary to the Government of Bengal, which said, "The trade with the hills is not very brisk; the imports consist of hill salt, wax, musk, pepper, species, chowries, Booteah cloths and blankets, knives, ponies and occasionally cattle stolen from other Dooars. The hillmen take in return betel nut, pan, cotton and India cloths, dried fish, mustard oil and a little rice"³⁹. It was with a view to remove border conflicts and facilitate the smooth flow of commerce that Ashley Eden had been sent to Bhutan. However, the failure of this mission made the British decide to use force to restore peace.

The financial depletion on the aftermath of the Sepoy Mutiny compelled the government to abandon any plan of a full invasion of Bhutan. It was decided that the best strategy would be to occupy the Bengal duars, until the

Bhutanese had sent an ambassador to deliver up the treaty forced on ~~Eden~~ and to apologise humbly⁴⁰. In a Khureeta addressed to the Deb Raja of Bhutan dated 9 June 1864, the then Governor General of India, John Lawrence, laid down certain conditions to be fulfilled by the Bhutanese by 1st September 1864, the failure of which would lead the British government to take steps⁴¹.

The reply which the Bhutanese government gave to this demand was evasive, and accordingly, in a proclamation issued by H.M. Durand, Secretary to the Government of India on 12 November 1864, it was stated that

The Governor General in Council has therefore reluctantly resolved to occupy permanently and annex to British territory the Bengal Duars of Bhootan and so much of the hills territory including the forts of Dallingkot, Panakha and Dewangiri as may be necessary to command the passes, and to prevent hostile or predatory incursions of Bhootanese into the Darjeeling districts or into the plains below. A military force amply sufficient to occupy this tract and to overcome all resistance has been assembled on the frontier⁴² and will now proceed to carry out this resolve.

Durand further added that 'the occupation' of the country was not to be delayed on any ground. No overtures from the Bhutan government were to be entertained unless the latter were prepared to (1) surrender all the Bengal Duars, and the hill country on the left bank of the Tista, upto such points on the watershed of the lower range of hills

as may be laid down by the British Commissioner, (2) give up the two documents extorted from Mr. Eden, and (3) surrender all captives⁴³.

The political as well as the military initiatives before the commencement of the Duar war was wholly on the side of the British. The Bhutanese had always been represented as the aggressors, but it may be possible that they had a strong complaint also. Surgeon Rennie observed, "the remarks about fault being equal on both sides as regards aggression against property has ^{very} likely a fair amount of truth in it - at least such is my opinion"⁴⁴. The Bhutanese themselves felt that they had been greatly wronged, and stated that "We are the people to declare war, instead of which they are doing it"⁴⁵.

The military hostilities between the two countries commenced from November 1864, and continued for one whole year. It was not until the November of the following year that the treaty of Sinchula was finally signed. The British forces were entirely successful in their early ventures, and believed that they had completely defeated the Bhutanese by January 1865. The Bhutanese, however, showing unexpected valour and strategy, attacked Dewangiri in February 1865, and created a temporary set back for the British troops. The triumph of the Bhutanese was, however, shortlived as the British

made amends of the losses sustained by them and secured a stranglehold on the Bhutanese by the effective policy of economic blockade.

In a letter written by Colonel J.C. Haughton, Political Agent and Chief Civil Officer, dated 9 January 1865, to Brigadier General Mulcaster it was stated that the Government of Bhutan should be roused to a sense of its position by applying external pressure. Haughton felt that this could best be achieved by blockading all the passes of Bhutan till the rulers of the country came to terms with the British. Mulcaster was requested to direct all officers commanding the various posts and passes, to prevent as far as possible all intercourse between the people of the hills and those of the plains. Care was however to be taken to see that those Bhutanese who had submitted to the British were not prevented from obtaining things from the Indian markets⁴⁶. The measure was held to be effective, and at the same time, did not 'inflict any permanent injury on the country or its inhabitants'⁴⁷.

Colonel Henry Hopkinson, Commissioner of Assam, wrote to the Secretary to the Government of Bengal, enquiring whether the instructions regarding the blockade of the passes included the closure of the Tawang pass as well. It might be mentioned again that the Tawang or the Kooreaparah Duar

was independent of Bhutan, and closing these passes would interfere with the trade of the people of Tibet, with whom Hopkinson said, "we have no quarrel and who we believe wish us well, and the measure might also raise the jealousy and suspicions of the Lassa authorities and make them think we are going against them"⁴⁸. The decision of leaving the Tawang pass closed or open was vested upon Hopkinson who probably in the end decided to keep the pass open as was suggested by the fair which was held in Udalguri in Koorea-parah. Though leaving this pass open might allow some provisions for Bhutan, and go against the principle of economic blockade, Hopkinson was reluctant to antagonise the Tibetans.

By March 1865, the effects of the blockade was being felt. Even the Meches of the Diars were threatened with scarcity and starvation, and they complained to Colonel Haughton "that owing to the scarcity of rice our helpless families are brought to starve The merchants who had hitherto supplied us with rice and cotton seeds venture not to come to our quarter nowadays"⁴⁹. By the summer of 1865, the Bhutanese themselves were being adversely affected by the blockade. This is what the records say :

The general result of these measures have been that the Bootanese have suffered very considerably. They have been punished on various occasions in action, they have been almost entirely cut off from the plains and their trade

has been much curtailed. There are many articles of constant use among them some of which habit has made necessities of life, of which they are almost entirely deficient. They have accordingly made overtures for peace more than once, but the basis on which they are willing to treat viz. the surrender of the Bengal Dooars being inadmissible these overtures have come to nothing⁵⁰.

Affective though the blockade may have been all commercial activities between the two countries were not completely stopped. There is a particularly detailed description of the fair held at Udalguri in Kooreaparah, this pass being kept open by the British, keeping the Tibetan trade in view. The ^aTawang Raja had reiterated his friendship with the British, and this fair was held even during 1865 as in other years. H.M. Reilly, Superintendent of Police, in a report given to the Deputy Commissioner of Darrang, described in some details this particular fair. Reilly said that due to the war, the fair was not as well attended as usual. There were fewer Bhutanese, and fewer Mahajans, Cacharees and Assamese, from the neighbouring districts than there was at the last fair. This paucity of numbers was attributed to the war, and "also in consequences of the want of confidence, displayed by the Sath Rajahs of Korreeaparah in not coming down to the plains, when they were first expected. The reason for the latter is owing to the delay occasioned by the Booteahs coming down to the plains, which gave to the report that there was to be no fair this year at all, and thus few were prepared to attend

from a distance". Decline was also noticed in the amount of merchandise for sale in the fair, compared to the merchandise of the previous year. The Bhutanese from the lower ranges visited the fair, and bartered among other things chillies, blankets, Jubrang (spices), ponies, asses, mules, dogs, cows etc. and obtained in return rice and cloth. The war had not been made the subject of open discussion in the fair, even though Reilly was of the opinion that the traders discussed it in private amongst themselves⁵¹:

Besides this fair, small occasional references have also been made by British officers, who in the course of their campaign saw several instances of commercial transactions. For example, at a place called Choora Bundar, which was a large village on the frontier of Rangpur, several Marwarⁱ~~ee~~ merchants were noticed. These Marwarⁱ~~ee~~ merchants obtained tobacco and mustard seeds from the Bhutanese, and sent them to as distant places as Serajgunj. Again, at another Mech settlement in Sena Tockooria⁵² a number of Bengalis were observed exchanging rice in husks for cotton at the rate of six maunds valued at Rs. two to eight, with equal weights of cotton⁵³. This exchange in rice and cotton has also been described by David Field Rennie, Medical Officer of the 80th regiment that was sent to Bhutan in February 1865. Rennie said that through this trade, the hill people displayed their commercial ignorance and allowed

the Bengali traders to make enormous profits in this way⁵⁴. The Titalya fair was also going on while the war continued. Rennie visited it, and found that "a great variety of goods both European and native were exposed for sale and it was astonishing to see how judiciously the selection had been made". Also, "the vendors seemed indifferent at so early a stage of the proceedings about forcing the sale of their wares and held on to first prices with a tenacity quite foreign to native commercial character"⁵⁵.

But, in spite of these small transactions being carried on the policy of economic blockade against the Bhutanese was quite successful. The Paro Ponlob and the western Bhutan chiefs were reportedly apprehensive at this continued blockade since they controlled, in the main, the lucrative trade that Bhutan carried on with Cooch Behar and the Bengal plains. Taking advantage of the situation, the British Indian government sent a letter to the Deb Raja on 5 June 1865 stating^{ing} that if the Deb Raja refused to accept the proposed terms, troops would be sent further deep into his territory. The Deb Raja, in reply, pleaded for the restoration of the Diars, and said that from the revenues he received from the Diars a large sum went for the various religious festivals. He therefore threatened the Indian government by saying that evil would fall upon them in the event of their stopping the means of providing for these festivals⁵⁶. This letter was

followed by others of the same nature including a statement by a Bhutanese named Passa, who gave himself up at Buxa on 31 July. His opinion was that the ry⁰ats of Bhutan were in much distress in consequence of the annexation of the Duars and stopping of all trade. Passa's conclusion was that since the ry⁰ats were all in earnest for peace, and no arrangements had been made for the continuation of the war, it would be best for all concerned to make immediate settlement of the dispute⁵⁷.

The Treaty of Sinchula

The British too were realising the problems of keeping up this war. The cost of maintaining European and native troops all along the line from the tea gardens of Darjeeling to those of Darrang, more than two hundred miles east, was proving to be quite a burden. They were prepared to make peace, but only on an unconditional acceptance by the Bhutanese of all the terms laid down by them. In September 1865 the Governor General wrote - "Nothing short of your absolute submission and acceptance of the terms laid down will avert hostilities"⁵⁸. On 15 October 1865, the Dharma Raja of Bhutan in a last futile bid wrote a letter to the Queen pleading that the duars which yielded a very small revenue, be restored back to Bhutan. In the event of the

Diars not being restored, misfortune would fall both upon the Dharma Raja as well as the upon the English⁵⁹. The British were not to be taken in by such vague threats. But, in any case, Colonel Bruce Officiating Commissioner of Western Diars was asked to offer peace to the Deb Raja.

In November two representatives from the Deb and the Dharma Rajas arrived, and negotiations began at Sinchula above Buxa Diar, between Colonel Bruce and the Bhutanese representatives. The proceedings began on the 4th of November and the representatives made one last attempt to retain at least 'one Diar to furnish them with pan (betel leaf)'. Colonel Bruce replied that not a single Diar could be given up, but they would be able to obtain pan in abundance from all the Diars⁶⁰. During the next day's proceedings on 6 November, the Bhutanese officers said that if entry is made free for all, the Indian traders entering Bhutan might run the risk of being robbed by budmashes, or evil men. Colonel Bruce replied that the Indian government guaranteed protection to Bhutanese merchants all the way to Calcutta, and the Bhutan government ought to reciprocate this by protecting traders who entered Bhutan⁶¹.

The preliminary terms of the treaty were to the effect that the Bhutan government must tender ample apology for the insult of the British mission under Eden, that they must

give up the guns abandoned at Dewangiri within two months. There would be free trade between the two countries, and in lieu for the Duars the Bhutanese would get an annual subsidy of Rs. 25,000/- rising in three years to Rs. 50,000/- during which good conduct should be maintained by the Bhutan government⁶². The final treaty known as the treaty of Sinchula, or as the Bhutanese called - the 'ten article treaty of Rawa pani'⁶³, contained ten articles and was signed by the envoys on 11 November 1865. (See appendix V). The article II and article IX of the treaty however, caused some consternation among the Bhutanese, and led to some hesitation on their part, before the final signature was made. It was proposed in Article IX, that "there shall be free trade and commerce between the two governments. No duties shall be levied on Bhootanese goods imported into British territories, nor shall the Bhootan government levy any duties on British goods imported into or transported through Bhootan territories. Bhootanese subjects residing in British territories shall have equal justice with British subjects and British subjects residing in Bhootan shall have equal justice with the subjects of the Bhootan government". The clauses of this article, as well as those of Article II regarding fixation of boundary between the two countries, seemed to disconcert the Deb Raja. In the Bhutanese version of the treaty which was sent to him for his signature the Deb Raja had article two

and article nine of the treaty erased. Regarding the first erasure, the Deb Raja said that he wanted no one else but Bruce to fix the boundaries. Regarding the erasure of the other Article he said that he was apprehensive about a recurrence of hostilities between the two countries, and that it would be better if trade be transacted at the frontier posts⁶⁴.

Colonel Bruce explained to the Lieutenant Governor that the ^{Deb} Raja was possibly quite ignorant of the possible consequence of his act. The omission of the 9th Article would be as unfavourable to Bhutan as to the British, opined Bruce, because Bhutan would be deprived of the free import of betel nuts, betel leaves, and other goods from the plains and also would no longer be able to export salt, as freely as before⁶⁵. However the Deb Raja no longer wished to antagonise the British since he had also informed Bruce that if the latter was not satisfied with the ^{Deb} Raja's decision, the treaty should immediately be returned to him so that all erasures would be at once corrected and restored⁶⁶.

The Lieutenant Governor immediately instructed Bruce to inform the Deb and the Dharma Rajas that either the treaty was to be signed in all its entirety or not be signed at all. Further, if all the articles were not agreed upon, then hostilities and the blockade upon the Bhutanese would

continue. It was emphasized that "the Rajahs should be informed that they must accept article 9 of the treaty, but that every reasonable precaution which they can suggest in view to satisfying them and preventing difficulties from arising, will be taken"⁶⁷.

Regarding the second article, the Lieutenant Governor gave instructions that Bruce must explain to the Bhutanese that he would be succeeded by Major Agnew, who would settle the boundary question⁶⁸, in consultation with the Bhutanese agents and on the basis of principles described by the Deb Raja.

In the end, the Bhutanese accepted all the conditions, and the treaty, drawn up at Sinchula on 11 November 1865, was finally concluded on the 25th and 26th of January 1866. Disputes between the two countries, however, continued over the payment of subsidy, and handing over of the British guns seized by the Bhutanese at Dawangiri. The British government again used its trump card by saying that in the event of the Bhutanese not giving up the guns, hostilities would recommence, all compensation money would be stopped, and the economic blockade would again be reimposed⁶⁹. Ultimately however this problem was solved, and on 25 February 1866, Colonel Agnew wrote to the Secretary to the Government of India that the guns had been delivered and hence, payment of the subsidy would be made immediately⁷⁰.

The outcome^e of the Duar war was not very surprising. It was only to be expected that Bhutan would never stand up to the British. It was surprising because the British had to suffer some reversals, and the Bhutanese held out as long as they did. The British used the policy of economic blockade as an effective lever to force the Bhutanese to come to terms. Knowing how greatly the Bhutanese depended upon the supplies from the plains, the British Indian government very effectively exploited this weakness of the hill people. Regarding the acquisition of valuable tract of territory with an area of about 450 square miles and which included Kalimpong as well, the "Friend of India" commented - "this will greatly extend the hill territory of Darjeeling and will enable us to trade directly with Tibet without, as in the north west, piercing the hills to a great distance"⁷¹. Surgeon Rennie expressed the importance of the treaty for commercial intercourse with Tibet in the following words - "Though direct communication with Lhasa within a moderate period may not be practicable, more extended commerce with Tibet than now exists, is not necessarily precluded and it occurs to me that our present relations with Bhutan might be turned to useful account with reference thereto"⁷². The British always kept in mind that ultimately it was the trade with Tibet by which maximum commercial advantages could be gained, and always aimed at seeking better means of communication with the country.

The territorial gains of the British by this treaty were also considerable. The whole area of the Duars would yield, it was estimated, a gross revenue of one and a half lakh of rupees with prospects of increasing several fold in course of a few years. It possessed vast tracts of excellent timbers besides immense possibilities of the cultivation of tea⁷³. However, these territorial acquisitions did not fully meet the expectations of the British tea planters in India who favoured a deeper incursion into Bhutan. When the terms of the treaty were under discussion, John Lawrence had written to Charles Wood that a 'great howl' had been raised in the English papers against the terms of the proposed treaty. This treaty was said to have thwarted the hopes of the British tea planters in India, of helping themselves to much good land in Bhutan on its annexation. Lawrence himself was strongly against the wholesale annexation of Bhutan mainly on two points. First, such an action was likely to cause an alarm in Tibet; and, secondly, the economic potentiality of Bhutan minus its duars was negligible. Its annexation, felt Lawrence, would cost more than it was worth at any rate⁷⁴.

Thus ended this "unequal war" between the two countries, the Bhutanese being very much at the receiving end. Skirmishes and conflict continued nevertheless with violations of various clauses of the treaty from time to time. Even the

Article IX was occasionally violated, and duties were charged on goods exchanged, against the principle of free trade. For the present, however, the British were highly satisfied with the gains made. "Even if troops had advanced upon Punakha" remarked Lawrence, "we doubt whether terms materially more advantageous than those now imposed would have been dictated to the enemy"⁷⁵.

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CHAPTER VI

The Centralisation in Politics For The Sake of Commerce, 1865-1885

Relations between India and Bhutan improved to some extent after the signing of the treaty of Sinchula. The money allowances given to Bhutan in lieu of the Duars placed a powerful lever in the hands of the British. It could be withheld on political grounds, and stipulations in furtherance of trade could be attached before resumption of payment. In fact, since the conclusion of the Duar war, and till 1885 in particular, the civil strife in Bhutan assumed serious proportions, with the warring parties often asking the British Government for help. The British, steadfast in the

policy of non-intervention in the internal matters of the country, remained by and large neutral. As is to be expected, these internal dissensions had some adverse effect on the commercial transactions between the two countries. And, the British, by using the effective lever of withholding the subsidy, tried to overcome the difficulties.

The internal feuds of Bhutan originated from the fact that the defacto central authority in Bhutan had been from a long time of a weak and vascillating type. The provincial governors of the different Dzongs held the real power in their hands so much so that Pemberton (1838) and Eden (1864) had found the Deb Rajas a mere puppet in the hands of the Ponlobs. Very often, the border disturbances and the atrocities of the Bhutanese were unknown to the Deb and the letters written to them by the British were even suppressed by the border chiefs. In February 1867, some dissensions in Bhutan were reported by the Commissioner of Cooch Behar, who characterized them as civil war. It seemed that differences between the Paro Ponlob and the Tongsa Ponlob, had reached a climax, with the Tongsa Ponlob refusing to recognize the authority of the Deb Raja Tshenyi Lupon Tsuendue Pekar¹. The Tongsa Ponlob wanted to place a child, aged five or seven years, on the seat of the Dharma Raja, which had been lying vacant for some time, and thereby assuming for himself the control of the whole of Bhutan.

The other faction, led by the Paro Ponlob and supported by the Deb Raja, made some tentative suggestions for help to the Commissioner of Cooch Behar. The British government, however, stood firm in its resolution of non-interference in the internal affairs of Bhutan, and refused to give its assistance to any of the warring factions².

Obstructions On The Chukha Bridge

A more serious outcome of the internal quarrels was a severe obstacle that was placed in the path of trade and commerce between Bhutan and Buxa, at a place called Chukha. In June 1867, it was reported to Haughton, Commissioner of Cooch Behar, that there was a complete stoppage of commercial intercourse at Chukha, and no one was allowed to pass the bridge. Haughton's reaction at the receipt of this news was one of despair of ever making the Bhutanese see reason. In a letter written to the Thimphu Dzongpon on 19 June 1867, Haughton admonished him, because "by trade countries flourish and the people become rich but by the avarice of rulers, trade is destroyed and the people become poor"! Haughton also reminded the Thimphu Dzongpon of the provision of free trade in the treaty of Sinchula, and requested him to allow the traders to pass freely to and from Buxa³. No reply was

received by Haughton of this letter, and the bridge remained closed. Five months later, Haughton again remonstrated to the Thimphu Dzongpon, and followed it up with a letter to the Dharma Raja appraising him of the situation. In the second letter to the Thimphu Dzongpon written on 21 November 1867, Haughton warned the Bhutanese that the British government would not allow 'the least breach of the treaty or any unfriendly act, to pass un-noticed'. He also pointed out the inconvenience which the Indian people at Buxa were facing because of the stoppage of supplies which they had been in the habit of buying from the Bhutanese⁴. But it seemed all these appeals as well as threats were of no avail.

Informing the Dharma Raja of this stoppage, which was rightly considered to be contrary to the spirit of Article IX of the treaty of 1865, Haughton appealed to the spiritual head of Bhutan, who was supposed to be 'a man of peace, and whose profession it is to promote the happiness of men' to induce his people to abstain from these unfriendly acts⁵. The traders were prevented from crossing the bridge, according to one report, by the amount of custom duties exacted by the Bhutanese officials. But, another reason for this obstruction was surmised to be the deliberate stoppage by 'one of the candidates for the executive power anxious to prevent any intercourse between ourselves and his rival'⁶. If the first be true, then it was unjust on

the part of the Bhutanese to try to exact duties from the traders, so soon after the signing of the treaty for duty free trade between the two countries. As far as the second reason was concerned, it was possible that the Tongsa Ponlob, out of jealousy at the lucrative trade which the Paro Ponlob carried on with the plains, was making attempts to obstruct and disrupt it. The Bhutanese authorities on their part claimed that they had stopped the bridge at Chukha during internal dissensions fearing that some 'evil disposed persons would use the bridge for improper communications'. They also pleaded that the British should not harbour any ill feelings against them because of this.

