The First Nepali in England: Motilal Singh and PM Jang Bahadur Rana

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Introduction

Migration of Nepalis in the UK is a relatively recent phenomenon.[1] Yet, today Nepalis are already a well-established ethnic minority group with a population estimated at around 100,000 people. This is especially thanks to settlement rights granted to the Gurkhas in the 2000s, 190 years after their first recruitment into the British Army.

Until recently, it was assumed that the first people from Nepal to set foot in the British Isles were Nepal's Prime Minster Jang Bahadur Rana and the members of his mission to the UK in 1850. However, a recent discovery of events that happened in London in May 1850 falsifies that assumption. An unprecedented event took place in the street of London in late May 1850. In a surprising turn of events, the Nepali Embassy got unexpected news about a Nepali, who turned out to be a former soldier, living in London. Soon after, he was rescued from London's St Paul's Churchyard, where for years he had been living a pathetic life as a crossing-sweeper. He served as a private interpreter to Jang Bahadur during his stay in Britain, and accompanied him to Paris and presumably back home to India and Nepal. This man was Motilal Singh, who left behind a historical article entitled 'Some Account of the Nepaulese in London', published in the July issue of the *New Monthly Magazine and Humorist.* [2]

This paper primarily aims to introduce Motilal Singh and his life in London. I have undertaken further research into Motilal Singh since my earlier Nepali publication on him (Adhikari 2013), which came out as the by-product of a larger work on Nepali migration in the United Kingdom (Adhikari 2012).[3] This paper is based on research into Motilal's article

[1] I am grateful to David N. Gellner for reading the earlier version of the paper and giving comments, and to John Whelpton for comments and for editing the final text. I would also like to thank two anonymous reviewers for their comments and feedback. I am solely responsible for any remaining errors.

[2] It was Biswo Poudel who first discovered the article, and published a short piece about it in *Himal Khabar Patrika* in September 2010. The substantial 18-page article, divided into six parts and published in the July issue of the magazine, provides detailed information, some of it new, on Jang Bahadur's visit to the UK. The first and the most important section introduces Motilal himself, revealing his identity as a Nepali and the circumstances that landed him in England. The second section relates much of what is already known about the arrival and the manner of reception of Jang Bahadur's team in Southampton. The third section explains two important aspects: Motilal's perspective on the local people and witty and metaphoric descriptions of the railway. The fourth section describes four events in particular: Jang Bahadur's visit to a French play (including a humorous description of the French), attending a review of the Lifeguards (including romantic encounters), sightseeing in London, and enjoying an evening party organised at Leadenhall Street by the East India Company Office. The fifth section describes the Nepali team's visit to the Derby horse race, highlighting the perceived English craze for racing, Jang Bahadur's deep knowledge about horses, the gypsy Andhra women, as well as the incident with the horse dealers. The final section describes Lumley's fête.

[3] The Centre for Nepal Studies UK conducted a large scale survey of Nepalis in the UK in 2008, and the research continued until 2011. In 2012 an edited book entitled *Nepalis in the United Kingdom: An overview* was published.

and other relevant materials, such as online historical archives, including newspapers and magazines published around 1850, and other published secondary sources.

The growth of Nepali migration to Britain has naturally given rise to interest among both academics and ordinary people about the place of these migrants in British society. Though information about the current situation is readily available, information about historical matters is extremely limited. In this context, the discovery of this new material makes an important contribution both to the study of history of Nepali migration and the history of the Britain-Nepal relationships. Specifically, it helps us to understand more about the activities and encounters of the Nepali mission during their stay in Britain. We already know much about the late 18th and 19th-century Nepal through the work of British visitors and diplomats. Motilal's work reciprocates to some extent by broadening our understanding of lives in Victorian England through the eyes of Nepali visitors in the 19th century.

Motilal Singh had previously been unknown to Nepali historians, as several other known publications of that time do not mention him. Since his original article only covers activities for about a month beyond meeting the Nepali party, and nothing further was published by him beyond June 1850, his fate remained a mystery. There are also competing and puzzling identity issues that add to the mystery. Through further research I have discovered a piece published in *Punch* magazine which answers some questions about Motilal's return, and shows that as anticipated, Motilal Singh did in fact accompany Jang Bahadur's party to Paris on their way back home.

Recent research findings suggest that given his multi-dimensional relevance to Britain-Nepal relations and Nepali migration to the UK, Motilal was an important historical figure: he was a Gorkha soldier who participated in the Anglo-Nepal war of 1814-1816; he is also among the first group of Nepalis (prisoners of war) to join the army of the British East India Company. He is, so far as is known, the first Nepali to visit and live in the UK, and the first Nepali known to date to write and publish in English.

