

The different civilisations of the East seem to mingle in the Kingdom of Nepal. To the south lies India, with Benares and the great River Ganges, so recently visited by the Queen. To the North is Tibet, and on all sides in Katmandu the decorations and ornaments betrayed the Buddhist influence and hinted at Chinese culture. This capital of Nepal stands, as it were, at the cross-roads of Asia.

Refugees from Tibet can almost feel at home in Katmandu. They can practise their religion openly, for in Nepal the Buddhist faith exists side by side with Hinduism, and often a mixture of both. But now Western influence and Nepal's long connection with Britain were in evidence. King Mahendra, Ruler of Nepal, was the Royal Host.

People gathered hours before the Queen's aircraft was due - liquid refreshment laid on.

At the Airport were the youthful King Mahendra and Queen Ratna. Not long ago they were State Visitors to Britain. Now it was Mahendra's turn to be host. He and his entourage were in full uniform, to do the Royal honours. As the Airport is on the small side, and the approach difficult, the Queen and Prince Philip travelled in a Dakota, a smaller plane than the Britannia, and better suited to short runways.

Mahendra's Kingdom occupies territory a little over five hundred miles in length, and Katmandu lies among the fertile valleys sheltered by Himalayan foothills. Only a few days earlier Her Majesty and the Duke had been in Bombay. Now they seemed to be in another world, friendly to the west but holding jealously to its own standard of values and beliefs. Almost everywhere the sweet smell of incense proclaims the worship of Buddhism.

The two Monarchs drove away from the Airport together.

Prince Philip was accompanied by Queen Ratna.

Katmandu meanwhile, with its population of 100,000 people, went about its daily life, the market carrying on business much as usual. Nepal is a self-supporting country (necessarily so), for communication with the rest of the world is difficult; in fact, not so long ago, it was a dangerous adventure to travel far. Now, a Tiger shoot, had been organised by King Mahendra for his guests. Quite an army of 327 elephants had been mobilised for the purpose, and to shoot (not tiger but film), Pathe Cameraman Cedric Baynes, took to the Howdah.

Cordoned by a sort of wall of white canvas was the area into which a tiger had been driven by beaters.

THE QUEEN IN KATMANDU (2)

Tigers have never seen canvas before and so make no attempt to break out of the compound. Towards the 'set' (as it's called), the Queen and her party were taken on saddled elephants, before the serious business of the hunt began. Then, when all was ready, they transferred to howdahs. This is a land whose people have always lived under the menace of marauding tigers. The technique of hunting them, to keep their numbers within as safe bounds as possible, was perfected long ago.

Keen eyes peered at the undergrowth; and, yes, there was the tiger.

As the Duke had a whitlow on his trigger finger, the tiger was not Royally slain. Nor was it even shot by the Foreign Secretary, who had an off-day. However, Rear Admiral Bonham Carter and Sir Michael Adeane between them put an end to the beast. The tigress measured 8-foot-8.

King Mahendra had fulfilled a time honoured obligation of a host in Nepal, and provided the Royal Party with a tiger to shoot. But there was more hunting to come. The next prey was a Rhino.

The Queen spotted the huge beast, though it was almost completely hidden. The guns saw it too. And that was the end of another animal.

Nepal is the land of the Ghurkas and at Pokhara 200 veterans of world wars waited at the airfield to be presented to Her Majesty. In any company Ghurkas are superb fighting men. The V.C. is proudly worn by Captain Lal Bahadur Thapa, won in Tunisia.

One of the senior warriors displayed a First World War discharge paper, bearing the photograph of George 5th, the Queen's grandfather. Great Britain can never adequately acknowledge her debt to the valiant Ghurkas. It was, unfortunately, now time for Her Majesty to bid goodbye to Nepal. With a host of most pleasant memories she and the Duke left the romantic kingdom of King Mahendra.