VIEWS IN THE HIMALA MOUNTAINS

J.B. FRASER

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Scene near Gangotree in Himalaya Mountain.

Gangotri is in Uttarkashi district in the state of Uttarakhand. It is a Hindu pilgrim town on the banks of the river Bhagirathi. It is on the Greater Himalayan Range, at a height of 12,313 Feet.

"Gangotree, the source of the most sacred branch of the Ganges, ought to hold and does bear the first rank among the holy places. Here all is mythological if not holy ground. Here Mahadeo sits enthroned in clouds and mist amid rocks that defy the approach of living thing, and seems that make desolation more awful. Gods, goddesses, and saints here continually adore him at mysterious distance, and you traverse their familiar haunts. But, although Gangotree be the most sacred, it is not the most frequented shrine, access to it being far more difficult than to Buddrinauth."

"Fifteen feet above the stream, is situated the small temple, or mut, dedicated to the goddess Ganga, or Bhagiratee. In former times no temple made with hands was provided for the worship of the deity, but within these few years, the piety of Umer Sing Thappa, the chief of the Ghoorkha conquerors, appropriated a sum of money of about four or five hundred rupees for the erection of the small building which is now placed there".

"The temple was remarkably neat, quite in the Chinese style, as usual: it is sacred to the goddess Bhowannee. The whole of the interior is sculptured over in wood, with infinite labour, and probably forms a detail of the exploits of the deity, she seems to have been frequently engaged with monsters of very uninviting shapes, the portion of the carving, however, which neither represents the human nor animal figure, is by far the most beautiful. The whole roof, which is formed of fir wood, is richly cut into flowers and ornaments entirely in the Hindoo taste, with a sharpness and precision, yet an ease that does honor to the mountain artist: and, considering his tools and materials, it is truly wonderful".

VIEWS IN THE HIMALA MOUNTAINS

BY

JAMES BAILLIE FRASER, Esq

Foreword By

William Dalrymple

Text by

Robert Hutchison

Published for Mrs. Meera Singh Akoi

&

Ashok Agrawal

by

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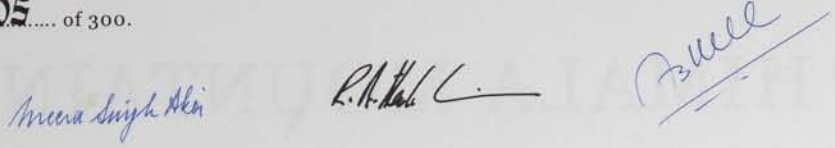

Dedicated to Shri Jasdev Singh Akoi.

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अस्त्युत्तरस्यां दिशि देवतात्मा हिमालयो नाम नगाधिराजः।
पूर्वापरौ तोयनिधीवगाह्य स्थितः पृथिव्या इव मानदण्ड ।।1।।
यं सर्वशैलाः परिकल्पय वत्सं मेरौ स्थिते दोगधरि दोहदक्षे।
भास्वन्ति रत्नानि महौषधीश्च पृथूपदिष्टां दुदुहर्धरित्रीम् ।।2।।

In the northern part there is a mighty mountain by the name Himalaya, the abode of perpetual snow, fittingly called the lord of mountains, animated by Divinity as its soul and internal spirit. Spanning the wide land from the eastern to the western sea, be stands as it were like the measuring rod of earth. At the direction of the king Prithu the self same mountain was used as a calf by all other mountains. While the Mount Meru (Kailash) stood as an expert milker of cows and milched the Mother Earth, the milk of shining gems and medicinal herbs of wonderful virtues and supreme efficacy (in order to adorn the Himalayas).
- Kalidas's Kumarasambnavam

There is a land that excites the imagination and evokes the most refreshing feeling of purity and spiritual well being. It rises abruptly above the scorched plains of summer, a land crowned by majestic heights. Its pristine beauty fires the mind. It is Himalaya, abode of Gods. Its silence, its bracing air, its everlasting snows, deodar forests and noble rivers – equally venerated as a source of fertility and plenty for all of Hindustan – lend themselves to meditation and therefore to knowledge. This majestic landscape whose lofty peaks appear as staircases rising to the Heavens has always been in my veins through the tales told by my grandmothers, the epic fables of the scriptures, and the poems and songs read or heard during my childhood. The images I received from them of the Great Himalaya have been etched in my mind from very early on. I first visited this legendary land when I was in my mid-teens and was spellbound by the beauty of its snowcapped peaks, its evergreen forests and magic meadows, its deep gorges and roaring torrents; the ascetic sadhus and hardiness of the hill people have been a source of inspiration. Since my awakening, the Himalaya has exerted such a powerful force in my life that I am drawn again and again to answer its captivating call; nothing gives me more peace of mind than the spiritual solitude experienced during long walks among the scented pines and cedars of this sacred land.

James Baillie Fraser, a young amateur artist from Scotland, was similarly someone unable to resist the call of the Himalaya, and in 1815 he visited its innermost sanctuaries. He made sketches during his journey into what was then the unknown and later with the help of William Havell, the leading lithographic artist of the day, he produced a folio containing twenty amazing Himalayan views, regarded today as among the finest mountain landscapes ever painted. I have the privilege of reproducing these rare aquatints. By re-uniting them in this limited edition my aim has been to capture the grandeur of the Himala Mountains as Fraser knew them for discerning readers and collectors the world over to appreciate and cherish.

The Imperial Hotel, New Delhi's first and foremost hotel, was inaugurated by the Vicereine Lady Willingdon in 1936 and ever since has been a witness to the major events that have shaped our nation. The hotel's co-owner, Jasdev Singh Akoi, is a true connoisseur of fine art. With vision and dedication he has made The Imperial not only one of the finest hotels in the world but through a deep love of art, especially fine prints and engravings, the home of possibly the finest collection of aquatints and lithographs on India in existence. I owe my appreciation of the fantastic world of Antiquarian Books and Lithography to his constant guidance and encouragement.

Mrs Meera Singh, a fine human being, has deep rooted artistic sense. She has provided most valuable and innovative inputs for this book. My heartfelt gratitude goes to Meera and Jasdev Singh Akoi for their unwavering kindness and support.

I wish also to thank Robert Hutchison for writing the beautiful text that accompanies this folio and William Dalrymple for providing a masterful preface. My long time patron and friend Aman Nath is to be thanked as well for his unerring support. My special thanks to Sr. Lawyer Mr. K. K. Venugopal, Mr. Kishore Gidwani, Mr. B. N. Uniyal & to Mr. Tarang Jain of Varroc Group for their constant encouragement & support. In addition, I am grateful to Mr. Hugh Rayner, of Bath, England; a collector of rare Indian books and photographs, for his encouragement and advice. My special thanks to all the members of my team, especially to Ajay Sharma, Anshul Agrawal & Vishu Haq without their hard work this book would have remained a dream. My warmest appreciation however is reserved for my wife Parag, without whose patience, understanding and assistance this endeavour would not have been possible.

Ashok Agrawal, *Director,* Parag Books Pvt. Ltd.

Acknowledgments

The Himalayas have always held special fascination for me. I spent my early years at school in the mountains and grew up with a natural affinity for them. Since my schooldays I have observed them from Bhutan to Kashmir and continue to be enthralled by the majesty of their glaciers, the sweep of their forests and the liveliness of their cascades and torrents that combine to give these snow-capped giants their unmatchable richness of substance and colour.

James Baillie Fraser's Himalayan aquatints represent the earliest images we have of these mountains. They conjure up so magnificently my first recollections of them. Hence I decided to republish Fraser's works for others to enjoy and, I hope, treasure as over the years I have done, for they have given me many hours of pleasure.

I am fortunate to have been exposed to art and the aesthetic side of life since my earliest childhood. The paintings and sketches of my great aunt, the justly famous Amrita Shergil, hung on the walls of our family home, and the scenes and people she depicted were especially familiar to me as they came from the surroundings in which I grew up.

My husband, Jasdev and I have always been interested in Anglo-Indian art. The items we collected dating from late eighteen century onwards provide a unique glimpse of the world that existed two hundred years ago, when travellers wrote about and extolled India's ancient and mystical qualities. These works offer by their detail and descriptive imagery an invaluable record of that past to which we all in some degree belong. It is important, therefore, to protect and preserve them.

When The Imperial was undergoing the massive renovations that my husband, Jasdev, launched in the late 1990s we began searching for other treasures to supplement our existing collection. Thus began a wonderful journey of discovery. Even then these works were rare and difficult to come by. Once we had built up the collection we decided to share it with others. The restoration completed, I encouraged Jasdev to display the collection in the corridors and rooms of the hotel – to make The Imperial a kind of living museum of Imperial Indian art and culture, and to feature at least one artist's work on every floor. I did not know of a place anywhere in the city where it was possible to see the complete Indian collections of William Hodges, Thomas and William Daniell, François Balthaszar Solvyns, Robert Melville Grindlay, Prince Alexis Soltykoff, Emily Eden, Charles Stewart Hardinge, William Simpson, Henry Martens or William Carpenter, to cite but a few.

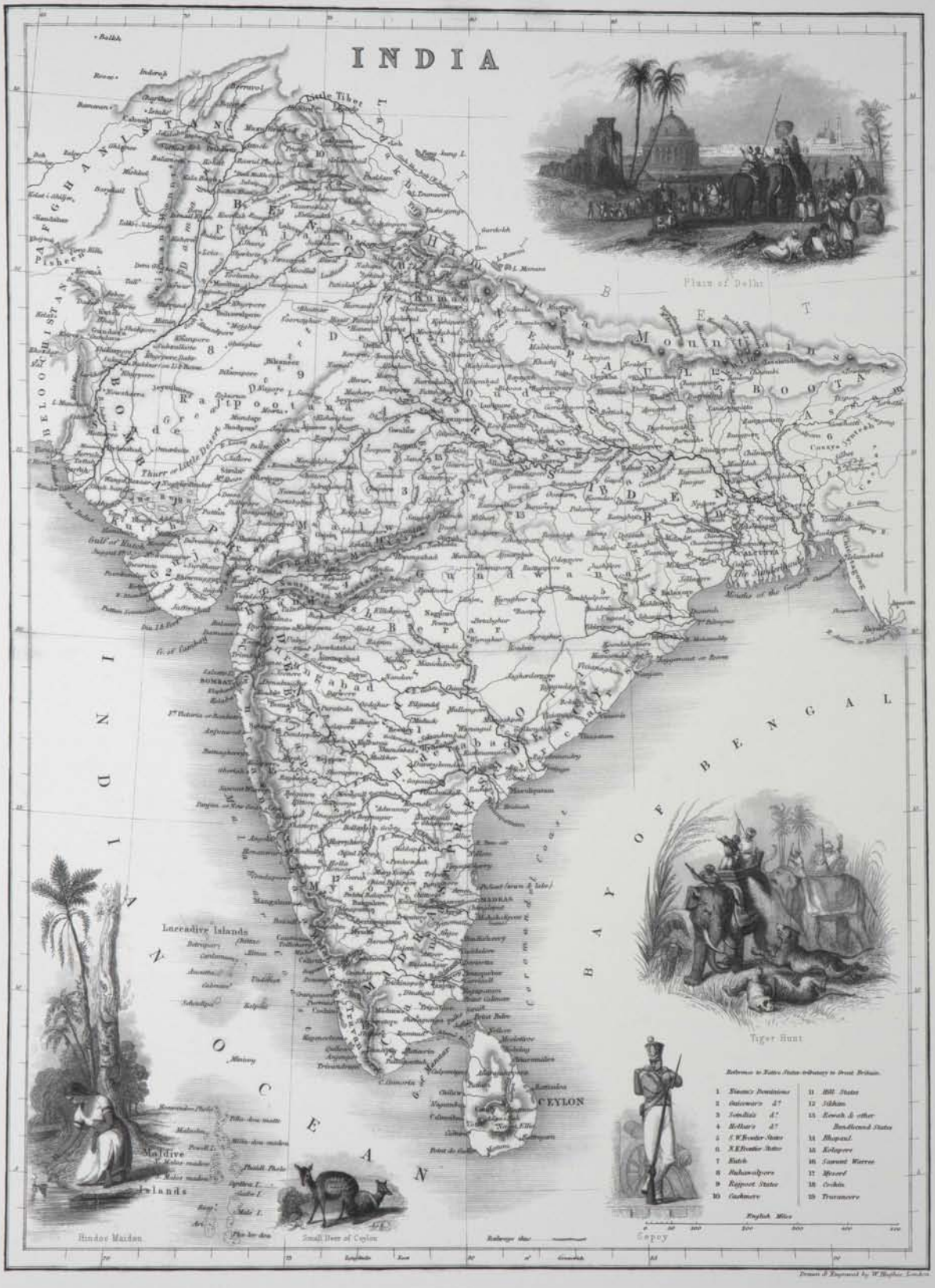
Guests and friends frequently ask us where such works can be found. As limited editions, they are by definition extremely rare and expensive to acquire. For example, an original James Baillie Fraser aquatint – if one is lucky enough to find one – can sell for upwards of two lakhs! Other artists may be even more expensive. For this reason I decided with the help of my friend Mr. Ashok Agrawal and my husband to republish one of our favourites – Views in the Himala Mountains – in its original 'elephant' size format. The assemblage consists of twenty-one plates. It was my intention to make this remarkable series available to art lovers at a fraction of its original cost! We wanted our edition to be as true to the original as possible in form and presentation, in binding, paper quality, printing, and colours, all of which has been painstakingly done in the space of a year.

I am very grateful and wish to thank my friend Mr. William Dalrymple for writing the foreword to this volume. It is important here to note that he has personally followed Fraser's footsteps in the high Himalayas – having a special interest in doing so as his wife, Olivia, who in her own right is a well known and very accomplished artist herself, is a descendent of James Baillie Fraser!

My thanks to Ashok Agrawal, a true antiquarian with a deep appreciation of ancient scripts and art. His advice and support have been invaluable as well his enthusiasm for the project. I extend special thanks to Mr. Robert Hutchison, whose knowledge and love of these mountains have taken him trekking all over the hills that Fraser so masterfully illustrated. He has written a well-researched and masterful text to accompany the plates.

Meera Singh Akoi

* * *



India in 1850

Reproduced from original for Mrs Meera Singh Akoi and Mr. Ashok Agrawal by Parag Books Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, India. September 2011.

FOREWORD

It was a high, clear, Himalayan morning and we were corkscrewing our way up from the banks of the river Bhagirathi, along the steep sides of a thickly wooded valley. The track was soft and mossy and it led though ferns and brackens, thickets of brambles and groves of tall Himalayan cedar trees. Small waterfalls tumbled through the deodars. It was May and after a ten day trek, I was just one day's walk from my destination: the great Himalayan temple of Gangotri, believed by some Hindus to be one of the principle homes of Lord Shiva, and in many ways the Mount Olympus of Garhwal.

