

A FEW TIBETAN CUSTOMS AND A FEW THOUGHTS SUGGESTED BY THEM. THE PRAYER-FLAGS.

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I had the pleasure of paying in May-June this year, a five weeks' visit to Darjeeling, that beautiful queen of the Himalayan hill-stations, which interests us—people from the south—mostly from two points of view.

Introduction.

Firstly, its beautiful scenery.¹ I have seen the Himalayan snows from several places in the north—from the valleys of Cashmere, Kangra, and Kulu, and from hill stations like Simla, Murree and Dharmśâlâ. I have walked over its snow in a shady corner of the Banihal Pass in Cashmere and on a hill at Nalkanda near Simla. Thus, I have enjoyed the Himalayan scenery from various places. But, I think the scenery of Darjeeling has a charm of its own, the beautiful tea-gardens on the slopes of the adjoining hills adding to its beauty. The sight, on a clear morning, of Mount Everest, the highest peak of the Himalayas (29,000 ft.), from the Senchal Peak (8100 ft.) and Tiger Hill (8,500 ft.), about 7 to 8 miles from Darjeeling, satisfies our curiosity of seeing from a distance the loftiest mountain in the world, but it is the great Kinchinganga, that pleases us the most. Standing on the summit of the Tiger Hill, one clear and quiet morning, on the 27th of May 1913, with the Himalayan range before me, with Mount Everest in the furthest distance, and the grand Kinchinganga presenting its brilliant and

¹ As said by Mr. Bomwetsch, in his "Hand-book to Darjeeling," the Himalayas, the Niagara Falls and the Pyramids of Egypt are considered to be "the three greatest wonders of the world."

beautiful snowy front in the nearest distance, I was led to remember these first few lines of Milton's *Comus*:—

“ Before the starry threshold of Jove's court
My mansion is, where those immortal shapes
Of bright aerial spirits live inspèred
In regions mild of calm and serene air,
Above the smoke and stir of this dim spot
Which men call Earth.”

Secondly, its Bhutiâ people. The next thing that interests us, southerners, is the people of the different hill races of the Mongolian type that are found there. We see at Darjeeling, the people of Sikkim, Nepal, and Bhutân. Darjeeling itself, at one time, formed a part of the country of Sikkim. Its district now meets the frontiers of Sikkim, Nepal, and Bhutân—of Nepal on the west, of Sikkim on the north, and of Bhutan on the north-east. Tibet is situated further to the north. “Bhutiâs” is the general term by which the people of these different countries, who profess Buddhism as their religion, are known here. They come from Sikkim, Nepal, Bhutân and even Tibet.

The *Darjeeling Gazetteer* says:—“The word Bhotiâ means properly an inhabitant of Bhot or Tibet, and is synonymous with Tibetan. The native names of Tibet. The native name of Tibet is Bod, and the Sanskrit form of this word was Bhot. The Sanskrit-speaking races of India have accordingly called the inhabitants of this region Bhotiâs. The country of Bhutân was so called by the Bengalis in the belief that it was the end of Bhot (Bhotânta), and the natives of Bhutân, as well as Tibet, are indiscriminately called Bhotiâs. The English word Tibet, appears to be derived from the Mongolian Thübot, which is the Mongolian name for the northern portion of the Tibetan plateau.”¹

¹ Bengal District Gazetteers.—Darjeeling, By L. S. S. O'Malley (1907), p. 46.

The above-mentioned native names of the country of Tibet—the Tibetan Bod and the Sanskrit Bhot—seem to signify some connection with the general belief of the early Tibetans, the belief of their very early Bon religion, which believed in the existence of spirits or goblins. We know, the Sanskrit word for goblins is *bhûta* (भूत lit. those that existed in the past), the equivalent of which we see in the words “bhût kâl,” *i. e.*, the past times or past tense.

In the Vendidâd of the Parsees, we have the mention of a demon “Buiti”¹. It seems to be the Sanskrit *bhûta*, *i. e.*, a spirit. The Pahalvi Bundelesh² speaks of this Buiti as But. It says :—“The demon But is that which is worshipped among the Hindus. His splendour is contained in the idols. For example, they worship the idol of a horse.” Some identify this word But with Buddha, the founder of Buddhism. But it seems to be a common reference, both to the belief of the Hindus of India, and of the early inhabitants of Tibet, who believed in the influence of spirits or goblins and who had idol-worship.