The remaining part of the paper is organised into four sections: general information on Jang Bahadur's party in England, some information about the life of Motilal Singh, some mysterious and puzzling aspects of his story, and some of the highlights of his essay. The paper ends with a short conclusion.

The first ever high-level visit to the UK from South Asia?

Until about 10 years before the bicentenary of Gurkha recruitment to the British Army (initially the army of the East India Company), Gurkha soldiers themselves did not have any direct experience of the territory of the country known as Britain. Initially, Gurkha recruitment was not formally recognised by the government of Nepal, but once the government formally acknowledged it and began to cooperate with the recruitment process (particularly from the time of Bir Shamsher), the system was to recruit Gurkhas in Nepal and to retire them in Nepal (Gould 2000, Nepal Government 1947). Despite serving in several parts of the world in the colonies of the British Empire, Gurkhas were not allowed to come and live in Britain. The numerous books written about Gurkhas (mainly by ex-Gurkha officers) remain silent on the question of Nepali migration to the UK.

When the Nepali Prime Minster Jang Bahadur Rana visited London in 1850, he was believed to be the first Nepali to visit Britain. At the time, several British papers carried and reported

news with some importance about his visit. A detailed report of his visit was seemingly prepared by one or more members of his entourage, and a version of this was collected and published by Kamal Dixit under the title *Jang Bahadurko Belait Yatra* (Dixit 2058 BS). According to this report and other sources, the 25 people from Nepal in the tour included two brothers of Jang Bahadur, Col. Jagat Shamsher Rana and Col. Dhir[4] Shamsher Rana, plus Sr. Capt. Ranmehar Adhikari, Kaji Karbir Khatri, Kaji Hemdal Singh Thapa, Kaji Dilli Singh Basnyat, Lt. Lal Singh Khatri, Lt. Karbir Khatri, Lt. Bhimsingh Rana, Subba Siddhimansingh Rajbhandari, Subba Sivnar Singh, Kharidar Prithvidhar Padhya, Kharidar Hari(jyu), doctor Chakrapani, Newar artist Bhajuman, four chefs and domestic servants, and other army personnel (*huddasipāhi*) (Whelpton 2016, Dixit 2058 BS, Cavenagh 1884; Oldfield 1880, The Indian News 1850).[5]

Given that none of these documents mention any interaction with Nepalis in Britain, Jang Bahadur and his team were regarded as the first Nepalis to set foot in the British Isles, informally known as *Belait* in Nepali. The *Belait Yatra* report claims: '… So far, nobody from Hindustan (India) has been to London *Belait* ...' (Dixit 2058 BS: 1). While this claim is not correct as there had been visits from India before (Fisher 2004), it is true that high profile political leaders had not visited before, out of fear of losing caste after crossing the black water (*kalapani)* (Whelpton 2016). Hence the comment of the British Indian officials quoted in the report that, 'So far no sovereign, nawabs, kings or noblemen had shown interest in travelling to *Belait*' is likely to be true (Dixit 2058 BS: 3).

The report also quotes high ranking British officers who confirm this, by telling Jang Bahadur: '… Nobody from Hindustan of your stature has ever come here. Seeing your greatness, the people of all classes have a high impression of Gurkhas' (Dixit 2058 BS: 18). *The Economist* of 1 June 1850 (p. 602) concurs, 'He is the first Hindoo of so high a caste who has ever been presented to the Queen.' For all these reasons, it was generally thought that Jang Bahadur and his party were the first people from Nepal to come to the UK. However, one article about Jang Bahadur published at the time in the *New Monthly Magazine and Humorist* did reveal that they were preceded in Britain by another Nepali.

Motilal: The first Nepali in Britain and his life

The article 'Some Account of the Nepaulese in London', published under the name of Motilal Singh in July 1850, provides important information about Jang Bahadur's Nepali party in Britain and, more importantly, about Motilal himself.

The article suggests that Motilal Singh was the first Nepali to reach the British Isles. The possibility of other Nepalis arriving there before him is slim, though it cannot be totally ruled out. Motilal mentions that the language of gypsies he encountered at the race course sounded reminiscent of Nepali. These people came to Britain several centuries earlier, and may well have been of Indian descent (Motilal refers to them as being from Andhra). Unless we find further evidence, we should regard Motilal Singh as the first Nepali to come to and live in Britain.