I was not alone on the road. The previous night I had seen groups of pilgrims- mainly villagers from Rajasthan- camping beside the temples and bazaars at the bottom of the mountain, warming their hands over small driftwood fires. Now, in the light of morning, their numbers seemed to have miraculously multiplied. Indeed the narrow mountain track now appeared like a great sea of Indian humanity: every social class from every corner of the country was there. There were groups of farmers, illiterate holy men and urban sophisticates from North and South all rubbing shoulders like something out of a modern Indian Canterbury Tales. The rich rode horses or were carried up doolies, a strange cross between a wicker deckchair and a rucksack, but the vast majority of poor pilgrims had no option but to walk.

Every half-mile we would come across groups of twenty or thirty villagers straining up the steep mountain path. Barefoot, bent-backed old men with grey walrus moustaches would be leading their heavily-veiled wives up the slopes; others, more pious, would be bowed in prayer before the small shrines- often no more than piles of pebbles and a calendar poster of Lord Shiva- which were strung out at intervals along the route.

For the pilgrims, the decision to visit the four great Himalayan shrines- the char dhams- near the source of the Ganges was dictated by faith. My own motives were less profound: I was merely curious. Nevertheless I did have one particular reason to want to see the river's source for myself. For it was my wife's distant forbear, the Scottish artist and explorer James Baillie Fraser who, in 1815, was the first Westerner ever to penetrate to this then semi-mythical destination. I had always been gripped by Fraser's account of his epic journey and was fascinated to know how much- or little- the pilgrimage had changed in the 178 years since James had reached the source.

A few days later we had awoken at dawn to find our camp looking straight out over the mountains to Shiv Ling, the white pyramid peak that rises immediately above the source- Gaumukh, or the Cow's Mouth. We were now in the very middle of the Himalayas, miles from any road, and seemed to have entered a kind of mythical world of indeterminate date, place or period. Other than the Himalayan peaks in the distance, there was nothing to place us specifically in India, or even in Asia. The people we had been meeting for weeks were like the cast from an old fairy tale: bearded woodcutters sat chatting in clearings of the forest; nomad herdsmen and shepherdesses wandered past with their flocks, shy and silent.

After weeks in the burned-out heat and dust of the North Indian plains, the damp incense-smell of the leaf mould and the sweet resinous scent of the conifers transported me straight back home to Scotland- exactly as it had done to James Fraser two hundred years previously. Passing through the same area at the same time of year, he recorded in his logbook his pleasure at finding so much that was so familiar from his childhood:

"We now bound China and Tartary and live in a climate very like Scotland," he wrote. "We can go and lie down under the oak, birch, larch, elm or gather wild strawberries and raspberries as at home... Asia was lost to our imaginations." He added: "The delight of such associations of feeling can only be understood by those who have lingered out a long term of expatriation and who anxiously desire the moment of their reunion with their native land."

But even to the homesick exile, the people and the architecture of the region were in many respects more sophisticated than those of Scotland: "...their persons are better clad, and more decent;" wrote Fraser, "their approach more polite and unembarrassed; and their address better than that of most of the inhabitants of Scotland. Their houses, in point of construction, comfort and internal cleanliness, are beyond comparison superior to Scottish highland dwellings."

It was a measure of James Baillie Fraser's open-mindedness that he was prepared to recognise this. At a time when imperialist notions of European racial superiority were accepted by most Westerners without question, Fraser was a rare example of the free-thinker who treated all men alike, irrespective of colour, race or religion; and for this reason today he comes across as a genuinely sympathetic character. On his way to the hills, James had spent several months with his brother William, the assistant to the British Resident in Delhi, who had gone native with a vengeance and become himself something of a White Mughal. He had pruned his moustaches in the Delhi manner and fathered 'as many children as the King of Persia' from his harem of Indian wives. He loved to discuss ancient Sanskrit texts and composed Persian couplets as a form of relaxation. When James arrived in Delhi he found William dressed "in the usual morning dress of the country- a pair of loose drawers & a sort of morning gown cut in the native fashion and called the ungurca; nothing on his neck, a purple foraging hat on his head; large whiskers"- his house too was thoroughly Indianized: "A curiosity," thought James, "tygres skins, caps of tygres heads, saddle cloths of ditto, quantities of saddlery, matchlocks, bows and arrows, quivers, belts, armours, guncases... Persian books and Indian curiosities of all sorts filled up the place." James concluded that "his knowledge of the country and the natives [is such], and his habits are so assimilated that he can do what no other man would think of attempting."

It was William who first had the idea of trying to reach the source of the Ganges, but in the end was unable to accompany his brother, and James ended going without him. While travelling in the Himalayas James wore Gurkha and Pahari dress and shared his tents with his staff. As he trekked through the High Himalayas, he made thousands of sketches of people, landscapes and buildings which he later turned into prints. In Delhi James was already producing sketches which he planned to work up and publish, a project which was eventually to come to fruition in two successful series of aquatints, one on Calcutta, the other of the Himalayas, Views of the Himala Mountains.

From these prints, copies of which we brought with us, it was astonishing for us, following in Fraser's footsteps two hundred years later to see how little the area had changed. There had been little deforestation in these parts and the rhododendrons and deodars grew as freely as in Fraser's prints. The dress of the hill peoples was unchanged: the women still pleated their saris in the same manner; the men still sported the white homespun kurta-dhoti; at higher altitudes this was still supplemented by a thick, locally-woven shawl. New temples were still being built in the traditional manner of this part of the Himalayas: made of carved wood with high pitched rooflines that recall the flying eves of Chinese pagodas, while the squat spires are still surmounted with a canopy decorated with a fringe of wooden bobbins. It was as if the whole area had been frozen in time.

The final trek from Gangotri to Gaumukh is through an almost symbolic wasteland: an inhospitable high-altitude moonscape, twelve thousand feet high, burningly hot by day, icily cold by night. Yet as you near the source, the air of expectancy grows: every cave, or rock wall shelters a hermitage or a holy man. At Bhojbasa, the pilgrims make their last camp, and rise at four the following morning so as to reach Gaumukh at dawn.

It is an extraordinary journey: through the early morning mist ghostly silhouettes emerge, all heading in the same direction, along a trail marked by a line of cairns and tridents. But it is only when you reach a pebble shore, directly under the peak of Shiv Ling, that you can actually catch a glimpse of the site you have travelled so far to see.

I focused my eyes through the mist. As I looked indistinct shapes slowly resolved themselves into solid objects, revealing a sight so strange that it seemed at first as if we had stumbled onto a film set rather than a natural panorama. Ahead, rising perhaps 40 metres into the air, was a solid wall; at first I took it to be rock, but gradually it became clear that it was in fact a crystal amphitheatre of ice. The haze hung like a sheet just above the pointed peak of this ice wall; another thinner line of haze hung over the water at its base, so that the whole glacier appeared somehow disembodied by the vapour, suspended, as it were, between two clouds.

Stranger still, the Ganges flowed directly out of the glacier, emerging not as a small stream which gradually gained volume as it flowed seaward, but rushing from the ice as a fully-formed river, a wide grey swathe of snowmelt, thirty metres across.

No man-made shrine or structure breaks the solitude; no priest intercedes between God and man. Here pilgrims gaze not on an image but on the living Goddess herself, as she rushes out of her ice prison on her journey from heaven to earth. Only when you see this sight can you understand how easy it must have been to deify such a river and you certainly don't have to be a Hindu to feel that this is one of the most extraordinary places on the face of the earth.

Two hundred years earlier, at the end of a much more difficult journey, James Baillie Fraser had stood watching the same sight: "We were now in the centre of the stupendous Himala, he wrote.

Here was the source of that most noble river, equally an object of veneration and a source of fertility and opulence to Hindustan. Moreover, we had now reached the holiest shrine of Hindoo worship which these holy hills contain. These are surely striking considerations, combining with the solemn grandeur of the place to move the feelings strongly. The fortuitous circumstance of being the first European to ever penetrate to this spot was no matter of boast, for no great danger had been braved: the road is now open to any other who chooses to attempt it, but it was a matter of some satisfaction to myself...

The sun was now fully risen and the mist had almost entirely cleared. Soon it would be hot. It was time to head back. At the two great boulders which form the natural gateway to the Cows Mouth, I paused for a last look. A naked sadhu was praying waste-high amid the ice floes of the freezing water; many other holy men were standing as if transfixed on the bank. Like James Baillie Fraser I too felt a tinge of satisfaction at having finally reached this most remote of places; and like him I felt somehow sure that however far I travelled, I was unlikely ever again see so strange and otherworldly a place.

William Dalrymple
New Delhi
Feb 2011

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William Dalyrmple was born in Scotland and brought up on the shores of the Firth of Forth. He wrote the highly acclaimed bestseller In Xanadu when he was twenty-two. The book won the 1990 Yorkshire Post Best First Work Award and a Scottish Arts Council Spring Book Award; it was also shortlisted for the John Llewellyn Rhys Memorial Prize. In 1989 Dalrymple moved to Delhi where he lived for six years researching his second book, City of Djinns, which won the 1994 Thomas Cook Travel Book Award and the Sunday Times Young British Writer of the Year Award. From the Holy Mountain, his acclaimed study of the demise of Christianity in its Middle Eastern homeland, was awarded the Scottish Arts Council Autumn Book Award for 1997; it was also shortlisted for the 1998 Thomas Cook Award, the John Llewellyn Rhys Prize and the Duff Cooper Prize. A Collection of his writings about India, The Age of Kali, was published in 1998.

William Dalrymple is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature and of the Royal Asiatic Society, and in 2002 was awarded the Mungo Park Medal by the Royal Scottish Geographical Society for his 'outstanding contribution to travel literature'. He wrote and presented the television series Stones of the Raj and Indian Journeys, which won the Grierson Award for the Best Documentary Series at BAFTA in 2002. He is married to the artist Olivia Fraser, and they have three children. They now divide their time between London and India.

In Search of Brother William

James Baillie Fraser

They had not seen each other in sixteen years. The reasons were wholly economic: in those days to assure a family's financial wellbeing, Scotland's sons were expected to earn their way from an early age, finding work often thousands of miles from their birthplace as at home the opportunities were scant. Accordingly, in 1799 James Baillie Fraser was sent to manage the family sugar plantations at Berbice in Guyana. He was all of sixteen. Two years later his brother William - then five days short of his seventeenth birthday - sailed for the Orient and a career with the East India Company. With three other brothers and a sister, they were a tightly knit family, but James and William were always the closest. They had spent their childhood roaming the glens and dales around Moniack, the family estate at the head of Beauly Loch, a few miles west of Inverness. The baronial manse, Reelig House, had been built around 1750 by their grandfather, the noted Persian scholar James Fraser. Their father, Edward Satchwell Fraser, had added an extensive walled garden that flanked the forest of Reelig Glen. The estate was not far from Culloden, where two thousand Scots - the cream of Bonnie Prince Charlie's highland army - lay buried, butchered in battle one fine April morning of 1746 by the Duke of Cumberland's troops, and Scotland's hope of independence lay buried with them.

Their father was born five years after the great battle. Educated at Charterhouse, he obtained a commission in the 1st Grenadier Guards. His regiment was sent to America and he served throughout the War of Independence as adjutant to General Simon Fraser, the 12th Lord Lovat, chief of Clan Fraser. After leaving the Army he was appointed Collector of Customs at Inverness and invested the family's fortune in a syndicate that owned sugar plantations in Guyana, eventually acquiring two plantations in his own name. But sugar was a volatile commodity. A few years later the bottom fell out of the market and with it the fortune of the Reelig Frasers.

William was the pretty boy of the family, slight of frame and long of limb, with wispy chestnut locks down to his shoulders, petulant lips, heavily hooded bluish-grey eyes and a pale rosebud complexion. He was said to be frail of constitution. After arriving at Calcutta in February 1802, he attended Fort William College to learn how to become a model civil servant in British India. The following year he was awarded a gold medal that brought with it a cash prize of £500, which we are told he sent home to help alleviate the family debt, then approaching £30,000.

After completing his training, William was posted to Delhi, arriving at the British Residence on 15 January 1806, "six months and a day" after leaving Calcutta, and just in time to breakfast with the Resident, Colonel David Ochterlony. William would become completely hypnotised by the Mughal capital. His duties included attending the Mughal court, hearing petitions at the Residency and extending the process of law to the countryside around Delhi - impressive responsibilities for a lad about to turn twenty-two.

Hindustan, as Upper India was more readily known in those days, was in a state of considerable turmoil. Delhi had fallen to the British in 1803 and the Mughal emperor Shah Alam was placed under East India Company protection. But much of the rest of the newly acquired territories remained in the hands of petty warlords and brigand armies, one more cutthroat than the other. William was constantly touring the villages around Delhi, endeavouring to pacify them sufficiently to introduce an equitable system of revenue collection. Being quick with languages, he had learned to speak the native tongues with prodigious fluency. He also devoured works in Persian and Sanskrit. His knowledge of eastern culture and local dialects meant that he could mix easily with the people and for the most part was greatly admired by them. "From sunrise until 9 o'clock in the morning I am always on horseback with sextant, theodolite and measuring wheel. The same from three in the afternoon until dark... My health is robust and uninterruptedly good, which I owe to constant exercise and stout temperance," William wrote in a letter to his father.

William Baillie Fraser

Not long after William's arrival at Delhi, Colonel Ochterlony was called to other duties, and a new Resident, Archibald Seton, was appointed. He described William as "the most active civil servant in India." Then in 1808 - the same year that the fourth Fraser brother, Alexander, known as Aleck, arrived at Fort William -

William joined Lord Mountstuart Elphinstone's embassy to Afghanistan, which was blocked at Peshawar, resulting in the mission's dissolution a year later. Soon after, William embarked upon an expedition to the land of the Bhuttees, more than 200 miles to the west of Delhi, with Colonel James Skinner, famed founder of a regiment of irregular cavalry known as Skinner's Horse, to pacify this wild and bellicose people and encourage them to take up more sedentary pursuits.

The third brother, Edward, by then had joined James Baillie Fraser at Berbice, but when the estates were sold in 1811 they gave up sugar planting. James returned home to Scotland and Edward joined William and Aleck in India. Edward, however, only remained a short time. Within six weeks he showed signs of consumption. The illness developed quickly and he was sent to convalesce on the island of St Helena in the South Atlantic. He was too sick to travel unaccompanied, so Aleck, in many respects the soul of the family, went with him. Edward died at St Helena on the eve of his twenty-seventh birthday. A saddened and exhausted Aleck returned alone to Delhi. While at sea he noticed that his saliva was tinged with blood, evidence that he too had contracted the deadly disease. In fact, he had less than four years to live.