The sturdy, good looking, broad-featured Bhutiâs at once attract our attention at Darjeeling. Their religious customs, manners and belief also appeal to us at once, because we observe some of them, even in our daily walks, and in our frequent visits to the Observatory Hill, where they have a sanctuary or place of worship. As M. Bonvalot, the author of “Across Tibet” says : “In no country is religion so much in evidence as in Tibet. Every man has a praying-wheel in his hand which he continually turns even on horse back. Piles of stones engraved with mystical sentences are met with ; flags bearing the same mystical sentences flutter in the wind ; and in the very hills and rocks they are inscribed.” M. Bonvalot³ thus sums up, as it were, the

¹ Vendidâd XIX, 1, 2, 43 (Spiegel, 4, 6, 139).

² Bundelesh, Ch. XXVIII. 34; *vide* my Bundelesh pp. 38, 39.

³ “Across Tibet,” being a translation of “De Paris au Tonkin à travers le Tibet inconnu,” by Gabriel Bonvalot. Translated by C. B. Pitman (1891), Vol. I., p. 31.

different forms in which the Buddhists of Central Asia keep up their religion in evidence: "To the north we can see on the sides of the mountain an inscription in very large letters. These are the sacred sayings of the Buddhists, which believers can decipher miles off. Never in my life have I seen such big letters; all the slopes of the Tien Shan would scarcely be sufficient to print a whole book. The Buddhists like to manifest their devotion in the open air, and when we leave the valley to reach by a pass the defile of Kabchigué-gol, we meet *obos*, or heaps of stones, upon most of which prayers have been engraved, at each culminating point of the undulating ground. These *obos* are generally placed on an eminence, at one of those spots where beasts of burden are allowed to halt and get breath. Advantage is often taken of these halts to make a light collation; after that, prayers are offered that the road may be a good one, when starting on a journey, while thanks are returned because it has been good, if the journey is ending. By way of showing respect or gratitude to the divinity, stones are heaped up, and a pole is often placed in the ground, with a prayer written on a piece of canvas tied to the end of it; those who follow after add more stones. Workmen specially employed, and travelling lamas, engrave prayers upon slabs and deposit them at the spot. Thus the *obo* is constituted, and the shepherds, the travellers, and the tribes on the march swell its proportions every time they pass, the heaps of stones gradually acquiring such colossal proportions that they have the appearance of monuments. Many Buddhists deposit images of Buddha, and of Tsong Kaba, the great reformer; and small pyramids of earth represent chapels, as I was informed. Others deposit carved fragments of horn, pieces torn off their garments, bits of horsehair (which they tie on to a stick), or anything which come handy to them; and when they are making the presentation, they offer up prayer."

One sees religion in evidence in all these forms, on a small scale at Darjeeling and in the adjoining hill-towns.

I propose placing before the Society, in the form of a few papers, the result of my observations and of my study at this station. I had the pleasure of observing their religious customs and manners at three of their monasteries and at their houses. I had visited their villages of Bhutiâ Basti, Tong Song, Âloo Bâri (potato-garden), Ghoom, Sukiapuri, and the village formed on the frontier of Nepaul. Their monasteries, known as *gompâs*, interested me very much, and I remember with pleasure the several hours I spent for several days in visiting them, and in the company of their Lamas or priests. Their monasteries appealed to me, because I was interested in the subject of monasteries when I was at College, where I had competed for a Prize Essay on the subject of "The Dissolution of the Monasteries in England in the reign of Henry VIII." It was that interest that had led me to visit some monasteries in Italy. I remember specially my visit, on 30th July 1889, of the Chartreuse or Monastery of St. Martino at Naples, which, at one time, belonged to the Carthusian monks, but is now held by the Italian Government, and which contains a picture—valued, as I was told, at 150,000 francs—of the three Persian *Magi* going with all oriental pomp to see the child Christ. Again, what added to the interest of visiting these monasteries, was the fact, that it was believed by some, that, as Buddhism had some influence on the early Christianity, the Buddhist monasteries had some influence on Christian monasteries.

