CHAPTER TWO

EARLY BRITISH EFFORTS TO OPEN UP TIBET THROUGH NEPAL AND BHUTAN

Before the advent of the British India's overland trade with China through Tibet was more closely linked to the economy of the Himalayan-hill-states than to that of India at large. But when the East India Company got hold of Bengal in 1765(1), the importance of the latter increased manifold. Actually the Company wanted to redress the adverse balance of the trade with China through the sea route by opening land-routes through Tibet, and by introducing Bengali and British manufactures (2) to the countries situated on the other side of the Himalayas. Hence to reach the vast, and supposedly fabulous markets of China through its back-door i.e. Tibet, the Company started probing into the Himalayan hill-states like Nepal, Bhutan, Ladakh and Assam.

(1) After the battle of Buxer in October, 1764, the Mughal Emperor, Shah Alam II granted to the Company the 'Diwan' of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa by a royal 'firman' on August 1765. This gave the Company virtual sovereignty (without attracting any responsibility) over these three States.

(2) Though there was a certain demand for British woollens at Canton, yet they could not profitably be sold in competition with the Chinese silk.
The early British efforts to open up Tibet were directed towards Nepal, through which ran the traditional trade route to Tibet viz. the Patna-Kuti-Kathmandu route. The trade was highly lucrative on this route. Apart from other commodities like Tibetan musk, wax and borax, exchanged for woollen and cotton piece goods, a large quantity of Tibetan gold also passed through this route to Patna. But at that time this route was in a chaotic condition due to the explosive expansion of the Gurkhas, a powerful clan of Nepal, under their leader Prithvi Narayan Sah. And, the rulers of Nepal were too weak to defend the commerce of the country, and the routes through which it passed.

Hence in 1767 an abortive attempt was made by the Company to seize the Patna-Kuti-Kathmandu route. An expedition was sent under Captain Kinlock to help the ruler of Kathmandu against the Gurkhas. Although the expediency of the expedition was not fully

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(3) For other commodities of trade see infra, Chapter V., pp. 94-110.

(4) Calendar of Persian Correspondence (Calcutta, 1911-14) Vol. VI, p. 346.

(5) On the eve of Gurkha rise Nepal had three Principal States namely Kathmandu, Bhatgaon and Lalita Patan, ruled by Jayaprakas Mall, Ranjeet Mall and Vishnu Mall respectively.

For the detailed history of this phase see: D. R. Regmi, Modern Nepal (Calcutta, 1961), pp. 52-193.

appreciated by the Select Committee(7) of the East India Company yet the ejection of the Gurkhas from the trade route was indispensable for the safety of the Company's commercial interests in Nepal. Besides, in view of the Kathmandu ruler's close contacts with the Pontiff of Lhasa, the Dalai Lama, the Company was counting upon the former to plead their case for commercial concessions in Tibet. But unfortunately the expedition proved disastrous due to their ignorance of topography and climate of the land.(8)

However, despite the abortive attempt of Kinlock, the Company became more eager to:

... obtain the best intelligence .... whether trade can be opened with Nepal; and whether cloth and other European commodities may not find their way thence to Tibet, Lhasa and Western parts of China (9).

(7) Select Committee's Report to the Court of Directors, 25 Sept., 1767.


(9) Citation, Lamb, Ibid, p. 7.
And now, realising that the table had turned in favour of the Gurkhas, the Company tried to coax Prithvi Naryan Sah, the Gorkhali leader. In Aug. 1769, Sergeant Logan's mission was sent to assure the Gurkhai leader that:

Only due to ignorance the Company had assisted the Kathmandu Raja, and now the Company was fully acquainted, it will on no account, support any other party, except the addressee. (10)

However, Logan’s mission was devoid of any tangible results. The only concession which he could obtain was the permission from the ruler of Saptari (a small state in the south-east of Nepal) for the British traders to go to the Chumbi valley through the Morang–Teesta route via Sikkim, as the Kathmandu–Kuti route had been blocked up by the Gurkhas. (11)

But this concession too was barren of result as in the same year the Raja of Morang was dethroned and his State was annexed by the Gurkhas. (12) Secondly Logan’s move was too late as the conquest of Nepal,

(10) Calendar of Persian Correspondence, Vol. II, Nos. 1681, 1686.


