

NOTE I.—SOMNATH is the site of the celebrated Temple on the coast of Sauráshtra, or Peninsular Guzerat, plundered by Mahmúd of Ghazni on his sixteenth expedition to India (A.D. 1023). The term "great kingdom" is part of Polo's formula. But the place was at this time of some importance as a commercial port, and much visited by the ships of Aden, as Abulfeda tells us. At an earlier date Albiruni speaks of it both as the seat of a great Mahadeo much frequented by Hindu pilgrims, and as a port of call for vessels on their way from Sofala in Africa to China,—a remarkable incidental notice of departed trade and civilisation! He does not give Somnath so good a character as Polo does; for he names it as one of the chief pirate-haunts. And Colonel Tod mentions that the sculptured memorial stones on this coast frequently exhibit the deceased as a pirate in the act of boarding. In fact, piratical habits continued in the islands off the coast of Kattiawár down to our own day.

Properly speaking, three separate things are lumped together as Somnath: (1) The Port, properly called Veráwal, on a beautiful little bay; (2) the City of Deva-Pattan, Somnath-Pattan, or Prabhás, occupying a prominence on the south side of the bay, having a massive wall and towers, and many traces of ancient Hindu workmanship, though the vast multitude of tombs around shows the existence of a large Mussulman population at some time; and among these are dates nearly as old as our Traveller's visit; (3) The famous Temple (or, strictly speaking, the object of worship in that Temple) crowning a projecting rock at the south-west angle of the city, and close to the walls. Portions of columns and sculptured fragments strew the soil around.

Notwithstanding the famous story of Mahmúd and the image stuffed with jewels, there is little doubt that the idol really termed Somnath (Moon's Lord) was nothing but a huge columnar emblem of Mahadeo. Hindu authorities mention it as one of the twelve most famous emblems of that kind over India, and Ibn Ásir's account, the oldest extant narrative of Mahmúd's expedition, is to the same effect. Every day it was washed with water newly brought from the Ganges. Mahmúd broke it to pieces, and with a fragment a step was made at the entrance of the Jámi' Mosque at Ghazni.

The temples and idols of Pattan underwent a second visitation at the hands of Aláuddin's forces a few years after Polo's visit (1300),\* and this seems in great measure to have wiped out the memory of Mahmúd. The temple, as it now stands deserted, bears evident tokens of having been converted into a mosque. A good deal of old and remarkable architecture remains, but mixed with Moslem work, and no part of the building as it stands is believed to be a survival from the time of Mahmúd; though part may belong to a reconstruction which was carried out by Raja Bhima Deva of Anhilwara about twenty-five years after Mahmúd's invasion. It is remarkable that Ibn Ásir speaks of the temple plundered by Mahmúd as "built upon 56 pillars of teak-wood covered with lead." Is it possible that it was a wooden building?

In connection with this brief chapter on Somnath we present a faithful representation of those Gates which Lord Ellenborough rendered so celebrated in connection with that name, when he caused them to be removed from the Tomb of Mahmúd, on the retirement of our troops from Kabul in 1842. His intention, as announced in that once famous *pæan* of his, was to have them carried solemnly to Guzerat, and there restored to the (long desecrated) temple. Calmer reflection prevailed, and the Gates were consigned to the Fort of Agra, where they still remain.

Captain J. D. Cunningham, in his *Hist. of the Sikhs* (p. 209), says that in 1831, when Sháh Shúja treated with Ranjít Singh for aid to recover his throne, one of the Maharája's conditions was the restoration of the Gates to Somnath. This probably put the scheme into Lord Ellenborough's head. But a remarkable fact is, that the Sháh reminded Ranjít of a *prophecy that foreboded the downfall of the Sikh Empire on the removal of the Ghazni Gates*. This is quoted from a report of Captain Wade's,

\* Soin *Elliot*, II. 74. But Jacob says there is an inscription of a Mussulman Governor in Pattan of 1297.