In Scotland, James was unable to find work and shortly after Edward's death he decided to seek fortune as a merchant in Calcutta. He arrived there in January 1814 and went into business with another Scotsman. Over the next twelve months they made a modest profit, but James was longing to see William again. When Aleck next came on business to Calcutta, James decided to accompany him back to Delhi. William, meanwhile, had received orders to join the Saharanpur Division formed under the command of Major-General Robert Rollo Gillespie. It was one of four army corps created to repel the Gurkhas who, crossing the northern frontier from Nepal, had occupied the Doon Valley, Garhwal and Kumaon. William became the division's political officer. A detachment of Gillespie's troops marched into the Doon Valley, lying at the foot of the great snowy mountains, and attacked the Gurkha fort at Kalunga, six miles northeast of Dehra Dun. The attack was not successful, the Gurkhas being valiant fighters, and so the East India Company troops retired to Dehra Dun to await General Gillespie's arrival with the rest of the division.

At the end of October 1814, Gillespie ordered a new attack on Kalunga, but he was killed leading it, while William narrowly escaped death when an arrow pierced his neck "between the gullet and windpipe, avoiding on each side the arteries and large vessels". He calmly returned to his tent, extracted the arrow, cleaned and bandaged the wound, then sat down to write an express report to Lord Moira, the governor-general.

General Gabriel Martindell succeeded Gillespie in command of the Saharanpur Division and the fort was finally captured at the end of November 1814. The Gurkhas withdrew westwards to Nahan, capital of the small mountain state of Sirmur, where Martindell pursued them. He took Nahan on the day before Christmas 1814, but the Gurkhas retreated into the mountains, occupying the stronghold of Jytock on a lofty ridge above the capital.

On 27 January 1815, James and Aleck left for Delhi. Mainline travel in India was slowly improving. They reached the Mughal capital in early March, only to learn from the new Resident, Sir Charles Metcalfe, that William was in Sirmur. Aleck returned to his seat as a judge in the Delhi law courts. James departed five days later to catch up with General Martindell's army at Nahan. He had decided to keep a travel journal and brought with him the utensils of an artist to make sketches along the way. He reached the capital of Sirmur - "perched like a bird's nest on the brow of a rock" - on Monday, 13 March 1815, but was told that William had been dispatched northwards on a sensitive assignment. His disappointment was profound, for James had travelled a thousand miles overland only to be informed that William had been sent on a political mission to the uncharted hill country in the northwest. Fortunately, one of William's friends took James in hand and told him that the political agent was expected back at Blackhill within days.

Blackhill was the forward British position on the ridge opposite Jytock, 1800 feet higher than Nahan. James decided to set off for the camp in the morning, giving him the rest of the day to explore Nahan. In his Journal he described it as "a small town, but the buildings are of stone, cemented with lime. They are remarkably small, and all have flat roofs. The effect of the whole at first is singular, giving a strange idea of diminutiveness... Perhaps this is necessarily produced by an unconscious comparison with the vast proportions of the surroundings."

He explained that Nahan was built on a hillcrest "so uneven that the whole forms a collection of petty ascents and descents. There is one principal street that, like the others very confined and short, consists of many small flights of steps cut [for] the great convenience of the men but by no means so of the cattle, horses particularly, which animal indeed seems never to have been intended for use in these regions. There are few buildings worthy of notice: the raja's palace has a tolerably neat but not very remarkable appearance, and there are no temples of much consequence or of any splendour to visit. It has, however, for several years been in a state of decay, since the conquest of the Gurkhas ruined all the country." James did not hold a high opinion of the Raja of Sirmur. He explained in his Journal: "Soon after the conquest of Garhwal, Sirmur also fell under the Gurkha tyranny. The reigning prince was a bad and weak man and - I believe from a principle of revenge on some of his neighbours, whom he felt too weak or fearful to attack - he gave encouragement to the common enemy to attempt taking possession of the country. Thus he lost his own crown, and the whole country fell through his treachery."

Next day James reached the camp at Blackhill, noting how the newly cut gun-road up the mountain was "little more than a space cleared of rocks and trees with many deep hollows and in places perpendicular cliff-like sides". He had been there three days when, shortly before noon, an orderly informed him that his brother, the Burra Sahib, had been spotted approaching along the ridge and was not far off. James immediately went to meet him. "[William] had marched 12 miles that morning," he reported in a letter to their mother. "It was an awkward place for a re-encounter [with] the brother I parted from sixteen years before - and how altered he was. He had been rather a weak boy of fourteen. I now met a large stocky man already famous and well known, having by his own exertions, talents and activity gained a most respectable name."

The emotion of the moment was certainly very grand, though James seemed a little disappointed by William's almost formal reserve. "From all I had heard of him I did not expect to be struck by any remembered likeness to his former self - but his appearance was even less similar than I could have expected... His person is nearly as large as our father - he is not so much fat as muscular - but this and much exposure has embrowned and enlarged his features far beyond what anyone of us have ever appeared and removed a sort of sleepiness which marks [Sir Henry] Raeburn's picture of him... Meeting on a high road surrounded by officers, soldiers and servants you cannot suppose that much affectionate greeting could take place between us - and William's general manners now have acquired such an appearance of austerity that the same evidence of feeling which others would shew, and which he actually experienced, was not to be expected of him."

With the British guns in place, the siege of Jytock began in earnest. While William drafted his report, James sketched the battle scene with enthusiasm. "At Jytock I got seized with a desire to delineate some of the objects that met our view and the first impulse was in an odd place - our Batteries - when really it was not quite pleasant, for the enemy's shot were playing over our heads quite briskly..." But, as he later explained: "When the Devil of Drawing broke loose there was no holding him." His entry for Tuesday, 28 March 1815, was full of astonishment: "Last night my brother's Gurkha Company came into camp. Such ragamuffins I have seldom seen. They have Chinese faces, sallow complexion, dark shaggy hair shorn short by the ears and very bushy. Upon their heads they wear a peculiar turban somewhat like the broad Scottish bonnet. Their garments are filthy. They carry besides a tulwar a short crooked knife in their cummerbunds... As in Scotland, filth seems necessary to keep out the cold."

William had indeed recruited an irregular band of Gurkha deserters to help persuade the garrisons of the remaining outposts to surrender. They, like the Mewatties he recruited around Delhi, had become singularly attached to him due to the firm kindness, understanding and respect he paid them.

In addition to Jytock and the fortress of Malaun further to the west, the Gurkha occupiers held a series of strongholds in the hills between the Sutlej and Jumna rivers. At Malaun, operations to expel them were in the able hands of William's old friend, the Boston-born David Ochterlony, soon to be knighted and promoted major-general. But at Jytock the offensive bogged down, as General Martindell showed little fighting initiative. James was not impressed. He wrote: "This old man, the general, seems gifted with the very soul of procrastination and the marrow of obstinacy." A few days later he added: "The despair and vexation of every officer in the army is great, but the old mule will listen to nothing, neither his engineer nor artillery officers, nor to those men of experience."

On Tuesday, 16 April 1815, Ochterlony's troops defeated a strong Gurkha attack on the ridge of Dionthal, overlooking Malaun, after which the fall of the fort itself could only be a matter of days away. At Jytock, however, the Gurkhas seemed more strongly entrenched. On 30 April, when James sat down to make his best sketch of the ridge [Plate 1], Jytock was still firmly in Gurkha hands. He described the scene in his Journal:

"Jytock, the fort to which Ranajor Singh Thapa retreated when he evacuated Nahan..., is situated on the lofty end of a ridge, distant from Nahan in a direct line between two and three miles. Between it and that town run a deep ravine, which occasions the road to wind so much that the distance in travelling is nearly doubled. The ridge extends, first, to the westward by a low neck to Blackhill, the position of our chief camp; from thence in the same direction, and nearly a mile distant, lies the elevated peak called Nownie, where there is a British advanced post. At that point the ridge takes a turn to the northward, and becomes lost on the spur that forms the southern bank of the Jelall River..."

As the siege continued, at the end of April 1815 William received word that he had been appointed Commissioner for Garhwal. Before leaving for Garhwal's capital of Srinagar, however, Lord Moira wanted him to enlist the help of the chiefs of the hill states situated north of Sirmur in blocking the Gurkha line of retreat and also to obtain the surrender of the forts in the hills beyond Nahan that still resisted. For this he was assigned a small military detachment consisting of eight Indian officers, 333 sepoys and Mewatti Irregulars, two pay clerks and an additional escort of 51 jawans from his corps of Gurkha deserters.

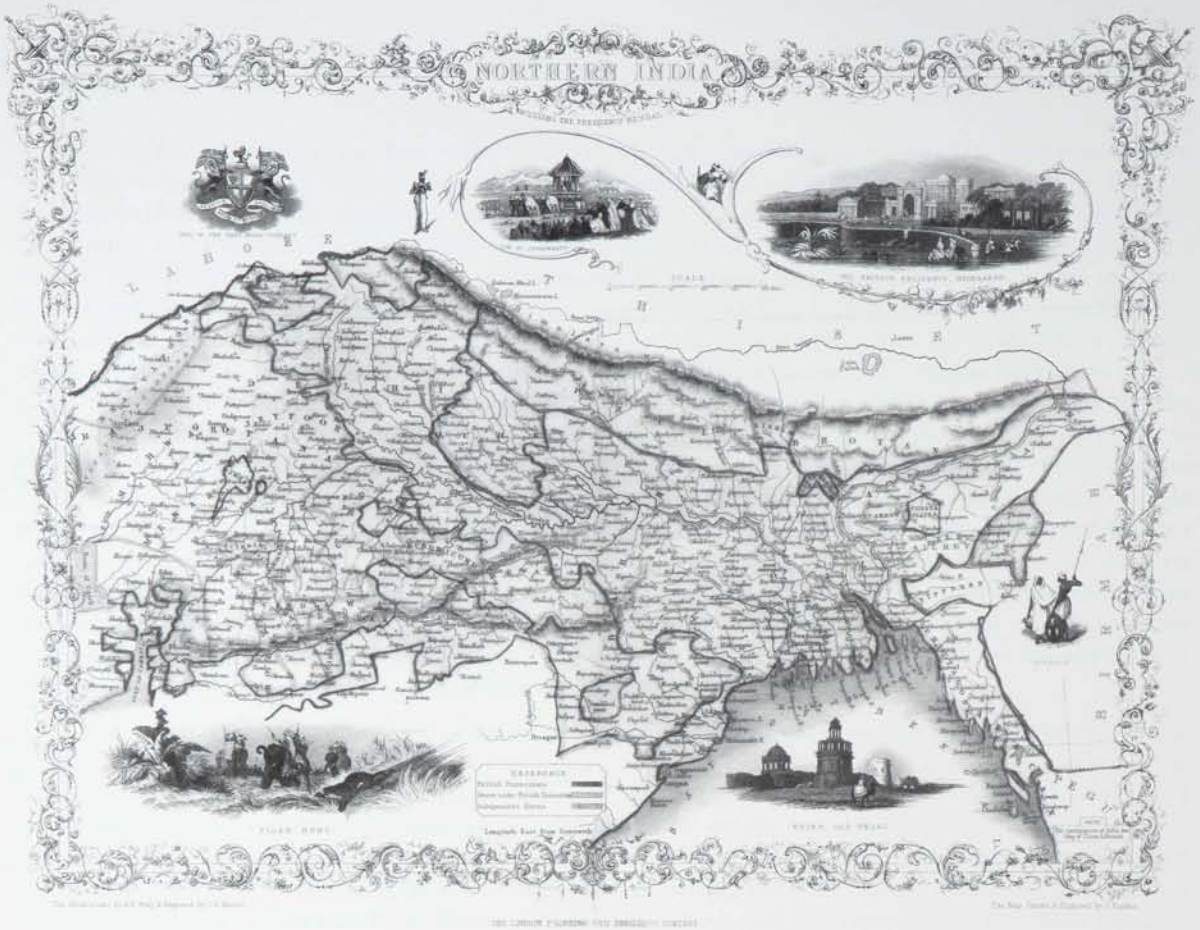
DRAWN BY J. B. FRASER.

ENGRAVED BY R. HAVELL & SON. 1819

THE RIDGE AND FORT OF JYTOCK.

Published as the Act directs by Rob.t Havell, 3 Martin Row, Strand, March 1, 1820.

Jytock or Jaitak Fort as it is known today is a hill fortress situated in Jaitak hill of Sirmaur District, Himachal Pradesh. It was constructed by Ranjor Singh Thapa, the Gurkha leader, when he attacked and sacked Nahan in about AD 1810. The fort was built with materials removed from Nahan Fort and Palace. It commands a fine view of the Suris, Nahan and Dharthi hills. The fort is 23 km north of Nahan.



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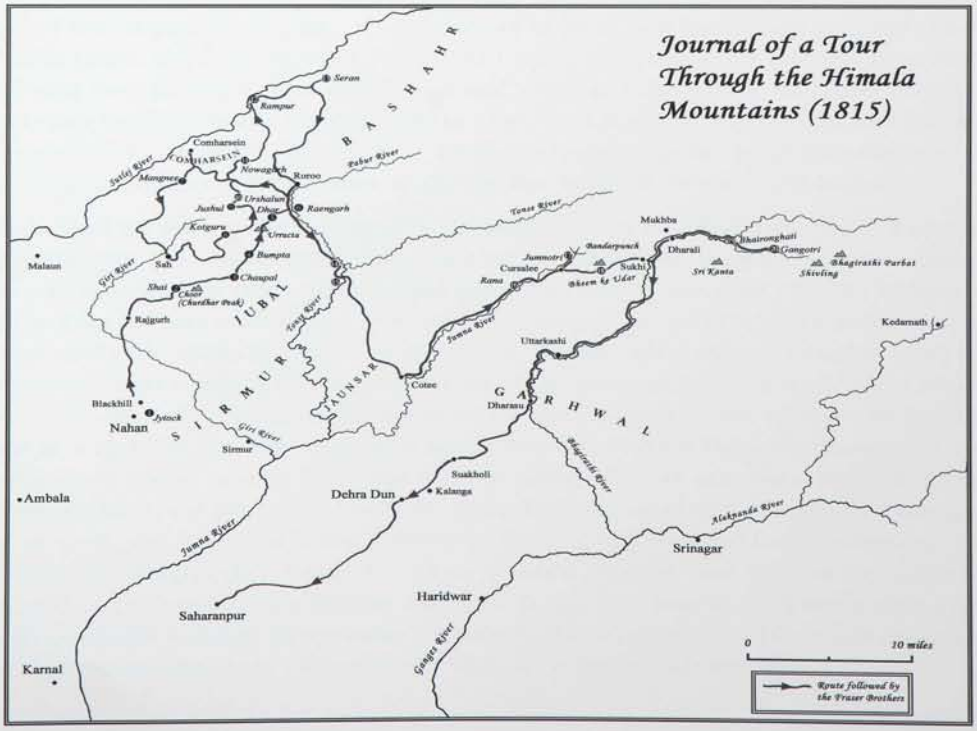

Map of the route of the Frasers's Himalayan tour.