[4] I have modernized and anglicized the orthography of the sources (i.e. 'Bir' for 'Beer') and omitted diacritics.
[5] Chakrapani, Bhajuman and Hari *(jyu)* are not mentioned in the *Belait Yatra* edited by Kamal Dixit or other sources of that time. According to Whelpton (2016: 118), a biography of Jang Bahadur prepared by his son Padma Jung Bahadur Rana (1909) contains the name of the physician (Chakrapani) and artisan (Bhajuman). Whelpton (2016: 112) cites a facsimile published in 2008 which mentions Kharidar Hari *(jyu)* as someone who accompanied Jang Bahadur and wrote the *Belait Yatra.*

Born in Bhadgaon (Bhaktapur) in the Kathmandu valley, Motilal Singh was a Gorkha warrior who fought in the war between Nepal and the British East India Company. At the outbreak of conflict in 1814 he was 19 years old and he was thus about 55 years old when he met Jang Bahadur in 1850. A piece in 1850 in *Punch*, a magazine published from London, described him (without giving his name) as a young man, but Motilal's own account suggests that he was not young. Following the defeat of Nepal in that war, he was imprisoned and eventually joined the newly formed battalion (perhaps in 1815), where he learnt English and further military skills. We do not have any information on how long he served in the Army although he mentions settling in Calcutta after peace.

After migrating to Calcutta (Kolkata) city at a young age and working with the English there, he seems to have adopted local English spellings and anglicized his name as Mutty Loll Sing. His 18-page article in English is the first substantial piece ever published in English in the name of a Nepali. Even though Kamal Dixit suggested that Lt. Lal Singh Khatri, a member of Jang Bahadur's entourage, was the first Nepali to study English (Dixit 2058 BS), Khatri did not publish enough to qualify as a real author. Whilst in England, Khatri simply wrote a short letter to the *Illustrated News London*, published on 27 July 1850, in which he complained about the wrong demarcation of the northern border on maps of Nepal, and he had them rectify the error. Subsequently, he participated in a meeting of the Geographical Society and answered questions about the northern Himalayan frontier.

So, can we regard Motilal Singh as the first Nepali to publish in English? Did he in fact know English well enough to be able to write a memoir of Jang Bahadur's visit to Britain in a sophisticated literary style? Had there been some form of ghostwriting? It is highly likely that there was a lot of help from the editor, Harrison Ainsworth, whose ability was praised by an observer in *Athenaeum* of 6 July 1850, but Ainsworth certainly could not have written the article on his own. The regular metaphors from Hindu scriptures and the Indian sub-continent context suggest that Motilal might have had substantial support from one or more Nepalis. There is also evidence to suggest that Motilal did have good English. *The Indian News* (1850) (which referred to him as Buxoo, see below) describes him as, 'being proficient in English as well as Hindostanee, and having led a roving "Life in London'' for some years past…' (The Indian News 1850: 281, footnote). Similarly, further evidence is the piece published in *Punch* (1850: 11, postscript), 'P.S. The Nepaulese Ambassador reads Punch. It is translated for him, MOUSER tells me, with his morning's curry, by the young man who, for the last two or three years, swept the Cheapside crossing.' Motilal also presents several references to his own competence in English. He claims: 'The excellent minister finds that I am skilled in the tongue of the English and clever in all their ways. For great occasions the Interpreter-Sahib will be employed, but behind his excellency is always Mutty Loll Sing (myself)' (Sing 1850: 277). In describing his attendance at the Derby race he speaks of the reaction of an Englishman, '… On which he stares to hear his own language so well spoken.'(Sing 1850: 283). It needs to be acknowledged that since Motilal was part of a team during the writing and publication of the article, he might have had some support from other parties such as Captain Cavenagh (political/liaison officer) and David Macleod (personal secretary) who were also attached to the mission.[6]

[6]Motilal's statement, 'To get rid of them, we buy what none of us are able to read"', in the context of purchasing a race card at the Derby from insistent sellers, does not imply that none of the party were able to read English. Cavenagh, the British liaison officer, and secretary Macleod were certainly able to. Among the other Nepalis, Lt. Lal Singh Khatri was also literate in the language. The statement probably simply means that they were unable to make sense of the cards detailing horses, owners, etc. because they were unfamiliar with the format.