Darjeeling has three monasteries in its vicinity. One is near the Bhutiâ Basti, on the road leading to Lebong. The second is situated on a hill near Ghoom. It commands a beautiful view of the country round about. The third is at Ging, about two or three miles below Lebong. It is situated in a picturesque quiet place surrounded by a number of fruit trees. The first monastery being nearer, I had paid it about six visits, and had spent a number of hours there, observing its religious services, and joining its religious processions. I had paid two visits to the Ghoom monastery and one to that at Ging.

In Darjeeling, one sees, at it were, only a tinge of the Tibetans and of their religion, manners and customs. So, I pray, that to my papers, only that much value may be attached, as to those based on one's observations at, what may perhaps be called, the borders of the Tibetan country. The result of the observations has been supplemented by the knowledge gained from a study of the books of travellers and from a personal talk with some of them. Among the travellers, I name with gratitude, Rai Sarat Chandra Das Bahadur, C.I.E., the author of the "Journey to Lhasa and Central Tibet" and of other interesting publications on Tibet, and Revd. Ekai Kawaguchi of Japan, the author of "Three years in Tibet." I had the pleasure of having long interesting conversations at Darjeeling with these well-known travellers.

The first thing that draws one's attention on entering Darjeeling and on visiting its monasteries and the houses of its Bhutiâs, is, what can be generally classed as, the Prayer-machines of the Tibetans.

Under the subject of "Prayer-machines," I include their

Prayer-flags

Prayer-wheels, and

Prayer-beads or Rosaries.

I will speak to-day of their Prayer-flags. Mr. Walter Hepworth, in his article on Flags, in the Encyclopædia Britannia,¹ says: "It is probable that almost as soon as men began to collect together for common purposes, some kind of conspicuous object was used, as the symbol of the common sentiment, as the rallying point of the common force." He adds that "flags or their equivalents have often served, by reminding men of past resolves, past deeds, past heroes, to rally to enthusiasm, those sentiments of *esprit de corps*, of family pride and honour, of personal devotion, patriotism, or religion, upon which, success in warfare depends."

¹ Vol. IX, 9th edition, p. 276.

As said in the above passage, we see, that religion, is one of the many things, the sentiments of which are sought to be rallied to enthusiasm by means of flags. In no religious community, is this seen to such a great extent as among the Bhutiâs or Tibetans. It is a question, whether the first "common purpose," for which man began to use the flag, was Religion, or War. From the ancient history of Persia, as referred to by Firdousi, it appears that the flag first came to be used by men for the purpose of warfare some thousands of years ago. Kâveh Âhangar (Kâveh, the Blacksmith), when he raised a revolt against the tyrannous rule of Zohâk, prepared a flag for the first time in Persia. He took a wooden pole, and raised over it the piece of leather with which he covered his body while working at his workshop as a blacksmith. Therewith, he first raised the banner of revolt, and many Persians rallied round it. With that banner—the very first Irânian banner—he and his followers went to Faridun, and implored him to march against Irân, and to relieve the country from the oppressive yoke of Zohâk. Faridun marched with that primitive banner to Irân, and freed the country from the foreign rule of Zohâk. From that time forward, the Kâvehâni banner (*i. e.*, the banner first prepared by Kâveh, the blacksmith)¹ became the standard of Irân, and carried its army to many a victorious battle. It formed the National banner, and, though its material was changed more than once, under the national name of Darafsh-i-Kâvehâni (*i. e.* the Drapeau of Kâveh), it continued as a whole till the time of King Yazdazard, the last of the Sassanian kings, when, being embellished with rich and precious jewels by many kings, it was valued by crores of rupees. In the Vendidâd,² which seems to have been written at some time before 1200 B. C., we find a reference to a drapeau flying over a royal city. The royal city

¹ For further particulars about this banner *vide* my paper on Gurz (Journal of the Anthropological Society of Bombay, Vol. VIII, No. 7, pp. 478-496). *Vide* my Anthropological Papers (Part I), pp. 313-29.

² Vendidâd, Chap. I, 7.

of Bâkhdhi (Balkh), where lived king Vishtâsp, the royal patron of the religion of Zoroaster, is spoken of as the city of "the exalted drapeau" (erêdhvô drafshâm).