Political Mission

The Fraser brothers and their little army set off from Blackhill on 6 May 1815, intending to swing through the hill states of Jubbal, Comharsein (Kumarsain), Bashahr and western Garhwal. Other than the political objectives, they considered several other possibilities, such as following the Sutlej to its source or investigating the affirmations made seven years before by Lieutenant William Webb that the Ganges rose at a mystical site in the Garhwal wilderness known as Gangotri. At that point no European had ever visited Gangotri. Thus James and William entertained both of these options, which they kept to themselves, conscious that William's movements were subject to the authority of his superiors. James had no such restraints. Having been a planter and merchant, he was fairly taken by the idea of becoming an explorer. He would be the first to give an artistic perspective to the northwest frontier, and this would surely bring him a measure of recognition. He was, moreover, scathing of the efforts made by Lieutenant Webb and his friends, Felix Raper and Hyder Jung Hearsey, in their 1808 attempt to reach the source of the Ganges. Webb had the full backing of Colonel Robert Colebrooke, the Surveyor-General of India. Colebrooke had outfitted Webb with the latest scientific gear, but in James' opinion Webb had bungled it, achieving none of the objectives set by the surveyor-general for the expedition. Colebrooke's instructions were (1) to survey the Ganges from Haridwar to Gangotri, (2) ascertain whether the ultimate source of the Ganges was at Gangotri or whether, as Major James Rennell affirmed in his 1783 Memoir, at Lake Mansarovar in the land of the Tartars, and (3) determine the position and heights of all the most remarkable peaks they encountered in the Himalayan range. Captain Raper's account of the Webb expedition was published in Asiatick Researches, the journal of the Asiatic Society at Calcutta.

As they marched out of Blackhill, James brimmed with excitement, and he carried a pound or two of pride in his baggage as well, especially because of the confidence Lord Moira had invested in his remarkable brother. True, other than a field compass and a perambulator for measuring distances, they carried no scientific gear, not even a barometer, and no one other than themselves was aware of their ultimate intentions. He lightly described their column as "a strange and grotesque procession." The weather was fine and their spirits high. They camped the first night at Seekhoul, a "poor and miserable village, but pleasantly situated" on the banks of the Jelall, a picturesque tributary of the Giri River. The perambulator told them they had covered only nine miles but their performance would improve as they became more accustomed to the routine of trekking across the broken terrain of northern Hindustan. On the morrow they crossed the Giri River - 40 yards wide and mid-thigh deep at the fording point - to reach the village of Thour, with its view onto Choor (Chur) mountain. Thour, according to James, hardly deserved the designation of village. It was inhabited by two Gosain families and consisted of a couple of houses "nearly entire, and a few others in ruins". The type of construction was different to anything he had encountered until then. Instead of being in stone and mud, with flat earthen roofs, the houses were of "loose but well-shaped stone bound by beams of wood, and the roof raised to a pitch was covered with rough slate, far overhanging the body of the house, as well as a wooden veranda or gallery which projected from the upper storey." He also remarked on the large number of peafowl that inhabited the abandoned fields.

On the third day they reached the ruined fort of Rajgurh. The hills, James wrote, "resembled those of the Scotch highlands". The fort, erected about eighty years before, had been burnt within the last six months by the Gurkha general Ranajor Singh Thapa. While camped near it they received news that a Gurkha force under the 70-year-old Kirtee Rana had been encircled as it retreated from Nowagarh and forced to surrender to a force of Bashahr hill men. They reached the village of Shai on the evening of Tuesday, 9 May 1815, and decided to halt for a day to acquire provisions. James remarked that the village [Plate 2] was "poor and chiefly in ruins, but its situation is not unpleasant." It consisted of an intriguing mixture of tall temples and small houses, inhabited by Brahmins, whom he described as "a race that take exceedingly good care of themselves." While their campfire was laid, James went fishing in the nearby stream, catching in no time at all two dozen fish of an unknown species. But he found them "extremely full of bones", and therefore not welcome eating. They planned to set out again on Thursday morning, but "want of grain and a heavy hailstorm followed by drizzling rain" detained them another day. The air had suddenly turned exceedingly cold", leaving the Choor Chandni, highest peak between the Jumna and Sutlej, "plentifully sprinkled with snow". They left Shai on Friday, 12 May 1815, heading northwards. After a march of 10 miles they camped beside a rushing torrent called the Bisharee Nullah, which formed the boundary between Sirmur and Jubbal, the latter described by William as being a hill state "of considerable extent".

"On crossing the Bisharee we observed that the dress of the inhabitants has completely changed," James wrote. "Instead of the dirty cotton cap and gown of Sirmur they wore a black cap of shaggy wool, somewhat like a highland bonnet compressed, a pair of trousers of thick dark striped woollen stuff, very loose from the waistband [that] reaches the heels in small wrinkles. Their chief garment is a coat of similar blanket stuff, which reaches down to the knees, gathered tight round the waist, and falling round the lower parts and thighs in many folds, somewhat like the Scotch highland philibeg. The better sorts usually wear a piece of cotton, much as the Hindoo do the doputta, and frequently wrap it round the shoulders as a plaid. Their shoes are formed of a close network, or twill, of woollen thread attached to a leathern sole." When they broke camp next morning, "Choor frowned hoary with snow, towering above all." Their route crossed a shoulder of the 12,000-foot mountain, eerie and impressive. At 6 p.m. they reached the fort of Chaupal, which had surrendered to William on his previous trip through the region. While setting up camp near the fort having covered a distance that day of 13 miles - James made the observation that saws for woodcutting were unknown to the hill people. Beams and planks were roughly hewn by axe - a technique that remained current for another three decades until Frederick "Pahari" Wilson, the "Raja of Harsil", introduced the crosscut saw to the Himalayas, bringing with it a new kind of activity - commercial timbering - that caused much damage to the environment.

They remained at Chaupal another day, allowing James the time to sketch. The town was the capital of Jubbal, whose territory extended from Sirmur in the south to Garhwal in the northeast, and in the west to the petty hill states of Bulsum, Kotguru and Saree. Consistent with his political duties, William had studied the affairs of Jubbal in some detail. Before the Gurkha invasion, it had been ruled by a hereditary chief with the title of RANA. The last Rana still lived in one of his houses at the village of Dhar on the banks of the Pabur (Pabbar) River. He was, however, a mere cipher since the real power was held by a vizier named Dangee. The vizier exercised the prince's authority, collecting revenues and directing the affairs of state.

The fort of Chaupal was situated on a ridge that connected Choor with a large mountain to the north called Urructa. James described the fort as a square building of no great extent, with a tower at three of its corners, enclosing a courtyard of about 20 square feet. The largest tower was occupied as a temple by the local divinity. A second contained the apartments of the commandant, and the third served as a storeroom and stables. That evening a runner brought them additional news of Kirtee Rana's surrender. With Nowagarh now evacuated, the only Gurkha garrison remaining in the region was at Raeengurh, on the banks of the Pabur River, three marches distant. William was instructed to negotiate Raeengurh's surrender. He assembled his militiamen and explained that because a large armed escort was no longer needed they were to remain at Chaupal [Plate 3].

Shai or Dagshai as it is known today is a cantonment town in Solan district in the state of Himachal Pradesh, India.

"The village of Shai is poor and chiefly in ruins, but its situation is not unpleasant. It consisted of an intriguing mixture of tall temples and small houses, inhabited by Brahmins" wrote James, whom he described as "a race that take exceedingly good care of themselves". "The valley takes its rise in the north-western shoulder of Choor, and in the upper part it is covered with wood, while that towards the village is varied with cultivation and green slopes: and the stream, though little fringed with wood, forms an embellishment by no means trifling. Our camp occupied some fields, whereon the corn had been chiefly cut along its banks".

DRAWN BY J.S. FRASER.

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ENGRAVED BY R. HAVELL & SON. No. XII.

ASSEMBLAGE OF GHOORKAS.

Published as the Act directs by Rt.d Ackermann, Strand, June 1st 1815.

Gurkha, also spelled as Gorkha or Ghurka, are people from Nepal and northern India who take their name from the 8th century Hindu warrior saint Guru Gorakhnath. His disciple Bappa Rawal founded the house of Mewar, Rajasthan. Later descendants of Bappa Rawal moved further east to found the house of Gorkha, which in turn founded the Kingdom of Nepal. Gorkha District is one of the 75 districts of modern Nepal.
Every Gurkha man used to stuck in his sash their national weapon, the Cookree; each had likewise a sword, a weapon they ran well use, and they also carried the old and almost useless muskets

Into the Unknown

Accompanied by fifty Gurkha jawans, William and James left Chaupal on Monday, 15 May 1815. James wrote in his Journal: "We were advancing into unknown country where everything was new and we were eagerly looking for what was extraordinary... hoping for uncommon adventure."

Their immediate destination was the village and fort of Bumpta, situated on a hillside far above the Pabur River. But when they reached the village they discovered that Bumpta's once extensive fort lay in ruins, victim of an accidental fire, and that the Rana of Jubbal was building a new residence on its foundations [Plate 4]. After the day's rugged march, James commented: "I have travelled in the Highlands of Scotland, and made long marches there without more fatigue than is usually felt, but I must aver that a 12- or 13-mile march such as of this day has fatigued me more than upwards of three times its distance at home."

A piercingly cold wind rose during the night, removing any temptation to linger, and so early next morning - Tuesday, 16 May 1815 - they resumed their journey into the unknown, ascending through the chir pines to reach the crest of a ridge that branched off from the great mass of Urructa Mountain. Following this ridge they entered a "deep and venerable forest... richer and more romantic, if possible, than any forest we had yet seen; not only pines of all sorts were here of all ages, from the greenest youth to the most hoary state of decay, [but] hollies and oaks grown to the most enormous size, with sycamore and yew of the most varied forms; these, with thousands of other trees, united in producing an effect both new and splendid."

It was a day of superlatives for James. He continued: "We reached a spot where a spring - the coldest and most delicious as we thought we had ever tasted - gushes from the mountainside, and falls over a spout which has been carefully placed to receive and direct it." After extolling the quality of the water, he launched into one of his few positive reflections concerning the hill people, remarking on how respectful they were of their environment. He found them "particularly attentive to distinguishing and guarding from pollution, and facilitating the use of, fine springs by erecting over them sheds of stone, whence the water is led by a spout so that the thirsty traveller may easily drink without muddying its source, or by simply placing a spout from which it may run pure."

Upon leaving the spring with the champagne water, they passed between Urructa's twin summits and were afforded their first view of the Sutlej River, running through a deep trough to the west. They rested there, permitting James to sketch "the whole stupendous range of the Himala [that] burst upon our view... The scene was majestic, and, if the epithet can justly be applied to anything on earth, truly sublime." They hardly suspected that in a little more than a decade the most famous of British hill stations in India, the imperial and scandal-loving Simla, would rise upon the heights only a few miles to the west of where they were resting.

From the pass they descended to the village of Dhar, with its well-built houses under pitched roofs of slate nestling around a five-storey tower in neat masonry bound by roughly hewn timbers, and in the background a hind-view of the shimmering Choor. James described the valley of Deyrah, in which the village was situated, as "particularly rich and lovely... the trees generally enormous." One, he noted, measured 25 feet in girth. The soil was "deep, rich, vegetable matter, black and very plentiful." A great number of Dhar's inhabitants assembled to stare at the first white men they had ever seen [Plate 5]. Below the village, on the banks of the Pabur, though not in view from their campsite, was the fortress of Raeengurh, garrisoned by 160 Gurkhas under the command of Runsur Thapa.

Next morning, the Rana of Jubbal, attended by a considerable concourse of subjects, paid them a visit. James portrayed the Rana as "a thin and sickly looking young man, about 25 years of age. His complexion was pale and yellow, his features meagre and prominent, his eyes large, protuberant and bloodshot, the lids tinged with antimony". Not impressed, James thought the lord of Jubbal resembled more "an impoverished Calcutta shopkeeper".

As soon as their audience ended and the royal host departed, the brothers struck camp and left for Raeengurh to rendezvous with the two commanders of the Bashahr militia and Dangee, vizier of Jubbal. They camped by the riverside opposite the imposing fortress [Plate 6]. Runsur Thapa had refused to surrender so William encouraged the Bashahr generals to enter into an alliance with Jubbal and besiege the fort.

James was fascinated by the vizier. He remarked: "Dangee was found to be the principal person to treat with, as friend or foe, and as it was an object to station a force in Jubbal... all means were adopted to procure [his] cooperation. Dangee is unquestionably possessed of considerable talents, and of a cunning which is peculiarly admired, and not infrequently is successful in the negotiations among these petty states, where bad faith and breach of treaty or word are not considered as disgraceful if they gain the desired end."

After agreeing upon a common strategy, late in the afternoon the brothers folded their tent and headed upriver until coming to a track that took them to the village of Karashee, which they reached well after 8 p.m., having that day covered a meagre six miles. For the next two days they kept to the high ground that formed the boundary between Jubbal and Bashahr. In the distance they could see the fort of Nowagurh, where Kirtee Rana had concentrated his troops, numbering perhaps a thousand. When the Gurkha retreat towards Raeengurh was blocked by the more numerous Bashahr militia, short of supplies and accompanied by several hundred women and children, Kirtee Rana agreed to surrender on condition that his men and their families be conducted to the nearest British camp. Although accepted by the Bashahr commanders, this condition was not immediately respected. The Gurkhas and their families were interned and treated harshly.

That evening James and William reached Comharsein (Kumarsain), above the Sutlej, where the local Rana provided them with a place to camp. Along the way William had received an express from General Ochterlony announcing the surrender of Umar Singh Thapa's army at Malaun. The days of the Gurkha raj were clearly numbered although it would still be some months more before they signed a formal peace treaty. Nevertheless, William realised that his mission to the Cis-Sutlej hill states was fast becoming superfluous and he would soon be called to other duties. Until the order was actually received, however, he decided to continue establishing contact with the minor rajdoms west of the Jumna.

James meanwhile was busy absorbing everything he could along their route and making bold and striking sketches of views hitherto unknown to the people back home in Britain. He described Comharsein as "a petty state of no great size". It stretched westwards across two valleys from the crest of the 10,600-foot Whartoo to the banks of the Sutlej. The town was mean and poor, consisting of a dozen houses of dry stone and wood. Before the Gurkha conquest it owed allegiance to Bashahr. With peace restored, James presumed this would again be the case. At least the Comharsein Rana showed every intention of wanting to remain seated on his throne. James described him as "a man of better presence than his compeer of Jubbal, stout, rather short, of dark and somewhat savage countenance, with a thick black beard... His habit was not of the hill fashion. He wore a dress of flowered silk, with trousers of the same material, a silk cap and richly embroidered shoes, and his whole figure might pass for that of a man of some rank."

The weather being fair, next morning they scrambled down to the Sutlej. The track was prodigiously steep and nearly three miles in length. By the river's edge the heat was sweltering. They found the riverbank occupied by the huts of "gold-finders". They bathed in the river's bracingly cold waters. James figured the town lay about 3,000 feet above them and he shuddered at the thought of having to ascend the long and steep track back to their camp.