(12) Regmi, op. cit, p. 129, n. 5.
by the Gurkhas, was complete by the end of 1769 (13).
Now being the master of the land, the Gurkhas shunned and evaded all British overtures for trade negotiations. (14)
The fall of Nepal and Sikkim to the Gurkhas therefore, resulted, for a while, in an almost complete stoppage of the age-old trans-Himalayan trade between Bengal, Bihar and Tibet via Sikkim and Nepal passes.

**Bhutan**

Now that Nepal was completely out of their hands, the Company started planning for an alternative trade marts for their merchandise in the eastern Himalayas. Moreover, a pressing reason for expanding the trade of Bengal, and developing new forms of commerce had, in the meantime, been provided by the great famine of 1770 in that province. It caused enormous financial losses especially in the export of grain and in the cotton industry on which the economy of Bengal was dependent to a large extent. (15)

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(13) Regmi, *op. cit.*, p. 147, n. 84.


Besides, the Gurkha invasions into Sikkim in 1769 had adversely affected the trade of Bengal which passed through the Morang-Teesta route of Sikkim. (16) Hence the Company was interested in Bhutan as an alternate outlet to the Chumbi valley. Though the route through Chumbi valley was passable only with great difficulty, (17) yet the Company had no alternative to the Nepal and Sikkim routes to Tibet. The court of Directors, therefore, sent another directive in 1771 suggesting the Bengal Government to explore the Assam and Bhutan routes to Tibet (18). When Warren Hastings (19) came to Bengal in 1772, the opening of Assam and Bhutan routes to Tibet and China had already become an object of the Company's policy.

(16) For the account of this route see Kirkpatrick, An Account of the Kingdom of Nepal (London, 1811), pp. 312-315.

(17) For Bogle's account about the Chumbi route see C.R. Markham (ed.), Narratives of the Mission of George Bogle to Tibet (London, 1876), pp. 148-150.

(18) Mehra, op. cit., p. 46.


Also see Penderal Moon, Hastings and British India (New York, 1949).
Curiously the Company's relations with Bhutan emerged as a result of the war provoked by Bhutan herself. The chain of events started in 1772 with the succession crisis in Cooch-Behar, an independent province on the northern confines of Bengal. While the Deb Raja of Bhutan went forward to help one claimant to Cooch-Bihar, Hastings supported the other by sending Captain Jones with a small force to oust the Bhutanese from Cooch-Behar. Hastings' assistance to Cooch-Behar, though apparently 'motivated by altruistic considerations,' resulted in war between the Company and Bhutan.

(20) For a detailed history of this crisis see Regmi, op. cit., pp. 127-38.

(21) But it was not a part of the territory of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa for which the Company held the right of 'Diwani' since 1765.

(22) But in his private correspondence Hastings admitted that his purpose was to gain possession of Cooch-Behar for the Company apart from whatever he may have hoped to gain at the expense of Bhutan, cf. G.R. Gleig, op.cit. I, p. 296. Citation, Mehra, op. cit., p. 47.

Also see Cammann, op.cit., pp.26, 155-56; Regmi op.cit., p.131; Ram Rahul, Modern Bhutan (London, 1971) pp. 37-38.

In reality a very advantageous deal was struck (on April 1773) before armed assistance was actually given. Mehra, op.cit., p.47.

Both sides suffered heavy losses before the war came to an end in Jan. 1773 culminating in a treaty which fulfilled the cherished ambitions of the Company. The most important term of the treaty was the article regarding trade which conferred upon the British an uninterrupted right of commercial dealings with the Bhutanese. Also, the use of the road to Chumbi valley was secured as a corollary to this stipulation. In exchange the same privilege was extended to the latter in the British territory.