But, the smallest infraction of the treaty of Sinchula, or any unfriendly act on the part of the Bhutanese, was not likely to be overlooked by the British. In order to drive home this fact to the Bhutanese, Haughton proposed the withholding of the allowance money, or so much of their allowance as may appear fitting, unless the clearest explanations regarding the obstruction was given, and the most satisfactory assurances made that such incidents would not be repeated in the future. The British were willing to believe that this closure of the bridge was not the act of the government, but of one of its principal officers - the person on whom suspicion was most acutely developed being the Wangdiphodrang Dzongpon. If such suspicion proved

correct, asserted Haughton, the allowance money could be paid through the Paro Ponlob who had always showed a friendly disposition towards the British⁷.

The proposal of withholding the payment of the subsidy was supported by Girdleston, officiating Under Secretary to the Government of India. He asserted that any hindrance to trade over the bridge in question must prove a general impediment in a country like Bhutan, and it was therefore expedient to adopt the proposal of Lieutenant Colonel Haughton⁸. The Government of Bengal was however doubtful if this act on the part of Haughton could be permissible under the provisions of the treaty. Mackenzie, the Under Secretary to the Government of Bengal, in a letter to the Secretary to the Government of India, expressed a doubt whether Colonel Haughton's construction of the treaty was correct, and whether the general provision for 'free trade' in article IX of the treaty could be construed as binding the Bhutan government to place no restrictions on the liberty of their own subjects to proceed into British territory. The words 'free trade', explained Mackenzie, in the first part of the article could possibly be held to be explained and, therefore, limited by the second sentence of the article commencing 'no duties shall be levied'⁹. Nevertheless, the Government of India upheld Colonel Haughton's interpretations, and authorised him to withhold the

allowance if the bridge was not opened.

The Bhutanese, however, claimed that the Chukha bridge had been fully reopened, and hence there was no reason in withholding the payment. But a technical reason for the non-payment of subsidy was furnished by the fact that the Bhutanese agent who had been deputed to receive the subsidy on January 10, 1868, belonged to a rank inferior to that stipulated under the article of the treaty. The person who turned up to receive the subsidy was the Subah of Buxa, while it was stated in the treaty that no person below the rank of a Dzongpon should be sent. Haughton dismissed the Subah without any discussion, leaving alone any payment. He wrote once more to the Dharma Raja that no payment would be made so long as a person of rank was not deputed and a satisfactory explanation of the closure of the road to Buxa was given¹⁰.

Moreover, Haughton was not willing to believe that the Chukha bridge had been reopened, as claimed by the Bhutanese. In a letter written to the Thimphu Dzongpon on 9 January 1868, he asserted: "As a person of the rank of Jongpen or superior rank has not been sent, the allowance to your government could not be paid. You write that the road is not closed, but last year the roads were thronged with traders. This year, I have not seen one. How then can it

be said that the road is not closed"¹¹. In reply to the above letter, communication was received from the Thimphu Dzongpon to the effect that the closure was made by a junior officer, and that the road had since been reopened. He also explained that since he had been away to Punakha at that time, he could not be present in person to receive the payment, but had sent the subah of Buxa instead, and pleaded that the payment be made over to him. This letter had no effect on the Government of India, who had already decided to withhold the payment of subsidy, if not in whole, at least in part, as long as a satisfactory explanation was not given by the Bhutanese for the closure of the Chukha bridge. In February 1868, the Bhutanese government made yet another effort to receive the subsidy by sending a representative of the Thimphu Dzongpon, and the Subah of Buxa. The Bengal government had meanwhile changed its mind and strategy, by deciding that payment should be made but the venue was to be changed. Payment would be made not at Buxa but at Darjeeling¹².

In deciding upon Darjeeling as being a more suitable place for the payment of subsidy than Buxa, Haughton had certain considerations in mind. He wished to (a) make the Bhutanese realise their error in not deputing in time a person of rank to Buxa, (b) to favour the Paro ponlob who was favourably inclined towards the British Indian government, and who the British found had not received his share

of even the previous year's subsidies, and (c) to suit his (Haughton's) own personal convenience as he was likely to be at Darjeeling by the time the new representative would come to receive the payment¹³. One would therefore find that in the so called neutral stand of the British in the internal feud^s of Bhutan, the over all consideration was to favour the faction which was desirable from their own point of view.

In the mean time, in March 1868, Major Murray, who had been the Commander at Buxa, informed Haughton that the road to the interior was fully opened, and in consequence trade was once more flourishing quite briskly¹⁴. The Bengal government therefore decided that it would not be judicious to withhold payment any longer if the Bhutanese representatives agreed to go to Darjeeling. When, on reaching Buxa, the Bhutanese representatives heard that they would have to go to Darjeeling in order to collect the subsidy, they tried to avoid going there, on one pretext or the other. But once they realised that the British authorities had taken a firm stand, they eventually decided to comply. Even though the Thimpu Dzongpon himself was not present at Darjeeling but only his representative, the ^Government of Bengal did not allow that to stand in the way of payment. Endorsing the proposal of the Government of India, the Secretary of State observed that the "case is one in which it is not expedient

to insist upon very strict explanations with regard to the past conduct of the authorities"¹⁵. Eventually the subsidy for the year 1868 was paid to the Bhutanese government on 15 October 1868, thus bringing to a close the conflict over the stoppage of intercourse at the Chukha bridge, and subsequent suspension of the payment ~~of revenue~~.

The Fairs And Firearms

In spite of some obstacles being raised in the path of trade by stoppage of goods at the Chukha bridge commercial transactions were not entirely brought to a close. The Bhutanese fair at Udalguri continued as before. Colonel H. Hopkinson, Agent to the Governor General, North East Frontier, visited this fair on 19 March 1868. There he met a deputation of Bhutanese, and heard a complaint that Indian ry^aots were in the habit of tapping caoutchouc from the trees in the Bhutanese area, without paying licence fee¹⁶. Caoutchouc formed quite an important commodity of export for the Bhutanese, and it was quite natural that they would wish to keep entirely for themselves the produce of the trees in their area. Hopkinson promised them redress in this matter. Dewangiri was another place where a brisk trade was carried on between the ry^aots of Assam and the hill people. The Deputy Commissioner of Assam on visiting

Lewangiri in May 1869, claimed that there were more Bhutanese squatters there than in the previous year. The number was estimated to be about 150 to 200, but of these not more than 50 were permanent squatters. Two thirds of the men were evidently traders from the interiors of Bhutan, and a brisk business seemed to be carried on between them and the petty traders from Assam. The Assamese and Cacharee traders brought up heavy loads of dried fish, rice, pan (betel leaf) and betelnut, and other articles of produce all of which commanded a ready sale among the Bhutanese. They took back in return from the Bhutanese, salt, blankets etc. All the Bhutanese appeared to be very civil, and readily conceded in giving the house tax, which the Deputy Commissioner collected from them at the rate of Rs. two per hut¹⁷. This indicated that the Bhutanese were perfectly aware that they were living on British soil and under British protection, and acknowledged their submission by paying up the tax.

Some amount of commercial activity was also going on at Buxa. When the terms of the treaty of Sinchula were being drawn up by Colonel Bruce in 1865, the proposal to hold an annual fair at Buxa at the time of making the annual payments, had been proposed by Bruce. He seemed to have been impressed by the eager desire for trading, evinced by the Bhutanese who accompanied the Bhutanese envoys to Buxa, and believed that the establishment of a large annual fair on the frontier

would be a great boon to them. This proposal by Colonel Bruce was heartily supported by the Lieutenant Governor, who promised to undertake measures to carry it out¹⁸. That Buxa had indeed become quite a prosperous mart, with many Hindus from Cooch Behar setting up shops for traffic with the Bhutanese, had been corroborated by Haughton in a letter to the Secretary to the Government of Bengal. Haughton wrote, "No doubt but for the never ending internal disputes of the Bhooteas, Buxa would become an important emporium"¹⁹. Commercial activities at Buxa, notwithstanding internal feuds continued quite briskly, the evidence of which was given by a Kyah (Marwari) merchant of Assam, Panna chund. He said that the majority of the merchants present in Buxa were the Kyah merchants. They dealt in rice, tobacco, and gun powder, and were prepared to go to Bhutan, if they managed to secure the permission of the Deb Raja. It was noticed by Panna that no taxes were levied on goods brought into Buxa from the plains below. Elephant teeth or ivory, found in the jungles by the Bhutanese, were sold by them for rupees ten a pair to the merchants at Dewangiri. The same pair would fetch these merchants rupees twenty or thirty when they again sold them in the plains. The horns of the rhinoceros were also said to be cheap in Bhutan and so was musk. These items brought by the Kyah merchants to the plains fetched double their value. Cloth was

however one of the important items which the Bhutanese took back from the plains²⁰.

A number of fairs were also being held at that time^{to} facilitate commerce between the two countries. The Ganga Shar^ad fair at Karagola Ghat, the Julpesh fair, the Gopinath, Mustanghur and Nek Mard fairs in the Dinajpur district were some of them²¹. Even though the Rangpur fair had been officially abolished way back in 1832, plans were being made in 1869 to fix up a date for holding this fair so as not to clash with another fair shortly to be held at Falakata, by the Commissioner of the Cooch Behar division for the 'purpose of interchange of commodities between the Bhutanese to the north and the people of the plains'. From the correspondence between Grazier, Officiating Magistrate of Rangpur, and the Commissioner of the Rajshahi Division, it is known that the Rangpur fair was scheduled to take place around 20 December 1869, previous to the Falakata one, so that the hill traders "find it more convenient to attend the distant fairs first where they would get better prices for their goods and to finish up at Falacotta"²². But, Haughton, Commissioner of the Cooch Behar Division, decided not to hold the two fairs at such a short interval of time, which he said would lead to unnecessary expenditure. He claimed that when he had proposed to open a fair at Falakata, he was unaware that another fair was being opened in the

adjoining district of Rangpur. According to him, it would not be wise to "invite traders to attend to Dooar Fair, at the very time the Collector of Rangpur is bidding for their custom"²³. Ultimately the Falakata fair was held a year later from the 5th to the 25th of January 1871. The existence of these fairs, and the interest taken by the authorities for effecting smooth transactions at them, show that the commercial relations between the two countries were fairly satisfactory during the period.

It is worth noting that though trade between Bhutan and India was mainly by the barter system, some sort of coinage was also in circulation in Bhutan. When the Bhutanese had invaded Cooch Behar in 1772, they had carried off the Raja's minting apparatus, and had since struck a debased coinage in their country, that represented half of the value of Cooch Behar's Narayani coins²⁴. The Tongsa Ponlob of Bhutan had in 1870 asked Colonel Haughton for two dies or iron moulds with which to strike coins. The British Indian government were in two minds, whether to supply these dies to Bhutan, which would enable them to strike a larger number of these debased coins. Ashley Eden, Secretary to the Government of Bengal, felt that since the British government were in no way concerned with the coinage of Bhutan, it would only be a neighbourly act to oblige the Bhutan government by giving them the dies²⁵. But another

group led by Haughton feared that in the course of transactions, such debased coinage would find their way into Indian territory, and would be greatly detrimental to the economy of the country. Haughton suggested that they could instead send a large number of Indian coins of various denominations so as to circulate a coinage of good value in Bhutan. It was also felt by Haughton that a wider circulation of British coinage in Bhutan, could only be to the advantage to the commerce of both the countries²⁶. In the end it was decided to adhere to the second opinion, and this point was agreed to by the Governor General in council. The annual payments to Bhutan afforded the means of pouring a good supply of coins into that country, and the Governor General felt that this circumstance might easily be made the ground of a courteous refusal to supply dies to Bhutan²⁷.

The civil war in Bhutan however was continuing as before, in which the Tongsa and the Paro Ponlob^bs were the main contenders in the power struggle. The British government for all their policy of non-interference in the affairs of Bhutan, followed the overall consideration of favouring the faction which was advantageous from their own point of view. Their inclination towards the Paro Ponlob was evident from a number of instances. Be that as it may, when the Bhutanese asked in 1869 for permission to buy arms in

India to meet their martial needs, the British firmly refused. The Subah of Buxa in a letter to the Commissioner of Cooch Behar pointed out that according to the terms of the treaty of Sinchula, India and Bhutan were bound to assist each other in times of war, and therefore he solicited the help of the British in this civil war which had broken out in the country. He also made a further alternative suggestion, saying that if it was simply impossible for the Indian government to render any assistance, they should at least issue a parwanah authorising the Bhutanese to purchase arms and ammunition anywhere within the British dominions. This claim to purchase arms in India was made, asserted the Subah of Buxa, under the article IX of the treaty which provided for Bhutanese traders to travel freely as far as Calcutta and likewise allowed Indian merchants to proceed to Bhutan, and trade freely²⁸.

The Bengal government gave a fitting reply to this demand. Haughton in a letter to the Subah of Buxa said that though the treaty did provide for free trade, British laws could not be abolished in favour of the Bhutanese. "Our laws place restrictions on dealings in warlike weapons, gun powder etc. and Bhooteas must submit to the restrictions which for the sake of peace and good order we are compelled to impose upon our own subjects. The Bhooteas are free to go to Calcutta and to trade precisely as our own subjects,

but my friend how can you suppose that this freedom to trade has anything to do with the entertainment of soldiers"²⁹.

Thus, though the British might favour a particular Bhutanese faction, they wanted to avoid direct involvement, and hence confrontation as far as possible.

Conflict Over Dewangiri

As mentioned earlier, Dewangiri was one of the places where a brisk commercial transaction was carried on between the Bhutanese of that area ^{and} with the Assamese or Cacharee traders who came there mainly during the months of December, January, February and March to exchange their wares.

Dewangiri may be described as a ridge 500 yards long and 100 yards broad and about two thousand feet above the plains. This place was approachable from the British territory by three bad and difficult passes or ravines of the Darrang, Matunga, and the Dea rivers. A description given by Major J.M. Graham, Boundary Commissioner, who visited Dewangiri on 13 January 1873, together with Lieutenant Colonel Macdonald, shows that there were about twenty three permanent houses in Dewangiri, inhabited by wealthy Bhutanese, who had no fields but depended entirely upon trade for a living.

During the winter months Dewangiri was visited by traders from Bhutan and Tibet who brought down with them lac, bees

wax, India rubber, blankets, gold, musk, oranges, tails, ponies, mules, asses, etc. which were exchanged with the Assamese ^aryots or with Marwar^L traders for hard cash, or in exchange for Assam silk, cloth, rice dried fish, betelnuts, brass plates, etc.³⁰.

It may be recalled that in the Duar war, the British succeeded in assuming control of Dewangiri by overthrowing the Bhutanese after the latter had initially succeeded in taking possession of it. The British began collecting taxes from the few squatters who lived there permanently, and as has been stated before the inhabitants too quite willingly gave up the taxes demanded of them. The Deb Raja of Bhutan, Jigme Namgyal, was not in favour of this exaction by British on the 'poor beparies' (traders) of Dewangiri. In a letter to the Commissioner of Cooch Behar, he requested him to send an order prohibiting the collection of taxes at Dewangiri, since he said it was useless to collect such trifling sum from the traders. The Deb Raja claimed that he knew of no custom whereby traders were liable to pay rent, and asserted that without free allowance to the beparies, both Indian and the Bhutanese governments would be greatly inconvenienced³¹. Haughton wrote back to say that if the settlers at Dewangiri did not engage themselves in cultivation they would not be taxed, and promised that enquiry on this point would be made. It is known from Graham's report

that the people of Dewangiri did not engage in agriculture, but notwithstanding that fact, they were still being taxed. Previously in 1872, Haughton appears to have accepted that if any tax were levied on traders residing temporarily at Dewangiri, it would immediately have to be remitted³². But taxes on the permanent residents continued.

One interesting incident was observed by Major Graham, who visited Dewangiri along with Lieutenant Colonel Macdonald on January 1873. A Bhutanese interpreter who accompanied them, reported that a Zinkaff or a subordinate official of the Tongsa Ponlob with eight followers had arrived in the village about eight days previously, and had levied tribute from each house in the village in the form of cloth valued at Rupees twenty five. He had stopped the traders from going down to the plains on the plea that the plains were unhealthy and claimed that since there were no orders from the Tongsa Ponlob to allow pillars to be erected, he could not agree to the demarcation of the boundary. He further pretended that he knew nothing of Dewangiri being made over to the British, and generally acted as if Dewangiri was very much under Bhutanese control³³.

This Zinkaff had in fact brought a Parwana with him, bearing the seal of the Tongsa Ponlob, which proclaimed him as the chief of Dewangiri. It was specified in the parwana that any one trading in Dewangiri without the permission of

the 'pachoong zincaf' would be severely punished, and that no one should be allowed to rob and extort the traders³⁴. The Zinkaff himself wrote a letter to the Boundary Commissioners stating that the Tongsa Ponlob had sent him to Dewangiri to establish the former custom of the traders, meaning thereby the trade which was carried on prior to the Duar war. He further professed satisfaction at the fact that hostilities now being terminated between the two countries, trade could be carried on as before. He requested Graham and Macdonald to send traders to Dewangiri during January, February, and March and asserted that he would place a chief at each trading Chowkey so that there would be no disturbance among the traders. As far as demarcation of boundaries were concerned, he forbade the British to build any pillars till he himself received explicit directions from the Tongsa Ponlob, and made clear his intentions of collecting revenue from the inhabitants of Dewangiri³⁵. The British officers were greatly surprised at this attitude on the part of the Zinkaff, and also at the authorities in Bhutan for that matter, and were determined to retain their suzerainty over Dewangiri at all costs.

In fact, in 1872, some proposals were mooted by Major Thomas Lamb, Deputy Commissioner of Kamrup, for the occupation of that portion of the hill country which had been declared British territory. Lamb had three suggestions for

the control of Dewangiri - firstly, permanently occupying Dewangiri by having a detachment of troops there throughout the year; Secondly, having a guard at the entrance to Dewangiri, and thirdly removing the village of Dewangiri and establishing a hat at Koomrikatta. Dewangiri was, according to Lamb, a place of strategic importance as far as the commercial aspect was concerned, and in order to facilitate Indian traders, he suggested that the village should be abolished and no one permitted to reside there or occupy the heights in that vicinity, and the Bhutanese should be made to come down to a hat in the plains preferably Koomrikatta. This place was similar in all respects to Udalguri in the adjoining district of Darrang, where also a hat was set up every year. The Bhutanese traders would require a depot, said Lamb, and this should be in such a place where the British could command without difficulty, Dewangiri being difficult to have access of. A political strategy was also implied in Lamb's suggestion when he said that Koomrikatta would be visited by a patrol, who would do their best to obtain information of what was going on in the hills beyond the British frontier³⁶.

Major Graham, on his visit to Dewangiri in January 1873, also made a suggestion in the same vein. According to him, Dewangiri being so cramped and confined from scarcity of water, and being so inaccessible, was highly unsuitable as a

location for a fair. He also suggested ^GKomrikatta as being a much more suitable place for a fair. He believed that the Bhutanese would throw all the obstacles they could, in the way of establishing a fair in the plains, and it seemed to Graham, that the only way of securing the establishment of such a fair at Koomrikatta would be to prevent Indian traders from proceeding to Dewangiri, as a result of which the Bhutanese would be forced to come to Koomrikatta³⁷. This decision of the British to altogether exterminate Dewangiri may have caused the Bhutanese Zinkaff Pachoong to act as he did.

The Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, realizing the importance of Dewangiri as a commercial depot, gave his preference to the suggestion that Dewangiri should be occupied and utilized. He had recommended that a small party of fifty troops should take up their position at Dewangiri in December 1873, and remain there till the end of March. Their presence there, the Lieutenant Governor felt, would mark the resolve of the government not to tolerate any interference by the Bhutanese on Indian soil³⁸.

In all probability the British in the end, gave up the idea of removing the fair from Dewangiri to Koomrikatta. The difficulty of access to Dewangiri was attempted to be resolved by the Public Works Department of the ^Government, of India, by granting an assignment of rupees ten thousand to the

Kamrup District Road Committee in 1873, to meet the cost of constructing a road to Dewangiri. The Road Committee was urged to lose no time in opening the line of communication, if it be only a bridle path. The ^Government of India was also asked to pass early orders for the posting of a military guard of fifty men at Dewangiri³⁹.

In December 1873, Lamb once again visited Dewangiri to make a survey of the general state of things. It seemed that the agent Pachoong or Bhasoong, as Lamb refers him, when questioned about extorting money from the villages worth about rupees three hundred and seventy four, replied that the usual payment of one piece of cloth, valued at Rs. 20 from each house had been taken according to an ancient custom together with Rs. 3 as fees. It was also stated that each householder had been given a maund of salt in exchange for the cloth taken, valued at Rs. 5. Lamb, on telling the Bhutanese Zinkaff that he could not take either money or cloth from any one at Dewangiri, except in the way of trade, received the reply that they had the Deb Raja's permission to do so. Lamb then proceeded to explain to them that such orders had no force whatsoever because Dewangiri was British and not Bhutanese territory⁴⁰.

