

**Report on the visit of Indian trade agent Yatung
(Shri L. S. Jangpangi) to Lhasa
3rd to 19th July 1960**

I paid liaison visit to Gyantse and Lhasa on the approval of the Political Officer in Sikkim. I left Yatung on the morning of 3rd July, reaching Gyantse same evening. After one day's halt at Gyantse, I reached Lhasa on the 6th July. Shri P. N. Kaul, Consul General for India at Lhasa, was kind enough to come same distance to meet us. After a halt of 9 days I left Lhasa for Yatung on 16th and reached it on 19th July. On way back I again halted for a day at Gyantse. In this tour I was accompanied by my wife, two children. Personal Assistant and Smt. Joshi, wife of an assistant at Yatung. The journey though very tedious was pleasant except enforced halts on way due to mechanical defects of the car and unnecessary detention at Shigatse bridge on our return journey.

2. Road between Yatung and Lhasa was in good condition and had been made quite wide for running two way traffic easily. Few portions on either side of Shegula which were still marrow were being widened by the local labourers brought from the villages on way and from the interior. It was found that gang huts have been constructed all through between Yatung and Lhasa at a distance of about ten to twelve miles. In these gang huts fuel and fodder were being collected in sizeable stock. This clearly showed that besides vehicular transport they propose to run also mule cart transport. Number of such carts were seen plying on way up and down at many places. Besides this, one big boat was in making at Taktukhs. All these improvements of road, etc. indicate possible plan for heavy traffic in near

future. Besides improvement of road some survey parties were seen working on the road for improving, we suppose, the present alignment.

3. The new road between Gyantse and Lhasa has been completed long ago but it has not been opened for general traffic. So it was not possible for us to travel on that road. The Foreign Bureau at Lhasa had informed our Consul General that road was still dangerous at places for through traffic, so it would not be possible to open the road for some time. It was however learnt at Gyantse that lot of military trucks were running on this road. It is presumed that they are keeping this road for the present for use of the military only. Road is much better than the existing via Shigatse. It is said that journey between Gyantse and Lhasa, if this road is opened, will take only seven hours.

4. The construction of road through Khangphu valley to connect it with Thangkarfu road was said to so still incomplete and it has not yet been linked with Thangkarfu road. The work is said to be in progress. This road is being kept secret as local Tibetans are neither employed on its construction nor allowed to go somewhere near about it. The military men are working on this road. There are, however, conflicting reports about linking of this road with Thangkarfu road. One report says that they have taken a direct alignment to join it to Thangkarfu road somewhere near about Thangkerla pass and another report indicates that this road is being brought through the Khangphu valley some two miles up the valley from Yatung to link it with Thangkarfu road. Confirmation is being obtained about these conflicting reports. It is a fact that road construction is being done in this section. We noticed that a branch road was started just below Thangla but it appears to have been abandoned after constructing more than a mile. It is not known why it was abandoned but local people at Pharl say that there would be no

difficulty is connecting the road with Khangphu village because there is a flat ground all through to it. No branch road was noticed anywhere between Gyantse and Phari either being constructed or already made towards either Bhutan or Sikkim border.

5. During our this [sic] trip, although we noticed quite a number of trucks running between Shigatse and Lhasa. Only a few truck leads of troops were seen coming from Lhasa towards Shigatse. Most of the trucks were covered and contents could not be judged. The traffic between Yatung and Gyantse was not so heavy. Trucks going from Yatung towards Lhasa were invariably all loaded with timber or firewood and these going on opposite direction were loaded with stores, etc. We learnt at Gyantse and Shigatse that the number of troops were not very considerable. Although several parties of troops passed through Shigatse towards Western Tibet about a month before our visit, at the time of our visit there appeared to be no remarkable troop movements. It was estimated that there were about five to six thousand troops at Shigatse and about two thousand at Gyantse. It was learnt at Gyantse that some fresh troops had arrived there just about that time. At Lhasa it was learnt that concentration of troops was much less than during the past months. We came to know that Phari post had also been strengthened with fresh reinforcements. During this whole trip I was only one armoured car at Lhasa where is reported there are some of them. There was neither any report nor any indication on the road of tank movements between Lhasa and Yatung and it was not seen at Lhasa itself.