Another important result of this Anglo-Bhutan war was the intercession of the Tashi Lama of Tibet on behalf of Bhutan. The Tashi Lama, at the instigation of Prithvi Narayan Sah of Nepal, wrote a letter to Hastings requesting him to treat the Deb Raja with 'compassion and clemency.' Hastings saw in the intercession of the Lama, the possibility of implementing the policy which the Court of Directors had been urging since 1768. Moreover, by then the opening of new channels of commerce was the only method of making up for the constant drain of money from Bengal.

(23) Regmi, op. cit., pp. 141-42.
(26) Hastings' Minute in Public Consultations, 19 April, 1779 No. 1.
Hence Hastings calculated that to offer easy terms to Bhutan was the best way to establish friendly relations with the Lama and Tibet. Secondly Hastings drew shrewd conclusions from the presents, which accompanied the letter of the Lama, and tried to assess the extent of the external trade and internal wealth of Tibet (27). In a nutshell, for Hastings' object, the letter from the Lama was an occasion 'too favourable to be neglected' for establishing friendly and commercial relations with Tibet. (28)

George Bogle's Mission to Lhasa

Warren Hastings reciprocated Tashi Lama's letter by sending a friendly mission to Tibet. In May 1774, George Bogle (29) was sent to Lhasa with the object of opening a 'mutual and equal communication of trade' between

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(27) A list of these presents is given in Camman, *op.cit.*, pp. 30-31.

Probably it was after seeing these presents, as is suggested by Turner, that Hastings decided to send an Englishman to Tibet. Cf. Samuel Turner, *An Account of an Embassy to the Court of Teshoo Lama in Tibet* (London, 1800), p. 365.

(28) *Foreign Department, Secret Consultations*, 19 May 1774, No.3.

(29) For a biographical sketch of George Bogle see Markham, *Narratives*, pp. CXXXI-cliv.
Tibet and Bengal by a treaty of 'amity and commerce'. (30) Bogle was also instructed to study, apart from markets and resources; the nature of road between Bengal and Lhasa; the nature of intercourse between Lhasa and China; especially the extent of influence the Lama had upon the Court of China; and about the people, politics and manners etc. (31) To all appearances the mission was a courtesy call, and its concern was trade rather than diplomacy. (32)

Thus, with these instructions Bogle repaired to Tibet. He reached Tashilhumpo, the seat of Tashi Lama, in Dec., 1774, and stayed there for five months. He could not visit Lhasa as the Dalai Lama was then a minor and viewed Bogle's mission with suspicion. (33) In fact Bogle's Mission achieved very little to open up the alternative trade route through Bhutan to Lhasa. According to Bogle the fulfilment of the object of the Company rested (insecurely) upon two supports. Firstly, the existence of Tashi Lama was the only hope through whose intercession the Company could have reached the Court of China. But, unfortunately, the Tashi Lama died in Nov.

(31) Markham Narratives, pp. 5-8.
(33) Probably Dalai Lama's suspicions about the Mission were the result of the instigation of the Gurkhas who did not like the growing intimacy between the Tashi Lama and Bogle: Francis Edward Younghusband, India and Tibet (London, 1910), pp. 21-22.
1780. 

Secondly, by standing as the protectors of the Tibetans against the Gurkhas, the British could have lasting diplomatic relations with Tibet. This opportunity was also lost by the policy of neutrality followed by Cornwallis (1786-93) during the Tibeto-Nepalese crisis of 1789-92.

Samuel Turner's Mission to Lhasa

Warren Hastings, however, did not abandon his Tibetan schemes even after the death of George Bogle and the Tashi Lama of Tashilhumpo. In 1783, he sent another mission to Lhasa under Samuel Turner to convey the good wishes of the Company on the occasion of the installation of the new Lama. Turner stayed at Shigatse for one year and succeeded (though unexpectedly) in getting some minor trade concessions.

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(34) Bogle too died in April 1781. Younghusband, op.cit, p.24.


(36) Cammann, op.cit., p. 117.