But, for the present, we will lay aside the question, as to which was the first to introduce the use of flags among mankind—the Army or the Church—and simply say, that flags played a prominent part in the places of worship of many nations. In our country, we see them in the form of *Dhajâs* or *nishâns* on Hindu temples and Mahommedan mosques. They take a prominent part in religious processions.

The Bhutiâ or Tibetan flags, which play a prominent part in the religion of the Tibetans as a kind of prayer-machine, differ from the flags of other nations in this, that they are, to a great extent, what may be called, Prayer-flags. The flags of the Hindu temples or Mahommedan mosques carry some religious devices, but they are not prayer-flags in the sense, in which the flags of the Tibetan *gompâs* or monasteries, or some of the flags of the Tibetan houses are. First of all, we must clearly understand what we mean by "Prayer-flags."

By Prayer-flags are meant flags, (a) which have prayers inscribed on them, and (b) which, by fluttering high in the air, are believed to repeat, on behalf of the votaries who offer them, certain prayers.

(a) As to the first essential of a prayer-flag, *viz.*, the inscription of prayers on it, the prayers may be short or long, according to the size of the flags. All the monasteries have wooden plates upon which the prayers are carved. They are generally imported from the big monasteries of Tibet. With an application of a particular kind of ink or a kind of colour, the Lamas stamp the flags with the prayers inscribed on the plates.

The votaries carry their own cloth to the *gompâs* or monasteries, and the Lamas or priests there, stamp the cloth with prayers. The most common prayer inscribed on it is the well-known Buddhist prayer "Om Mâni Padme Hûm", *i. e.*, "Hail! The Jewel

in the Lotus Flower.”¹ This short prayer seems to hold the same position among the Tibetans, as the *Pater Noster* among the Christians, the *Ahunavar* among the Zoroastrians, the *Bi'smillâh* among the Mahomedans. The votaries carry the prayer-stamped cloths home and hoist them on, or rather attach them to, long wooden poles. They take these poles to their monasteries or other smaller sanctuaries as offerings, and put them up in the compounds of the monasteries. They also put them up in the front of their houses. It is said that they put them up, even when travelling, near their tents.²

(b) As to the second essential of a prayer-flag, *viz.*, that it should flutter high in the air, the principal idea at the bottom of the custom of having a prayer-flag is, that, by fluttering in the air, it repeats, on behalf of the votaries, the prayers inscribed on it. So, the higher the pole of a flag, the greater the chances of its catching even the gentlest of breezes, and the greater the flutter. As each fluttering movement is believed to repeat the prayer inscribed on the flag, the greater the flutter, the greater the meritoriousness to the offerer.

In the case of other religious communities, their places of worship have generally one flag, or, at times, two or three. But, in the case of the Bhutiâs or Tibetans, their *gompâs* or monasteries, their shrines and other places of worship have a number of them. On entering into the compounds of their monasteries, you see, at times, about 30 or 40 posted there. On grand occasions, public and private or domestic, they present a flag as an offering to the monastery, and plant it in its compound, believing, that its fluttering there would repeat a number of prayers on their behalf in that place of worship. Again, in the case of some other nations, their religious flags are generally confined to their religious places or to their religious processions, but in the case

¹ Vide Dr. Waddell's "Buddhism of Tibet or Lamaism", pp. 148-49, for a full explanation of this mystic formula.

² "Across Tibet", by Bonvalot, Vol. II, p. 12.

of the Bhutiâs or Tibetans, they are put up even at their houses. There is hardly a Bhutiâ house, which has not one or more flags fluttering high in the air before it. In fact, you can distinguish a Bhutiâ village from a distance by the number of flags you see flying there from big poles. Occasions of joy and of grief are the times when they hoist these flags. On occasions of joy they erect them for "good luck."¹

When a person dies in a house, a flag in his honour is hoisted.

Prayer-flags and death. It is believed to repeat prayers on his behalf or for his good. If there is more than one death during the year, more than one flag is hoisted. They generally see, that the flag flutters there during, at least, the first year of the death. If the cloth of the flag is torn by the force of the wind they renew it.