6. It was noticed that Tibetan villagers in general were being either employed in road constructions or in agricultural farms in order to keep them busy all the time. Besides this, they were asked to attend meetings almost daily during nights. It was learnt that they were not being paid any

appreciable wages. In a few cases they were being supplied with stampra for one meal or half to one renminbi a day. As regards road construction, the villages had to bear cost of labour in their areas. All sorts of people – men, women, boys and girls – were seen working on road improvements near about Shegula. It was else reported that these people were not even allowed to take sufficient feed brought by themselves, what to say of supplying from the Government. At Lhasa itself it was noticed that even the school children were being put to dirtiest possible work in cleaning refuge, etc. Ladies of ex-nobles have of late been also put to manual work such as street cleaning and other such manual work. Even the parents of Panchen Lama have not been spared. They were asked to clean streets in Shigatse daily and it was learnt from the Nepalese Trade Agent at Shigatse that they have been asked to live in stables where as their servants were forced to occupy their roads. Tibetans, whether rich or poor, are not happy at the treatment meted out to them. The former Tibetan officials or well-to-do men, lamas and monks were being publicly humiliated both at Gyantse and Lhasa. Last on such list were these who were up till now either Chinese employees or their favourities. It was learnt at Gyantse that one lama of nearby monastery was humiliated and beaten so badly that his assistant (disciple) when called to report a day later said to have committed suicide in order to escape such public humiliation.

7. It was reported that all valuable properties from the monasteries at Gyantse, Tashilunpo at Shigatse and Sera, Drepung, etc. near Lhasa, have been confiscated. It is said that from Jokhang at Lhasa which is the only monastery where visitors are allowed, articles have not been removed. When we visited it on 10th we found no such pilferage but it was evident that lamps were not being burnt daily as before. It has been further learnt that at Shigatse all the properties except the private property of Panchen Lama

have also been confiscated by the Chinese. Only a few monks have been left in each of the monasteries and they are also being put to manual labour in fields, collection of firewood, etc. The general public have been issued with strict warning that they should not burn lamps for worship as they were in the habit of doing so in the past.

8. There are practically no Indian traders at Gyantse, but three shops of Ladakhis and some Kashmiri Muslims are at Lhasa and Shigatse. The latter's nationality has been disputed by the Chinese who say that these Kashmiri Muslims are Chinese nationals. But these Muslims have so far claimed Indian nationality and they have thus not accepted Chinese claims. They are, therefore, being put to all sorts of trouble, harassments, both at Lhasa and Shigatse. About four or five at Lhasa and one at Shigatse are in Chinese jails. All the shops of Kashmiri Muslims at Lhasa are closed as a protest against Chinese treatment towards them. When we were at Lhasa, as these Muslims had not accepted Chinese ration cards which might have implied their acceptance of the Chinese nationality, they were faced with the problem of fresh supplies. So far they were using the ration which they had hoarded about three or four months before in view of coming in conflict with the Chinese authorities. While we were at Lhasa these people were having worst time with the Chinese authorities and some of them were badly beaten and one young boy had to be treated for wounds at Consulate hospital at Lhasa. There are some Nepalese traders at Gyantse, Shigatse and Lhasa but most of them were on the point of closing their shops in Tibet due to slackness in the trade and interference by local authorities. The Chinese are discouraging local people to visit Indian or Nepalese shops and they have declared these shops out of bounds for their civil and military personnel. So there was practically very little trade, at these places, being carried by Nepalese who are established at these places for more than five or six

decades. The recent decision of Chinese to levy a monthly sales tax on all traders irrespective of their nationality. The Ladakhi Kashmiri Muslims were made to pay it immediately but cases of Nepali traders were still under consideration. The Kashmiri Muslims, as complained by them, were charged exorbitant tax on exaggerated valuation of sales by the Chinese area Tibetan herelings. As in the Chinese way they do not accept any representation or argument these Muslims traders had to pay whatever amount was imposed on them by the authorities. The latter were very angry with them on nationality ground. They were, therefore, being harassed in every way possible. A hint although has been thrown at Phari and Yatung also, but no such tax has been levied so far. In fact practically there is no trade at the moment due to various reasons.