(37) Like Bogle, Turner too could not visit Lhasa. Turner, op.cit., p. 368; Cammann, op.cit., pp.146-47.

for the Company. (39) Beyond that he too could not accomplish much. But he did obtain a clearer idea of the complex elements involved in Tibetan politics and trade. He observed that the way to Peking lay through Lhasa only:

Whenever a regular intercourse takes place between the agents of the Government of Bengal and the Chiefs of Tibet, I shall consider it to be the basis of an intercourse with China. And, it will probably be through the medium of the former that we shall be enabled to arrive at Peking. (40)

He, therefore, suggested that the best way to achieve this end would be through the establishment of trade relations between India and Tibet. (41) Accordingly in April 1784, Hastings invited native Indian traders to trade with Tibet through Bhutan, (42) and to give encouragement to them the first venture was exempted from all duties. (43) The first attempt to trade with Tibet was made in 1785, but the actual conditions of trade in Tibet and Bhutan were not very encouraging for the traders. It was due to the reason that the

(40) Ibid, p. 373.
(41) Ibid.
(42) Foreign Department, Political A., 11 May 1984, Nos. 24-37.
(43) Ibid, No. 37.
rulers of Tibet and Bhutan had monopoly of all the trade and enjoyed certain privileges which the traders from India lacked. (44) Secondly, Turner observed that 'the people of Tibet lacked purchasing power and the country gave a strong impression of poverty'. (45) Inter alia, before the report of this venture could reach Hastings, he had already set out for England in Jan. 1785.

However, Turner's information regarding Russia's definite efforts to open commercial relations with Tibet was the first intimation of Russian rivalry in Tibetan trade. (46)

**Tibeto-Nepalese Crisis of 1789-92**

The departure of Hastings (47) resulted in a decrease in the tempo of Anglo-Tibetan relations. Tibetan route to China was considered 'too long and hazardous to be entered upon and doubtful of

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(47) From Feb. 1785-86 Macpherson, being a senior most member on the council, became the acting Governor General as a stop gap arrangement.
Meanwhile the Gurkhas invaded the territory of Tashi Lama in 1789. The main reason behind the invasion was that the Gurkhas claimed the right of minting coinage for circulation in Tibet and wanted to abolish the duties which the Tibetans charged on the salt exported to Nepal. But it might have been incited by the expansionist policy of the Gurkhas. Both the combatants appealed to the British for help. Though Cornwallis (1786-93) declared neutrality, yet he was out to exploit the situation. Ostensibly he assured both the parties viz. the Gurkhas and the Tibetans, the Company's friendly intentions and respect for their sovereignty. But explained Company's inability to send English troops with hostile intentions as either of them was a friend of the British.

Moreover, an abortive attempt was made to send a mission under Cathcart through sea-route. cf. H. Pritchard, Early Anglo-Chinese Relations from 1750 to 1800 (Washington, 1937) pp. 237-40. Also see Morse, op. cit., II, pp. 156, 216.
(49) For the history of two Tibeto-Nepalese wars see Kirkpatrick, op. cit., pp.339-79; Also see Turner, op.cit. pp. 437-42; JBOHS, Vol. XIX (Patna, 1933) p. 371-74.
(50) Foreign Department Political Consultations, 3rd Oct. 1792, Nos. 17, 18.
While offering mediation to both the parties Cornwallis secretly hinted to the Gurkhas that armed assistance would be forthcoming in return for a commercial treaty for opening up Nepal to British trade. The Gurkhas hastily agreed to sign the commercial treaty with the British because the Chinese forces were marching towards Tibet to help the latter against the Gurkhas. This treaty with the British was duly signed by the Gurkhas in March, 1792. In Sept.1792 Cornwallis, fully confident of the success of his diplomacy, planned to send Colonel Kirkpatrick to help the Gurkhas. But the winter season set in and foiled the move and Kirkpatrick could not leave the plains till the spring of the next year.