Besides these flags on long poles seen at the monasteries and near the houses of the Bhutiâs, one Variegated colours of prayer-flags. sees small flags or bannerets in various places, principally at some public or private shrines or altars, on streams or rivers, and in the hands of wandering priests or priestesses. At the smaller shrines and at the altars in the houses, these flags also take the form of a long string of cloth cut in a variety of forms. One sees such a shrine or altar on the Observatory Hill at Darjeeling. It is a sight worth seeing and even worth admiring, for those who take an interest in the subject, to see Bhutiâ women coming up to the sanctuary on this hill in the early morning, and to observe the devotion with which they present their offerings, and hang rows of bannerets there. I exhibit a few strings of these bannerets.

These mountain tribes live in the midst of the variegated colours of Nature. The wild flowers, shrubs and plants of the hill-forests give them, as it were, a taste for a variety of colours. The rising and the setting sun gives various beautiful hues and tints to their mountains and to the perpetual snows opposite.

¹ Col. Waddell's "Lhasa and its Mysteries", p. 145.

They live and grow as it were in a feast of colours. So, they have a wonderful fondness for colours. I have noticed this in many a hill tribe of the Himalayas. I have seen this in their mountain-fairs—at the mountain-fair of Sipi at Simla on 14th May 1906, and at the mountain-fair of Siddhbâri on the way to Dâdâ from Dharamsâlâ in the Kângra Valley on 23rd May 1899. The women muster at these fairs in large numbers. It is a pleasure to see them in their dresses of variegated colours. Even their shoes display a variety of colours. At Darjeeling, they generally buy only the soles of their boots in the Bazaars, and make up the upper part at home from thick warm cloths of variegated colours according to their tastes. This taste of colours they carry to their gods, to their temples, shrines and altars.

It is said that all art had its early home in the Church. The Crude art displayed in them. Church has been the original home of Drama, Music, Painting, Sculpture and such other arts. One sees that, in however a rude beginning, on the Observatory Hill at Darjeeling. On many a pleasant morning, I was there, saying my silent prayers to Nature and to Nature's God, and hearing the prayers of the hale and hearty simple folk of the hill. The women came there, holding in one hand a home-made portfolio, containing various things for offerings, and in the other a kettle or jug containing their favourite drink of *Marwa*, their god's drink. Among the various things of offering, one was a piece of cloth. They carried with them scissors with which they cut the cloth artistically—and their art was, of course, of the roughest kind—according to their taste. They then consecrated it by waving it several times over the fire burning before the altar, and hung it over the shrine or altar. The cloth took the form of a string of pendants or *loran*. Some of the pieces of the cloth were stamped with prayers. One sees, as it were, a forest of such strings of pendants on the Observatory Hill, not only over the central shrine or altar, but also over some of the adjoining trees, under the shadow of which stood some smaller shrines.

Next to the shrines, one sees such strings of pendants also on the altars in the houses. Again, bannerets in the form of strings of pendants are seen over streams and streamlets. The Tibetans believe in a class of spirits or goblins, hovering everywhere and especially on the banks of streams or rivers. So, in their honour, they put up small flags across these streams. These take the form, not of poled-flags, but of a hanging string of pendants, such as those we find hung on gay ceremonial occasions in our country. The larger a stream, and the broader its ravine or bed, the greater is the seat of the spirit. So, the string, or, if I were to speak in our Indian word, the *toran* of small flags is, at times, 100 to 150 feet long, according to the breadth of the ravine through which the stream flows. It is fastened to trees on both the banks of the ravine. At times, the stream may be hundreds of feet below their houses or roads, and at times at the distance of a mile or so. In that case, instead of going down to the stream, they put up the string bannerets near their villages on some place above the stream. I saw a very long string of this kind at the village of Tong Song, which stands above a big stream, whose roaring noise, after a heavy downfall of rain, was heard for days together on a part of the Mall.

Rai Sarat Chandra Das Bahadur, while speaking of the flag-poles about 20 to 25 ft. high with inscribed banners, which he saw at Lhasa, thus speaks of the "fluttered fringes about a foot and a half broad" seen at various places in Tibet: "These 'fringes' are cotton strips on which are printed charms (mantras). Usually the figure of a horse¹ occupies the middle of the strip. They are called *lung-ta* or wind-horse, The 'inscribed banners' belong to the same class of objects, and have also prayers or passages from the scriptures printed on them."²

Col. Waddell³ thus speaks of these prayer-flags: "These prayer-flags are luck-compelling talismans. They are called 'Dragon-horses,' and bear in their centre the figure of a horse with the mystic 'Jewel' on its back, and surrounding it are spells which combine Indian Buddhist mysticism with

¹ *Vide* the reference to the worship of the horse in the Pahlavi Bundesh (Chap. xxviii 34) in connection with the worship of But, *vide* above.