9. On our return journey we were stopped at Shigatse bridge at 5.45 p.m. IST by two armed soldiers. As soon as our cars stopped, these soldiers fixed bayonets to their rifles and began moving up and down by the side of our cars. These men also made enquiries of us and purpose of our visit to Lhasa. We showed them our travel documents as issued by Foreign Bureau at Yatung and checked by the Foreign Bureau at Lhasa. Instead of allowing us to pass, these soldiers told us to wait till their officer returns from the mess where he had gone for his dinner. Although it was odd hour for Chinese dinner which usually taken place between 3 and 4 p.m. IST, we had no alternative but to wait. When nobody turned up until 6.30 p.m., we told the guards that they should better take us either to their immediate officer or to the Foreign Bureau at Shigatse but they did not agree to this and simply asked us to wait until their officer returns. After a long discussion they agreed to take us to the Transport Office at 6.5 p.m. IST. When we had reached nearer to the officer, one N.C.C. said to be the check post officer met us and he after examining our road permit allowed us to pass. We felt

this a clear case of harassment but as there was no officer forthcoming nor we were allowed to see any one we had no other alternative but to wait helplessly. On return to Yatung I tried to see Director of local Foreign Bureau (Hung Fei) but as he was out of station, I could meet him only on 26th. I protested to him about such treatment meted out to me at Shigatse bridge. He told me that he had received report from the department concerned at Shigatse. They have pleaded that due to language difficulty we were stopped as guards on the bridge were Tibetans and did not know Han language. I told him that after receiving proper documents from the authorities concerned and explaining to the guards on duty, there was no point in stopping us unnecessarily for such a long time when we had ladies and children in our party and it was raining and we had to arrange for our night's halt at Shigatse. He simply repeated his above assertion. As I was not satisfied with his reply I told him that I strongly protest against such a treatment meted out to me.

10. At Gyantse Indian Trade Agent (Shri R.S. Kapoor) took me round the old Agency site where some constructions of class IV quarters had been completed except that roofs have not been put ever then. For want of roofs, walls already constructed were on a process of wearing out due to rainy weather which had started. Besides this, there was some collection of local materials by the site. The accommodation of the Trade Agent and his staff in three Tibetan houses were felt very inadequate but under the circumstances there was no other alternative. In the house occupied by some of the staffs some Tibetans were also living with their cattle, etc. which was making the premises all the more dirty. The Central Public Works Department staffs were housed in another rented building about a mile or so away from the Trade Agency office. I learnt from Shri Kapoor that some members of our Tibetan staff were being shadowed by the Chinese and he was expecting

harassment of these any moment. All the class IV staff irrespective of the fact whether they are Tibetans or Nepali *katchras* were ordered by the Chinese to attend daily meetings. Some of the Nepali *katchras* in employ of Gyantse Agency, although have been issued with passports, the Chinese have not given stay visas on them. It was learnt at Shigatse from the Nepalese Trade Agent that all the *katchras* who were issued with passports by the Royal Nepalese Consul General at Lhasa have been given stay visas by the Foreign Bureau there. Movement of staff at Gyantse is restricted to a limited area from the Agency to the bazaar only.

11. Our Consul General at Lhasa was also experiencing the same difficulties to house the staff properly. He has, therefore, started construction of two units for the staff under the supervision of Chinese engineers. Quarters were still incomplete when I left Lhasa. He has some further proposals to construct some quarters for the staff and also for class IV. If his proposal materializes the staff members of the Consulate will have some satisfaction of some sort of accommodation. At present they are in Tibetan rented houses and accommodations provided in these are not very satisfactory. The movements of Consulate staff is also limited to certain areas, particularly bazaar areas. Special permit is needed to go beyond this limit. Outsiders are also not allowed to enter Consulate premises by the sentry placed at the gate.

12. In spite of all these difficulties, our staff members in Tibet are doing their work satisfactorily.

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