After a second meeting with the Comharsein Rana, the following morning they headed southwards along the watershed between the Jumna and Sutlej until reaching Narkanda, a village situated at an altitude of 8,000 feet. From Narkanda they began a long descent to the village and temple of Mangnee, and pitched their tent in a small field nearby [Plate 7]. "The temple was remarkably neat, quite in the Chinese style,"James wrote. "It is sacred to the goddess Bhowannee. The whole of the interior is sculptured over in wood, with infinite labour, and probably forms a detail of the exploits of the deity. With these I am wholly unacquainted, but she seems to have been frequently engaged with monsters of very uninviting shapes. That portion of the carving, however, which neither represents the human nor animal figure, is by far the most beautiful. The whole roof, which is formed of fir wood, is richly cut into flowers and ornaments entirely in the Hindoo taste, with sharpness and precision, yet an ease that does honour to the mountain artist, and, considering his tools and materials, it is truly wonderful."

The night was stormy, the morning dull and overcast. After procuring provisions, they left Mangnee at 11 a.m., continuing to "a site where intelligence might speedily reach us from Nahan or Malaun." Sure enough, next day a dispatch arrived with news that Jytock had fallen, but it contained no orders for William's recall. Still William was hesitant about continuing, so they waited another three days in case a second messenger arrived with further orders.

DRAWN BY J. B. FRASER.

ENGRAVED BY R. HAVELL & SON N° XIV

VILLAGE & CASTLE OF BUMPTA.

Published as the Act directs by Rob^t Rob^t Havell Regent Road Street, March 1820.

The village of Bumpta situated on a hillside for above the Pabur River near Modern day Rarog town in Sohan District of Himachal Pardesh, India.

"Bumpta was formerly a fort, and considered a place of strength in the country; it had a strong wall and towers, and is situated so as to command the vale below, but it again is commanded by the whole hill above. It was probably extensive, as the ruins are large, but it was burnt down by accident, and there was at this time a house building for the residence of the Rana of Joobul upon the old foundation".

"The scenery or face of the country had little to attract attention or merit description. The back of the Chaupal, or Gudhala ridge, was somewhat wooded with Weymouth pines towards the top, but the lower parts, and the whole of the intermediate hills, the valley of Coiss and Nar, were destitute almost of a tree".

DRAWN BY J. B. FRASER.

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ENGRAVED BY R. HAVELL & SON. PL. XII

ASSEMBLAGE OF HILLMEN.

Published as the Act directs by Rob^t Havell & Mess. Bond Street March 1.1812.

A great number of Dhur's (Dharampur in Himachal Pradesh as it is known today) inhabitants assembled to stare at the first white men they had ever seen.

DRAWN BY J. D. PARKYNS.

ENGRAVED BY B. HAVELL & SON. 79 TX

FORT OF RAEENGTRH.

Published as the Act directs by Mr. Joshua J. Hamble, Bond Street, March 1, 1821

Between modern day Kasauli & Dharampur, in Dharampur district in Himachal Pradesh, India

Somewhere near Narkanda in Himachal Pradesh

The delay gave them time to take stock. To increase mobility they considered reducing the amount of baggage they carried with them. That proved difficult as they were already down to what they considered the barest minimum. Their three-pole tent weighed 60 pounds. Each bed had a straw mattress and a cotton quilt, and they had a table and two chairs. The clerk who accompanied them had his own tent. They carried a small quantity of wine, tea, coffee and sugar. Their flour was of coarse quality procured locally, as was the rice and dhal. Milk and ghee could always be had, and occasionally mutton, though it was dear. On the other hand, fresh vegetables were scarce and of poor quality.

"The situation in which we halted was by no means an interesting one in point of beauty or surrounding country," James wrote. He was eager to move on. As usual he was not impressed with the local inhabitants. "The whole people inhabiting this region are still in that semi-barbarous state, between the complete savage and that which, in consequence of commencing intercourse with a civilised people, is just emerging from so gross a condition... Only faint advances to improvement have as yet been effected. Such a state may offer curious matter of study to the moralist and philosopher, but affords a very circumscribed field for interesting description." Indeed James could discover nothing noble about the paharis. "It is to be feared," he continued, "that the mountaineer of these hills is not only violent and unruly, he is wily, cunning and treacherous, and certainly revengeful. Their conduct towards Kirtee Rana affords strong proof of this."

He gave no hint of how William considered them. But James had clearly made up his mind. "Seldom could a direct answer to any question be obtained; or all was fair promise without an idea of fulfilment... Viewed in general, they are lazy, indolent, and remarkable for their apathy."

He found little to recommend the women, either. "They wear Nhuts, or large rings in the nose, after the common Hindustani fashion, and earrings, valuable and large, according to the means of the owner. Round the ankles are huge and heavy ornaments of pewter, and on the arms large bangles of the same, or of brass. The toes and fingers are strung with rings of these metals, and round the neck and on the breast they wear a profusion of beads, of glass, pewter and sometimes perhaps of silver." But also he noted that the "women here are articles of property."

He described at length an incident that took place on the morning of 28 May. "We were roused by the information that a body of people was advancing along the ridge above our encampment. On inquiry we found that they consisted of the prisoners formerly constituting that force of Kirtee Rana, now marching disarmed and attended by a body of Bashahr soldiers to the headquarters of General Ochterlony.

"It was a strange sight to view their wild figures crowning the heights above us and stretching in a long irregular line down to a small hollow a little way beyond our camp. When they assembled at their halting place I went to look at them. It is difficult to conceive a more uncouth and heterogeneous assemblage than were collected there. The features and figure of the true Gurkha are always singular and remarkable, from his broad Chinese or Tartar-like physiognomy, the small eyes, flat nose and meager whiskers, as well as his stout square make and sturdy limbs. These, in every description of costume and in all degrees of raggedness, were mingled with inhabitants of Kumaon, Sirmur and Garhwal. Women and children, loaded with the few articles they had preserved from the rapacity of their captors, were interspersed among the rest, and all around the Bashahr soldiers in national dress, armed with bows and arrows, shields and swords, watched, standing over their movements... But it would need a lively imagination to suggest, and a far more humorous and able pen to describe, the grotesque attitudes and the odd uncouth individuals that composed the assembly. Many miserable objects, too, faint with weariness and hunger, wounded, and ill attended to, with women and young children perhaps weak or ill, yet forced to carry them, because their husbands were already overloaded by necessary provisions, and what baggage they had preserved, formed a large part of the cavalcade... Yet, among them there were many fine-looking young men; and there was a cheerfulness of countenance, a modest confidence of demeanour that could not but pleasantly attract observation.

"They were prisoners; they had lost their all; and they had been in the power of a cruel and treacherous enemy; nor could they well say what they had to expect: but no murmurs of lamentation or discontent were heard; good humour and lightness of heart absolutely seemed to prevail among them, yet without noise of tumult... No disputes, no quarrels occurred: and the quietness with which all was conducted might have afforded a lesson to the more disciplined troops of other nations."

After James and William had taken their usual light breakfast of milk and thin cakes of flour, with a cup of tea, they asked Kirtee Rana to visit. "He is a fine, brave and spirited old soldier. We received him kindly [and] supplied him with money sufficient to procure for himself and his men comforts and necessaries till they should reach the camp, and we provided for himself the means of proper carriage and some attentions befitting his rank and age."

On Thursday, 1 June 1815, having received no new orders, they continued their loop southwards. After fording the Giri River they turned northwards once more, entering the mini-state of Bulsum and camping at the village of Sah, where they found an abundance of peach, apricot and apple orchards, and also shaddock, lemon and fig trees.

Next day the Rana of Bulsum came to meet them. He insisted on accompanying them for the rest of their march through his tiny kingdom. They continued in his company for the next three days before bidding him farewell. Their next destination was the small state of Kotguru (Kotgarh). From the heights above the village they saw the house of the Rana of Kotguru curiously perched on a rock above the stream [Plate 8]. They camped in a grove of mulberry and oak trees with plenty of fine strawberries.

The Rana of Kotguru's visit to their camp on Tuesday, 6 June 1815, produced quite a spectacle. "He was very corpulent, sickly and ill-looking, advanced in years, and bearing the marks of excess as well as disease," James remarked. "Unable from illness and fat to move of himself, he was pulled uphill in a sort of litter by fifty men."

They didn't linger at Kotguru. The weather turned unpromising, and so they pressed onwards, descending a long dell to arrive somewhat late next day at Jushul [Plate 9]. After a stormy night, the weather turned cold. They decided on a rest day, and in the evening they ascended Urshalun Tiba for a view of the snowy mountains half shrouded in storm. The night was extremely cold and the following morning "a bitter north wind benumbed our very joints." They again climbed Urshalun, "whence the snowy range appeared in a cloudless sky of pure blue, more clearly and distinctly than we had ever seen it, and I took the opportunity of sketching an outline of it, as well as of the nature of the country" [Plate 10].

From Urshalun they rejoined their old route that led to Comharsein, following it for a few miles until they branched right, heading northwards to Nowagurh. They pitched their tent at a considerable distance from the abandoned fort. In the morning the ground was covered with frost. They climbed Nowagurh Tiba - whose summit the locals believed was occupied by Kali - for a splendid view onto the snowy range [Plate 11].

On Sunday, 11 June 1815, they broke camp soon after 6 a.m., the morning being cold and frosty. It was James' thirty-second birthday. They continued northwards, reaching the crest of a ridge from where they first viewed the Jumnotri and Gangotri ranges. They could see the Sutlej far below on their left and began a 3-mile descent that in places had a 45-degree slope. After following the river for 4½ miles they reached Rampur, winter capital of the kingdom of Bashahr. They proceeded through the town to the Dewan Khauch, the Hall of Audiences, where the Raja's palace was located, and pitched their tent under a peepul tree.

Largest of the hill states east of the Sutlej, Bashahr was bordered on the north by Spiti and in the east by Tibet. As the town straddled the main trans-Himalayan trade route, its bazaar attracted traders from Kashmir, Ladakh, Yarkand and Tibet. The state was defended by a citizens' army. "Such a force can never be very efficient," James opined. But in this case he was wrong. Bashahr's militia could at short notice bring into the field 3,000 men, one-third armed with matchlocks, the rest with bows and arrows. In recent times the army had successfully held off the Gurkhas and defeated an invading force under command of the Raja of Kullu.

Bashahr possessed few natural resources, but was rich in sheep, cattle, and corn of various sorts. The finer grains of wheat and barley did well on the sloped terraces facing westwards. Rice was also cultivated along with a multitude of smaller grains. Tobacco and opium was grown in small quantities. Rampur's orchards were rich in apples, apricots and peaches, and grapes grew wild. They remained two days at Rampur, discovering both of its palaces and one or two fine temples. The river was bridged by a perilous ropeway called a jhoola [Plate 12]. The opposite bank was Kullu territory. They learned that the Raja, whom William was intent on interviewing, had retired to his summer residence 30 miles to the north and so they left town on 15 June 1815, heading for Seran (Sarhan), Bashahr's summer capital in the hills overlooking the Sutlej. They camped near the summer palace, which James sketched [Plate 13]. Heavy rains kept them at Seran longer than expected. Between storms they were offered splendid views of Bandar punch to the northeast.

DRAWN BY J. B. FRASER.

ENGRAVED BY R. REID, & SON, EDINR.

THE VILLAGE JUSHUL.

Published as the Act directs by Wm. Richardt, 3, Hanover Street, Hanover Square, March 1, 1820.

Now, present-day Rohal in Shimla District of Himachal Pradesh

VIEW OF THE COUNTRY FROM URSHALUN TEEBA.

"From Kwitegrau (Kutgarh) springs another small ridge, which forms one side of the Cotee nullah, called the Bliecouree ridge; and between it and the Gudhaks range runs a fine stream, called Sunt ha nuddee, which falls into the Cotee almost at the same point where it is joined by the Nur. This last stream arises in the bosom of Urructa, where it gives off the Chuttur Teeba, which, running in a north-westerly direction, joins at Sunknee, the great ridge in question; thus uniting Urructa and Choor, the two principal points in this part of the country".

DRAWN BY J. B. FRASER.

ENGRAVED BY R. HAVELL, to HON. JET H.

COUNTRY TO THE NORTHWARD FROM NOWAGURH TEEBA.

Published as the Act directs by Mess.rs Colnaghi & Martin, Pall Mall, March 1.st 1817.

Nowagurh or Neogli as it is known today is a small town in Shimla District.

DRAWN BY T. H. FRASER

Reproduced from original for Mrs Meera Singh Alvi and Mr. Ashok Agrawal by Parsu Books Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, India, September 2011.

ENGRAVED BY H. HAVELL, & ASSR.TS

THE TOWN OF RAMPORE.

Published as the Act directs by Major Roberts and Hooper, Bond Street, March 1820.

Rampore or as it is known today as Rampur, this small commercial hub is located at a distance of 130 km north east from Shimla. This town by the side of Satluj River is at lower height than the surrounding areas. Rampur was the seat of former Princely state of Bushair or Bushehar.

DRAWN BY J. B. FRASER.

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ENGRAVED BY R. HAVELL & SON. 27.

SERAN RAJAS PALACE.

Published as the Act directs, by Messrs Rodwell and Martin, Bond Street, March 1820.

Seran is situated in present day Serahan Bushahr, in Rampur district, Himachal Pradesh.
Best-known for the Bhimakali temple, it sits high on a ridge above the Satlej River.

On the third day the Raja paid them a visit. To their surprise, his majesty was but "a small, ill-grown child of between six and eight years old." James gave an intriguing description of him: "His manners and countenance were both marked and formed, and not at all like those of so young a person. His nose is much hooked, and he has large, full and sparkling black eyes. He is affected by that species of glandular swelling of the neck so common among the people of the hills known in Europe by the name of goitre. His father, we learnt, was also afflicted with it."

William was writing his report for the governor-general when a runner arrived bearing orders for him to proceed with all haste to Srinagar in Garhwal, where he had been appointed Commissioner. This was easier said than done. The monsoon had arrived. Violent rain and thick mists kept them at Seran a week longer and when finally they broke camp on Saturday, 24 June 1815, the loads were soaked through and extra heavy, causing much grumbling among the porters. The rain soon resumed. Six soggy days later they reached the village of Roroo (Rohru) on the banks of the Pabur.

On Saturday, 1 July 1815, they proceeded downriver through the mile-wide Pabur valley to the spot opposite Raeengurh where they had previously camped. They were delayed there several days due to the difficulty of hiring new porters. In the interim they received an unexpected visit from the Ranee of Saree, a pocket-sized hill state that had been forcefully annexed by Bashahr.

