

TWO LETTERS FROM RANGA NATH PANDIT* TO B. H. HODGSON.

Thakurlal Manandhar

Kathmandu

In 1837, owing to the intrigues of the Pande faction, General Bhimsen Thapa was put in irons and imprisoned and Rana Jang Pande managed to obtain the position of Prime Minister. But later, the charge against Bhimsen was discovered to be purely an invention to bring about his downfall. The Pandes confessed and Rana Jang had to be dismissed. Ranga Nath Pandit, who had before obtained the position of a Chief Justice became a 'stop-gap' Prime Minister. But when he came to realise that the weak-witted and fickle-minded king was not much in his favour and that it was impossible for him to conduct the policy of the government as he thought right, he soon resigned that post. Puskar Shah was then appointed and he too soon resigned. 'Prime minister after Prime minister strutted his appointed month or so upon this unreal stage until at the beginning of the year 1839 Rana Jang again assumed command of the anti-Thapa forces.'¹ The old charge against Bhimsen was again resurrected and Bhimsen was again thrown into prison. Students of Nepalese history at that period are quite aware of the fact how the astute old statesman was to perish in his underground cell as a result of the mad folly of Rana Jang's action on July 20, 1839. What followed was the government's anti-British policy. On 1st Nov. 1840, Rana Jang was again dismissed and his supporter the senior Queen died of *awal* in the Terai on 6th Oct. 1841. The two anti-British forces who were 'the gravest—almost the last—danger to peace between Nepal and her great Southern neighbour'² were removed. Then followed the appointments of Fateh Jang and later of Mathbar Singh and at long last in the tangled condition of Nepalese politics came the horrible incident of the Kot Massacre. Ranga

*The name Ranganath is wrongly spelt as Raghunath by Perceval Landon and Pudma Jang Bahadur Rana in their works. This is evidenced by the two letters herein published. It was sometime in 1952 that photo—copies of the letters were given to me by Sir Christopher H. Summerhayes, the then British Ambassador in Nepal for translation into English. He did not say where they came from.

1. Perceval Landon: Nepal, vol. 1, p. 91

2. Op. cit, p. 95

Nath Pandit had to flee the country like the other nobilities for safety. The two letters that follow reveal that since the time of Bhimsen, he was in favour of establishing good and friendly relations with the British to save the country from ruin.

Of this man, Perceval Landon gives a right estimate which is as follows : "He was typical of his caste. He accepted the office of Prime Minister on two occasions, but rapidly realized that the dangers of the post were far more serious than its dignities or emoluments. He was supported by no one, and always took the first opportunity to resign. His chief preoccupation during his term of office was the safety of his own person, and it was not of such men as he that a Governor of Nepal could be made during these terrible times."³

TRANSLATION OF THE LETTERS

1. To Mr. B. H. Hodgson

Benares
Marga Shirsha
7 Wednesday

My dear friend,

I am getting on quite well. I hope you too are well. News at this end is good enough. Your kind letter dated Wednesday, Kartik badi 9 was received on Kartik sudi 15. Happy to hear news of your good self and to have received your kind favour in writing to me. You know already of the events that happened in Nepal in recent years.

I am now here in Benares together with my two sons. Only my wife is in Nepal. I gather that my younger brothers, i. e. the third and the fourth, and the sons of my younger brother, i. e. the second who were in Nepal are now expelled from that country. The third of my brothers has now arrived in Ramnagar while the whereabouts of the fourth one is not known. The son of my second brother has not yet arrived in this country. Chautara Guru Prasad Sah, with his wife, his son, and his brothers and nephews have all fled from Nepal and have now arrived in Gorakhpur. Bhimsen Thapa's brother Ranabir Singh Thapa, who had become a fakir, has now come to Benares with his fourth son and also Singhabir Pande together with his son, while all the other nobilities like Sherjung Thapa, Rana

3. Op. cit., p. 108

Ujjwal Thapa and others, the grandsons of Bhimsen Thapa and of Dalbhanjan Thapa and others have now many of them arrived in Betiah.

Again, nowadays Jang Bahadur, taking His Majesty's eldest son into confidence, is creating an impression that Her Majesty the Queen is making an attempt to enthrone her own son by assassinating him and his brother. The Queen has now been made powerless (imprisoned). Ten or twelve of her men have been beheaded (?) and troubles are still afoot in Nepal. From hence it has become too difficult for men of good intention to remain in that country with their life and property made secure. When these nobilities all will come to gather I shall be able to know their ideas. I shall then speak to the Bada Saheb here and also write to let you know. I have spoken to the Bada Saheb here about my interpretation of the recent events. He tells me that Mr. Thoresby will go to Kathmandu as Resident, that he will wait and see what course of action a man of integrity like him will adopt and that after considering the matter over for about 20 or 25 days he will confer with you and then act as may be deemed needful for our mutual benefit.