In the end the British government decided to deduct the sum collected by the Bhutanese as revenue from the next

annual payment, and further warned them that any encroachment upon British territory would be seriously dealt with in future.

Added to the conflict over Dewangiri were the age old problems of the Bhutanese raids on Indian territory. There were complaints of atrocities being committed upon Indian traders by Bhutanese at a place called Dea Chowkey, which was a small trading mart on the Indian territory to which a number of Bhutanese traders came regularly to sell salt and other articles. It was reported that these traders had committed oppressions on the Indian merchants. The Bhutanese Government when appraised of the situation seemed genuinely sorry and hastened to make amends. It was stated that if any of the Bhutanese traders had committed any oppression, the British Government might punish them. The Bhutanese claimed that all the traders from Dea Chowk^{ey} on their way back to their homes had been stopped, and that officials had been ordered to arrest the officers. The Bhutanese at this stage professed friendship with the British as was reflected in their words, "If the ryots of the Dharm Raja oppress the ryots of the Maharanee, or if the ryots of the plains oppress the ryots of the Dharm Raja, it will be very difficult as the Maharanee and Dharm Raja are friends"⁴¹.

However, atrocities were again repeated when some Bhutaneſe viſiting Aſſam committed dacoity in the market of Subankhata in the ſame year. When the matter was brought to the knowledge of the Deb Raja he promiſed to hold an enquiry⁴² and hand over the plundered property as well as the guilty perſons to the Commiſſioner of Cooch Behar. The Bengal government however, as a penal measure, authorised the Commiſſioner of Cooch Behar to deduct one thouſand rupees from the treaty allowance. The ^Government of India alſo approved of this deciſion⁴². The Deb Raja of Bhutan had meanwhile forbidden the Bhutaneſe traders from going to Dewangiri, probably out of a fear of a recurrence of the charges of dacoity. At this, the Cooch Behar Commiſſioner expreſſed his view that 'no attempt ſhould be made to ſtop the normal current of trade'. The Deb Raja complied with the requeſt, countermanded his recent deciſion and opened the road⁴³. However, in his efforts to prevent ſuch incidents from repeating themſelves the ^{Deb} Raja placed two of his ſubordinate officials or Zinkaffs on the borders of Dewangiri to keep watch upon the Bhutaneſe traders who would cross the border and enter Kamrup. This attitude on the part of the Deb Raja was helpful, and the ^Government of India expected the trade between Bhutan and India to increaſe.

The Revival of Trade

But, in all probability, trade between India and Bhutan did not show a marked improvement in the years immediately following the Duar War. The Bengal Administration Report for the year 1875-76 says that the traffic from Bhutan was registered at Labha in the Darjeeling district, and was very insignificant, not exceeding five or six thousand rupees both ways⁴⁴. It improved to some extent the next year as the Administration Report for the year 1876-77 showed. The imports into Bengal from Bhutan was more than the exports from Bengal into Bhutan, the former amounting to Rs. 12,708 as compared with Rs. 7,590 of the exports. It may bear repetition that this trade was entirely by land and was carried on by carts and pack bullocks and occasionally by coolies⁴⁵. The goods transported between the two countries began to be officially registered at the frontier posts, together with their respective volumes and values during the last quarter of the 19th century. Barring the occasional mistakes of the Mohurirs at the various frontier posts, these records may be accepted as being generally correct, giving a reasonably fair idea of the trade carried on between the two countries. The Table 4 shows the extent of and the fluctuations in trade during the seven years from 1878-79 to 1884-85.

Table 4
 Volumes of Indo-Bhutan Trade Through the Bengal Frontier,
 1878-79 to 1884-85
 (in Rs.)

Year	Imports from Bhutan	Exports to Bhutan	Total
1878-79	84,901	88,108	1,73,009
1879-80	3,85,406	2,89,588	6,74,994
1880-81	2,43,922	1,96,947	4,23,569
1881-82	1,25,448	1,05,168	2,28,216
1882-83	1,11,442	86,693	1,98,135
1883-84	96,350	1,23,000	2,19,350
1884-85	1,34,189	1,43,308	2,77,497

Source : Reports on the External Trade of Bengal with Nepal Tibet, Sikkim and Bhutan for the official years ending 1878-79 - 1884-85, Govt. of Bengal.

The frontier stations at which this trade was recorded were Ambari Falakata, Buxa, and Hantuparah all in the Jalpaiguri District. The first two stations were kept open for five months and the third station for ten months of the year. The Reports from which the above data have been collected claim that the figures for the years 1880-81 and 1881-82 could not be acceptable to the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal. Under his order enquiries were made by the Deputy Commissioner of Jalpaiguri, which showed some fabrications in the figures for the shell lac trade since 1878-79.

These fabrications were for the most part done by the Mohurirs at Buxa and Ambari stations. But from September, 1881, it was stated that an intelligent and careful Mohurir had been appointed replacing the others⁴⁶.

Comparing the figures for 1882-83 with that of the next year, it will be found that the gross value of trade for 1883-84 was 10.70% in excess of the previous year's figures. The value of imports, however, decreased by 13.54%, while that of exports increased by 41.88%. As regards the imports, the decrease was mainly due to a large falling off in the horse trade. The trade in madder ~~or manjit~~ was exceedingly active, and so was the trade in vegetables, fruits and nuts. On the other hand ghee, and foreign tea, registered a decrease. Wax was another item which showed a slump; only 21 maunds being registered at Ambari in 1883-84, against 137 maunds in the previous year. Manufactured woollen goods, chiefly blankets, showed an advance, as did musk and yak tails. This was as far as the imports into India were concerned. The total value of exports to Bhutan in 1883-84 went up from 86,693 of the previous year to 1,23,000. This increase was mainly due to European piece goods, rice, manufactured silk goods, betel nuts and tobacco, all of which were sold at higher rates, than what they fetched the previous year. Trifling decreases were however, also noticed in the quantity of metals exported, and in the salt trade⁴⁷.

For the year 1884-85, the registering stations at Ambari and Hantuparah were kept closed for seven months of the year from April to October, and Buxa was kept closed for two months namely July and August. From the figures available it appeared that the total bulk of trade during 1884-85 increased some what to 2,77,497 from 2,19,350 of the previous year, or by 26.51%. The import trade however, increased considerably by 39.27% in comparison with the previous year, while the export trade showed an advance of 16.51%. The chief items of increase in the import trade were madder or manjeet, fresh fruits and vegetables, musk, foreign tea, and manufactured woollen piece goods, Madder or Manjeet rose from 511 maunds in the previous year to 1,099 maund in 1884-85. Fresh fruits and vegetables showed an increase of 945 maunds and the value of musk rose from Rs. 5913 in 1883-84 to Rs. 8344 in 1884-85. The trade in foreign tea amounted to 35 maunds against 12 maunds in the ^eproceeding year, but decreases were also noticed in certain items, particularly the number of horses, which showed a further falling off from 498 the previous year to 247. The trade in ghee was also fast declining and so was wax. However, on the whole the value of imports from Bhutan increased considerably as compared with the previous year.

As regards the export trade for 1884-85, the greatest improvement was under indigo, ^Rrice, husked as well as

unhusked, sugar and European manufactured woollen goods. The exports of indigo rose from 2 maunds in 1883-84 to 8 maunds the next year. The export of rice went up by 24.24% while that of paddy by 34.11%. The trade in undrained sugar increased by 665 maunds or 50.19% and that of manufactured woollen goods showed an advance of Rs. 1,366 or 37.09%. Certain items also showed a falling off, of which mention can be made of iron, betelnuts and a trifling decline in tobacco. It is however, worth mentioning that no salt was exported to Bhutan during 1884-85⁴⁸.

This was as far as the Bhutanese trade with Bengal was concerned. Some statistics however are also available of the Bhutanese trade carried on with Assam during 1877 only. The trade between Bhutan and Assam was registered by the frontier mouzahdars at the following stations - Ripu, Guma, Chirang, Sidli and Bijni in Goalpara, Darrang in Kamrup (near to Dewangiri), and Gohpur, Helem, Daimara, Balipara, Udalguri, and Khagrapara in Darrang. During the cold weather months, it was reported, numerous Bhutanese merchants came down through the several routes or duars to attend the fairs held at Dhubri, Datma and Udalguri. For eight months of the year, there was an entire cessation of trade with Bhutan, as the Bhutanese of the interior did not dare to venture into the terai or even into the lower range of their hills during the hot weather months. This trade, it was believed, was

essentially a free one, and no duties were levied on merchants trading in Bhutan, or in the Naga and Mishmi Hills⁴⁹.

The trade with Bhutan was believed to be much larger than, what the returns show. But these figures help to form a general idea of the volume of trade carried on between Assam and Bhutan. For the year 1877, the exports from Assam into Bhutan was estimated at Rs. 1,98,423, while the imports into Assam from Bhutan was value^d at Rs. 91,546. The increase of exports over imports was attributed to the large amount of silk, valued at Rs. 1,45,943, which was reported to have been taken from the Kamrup district into Bhutan. However, the Lieutenant Governor found it difficult to accept that such huge quantities of silk had been brought into Bhutan, especially when the manufacture of silk had been for several years on the decrease. Moreover no large fairs were held in the Kamrup district to form a nucleus for such extensive transactions. In Darrang where two fairs frequented by the Bhutanese were held in that year, the amount of silk exported was trifling. It may thus again be concluded that as in the case of the Mohurirs of the Bengal frontier, the Mouzahdars of the Assam frontiers too had supplemented facts largely from their imagination⁵⁰.

Be that as it may, besides silk, the other items exported from Assam into Bhutan included betelnuts, paddy, rice, and European cotton piece goods, the approximate values of which goods were as given in Table 5.

Table 5
Some Items of Bhutanese Imports and Exports Through Assam,
1877

		(in Rs.)	
Goods exported to Bhutan	Value	Goods imported from Bhutan	Value
Silk Cloth	1,50,315	Rubber	19,230
Betel Nuts	1,120	Salt	22,758
Paddy	17,184	Ponies	18,640
Rice	14,512	Blankets	18,215
European piece-goods	4,566	Wax	n.a.

Source : To Secretary to the Government of India, Revenue, Agricultural and Commerce Dept., from SOB Redsdale Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam, dated Shillong, 19 January 1878, Foreign, Political A, June 1878. NAI.

From these statistics, some idea can be formed of the value of the trade carried on between Assam and Bhutan. Though it is true that the statistics for only one year are available, nonetheless, these figures may be taken to serve as an average index of Assam-Bhutan trade during this period.

Development of Bhutan As An Entrepot

The hope that Bhutan might play an important part, though a secondary one, in opening and improving Anglo-Tibetan trade was still entertained by the British administrators.

The possibility of also finding out a direct route between Assam and Tibet was discussed from time to time. An alternative route was also suggested by some, which argued in favour of using the Brahmaputra valley as the great high road to Tibet. However, in spite of efforts to open up communication with Tibet through Assam, the almost impenetrable Assam Himalayas, inhabited by the war-like tribes did not offer an easy route for commerce. There was never a route through it comparable with that through Nepal or Sikkim or Bhutan, and it possessed no hill stations like Darjeeling to focus British attention on its potentialities⁵¹.

The British statesman, on their part, believed that the Lhasa authorities were not averse to the expansion of their trade with India, but that it was the jealousy of the Chinese which was the sole obstacle to British commercial interests in that country. It might be recalled that Chinese jealousy had prevailed way back in 1774 and 1783, when the first British commercial missions were sent. It was with a view to remove these suspicions that the British authorities decided to take up the matter with the authorities in Peking itself. On 24 April 1873 the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce of England, submitted to the Secretary of State for India, concrete proposals of British trade with Tibet and Central Asia. The society

pleaded for (a) a better access to Tibet from the side of Sikkim, (b) completion of the Calcutta-Darjeeling railway, (c) removal of any restrictions upon the trade with Tibet through Bhutan from Bengal and Assam, (d) permission of the Peking authorities for unrestricted trade along the whole frontier of Tibet, and (e) establishment of consular agencies at Lhasa. On 4 June 1873, the Duke of Argyll sent these proposals to the then Viceroy of India, Lord Northbrooke⁵².

Since 1871-72, contemplations were afoot regarding the construction of a railway tract connecting the plains with the hilly regions, from the commercial point of view. There was a proposal 'to lay a line along the Caragola and Darjeeling road with a branch cut to the east from Titalya or thereabouts, through the Dooars or Cooch Behar towards Assam'. It was hoped that though the trade with Bhutan was 'very trifling' owing to the exclusiveness of the people, it would no doubt increase very considerably if a railway came into that part of the country. It was also further hoped that this railway would also lead to the opening up of trade with central Asia eventually⁵³. Even though the railway line was not immediately laid, the idea of constructing such a line in order to facilitate trade in this region had come to stay.

It was also considered that a direct route to Tibet from Darjeeling through Sikkim would be quite useful. It was with the construction of this road in view that J.W. Edgar, Deputy Commissioner of the Darjeeling district, visited Sikkim, and as a result of his tour submitted to the government a detailed report "regarding the actual extent, condition and prospects of trade with Tibet, the best line for the construction of road over the passes and on other matters which would enable government to take action upon the important question of the resumption of commercial intercourse between India and the countries beyond its northern frontier"⁵⁴. Attempts were also made to collect all the information possible as to the goods which were most in demand in Tibet, to see that restrictions on trans-himalayan trade was removed, and to encourage trade by the establishment of fairs. The frontier officials were also told that any opening for friendly relations should be made use of and should at once be reported to the government⁵⁵.

There was also talk of introducing Darjeeling tea into Tibet, and European planters were full of confidence that they could 'supplant the China article both in quality and price'. In 1874, the Commissioner of Cooch Behar observed, "our relations with Central Asia via Phari are beginning to take shape and must before long under the influence of railways and trade, become of great practical value. Bhutan

must have a part in these relations, though a subordinate one"⁵⁶. It was in pursuance of the above mentioned policies that the British, while maintaining a close watch over Bhutan, left her autonomy unimpaired, and adopted a conciliatory policy. The British were also keen that Indian trade with Bhutan should be flowing freely at this stage in order to unlock the road to Tibet and Central Asia.

The policy of conciliation adopted towards Bhutan was highlighted when, in 1874, the Bhutanese envoy, on coming down to collect the treaty money, made a representation to the effect that a drought was on in Bhutan at that time, and pleaded that the exportation of rice might not be checked. He was assured that the British government did not wish to put any restrictions on the grain trade, and that the rice would be exported as usual to Bhutan. Presents were exchanged at the meeting, an indication that harmonious relations existed. The presents delivered to the envoy consisted of forty two yards of red broad cloth, thirty six bottles of country spirits, and some betel nuts, etc. The presents received from the envoy consisted of some baskets of fruits and vegetables, four silk scarves, five pieces of mekli cloth and a blanket⁵⁷.

It was also further decided that a Bhutanese should be sent to reside in the British territory as an agent. The

British government promised that the agent would be given fifty rupees per mensem as a sumptuary allowance, and eight hundred rupees was to be expended in building a house for him. The Deb Raja, Jigme Namgyal, appointed one Fentook as their agent, who was colonel Haughton's interpreter, being unable to depute any of their own subjects owing to their ignorance of any language but their own⁵⁸. The British agreed to this appointment mainly because they were anxious to preserve the most friendly intercourse with Bhutan. It was not their custom to maintain agents of foreign countries in India, and in allowing Fentook to act as Bhutanese agent they were departing from their custom⁵⁹. All this was being done to placate the Bhutanese, who the British hoped would help them in keeping open the commerce not only with their own country, but also with Tibet and further north.

But, the British policy of opening up of a line of communication for the purposes of trade and commerce with Tibet, and also perhaps with China, did not meet with much success at least in the last decades of the nineteenth century. After repeated proposals were put forward demanding that the Chinese government should be approached through the British Legation at Peking to grant an order of admission to Tibet, the Chefoo Convention was held on 13 September 1876. This convention agreed to provide facilities to the British for explorations in Tibet. The Tibetan government,

however, viewed the outcome with suspicion, and ultimately the Chefoo Convention ended in a failure.

It cannot be doubted that internal dissension among the Bhutanese chiefs was also responsible for frustrating the British expectations. The efforts of the British to maintain personal contacts with the Deb Raja often failed due to frequent contests for power amongst the Ponlops in Bhutan, and quick successions to the post of the Deb Raja. A line of thinking was gradually emerging that a strong and centralised Bhutan alone would serve the material gains of the British in the Himalayan territories⁶⁰.

Favouring the Strong to Devour the Weak

The rivalry for power, and the intrigues of various parties served to vitiate the atmosphere of the Bhutanese courts, and were not at all conducive for maintaining cordial relations with India. Even though the envoy who had come to collect the compensation money in 1874, had declared that the internal condition of the country was perfectly tranquil, the fact was that it was not so. The then Deb Raja of Bhutan, Jigme Namgyal, who had held the post from 1870 onwards, had just resigned in favour of his brother Kyitsalpa Dorji Namgyal who continued as the Deb Raja till 1879. In 1876, Kyitsalpa completed the defeat of his

remaining rival Tsewang Norbu, who was then the Paro Ponlob. The Paro Ponlob together with the Punakha Dzungpon escaped to Kalimpong in India and sought asylum there. The British also gave them shelter and refused to hand them over to the Bhutanese⁶¹. In spite of their professed neutrality, they were always slightly inclined towards the Paro Ponlob, as stated earlier.

Though partial the British might be to one particular section of the Bhutanese contenders for power, they did not embroil themselves directly by supplying arms and ammunition. An appeal was again made in 1877 to this effect by the envoy who came down to collect the annual subsidy. He arrived on 10 January 1877, and asked G. Dalton, Deputy Commissioner of Cooch Behar, the permission to purchase or to obtain on loan about fifteen or sixteen rifles or muskets. Dalton replied that though the British rules regarding the possession of fire-arms and especially their export were very strict, there might be no objection to selling the envoy about ten or twelve guns⁶². The Commissioner of the Rajshahi Division when informed of this, felt that it would be better if instead of selling the muskets they could be made over as presents to the envoy⁶³. The Bengal government, however, when apprised of the situation, favoured the policy of non-intervention as taken on previous occasions. The Under Secretary to the Government of Bengal

ordered the Commissioner of the Rajshahi and Cooch Behar Divisions to desist from selling the muskets to the Bhutanese, let alone presenting them⁶⁴.

The civil war in Bhutan continued unabated, and again an officer of the insurgent party in Bhutan arrived in 1877 itself with a letter addressed to the Lieutenant Governor in Bengal, and with similar letter to H. Ulick Browne, Commissioner of the Cooch Behar and Rajshahi Division. The object of the letter was to obtain the intervention of the Government of Bengal in the conflict between the Punakha Dzongpon and Jigme Namgyal (the ex Deb Raja who ruled from 1870-74), who even though had retired in favour of his brother Kyitsalpa, was the all powerful head of the state, the authority of Kyitsalpa not being considered of any importance. Upon the receipt of this letter the Government of India reiterated its stand of strict non-interference in the internal affairs of the country, though willing to continue its friendly relations⁶⁵.

In 1878, during the reign of Kyitsalpa, another representation was made to the British government signed by seven insurgent parties of Bhutan. These seven insurgents were - the Regent who ruled between the death of one Dharma Raja and another, the Punakha Dzongpon, the Paro Ponlob, the Wangdiphodrang Dzongpon, the Daka Ponlob, a superceded Paro Ponlob, and the Gelchen. They informed the Government of

India that they were very much interested in the proposal made by the British for the construction of a road right up to Tibet through Bhutan. Further they assured that they would be willing to place as many as two thousand to three thousand labourers at the disposal of the British government for the purpose⁶⁶. It was in 1875 that the then Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, Sir Richard Temple, had proposed to the Deb Raja, Kyitsalpa Dorji Namgyal, that a road be made through Bhutan. Kyitsalpa had evaded the matter, and had informed his predecessor and patron, Jigme Namgyal, who in turn wrote to Tibet stating what had happened. One Chinese and one Tibetan official were immediately said to have arrived in Bhutan and after a meeting with them it was decided by the Deb Raja to oppose the construction of the road by all possible means aided in every way by the Chinese and the Tibetan officials⁶⁷.

Be that as it may, this proposal for the construction of the road was ~~per~~^eceived with enthusiasm by the above mentioned seven insurgents in Bhutan, who expressed their desire to help the British in the construction of the road whenever necessary. The Commissioner of the Rajshahi and Cooch Behar Divisions thought that an attempt could be made to facilitate trade with Bhutan and Tibet by letting the Deb Raja know that his officials had expressed their eagerness to help in the building of the road. The British,

however, did not entertain very high hopes on the prospects of building the road, being sure that the Deb Raja, after consultation with the Chinese and the Tibetan officials as on the previous occasion, would evade the issue. The main reason for the refusal of the Tibetan and Chinese officers, concluded the Commissioner of the Cooch Behar and Rajshahi Division, was the lurking fear that the ultimate objective of the British would be to occupy both the countries⁶⁸. In the end, therefore, the British government did not undertake the construction of the road, in order to avoid antagonising the authorities of both Bhutan and Tibet.