"She had but small means for travelling comfortably, and lodged in a large cave in the rock near at hand," James noted. "The way she took to approach was curious... not willing to expose her person to public view. Her litter stopped at a little distance from the tent, and several sheets were held by her attendants around her, forming a screen, in the envelope of which she walked to our tent, which she entered without scruple. The approach of the walking screen, surrounded by attendants, had a curious appearance. She was about twenty-five, rather good-looking but already faded. She had high features, dark eyes and a tolerable person. Her colour was yellow with a ruddy tinge to her cheeks. Her dress was loose of rather coarse muslin. Her head was covered with a handkerchief... She came to communicate her tale of oppression, and her fears of further distress from her neighbours, small and great. The situation of widows in this turbulent country must be wretched enough. Nothing could be done but to promise her protection, and a representation of her case to the proper authorities. She took her leave soon after, retiring to her rock, refusing any other accommodation."

Next morning they continued down the right bank of the Pabur towards its junction with the Tonse River, camping that evening in an abandoned field. It rained through the night and they set off early in the morning, making haste in spite of the slippery, rain-soaked track. Seven miles downstream they reached the Pabur's junction with the Tonse. Here James sketched the magnificent landscape [Plate 14], while a party of Gurkhas went ahead to inspect the jhoola across the Tonse to insure that it was in serviceable condition.

James gave this account of an incident that cost the life of their havildar: "The ropes were found defective; but, having made them fit for use, as we supposed, the party began to cross to the opposite side. Several had crossed, but our havildar, who was accompanied by his wife, wished to carry her over along with himself. It does not appear clearly how he had fixed her, but he accompanied her in the loop, which is the means of suspending the passenger. The hauling rope broke, and he, desirous to release her from this perilous situation, resolved to cut himself free from the loop and, dropping into the river, swim with the end of the rope ashore. He did so, but in his fall got entangled in his blanket, or in the rope, and was hurried away by the stream, and drowned, probably dashed to pieces on the rocks of the rapids a little way below, for we saw him no more... The man was regretted as a willing active fellow and a good soldier."

James and William arrived at the jhoola around noon. They found the Tonse about 30 yards wide, very angry and very swollen with the rains. Hauling all their people across on the jhoola took all afternoon and continued without further incident into the night [Plate 15]. They camped on the opposite bank. On Friday, 7 July 1815, they reached a place 12 miles distant that was surrounded on all sides by high cliffs. It was one of their most exhausting days. "We had very great difficulty in bringing on our baggage and coolies. The latter were totally knocked up, and though sepoys were stationed by every one, we could not prevent several from throwing their loads suddenly down and running into the thick jungle that skirted the path."

This stage of their journey was nearing its end. The monsoon had rendered the track hazardous. "The mountains about us are particularly rugged and precipitous," James noted. "There is much cliff and rock, little and laborious cultivation, and few villages." Two days later they reached the village of Cotee on the banks of the Jumna, arriving long after dark. They were exhausted, having covered 26 miles in forty-eight hours, and fully apprehensive, as on the morrow they would part company.

DRAWN BY J.B. FRASER.

ENGRAVED BY W. DANIELL & SON, N° XVII

THE JUNCTION OF THE TOUSE AND PABUR.

Published as the Act directs, by Mess^rs. Daniell & Webb, Bread Street, March 1.1810

The Tuse or Tons as it is known today is the largest tributary of the Yamuna and flows through Garhwal region in Uttarakhand, touching Himachal Pradesh. Its source lies in the 20,720 feet high Bandarpunch Mountain, and it is one of the major perennial Indian Himalayan Rivers. In fact, it carries more water than the Yamuna itself, which it meets below Kalsi near Dehradun, Uttarakhand.
The Pabar (present day Pabbar) River is a tributary of the Tons River connecting to it from the west. The Pabbar River is the westernmost river that drains east to the Ganges.

CROSSING THE TOUSE.

Published as the Act directs, by Mess.rs Richard J. Martin, Bond Street, March 1, 1820.

Crossing the river on a rope, an ancient way of crossing the rivers in the Himalaya.

The "Seat of Mythology"

James had decided to follow the Jumna to its source. William regretted not being able to accompany him. During their two-month journey they had once again become as close as two brothers could possibly be, but orders were imperative. Concerned for his brother's safety - James was now embarking upon the most perilous part of the journey, ill-equipped and not knowing what dangers lay ahead - William provided him with the best guide he had and a small escort of jawans. Their parting was sober - harder one imagines for James than for the more reserved William.

James recorded the event in his Journal: "While thus on the banks of the Jumna, and so near the spot whence it derives its source, and so near also to the several remote and holy places of Hindoo pilgrimage, I was exceedingly anxious to visit these remarkable spots, and trace to their source the rivers that form the celebrated Ganges; places to which no European had ever penetrated, and of which so many fables have been related."

This was the country that seven years previously Lieutenant (now Captain) Webb had described as filled with such dangers that any voyage there "could not be prosecuted without the greatest risk." In his report to Colonel Colebrooke, Webb had explained: "I found the difficulties so far exceeded what had been represented that I was fully convinced it would be vain to persevere further." He reckoned he was within sixty miles of the river's probable source when he turned back. In addition, he was concerned that "the alternate changes of the weather, from excessive cold in the morning and evening to oppressive heat at noon, were such as no constitutions uninured to the climate could well support."

But James was not bothered. "For some days previously," he wrote, "I had been reflecting on the possibility of realising [this dream]. I was now determined to profit by an opportunity so excellent, and which could never again occur to me, viz., to separate from my brother, in whose march I had so long participated, and with his assistance to pursue my course upward along the Jumna, and to cross over from its source to that of the Bhagiruttee (Bhagirathi), and thence, if time permitted, to make my way to Kedarnath and Badrinath, and return by the way of Sreenuggur (Srinagar), where I should rejoin my brother.

"There was, in truth, not much real difficulty to be contemplated in the undertaking. Our ignorance of the country, and its wilderness, and poverty in population, as well as in means of substance, with the doubtful capability of necessary servants to perform the journey under the prospect of much privation and exposure, were chiefly the obvious obstacles, and these were provided for as far as possible by procuring the best guides - one or two old servants of the late raja [of Garhwal], well known among the people of the country and who could be relied upon to procure whatever was really afforded for our party - and by taking only the strongest and most willing servants, many of whom were desirous of providing for the safety of their souls by so pious a journey.

"Little time could be given to preparation: a very small parcel of necessary clothing, with needful articles of food, and the means of preparing it, a small stock of wine, etc. formed my baggage. But it was necessary to carry three or four days' provision for the party in case of accident, and with the necessary escort it was increased to a considerable number. Our company was nearly as follows, viz., a Gurkha jemmadar, with twelve [jawans], a Mewattee jemmadar, with a like number of men; four chaprassis (runners); the necessary people for procuring and preparing provisions, and coolies sufficient to carry the provisions and necessaries for the people, and these never fewer than twenty-four, and often more."

The trustworthy guide was Kishen Singh, a "favourite servant of the late raja, who was the chief chobedar (silver-stick bearer) when the raja was killed [in battle with the Gurkhas], and who himself bore marks of suffering, for he had received three severe wounds, one of which had nearly cut his head in two, and the parts having been ill-joined it gave to his face a most singular expression, for the visible scar reached across his nose from the left cheek to behind the right ear, which, with his nose, had been divided.

"From this man we expected much intelligence and many facilities in traversing, as well as inspecting the country... All these people swelled the number of coolies and attendants, with their servants and baggage, so that our total number was not less than sixty. This may well be deemed cumbrous and large for undertaking a rough journey of discovery, but when the customs of the country are considered, the comforts that are absolutely necessary, and perhaps as much as all, the policy which urged that the first European who penetrated these untrodden regions should not be meanly attended, the number will be acknowledged, as it really was, quite as small as was consistent with prudence and propriety.

"It was desirable to collect as much knowledge of the country as possible during the route. I therefore determined to keep an itinerary, and to survey as we proceeded with as much accuracy as my own want of skill and the deficiency of instruments would permit, for these only consisted of a surveying compass on a tripod, a small pocket compass, and a perambulator. I had neither a thermometer nor barometer. Not having foreseen such journeys, no such provision had been made.

"Thus equipped we left Cotee on 10 July, and took the road towards Jumnotree, following the deep indentings of the ravines and valleys that furrow the mountains, and pour their streams into the Jumna, winding far below us like a silver line in the deep hollow of its bed."

They continued along this track above the right bank of the Jumna for two days, making good time. On the third day they were joined by the local governor, Govind Bhisht, who insisted on guiding them through his district. James could only accept.

He described Bhisht as being "of high caste and considerable consequence. A tall, good-looking man, fair and far superior in appearance to people of the hills." They reached Shellee, where a fearful bridge crossed a mountain torrent, and from there a steep ascent took them to the village of Naguan (Naugaon), where Govind Bhisht had a residence. Dark clouds hung over the mountains and on reaching the top of an ascent they looked down upon a deep and dark glen called Palia Gadh. The Brahmins in this region were said to have prophesized the death of Raja Pradyuman Shah and the loss of his kingdom to the Gurkhas. They descended to the village of Palia, consisting of about twenty houses, where they spent the night. Their guide and provider, Govind Bhisht, arrived two hours later, exhausted. He proved to be more of a cog than a help.

After a rainy night, the morning of Thursday, 13 July 1815, was fine. James was conscious that he had penetrated into the seat of Indian mythology, the very heart, as he put it, of the region of superstition. At the decaying village of Coopera he visited a temple dedicated to Vishnu, known locally as Nag Rajah. That night they camped under the porch of a temple at the village of Rana. Between rain showers they viewed the unclimbed Bandarpunch, which James sketched [Plate 16]. He was running short of paper as the bundle with his paper stock had by negligence remained with William.

He rose next morning to find the peaks painted crimson and gold. With the governor and Kishen Singh he set out at 7 a.m. on a road that was steep, difficult and in bad condition, but it afforded some fine views of Bandarpunch. In the afternoon they reached Cursalee (Kharsali), highest village in the Jumna valley, with thermal springs, graceful cascades and an ancient three-storied temple dedicated to Lord Someshwar. The temple had stunning woodcarvings and stone sculptures. They camped there for the night but sleep was short as a religious festival with folk dancing was in progress.

Early next morning, James left with the high priest and others for the holy site of Jumnotri. A raw wind was blowing off the mountains. They reached the shrine of Bhyramji, halfway to their destination, and continued until "a prodigious mass of snow" told them they had arrived at Jumnotri. James was ecstatic, realising he was the first European ever to view this magic site. He made a rough sketch of the young river rushing down from Kalinda, on the very flank of Bandarpunch [Plate 17].

The return to Kharsali was rendered more difficult by the daytime increase in snowmelt carried by the torrents. Two men were almost swept away while crossing one of the torrents but in the end everyone arrived safely back at Kharsali.

In spite of being warned that the high route from the Jumna to the Bhagirathi was exceedingly dangerous and many were the travellers who died from the "poisonous wind" off the snow-capped mountains while attempting it, James decided all the same to risk incurring the wrath of the gods with an "all or nothing" throw of the dice. The route, he was assured, never took less than four days. But the difficulties encountered during those four days were such that most everyone preferred to return to Naugaon and from there cross to Barahat in the Bhagirathi valley, a detour of ten to fourteen days.

DRAWN BY J.M. SKINNER.

ENGRAVED BY R. HOWELL & SON. 1817.

THE VALLEY OF THE JUMNA WITH TWO GRAND PEAKS OF BUNDERPOOCH.

Published as the Act directs by Mr. Robert Howell, Strand, Great North Road, March 1, 1817.

Banderpooch (or Banderpunch) is a major peak of the Garhwal division of the Himalaya, in the state of Uttaranchal. It literally means "Tail of the monkey" or "Tail of Hanuman" in Hindi. It's a twin peak: Bandarpunch-I (6316m) & Bandarpunch-II (also known as white peak) (6102m).

"Bunderpooch signifies "monkey's tail", it is said that Hoonooman, after his conquest of Lunka, or Ceylon, in shape of a monkey, when he had set that island on fire by means of a quantity of combustible matter tied to his tail, being afraid of the flame reaching himself, was about to dip it in the sea (Sumunder) to extinguish it; but the sea remonstrated with him, on account of the probable consequences to the numerous inhabitants of its waters: whereupon Hoonooman plunged his burning tail in this lake, which ever since has retained the name".

"The name of Bunderpooch properly applies only to the highest peaks of this mountain: all the subordinate peaks and ridges have their own peculiar names. There are said to be four peaks which form the top of Bunderpooch, only two of which are seen from hence; and in the cavity or hollow contained between them tradition places a lake or tank, of very peculiar sanctity. No one has ever seen this pool, for no one has ever even attempted to ascend any of these prodigious peaks. Besides the physical difficulties, there is one to be encountered far more conclusive than any other, that could be opposed to the superstitious and blindly obedient Hindoo. The goddess (Jumna) has especially prohibited any mortal from passing that spot appointed for her worship. A Fuquer once lost his way in attempting to reach Jumnotree, and was ascending the mountain, till he reached the snow, where he heard a voice inquiring what he wanted; and, on his answering, a mass of snow detached itself from the side of the hill, and the voice desired him to worship where this snow stopped; that Jumna was not to be too closely approached or intruded on in her recesses: that he should publish this, and return no more, under penalty of death".

Jumnotree or Yamunotri is the source of the Yamuna River and the seat of the Goddess Yamuna in Hindu mythology. It is situated at an altitude of 10,804 feet in the Garhwal, Himalayas and located approximately 30 kilometers North of Uttarkashi.
"The river Jumni was here traced to its source in a number of small rills flowing from the snow, and collected in a pool at the bottom of a deep slope". "Jumnotree has reference only to the sacred spot, where worship is paid to the goddess, and ablution is performed".

Accordingly, he provisioned for four days. Governor Bhisht bid him farewell. The night was cold, the morning sharp but clear. He and his party left Kharsali at 6 a.m. and were soon enveloped in cloud. They rose above the tree line and continued climbing among the stunted birches and heather till reaching a spur that formed part of Bandarpunch's southern ramparts. Another ascent took them to Bheem-ke-Gadh, a torrent that here was larger than the Jumna at Kharsali. The high pastures they crossed along their route were filled with a profusion of flowers of every hue. They camped that night at the top of a scree-filled glen in a cave called Bheem-ke-Udar [Plate 18]. It provided scant shelter for sixty persons but was the best they could manage. Again the clouds dispersed during the night and it became bitterly cold. The coolies were exhausted and complaining. He presumed they were at about 13,000 feet above Calcutta. In any event, they were well above the tree line as they found only a few dry shrubs with which to make a fire.

Monday morning was cold and foggy. Everyone was in motion shortly after daybreak, climbing a steep moraine beside the Bheem-ke-Gadh, covered in places by crusts of snow. "It was exceedingly cold and only by the toil of climbing did we preserve any sufficient warmth," James wrote. "Everyone complained of the poisonedwind." Most experienced headaches and nausea, some were vomiting. Even James was having trouble.