² "Journey to Lhasa and Central Tibet", by Sarat Chandra Das, C.I.E. (1902), p. 149 n.

³ "Lhasa and its Mysteries", by Dr. L. A. Waddell (1905), pp. 85-86.

Chinese myth, and are intended to invoke the aid of the most favourite divinities of the Lamas upon the person who offers the flag and whose name or year of birth is generally inscribed thereon. The divinities invoked are (1) He who conveys wisdom (*Manjusri*); (2) He who saves from hell and fears (*Avalokita* incarnate in the Dalai Lama); (3) He who saves from accident and wounds (*Vajrapani*); (4) He who cleanses the soul from sin (*Vajrasatwa*); and (5) He who confers long life (*Amitayus*)."

Colonel Waddell reproduces in his book the inscription on a flag and gives its translation as follows¹ :—

“ Hail! *Wagishwari* *mum* 2!

TIGER. Hail! to the Jewel in the Lotus! Hung 2! LION.

Hail! to the holder of the Dorje³ (or 3
thunderbolt)! Hung 2!

Hail! to the Diamond Souled one 2!

Hail! *Amarahnihsiwantiye Swahâh*!

(The above is in Sanskrit; now follows in Tibetan):

Here! Let the above entire collection (of deities whose spells have been given) prosper . . . (here is inserted the year of birth of the individual), and also prosper—

The Body (*i.e.*, to save from sickness),
The Speech (*i.e.*, to give victories in disputes),
And the Mind (*i.e.*, to obtain all desires);

PHENIX. Of this year holder (above specified) DRAGON
and may Buddha's doctrine prosper!"

One sees these prayer-flags, at Darjeeling, in, as it were, their different forms of evolution, or rather of degeneration. We see

¹ “Lhasa and its Mysteries”, by Dr. L. A. Waddell (1905), p. 87. The words in the 4 corners represent the position of the figures of these animals in the flag.

² These are the spells of the first four divinities named in Col. Waddell's above description of the prayer-flag.

³ *Dorje* is a religious instrument in the monastery. It symbolises ecclesiastical authority. It is this word which has given Darjeeling its name.

them in their full forms in the compounds of the monasteries. These forms are, more or less, preserved near the houses of the Bhutias. On coming down the hill, we find near the houses of poor Bhutias the flag-poles with very sparse cloth. Then, some of them seem to be even without the prayer forms. Lastly, we find mere poles without any flag or cloth attached to them.

In the high ritual of the Tibetan Church, there is a particular process of flag-saluting in which their different gods seem to have different flags. Dr. Sven Hedin gives an interesting description of the ceremony.¹ In his description of the New Year Festival of the Court of the Tashi Lama he says :—

“ Now the religious ceremonies begin. The Tashi Lama takes off his mitre and hands it to an acolyte. All the secular lords on the open platforms also take off their mushroom-shaped hats. Two dancers with gruesome masks, in coloured silken dresses with wide open sleeves, come forth from the lower gallery, the curtain being drawn aside, and revolve in a slow dance over the quadrangle. Then the Grand Lama is saluted by the eleven principal standards in Tashi-lunpo; every idol has its standard, and every standard therefore represents a god of the copious Lamaistic mythology, but only the standards of the eleven chief deities are brought out. The flag is square, but strips or ribands of a different colour project at right angles from the three free edges; there are white flags with blue strips, blue flags with red ribands, red with blue, yellow with red strips, etc. The flag is affixed in the usual way to a long painted staff, round which it is wrapped when a lama brings it out. He marches solemnly up, halts before the box of the Tashi Lama, holds out the staff horizontally with the assistance of a second lama, and unrolls the flag, and then the emblem of the god is raised with a forked stick to salute the Grand Lama.

¹ Trans-Himalaya, Vol. I., p. 315.

It is then lowered again, the flag is rolled up, and the staff is carried sloped on the shoulder of the bearer out through a gate beneath our balcony. The same ceremony is observed with all the standards, and as each is unfolded a subdued murmur of devotion rises from the assembly."