Motilal came to England lured by the prospect of becoming wealthy (he uses the phrase 'temptation of gold'), but was very unhappy with his life there. Already retired from the Army before he came to England, he was old enough to leave behind a wife and several children in Calcutta, but young enough to still want to travel. This suggests the possibility that by 1850 he had already lived in London for about 10-20 years.[7] As he himself makes clear (Sing 1850: 272), when he came to England, his living conditions became miserable. He lost all his money, and these circumstances resulted in a very hard life. There were already some Bengalis in London (Fisher 2004), but Motilal does not write anything about them. No other figures of high stature from the Indian sub-continent had visited this land before 1850, and seeing the Prime Minister and his team (whom he calls 'my noble countrymen') in London caused him 'astonishment'.[8] When Motilal was engaged in the war against the British East India Company, Jang Bahadur had not even been born. However, meeting an ex-Gorkhali soldier, who was well-versed in the language and familiar with local customs, in the streets of London, was equally unthinkable for Jang Bahadur and his team. What makes all this even more surprising is that the whole incident was not covered in the *Belait Yatra*, or in the memoirs of the liaison officer, Cavenagh.

Notwithstanding his skills, knowledge and abilities, Motilal had to work as a crossing-sweeper (a beggar who received gratuities for cleaning roads) to make a living. During Victorian times, there were numerous beggars in the street of London, even including children. It appeared a more respectable option to seek gratuities from passers-by in return for clearing their path across the road, as opposed to simply begging. Nevertheless, being in such an occupation was a necessity rather than a choice for Motilal. *Punch* states he had been in the job for two to three years but other sources suggest a longer period (for example, *The Indian News* 1850: 281, footnote).

Motilal positively displays his wealth of Eastern knowledge and philosophy in his writing.[9] He had a good deal of knowledge of *Nītishāstra* and *Dharmāshāstra*, and he was a great follower of them. Given his strict observance of Brahmanical Hindu mores –what he calls preserving his 'Brahma'– the hardship of his stay must have been even greater. In simple words, despite being married to a Sudra woman, his compliance might imply that he did not eat any food deemed impure, particularly meat (not to mention beef) or consume alcoholic drinks. However, because of his financial situation he almost certainly had to make compromises. His own claims, as well as those in other reports, about the excessive efforts of Jang Bahadur's team to maintain ritual purity in Europe epitomise the strictness of Nepali society at that time, as was evident in the civil code (Muluki Ain) promulgated four years later in Nepal. The very fact that several newspapers referred to Motilal as a Hindu equally testify to their observations of his Hindu lifestyle. Desperate to return and meet his family, Motilal holds his country in high esteem. While praising the skills displayed during the Derby

[7] Motilal's statement that he hoped his wife was still living and waiting for him also suggests that it was some years since they separated (Sing 1850: 272).

[8] Motilal most likely met Jang's party on 27 May, the day after their own arrival in London, since he says that he accompanied Jang to St. James Theatre the same evening and we know from Cavenagh's account that Jang was at that theatre on 27 May. In any case, the initial meeting must have been before 29 May, when Motilal went with Jang to the Derby. Motilal writes he himself believed that the Nepalis were returning from the East India Company's office in Leadenhall Street when he appealed for help but he must be mistaken as their first visit there was not till 30 May.

[9] As described above it must have been huge a come-down for him, a high-caste (presumably Thakuri) man to earn his living as a sweeper. We also can assume that he might have inputs in the writing from the member of the Jang Bahadur's party. See fn11-15 for details.

horse race, he says, 'it is the same that we see in our own country, from whence all knowledge goes forth' (Sing 1850: 284).

Despite all these details about Motilal Singh, there are a few things that are not equally clear or fully resolved about his life which warrant some discussion. These are dealt with in the next section.

Mysterious appearance and disappearance of Motilal

There are several surprising facts and even mysteries about the life of Motilal, the two main ones being his identity (name), and what happened to him after a month of accompanying Jang Bahadur's party.

Let us first deal with the identity question. Four names appear in conflicting ways in different sources –Motilal, Buxoo, Abdul Rahman, and Mohamad Ali Khan– as elaborated below, yet their exclusion from the *Belait Yatra* and reports related to the visit of Jang Bahadur make the matter of Motilal's identity complicated. Most surprising is the fact that the reports published at the time (with a couple of minor exceptions), and none of the later works dedicated to Jang Bahadur's visit to Europe mention Motilal at all. Therefore, it is important to discuss each of these names and ascertain whether they were likely to accompany Jang Bahadur's entourage, and whether they may or may not refer to Motilal himself.