Meanwhile the Chinese troops marched towards Tibet to help Lhasa against the Gurkhas and was benefitted in planting her influence among the Tibetans and the Nepalese as well. In 1793, by a decree, the Chinese Government once for all declared Tibet closed to the foreigners. Thus Tibet had now virtually closed

and became a forbidden land for the British, which obviously adversely affected the commercial interests of the Company. The Chinese intervention seemed to have changed Tibet from a possible help towards the improvement of Anglo-Chinese relations to a positive danger to the position of the British traders at Canton.

**Macartney's Mission to China**

The 'non-committed' attitude of the Company during the aforementioned crisis created much misunderstanding among the Chinese authorities regarding the British intentions towards Nepal and Tibet.\(^{58}\) The British were regarded to have given assistance to an enemy of the Chinese.\(^{59}\) Consequently, an embassy under Lord Macartney sailed to China in December 1793 with the object\(^ {60}\) of clearing the misunderstanding.\(^ {61}\)

\(^{58}\) *Foreign Department Political Consultations*, 27 June, 1792, No.20.

\(^{59}\) *Calendar of Persian Correspondence*, Vol. X, No.348.

\(^{60}\) For the objects of this embassy see an article by E.P. Pritchard, *The Instructions of the East India Company to Lord Macartney on his embassy to China and his Report to the Company* *JRAS* Vols. 2,3,4 (1938).

However, this embassy failed to bring about any significant improvement in the Anglo-Chinese relations. Inter alia, Lord Macartney's refusal to 'Kotow' before the Chinese emperor and Fu-Kang-an's (Chinese Minister) dislike for the British further worsened the already strained relations.

Abdul Kadir's Mission to Nepal

Despite the afore mentioned failures, the Company had not forsaken its attempts for the extension of its commerce to China through the Himalayan countries. With the treaty of 1792 in the background, the Company again tried to cultivate relations with Nepal. In 1795 Sir John Shore (1793-98) sent Abdul Kadir to Nepal to negotiate another commercial treaty with that country. Actually Abdul had the recommendation of the Company and he was supposed to deliver certain presents to the ruler of Nepal on behalf of the Company, but he went there in his private capacity of a merchant.
and not as a representative of the Company's Government. (66)

However, after much refutation (67) Abdul was allowed to enter Nepal by the Nepalese Government (68). He delivered the presents to the ruler (69) and stayed there for eight months. This mission too proved abortive and nothing tangible came out of this venture except a factual report (70) regarding the political and commercial conditions of the country. (71) But this 'diplomatic drive in disguise' (72), seemed to have served the purpose of the planners like Sir John Shore. According to his opinion the 'mission was not a total failure' and 'promised some hope for a better future of Company's trade with Nepal'. He calculated that:

... Considering the commercial as well as political information derived from the deputation it cannot be deemed useless and unimportant. (73)

(66) Regmi, op. cit., p. 240.

(67) Foreign Department, Political Consultations, 20 March 1795, No. 23.

(68) Foreign Department, Political Consultations, 1 May 1795, No. 7.

(69) Ibid, 24 Sept. 1795 No. 20.

(70) For his report see Foreign Department, Political Consultations, 7 March 1796, No.3, 4.

(71) For a detailed account of this mission see Regmi, op. cit. pp. 239-253.

(72) Foreign Department, Political Consultations, 26 June 1800, No. 70.

(73) Ibid, No. 23.
However, despite all these hopes and enthusiasm, the Company could not develop any direct contacts with Nepal. (74) In 1801, Company's Government again tried to avail of an opportunity, which came its way during the succession crisis in Nepal. (75) A new commercial treaty was signed with its minor ruler (76) and Captain Knox was despatched to Kathmandu as the Company's Resident. (77) But the relations between the Company and the Gurkhas soon became so strained that Knox had to be withdrawn in 1803. Lord Wellesly, realising the futility of further efforts to have friendly relations with Nepal, dissolved the existing treaties with that country. (78) Again in May 1810, the Minto Government (1807-13) tried to negotiate with Nepal but relations between the two Government,

