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.’2 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 Qneen 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’* 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

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*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

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
नेपाली टेक्स्ट अफ दी लेटर्स

स्वस्तिकी स्वागतमायोग्य राजधारीदरण सम्भव परम्पराय श्री श्री श्री बराहन हुतन हाजन साहब बहादुरके उत श्री गुरु पंडितराज श्री रज्ञानाथ पंडितस्य शुभार्थिविशाल पूर्वक प्रतिभादृष्ट श्री हृदा कुशल छ तथा तपाईको कुशल क्षेत्रहरू विस्तारन त्योर श्री ह्रासको समाचार भलो छ। उप्रान्त कालियक वर्ष ९ रोज ४ को तीकोपत्र कालिक श्रद्धा १५ को दिन आफ्नो पुस्तको तपाईको कुशल क्षेत्र र मलाई पाठिज्ञामा पार्दा मनमा बडो आनन्द भयो अर्थात नेपालको हाँल सुरुह तपाईलाई मालुम छ मेरा छोरा २ सेमेट म सानासमा छ जनाना मातृ नेपालमा छन् र नारायण भाई रामनगरका इलाकामा दोस्रो पुस्तको छान्छ पाँची फलान गर्न छ भन्न ढेकाना छैन माहीला भाईका छोरा अर्थात एक मुलुकमा आफ्नो पुस्तको छन नैवारा गुरुप्रसाद शाह बालका जनाना र दुई छोरा भाई भतोजा गंगा समेट भानी गोरखभुमा आफ्नो राधाखान भीमसेन धापाका भाई फकीर भयाका रणवीरसिंह धापा काहीला छोरा समेट र तिहीबर पाडे छोरा समेट वनारस आफ्नो राधाखान तेरजङ्ग धापा रणजीतन धापा गंगा भीमसेन धापाका भादी गंगा धापाहरू र दल भजन पन्डिका नाती गंगा भला मानिस धेरै वेत्याका झिलामा आफ्नो राधाखान धाजीले फेरी ज्ञानबहुमुखी ठाकुरबाई बसाउन लाखिकाअन्त्य भन्न वुरा वाघीर इलाम तरफका १०१२ जना मानिस पनि छाँटो भन्न हुनुहुनु छन् अज उपान्त धातामानिसले जीठ धन बचाउ द्वारा मुलुकमा बनन गाँवो प्रस्तुत रामादार वहैलिया पिछो उनको आशय विस्तार बुढी याहीं बढासाहब सिन पनि भनेला तह्न पनि लेखी पठाउन तिरो अर्धकाल याहींका बढासाहबसिन पनि विस्तार गन्धो हाँल सवारी साहब रोजङ्ग भने नेपाल जान्हुँ द साहचर्या छैन इस्ते वहाँ पितृकहा व्यवहार व्यवस्था गन्धबुढौ २०२२ दिन विचार गरी हाजन साहचर्या र मेरा सलाहको आफ्नु सम्मान हुन्छ काम गरिओ बाहुँ साहचर्याँ दस्तियो पत्राँ प्रभाव धातिज्ञामा दिना अव्वल पनि तकैया कम्पनीमा दोस्तोको स्वतन्त्रतिको मेहनतमा गर्ने तपाई दोस्तले बेलमालाको जानु बुढुमुँ भयानको छ अब पनि सकै तकैया कम्पनीका निर्माणा आफ्नोको छ आफ्ना कुबूटी वर्गाले देखाउँ दस तकैया सकै तकैया स्वतन्त्र कम्पनी रामनगर छैन दोस्त साहचर्या छैन मद विफारीस गरी इनजुल हुभेतित हाँला पालना हुन्छ पाँट गरी दिनु हुन्छ नेपालका परिवार पनि कम्पनीका पंगोस्तितमा सिकी पढायराम नेपाल जानु बाँटू पनि पनि पनि घर कम्पनीका पंगोस्तितमा रामनत्र छ सब
कुराको भरोसा तपाईको निवासमा प्लान असा उभार्दा नेपालको जबले रहेको लाई नेपालको राजी-दंड तस्वीर साहित्यलाई पनि लेख्न्था। मुनासीब लेखीयो बाट यसलाई होला भैनी मेरामान्ना आउँदा जान्यास क्षुद्र हुँदैँ सविशेषको निधिधिको मिति मार्ग रोकेप दूर दो रोज ४।

स्वस्तिको विद्वानसँग राजभारोद्दरण समक्ष परमाणु भेष भैली रहेको होटन हाजसन साहित्य प्रवाहित राज र राख्यालाई पनि पुस्तकाळ राज मुहूर्तको हुँदैँ राख्यालाई प्रचारित भन्नुहुन्छ। केही यसको कुराको क्रम रहेको लाई होला भैनी मेरानामा आउँदा तपाईं प्रत्यक्ष हुँदैँ निर्देशकहरूको लाई मलाई बुझाउँ। मेरो बुझाउँ तसल्ल गर्नुहोस्। भयो अब्ज विस्तार सुनी तपाईं परम निर्देशकहरूबाट बुझाउँ। यसलाई राख्यालाई पुस्तकको प्रार्थनासँग गरिन्छ। यसको हाल तुल्य सार्थक... २ भनेर... ३ समेट बारा जिल्लामा जर्नेको नाम भ्याका कृतिका जगमामा आउँदा प्रत्य क्रम ३ का बिन कार्यरत गर्नुहुन्छ। भयो जबलिबाहुरले छोरका हुँदैँले काम गर्ने नेपालमा राख्यालाई छुँदैना भारादार सबको विवाह भन्नुहुन्छ। वाहिर भन्नुहुन्छ। बालकहरूको छथैन जो होलास रोच पछि लेखी पत्रकथा नेपालका राजीदंड साहित्यमा तपाईंभित्रबाट मालुम पनि भयो हो मेरारत प्रत्यप्रायको बुझाउँ निर्देशकहरूको साहित्यसँग नरकाको गुण विस्तार सन्दर्भ माथै आँक्ष शुद्धास्थ बसन साहित्यमा तीर्थ गर्नु।... १ को भजन गन्तूछो छोरा भाभुरले सर्कारले अन्नहाराको राख्यालाई छुँदैना साहित्यमा राख्यालाई तपाईं भित्रको मित्रहरूलाई हुँदैँ छ। परिवारहुँदैँ एकमा निःशुल्क पूर्व फौजीकाको तीर्थ गन्तूतपाईं मित्रको पनि भेट गर्नको मन्द भेट नदुङ्गान्त पत्र आउँदैँ राख्यामा नमन परम आनन्द रहेका...