Until we discovered Motilal's own article, there was little basis to suppose that the rescued crossing-sweeper at the St. Paul's Churchyard was Motilal himself. Several contemporary morning and evening papers in London (e.g. *The Economist*, 1 June 1850) carried the same piece of news about the incident of a crossing-sweeper being rescued without naming him, under the title 'vicissitude of fortune':

> Everyone who has passed through St. Paul's Churchyard to Cheapside on a rainy day, when birch brooms are very much in requisition, must have noticed the well-known Hindoo crossing-sweeper, who has for years past regularly stationed himself at the north-east angle of the Cathedral. A day or two ago he was at his post as usual, when the attention of the Nepaulese Ambassador, who was passing at the time, was attracted towards him. His Excellency ordered the carriage to stop, and entered into conversation with him, the result of which was that he threw his broom with desperate eagerness over the railing of the burial-ground, and then scrambled into the carriage and took his seat by the side of his Excellency, who immediately drove off with his singularly-acquired companion. We understand that our ex-crossing-sweeper is engaged during his Excellency's stay in this country, which will probably be about two months, to act as interpreter to him and his suite. He now appears in the carriage of his Excellency every morning arrayed in a new and superb Hindoo costume, and is not too proud to recognise his old acquaintances and friends of the broom (The Economist 1850: 627).

These papers identified him only as a Hindu crossing-sweeper. However, on the 17th of June 1850, the fortnightly *Indian News and Chronicle of Eastern Affairs* corrected the above report, identifying the crossing-sweeper as Buxoo. It said:

> 'Buxoo' was picked up by a portion of the Embassy in St. Paul's Church-yard; but his highness the Ambassador was *not* in the carriage at the time, the act of national sympathy having been evinced by some members of his suite. The ex-sweeper, moreover, is not, of course, enlisted as an interpreter to the Ambassador. The oriental world knows full well that Mr. Macleod has accompanied the mission from India in that capacity, and that Captain

> Cavenagh, also in political charge of the Embassy, is an able Oriental linguist. Buxoo, being proficient in English as well as Hindostanee, and having led a roving 'life in London' for some years past, may prove an invaluable adjunct to the *attendants* of the Ambassador in their bewildering rambles; but he has not quite jumped, as alleged by our contemporaries, from the lowly besom to the exalted position of dragoman, *par excellence*, to a Royal Ambassador (The Indian News 1850: 281).

The surprising absence of Motilal's name in newspapers, yet at the same time the inclusion of other names such as Buxoo is confusing. The identification of Buxoo in *The Indian News* and Motilal's self-description point to the same person: a Hindu crossing-sweeper rescued from outside St. Paul's Church by the Nepali Embassy. It seems that the English newspapers did not bother to find out his name. Several newspaper articles refer to him, as he himself claims to have been known by many people, only as a Hindu. Some even listed him simply as a black man. For example, William Makepeace Thackeray writing in the *Proser* magazine of 29 June 1850 calls him 'the black gentleman in St. Paul's Churchyard' (Saintsbury 1908: 372). Either *The Indian News* arbitrarily called him Buxoo as this was a common Indian name, or possibly he had nicknamed himself to conceal his true identity and to hide that he was a high-caste man in a degrading occupation.

What is most surprising is the fact that Joseph Salter (1873) and many others following him (e.g. Fisher 2004) identify the crossing-sweeper as Abdul Rahman, who came from Surat India in 1840s as a lascar (Indian seaman). According to Fisher, Abdul used his money, earned from the Nepali Ambassador, to open two lodging-houses for lascars at Blue Gate Fields, Limehouse, London (Fisher 2004: 390). About 20 years later, he is reported to have sold his properties and returned to India. As we know now, this claim is at least partly unfounded. Motilal's own account and the information provided by several other papers also do not support the story about Abdul Rahman.

Another puzzling name comes through Forbes-Mitchell (1894), who claims that Jang Bahadur had appointed a British-educated and experienced former engineer named Mohamad Ali Khan from Rohilkhand (Rohilcund) in India as his personal secretary. Again, none of the writings on Jang Bahadur mention Mohamad Ali Khan. Could Motilal in his article be calling Khan Ram Bux[10] (using a Hindu name for a Muslim!) or could he (Khan) be the supposedly Anglo-Indian Donald Macleod, Jang Bahadur's personal secretary during his mission to Europe? In fact, to this day, there are still a few people in Jang Bahadur's entourage who are not yet identified, and many junior officers in Jang's party did not find themselves mentioned in the list of guests or in the India Directory. Whelpton (2016) suggests that part of or all of Mohamad Ali Khan's story could be fabricated.

In his 1853 book, Charles Manby Smith quotes the incident of the crossing-sweeper being rescued and explains that 'Hindus, Lascars, or Orientals of some sort' worked as occasional crossing-sweepers. This suggests the presence of more than one crossing-sweeper with a similar background, which may have led Salter into error. In fact, Abdul's story was written down more than two decades after the 1850 event. As stated above and quoted by many, even *The Indian News* mentions Buxoo as having the national sympathy of the *Nepali* team.

