

## THE STRONGHOLD OF SHAMBHALA

BY NICHOLAS ROERICH.

"Lama, tell me of Shambhala!"

"But you Westerners know nothing about Shambhala—you wish to know nothing. Probably you ask only out of curiosity; and you pronounce this sacred word in vain."

"Lama, I do not ask about Shambhala aimlessly. Everywhere, people know of this great symbol under different names. Our scientists seek each spark concerning this remarkable realm. Csoma de Koros knew of Shambhala, when he made his prolonged visit to the Buddhist monasteries. Grunwedel translated the book of the famous Tashi Lama Pal-den ye-she, about "The Way to Shambhala." We sense how, under secret symbols, a great truth is concealed. Truly, the ardent scientist desires to know all about Kalachakra."

"Can this be so, when some of your Western people desecrate our temples? They smoke within our holy sanctuaries; they neither understand nor wish to venerate our faith and our teaching. They mock and deride the symbols whose meaning they do not penetrate. Should we visit your temples, our conduct would be completely different, because your great Bodhisatva, Issa, is varily an exalted one. And none of us would defame the teaching of mercy and righteousness."

"Lama, only the very ignorant and stupid would ridicule your teaching. All the teachings of righteousness are as in one sacred place. And each one possessed of his senses, will not violate the sacred place. Lama, why do



you think that the essential teaching of the Blessed One is unknown to the West? Why do you believe that in the West we do not know of Shambhala?

“Lama, upon my very table you may see the Kalachakra, the Teaching brought by the great Atticha from India. I know that if a high spirit, already prepared, hears a voice proclaiming *Kalagiya* it is the call to Shambhala. We know which Tashi Lama visited Shambhala. We know the book of the High Priest, T'aishan—“The Red Path to Shambhala”. We even know the Mongolian song about Shambhala. Who knows—perhaps we even know many things. We know that quite recently a young Mongolian lama issued a new book about Shambhala.”

The Lama studies us with his piercing glance. Then he says:

“Great Shambhala is far beyond the ocean. It is the mighty heavenly domain. It has nothing to do with our earth. How and why do you earthly people take interest in it? Only in some places, in the Far North, can you discern the resplendent rays of Shambhala.”

“Lama, we know the greatness of Shambhala. We know the reality of this indescribable realm. But we also know about the reality of the earthly Shambhala. We know how some high lamas went to Shambhala, how along their way they saw the customary physical things. We know the stories of the Buryat lama, of how he was accompanied through a very narrow secret passage. We know how another visitor saw a caravan of hill-people with salt from the lakes, on the very borders of Shambhala. Moreover, we ourselves have seen a white frontier post of one of the three outposts of Shambhala. So, do not speak to me about the heaven Shambhala only, but also about the

one on earth ; because you know as well as I, that on earth Shambhala is connected with the heavenly one. And in this link, the two worlds are unified."

The Lama becomes silent. With eyes half concealed by the lids, he examines our faces. And in the evening dusk, he commences his tale: "Verily, the time is coming when the Teaching of the Blessed One will once again come from the North to the South. The word of Truth, which started its great path from Bodhgaya, again shall return to the same sites. We must accept it simply, as it is: the fact that the true teaching shall leave Tibet, and shall again appear in the South. Really, great things are coming. You come from the West, yet you are bringing news of Shambhala. We must take it verily so. Probably the ray from the tower of Rigden-jyepo has reached all countries.

"Like a diamond glows the light on the Tower of Shambhala. He is there—Rigden-jyepo, indefatigable, ever vigilant in the cause of mankind. His eyes never close. And in his magic mirror he sees all events of earth. And the might of his thought penetrates into far off lands. Distance does not exist for him ; he can instantaneously bring assistance to worthy ones. His powerful light can destroy all darkness. His immeasurable riches are ready to aid all needy ones who offer to serve the cause of righteousness. He may even change the karma of human beings . . . . ."

"Lama, it seems to me that you speak of Maitreya ; is it not so?"