"I could hardly command strength to climb the steeps," he reported. Below the pass was a small pool of water, very sacred, known as Matree-ke-Tal, chief source of the Bheem torrent, surrounded by snow. Visibility was less than a mile. No vegetation. The cold was numbing. They had reached the highest point, which he estimated at nearly 17,000 feet above Calcutta. At that altitude, he noted, "the air was so rarefied as to lose the power of distending the lungs." About them the snow was "moist though hard."

They were on the watershed between the Jumna and Bhagirathi. They quickly dropped below the tree line. At 5 p.m. they arrived in a thick forest three or four miles above the village of Sookhee (Sukhi) and decided to camp in the open, everyone being exhausted, but the symptoms of mountain sickness had left them. Since quitting the Jumna, James figured they had travelled 27 miles.

In those days, based on calculations by Colebrooke, Webb and John Hodgson, the height of Bandarpunch was believed to be around 25,000 feet. Yet Fraser wondered whether the professionals had made a mistake and overestimated Bandarpunch's height by several thousand feet. Only some years later more accurate measurements placed its elevation at 21,077 feet. Still, Fraser was sharply criticised for his "haphazard" estimates. The Quarterly Review, published by John Murray in London, regarded it highly improbable that he ever reached a high point of "nearly 17,000 feet". It is difficult to fix with certainty the route Fraser actually followed. But in his Journal he wrote that he descended into the Bhagirathi valley at Sukhi. Directly above this village is a rounded summit over which the road to Gangotri passes that is known today as Sukhitop, with an altitude of 8,550 feet. The Darwa ridge, on the watershed to the south of Sukhi, is at 14,000 feet. The topography along the northern route - the one followed by Fraser - is far more awesome, so he could not have been far off his estimated altitude of "nearly 17,000 feet". Unfortunately such petty criticisms overlooked the real achievements of Fraser's journey - his visual renderings of the snowy ranges remain 200 years later unsurpassed masterpieces of Himalayan landscapes, eloquent testimony of his genius.

After a dry night at their forest camp, the morning turned misty. Fraser and his escort continued to the Kandee Pass on an eastern spur of Bandarpunch. They were then in Upper Tangnore, as the district that guarded the approaches to Gangotri was then known. From Kandee Pass they had their first view of the Bhagirathi River deep in the valley below and rising above the clouds to the northeast the frosted sugarloaf hulk of Sri Kanta. They descended to the village of Sukhi, situated in a hollow beneath the ridge that sloped down from the pass.

When viewed from Sukhi, the Bhagirathi appeared nearly as large as the Sutlej at Rampur, but the Bhagirathi's banks were much broader. Likewise, it had seemed that the steep and shaggy roughness of the upper Jumna valley could hardly be surpassed, but the chasm in which the Bhagirathi ran was on a much grander scale.

At the foot of Sukhitop they crossed the river on a giddy bridge. Any slip would have been fatal, the river being deep and the current very rapid. They proceeded up the left bank, reaching Duralee (Dharali) at the end of the afternoon. They camped on the flat ground by the riverside. The high route from the Jumna had taken two days instead of the minimum of four that everyone had said would be necessary. James was exhausted but well content. Opposite his camp, above the right bank of the river, he viewed the village of Mookubba (Mukhba), formerly populous, he was told, but now only inhabited by the pundit, his family and servants, about fifteen people in all.

Wednesday morning, 19 July 1815, was again misty. The pundit of Mukhba had come down from Mukhba to travel with them, but he imposed conditions on their visit to the holy site of Gangotri: no firearms, no Mussulmans and everyone except James was to go barefoot. At first James found the path good but it became more perilous as they rose into the mountain fastness. Towards the end of the morning they came to the Jadhganga gorge at Lanka.

"The river runs below [us] at a depth of more than 100 yards, closely confined between two winding walls of solid rock in which it has hollowed itself a bed only sufficient to contain it, hardly broader above than it is below," James wrote in his Journal. "Beyond this point the road is difficult, and frequently dangerous, passing along the face of scars, in the beds of torrents, across rocks and over fragments of trees, ending in a very ugly and perilous descent, about six cos[1] from [Dharali], which leads to Bhyram Ghautee (Bhaironghati)."

He described Lanka as "a very singular and terrible place". There the river's two branches met: the main Bhagirathi branch "descends from the eastward, and the other, of a size fully equal, called the Jhannevie (Jadhganga), joins it from the northeast. Both these rivers run in chasms, the depth, narrowness and rugged wildness of which is impossible to describe. Between them is thrust a lofty crag, like a wedge, equal in height and savage aspect to those that on either side tower above the torrents. [At] the bottom of the deep and dangerous descent, and immediately above the junction of these two torrents, an old and crazy wooden bridge is thrown across the Bhagirathi,[2] from one rock to the other, many feet above the stream, and it is not till we reach this point that the extraordinary nature of the place, and particularly the bed of the river, is fully comprehended. There we see the stream in a state of dirty foam, twisting violently, and with mighty noise, through the curiously hollowed trough of solid granite, cutting into the strangest shapes, and leaping in fearful waves over every obstacle."

On the far side of the primitive bridge was an overhanging rock, where Bhyram was worshipped, and a black stone was partially painted red in the image of the god. "Here prayers and worship alone are not performed, but everyone is obliged to bathe and eat bread baked by the Brahmins as preparatory to the great and effectual ablutions at the holier Gangotri." James made a "very imperfect" sketch of the scene. It shows a solitary figure standing on a rock in the foreground gazing at the turbulent river with hands folded in prayer. The figure, wearing the white cloth of a pilgrim draped around his waist, serves as an artistic device to draw attention to the supernatural qualities of the setting [Plate 19].

"From hence we ascended the rock at the foot of which the bridge is situated by a path more curious, dangerous and difficult than any we had yet passed. As the rock is too steep and perpendicular to afford a natural path, the chief part is artificially constructed of large beams of wood driven into the fissures, on which other beams and large stones are placed, thus forming a hanging flight of steps over the fearful gulf below, and as this sometimes has suffered from age and weather, while the facilities for attaching it to the rock are rather scanty, or altogether wanting, it is frequently so far from being sufficient that it strikes dread into anyone not much accustomed to this mode of ascent. Sometimes it is even required to make a leap to reach the next sure footing, with the precipice yawning below...

"By this unpleasant path we reached a step, or level spot, on the first stage of the mountain where, in a thick grove of fir trees, is placed a small temple to Bhyram, a plain white building, built by order of Ummr Singh Thapa, who gave a sum of money to repair the road and erect places of worship here and at Gangotri. Having paid our respects to Bhyramji, we proceeded along the side of the hill on the right bank (north) of the river, gradually ascending by a path equally difficult and dangerous as the first part of our ascent, but more fearful, as the precipice to the river, which rolls below us, increases in height, and exceedingly toilsome from the nature of the ground over which it passes, and which consists wholly of sharp fragments from the cliffs above, with fallen trunks and broken branches of trees." Fortunately this rugged route lasted only a few more miles as they finally reached Gangotri, where the valley broadened and the true dimensions of the mountains surrounding them became apparent. James was overawed by the pristine beauty of this revered place. A short distance further he arrived at the site where, about 15 feet above the river, the small temple dedicated to the goddess Gunga was situated.

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1 Mughal unit of measure equivalent to 2.25 miles.

2 He means the Jadhganga.

BHEEM KE UDAR.

A Cave named after Bhima, one of the five Pandava brothers in the epic Mahabharata, is situated, a little more than ten miles from Carnalee or present day Kansali. This cave and under a few other large stones around it provided scant shelter for about sixty people of Fraser's party.

Near the confluence of Jad Ganga and Bhagirathi River lies a scenic Bhairon Ghati. It is located 10kms before on the way to Gangotri. The temple of Bhairon Nath is surrounded by dense forest. Bhairon Temple can be reached after travelling by road from Lanka to Bhaironghatti and by crossing the Jahanvi River on foot.

"In former times," he noted, "no temple made with [human] hands was provided for the worship of the deity, but within these few years the piety of Ummr Singh Thapa, the chief of the Gurkha conquerors, appropriated about four or five hundred rupees for the erection of the small building which is now placed there, and it by no means clearly appears whether he has in truth done an act pleasing or disgusting to the goddess. On this subject the pundit's answers were by no means explicit."

By comparison, James affirmed that the goddess Jumna "prefers simple worship at the foot of her own and natural shrine and has forbidden the erection of temples to her honour." He gave no opinion on which approach was more appropriate. However the Gangotri that existed 200 years later, having lost its pristine charm to the exigencies of mass travel, might well have pleased him less.

Gangotri temple, he reported for his home audience, "is situated precisely on the sacred stone on which Bhagiruttee used to worship Mahadeo.[3] It is a small building of a square shape for about 12 feet high, and rounding in, in the usual form of pagodas, to the top. It is quite plain, painted white with red mouldings and surrounded with the usual melon-shaped ornaments of these buildings. From the eastern face of the square, which is turned nearly to the sacred source, there is a small projection covered with a stone roof, in which is the entrance facing the east, and just opposite there is a small pagoda-shaped temple to Bhyramji. The whole was surrounded by a wall built of unhewn stone and lime, and the space this contains was paved with flat stones. In this place too there was a comfortable but small house for the residence of the Brahmins who come to officiate. Without the enclosure there were two or three sheds constructed of wood, called Dhurm sallahs, built for the accommodation of pilgrims who resort here...

"The scene in which this holy place is situated is worthy of the... reverence with which it is regarded. We have not about us the confined gloominess of Bhyram Ghautee: the actual dread which cannot but be inspired by the precipices, and torrents and perils of the place here gives way to a sensation of awe, imposing but not embarrassing, that might be compared to the dark and dangerous pass to the centre of the ruins of a former world... Thus on all sides is the prospect closed, except in front to the eastward, where from behind a mass of bare spires arise a series of huge, lofty, snowy citadels. These are the peaks of Roodroo Himala and Soomeroo Purbut.[4] There could be no finer finishing, no grander close to such a scene."

He reflected: "We are now in the centre of the stupendous Himala, the loftiest and perhaps most rugged range of mountains in the world. We are at the acknowledged source of that noble river, equally an object of veneration and a source of fertility, plenty and opulence to Hindustan, and we had reached the holiest shrine of Hindoo worship... These are surely striking considerations, combining with the solemn grandeur of the place, to move the feelings strongly. The fortuitous circumstances of being the first European that ever penetrated to this spot was no matter of boast... The road is now open to any other who chooses to attempt it, but it was a matter of satisfaction to myself."

James attempted to continue upriver towards Gaumukh - where because of the broken terrain "no mortal had gone, or can go". Not to be deterred, he said he wanted to gain a vantage point "about two furlongs beyond the temple, both for the purpose of observing the course of the river and of seeing Gangotri in another point of view. But having with considerable difficulty made my way over the unsteady fragments for some hundred yards, at the risk of being precipitated into the stream I was forced to turn back...

"In the want of time I experienced an effectual obstacle to exploring [further], and I was obliged to rest satisfied with the conclusions formed on the pundit's report, strengthened by observation as far as it went, and by reason and analogy where observation failed. The [true] source of the Ganges is not more than five miles horizontal distance from the temple, and in a direction southeast, 85 degrees nearly, and beyond this place it is in all probability chiefly supplied by the melting of the great bosom of snow which terminates the valley and which lies between the peaks of the great mountain Soomeroo Purbut, held to be the throne of Mahadeo himself...

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3 The Great God - a name of Shiva (John Dowson, A Classical Dictionary of Hindu Mythology, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, New Delhi, 2000).

4. The Bhagirathi Group and Shivling. The latter he describes as "a prodigious spire of bare rock, the top of which is enveloped in snow, the loftiest insulated peak I ever saw."

"The old popular idea that the Ganges issued from a rock, like a cow's mouth (Gae Moukh), did not fail to occur to me. This idea is extremely prevalent and it is difficult to account in a satisfactory manner for its universality, for it is not authorised by the shasters [religious text explaining the Vedas]. And the numbers of pilgrims and devotees who have reached the place of Gangotri, it might be presumed, would have served to give sufficient publicity to the true state of the case... It does not seem at all a point of religious or superstitious imposition, as the pundit of Gangotri would not then have treated it as he did. In all probability it must be referred to that love of the marvellous said to be so inherent in travellers, and which, like a sort of freemason craft, none of the fraternity choose to disturb by undeceiving the public, and disclosing the frauds of each other."

Because James was convinced that Gaumukh was a legend, he did not believe the account given by Captain Webb's munshi seven years before.[5] "The relation of the munshi's journey," James wrote, "affords a singular mixture of marks of truth and authenticity with falsehood and error, creating a complete indecision in my mind whether he really reached Gangotri or not."

A redacted version of the munshi's report, as reproduced in Raper's account of the expedition, stated: "A few miles beyond Gangotri the river is entirely concealed under beds of snow, beyond which no person has hitherto been able to penetrate. The breadth of the stream is about fifteen or twenty yards, the current moderate, and not above waist deep. Two miles beyond is the spot called Gau-muchi, or the cow's mouth. It is a large stone, situated in the middle of the bed; the water passes on each side, but a small piece of the fragment is disclosed above the surface, to which fancy may attach the idea of the object [i.e., a cow]."

The munshi was indeed mixing fact with fiction. In winter and spring, and sometimes until well into the month of June, parts of the river above Gangotri are covered by beds of snow swept down into the narrow valley by avalanches off the mountains above. The phenomenon is quite impressive. But Gaumukh is not "a large stone situated in the middle of the bed".

Proof of the real Gaumukh's existence would have to wait another two years when the surveyors John A. Hodgson and James Herbert, benefiting from James Fraser's pioneering experience, actually reached the snout of Gangotri Glacier, 10 miles further up the valley. They discovered that Mother Ganga's waters did not issue from a large stone but, already copiously formed, the river flowed from a hoary cave in the middle of a solid wall of blue ice that so resembled - and still resembles - a cow's mouth.

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5 When Webb and his companions decided to abandon their attempt to reach the source of the Ganges, they dispatched one of their munshis to Gangotri in their stead with instructions to faithfully report on everything he saw before rejoining them again further down country

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ENGRAVED BY ROBT HAVELL & SON JUN.R

GUNGOTREE THE HOLY SHRINE OF MAHADEO.

Gangotri is in Uttarkashi district in the state of Uttarakhand. It is a Hindu pilgrim town on the banks of the river Bhagirathi. It is on the Greater Himalayan Range, at a height of 10,315 Feet.

"Gangotree, the source of the most sacred branch of the Ganges, ought to hold and does bear the first rank among the holy places. Here all is mythological if not holy ground. Here Mahadeo sits enthroned in clouds and vast arctic rocks that defy the approach of living thing, and snow that makes desolation more awful. Gods, goddesses, and saints here continually adore him at mysterious distance, and you traverse their familiar haunts. But, although Gangotree be the most sacred, it is not the most frequented shrine, access to it being far more difficult than to Badrinauth".