[10] Ram Bux is mentioned in Motilal's own article but not in other reports. Motilal has clearly presented this person as the close confidant and treasurer of Jang Bahadur (Sing 1850: 279). In any case, like Motilal, Ram Bux is himself a mystery because he is not mentioned in any other publications related to Jang Bahadur. Could Ram Bux be another name for Jang Bahadur's secretary Donald Macleod? This is very unlikely, as Motilal only refers to the latter as Secretary-Sahib and clearly regards the treasurer, Ram Bux, as a separate person.

Motilal's first–hand account published after a month of the London incident helps us to unravel the knot, so that now we can definitely state that he was a Nepali.

In contrast to the story of Abdul, the end of Motilal's life is shrouded in mystery. The chance meeting with Jang Bahadur the day after his arrival in London was indeed a big turning point in Motilal's life. This gave him an opportunity of returning home and re-joining his family. He was unaware of his family's state due to a complete breakdown in communication. However, he had not given up hope that his wife was still alive (Sing 1850: 273). Motilal was so eager to go home that it is inconceivable that he would have waited another 20 years to do so.

The second puzzling question is whether was Motilal successful in returning home. Recently, there has been a small yet important finding which actually reveals that Motilal accompanied Jang Bahadur to Paris. A piece that appeared in *Punch* (1850: 101) under the title 'What's in a Name?' includes these words: 'The Nepaulese Ambassador (who has just left us for Paris, which is so crowded that RUM JUGGUR could hardly find a bed, and SHERE Mutty- *ce chére* MUTTY, as the French call him – was compelled to sleep in a cockloft)…''. The paper spells Motilal's first name exactly the way it appeared in his article in the New Monthly Magazine. This suggests that Motilal did indeed return home.

So far we have not found any evidence to suggest that, as was humorously claimed in his article, a sketch of Motilal was made at the Derby and published in a newspaper, so it is unlikely that a portrait of him will ever be found. There should, however, be descendants of Motilal's relatives currently living in Nepal. Since he claimed to have had several children in Calcutta, there should be a number of descendants. But would they know anything about their forefather? There is no full certainty about his caste status; he may well have been a Chhetri or Thakuri (as many of the military commanders in the Jang Bahadur's team), but Singh is also a very common surname, used by other caste groups including Newars (although Newars were not normally enlisted in the army).

Motilal's essay

As stated at the beginning of this paper, Motilal's article is comprehensive and covers activities and impressions related to Jang Bahadur's visit until the end of June. The conspicuous omission of all three meetings (and more activities) with Queen Victoria in the article is largely due to Motilal's exclusion from those meetings, as he was merely an informal interpreter and personal assistant. In fact only Jang Bahadur, his two minister brothers, and Cavenagh, the liaison officer who also acted as interpreter, visited the Queen and attended the programme at her official residence. Similarly, Motilal's article also does not cover visits to places outside London, such as Plymouth, Coventry, and Edinburgh. Because the article was published towards the end of June or early July (and written before 29 June, as the contents were published in the *Athenaeum* of 29 June 1850), and the Nepali party left for Paris after mid-August, it does not include events that took place after June. Moreover, Motilal notes that covering everything that happened within the described period would not have been possible, when he states: '… were I to tell all that has caused them to lift the eyebrows of astonishment during their stay in London, many volumes would not contain it' (Sing 1850: 289).

Thanks to Motilal's deep knowledge of the local language, customs and environment, as well as commendable work by the editors of the magazine (and perhaps support from the members of the mission), his article is much clearer and transparent in presenting information than the

Belait Yatra, the Nepali account written by a member (or perhaps members) of Jang Bahadur's entourage. For example, the main report calls Southampton 'Sautānghāt', Richmond Terrace 'Rijwant Carriage', and renders 'Hooray Hooray' as 'Barray Barray', and 'Lumley' as 'Lamadi'.

Motilal's article also reports interesting sociological detail in the context of racial identification, with the local people referring to Nepalis as black. For instance, a man complimented Jang Bahadur with the remark 'Bravo Blackee' after the latter's short impressive speech following the Derby horse race, which a horse that Jang Bahadur had backed had won (Sing 1850: 283). One magazine of the time, *Punch*, even published an article about him entitled, 'The Black Prince' (Punch 1850: 23). When Jang Bahadur and party went to review the Life Guards at Hyde Park, the crowd cheered them with 'Here come the blacks' (Sing 1850: 278). Generally, even today, Nepalis in racial classification, are regarded in the UK commonly as dark (or black) though most people in the UK use the word black to refer to people of African or Afro-Caribbean descent and asian for South-Asians. It could be just a sign of the time how people reacted when they saw people from other culture and races rather than playing racism *per se.* No further information is given whether the Nepali party faced any racial prejudice, or how they reacted when they heard themselves being called black.