In the frequent changes that were taking place during this period in Bhutan for the seat of the Deb Raja, Kyitsalpa (1874-79) was succeeded by Chhoeqyal Zongpo (1879-82) who in turn was succeeded by Lama Tshewang (1882-84). It was in all probability this Deb Raja, Lama Tshewang, who had asked the Commissioner of Cooch Behar and Rajshahi Division, in 1883, that a telescope may be given to him, the price of which he promised to send over⁶⁹. The Bengal government conceded the grant of a telescope to him, indicating their friendly attitude to the new Raja, and their acceptance of him as the new head of the state.

Meanwhile, there emerged a personality on the scene of Bhutan, who would ultimately change the destiny of that

country. He was Ugyen Wangchuk, son of the erstwhile Deb Raja of Bhutan, Jigme Namgyal, who as already mentioned, was the Deb from 1870 to 1874. It may also be remembered that Jigme's brother, Kyitsalpa, had ruled from 1874 to 1879. In 1881, Ugyen Wangchuk, the son, became the Paro Ponlob, and in 1884, he took over as the Tongsa Ponlob^b, handing over the charges of Paro to one of his own relations. Ugyen Wangchuk immediately set himself the task of ^{ho} ~~sp~~lating one of his own nominees to the post of the all important Deb Raja, a post held for long by his father, and subsequently his uncle. Consequently, the civil war again broke out in Bhutan in 1885, in which the Thimphu and the Punakha Dzonqpons, named Alu Dorji and Phuntshok Dorji respectively, opposed the Tongsa Ponlob on the question of the election of the Deb Raja. Ugyen Wangchuk, together with the Paro Ponlob who was his relation planned to depose the Deb Raja, Gawa Zangpo, who had succeeded Lama Tshewang in 1884. The outcome of this dispute was that a battle was ^o ~~f~~aught in Changlimithang in Thimphu which is the present halipad. Gawa Zangpo once again asked for arms and ammunition from the British including 200 muzzle loading rifles and 400 rounds of ammunition for each rifle. In reply the Indian government once again reiterated its policy of non-intervention and, though professing its desire that peace be maintained in Bhutan, sent a civil refusal to the request made by the Raja⁷⁰. The

out come of this battle at Changlimithang was that Phuntshok Dorji was killed, and Alu Dorji ran away to Tibet where he sought the help of the Dalai Lama, which was refused apparently on the advice of the British⁷¹. This left the Deb Raja absolutely defenseless, and Ugyen Wangchuk succeeded in getting his nominee, Pam Sangye Dorji, appointed as the Deb Raja, and himself emerged as the virtual ruler of Bhutan.

Thus began a new era for Bhutan. The internal disputes did not end all at once but started dimishing gradually. The refusal of the British to help the erstwhile Deb Raja Gawa Zangpo, had evidently earned the good will of Ugyen Wangchuk. The British government in India too, on its part were very happy at the emergence of a strong centralised power in Bhutan. They still firmly believed that a strong and stable political authority in Bhutan would help them in furthering their commercial ambitions not only in Bhutan but also in Tibet and Central Asia.

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CHAPTER VII

The Fulfilment of Commercial Diplomacy, 1885-1907

Ugyen Wangchuk, unlike his father Jigme Singye, was keen to develop his country's relations with the British along with strengthening his position within the country itself. As a result of the diplomatic overtures of Ugyen Wangchuk the relations with India improved. British India, on her part, still hoped to control the commercial strings of Tibet, and looked towards Bhutan as an useful ally in the fulfilment of this dream. The support of the Bhutanese was indeed essential for the British to reach a commercial agreement with Tibet, since the Tibetans were very much opposed to British commercial ventures into their country.

Ugyen Wangchuk became the defacto ruler, and realised even during the tenure of his Tongsa Ponlobship that Bhutan's future lay in stabilising her internal situation. In order to do this, he felt that the central government must be strengthened. He also concluded that, to establish supreme authority within his country, he must have a close association with his neighbours. Though both China and Tibet were interested in maintaining an intimate relation with Bhutan, Ugyen Wangchuk realised that none of them could stand up to British India, and hence his decision to lend support to the British, as against the Tibetans and the Chinese.

Tibetan Hostility Towards British Commercial Expansion

The Chinese officials were always anxious to exercise any kind of control over the Himalayan region, and therefore they were on the lookout for any incident that would provide them with a pretext for intervention. One opportunity had presented itself in 1885 when Gawa Zangpo, the Deb Raja who had been deposed by Ugyen Wangchuk, appealed to the Chinese and Tibetan officials against the injustice done to him. The Tibetan and Chinese officials responded to his appeal and a Chinese Phopen (a Commissioner) and a Tibetan Saphe (a Governor) arrived at Phari in connection with this matter. The Maharaja of Sikkim was also present there, and it was

decided to stop the Tibetan trade with India till the Bhutanese matters were settled. The traders were not to be harmed in any way and were told that they would be allowed to proceed once again as soon as matters with Bhutan were satisfactorily solved¹. However, the situation in Bhutan did not change, Gawa Zangpo was not reinstated, and Ugyen Wangchuk decided not to comply with the desires of his adversaries. Though relations between India and Tibet were not improved to any extent by this incident, nevertheless the British became more sure of Bhutanese inclination towards them. They felt that they could rely on Bhutanese co-operation in the execution of their policy towards Tibet and China.

Colman Macaulay, Financial Secretary to the Government of Bengal, greatly elated by the prospect of a revival of the Tibetan policy of Warren Hastings, suggested the sending of a mission to Tibet. Under the articles of the Chefoo Convention (1876), the British had previously obtained a promise^e of Manchu protection for an exploratory British mission to Tibet. Not to be undone by the indifferent attitude of the Tibetans, once again, the Government of Bengal initiated correspondence with the Panchenⁿ Lama to seek his approval for the same. But the Tibetans appeared to be opposed to the despatch of this mission, even though Macaulay had meanwhile obtained permission from Peking under the

provisions of the Chefoo Convention. Lord Dufferin, the Viceroy, was not very keen about the despatch of a British mission to Lhasa because of its probable uncertain consequences. But, Macaulay succeeded in impressing Lord Randolph Churchill, Secretary to State, with the advantage of such a mission, and it was agreed that a mission should go under the leadership of Macaulay. In early 1886 the mission was ready to proceed, and Macaulay said that he planned to meet the Tibetan, Sikkimese and the Bhutanese authorities at Kophu, a place on the Sikkim side of the ^{La} Jelep~~fa~~ close to the trijunction of Bhutan, Sikkim and Tibet, and to make an understanding with them to secure the peace and tranquility of the region. He pointed out that there was a provision in the Treaty of Sinchula which enabled the British to put an end to a state of affairs which hampered commerce. Macaulay proposed that the ^{G₁} government of India should pay the annual subsidy to the ^{G₁} government of Bhutan not at Buxa but at Kophu, so that the Bhutanese authorities might be induced to maintain peace and security in that region during his visit². But when all arrangements were nearly complete, the Macaulay mission itself was abandoned due to 'international considerations'. In 1885, the British had declared war against Upper Burma and annexed it. Since the Manchus had acquiesced ^{to} in the annexation, the ^{G₁} government of India did not consider it advisable to carry

on any programme that might in the end hurt their susceptibilities, and make them apprehensive of the British policy of expansion.

Whatever be the real reason behind the calling off of the Macaulay mission, one of its effects was that the policy of enlisting Bhutanese cooperation in promoting commerce fell to the ground. Further, the Tibetans apparently took the withdrawal of the British mission as a sign of British and Manchu weakness. In a rare display of 'unprovoked aggression' they crossed Jelp La, the pass from Chumbi into Sikkim, and occupied Lingtu and even threatened that Darjeeling would soon come under their possession. The British government professing its policy of forbearance, requested the Chinese to ask the Tibetans to withdraw. When this produced no effect arms were taken up and, in March 1888, the British attacked and drove the Tibetans out of Lingtu³. The Chinese on their own carried on further negotiations with India, and on 7 March 1890 an Anglo-Chinese Convention was signed at Calcutta to define the status of Sikkim, and provide for trade between India and Tibet. But that was only the first stage. Within another three years, ²regulations concerning trade, communication, and pasturage were signed at Darjeeling on 5 December 1893, whereby the British and Manchu governments agreed to open a trade mart at Yatung on the Tibetan side of the frontier. They also

agreed to post British and Chinese agents there to supervise trade. The Tibetans were ^{Party} ~~partly~~ to neither agreements, and resented the interference into their internal affairs.

This attitude on the part of the Tibetans, and the professed inability of the Chinese to control them, was very much against the principle of the Chefoo Convention which had been concluded in 1876 according to which the Chinese had agreed to provide facilities for, and protect a British mission of exploration across Tibet from India to China or in the reverse direction. In 1890, another step was taken towards the ultimate objective of regularising commercial intercourse with Tibet, and finally, a set of Tibetan Trade Regulations were signed in 1893. The principal aim of the British regarding these trade regulations was to get some mart recognized to which the British Indian merchants could proceed to meet their Tibetan counterparts. There was no attempt made to persuade Tibetans to allow British traders on their territory, as the British knew the futility of such a suggestion. They merely sought to have one single place recognized where Indian and Tibetan traders could meet to do business with each other. The site suggested by the British as a trading mart was Phari at the head of the Chumbi valley, but eventually, after prolonged discussion, Yatung, at the extreme southern end of the Chumbi Valley, was agreed upon⁴.

Though the British felt that Yatung was not a suitable place to offer much attraction for traders, they accepted Yatung as the only alternative to avoid the breakdown of the negotiations. Having made this concession and having refrained from pressing for permission to allow British subjects to travel beyond this, or to buy land and build houses there, the British hoped that the Chinese would meet their wishes regarding the unrestricted admission of Indian tea into Tibet. The pressure from the Darjeeling tea planters had mounted with the years, and tea being a commodity suited for transit across mountains, it seemed natural and reasonable to the Bengal government that it should press for its admission ⁱⁿ to Tibet. The Chinese, however, understandably on their part was unrelenting in giving such a concession to the Indian tea planters⁵.

On 5 December 1893, the Trade Regulations were signed at Darjeeling. The trade mart at Yatung was to 'be open for all British subjects for purposes of trade from the first day of May, 1894', and the government were to be 'freed to send officers to reside at Yatung to watch the conditions of British trade'. The British subjects were not at liberty to buy land and build houses for themselves but were to be free 'to rent houses and godowns (stores) for their own accommodation and for the storage of their goods' and 'to sell their goods to whomsoever they please, to purchase

native commodities in kind or in money, to hire transport of any kind, and, in general, to conduct their business without any vexatious restrictions". Goods other than arms, liquors and others specified were to be 'exempt from duty for a period of five years', but after that, if found desirable a tariff might be 'mutually agreed upon and enforced'⁶.

Claude White, the Political Officer in Sikkim, was sent in 1894 to visit Yatung to attend the opening of the mart, and to report on the general situation as regards trade. White gave a very dismal picture of the trading activities at Yatung. The place itself, reported White, had been 'exceedingly badly chosen'. He also condemned the condition of the shops or stores, which he said while being suitable as native shops, were quite inadequate for the storage of goods or for the use of European merchants. Above all, the free trade clauses of the treaty, reported White, were not being carried out, since the Tibetans were charging a tax of ten percent on all goods passing through Phari. The Tibetans were being discourteous and obstructive, and were claiming that this Trade Regulation had been signed by the Chinese and the British, and that they had nothing to do with it⁷. Thus even with the signing of trade regulations with Tibet, no substantial increase in the volume of trade was noticed. The officiating Chief Secretary to the govern-^Gment of Bengal in a report about relations with Bhutan and

Sikkim for the year 1895-96 to the Secretary to the ^Government of India, concluded that the results of the convention with China and the trade regulations had so far been entirely disappointing. He further said that it would be impossible ^{to} ~~for~~ foresee when the obstructive attitude of the Tibetans would give place to cordial cooperation with the British authorities⁸. It was claimed that the Tibetans had prevented Yatung from becoming a real trade mart and absolutely no business was ^{being} transacted there. It seemed therefore, that the signing of trade conventions, amounted to wasted labour, since no Tibetan was a party to the agreement, and it seemed as if the farce of the Chefoo was being re-enacted on a larger scale.

Unsteady Progress in Bhutanese Trade

Meanwhile, with no headway being made in commercial ties with Tibet, the Bhutan authorities too on their part put obstacles in the way of a recommencement of free trade with India. This was a blatant violation of the treaty of Sinchula, which had been a dead letter so far as the goods transported from India into Bhutan were concerned. The traders from India were not usually allowed to enter Bhutan. It was evident that suspicion of foreigners still continued. This fact together with the unwillingness of the Bhutanese Ponlobs to relinquish

the monopoly of Bhutan's foreign trade as also the internal disturbances in Bhutan were responsible for the slow recovery in trade. In his Administration Report for 1885-1886, the Deputy Commissioner of Jalpaiguri made the following remarks on the subject - "It may be noted that the trade with Bhutan has suffered owing to the late commotions in that state but with the establishment of a settled and peaceful government a revival of trade may be hoped for"⁹.

Table 6

Volume of Indo-Bhutan Trade Through the Bengal Frontier :
1885-86 to 1889-90

(in Rs.)

Year	Imports from Bhutan	Exports to Bhutan	Total
1885-86	99,164	1,00,787	1,99,951
1886-87	77,072	1,54,725	2,31,797
1887-88	1,28,913	1,80,677	3,09,590
1888-89	1,48,708	1,53,044	3,01,752
1889-90	1,85,441	1,91,939	3,77,380

Source : Reports on the External Trade of Bengal with Nepal Tibet Sikkim and Bhutan for the official years 1885-86 - 1889-90.

It is true that soon after Ugyen Wangchuk established himself at the helm of affairs, stability returned considerably, one effect of which was indicated in the external trade. Though the fluctuations shown in Table 6

are not negligible, ^{nevertheless} the general trend of the traffic is on ~~the traffic is on~~ the increase. Be that as it may, the principle of free trade was not being adhered to by the Bhutanese, and whatever commercial transactions at the fairs and markets were being held were on the Indian side of the border. However, the ^Government of India did not, at that stage, insist on the fulfilment of this article of the treaty. The conciliatory policy of the British paid them rich dividends in the shape of Bhutanese friendship. In 1888 when the conflict took place between the British and the Tibetan governments, the Bhutanese authorities used the occasion to show how greatly they valued British partnership. The Tibetans had solicited Bhutanese help, but they were refused. In fact, a person named Shipanjoo, father of Ugyen Kazi, who was the Trade Agent of Bhutan in Kalimpong, actually warned the Tibetans of the consequences if they did not come to terms with the British¹⁰. This attitude on the part of the Bhutanese was an important step towards a more intimate connection between the two countries. In 1889, Ugyen Wangchuk's nominee Sangay Dorji resigned in his mentor's favour. With the emergence of Ugyen Wangchuk as the all powerful figure in Bhutan an even closer contact was established between him and the British. The Deputy Commissioner of Jalpaiguri in a report to the Commissioner of the Rajshahi Division claimed that relations with Bhutan continued on a most satisfactory footing throughout the year 1889. A minor

conflict however arose over border claims. A Bhutanese official visiting the Hope Tea Estate in February 1889, which lay on the border between Bhutan and the western Duars, being much struck with the tea cultivation and the prosperous look of the tea estate, wrote to the Deputy Commissioner of Darjeeling laying claim to the land as being a portion of Bhutan territory¹¹. It may be presumed that the Bhutanese were lured by the prospect of acquiring a valuable item of export like tea, which could bring them rich dividends. However, the inspection of the boundary pillars indicated that the land lay and had always been within the British territory. The British ultimately succeeded in assuring the Bhutan government that such was the case. Apart from this there was no other territorial disputes, and relations with the Bhutan government were on a fairly satisfactory and friendly footing.

In spite of Ugyen Wangchuk professing great friendship with the British, the British themselves were sometimes a little wary of Bhutanese attitude. When permission was refused to Dr. Ehlers, a well known German explorer, to enter Bhutan in 1890, W.J. Cunningham, officiating Secretary to the ^Government of India, described the Bhutanese as 'uncivilised'. According to him, a ^Bmore than usually unsettled state of affairs^J existed in Bhutan at that time, and that the ^Government of India could not undertake to

guarantee the safety of an European travelling in the interior of that country¹². It may be noted that the British had not sent any other mission since the disastrous experiences of Ashley Eden way back in 1864. They were not sure of Bhutanese attitude to an European visiting their country, even twenty five years after the treaty of Sinchula had been signed by both the governments.

Though mutual trust and confidence between the two countries were lacking, apparently however the relations were satisfactory. The payment of subsidy for the year 1890 was executed smoothly. During that year, a fairly large settlement of Bhutanese developed at Chunabhati near to Buxa. Most of these Bhutanese were inhabitants of the old Bhutia Busti which lay just outside the cantonment of Buxa. Their presence in Buxa was said to be useful since these Bhutanese indulged in certain amount of commercial activity and carried on trade with the interior of Bhutan. During the course of the year the Bhutanese traders also attended in a large number ^{of} fairs and markets held in British territories. The _A items they brought down to be exchanged with the products of the plains included ponies, dogs, blankets, musk, skins, Bhutanese knives, etc.¹³.

But, the trade between Bhutan and India began to decline after 1889-90, and this declining trend continued right upto 1897-98, as may be seen from Table 7.

Table 7

Volume of Indo-Bhutan Trade Through The Bengal Frontier :
1889-90 to 1897-98

Year	Imports from Bhutan (in Rs.)	Exports to Bhutan (in Rs.)	Total (in Rs.)
1889-90	1,85,441	1,91,939	3,77,380
1890-91	1,82,659	1,84,612	3,67,271
1891-92	1,84,892	1,34,848	3,19,740
1892-93	1,66,194	1,26,471	2,92,665
1893-94	1,35,735	1,43,241	2,78,976
1894-95	1,50,614	1,38,963	2,89,577
1895-96	1,29,856	1,36,077	2,65,933
1896-97	1,19,713	1,44,471	2,64,184
1897-98	1,08,194	1,37,460	2,45,654

Source : Reports on the External Trade of Bengal with Nepal, Tibet, Sikkim and Bhutan for the years 1889-90 - 1897-98.

In 1890-91, the total value of goods exported to and from Bhutan amounted to Rs. 3,67,271, against Rs. 3,77,380 of the previous year. Decrease was noticed both in the value of the imports from Bhutan as well as in the goods exported to Bhutan. Despite this falling off which was in any case not of very serious proportions, the commercial zeal of the traders were not dampened in any way. This ^{was} indicated by the
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establishment of another fair in 1891, known as the Kalimpong fair, which subsequently became the most popular in the whole of the Darjeeling district. It attracted not only the surrounding villagers, but also traders from Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim as well as a large number of Tibetan traders. These traders brought up ponies, silks and mules for sale. It was reported that silk manufactured by the Bhutanese found a good market in the whole of the Darjeeling district¹⁴.

During the year 1891-92 the decrease in the total value as compared to the previous year was mainly due to a slump in export goods to Bhutan. Imports from Bhutan, however, increased, and this increase was mainly due to the importation of a considerable supply of fresh fruits and vegetables. During the next year, that is for 1892-93, a further and quite considerable decrease was noticed compared to 1891-92. The decrease which occurred this time was greater under imports than under exports. There was an appreciable falling off in the imports of fresh fruits and vegetables which had shown a great increase only the year before. The value of yaktails also decreased, while in the case of raw wool, wax, ponies and mules, and ~~ghat~~ the figures indicated a satisfactory advance. The export trade was characterised by a fall under piece goods and betelnuts, while woollen and silk goods, and tobacco showed an increase. Trade further declined in 1893-94, with the total value of goods coming down from

2,92,665 in 1892-93 to 2,78,976 during the current year. The decrease during that year was due mainly to a falling off under imports only, while the exports showed an improvement of 13.26 per cent over the figures of 1892-93, owing chiefly to larger despatches of European cotton and woollen piece goods, rice and tobacco. The decrease in the import trade amounted to 18.33 per cent as compared with 1892-93, and was due to a falling off in the supplies of raw wool, fresh fruits and vegetables, and yak tails received from Bhutan. The year 1894-95, however, showed a slight increase in the total value as compared to the previous year. The main increase was under imports^{and} the chief articles brought into India ^{while} being woollen manufactures, wax, fresh fruits and vegetables - while there was a heavy decrease under raw wool. As regards exports there was a falling off under totacco, and European cotton and woollen goods, while the traffic in betelnuts, Indian silk manufactures, and European cotton - both twist and yarn - showed an increase¹⁵.