He has asked me to write to you accordingly. You know well enough how in the past as well I had done my best to strengthen our friendly relations with the Company's Government. And now that I have come to the protection of the Company, I shall leave no stone unturned to work for the continued friendship between the two Governments. I ask you as a friend of mine to speak to the Bada Saheb here and also to your friends in the Company's Government so as to recommend me for their help and assistance in enabling me to support myself with the honour and dignity I deserve. I have sent for my family to come over and live in the Company's protection. Even though we may have to be in Kathmandu on business, we have decided to make our home in the Company's territory. As a good friend of mine you are my only support to depend upon in such times as this. I shall be writing to you off and on as to the news of what will happen in Nepal in days to come. In my opinion, you had better write to Mr. Thoresby, the Resident in Nepal, about what you consider to be necessary. Well you know better than I do. More next time.

With best wishes and regards,

Yours Sincerely,

Shri Guru Panditraj Shri Ranganath Pandit

2. To Mr. B. H. Hodgson

My dear friend,

I am quite well here and I shall be happy to know you are well too. Regarding news here, it is all right.

On Poush badi 12 Tuesday Major Kapinder Saheb Bahadur was kind enough to come over with your letter to me. He read over the letter to me explaining the contents in Hindi all to my satisfaction. He made me learn everything that was significant. I was extremely delighted to learn that as a real friend you have done me a big favour. May you live long and obtain honour and respect. So do I pray to God.

As regards news here, His Majesty and Her Majesty the Queen both came to the Government Headquarters in Barewa, and on Poush badi 3 they left for Katarbana. Jang Bahadur is in Nepal working under the orders of the son of His Majesty. Old nobilities with their families are living in different parts of the Company's territory.

There is a rumour that His Majesty has started (to go) back to Nepal. That is not known for certain. I shall let you know about this later. I hope the Resident in Nepal as well as your good self have come to know of my intentions to go on pilgrimages as much as I can, to live in a right place and to be wishing good of the Government as best as one could in accordance with your good advice, and to think of God always for me and for my sons and brothers to work in obedience to the orders of the Government. This will be possible through your kind efforts. I shall leave my family behind in a certain place and shall go on a pilgrimage to Kaushika in the east. Also I intend to pay you a visit. Till that time I hope you will be writing to me so as to make me happy.....

With best wishes and regards,

Yours Sincerely,

Shri Guru Panditraj, Shri Ranganath Pandit



NEPALI TEXT OF THE LETTERS

स्वस्तिश्री सर्वोपमायोग्य राजभारोद्धरण समर्थ परमाप्त श्री श्री श्री वरायन होटन हाजसन साहव बहादुरकेषु इत श्री गुरु पण्डितराज श्री रङ्गनाथ पण्डितस्य शुभाशीर्वाद पूर्वक पत्रभिदम् ईहा कुशल छ तहा तपाईको कुशल क्षेमरह्या चित्तसानन्द होला आगे ईहाको समाचार भलो छ । उप्रान्त कार्तिक वदि ९ रोज ४ का तीकोपत्र कार्तिक शुदि १५ का दिन आई पुग्यो तपाईको कुशल क्षेम र मलाई षातिर्जमा पाउंदा मनमा बडो आनन्द भयो अधिको नेपालको हाल सुरथ तपाइलाई मालुमै छ मेरा छोरा २ समेत म बनारसमा छु जनाना मात्रै नेपालमा छन्, साहीला कांछाभाई र माहीला भाईका छोरा नेपालमा थियो उहाँबाट निकाली दिया छन्, र साहीला भाई रामनगरका इलाकामा आई पुग्यो कांछा भाइको फलाना जग्गा छ भन्या ठेगाना छैन माहीला भाईको छोरा अक एस मुलुकमा आई पुग्याको छैन चौतारा गुरुप्रसाद शाह आफ्ना जनाना र वहाँका छोरा भाई भतीजा गैरह समेत भागी गोरखपुरमा आई रह्याछन भीमसेन थापाका भाई फकीर भयाका रणवीरसिंह थापा काहिंला छोरा समेत र सिंहबीर पांडे छोरा समेत बनारस आई रह्याछन्, सेरजङ्ग थापा रणउज्जल थापा गैरह भीमसेन थापाका नाती गैरह थापाहरू र दल भंजन पांडेका नाती गैरह भला मानिस धेरै वेतियाका जिल्लामा आई रह्याछन आजकाल फेरी जङ्गबहादुरले...का जेष्ठ पुत्र सित मिली...ले हजुरहरूलाई मारि आफ्ना छोरालाई राज्यमा बसाउन लाग्याकाछन् भन्या कुरा पारी...लाडैकुद गरायो ...का तरफका १०।१२ जना मानिस पनि छाट्यो अरू धुमधाम छँदै छ अब उप्रान्त भलामानिसले जीउ धन बचाई त्यस मुलुकमा बस्न गान्हो पन्यो सबं भारादार बटोलिया पछी उनको आशय बिस्तार बुकी याहाँ बडासाहव सित पनि भनौंला तहाँ पनि लेखी पठाउंला मेरो अर्थकन याहाँका बडासाहवसित पनि बिस्तार गन्यो हाल तसवी साहव रजीडं भइ नेपाल जान्छन् इ साहवदाना छन् इनले वहाँ पुगी-कन क्या वन्दोवस्त गर्छन् २०।२५ दिन विचार गरी हाजसन साहवका र मेरा सल्लाहले आफ्नु संभार हुन्या काम गरौंला वाहाँ साहवलाई यसै लेखी पठाउनु भन्या षातिर्जमा दिया अघि पनि सर्कार कम्पनीमा दोस्तीको मज्बुतीको मेहनत गन्याको तपाइ दोस्तले बेसगरी जानु बुऊनु भयाको छ आज पनि सर्कार कम्पनीका पनाहमा आयाको छु आफ्ना बुद्धी वर्गतले भेटाया सम्म दुवै सर्कारको मिलाप रहन्या काम गरिनै छ तपाई मित्रले याहाँका बडा साहवछ्यौ र अरू आफ्ना दोस्त साहेवान छ्यौ मदत सिफारीस गरी इज्जत हुर्मतसित हाभ्रा पालना हुन्या पाठ गरी दिनु होला नेपालका परिवार पनि कम्पनीका पनाहमा झिकी पठायी कामले नेपाल जानु आउनु पन्या पनि घर कम्पनीका पनाहमा राखीन्या छ सब