Some papers of the time called Jang Bahadur the Lion of London city, because of the huge crowds he attracted, the precious jewellery he wore, and his presence in a number of high–level parties in the town, as well as his habit of trying to buy, pay, or give tips for anything and everything he liked. In a joke about the difficulty in pronouncing the words 'Nepaulese Ambassador', a cartoon published in the *Punch* showed two Londoners referring to Jang as 'The New Police Ambassador' (Punch 1850: 61).

In fact even Motilal himself tried to use skin colour to describe people, he uses the phrase red face, or faces scarlet, to refer to white men and compares the East India Company's directors' heads to cauliflowers. Often he uses the word rose-faced to indicate beautiful young women. The French are compared to monkeys to describe their ability to imitate and act in plays. As in the *Belait Yatra* report of another member of the Nepali team, Motilal also spent significant time and space describing the beauty of young women. He highlights, implicitly, the romance between the young ambassador, Jang Bahadur (then in his early 30s), and Laura Bell.

In order to exoticise the account but also to fit the purpose of the *New Monthly Magazine and Humorist*, some of the events and facts in Motilal's article are deliberately exaggerated. For example, it reads, '… each of these Life Guards is twelve feet high, … he rides upon a horse, black as the darkest night, whose belly is forty feet from the ground …' (Sing 1850: 278). And,

> 'The vats that hold the porter are of such enormous dimensions that a thousand persons might swim in one with ease, and men are drowned in them daily by scores. This is thought nothing of here, except by these accidents the porter is said to be improved in flavor.' (Sing 1850: 279).

How would Nepalis, who had no impression of what a train was like, have reacted to a description of it with the metaphor of an 'unseen monster as a slave' (Sing 1850: 275)? The railway system was not widely developed at that time, and the underground system in London was just being built. The use of the term demon to describe a train could equally well

reflect the widespread fear that anyone unfamiliar with these modes of transport might have had about dark-smoke-emitting trains.

In the 29 June 1850 issue of *Proser*, William Makepeace Thackeray indirectly referred to Motilal's article as a travelogue. He writes that the foreign writers are like mirrors and that he cannot wait to read their experience of Britain. 'If the black gentleman of the St. Paul Churchyard, who was called away from his broom the other day, and lifted up into the Nepaulese General's carriage in the quality of interpreter, write his account of London life, its crossing and sweepings, I have no doubt we shall all read it, …' In the same year, on 6th July, *The Athenaeum* refers to the article of Motilal Singh and highly praises the editorial ability of Harrison Ainsworth. It states that some of the paragraphs of the paper are reminiscent of the letters by a Chinese traveller published in Oliver Goldsmith's *Citizen of the World*, and that it is 'full of sly humour.'

Written in a literary and humorous style in nineteenth-century English, the article makes extensive use of old metaphors from the Indian subcontinent and quotations from the Hindu *Dharmāshāstra*s and *Panchatantra*. The article altogether invokes 17 gods and goddesses.[11] The *Panchatantra* (an example of the genre of *Nītishāstra* writing on moral principles) composed by Vishnu Sharma is invoked with quotes in at least three places[12]. Manusmriti (book of religious codes and guidelines) is quoted in three places, and invoked five times.[13] Names of sacred places, objects, titles and phrases are used in at least 18 places including two Hindu terms (*gooroos* and *yogis*) employed to describe Christian priests and devotees.[14] The article also makes a point to highlight the superior eastern culture, with appropriate metaphors in four places.[15]

[11] These include: Ganesh (the elephant god), Ganga (the holy river, wife of Shiva), Indra (king of heaven), Iswara (the collective name of the gods or the supreme god), Kali (the dark-faced goddess of power and destruction), Kartikya (Kumar, son of Shiva), Krishna (8th incarnation of lord Vishnu), Radha (consort of Krishna), Rama (ninth incarnation of lord Vishnu and King of Ayoddhya), Saraswati (goddess of wisdom and knowledge), Shiva (one of the Hindu trinity, the destroyer), Skanda (the god of fire arms), the sun god, Varun (god of ocean), Vishnu (the preserver) and Yamaraj (god of death).