It may be remembered that Tibet remained practically closed and inaccessible for British Indian trade during this period. The Anglo-Tibetan war in 1888 was undoubtedly a great shock. The Trade Regulations signed in 1893 did not improve the situation to any great extent. One reason for the continuous falling off in trade with Bhutan must have been the closure of Tibet, because a considerable part of

Bhutanese import and export was carried into and from Tibet. The Tibetans were accused of sending back unopened the letters written to them by the British Indian government for a redress of the situation. But, apart from that, some of the blame for this falling off in trade may be attributed to the Bhutanese who were indulging in constant violations of the Sinchula treaty, particularly with regard to free trade, by imposing duties on certain items, and by prohibiting Indian merchants from entering their territory. The total value for 1895-96, came down to 2,65,933 rupees from 2,89,577 rupees of the previous year. The decrease in the trade was almost entirely in imports and was chiefly due to a falling off in the supplies of raw wool. In the export trade the largest decreases were under European woollen fabrics, rice and European cotton piece goods, while the articles which showed the largest increase were Indian silk and cotton piece goods and refined sugar¹⁶.

During 1896-97, there was again a slight decrease in the total value, which came down to 2,64,184 rupees from 2,65,933 of the previous year. The decrease in trade was entirely in imports and was due chiefly to a falling off in the supplies of Indian woollen manufactures and cotton piece goods; there was in fact no imports ^{of} raw wool during the year, while the articles which showed an improvement were musk, and ponies and mules. The Deputy Commissioner of Jalpaiguri had stated

that the decrease under wool, raw as well as manufactured, cotton piece goods and yak tails was due to a fall in the demand for those articles in the plains. Regarding exports which by itself had risen to 1,44,471 from 1,36,077 rupees the Deputy Commissioner had opined that "The increase in traffic may be attributed to the growing appreciation of the articles amongst the Bhutias, to the facilities offered to them for obtaining their supplies at the foot of the hills by establishing markets, and at the fairs opened every year by government at Falakata and Alipur, and also to the fact that the articles are sold at higher rate to the Bhutias than to the local purchasers". In the export trade certain items had also lost their values, the largest decreases being under European cotton piece goods and twist and yarn. This decrease may be attributed to the small handloom manufacture of coarse cloth by the Bhutanese women which probably cost less than the European manufactured twist and yarn¹⁷.

A minor dispute was reported at the end of 1897 between the Bhutanese and the Indian police at the Chamurchi Bazar in Jalpaiguri district in which a Bhutanese was killed. Apart from this there were no other disturbances. The reports of 1898-99 indicate that the influence of the Tongsa Ponlob, Ugyen Wangchuk, continued to be paramount but it was exercised in a friendly spirit towards the British government¹⁸. During 1897-98 however the trade fell off further,

to 2,45,654 from Rs. 2,64,184 of the previous year. Decreases were noticed both in the imports as well as in the exports. As in 1896-97, there was no import of raw wool during the next year as well, and other decreases were noticed in wax, musk, horses, ponies and mules. The Deputy Commissioner of Jalpaiguri stated that the general decrease in the value of imports was due to the falling off in the demand consequent on the scarcity during the year under report. In exports there was a decline under the items of cotton and woollen piece goods of European manufacture, betelnuts, unrefined sugar and Indian silk manufactures. The decrease under the above heads was attributed to the fact that traffic from Calcutta to Torsa was entirely stopped from June to September in 1897 owing to damage caused to the railway line by earthquake, while the roads from Jalpaiguri to Buxa via Alipurduar and from Falakata to Hantupara were also rendered unfit for traffic for nearly six months during the year¹⁹.

Trouble Over Transactions In Assam Borders

In 1891 there was a recurrence of raids by the Bhutanese on the Assamese ^aryots. There were also rumours that the ^eBhutanese were threatening to invade into British territory. These rumours were brought down by traders coming from the interior of the country to Buxa, and was to the effect that

the Tongsa Ponlob, while on a visit to Tibet in 1890, had been persuaded by the Tibetans to plan an incursion on British territory²⁰. It cannot be definitely ascertained whether there was an element of truth in these rumours since the invasion never took place, but certainly there was an element of unrest. Reports, however, later confirmed that there were no gathering of armed men as such at Phari, as had been previously rumoured, neither had any one heard of any warlike preparations or intrigues in Bhutan. It was further clarified that what actually happened was that about five or six hundred coolies had collected at Phari by the order of the Phari Dzongpon, and had commenced to cut timber and clear the ground for the purpose of building a trade mart or a custom station²¹. Major Woodhouse, Commanding Officer at Buxa, greatly deplored the want of some system of intelligence in Bhutan, and said that nothing was being done to enable the British officials on the frontier to keep in touch with what was going on in the interior. He further asserted that all these were having an adverse effect on trade between the plains and the hills with fewer men coming each year to Buxa from the interior²².

The situation was not helped in any way by the Bhutanese raids which occurred again on the hapless Assamese ^aryots in 1891. Exactions on these ^aryots by the Bhutanese were reported to have been going on for some years past, but, during 1891,

they exceeded anything known before. The Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam stated that from the enquires which the Chief Commissioner of Assam had made at Guwahati, he was convinced that this was not a case of simple dispute between the Bhutanese and the villagers of Kamrup, regarding the rate at which the goods brought down by the Bhutanese for sale were to be bartered for the produce offered by the villagers. Neither had this case anything to do with the claim of the Bhutanese to duties on forest produce cut by the Kamrup villagers in the forests of Bhutan. According to the Commissioner of Assam the facts simply were that in the past years the Bhutanese had found themselves stronger than the villagers with whom they professed to trade, and had every year taken more and more advantage of the submission of the simple Assamese to their extortionate demands, till matters reached such a height that it was necessary to take steps to redress the situation.²³

The Bhutanese however, gave a completely different picture of the incidents, and said that they were simply trading with the Assamese. A detailed description of this so called trade had been given by Laghanu Ram ^{Das} ~~Das~~, Supervisor and Ganungo of the villages situated on the north of the Kamrup district, where these disturbances were taking place. The Bhutanese, reported the Ganungo, visited

the houses of the people in the mouza of Bijni and offered them a few chillies. When their offer was not accepted, the Bhutanese left the chillies at the doorway, and then exacted about seven dones, that is, about thirty five seers of mustard seeds. The villagers who refused to make any contribution were made to submit by means of threats. The Bhutanese also made the people believe that the Mouza would from that year come under the possession of Bhutan. In all, seeds worth about five hundred rupees were taken away from the ry^aots. It was also stated that in cases where there was no sufficient paddy to satisfy the demands, money, pigs and cattle were taken. The Qanungo was of the opinion that these Bhutanese would come again and repeat their oppressive practises in the name of 'trade'. He further reported that if steps were not taken to remedy this evil, the oppression would become intolerable for the ry^aots, forcing them to migrate in the event of which the government revenue would suffer²⁴.

Both the governments of Assam and Bengal were perturbed at this state of affairs. It was decided that punitive measures were to be taken to prevent recurrence of such incidents in the future, and compensation were to be given to the villagers. The Chief Commissioner of Assam was asked to draw the Deb Raja's attention to articles IV and V of the treaty of Sinchula, under which the British government

would be justified in suspending the payment of the subsidy either in whole or in part in the event of the failure of the Bhutan government to check aggressions into the British frontier. The non-payment of the subsidy, or at least a threat of non-payment was considered to be a very effective instrument by the British for subduing the Bhutanese. Ultimately, however, the payment of subsidy was not stopped because of the Raja's friendly letter dated 22 October 1891. This letter made the ^Government of Bengal feel confident that the Raja would make ample redress for any fault that may be proved to have been committed by his people²⁵. But, as a preventive against the occurrence of such events in future, it was decided to establish several police frontiers in the villages where the outrages had been reported²⁶. It was hoped that the depredations complained of by the inhabitants would not be again attempted if there were some police on the spot.

Contrary to the belief of the British Indian government, that Bhutanese raids into the Assam territory would stop, there were again reports of similar outrages committed by the Bhutanese in certain villages in the Kamrup district, at the beginning of January, 1892. There were of course no reports of any violence. Under the pretence of their so called trade the Bhutanese, who claimed that they came from the village of Nurpu, put packets of chillies in the hands

of the villagers or put them in their houses, and asked for dhan or unhusked paddy. None of the villagers had the courage to refuse and the Bhutanese were reported to have taken away about half to three fourth maunds of rice from each house, there being about three hundred houses in all²⁷. This peculiar system of trade and blackmail by the Bhutanese could only be checked, the British felt, by building more military outposts near the villages and deducting the sum from the annual subsidy.

After considerable discussions it was ultimately decided to deduct a certain sum from the subsidy paid to the Bhutanese government in 1892 for the maintenance of an outpost at Kakolabari. Upon the receipt of this depleted subsidy, the Deb Raja²⁸ of Bhutan wrote to the Deputy Commissioner of Jalpaiguri pleading that an injustice had been done to the Bhutanese. He claimed that his subjects had 'begged' rice and paddy from the Assamese villagers according to a prevalent and ancient custom, and that there had been no question of any extortion whatsoever. On the contrary it had been reported to him, claimed the Deb, that the ryots^a themselves had assaulted the Bhutanese, two of whom had died in the beatings²⁹. The Bengal government however remained firm in their resolve to deduct the stipulated amount for the maintenance of an outpost. The Commissioner of the Rajshahi

Division wrote back to the Deb Raja saying that it had been found necessary to establish an outpost to protect the Kamrup frontier from further aggression. He further proclaimed that though he regretted it, there was no way that the money could be refunded³⁰.

The deduction in the payment of the annual subsidy to Bhutan, made the Deb Raja realise that the British would continue in this policy unless some steps were taken to prevent these exaction. Thus, once again proclaiming that these acts were nothing more than a continuation of an old custom of bartering and begging paddy, he declared that an order should be issued to the Bhutanese subjects barring them from engaging in unlawful or forced barter in which both the parties did not agree to perfectly³¹. This was acceptable to the British, and the Deputy Commissioner of Assam wrote to the Deb Raja that the rates of such barter would be fixed between the Commissioner and the Bhutanese deputies at the Dewangiri fair which was being held regularly every year³².

The Bengal government however, did not wish to make the subject of the Assam raids and subsequent deduction of subsidy, as an issue for hostility between the two countries. As a gesture of goodwill and friendship, it was decided by the British Indian government in 1894, to present a M.H.Rifle

with a bayonet and scabbard together with fifty rounds of ammunition to the Tongsa Ponlob³³. The presentation of this rifle indicated that the overall relations between the two countries were not only on satisfactory level, but also that the British had reposed an exceptionally good faith upon the ruler of Tongsa.

Opening Tibet With the Aid of Bhutan

At the close of the 19th century Bhutan had a relatively stronger and a more stable government than what she had for a long time. India too had a new Viceroy, Lord Curzon, whose appointment was announced in the fall of 1898, and who assumed his Viceroyalty in January 1899. The British in India were becoming increasingly frustrated at their failure to break past the barrier of defence created by the Tibetans and open up their country. The protocol of the Anglo-Chinese Convention signed in 1890 had provided various provisions for trading facilities, and so did the decision to open up the trading mart at Yatung in 1894. However, all these proved futile since the privileges were entered upon on paper only, having little value in real life. The Tibetans were making themselves as inaccessible as possible, and their remote geographical location helped them in maintaining their aloofness.

Lord Curzon had commenced in the autumn of 1899 a series of attempts to open up direct communication with the Tibetans. Ugyen Kazi, who was the personal agent of Ugyen Wangchuk and was residing in Kalimpong, was commissioned by the Viceroy to write a letter on his own behalf to the Dalai Lama, suggesting in general terms that a high Tibetan official should be sent to India to discuss the frontier and trade questions. This letter met with an unfavourable response. Later another letter was sent through Captain Kennion, the Assistant to the Resident in Kashmir, but this was not delivered to the authorities at Lhasa. Finally, Ugyen Kazi was again entrusted with yet another letter which he himself was to deliver to the Dalai Lama at Lhasa, but in August 1901, the letter was referred back with the seal intact³⁴. The repeated failure of all these attempts ultimately led the British to shelve the policy of trifling about on the frontier with petty Chinese or Tibetan officials, and they proposed to take some definite steps to enter into a direct contact with the Dalai Lama himself.

When the Viceroy was thus trying to enter into some negotiations with Tibet, a new dimension was brought into the whole aspect of Indo-Tibetan relations by the news that the Dalai Lama was sending an envoy to Russia, and diplomatic negotiations were to be entered into with that country. The Russians themselves strove to assure the British that 'the

mission was chiefly concerned with matters of religion and had no political diplomatic objects in character³⁵. But the fact that the Dalai Lama, who had only so recently refused to receive the communications of the Viceroy of India, was publicly sending a mission to Russia, could not but give rise to apprehensions in the minds of the Indian government as to the object and result of any negotiation that might take place. This incident took place in the latter part of 1901.

" On 2 August 1902, another new factor was introduced into this already disturbing situation, by the rumour that China was making a secret agreement with Russia regarding Tibet. The rumour was strongly denied by the Chinese who declared that such an arrangement had never even formed a subject of discussion between the Chinese and the Russian governments. But the seeds of suspicion had been sown in the Indian minds, and it is doubtful if these suspicions did not rest on some amount of authenticity. Russia had been interested in Tibet for quite some time, and on her part had been sending semi-official, semi-scientific expeditions into that country. These had always reported on the richness of Tibet in regard to gold and the desirability of getting concessions there. The British in India felt that, even if it might be accepted that the mission sent by the Dalai Lama was essentially of a religious character, it

would not take much time for a religious understanding to be converted into a political one. To have Tibet entering into an agreement with Russia, was not at all a comfortable ⁰proposition for India. It must be remembered that in 1902, Russia was still on the crest of a great advancing wave of expansion. She had already spread over Manchuria, extended her strong hold in western Turkestan, and annexed the Pamirs. Therefore, it seemed to be only a matter of time before she would absorb Chinese Turkestan and Mongolia³⁶. Even though it seemed impossible that Russia would invade India through Tibet, the mere prospect of having Russia established in Lhasa, while the British themselves were unrepresented there, was enough to make the British recommend prompt action to countermand this menace.

With the double objective of entering into a direct communication with the higher authorities there as well as preventing the Russians from coming into closer contact with Tibet, it was proposed in the very important despatch of 8 January 1903, to send a mission with an armed escort to Lhasa with a view to settle future relations especially with regard to the trade regulations³⁷. It was to be made very clear to the Chinese and Tibetans, emphasized the ^Government of India, that this mission was of an exclusively commercial character, and that there was no intention of declaring a protectorate or permanently occupying any portion of Tibet³⁸.

The Russians were accordingly informed of this forthcoming mission to Tibet, and they on their part once again disclaimed all rumours regarding any convention about Tibet either with China, or with Tibet herself, or with any one else for that matter. In spite of these very definite assurance from Russia, the British decided to go on furthering their plans for the proposed mission. Though the main objective was indeed to secure the trading rights and privileges with Tibet, yet the underlying fear of Russian influence exerting itself in Lhasa was still existent in the British minds and they were determined to regularise relations with Tibet before it was too late.

The stage was therefore all set for the deputation of yet another mission to Tibet through Bhutan. The Viceroy appointed Major Younghusband as the Commissioner and head of the mission, which finally began its journey on 5 December, 1903, from Darjeeling. The attitude of the Bhutanese towards this mission was of the greatest importance, as the line of communications up the Chumbi valley ran through difficult country within a few miles of the frontier of Bhutan. At this crucial point of time, Ugyen Wangchuk once again gave another proof of his able statesmanship, and himself accompanied Younghusband to Lhasa. Being a devout Buddhist, he was in a position to visit the high Tibetan officers, and

personally explain the desires and objectives of the British. This attitude on the part of the Tongsa Ponlob further helped to cement the newly developing friendship between the two countries. The Tongsa Ponlob had already been informally told by Younghusband as to what was to be expected of the Tibetans. Ugyen Wangchuk acted as a mediator with great efficiency during the whole of this expedition, expounding the British terms of settlement, and generally 'preparing' the Tibetan delegates in behind the scene encounters, and before their meetings with Younghusband in stately durbars³⁹.

Immediately before the Younghusband mission took off, another interesting development had taken place, which may be most appropriate to recollect here. The incident reflects, above all, the close collaboration of Bhutan in any British endeavour to reach the further north.

It was felt by the British Government that one of the reasons for the inaccessibility of Tibet was the absence of a good road from India. It was therefore decided to offer the Bhutanese certain concessions if they agreed to the construction of a road through their country upto Tibet.

The Commissioner of the Rajshahi Division was to meet the Tongsa Ponlob in November 1903. It was decided that, during his meeting, he would offer the Tongsa Ponlob, Ugyen Wangchuk, an increase of 25,000 rupees in the annual subsidy on condition that a road be made through the Dichu or Amochu Valley

and be maintained by the Bhutanese. It was also suggested that the interest and cooperation of the Bhutanese authorities in the construction of the road could be stimulated by an offer to allow them to levy transit duties on the proposed road at rates to be approved by the British government. Macpherson, official Chief Secretary to the Government of Bengal, while making the above mentioned suggestion, observed that though these conditions would be against Article 9 of the Sinchula treaty, it would probably in any case make little difference since this particular article had been a 'dead letter', from its very inception. In these circumstances, it was felt that it would be better to have a fixed scale of duties on the new trade route as against a nominal maintenance of Article 9 of the treaty⁴⁰.

Lord Curzon however, did not approve the proposal of allowing the Bhutanese to levy duties on the trade route to Tibet, which he said, besides being contrary to the treaty would also be detrimental to the very purpose for which the British were thinking of entering Tibet. He was also opposed to an increase in the annual subsidy to Bhutan which was to be offered if the Bhutanese cooperated in the construction of the road⁴¹. In view of Curzon's opposition to increased payment to the Bhutanese, the Chief Commissioner of Assam suggested that as a last resort the Bhutan government might be offered a portion of the territory taken from them after

the Duar War of 1865 if other inducements held out by the Bengal Government towards the securing of this important object failed. This territory consisted of a narrow strip of land in the Kamrup district between the Manas and the Darrang rivers. This bit of land had little value for Assam, consisting as it did mainly of forest land, while its acquisition would be greatly valued by the Bhutanese. The British were, however, careful to keep any villages out of the territory to be assigned to Bhutan for they would on no condition hand over any British subject to Bhutanese authority⁴².

Accordingly negotiations were entered into with the Bhutanese with a view to enlist their cooperation in the building of the road. The British side was represented by Marindin, the Commissioner of the Rajshahi Division, and by Walsh, assistant to the British Commissioner for Tibet. Walsh succeeded in impressing upon the Bhutanese that, in order to benefit trade between the two countries of Tibet and India, it was desirable to obtain an easier route through Bhutan by following the course of the Di Chu or the Amo Chu. It was further pointed out by Walsh that the construction of either of these roads would be of great advantage to the Bhutanese as it would give them an easier access for trade with the plains of India. The Bhutanese on their part were quite willing to cooperate⁴³. Accordingly, an official

was sent with a small escort to Bhutan in order to explore routes in the Amo Chu and Di Chu valleys. By 16 February 1904, the exploration of routes was completed. The Amo Chu valley was full of jungles and sparsely populated whereas the Di Chu valley was open and well populated. On 6 March 1904, the ^Government of Bhutan sent a permit to Walsh through the Bhutanese envoy to enable him to make the survey and build a road. The ^Government of Bengal strongly advised postponement of the work on the road during rains⁴⁴. But, all these preparations proved futile, because, in September 1904 when the rains had ceased, the construction of this road was also postponed indefinitely on the ground of its high cost.

What exactly was the reason for the abandonment of the project, apart from what is available on records, cannot be easily known at this distance. But, one thing needs to be mentioned. The road to Tibet via Bhutan was conceived immediately prior to the departure of the Younghusband mission; and, the plan was given up a year later synchronising with the achievements of the same.

The terms of the draft treaty which Younghusband was supposed to present to the authorities in Lhasa contained the following provisions (The whole draft of the treaty is given in Appendix VI). First, trade marts were to be established at Gyantse, and Gartok, in addition to Yatung,

and a British agent was to have right of access to the Gyantse mart; secondly, an indemnity was also to be demanded from the Tibetans, though the sum to be demanded was not to exceed an amount which it was believed would be within the power of the Tibetans to pay. Provision was also made allowing the Tibetans to pay the money in instalments if necessary, spread over a period of three years; thirdly, the Chumbi valley was to be occupied as security for the indemnity, and for the fulfilment of the conditions regarding the trade marts; fourthly, the boundary laid down in the Convention of 1890 was to be recognized, fifthly, the two Sikkim-British subjects who had been captured in 1903 were to be released; and, finally, fortifications were to be demolished⁴⁵.