कुराको भरोसा तपाईंको भित्रको छ अब उप्रान्त नेपालको जो हवाल होला लेख्दै रहूँला नेपालका रजी-डंट तसवी साहवलाई पनि लेखन्या मुनासीव लेखीगयो बढियो होला भनी मेरा मनमा आउँछ जान्या आफु हुनुहुन्छ विशेष किमधिक मिति मार्ग शीर्ष शुदि ७ रोज ४

स्वस्ति श्री सर्वोपमायोग्य राजभारोद्धरण समर्थ परमाप्त श्री श्री श्री धरायन होदन हाजसन साहव बहादुर केषु इत श्री गुरु पण्डितराज श्री रङ्गनाथ पण्डितस्य शुभाशीर्वाद पूर्वक पत्रमिदम् इहा कुशल छ तहाँ तपाईंको कुशल क्षेम रह्या चित्तसानन्द होला आगे यहाँको समाचार भलो छ उप्रान्त पौष वदि १२ रोज ३ का दिन मेजर कपिडर साहव बहादुरले मेहरवानगी राखी मेरा घरमा आई तपाईं मित्रको पत्र ल्याई वाची हिन्दुईले सब चिठीको हवाल मलाई बुझाई मेरो बहुते तसल्लह गर्नु भयो अर्थ विस्तार सुनी तपाईं परम मित्रले बहुते धरोवाको मेहरवानगी राख्याको बुझी मनमा बडो आनन्द भयो यस्तानिर्मल परममित्रको आयु र मान ज्यादा बढाउन यसै कुराको प्रार्थना गरिन्छ यहाँको हाल सुरत भन्दा...२ को डेरा...३ समेत वारा जिल्लामा बरेवा नाम भयाका कचहरीका जग्गामा आई पौष वदि ३ का दिन कटवना पाउ लाग्नु भयो जङ्गबहादुरले छोराका हुकुमले काम गरी नेपालमा रह्याको छ पुराना भारादार सबका परिवार समेत सर्कार कम्पनीका मुलुकमा जग्गामा रह्याका छन्... जान भनी पाउ लाग्नु भयाको छ भनी बाहिर भन्छन् आशये अरु निश्चय षत्याको छैन जो होला सो पछि लेखी पठाउला नेपालका रजीडंट साहवबाट तपाईं भित्रबाट मालुम पनि भयो हो मेरा र तपाईंहरूले भन्याको बुद्धिवर्गतले सक्क्यासम्म सरकारको शुभ चिन्तन गरी हुर्मत आफु साथ शुठाउँमा बस्नु सक्क्यासम्मका तीर्थ गर्नु... १ को भजन गर्नु छोरा भाइहरूले सरकारले अन्हायाको काम गर्नु स्ही ईरादा छ सो तपाईं भित्रका मेहरवानगीले हुन्या छ परिवारहरूलाई एक जग्गामा थनक्याई पूर्व कौशीकाका तीर्थ गर्नु तपाईं मित्रसित भेट गर्नाको मनछ भेट नहुंज्यानि तपाईं मित्रको पत्र आउँदै रह्या मनमा परम आनन्द रहला...