"We must not pronounce this mystery! There is much which may not be revealed. There is much which may not be crystallized into sound. In sound we reveal our thought. In sound we project our thought into space and

the greatest harm may follow. Because every thing divulged before the destined date, results in untold harm. Even the greatest catastrophies may be provoked by such light-minded acts. If Rigden-jyepo and the Blessed Maitreya are one and the same for you—let it be so. I have not so stated!

“Uncountable are the inhabitants of Shambhala. Numerous are the splendid new forces and achievements which are being prepared there for humanity. . . .”

“Lama. Ancient teachings tell us that very soon new energies shall be given to humanity. Is this true?”

“Innumerable are the great things predestined and prepared. Through the Holy Scriptures we know of the Teaching of the Blessed One about the inhabitants of the distant stars. From the same source we have heard of the flying steel bird . . . about iron serpents which devour space with fire and smoke. Tathagata, the Blessed One, predicted all for the future.”

“Lama, if the great warriors are incarnated, will not the activities of Shambhala take place here on our earth?”

“Everywhere—here and in heaven. All benevolent forces shall come together to destroy the darkness. Each one who will help in this great task shall be rewarded a hundred-fold and upon this very earth, in this incarnation. All sinners against Shambhala will perish in this very incarnation, because they have exhausted mercy.”

“Lama, we certainly know that Pan-chen-rinpoche is greatly esteemed everywhere. In different countries we have heard how highly not only Buddhists, but the people of many nations, talk about His Holiness. It is even said that in his private apartments, long before his departure, the details of his coming travels were outlined in the frescoes. We know that Pan-chen-rinpoche follows the customs of all the great lamas. We have been told how

during his flight he and his followers escaped many of the greatest dangers.

"We know how at one time his pursuers from Lhasa were already quite upon him, when a heavy snowfall cut off the pursuers' road. Another day, Pan-chen-rinpoche arrived at a lake in the mountains; a difficult problem confronted him. His enemies were close behind; but in order to escape, it would be necessary for him to make a long circuit around the lake. Thereupon, Pan-chen-rinpoche sat in deep meditation for sometime. Arousing himself, he gave orders, that despite the danger, the entire caravan would have to spend the night on the shores of the lake. Then the unusual happened. During the night, a heavy frost arose, which covered the lake with ice and snow. Before sunrise, while it was still dark, Tashi Lama gave orders to his people to move on speedily, and he, with his three hundred followers, crossed the lake over the ice by the shortest way, thus escaping danger. When the enemies arrived at the same spot, the sun was already high and its rays had melted the ice. There remained for them only the roundabout way. Was it not so?"

"Verily, so it was. Pan-chen-rinpoche was helped by Holy Shambhala throughout his travels. He saw many wondrous signs when he crossed the uplands hastening to the North."

"Lama, not far from Ulan-Davan we saw a huge black vulture which flew low, close to our camp. He crossed the direction of something shining and beautiful, which was flying south over our camp, and which glistened in the rays of the sun."

The eyes of the Lama sparkled. Eagerly he asked:

"Did you also feel the perfumes of the temple-incenses in the desert?"

"Lama, you are quite right—in the stony desert, several days from any habitation, many of us became simultaneously aware of an exquisite breath of perfume. This happened several times. We never smelt such lovely perfume. It reminded me of certain incense which a friend of mine once gave me in India—from where he obtained it, I do not know."

"Ah—you are guarded by Shambhala. The huge black vulture is your enemy, who is eager to destroy your work, but the protecting force from Shambhala follows you in this Radiant form of Matter. This force is always near to you but you cannot always perceive it. Sometimes only, it is manifested for strengthening and directing you. Did you notice the direction in which this sphere moved? You must follow the same direction. You mentioned to me the sacred call—*Kalagiya!* When some one hears this imperative call, he must know that the way to Shambhala is open to him. He must remember the year when he was called, because from that time evermore, he is closely assisted by the Blessed Rigden-jyepo. Only you must know and realize the manner in which people are helped because often people repel the help which is sent."

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