It goes without saying that the consent of the Tibetans in accepting the terms of the draft treaty was not achieved very easily. The Dalai Lama ultimately fled from his country after warning his countrymen against making any negotiations with the British. The Tibetans on their part made considerable protestations against certain clauses, particularly against the payment of indemnity. Making 'a last desperate though vain bid against the sacrilege involved'⁴⁶ the convention was ultimately signed and sealed on 7 September 1904, in the audience hall of the golden Potala at Lhasa. The great ceremony tailed off with a speech by Younghusband in which he reminded the Tibetans that most of their misfortunes had

been due to disrespect which they had shown to the British representatives. He exhorted them by saying "You will find us equally good friends if you keep the present treaty and show civility" -- a promise that was for many a year made good and honoured by both sides⁴⁷.

The thing was thus done, and the mission achieved what it had set out to do. As far as the trade regulations were concerned, the Tibetans accepted them without much hesitation. It was only in the matter of payment of indemnity that certain amount of reservation was shown by them. Younghusband, showing a great deal of discretion on the subject of establishing trading marts at Gyantse and Gartok, went one step further and asked permission for the British agent at Gyantse to proceed to Lhasa to discuss matters with the Tibetan officials. Younghusband had done this on his own judgement after receiving orders from the Indian government desisting him from pressing this clause any further. He moreover found that the Tibetans raised no special objection to this particular clause, provided the trade agent went to Lhasa only on commercial business, and only after he had found it impossible to get this commercial business disposed of by correspondence, or by personal conference, with the Tibetan agent at Gyantse. Therefore, Younghusband felt that there would be no objection to exacting such an agreement from the Tibetans, and he had it drawn up separately. It ran as follows - "The Government

of Tibet agrees to permit the British agent, who will reside at Gyantse to watch the conditions of the British trade, to visit Lhasa, when it is necessary, to consult with high Chinese and Tibetan officials on such commercial matters of importance as he has found impossible to settle at Gyantse by correspondence or by personal conference with the Tibetan agent"⁴⁸.

Thus ended the Younghusband mission. Beside entering into agreements with Tibet, one very important result of the mission was that friendship with Bhutan was established on a firmer basis. The service rendered by Ugyen Wangchuk to the mission has already been mentioned above. No doubt the Tongsa Ponlob, by his presence, and by the 'weight' which he carried, helped in executing a smoother exchange of terms and conditions between the British and the Tibetans, than would otherwise have been expected. The British government too were not ungrateful. For 'services rendered', the Ponlob was to receive soon the signal honour of a 'Knight Commander of the Indian Empire'.

The Give and Take of a Growing Trade

It will thus be seen that the Viceroyalty of Curzon was indeed a crucial phase in the history of India's relations

with her northern neighbours. The Tibetan Trade Regulations of 1893 had fallen due for revision in 1898 and little had been done to put them into effect when he arrived. By 1904, the Younghusband mission achieved its goal not only as far as Tibet was concerned, but also helped to project the friendship with Bhutan. The Bhutanese also reciprocated their friendship with India by whatever gestures they could within their means. Exchanges of present were frequent on either side, as an example of which the presentation of a sword and a belt to Walsh, the Deputy Commissioner of Darjeeling, by Ugyen Wangchuk, the Tongsa Ponlob, may be cited⁴⁹. On 3 June 1904, when the Younghusband mission was in progress, the gift was handed over to Walsh, who, it may be remembered, was responsible for the successful negotiation of the construction of a road to Tibet via Bhutan, and who was also the Assistant to the Commissioner for Tibet, Younghusband. The gift was subsequently deposited duly at the Toshakhana.

Even in more substantive matters, the period was equally promising. A look at Table 8 will reveal that the volume of trade between Bhutan and India progressed rapidly from 1898-99 to 1905-06, in complete contrast with the situation that prevailed roughly during the previous decade.

Table 8
Volume of Indo-Bhutan Trade Through the Bengal Frontier 1898
-99 to 1905-06 (in Rs.)

Year	Imports from Bhutan	Exports to Bhutan	Total
1898-99	1,05,756	1,47,056	2,52,812
1899-1900	1,23,714	1,47,608	2,71,322
1900-01	2,76,366	1,73,679	4,50,045
1901-02	5,11,675	1,37,485	6,49,160
1902-03	4,16,521	1,16,194	5,32,715
1903-04	7,01,315	1,18,817	8,20,132
1904-05	5,60,144	1,38,306	6,98,450
1905-06	11,11,241	1,54,440	12,65,681

Source : Reports on the External Trade of Bengal with Nepal, Tibet, Sikkim and Bhutan for the years 1898-99 - 1905-06.

During 1902-03, as per the records of registration, the total value of goods went down to Rs. 5,32,715, compared to Rs. 6,49,160 of the previous year. Decrease was noticed both in the imports as well as in the exports category. Walsh, Deputy Commissioner of Darjeeling, stated that whatever exports there had been from Bhutan had consisted in the main of ponies, cattle, beeswax and blankets, while in the imports section the chief items were tobacco, piece goods, copper and German silver. During the next year however, that is during

1903-04, quite a substantial increase was noticed in the value of the goods traded. The total went up to quite a remarkable 8,20,132 rupees against 5,32,715 of the previous year. Increase was noticeable especially in the imports from Bhutan which went up from 4,16,521 in 1902-03 to 7,01,315 the next year. This was entirely due to the increase in the imports of timber, the value of which amounted to Rs. 4,45,609 against Rs. 1,81,000 in the preceeding year⁵⁰. Exports to Bhutan also increased though not to a very great degree. One of the reasons for the increase in exports was assigned to the fact that a large number of guns were being manufactured at this time in Bhutan, and the iron for these guns were probably imported by way of Buxa or the Duars⁵¹.

In spite of this quite substantial increase in the volume of trade, frequent violation of the Treaty of Sinchula were also noticed. Evidence showed that faults lay on both sides. In 1903 it was brought to the notice of the Chief Commissioner of Assam, as well as to the ^Government of India that a duty was being levied on rubber imported into Assam from Bhutan. This was contrary to the provisions of Article IX of the treaty of 1865 in which it was provided that no duty should be levied on Bhutanese goods imported into British territories, and vice-versa. Since this duty had been in existence for many years it was presumed that this duty was causing no injury to Bhutan. However, it was considered safe

to ascertain the exact opinion of the ^Government of Bhutan in this matter so as to avoid any possible charge against the Indian government in future, of a breach of faith⁵².

The Assam government, in reply to the queries, made an attempt to clarify the reasons for this duty having been imposed.

They said that when, with the Chief Commissioner's Notification of 24 September 1892, duty on all foreign rubber imported into the province was imposed, no exception had been made in the case of rubber imported from Bhutan, apparently through an oversight. Moreover since there were no complaints from Bhutan on this issue, this rule had remained unchanged. It was further stated that imports of rubber from Bhutan had amounted to about seventy two maunds annually for the last five years, and the average amount of duty levied on the same was Rs. 995 per year. The Chief Commissioner of Assam concluded his remarks by saying that the Bhutan rubber could be exempted from import duty in accordance with the terms of the Sinchula treaty⁵³.

The Government of India, while agreeing with the Chief Commissioner of Assam, replied that an alternative plan could also be worked out. It was suggested that an annual fixed payment might be granted to Bhutan as a compensation for the levy of import duty on rubber. This payment could be made by an addition to the amount of the subsidy - the addition being a sum of one thousand rupees per annum or a sum in

slightly ⁱⁿ excess of this, which ever would be accepted, by the Bhutanese as being adequate⁵⁴. However, this plan was accepted neither by the Bengal nor by the Assam governments who felt that this would again be a breach of the treaty. Therefore the orders imposing the duties were withdrawn, and attempts were made on the side of the Assam government to adhere as far as possible to the treaty of Sinchula.

This imposition of unauthorised duties on rubber led the Government of Assam to be more careful in future regarding duties on goods brought in from Bhutan. The Chief Commissioner of Assam while soliciting sanction to the issue of a notification under section 37 of the Assam Forest Regulation, regarding the duty on imported forest produce from adjoining areas, made a specific alteration to show that the produce coming from Bhutan was to be exempted from taxation. Previous to the issue of this notification cane was being imported into British territory from the adjoining provinces free of duty. As this led to the loss of revenue the Chief Commissioner of Assam considered it desirable that a duty similar to that levied on imported timber and bamboos should be imposed on canes as well. It was however made clear that canes from Bhutan were to be exempted as per the clauses of the treaty of Sinchula⁵⁵, so that unwanted controversy as in the case of rubber was not repeated.

In 1906, a certain amount of hope was entertained, by the discovery of coal in Dewangiri, that a valuable mineral might be introduced as an important export item from Bhutan. It was reported by G.E. Pilgrim of the Geological survey Department that ~~that~~ this deposit of coal contained a very high as ^h content and was, therefore not considered to be of a very good quality. The cost ^t of mining this coal, predicted Pilgrim, would also be very high, and this would prevent it from successfully competing with the Upper Assam coal, which cost about Rs. 12 to Rs. 20 a ton. If the Bhutanese could find it possible to supply the coal below the price mentioned above they would have no difficulty in competing with the Upper Assam coal. But, since this would be difficult, Pilgrim concluded by saying that he himself was disinclined to recommend any capital being sunk in prospecting operations, which would certainly be expensive and would also probably be useless⁵⁶. Thus any new hopes which might have arisen with the founding of this coal site was lost.

The reports of the relations between Bhutan and India for the year ending 1906-07 showed that a great deal of unlicensed ~~traffic in~~ forest produce were being brought into India from the Bhutan forests. The Tongsa Ponlob had, in January 1906, asked Claude White to arrest persons engaged in the smuggling of forest produce such as timber, lac, wax, bamboo and cane, elephant tusks, horns of rhinoceros, etc.

from Bhutan into India. The matter was accordingly referred to the Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam who replied that though they would be very pleased to be of assistance to the Bhutan Durbar, it would be impossible to undertake the arrest of any person engaged in such activities as there were no sufficient forest staff, available for guarding the frontier. The Tongsa Ponlob was however informed that if any persons were found with unlicensed forest produce, crossing the border, he would at once be arrested. White felt that the Bhutan Durbar was losing yearly a large portion of their revenues due to the smuggling of forest produce across the frontier⁵⁷.

The Tongsa Ponlob gave further evidence of his friendly attitude towards the British by supplying good quality timber for the construction of the new Trade Agency Building which was being built by the British at Gyantse during 1906. He supplied 17,132 large sized beams and 1,250 battens valued at Rs. 21,203⁵⁸. This indicated Ugyen Wangchuk's desire to facilitate the Indo-Tibetan trade which the British themselves were so eager to develop.

However, infringement of clause IX of the treaty of Sinchula continued J.E. Webster, Judicial Secretary to the Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam said that duties were levied on the borders of Kamrup district by the Bhutan government. Duties were levied on articles and livestock

passing out of Bhutanese territory as well as on articles coming into Bhutan from Assam and Eastern Bengal⁵⁹, at the rates given in Table 9.

Table 9

Rates of Duties Levied by Bhutan on the Borders of Kamrup, Assam, 1907

Imports from Bhutan			Exports to Bhutan		
Articles	Unit	Rate Rs. annas	Articles	Unit	Rate
Ponies	head	1 - 0	Rice or	Mule/ Pony load	3 seers
Goats and sheep	head	0 - 4			
Blanket	Bundle	0 - 8	Paddy	head -load	2 seers
Wax	Maund	1 - 0	Betelnut	Pony- load	80 nuts
Lac	Maund	1 - 0		head- load	
Manjit or Madder	Maund	0 - 8			
Chillies	Maund	0 - 4			
Dried Radish	Maund	0 - 2			

Note : A Bundle of blankets normally consisted of about 20 to 25 blankets.

Maund = 43 Kilogram (approx.)

Seer = 1.2 Kilogram (approx.)

Source : Information regarding the duties levied on exports and imports from and into Bhutan, Foreign, External A, December, 1907, NAI.

But, the district officers of Jalpaiguri, Goalpara, and Darrang reported that no duties were known to be levied on goods exported from or imported into Bhutan. Nevertheless, whatever duties were ~~definitely~~^{definitely} levied on goods constituted an infringement of the terms of Article 9 of the Treaty of 1865. Though both the governments were well aware that duties were being taken, little was done to redeem this state of affairs. The Assistant Secretary to the Government of India in the Foreign Department, requested Claude White to bring the matter to the notice of Ugyen Wangchuk during his visit to Bhutan, in the hope that Ugyen Wangchuk would take some effective steps towards abolishing these illegal duties⁶⁰.

The Mission of Claude White And The Crowning of Sir Ugyen Wangchuk

After the help rendered by Ugyen Wangchuk to the Young-husband mission, Bhutan rose considerably in British estimation. In fact the Department of Political Affairs relating to Bhutan was transferred from the Government of Bengal to the Government of India thereby indicating the importance which the Viceroy was at that time attaching to Bhutan⁶¹. Moreover, as already mentioned before, the British government had decided to send another mission to Bhutan to felicitate Ugyen Wangchuk in recognition of his services. Claude White, Political Officer in Sikkim, was chosen for this purpose,

together with Major F.W.Rennick of the Intelligence Department.

Thus, an European Mission once again visited Bhutan more than forty years after the disastrous one led by Eden way back in 1864. The circumstances being very much different this time, the humiliation faced by Eden was replaced by warm friendliness. The route followed by Eden via Sipchu to Hah and Paro seemed a very suitable road for White until it was reported that the first part of this route was in a very bad condition and impracticable even for laden animals. So in the end it was decided that White, after leaving Gangtok, would cross the Nathula in the Amo Chu Valley, then over the Masseng-Chung-dong range in the Ha valley and subsequently follow Eden's route upto Punakha⁶² (Map II).

White reached Bhutan accordingly, and presented the insignia to Ugyen Wangchuk on 23 April 1905, thereby establishing a firmer bond of friendship between the two countries. Having completed his mission White returned to his headquarters at Gangtok on the afternoon on 19th June. On 6 July 1905 White sent a detailed account of his visit to the Government of India. He described at length the course of his journey, the internal situation of Bhutan, and above all the statesmanship of Ugyen Wangchuk. He mentioned that the overall control of Bhutan was vested in the hands of the Tongsa Ponlob and his council, the existing Deb Raja, Sangey Dorji, being a great recluse who occupied himself entirely with

religious affairs of the country⁶³.

Shortly after his return from Bhutan, two proposals were suggested by White. One was to increase the annual subsidy of Bhutan from fifty thousand rupees to one lakh per year, and the other included the building of a road from Ha, Paro and Tashichhodzong to the plains. Substantiating his first proposal he said that the Bhutan council had submitted to him a formal petition for an increase in the annual subsidy. White accordingly pleaded with the government to consider this petition favourably. His opinion was that this slight increase would give the British Indian government an absolute hold on Bhutan. In his own words,

formerly there was a chance of Tibet paying it, but by making the subsidy a lakh all danger on this point would disappear It will be money well laid out in that it will help to consolidate the present stable government in Bhutan, it will find Bhutan closer to India and give the Indian government a much greater control over it; it will assist the Bhutanese who have now for many years shown themselves friendly to us, to carry out some very pressing reforms and to open their country to trade, and will finally place Bhutan on our side and will show the Tibetans and the Chinese that it is so⁶⁴.

Further White pointed out that the great earthquake in Bhutan in 1897 had brought great havoc and ruin on the country and every public building to the east of Paro was shattered to the loss of lakhs of rupees. The Tangu breed of ponies for which Bhutan had been famous was dying out, and funds were

necessary for the regeneration of pony and mule breeding. Ugyen Wangchuk was also reported to have expressed a desire to open out the country to trade by making roads, but had complained of being constrained by the lack of funds⁶⁵. However, in spite of White's repeated claims that an enhancement of the subsidy could only be in India's favour, his plea was not supported by any body else, and as a result this proposal was dropped.

The second proposal of making a road through Ha, Paro and Tashichhodzong to the plains was however given much more thought. White in his report stated that the Bhutanese were fully cooperative on the subject of opening up roads and communication between India and Bhutan, but their difficulty lay in the paucity of labour and appliances. Taking this point into consideration, White suggested giving the Bhutanese a loan of tools to the value of Rs. 640 together with skilled labour for blasting and other purposes to assist them in opening out a road from Ha, Paro and Tashichhodzong to the plains. White also proposed sending the Sikkim State Engineer to make a rough survey from the Chukha Dzong down to the river Raidak in the plains to ascertain the approximate cost and feasibility of making a cart road or a bridle path over this portion. The government of India also felt that the opening up of communications between Bengal and Bhutan would be the best possible way of spreading British influence without active interference. The construction of this road would be

all the more welcome since the construction of the road along the Amuchu or Dichu was not being proceeded with, because of expenses. White was accordingly instructed to prepare a separate petition for the same, outlying a full explanation and scope of his proposals, and testifying to the fact that no objection would be raised to the Sikkim Engineer's journey in to the Bhutanese territory⁶⁶.

Amity and good will continued between the Tongsa Ponlob and the British, and constant exchange of presents and correspondence continued. Ugyen Wangchuk realised that it would be safer and more profitable to have a closer contact with British India as against Tibet and China. The British too at this point of time were prepared to extend all possible cordiality to the Bhutanese. In view of this growing friendly relations, they invited Ugyen Wangchuk along with the rulers of the Indian states to receive the Prince of Wales when he visited India in 1906. In addition to the customary honours due to an Indian ruler, the Tongsa Ponlob was accorded the special honour of a reception and a return visit by the Prince of Wales and the Viceroy⁶⁷. After his return to his country, Sir Ugyen Wangchuk began thinking on the lines of a monarchy for Bhutan. His ideas found support among by other Councillors who unanimously decided to invite him to become the first hereditary king of Bhutan. Sir Ugyen was enthroned on 17 December 1907 raising fresh hopes of peace and prosperity

in the minds of everyone concerned.

In a message to the Secretary to the Government of India, Claude White, while praising Sir Ugyen on establishing hereditary monarchy in Bhutan, greatly deplored the system of government which had hitherto existed in Bhutan. He said that the previous Deb and Dharma Rajas had exercised only nominal powers, while the real power passed into the hands of the powerful Ponlobs or the ministers who were constantly engaged in warring amongst themselves⁶⁸.

Claude White together with his entourage was present at the crowning ceremony of Ugyen Wangchuk. In the course of his discussions with the Maharaja, the latter expressed his keenness to develop the resources of his country, and White suggested to the Maharaja to seek the help of the Government of India to open rubber and tea gardens in Bhutan⁶⁹. White felt that the choice of Ugyen Wangchuk to be the king of Bhutan, could not have been a better one because, in his own words,

His integrity, uprightness and firmness of character commend him to every one and his accession to the Maharajaship is not only a gain to Bhutan but is of great advantage to the British government who will hence forth have a settled government with a man of strong character as its head to negotiate with⁷⁰.

Thus began a new era for Bhutan — the era of hereditary monarchy. The British were now happy at the thought of negotiating with a person of strength and integrity — a Bhutanese who had proved to be their ally. Hopes were no doubt entertained that all round improvement in relations would embrace commerce as well. Though the trade statistics did not give much hope it was nevertheless believed that things would improve considerably in the near future.

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SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Thus ultimately it was one of the secular chiefs of Bhutan, the Tongsa Ponlob, who ushered in a new era of monarchical rule in 1907 and set that country on the road to modernity. The history of modern Bhutan continues even up to this date, but one has to draw the line some where. It might be said that with the advent of Ugyen Wangchuk, the British at last felt that here was some one intelligent and sensible enough to say the least, with whom diplomatic discussions could be carried on. With Ugyen Wangchuk now at the helm of affairs, ~~the~~ Indo-Bhutanese relations could be expected to take on a more definite and concrete shape. Though the trade statistics did not reveal an immediate

improvement, nevertheless an all round ^{development} ~~improvement~~ in political as well as in commercial relations was no doubt entertained, and the future held out promises of fulfilling that distant dream of the eighteenth century British statesman, of opening out commercial contacts with Bhutan and through her with Tibet and China.

It might be remembered that it was in pursuit of trade that the first contacts with the Himalayan regions were made, and that was long before the British had established their stronghold in India. The fact that Tibet and Nepal were more or less well known to European traders and travellers have been proved by the fairly frequent expeditions and exchange of commodities between Tibet and Nepal and the West. Bhutan, though not a closed country, was nevertheless comparatively lesser known than both Nepal and Tibet. Her land locked condition, together with a deep sense of preservation of the identity of her people, made Bhutan endeavour to keep her doors shut to the entry of foreigners, especially Europeans. With her immediate neighbours however, especially with Tibet and India, Bhutan had maintained a fairly brisk commercial exchange and intercourse through out the centuries.

Concrete evidence of Bhutan's commercial contacts with India is available from the account of Ralph Fitch, an

European traveller who visited Cooch Behar in Bengal in 1583 and has given a lively, though some what exaggerated account of that place as well as of a country called 'Bottanter', which can safely be assumed to be Bhutan. Later, two Portuguese Fathers, Cacella and Cabral, who were the first Europeans to have actually visited Bhutan in 1626, have given a description of Bhutan's trade not only with the plains of Bengal and Assam but also with Tibet and China. The theory, therefore, that Bhutan was an entirely unknown and a closed country can now be disputed. A recent monograph, published by His Majesty's Government of Bhutan in 1972, has also opposed the prevalent idea that Bhutan was an entirely closed country in the medieval age, "The statement so often repeated that medieval Bhutan was a wholly closed country is only half the truth. It was no more closed than any land locked mountain country would, in the nature of things, be. Bhutan had plenty of contacts with her neighbours, and the intersecting point of the trade route in the India-Bhutan-Tibet triangle was at Cooch Behar on the Indian plains". (Michael Aris, Views of Medieval Bhutan, p.95).