Col. Waddell, in his very interesting article on prayer-flags in his learned book on the Buddhism of Tibet¹, points to the pillars of Aṣoka in India, as the source or origin of the Tibetan Prayer-flags or Burmese Prayer-posts. He says: "Both are erected by Buddhists for the purpose of gaining merit and displaying aloft pious wishes or extracts from the law; and the surmounting geese form an essential feature of the abacus of several Aṣoka pillars. The change from pillar to post could be easily explained, as great monoliths were only possible to such a mighty Emperor as Aṣoka; but every one could copy in wood the pious practice of that great and model Buddhist who had sent his missionaries to convert them They (prayer-flags) are called by the Lamas *Da-cha*, evidently a corruption of the Indian *Dhvaja*,² the name given by the earlier Indian Buddhists to the votive pillars offered by them as railings to Stupas The concluding sentence of the legend inscribed on the flag is usually 'Let Buddha's doctrine prosper'³ which is practically the gist of the Aṣoka inscriptions."

We referred above to the fact of the religion being much in evidence everywhere in Tibet, the prayer-flags being one of the ways of keeping it in evidence.

¹ The Buddhism of Tibet or Lamaism, by L. A. Waddell (1895) pp. 408-18.

² Cf. the Indian word ध्वजा *dhajā* for a flag.

³ Cf. a Zoroastrian's daily prayer. "Dād Din Beh Mâzdayaçnân âgahi ravâi goâfaragâni bâd haftê keshvar jamin" i.e., "May the justice, knowledge, promulgation, and glory of the good Mazdayaçni religion spread over (all) the seven continents of land."

We read the following on the subject in the narrative of Bogle's Mission.

"They erect written standards upon the tops of them (mountains), they cover the sides of them with prayers formed of pebbles, in characters so large 'that those that run may read.' " ¹

One can easily understand, why religion is more in evidence in Tibet than elsewhere, and why there are a number of prayer-flags, prayer-wheels, and big-lettered prayers on rocks, near springs and rivers in Tibet, and why they believe in the existence of spirits in streams and rivers, when he understands the difficulty, at times, of crossing these unbridged streams and rivers, a difficulty which causes the loss of many lives. Dr. Sven Hedin's description of the terror which struck him at the end of his Tibetan Journey, while crossing the Sutelj, gives us an idea of the difficulty of the road and also of the fact why religion is so much in evidence in Tibet. While observing the mode in which he was made to cross the Sutelj, suspended "between sky and water from a cable across its bed, he says :

"I have explored this river and discovered its ultimate source. Surely the discovery demands a victim! I never entertained such great respect for this grand majestic river as at this moment, and suddenly I realised the meaning of the *chhorten* pyramids and cairns of the Tibetans on banks and bridges, those cries for help against the uncontrollable powers of nature, and those prayers in stone to inexorable gods. My eyes fall on the gigantic white cauldron boiling in the abyss below." ²

The way, in which Dr. Sven Hedin was made to cross, or rather was pulled over to cross, the river by means of a cable, was so terror-striking that the two missionaries, who had come

¹ Narratives of the Mission of George Bogle to Tibet and of the Journey of Thomas Manning to Lhasa by C. R. Markham (1876) p. 70.

² Trans-Himalaya, Vol. III., pp. 395-96.

to the opposite bank to receive him, congratulated him "on having performed the short aerial journey without mishap" and told him that "an Englishman had turned back on seeing the cable." No wonder then, that the uncultured simple Tibetans resort frequently to prayers in this land of risks and dangers. I personally realize the terror which should strike one on a similar occasion, as I had the opportunity of seeing, though not of crossing, a rope-bridge over the Jhelum in Cashmere, while going from Murree to Srinagar in May 1895. This bridge was not of the same type, but was one, over which passengers are carried blindfolded on shoulders by the villagers used to the mode. One thought, suggested to us by the consideration of all the above modes in which religion is kept in evidence in Tibet, is, that even civilized countries try to a certain extent, to keep it in evidence. The inscriptions in large characters of scriptural passages on the walls of churches and on the walls of schools in scriptural classes, and the religious paintings in places of worship are, to a more or less extent, another form of keeping religion in evidence.