(74) Ibid., Nos. 9, 13.
(75) Foreign Department, Secret Consultations, 26 June 1800, Nos. 70-71.
(76) It was like a treaty of subsidiary alliance. Regmi, op. cit., pp. 235.
(77) Foreign Department, Secret Consultations, 26 June 1802, Nos. 42-43.
(78) C.U. Aitchison, op. cit., Vol. XIV, p. 45; D. Wright, History of Nepal (Cambridge, 1877) p. 52;
Also see W. B. Northey, The land of the Gurkhas (Cambridge 1937), pp. 43-44.
worsened day by day. (.79)

Anglo-Nepal War (1814-1816) and the Treaty of Sagrauli

Meanwhile the Gurkha encroachments on the Gangetic plains, the newly acquired territories of the Company, increased enormously and the war between them became inevitable. It started in Nov. 1814 and lasted for two years. (80) In March 1816 a treaty was signed at Sagauli (81) between the two powers. By this treaty the Gurkha advance was checked and the Company got possession of all the territory lying between the river Kali and Sutlej, comprising of Kumaon, Garhwal, and Bushahr. (82) Secondly this treaty brought the Company's territories contiguous to Ladakh and Western Tibet. Both were the centres of shawl wool and China tea, much coveted commodities of British trade.

(79) For a general outline of British intercourse with Nepal see History of Nepal (Translated from Prabatiya language of Nepal) by Kunshi Shew Shanker Singh and Pandit Shri Gunananda (Calcutta, 1958).

(80) For a detailed account of the war see, B.D. Sanwal, Nepal and the East India Company (Bombay, 1965), pp. 115-199.

(81) For the terms of the treaty see Ibid, pp. 199-214, and Appendix II, pp. 330-332.

(82) Foreign Department, Political Proceedings, 15 May 1815, No. 43; Also see Ibid, 16 May 1815, No. 44.
Actually the Company had been trying to procure the specimens of shawl-wool of Western Tibet since the days of Bogle (1774) and Turner (1783). Warren Hastings had instructed George Bogle, when the latter was proceeding to Lhasa, 'to send one pair of the animal called 'Tus' which produces the shawl-wool. But Bogle could bring nothing except the information that:

... the shawl wool came from goats, pastured in the region of Western Tibet, and was an important item of export to Kashmir. (84)

Samuel Turner too was not much successful in his attempt to bring some specimens of shawl-wool producing goats. Again, the instructions of Company's Board of Directors in 1799 to procure some specimens of these goats proved barren of any tangible results until the Company got an easy access to the Western Himalayas, after the treaties of Lahore (1809) and of Sagauli (1816).

(83) Markham, Narratives, p. 8.
(84) Ibid, p. 126.
(85) Turner, op. cit., pp. 188-89 and 355-57; Also see Cammann op.cit., p. 84, n. 11.
(86) Bengal Commercial Despatch, 31st Oct. 1799, Vol. 34.
Moorcraft Missions to Tibet (1812) and Ladakh (1820-25)

Another attempt was made in 1812 under the Minto Government when William Moorcraft accompanied by Captain Hearsey and disguised as 'gosains' under the assumed names of Mayapuri and Hargiri visited Gartok in Western Tibet. According to Moorcraft's information Gartok was an important centre of shawl-wool trade. Thousands of traders from the surrounding countries would assemble there during the summer months to exchange their goods for the native products of Tibet i.e. borax, salt, gold, shawl-wool, ponies and for the goods carried overland from China i.e. silk, tea and porcelain wares etc. (88)

Moorcraft also informed that the entire produce of shawl-wool of western Tibet was sold to the Ladakhis and only the members of 'Lapchak' and 'Chhaba' missions (89)

Also see Dorothy Woodman, Himalayan Frontiers (London, 1969), p. 22.