Commercial contacts therefore, between Indian and her Northern neighbours, especially Tibet and Bhutan, had existed long before the advent of the British in India. With their arrival, however, Indo-Bhutanese relations

especially became much more systematic in form and attempts were made to control and regulate the same centrally. It is true that the British did this to suit their own commercial interests, since opening up Tibet and China through Bhutan was their main concern. In the course of this endeavour, a new and complex chapter in Indo-Bhutanese relations was also opened up. With commercial interests being interwoven with political concerns, the British found that they were up against a determined, and occasionally a meddlesome neighbour. With the British getting the better of most of the exchanges, slowly and inevitably interests of trade and commerce were transformed into political interests. How these interests came to embrace all the Himalayan territories and to shape British policy in these regions was a problem which deserved some attention.

Soon after the East India Company had established their political stronghold in India, the Company being basically a mercantilist organisation decided to extend the commerce of the state in every way possible. Casting about for new pastures as it were, their eyes fell upon the Himalayan states of Tibet, Bhutan, Nepal and Sikkim, and they wondered what these countries had to sell and buy. Though Warren Hastings is accredited with the ingenious scheme of establishing commercial contacts between India and Tibet and Bhutan on a firmer basis, and for sending the first commercial

mission ever to these countries, certain events had conspired to make this possible even before Hastings assumed the Governor Generalship. The emergence of the Gurkha Chief Prithvi Narayan Shah on the throne of Nepal, threw the previously flourishing Indo-Nepal trade into jeopardy, since the Gurkhas though friendly to the English, guarded their country against English merchants. The officials frustrated in their plans to link up their Chinese and Tibetan trade through Nepal, looked about for an alternative route to continue the same trade. At this time most opportunely another incident opened their eyes towards Bhutan. The details of the Cooch Behar-Bhutan conflict need not be repeated again, it only sufficing to say that the Cooch Behar Raja appealed to the British against the outrages of the Bhutanese Chief Deb Judhur. The British complied to the Raja's appeal, seeing some lucrative gains which could be made at the expense of Cooch Behar. Moreover, it was realised that if trade with Bhutan and Tibet was to be extended, Cooch Behar as one of the gates to the north should definitely be under the Company's authority.

At the successful cessation of hostilities, at the end of which the Bhutanese were driven back to their own country, Hastings, seizing upon the chance offered by the dignified letter received from the Panchen Lama of Tibet, decided to send the first ever commercial mission to these countries with a view to increase further the commercial

contacts between the these countries and India. Thus began a phase in Indo-Tibetan ~~and Indo-Tibetan~~ and Indo-Bhutanese relations which can appropriately be designated as the high tide of commercial intercourse. The first mission, sent under George Bogle in 1774, achieved moderate success, especially with the Deb Raja of Bhutan from whom a written concession was secured for Indian Hindu and Muslim merchants to pass through his domains, though under some restrictions, European merchants however, were not allowed to pass through Bhutan. Besides obtaining concessions Bogle was responsible for preparing the way for extensive tea plantations in Bengal and Assam, and for pointing out possibilities of capturing this lucrative trade from China.

The fact that Hastings himself was highly satisfied by the outcome of Bogle's mission can be corroborated by the following facts - building of a Bhot Mandir at Howrah to extend facilities to the Tibetan merchants visiting Calcutta, sending of a couple of missions under Hamilton who had accompanied Bogle, and employing Bogle as the Collector of Rangpur in a further bid to give more encouragement to the Indo-Bhutanese fair which had been going on for some years now, under the sponsorship of the Government of Bengal. The fair, it may be noted, flourished considerably under Bogle's gurdianship. The untimely death of Bogle in 1781 brought to an end many grandiose plans entertained by the

British. Nevertheless, in an attempt to prevent the opening made by Bogle from being closed, the Governor General decided upon sending a fourth mission to Bhutan and Tibet. This time it was sent under Lieutenant Samuel Turner in 1783. It is however true that Turner did not achieve anything new in the way of commercial concessions from the rulers of either Tibet or Bhutan. He however, helped to strengthen and reaffirm the contacts established by his predecessor and thereby establish a closer alliance between India on the one hand, and Bhutan and Tibet on the other. Thus the astute diplomacy of Hastings, combined with the intelligence and application of Bogle and Turner, succeeded in re-establishing to a certain degree, what had once been a flourishing trade between India and her northern neighbours.

However, subsequent problems, characterised by border skirmishes, and indifference and neglect on the part of the rulers of both India and Bhutan led to a deterioration in political as well as in commercial relations. Hastings' departure from India resulted in a dramatic breakdown of the cordial relations, which he had striven so hard to build up. With his retirement a distinct phase in Indo-Bhutanese and Indo-Tibetan friendship came to an end, and "so completely was the policy of opening commercial intercourse between India and the trans-Himalayan regions

abandoned that the very history of Hasting's negotiations was forgotten". The period from 1788-1838 which can be termed as a period of uncertain prospects, witnessed a gradual transition from accord and amiability to discord and disharmony bringing in its wake a disruption of the political and commercial accords.

The hostilities between Nepal and Tibet, served to effect adversely the relations between India and Tibet. This was so, because the British by their apathy and refusal to help the Tibetans, or the Gurkhas for that matter, earned the wrath of the Tibetans and the Chinese who suspected them of being in compliance with the Gurkhas. Be that as it may, the outcome of it was that Tibet closed all her passes to India, thus shattering the commercial aspirations of the British officials. As ill fortune would have it, relations with Bhutan also started deteriorating at this time due to constantly recurring border raids and plunders. Whether the Bhutanese were entirely to be blamed for these outrages is a different aspect altogether. The crux of the problem was that with Tibet closing her doors, and no head way being made in commercial transactions with Nepal and Bhutan either, the whole concept of the trans-himalayan trade was endangered. Not that the British made no attempt to improve the state of affairs. An official named Kishen Kant Bose was

sent to Bhutan in 1815 to attempt to resolve these border differences. Though he failed in his objective since border raids continued unabated subsequent to his visit, his mission was important for the valuable report he presented at the end of his visit, throwing light on various aspects of Bhutanese life and her relations with other countries. The fact that the Rangpur fair was still continuing in spite of deteriorating commercial conditions was also evident from his report. Subsequent to Kishen Kant's visit, British contacts with Bhutan do not appear to have been of great significance for there is no account of any communication with the Bhutanese, till the Anglo-Burmese war of 1824-26. This war and the resultant acquisition of Assam by the British, marked the beginning of an important phase in Anglo-Bhutanese relations, for the British domains were extended right upto the Bhutanese border. Feuds, though not uncommon before, started recurring with increasing frequency. The British, naturally distressed at this state of affairs which was proving detrimental to their commercial interests, made yet another attempt to resolve this state of affairs by deputing another mission to Bhutan in 1837-1838.

This was the mission of Pemberton, and he was asked mainly to settle terms of commercial intercourse between the two countries. Pemberton too, could not succeed in

concluding a successful negotiation with the Deb Raja of Bhutan, and he attributed this failure to the weak and vascillating Deb Raja and to the stronghold which the Chinese had upon Tibet and Bhutanese trade. However Pemberton somewhat made up for his failure to sign an agreement with the Bhutanese officials by the exhaustive and detailed account which he gave of Bhutan on his return to India. He also suggested the occupation of all the Duars both in Bengal and in Assam then held by Bhutan. The Government of India too ultimately decided to shelve the policy of mendicancy and embarked upon force. The suggestion given by Pemberton was taken up and the Assam Duars were annexed in 1841. The ultimate occupation of the Assam Duars did seem to provide some relief, for the raids into the British territory decreased. But the Bengal Duars proved to be a bone of contention and in a last attempt to settle disputes peacefully, the British government decided to send yet another mission to Bhutan in 1864. This mission under Ashley Eden was deputed to "further endeavour to secure free commerce between the subjects of the British and Bootan Government and protection to travellers and merchants." But it was also emphasised that negotiations on this subject were to be kept in entire subordination to the main political objects of the mission, these being mainly border incursions and outrages. Eden was also advised to abstain from

pressing further the commercial concessions if he felt that these were hindering him from securing the main objects for which he was being deputed. Thus it is evident that this was the first time that political considerations were gaining advantage over commercial ones. The British probably felt, at this juncture, that commercial transactions would automatically increase, with an improved political condition. However, the mission under Ashley Eden was a complete disaster, and the crises reached such a point as could only be solved by a war. The whole of the period following the return of Pemberton from Bhutan to that of Ashley Eden was a period ridden with border strifes and raids, and the bitter harvest was the Duar War of 1864-65.

The military strategies of the war does not really come within the purview of this study. It would be sufficient to say that the Bhutanese resistance was unexpectedly tough and they gave in ultimately since they were being starved out by an effective policy of economic blockade employed by the British, and were forced to comply in the end. Of course, militarily the British were far superior to them, but it was not till the November of the following year that the final terms of the treaty of Sinchula was concluded. The terms of this treaty obviously favoured the British and all the Bengal Duars were unconditionally handed over to them. Article IX of the treaty laid particular emphasis on free

trade and commerce being carried on between India and Bhutan. The territorial gains of the British were also considerable. The Duars with their tea growing and other economic potentialities, had been acquired, new hopes entertained of trade with Tibet through Chumbi valley, and finally the subsidy which the British Indian Government was supposed to be paying to Bhutan, put a powerful lever into their hands, since it could be withheld whenever the British felt the necessity of doing so.

Thus ended the battle over land for tea. Nearly 9000 sq. miles of land were secured by the British in the Western Duars by the treaty of Sinchula, and these lands developed considerably during the next few decades. The first tea garden in the Western Duars was opened in 1876 at Gazaldobe followed by gardens at Fulbari and Bagrakote. A new type of tea bush known as the 'Assam-China hybrid', was soon introduced and was found to have greater merits than the 'China type of bush'. Very soon a wave of land speculation swept over the region and many resident capitalists of every description bought up land for the cultivation of tea. Thus the British acquisition of these land and their subsequent development as tea gardens proved to be a blessing as India was provided with a profitable tea industry. This was thus one of the far reaching consequences of the Duar war.

The post-war period ushered in a new era for Bhutan, and brought about a new dimension in the history of Indo-Bhutanese relations. Since the conclusion of the Duar war, and till 1885 in particular, the civil strife in Bhutan assumed serious proportion with the warring faction constantly asking the British for help. The latter tried more or less to maintain a neutral front. As a result of these internal disputes trade and commerce between the two countries naturally suffered and frequent violations of clause IX of the treaty of Sinchula did not help either, in the furtherance of trade. The obstacle on the Chukha bridge in 1867, which was a serious outcome of the internal quarrels as well as a violation of the Sinchula treaty, is one glaring example. This was, ultimately amicably settled. Be that as it may, evidences are available of certain amount of commercial transactions going on during this period as well as the commencement of a number of ⁱⁿ ~~fairs~~. Governmental Reports are available of the external trade of Bengal and Assam with Bhutan, which provide certain statistics to show that during 1878 to 1885, inspite of certain fluctuations the general trend of the trade was to increase. These reports barring certain fabrications on the part of the Mohurirs or accountants at the frontier posts, may be accepted to be reasonably correct.

Besides the trade which India carried on exclusively with Bhutan, it must be remembered that especially after

1865, the British policy was to establish greater economic and political relations with Tibet and through Tibet with China and Central Asia. For the fulfilment of this policy the British were looking towards Bhutan for help, since Bhutan lay on the route to Tibet, and her connections with Tibet, was felt, would be useful in furthering British Indian trade with that country. The Government of India made earnest efforts to reopen trade and communications with Tibet. This attempt, on the part of the British Indian Government, however, did not meet with much success and though the Chefoo convention was held in 1876 which agreed to provide facilities to the British for explorations in Tibet, it ultimately ended in a failure since the Tibetans themselves were not a party to this agreement. The Bhutanese were no help to the British either, for internal dissension in their country was serving to weaken the central power, and the authorities in Bhutan could not decide upon a definite foreign policy. Therefore a line of thinking was emerging among the British officials in India by the mid eighties, that a strong and centralised Bhutan could help them in fulfilling their commercial dreams in Tibet and Central Asia. For this purpose they embarked upon a conciliatory and friendly attitude towards Bhutan, with however, strict non-interference in her internal matters. At the time, fortunately for both countries, there

emerged a personality in Bhutan. He was Ugyen Wangchuk who took over as the Tongsa Ponlob in 1884, and who ultimately succeeded, after defeating his opponents in getting his nominee, Pam Sangye Dorji appointed as the Deb Raja, while he himself emerged as the virtual ruler of Bhutan. Ugyen Wangchuk seemed to be a strong ruler with friendly inclination towards the British. Thus the last decade of the nineteenth century saw the British somewhat more confident in the hope that a strong centralised Bhutan would improve their over all relations with that country and moreover serve as an important intermediary through which British access to Tibet and Central Asia could be made more certain.

The Tibetan hostility towards British commercial expansion however still remained. Their aversion towards the proposed despatch of a mission under Colman Macaulay to their country gave ample proof of this. However, the mission itself was abandoned, due to 'international considerations'. Nevertheless in 1893, certain Regulations were signed in Darjeeling, whereby the British and Manchu governments agreed to open a trade mart at Yatung, though the Tibetans were not party to any agreement. Yatung however, did not prove to be a suitable mart, for trade, and it was reported that mainly due to Tibetan hostility practically no business was being transacted there. With Tibet as usual being a stumbling block in British

endeavours to open up the northern trade, the Bhutanese authorities too were putting obstacles in the way of free commerce between India and Bhutan. Though trade statistics upto 1890 showed a general upward trend, and with Ugyen Wangchuk at the helm of affairs, more improvement was expected in the future, the clauses of the Sinchula treaty were not being adhered to especially with regard to free trade. Consequently, from 1890, the figures indicate a downward trend in Indo-Bhutanese commercial exchanges, which continued right up to 1897-98. Tibet's closure probably also played a part in this deterioration, because a considerable part of Bhutanese import and export was carried into and from Tibet.

The twentieth century saw the British continue in their efforts to open up Tibet, aided this time by the Viceroy Lord Curzon who was in favour of a 'forward policy' towards Tibet. A probability of Russia entering into an agreement with Tibet further increased British apprehensions. Though the Russians staunchly denied any diplomatic agreement with Tibet, the British decided to send yet another mission to that country with the double objective of entering into direct communications with the authorities at Lhasa, as well as preventing the Russians from coming into closer contact with Tibet. The Younghusband mission finally began its journey on 5 December, 1903 from Darjeeling,

and ultimately after tedious negotiations the draft treaty which Younghusband carried with him, was signed by Tibetan officials. Another important outcome of this mission was the valuable help rendered by Ugyen Wangchuk to the mission and his efforts to make it a success. This gesture on part of Ugyen Wangchuk proved to be a further cementing factor in Indo-Bhutanese ties. With an increase in cordial relations at governmental levels, other substantial matters such as trade received a boost as well, and reports indicate that commerce progressed rapidly from 1898-99 to 1905-06, contrasting sharply with the situation during the previous decade.

Minor causes of complaints regarding collection of duties on trade articles etc. were registered, but on the whole were not detrimental to the all round improvement in relations between the two countries. The British showed their gratitude for Bhutanese help by knighting Ugyen Wangchuk. The mission under Claude White in 1904-05 accomplished this very successfully. The crowning of Ugyen Wangchuk in 1907 as the first hereditary monarch of Bhutan served as a satisfactory finale, and a fitting tribute to his statesmanship.

With a strong and friendly ruler at the helm of affairs British could now hope for a longlasting friendship with

Bhutan -- a friendship which would serve to satisfy their commercial and strategic needs. The commercial minded diplomacy of the eighteenth century British statesmen, having in mind the double purpose of entering into commercial relations with Bhutan, and through her with Tibet, reached a stage of fulfilment more than one and a half centuries later. The friendship of Bhutan was secured and further hopes were entertained for the future.

APPENDIX IArticles of the Treaty Between the Honourable East India Company and Dharendra Narayan Raja of Cooch Behar.

(1773)

'Dharendra Narayan, Raja of Cooch Behar, having represented to the Honourable the President and Council of Calcutta the present distressed state of the country, owing to its being harassed by the neighbouring independent Rajas, who are in league to depose him, the Honourable the President and Council, from a love of justice and desire of assiting the distressed have agreed to send a force, consisting of four companies of Sepoys, and a field-piece for the protection of the said Raja and his country against his enemies, and the following conditions are mutually agreed on :-

'1st - That the said Raja will immediately pay into the hands of the collector of Rangpore Rs. 50,000/- to defray the expenses of the force sent to assist him.

'2nd - That if more than Rs. 50,000/- are expended, the Raja make it good to the Honourable the English East India Company, but in case any part of it remains unexpended that it be delivered back.

'3rd - That the Raja will acknowledge subjection to the will of the English upon his country being cleared of his enemies and will allow the Cooch Behar country to be annexed to the province of Bengal.

'4th - That the Raja further agrees to make over to the English East India Company one half of the annual revenue of Cooch Behar for ever.

'5th - That the other moiety shall remain to the Raja and his heirs for ever provided he is firm in his allegiance to the Honourable United East India Company.

'6th - That in order to ascertain the value of the Cooch Behar country, the Raja will deliver a fair Hastabud (revenue) statement) of his district into the hands of such person as the Honourable the President and Council of Calcutta shall think proper to depute for the purpose, upon which valuation the annual Malguzari (assessment) which the Raja is to pay, shall be established.

'7th - That the amount of Malguzari settled by such person as the Honourable the East India Company shall depute, shall be perpetual.

'8th - That the Honourable East India Company shall always assist the Raja with a force when he has occasion for it, for the defence of the country, the Raja bearing the expense.

'9th - That this treaty shall remain in force for the space of two years, or till such time as advices may be received from the Court of Directors empowering the President and Council to ratify the same for ever.

'This treaty signed, sealed and concluded by the Hounourable the President and Council at Fort William, the 5th day of April, 1773, on the one part, and by Dharendra-narayan Raja of Jooch Behar, at Behar Fort, the 5th Magh 1179 Bengal style, on the other part'.

APPENDIX II

Translation of a Letter from Teshoo Lama to Warren Hastings,
Esq. President and Governor of Fort William in Bengal.

Received the 29th of March, 1774.

"The affairs of this quarter in every respect flourish. I am night and day employed in prayers for the increase of your happiness and prosperity. Having been informed, by travellers from your country, of your exalted fame and reputation, my heart like the blossoms of spring, abounds with satisfaction, gladness, and joy. Praise be to God, that the star of your fortune is in its ascension ! Praise be to him, that hapiness and ease are the surrounding attendants of myself and family ! Neither to molest, nor persecute is my aim, it is even the characteristic of our sect, to deprive ourselves of the necessary refreshment of sleep, should an injury be done to a single individual, but in justice and humanity, I am informed, you far surpass us. May you ever adorn the seat of justice and power, that mankind may, in the shadow of your bosom, enjoy the blessings of peace and affluence ! By your favour, I am the Raja and Lama of this country and rule over a number of subjects, a circumstance with which you have no doubt been made acquainted, by travellers from these parts. I have been repeatedly informed, that you have engaged in hostilities against the Deh Terria, to which it is said the Deh's own criminal

conduct, in committing ravages and other outrages on your frontiers, gave rise. As he is of a rude and ignorant race, past times are not destitute of instances of the like faults, which his avarice has attempted him to commit. It is not unlikely that he has now renewed those instances, and the ravages and plunder which he may have committed on the spirits of provinces of Bengal and Behar, have given you provocation to send your avenging army against him. Nevertheless his party has been defeated, many of his people have been killed, three forts have been taken from him, and he has met with the punishment he deserved. It is as evident as the sun, that your army has been victorious, and that if you had been desirous of it, you might, in the space of two days have entirely extirpated him; for he had not power to resist your efforts. But I now take upon me to be his mediator; and to represent to you, that as the said Deh Terria is dependant upon the Dalai Lama, who rules in this country with unlimited sway, though on account of his being yet in his minority, the charge and administration of the country, for the present is committed to me; should you persist in offering further molestation to the Deh Terrai's country, it will irritate both the Lama and all his subjects against you. Therefore, from a regard to our religion and customs, I request you will cease from all hostilities against him; and in doing this, you will confer

the greatest favour and friendship upon me. I have reprimanded the Deh for his past conduct, and I have admonished him to desist from his evil practices in future, and to be submissive to you in all things. I am persuaded he will conform to the advice which I have given him; and it will be necessary that you treat him with compassion and clemency. As to my part I am but a Fakeer; and it is the custom of my sect, with the rosary in our hands to pray for the welfare of all mankind, and especially for the peace and happiness of the inhabitants of this country; and I do now, with my head uncovered, entreat that you will cease from all hostilities against the Deh in future. It would be needless to add to the length of this letter, as the bearer of it, who is a Gosein, will represent to you all particulars, and it is hoped that you will comply herewith.

