

REPLY BY THE QUEEN TO THE SPEECH OF WELCOME

BY THE KATMANDU MUNICIPALITY

Mr. Chairman,

I am speaking through you to the people of this Valley of Katmandu to thank you for the gracious welcome which you have given me and my husband today. I know how many of you have contributed your labour to beautify the city for our visit and it is hard to find words to express fully my gratitude to you all.

I am told that this Valley once held a lake which must have been a sight of great beauty before the waters were drained away to give your ancestors the rich soil which lay beneath. Man often spoils the charm of nature, but I find it hard to believe that your lovely home was ever more beautiful than it is as I see it today. I look forward eagerly to seeing more of it and more of its people.

My grandfather King George V came to Nepal, although not to Katmandu, half a century ago. He did not come further than the Terai; I am very glad to be the first of our reigning Monarchs to visit your capital, thus demonstrating, as did your King's visit to Great Britain last year, that the friendship between our countries and peoples is growing stronger and more intimate. During the 50 years of which I speak, great changes have come over the face of Asia, leaving many countries still wrestling to adapt themselves to unfamiliar circumstances. Like its neighbours, Nepal is striving to achieve rapid improvement in physical conditions and is being helped in this by many friendly Governments including those of several Commonwealth countries. I am sure that with your courage, industry and love of country you will be able to meet the challenge of change in a rapidly developing world.

I thank you once again for your welcome. Your wonderful Capital, distant though it is from my people in Britain, is deeply enshrined in their hearts. I bring a very warm message of greeting from them all to Katmandu and to Nepal.

*[Faint handwritten notes in Nepali script, including the words 'KING'S QUEEN', 'KATMANDU', and 'WELCOMING']*

## P O K H A R A

The plain and town of Pokhara lie in Central Nepal at a height of about 2,500 ft. above sea level. Only 20 miles to the north are peaks 26,000 ft. high, presenting a scene of mountain grandeur perhaps unique in the world, at least for places that can be reached by aircraft.

Dominating the air strip where Her Majesty's aircraft will land is the great pyramid of Machapuchre, a mightier Matterhorn, 23,000 ft. of rock and ice. The name, which refers to its twin summits, the northern and higher of which is not visible from Pokhara, means "Fish Tail". Machapuchre was climbed to within 150 ft. of the top by a British expedition in 1957.

To the left of Machapuchre, lying further back, is the Annapurna summit of 26,492 ft. climbed by Herzog's French expedition in 1950, the first "8,000 metre" peak in the world to be scaled.

To the right of Machapuchre appears the high craggy head of Marsyandi, called also Annapurna II, 26,041 ft. high and climbed last year by a Joint Services Nepalese-Indian-British expedition led appropriately by the Military Attache of the British Embassy, who also led the 1957 Machapuchre expedition.

Pokhara is notable too for its three big green lakes of a Cumberland type. By far the largest - about 3 miles long - is situated near His Majesty's villa, where the Royal Visitors will take lunch and a trip on the lake. The outflow of the lake, and a recently constructed irrigation dam, are not more than 1,000 yards from the air strip.

The focal point of life at Pokhara is the brown grass air strip and here hill men and their families wait patiently for the silver R.N.A.C. Dakotas to buzz the cows off the runway and then land. Many of the passengers have never been in a motor car in their lives; they have stepped straight into the air age.

There is, as yet, no road to Pokhara and the few jeeps there have been flown in. Flying in there so easily, now, it may be difficult to realize that until 1950 and later Pokhara was as securely closed to foreigners as Mecca and Lhasa. Mystery lay at the end of the long hike and few were allowed to take the road.

While at Pokhara Her Majesty will inspect a parade of Gurkha pensioners. Their villages can be seen dotting the slopes of the hills all round the Pokhara plain.

She will also inspect the small and gallant band of British medical missionaries who have staffed the Shining Hospital and the Green Pastures Leprosarium for almost 40 years.