(89) 'Lapchak' and 'Chhaba' missions were a sort of reciprocal commercial as well as religious arrangement between Leh and Lhasa. For further details about these missions see JASB, Vol. XIII (Pt. I, 1844), p.217; Also see a latest study by C.L.Datta, Ladakh and Western Himalayan Politics: 1819-1848 (New Delhi, 1973), pp. 65-66.
were entitled to carry on this trade between Leh and Lhasa. This arrangement, however, came into being by virtue of the treaty of 1684 stipulated after the Tibeto-Ladakhi-Mogul war of 1681-83. (90) Moorcraft further observed that since the economies of both Kashmir and Ladakh largely depended upon the shawl-wool trade, the existing agreement had never been infringed upon. Hence the shawl-wool trade of western Tibet was strictly and jealously guarded by both the Ladakhi and Kashmiri merchants, (91) and it was very difficult to elude their vigilence. However, Moorcraft succeeded in purchasing some shawl-wool for the Company and made the:

... epoch at which may be fixed the origin of a traffic which is likely to be extremely beneficial to the Hon'ble Company. (92)

Thus in his first adventure Moorcraft accomplished the primary object of his visit to Western Tibet i.e. to obtain shawl-wool. The by-product of his sojourn

was the confirmation of Turner's information regarding Russian activities in this area, which Moorcraft considered prejudicial to the interests of the Company. He warned the Minto Government that:

... vigorous trade carried on by the Russians in the neighbourhood of the Hon'ble Company's possessions is highly prejudicial to the Company's commercial interest (93).

Moorcraft therefore, advocated 'timely counteraction' to the Russian advance towards India 'in the guise of commerce'. It seems that his warnings greatly affected the terms of the treaty of Sagauli (1816) under which the Company secured the possession of Kumaon, Garhwal and Bashahr, (94) the backdoor to Tibet. Moreover, the possession of Bashahr (with area of 3,820 square miles) (95) contiguous to Ladakh and Kotgarh, a village on Sutlej, was undoubtedly very advantageous to the Company's commercial interests. Kotgarh was the starting point of all shawl-wool traders going to Gartok via Rampur and the Shipki pass. Thus the

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(93) *Foreign Miscellaneous*, No.125, para i; also *Asiatic Researches*, Vol.XII(1818), pp. 452-54.

(94) *Foreign Department, Political Proceedings*, 15 May, 1815 No.43, and 16th May, 1815, No.44.

Company now possessed:

...a direct and not difficult road into the Oonde's the country producing the animal which bears the shawl-wool ...(96).

With these possessions, notwithstanding the Kashmir and Ladakh monopoly, the shawl-wool of Western Tibet started flowing into the British territories through Kinnaur and Rampur. (97) This arrangement, however, worked well till the conquest of Kashmir by Maharaja Ranjit Singh in 1819. The Maharaja fully appreciated the worth of the wool trade. He took keen interest in the manufacture of shawls and numerous factories were opened in the Panjab. (98) Apparently the demand of shawl-wool enormously increased in the Panjab and its flow into the territories of the Company evaporated. Now some commercial arrangement with the ruler of Ladakh, without alienating the Sikhs, became essential for the Company. But the difficulty was that the Kashmiri merchants in Ladakh were apprehensive of the 'Firingis' (the British) and resented any interference in their


(98) *Foreign Department, Political Proceedings*, 10 Oct. 1823, Nos. 27, 28.
shawl-wool trade monopoly. The Ladakhis too, though not against the commercial relations with the British, apprehended the political implications of such relations. They were quite aware of the "practice of the 'Firingis' of annexing the countries in the guise of commerce." Hence, Moorcraft when he visited Ladakh in 1820, had to labour hard to remove the impression that the Company's Government entertained any designs against the independence of Ladakh. The Ladakhi ruler was convinced and signed a commercial agreement on 4th May 1821, by which the Company got liberty to trade with Ladakh and through Ladakh with other countries. Thus the Company achieved the long-cherished ambition of unrestrained access to western Tibet to trade in shawl-wool and also, to keep an eye on Russian activities in that area.

(100) Foreign Department, Political Proceedings, 20 Sept. 1822, No. 67.
(101) Foreign Department, Political Proceedings, 20 Sept. 1822, No. 60.