"In this country, the worship of the Almighty is the profession of all. We poor creatures are in nothing equal to you. Having however, a few things in hand, I send them to you as tokens of remembrance, and hope for your acceptance of them".

APPENDIX III"Articles of a Treaty between the Honourable East India Company and the Deva Raja or Raja of Bhutan. (1774)

"1. That, the Honourable Company, wholly from the consideration for distress to which the Bhutias represent themselves to be reduced, and from the desire of living in peace with their neighbours, will relinquish the lands which belonged to Deva Raja before the commencement of the war with the Raja of Cooch Behar, namely, to the eastward of the lands of Chichakhata and Paglahat, and to the westward of the lands of Kyranti, Maraghat and Luckeepore.

"2. That, for the possession of the Chichakhata provice, the Deva Raja shall pay an annual tribute of five Tangan horses to the Honourable Company, which was the acknowledgement paid to the Cooch Behar Raja.

"3. That, the Deva Raja shall deliver up Dhairjendra Narayan Raja of Cooch Behar together with his brother, the Dewan Deo, who is confined with him.

"4. That, the Bhutias, being merchants, shall have the same privileges of trade as formerly, without the payment of duties, and their caravans, shall be allowed to go to Rungpore annually.

of the Companys' territories they shall prosecute them by an application to the Magistrate who shall reside here for the administration of Justice.

"5. That, the Deva Raja shall never cause incursions to be made into the country, nor in any respect whatever, molest the ryots, that have come under the Honourable company's subjection.

"6. That, if any ryot or inhabitant whatever, shall desert from the Honourable company's territories, the Deva Raja shall cause them to be belivered up immediately upon application being made to him.

"7. That, in case the Bhutias, or any one under the Government of Deva Raja, shall have any demands upon, or disputes with any of the inhabitants of these or any part of the Companys' territories they shall prosecute them by an application to the Magistrate who shall reside here for the administration of Justice.

"8. That whatever Sannyasis are considered by the English as an enemy, the Deva Raja will not allow to take shelter in any part of the districts now given up, nor permit them to enter into the Honourable Company's territories, or through any part of his; and if the Bhutias shall not of themselves be able to drive them out, they shall give information to the Resident on the part of the English in Cooch Behar and they shall not consider the English troops pursuing the Sannyasis into these districts as any breach of this treaty.

"9. That in case the Honourable Company shall have occasion for cutting timbers from any part of the woods under the Hills, they shall do it duty free, and the people they send shall be protected.

"10. That, there shall be a mutual release of prisoners.

"This treaty to be signed by the Honourable President and Council of Bengal, and the Honourable Company's seal to be affixed on the one part, and to be signed and sealed by the Deva Raja on the other part".

Signed and ratified at Fort William, the 25th of April, 1774.

(Signed) Warren Hastings
William Andersey
P.M. Daires
J. Lawrel
Henry Goodwin
H. Graham
George Vansitart

(A true copy)

(Signed) J. Anriol,
Assistant Secretary.

APPENDIX IV

Treaty submitted on the 25th of April 1838 to the Deb Raja of Bootan by Captain R. Boileau Pemberton, Envoy on the part of the British Indian Government to the Court of the Deb and Dharma Rajas.

(1838)

Many years having elapsed since a Mission was deputed from the Government of British India to the Deb and Dhurma Rajas of Bootan, and the acquisition of the Territory of Assam by the Hon'ble the East India Company having greatly extended the relations which formerly existed between the two governments, the Right Hon'ble the Governor General of India in Council was pleased, on the 7th of August, 1837, to depute Captain R. Boileau Pemberton as Envoy on the part of the British Indian government to the Deb and Dhurma Rajas of Bootan, with authority to make any arrangements in concert with the Deb Raja which should appear best adapted to the present state of affairs, and as likely to strengthen and cement the amicable relations of the two Governments to a degree not provided for by any existing Treaty. The following Articles have been mutually agreed upon by the Deb Raja of Bootan and the Envoy on the part of the British Indian government, as being calculated to remove existing causes of dissatisfaction, to extend friendly intercourse, and to place, the future relations of the two governments on such a basis as shall be equally advantageous to both :-

Article 1st The subjects of Bootan of every description having always had free access to Territories of the British Indian Government for purposes of traffic, it is reasonable and just that a similar privilege should be extended to the subjects of the British Indian Government. It is therefore mutually agreed that the subjects of both States shall be equally unrestricted in any friendly intercourse they may wish to carry on, and shall be entitled to the protection of the respective Governments as long as they conduct themselves peaceably in their several vocations.

Article 2nd If any Ryot or other inhabitant of the Hon 'ble Company's Territory shall desert into the Territory of the Deb Raja, he shall be immediately given up on application being made for him, and if any individuals, inhabitants of the Bootan Territory, commit robberies, murders, or other heinous offences, and take refuge in the British Indian Territory, they shall be surrendered on the Bootan Authorities demanding and identifying them.

Article 3rd If any inhabitant of the British Indian Territories shall commit offences in the Doors for which the Bootan government now pays, or has heretofore paid, tribute to the Hon 'ble Company, such offender shall be seized and made over for trial to the nearest resident British Officer, by whom his offences, if satisfactorily proved, will be punished in accordance with the laws which prevail in the

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Hon 'ble Company's Territory; but if any British subject shall commit offences in the independent Hill Territory of the Bootan government, he will be amenable to trial in conformity with the customs which prevail there, the circumstances being duly reported at the time to the British Indian government.

Article 4th Should any aggressions be committed by the inhabitants of the Dooars under the Bootan government against the subjects of the Hon 'ble Company, such offenders shall be immediately surrendered by the Bootan Frontier Officers on receiving the Perwannahs of the Magistrates of Districts to that effect, and on their failing to seize the offenders, the Police of the British Indian government shall have free access to the Dooars in search of the culprits.

Article 5th Should the Booteahs, or other subjects of the Deb Raja, have any demands upon, or disputes with, any inhabitant of any part of the Hon 'ble Company's Territories, they shall prosecute them only by an application to the Magistrate of the district in which such disputes may have arisen, by whom an examination will be immediately made into the nature of the complaint, and redress, if necessary, afforded.

Article 6th The present mode of paying tribute for the Dooars, partly in goods and horses, and partly in money, having led to much misunderstanding and the accumulation of

heavy arrears, the Bootan Government agrees that the tribute shall in future be paid in cash, the revenue for each Dooars, being taken at the present amount, there being no wish on the part of the British Indian government to increase the tribute in the slightest degree.

Article 7th To insure the punctual payment of tribute, and to protect the Bootan Government as much as possible from imposition or loss, it is agreed, that at the customary season of the year, Zinkaffs shall be deputed by the Bootan government for the purpose of paying the amount due directly to the Collectors of Kamroop and Durrung, who will grant receipts for the amount so paid, and not, as was formerly the case, to any intermediate Native Agents. In the event of any Dooars falling into arrears to the extent of one year's tribute, the British Indian government shall be at liberty to take possession of and continue to hold such Dooars until the balances have been fully realized, and indemnification obtained for any extra expense to which the British Indian government may have been subjected by such temporary possession of the Dooar.

Article 8th The Dewangari Raja having seized and kept in confinement twelve Cacharee subjects of the Hon'ble Company, in violation of the friendship and practices observed between the two governments, the Deb Raja having for the first time been made acquainted with the circumstances by the British

Envoy, agrees to send immediately a peremptory order for their surrender to the British Authorities in Assam, by whom they will be tried in conformity with the 3rd Article of this Treaty.

Article 9th The Deb Raja having now been made fully acquainted with the misconduct of and aggressions committed by, the Bootan Officers in charge of the Dooars against the subjects of the Hon'ble Company, will adopt decisive measures for putting an effectual stop to conduct of so unwarrantable a nature; and will issue an order for the immediate apprehension and surrender of five escaped convicts from the Gowhatty Jail, now concealed in the Dooars, who had been condemned to imprisonment for participation in these offences against the British Indian Government.

Article 10th Many of the boundaries of the Assam Dooars being still in an undefined and unsettled state, the Deb Raja agrees, on application being received from the British Authorities to that effect, to depute properly qualified persons to assist in establishing such lines of demarcation as may be mutually agreed upon by them and the officers of the British Indian government.

Article 11th The want of an authorized Agent on the part of the Bootan government to whom reference could be made on any sudden exigency having led to the most serious inconveniences, and frequently endangered the friendly relations

of the two governments, it is agreed that in future two accredited Agents of the Bootan government shall reside permanently, one at Gowhatty in Assam, and the other at Rungpore in Bengal, for the purpose of receiving any communications the Authorities of those places may desire to make to the Bootan Government, or of conveying to those officers the sentiments and wishes of their Court.

Article 12th It being indispensable that measures should be immediately taken for examining and adjusting the accounts of the Dooars, with a view to the payment of all outstanding balances, the Deb Raja agrees that Zinkaffs or other persons well acquainted with the accounts of the Dooars shall be immediately sent to Gowhatty for this purpose, and that they shall be directed to make payments in full of whatever sums may, on comparison of accounts, be pronounced by the governor General's Agent to be due to the Hon'ble Company.

(True copy)

R. Boileau, Pemberton.

APPENDIX VThe Treaty Concluded at Sinchula on the 11th Day of November,
1865.

Treaty between His Excellency the Right Honourable Sir John Lawrence, G.C.B., K.S.I., Viceroy and Governor-General of Her Britannic Majesty's possessions in the East Indies, and their Highnesses the Dharm and Deb Rajahs of Bhootan concluded on the one part by Lieutenant-Colonel Herbert Bruce, C.B., by virtue of full powers to that effect vested in him by the Viceroy and Governor-General, and on the other part by Samdojey Deb Jimpe and Themseyrensey Donal according to full powers conferred on them by the Dharm and Deb Rajahs.

Article I

There shall henceforth be perpetual peace and friendship between the British Government and the Government of Bhootan.

Article II

Whereas in consequence of repeated aggressions of the Bhootan Government and of the refusal of that Government to offer satisfaction for those aggressions, and of their insulting treatment of the officers sent by His Excellency the Governor-General in Council for the purpose of procuring

an amicable adjustment of differences existing between the two states the British government has been compelled to seize by an armed force the whole of the Doars and certain Hill Posts protecting the passes into Bhootan, and whereas the Bhootan Government has now expressed its regret for past misconduct and a desire for the establishment of friendly relations with the British Government, it is hereby agreed that the whole of the tract known as the Eighteen Doars, bordering on the districts of Rungpoor, Cooch Behar, ^a and Assam, together with the Talook of Ambaree Fallacottah and the Hill territory on the left bank of the Teesta upto such points as may be laid down by the British Commissioner appointed for two purpose is ceded by the Bhutan Government to the British Government for ever.

Article III

The Bhootan Government hereby agree to surrender all British subjects, as well as subjects of the Chiefs of Sikkim and Cooch Behar who are now detained in Bhootan against their will, and to place no impediment in the way of the return of all or any of such persons into British territory.

Article IV

In consideration of the cession by the Bhootan Government of the territories specified in Article II of this

Treaty, and of the said Government having expressed its regret for past misconduct and having hereby engaged for the future to restrain all evil disposed persons from committing crimes within British territory or the territories of the Rajahs of Sikkim and Cooch Behar and to give prompt and full redress for all such crimes which may be committed in defiance of their commands, the British government agree to make an annual allowance to the Government of Bhootan of a sum not exceeding fifty thousand rupees (Rupees 50,000) to be paid to officers not below the rank of Jungpen, who shall be deputed by the Government of Bhootan to receive the same. And it is further hereby agreed that the payments shall be made as specified below :-

On the fulfilment by the Bhootan government of the conditions of this Treaty twenty five thousand rupees (Rupees 25,000).

On the 10th January following the 1st payment, thirty five thousand rupees (Rupees 35,000).

On the 10th January following forty five thousand rupees (Rupees 45,000).

On every succeeding 10th January fifty thousand rupees (Rupees 50,000).

Article V

The British government will hold itself at liberty at any time to suspend the payment of this compensation money either in whole or in part in event of misconduct on the part of the Bhootan Government or its failure to check the aggression of its subjects or to comply with the provisions of this Treaty.

Article VI

The British government hereby agree on demand being duly made in writing by the Bhootan Government to surrender under the provisions of Act VII of 1854 of which a copy shall be furnished to the Bhootan Government, all Bhootanese subjects accused of any of the following crimes who may take refuge in British dominions. The crimes are murder, attempting to murder, rape, kidnapping, great personal violence, maiming, dacoity, thuggee, robbery or burglary, cattle stealing, breaking and entering a dwelling house and stealing therein, arson, setting fire to a village, house or town, forgery or uttering forged documents, counterfeiting current coin, knowingly uttering base or counter felt coin, perjury, embezzlement by public officers or other persons and being an accessory to any of the above offences.

Article VII

The Bhootan Government hereby agree on requisition being duly made by, or by the authority of, the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal to surrender any British subjects accused of any of the crimes specified in the above Article who may take refuge in the territory under the jurisdiction of the Bhootan Government, and also any Bhutanese subjects who after committing any of the above crimes in British territory shall flee into Bhutan, on such evidence of their guilt being produced as shall satisfy the local court of the district in which the offence may have been committed.

Article VIII

The Bhootan Government hereby agree to refer to the arbitration of the British Government all disputes with, or causes of complaint against the Rajahs of Sikkim and Cooch Behar, and to abide by the decision of the British Government, and the British Government hereby engage to enquire into and settle all such disputes and complaints in such manner as justice may require, and to insist on the observance of the decision by the Rajahs of Sikkim and Cooch Behar.

Article IX

There shall be free trade and commerce between the two Governments. No duties shall be levied on Bhootanese goods.

imported into British Territories, nor shall be Bhootan Government levy any duties on British goods imported into, or transported through Bhootan territories. Bhootanese subjects residing in British territories shall have equal justice with British subjects and British subjects residing in Bhootan shall have equal justice with the subjects of the Bhootan Government.

Article X

The Present Treaty of Ten Articles having been concluded at Sinchula on the 11th day November, 1865, corresponding with Bhootan year Shim Lung 24th day of the 9th Month, and signed and sealed by Lieutenant-Colonel Herbert Bruce, C.B., and Samoojey Deb Jimpey and Themseyrensey Donai, the ratification of the same by His excellency the Viceroy and Governor-General or His Excellency the Viceroy and Governor-General in Council and by their Highnesses the Dhurm and Deb Rajahs shall be mutually delivered within thirty days from this date.

(Sd) H. Bruce, Lieut. Col.

Chief Civil and Poltl. Officer.

(Sd) In Debnagri

(Sd) In Bhootea Language

This Treaty was ratified on the 29th November, 1865 in
Calcutta by me.

25th January 1866 (Sd) John Lawrence
Governor-General

25th January 1866 (Sd) W.^U Myr
Secy. to the Govern-
ment of India.

APPENDIX VIConvention between Great Britain and Tibet, signed at Lhasa on the 7th September, (1904.)

Whereas doubts and difficulties have arisen as to the meaning and validity of the Anglo-Chinese convention of 1890, and the Trade Regulations of 1893, and as to the liabilities of the Tibetan Government under these agreements, and whereas recent occurrence have tended towards a disturbance of the relations of friendship and good understanding which have existed between the British Government and the Government of Tibet; and whereas it is desirable to restore peace and amicable relations, and to resolve and determine the doubts and difficulties as aforesaid, the said Governments have resolved to conclude a Convention with these objects, and the following articles have been agreed upon by Colonel F.E. Younghusband, C.I.E., in virtue of full powers vested in him by His Britannic Majesty's Government and on behalf of that said Government, and Lo-Song-Gyal-Tsen, the Ga-den Ti-Rimpoche, and the representatives of the Council, of the three monasteries Se-ra, Dre-pung, and Ga-den, and of the ecclesiastical and lay officials of the National Assembly on behalf of the government of Tibet.

I. - The Government of Tibet engages to respect the Anglo-Chinese convention of 1890, and to recognize the Frontier between Sikkim and Tibet, as defined in Article I

of the said Convention, and to erect boundary pillars accordingly.

II. - The Tibetan Government undertakes to open forthwith trade-marts, to which all British and Tibetan subjects shall have free right of access at Gyantse and Gartok, as well as at Yatung.

The Regulations applicable to the trade-mart at Yatung, under the Anglo-Chinese Agreement of 1893, shall, subject to such amendments as may here after be agreed upon by common consent between the British and Tibetan governments, apply to the marts above mentioned.

In addition to establishing trade-marts at the places mentioned, the Tibetan government undertakes to place no restrictions on the trade by existing routes, and to consider the question of establishing fresh trade-marts under similar conditions if development of trade requires it.

III. - The question of the amendment of the Regulation of 1893 is reserved for separate consideration, and the Tibetan government undertakes to appoint fully authorised delegates to negotiate with representatives of the British Government as to the details of the amendments required.

IV. - The Tibetan Government undertakes to levy no dues of any kind other than those provided for in the tariff to

be mutually agreed upon.

V. - The Tibetan Government undertakes to keep the roads to Gyantse and Gartok from the frontier clear of all obstruction and in a state of repair suited to the needs of the trade, and to establish at Yatung, Gyantse, and Gartok, and at each of the other trade-marts that may here after be established, a Tibetan Agent, who shall receive from the British Agent appointed to watch over British trade at the marts in question any letter which the latter may desire to send to the Tibetan or to the Chinese authorities. The Tibetan Agent shall also be responsible for the due delivery of such communications, and for the transmission of replies.

VI. - As an indemnity to the British Government for the expense incurred in the despatch of armed troops to Lhasa, to exact reparation for breaches of treaty obligations, and for the insults offered to an attacks upon the British Commissioner and his following and escort, the Tibetan Government engages to pay a sum of pounds five hundred thousand equivalent to rupees seventy five lakhs - to the British Government.

The indemnity shall be payable at such place as the British government may from time to time, after due notice, indicate, whether in Tibet or in the British districts of Darjeeling or Jalpaiguri, in seventy-five annual instalments

of rupees one lakh each on the 1st January in each year, beginning from the 1st January, 1906.

VII. - As security for the payment of the above mentioned indemnity, and for the fulfilment of the provisions relative to trade-marks^t specified in Articles II, III, IV, and V the British Government shall continue to occupy the Chumbi Valley until the indemnity has been paid, and until the trade marts have been effectivel^y opened to three years, whichever, date may be the later.

VIII. - The Tibetan government agrees to raze all forts and fortifications and remove all armaments which might impede the course of free communication between the British frontier and the towns of Gyantse and Lhasa.

IX. - The Government of Tibet engages that, without the previous consent of the British government, -

- (a) No portion of Tibetan territory shall be ceded, sold, leased, mortgaged or otherwise given for occupation, to any Foreign Power;
- (b) No such Power shall be permitted to intervene in Tibetan affairs;
- (c) No Representatives or Agents of any Foreign Power shall be admitted to Tibet;
- (d) No concessions for railways, roads, telegraphs,

mining or other rights, shall be granted to any Foreign Power, or to the subject of any Foreign Power. In the event of consent to such concessions being granted similar or equivalent concessions shall be granted to the British Government;

(e) No Tibetan revenues, whether in kind or in cash, shall be pledged or assigned to any Foreign Power, or to the subject of any Foreign Power.

X. - In witness whereof the negotiators have signed the same, and affixed there unto the seals of their arms.

Done in quintuplicate at Lhasa this 7th day of September in the year of our Lord one thousand nine hundred and four, corresponding with the Tibetan date, the 27th day of the seventh month of the Wood Dragon year.

Declaration signed by His Excellency the Viceroy and Governor-General of India, and Appended to the Ratified Convention of 7th September, 1904.

His Excellency the Viceroy and Governor-General of India, having ratified the Convention which was concluded at Lhasa on 7th September, 1904, by Colonel Younghusband, C.I.E. British Commissioner for Tibet Frontier Matters, on behalf of His Britannic Majesty's Government, and by Lo-Sang Gyal-Tsen, the Ga-den Ti-Rimpoche, and the representatives of

of the Council, of the three monasteries Sera, Dre-pung and
^a
Ga-den, and of the ecclesiastical and lay officials of the
National Assembly, on behalf of the Government of Tibet, is
pleased to direct as an act of grace that the sum of money
which the Tibetan Government have bound themselves under
the terms of Article VI of the said Convention to pay to His
Majesty's Government as an indemnity for the expenses
incurred by the latter in connection with the despatch of
armed forces to Lhasa, be reduced from Rs. 75,00,000 to
Rs. 25,00,000; and to declare that the British occupation of
the Chumbi Valley shall cease after the due payment of three
annual instalments of the said indemnity as fixed by the said
Article, provided, however, that the trade-marts as stipulated
in Article II of the Convention shall have been affectively
opened for three years as provided in Article VI of the
Convention, and that, in the mean time, the Tibetans shall
have faithfully complied with the terms of the said Conven-
tion in all other respects.

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