[12] These three quotes are: 'He is a man of real worth, from whose presence neither they who ask alms, nor they who seek protection, depart hopeless or unsuccessful.'(Sing 1850: 277); 'An honest man is delighted with an honest man, but the base take not delight in the just; as the bee approaches the lotus with a soft murmur, not the frog who stays fixed in one spot.'(Sing 1850: 277); '…Exclaiming in the words of Vishnusarman,"If the king were not to punish the guilty, the stronger would roast the weaker like fish on a spit; the crow would peck the consecrated rice; the dog would lick the clarified butter; ownership would remain with none; the lowest would overset the highest."' (Sing 1850: 287). According to Whelpton (2016: 107), these quotes are taken from Sir William Jones' translations of various Hindu scriptures.

[13] These three quotes are: 'The twice-born man who intentionally eats a mushroom, the flesh of a tame hog or a town cock, a leak or an onion, or garlic, is degraded immediately.'(Sing 1850: 274); 'Meat must be swallowed only for the purpose of sacrifice; and he who eats flesh - not in urgent distress- unobservant of this law, will be devoured, in the next world, by those animals whose flesh he has thus illegally swallowed.'Sing 1850: 274); 'Whatever women eat the flesh of male cattle, those women shall the animals here slain torment in the mansions of Yama (ruler of the lower world), and, like slaughtering giants, having cleaved their limbs with axes, shall quaff their blood' (Sing 1850: 281).

[14] Even though there seems to have been a lot of help in the writing of this article by other people (including member(s) of the Nepali party), it was not fully ghostwritten by an Englishman, who would not have borrowed Hindu terms to describe local Christian phenomena. Among the names, places, titles and phrases with religious associations included are: 'holy cow', 'oh night daughter of heaven', 'gooroos' 'yogis,' 'Apsara,' 'innocent Brahman,' 'Sudra', 'pure Brahma,' 'rites of ablution', 'the law of unenlightened English enjoins them not to keep them pure the flesh of forbidden animals and polluted vegetables', 'Chakavacra,' 'Saurya chariot,' 'Cuśa grass,' 'like the gale scented with sandal,' 'pen of truth,' 'prayers and penance'.

[15] These eastern allusions or references include: 'As the eye of the faithful worshipper rests always on the blue image of Nárāyan in the great reservoir of Khátmándù…' (Sing 1850: 276); 'On the card of invitation it is

Despite being uncertain whether his fellow countrymen would ever be able to access and read his piece, Motilal seems to be keeping them in mind as he says, 'Let my distant countrymen know...' (Sing 1850: 278). Shall we call it destiny or perhaps a coincidence that a century and a half later, his compatriots are not only the readers of his work, but are also the admirers of his contribution to history.

To conclude, despite some remaining puzzles, this paper demonstrates that the recently discovered information about Motilal Singh is a significant contribution to Nepali history, particularly in the context of the Nepal-Britain relationships and Nepali migration to Britain. It is an account of the tumultuous and mysterious life of a common man with historical significance. This multi-faceted personality has multiple relevance: he is the first Nepali in the UK, a potential icon of the Nepali diaspora; he is a Gorkhali soldier-turned-Gurkha soldier; and he is the first Nepali under whose name an article in English has been published in a prestigious London magazine.

The discovery of Motilal through his writing is significant for the study of history of Nepal and Nepali migration. From the point of view of recent Nepali migration, Motilal is both an ancestor and icon to inspire Nepali migrants and UK-Nepalis for generations to come. On the occasion of the 200 years of formal UK-Nepal relationships, the Centre for Nepal Studies UK established a research scholarship for Nepali students studying in Nepal in Motilal's name in order to commemorate his contribution.

Perhaps surprisingly to our current-day sensitivities, Motilal's difficult circumstances in Victorian Britain were in no way helped by his being a Gurkha. Today the context is very different – Gurkhas, and thus Nepalis, are held in high esteem – and yet the lives of ex-Gurkhas in Britain are not without problems. Former Gurkhas continue to fight for equal pensions, family visas and other welfare entitlements, and continue to face occasional racial prejudice. A greater appreciation of the long history of Gurkhas living in the UK, going as far back to, and perhaps beyond, Motilal Singh, could help to address some of these issues.

Motilal invokes the goddess Saraswati to end his article. Following his example, I too would like to end this piece by invoking the goddess of wisdom and knowledge, for her blessing upon the pens that write and share knowledge.

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notified that the festival is given in honour of a poet famous as Bherat (the inventor of dramas), and of a musician skilful as Callináth (the maker of harmony).' (Sing 1850: 287); and 'The dark half of the moon Bhádra had twenty times been turned towards the earth…' (Sing 1850: 272).

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