"Fifteen feet above the stream, is situated the small temple, or mut, dedicated to the goddess Ganga, or Bhagirattee. In former times no temple made with hands was provided for the worship of the deity, but within these few years, the piety of Umeer Sing Thappa, the chief of the Ghoorkha conquerors, appropriated a sum of money of about four or five hundred rupees for the erection of the small building which is now placed there".

The Return

After spending a cold night at Gangotri, James busied himself by making a sketch of the landscape surrounding the temple, with the peaks of the Bhagirathi Sisters and Shivling towering like fortresses of snow and ice above the head of the valley. By a mystical play of light piercing the clouds arching over the mountains he managed to create the impression that the figures in the foreground were standing in the middle of a natural cathedral whose columns stretched to the heavens, splendidly dramatic, spectacular and divine all at once [Plate 20].

Towards evening, he bathed at "the holy spot where the goddess used to stand. The water, just freed from the ice, was piercing cold, and it required no small effort of piety to stay long enough in it for the Brahmin to say the necessary prayers." Next morning the snowy peaks about him shone forth in all their glory. He bid them farewell and began the descent to Duralee (Dharali).

He quit Dharali for Sukhi on Saturday, 22 July 1815. It was raining. The perambulator had become so crazy and broken that no further use of it could be made. He noted that the men of Dharali were absent from the village. He later learned they had gone off to rustle sheep, bringing home some days later up to 500 beasties stolen from a neighbouring district.

James and his escort arrived at Sukhi that evening and next morning continued in drizzling rain, crossing the river below Lohari Nag on a bridge suspended between two rocks. The river progressively widened. The road was painful and difficult. They continued to a place called Teear, where they spent the night, having crossed back and forth across the river no less than four times. "The journey this day was, I think, the most painful we had yet encountered. Kishen Singh was so exhausted he had to brought forward in a litter." They had reached the point where Captain Webb and his companions had turned back, Webb having sent forward Captain Hearsey's munshi to learn whatever he could about the source of the river.

Four days later James arrived at Barahat (Uttarkashi), which he described as "a most wretched place, consisting of not more than five or six poor houses, surrounded with filth and almost buried in a jungle of nettles, the produce of dunghills". He found even its holy sites were in a state of dilapidation. However he failed to take into account that the town, once regarded as "a place of note", had been virtually destroyed by the great earthquake of 1803 in which up to three hundred of its inhabitants perished.

After a thoroughly uncomfortable night, before leaving Barahat on Wednesday, 26 July 1815, James inspected the Trisul, or trident, at nearby Sukh-ka-mandir. Erected in honour of Lord Shiva, it had survived the 1803 earthquake, remaining upright. Its pedestal was in copper, the shaft of brass stood about 12 feet tall and the forks were each 6 feet in length.

By what means it had come hither no one could tell, and although the inscription on the shaft was legible, and most probably contained information on its origin, no one knew in what language the characters were written. The lower part of the inscription bore some resemblance to Chinese, and the pundits of Barahat recounted that, many centuries before, this part of Garhwal was inhabited by, or tributary to, the Chinese or Tartars. They imagined that the trident may have been constructed and brought there by subjects of the Great Khan.

After James completed sketching this curious monument, he and his company proceeded downriver to Dhurassoo (Dharasu). Along the way he received word that William was waiting for him at Saharanpur, obviating the necessity of passing through Srinagar. Beyond Dharasu he left the river and commenced the ascent to the Jandagan ridge, until reaching a village "half buried in nettles and weeds". Here he rested the night. Next day he crossed the Jumlee Gadh, which ran in a westerly direction from the Dhunoulee (Dhanaulti) ridge, and camped at Belee (Balu), above the Aglar Gadh.

On Saturday, 29 July 1815 - described as "a lovely, fresh, dewy morning with clear sky and weather cool, calm and reviving" - he began the sharp ascent to Sowakhola (Suakholi) on the ridge overlooking the Doon Valley to the south. A dozen years later the construction of a convalescence centre for British military personnel on the ridge six miles to the west of Suakholi would mark the founding of the twin hill stations of Landour and Mussoorie. But for the moment there was only wilderness, beautiful, pristine wilderness. From Suakholi he descended to Dehra Dun, where James and his company spent the night.

James' voyage of discovery into the Himala Mountains ended next day when he and William were reunited at Saharanpur. James later remembered his three-month journey through the Himalayas as the happiest time of his residence in India. The brothers stayed at Saharanpur ten days, visiting with fellow Scotsman George Govan, the district surgeon and superintendent of the Saharanpur Botanic Garden. Leaving Govan's company, they continued slowly down the Jumna, making a triumphant entry to Delhi on 19 August 1815. Colonel Skinner celebrated their return by organising a grand dinner and one of his famous nautch evenings. At Delhi news soon reached them that their brother Aleck had fallen ill with fever at Allahabad and was too weak to travel. James left immediately to bring him back to Delhi.

He found Aleck in a distressing state, broken and prostrate. Immediately he made arrangements for their return to Delhi. The return was painfully slow, Aleck having to be carried on a palanquin all the way. Finally at Jokhoulee, on the outskirts of Delhi, they had to stop altogether. Aleck was too weak and confused to move further and so James nursed him in their tent by the roadside. William was summoned. Aleck expired on Monday, 3 June 1816, days after William joined them.

William Dalrymple in City of Djinns gives a touching description of Aleck's death. He quotes from a letter written by James to his parents: "His emaciation so great that there was hardly enough to cover bones and sinews, Aleck finally died. His sufferings for some days before his death were very great and immediately preceding it they were distressing beyond description. But at last his pulse ceased to play and the breathing stopped. Only the corps remained before us. Such was the end of my beloved brother Aleck."

Together, William and James closed Aleck's eyes and washed his body. "About six o'clock we wrapped it up in a piece of bedding and carried it ourselves to the grave. There we restored it to its native clay."

It was the normally stoic William who took the death most severely. In his diary, James described his brother's behaviour. "From the time the grave was filled up and the few people who attended gone, he sat at its head or lay on the ground along its side the whole day, weeping and groaning most bitterly.

"After the burial, James left for Calcutta where he joined the merchant House of Mackintosh, Fulton & Maclintock, and at that same time started taking art lessons from George Chinnery, an accomplished painter well known for coaching others on how to perfect their artistic talent, among them a young lieutenant with the Bengal Engineers, Robert Smith, who became one of James' close friends.

In January 1818, James was introduced to William Havell, a landscape painter and print maker who had accompanied Lord Amherst's embassy to China. James found Havell a most stimulating tutor and critic. Havell encouraged James to publish his Himalayan sketches. The British public had never seen scenes of the Himalayas before Thomas and William Daniell journeyed into the Northwest in 1789, getting as far as Garhwal. The eleven aquatints of the Himalayan foothills included by Thomas Daniell in his Oriental Scenery were spectacular and excited imaginations back home, but none were of the inner Himalayas such as James had so brilliantly captured.

James sent his best watercolours to his father in Scotland. Edward Fraser showed them to people in Edinburgh. Everyone agreed they were remarkable, including William Turner, perhaps the most famous British landscape artist of all time, who was then visiting Scotland. Edward contacted the London publishers Rodwell & Martin, with the result that when William Havell returned to England in 1819 he was immediately contracted by them to make engravings of the twenty finest Fraser landscapes for Views in the Himala Mountains.

By May 1820, James had enough of Calcutta and spent the next four months travelling upcountry. During his travels Views in the Himala Mountains and its companion work, the 548-page Journal of a Tour through part of the Snowy Range of the Himala Mountains, and the sources of the rivers Jumna and Ganges, were published by Messrs Rodwell & Martin. The works received mixed reviews. Some critics acclaimed the colours of the aquatints as light and pure, the skies, even if often cloud-laden and turbulent, as fresh and clear. Of course, as the years passed other artists would render some magnificent views of the Himalayas, but James Fraser's works were justly acclaimed as among the finest aquatints of India ever produced in England.

All the major periodicals of the time reported on his journey into the unknown. "Altogether, we regard Mr Fraser's work as a valuable accession to the chronology of India, and highly creditable to himself as an acute and diligent observer of nature in her wildest and sublimest forms," the British Review and London Critical Journal wrote in its September 1820 edition.

The Eclectic Review of London remarked in its June 1821 edition: "Valuable and interesting... although the materials are very indifferently put together. The want of coherence in the different parts, however, does not destroy the interest of the whole."

Less enthusiastic was the Quarterly Review published by John Murray of London. "The work is highly worthy of public notice and encouragement and that with all its drawbacks a kind of witchery hovered over the pages. [But] it is much regretted that Mr Fraser had neither thermometer nor barometer... nor any means of judging the height of the mountains he traversed, or of the inaccessible peaks that he had so many opportunities of viewing, free from clouds, and at no great distance. We cannot, of course, place the smallest reliance on his vague conjecture that, on passing the ridge where vegetation ceased and where the breathing was so strongly affected, they were 'nearly 17,000 feet above the level of Calcutta', nor can we agree with him in concluding the line of perpetual congelation on the southern side of the Himaleh to be 'somewhere between 15 and 16,000 feet above it." The Edinburgh Magazine noted that he was the first European traveller to mention the Jhannerie River. "Mr Fraser penetrated through tracts which some of his predecessors had been unable to reach. He thus accumulated a large mass of materials, which, had they been worked on with greater care and skill, might have made a truly interesting work."

In November 1820, James said goodbye to brother William and began a adventurous journey home. Their parting was awkward. It took place in a tent, pitched near the Kutb Minar monument on the outskirts of Delhi. "When it came time to part - the Nawab [of Firozpur] was ready - the horses all saddled and they came to the tent to summon us - William is not a man to show his feelings however keen - nor to give way to the common forms on such occasions - we got up - he gave me his hand and said, 'Well, goodbye - take care of yourself' - gripping it hard - but I did not speak - I did not trust myself - I took one look - probably I shall see him no more - and quitted the tent."

Nor would he see his youngest brother George again. In 1820, George arrived in India as fresh as a spray of highland heather to serve as an officer in the Bengal Cavalry. George joined William in Delhi, where in September 1832 he married Wilhelmina Moore. It seems he became an acknowledged expert on Assyrian scarabs and the early civilisations of the Euphrates River valley, though today not much more than that is known about his life.

James finally arrived back at Moniack in 1823 and in September of that year married his cousin, Jane Fraser Tytler. William was appointed Resident British Agent to the Mughal Court at Delhi in 1830 and undoubtedly was on his way to knighthood and greater fame when overtaken by tragedy. Upon the death in 1834 of his friend Ahmed Baksh Khan, Nawab of Firozpur, William was named executor of the estate.

Ahmed Baksh Khan's eldest son, Shamsuddin, was William's ward. When he discovered that Shamsuddin was trying to cheat his younger brother out of his share of the inheritance, William threw him out of the house. The young Nawab was angry and became angrier still when he suspected William of seducing his sister. On 22 March 1834, while on his way back to his mansion on the Ridge above Delhi after his customary evening ride, William was shot dead by an assassin hired by Shamsuddin.

Thomas Metcalfe, who succeeded William as Resident, asked John Lawrence to head the murder investigation. In a remarkable piece of sleuthing, the future viceroy of India tracked the killer back to Shamsuddin and uncovered the cruel conspiracy. In short order both men were tried, convicted and hung.

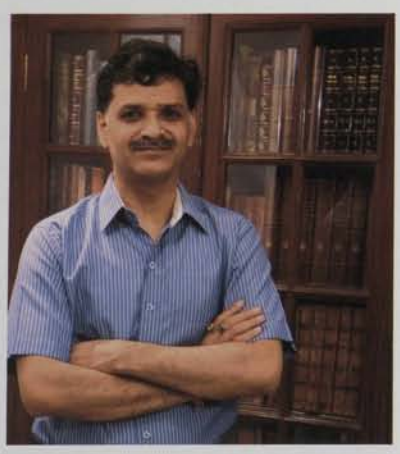
William was buried with great pomp in the grounds of St James Church, opposite Kashmir Gate. This unusual neo-classical church, built in the form of a Greek cross, was the seat of the Anglican faith in Upper India. The church had been commissioned by Colonel James Skinner and designed by James' friend, Captain (later Colonel) Robert Smith.

Although William was said to have had "more children than the king of Persia", all from his native wives, none were ever legitimised according to Scottish law or custom. News of William's murder greatly affected the father. William had always been his favourite. Four months after the murder, Edward Satchwell Fraser died at Moniack in Scotland. James became the Fifteenth Reelig. He was the only one of the five brothers who did not give up his life in the service of British India. His brother George, the youngest of the brood, died without issue at Aurungabad on 27 August 1842. James died at Moniack in 1856, aged 73. Sadly, he and his wife Jane had no children. The Reelig Fraser family continued through James' sister, Jane Anne Catherine Fraser, who became the Seventeenth Lady of Reelig. She married Philip Affleck Fraser of Culduthel and happily they produced many offspring.

About The Team

Robert Hutchison lives in Leysin, Switzerland, but is a frequent visitor to India. Born in Montreal, he studied economics and political science at McGill University. He interrupted his studies to travel and take up a career in journalism. He is the author of six books on subjects ranging from international white-collar crime and adventure travel to the extreme right wing of the Catholic Church. His first historical novel – The Raja of Harsil – was published in 2010 by Roli Books, New Delhi. It is based on the true story of "Pahari" Wilson, a deserter from the British Army during the Anglo-Afghan War of 1838-1842. Wilson settled in the upper Bhagirathi valley where he married, founded a family, and introduced commercial timbering to the Himalayas, becoming in the process one of India's richest men.

From 1961 to 1976, Hutchison was a correspondent for the Sunday and Daily Telegraph of London, covering the 1967 Middle East war and its aftermath from Benghazi in Libya and Cairo, and the 1969 Islamic Summit at Rabat, which reshaped the face of political Islam. His articles in The Financial Post of Toronto on international fraud and high-level corruption won him the National Business Writing Award and three citations for outstanding investigative reporting in Canada during the 1970s. He is currently working on a romanticized biography of Sir Proby Cautley, the builder of the Ganges Canal, which started operating in 1854 and remains to this day one of the largest irrigation canals in the world.



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Ashok Agrawal: While pursuing his MA in Political Science & preparing for civil services exams, a rebellious tour to Benaras & Calcutta in 1991 changed the course of life of Ashok Agrawal, there he bought a huge two story mansion, filled with finest colonial furniture. His frequent buying trips to Calcutta, Bombay & Ahemdabad introduced him to the world of Books & Fine Arts. The beauty of 19th century plate books fascinated him and soon he fell in love with the antiquarian books.

Parag Agrawal: Parag was practicing law at High Court, Gwalior when she first met Ashok in 1998. She felt spell bound with the beauty of the Artifacts & Books in which Ashok was dealing & decided to marry Ashok for all his passion for perfection. Soon they launched Parag Books and together their interest grew in other areas of Fine Arts: Lithographic Prints, Old Photographs & Bengal School Paintings. Today, Parag is the backbone of the Parag Books, looking after its finances and administration.

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