

Atīśa had never yet tasted tea, and the first cup on Tibetan soil was offered him with the following solemn words: "Venerable sage, permit me to make an offering of this celestial drink which contains the essence of the wishing tree!" Atīśa said: "This curious cup of precious material contains an elixir of the wishing tree. What is the name of this drink which you prize so much?" The Tibetans answered: "Venerable sir, it is called tea. We do not know that the tea plant is eaten, but the leaves are churned in warm water, and the soup is drunk. It has many properties!" Thereupon Atīśa, who could pay compliments like any French abbé, remarked: "So excellent a beverage as tea must have originated from the moral merits of the monks of Tibet!"

The Manasarowar Lake pleased Atīśa so much that he stayed there for seven days. Then he proceeded to mTho-lding, the capital of Guge, where he was received by the king with due honours. Although all the lamas and noblemen rose respectfully when Atīśa approached them, the old lama, Rin-chen-bzang-po, would not rise, partly from envy, partly from weakness. But then Atīśa displayed his intellectual armour in such a brilliant way before the old monk that even he was conquered and ready to sit at the feet of the newcomer.¹ After a residence in Guge of two years, Atīśa proceeded to Central Tibet. He died at Nyethang near Lhasa at the age of seventy-three in the year 1053 A.D. The founding of the so-called half-reformed sects of Lamaism was due to his exertions. The most important of them is the bKa-gdams-pa sect. It was in monasteries of this sect that Tsong-kha-pa studied, before he started the great reform movement which ended in the creation of the Ge-lug-pa sect. The object of all these reformations was not, as is often supposed, to go back to the early Buddhism as it was preached by Gautama, but to build up a church which represented the doctrines of the Mahāyāna school of Buddhism in a pure form. The doctrines of Nāgārjuna were propounded by all the great teachers of Tibet. But the Kāla-chakra philosophy with its monotheistic tendencies was also favoured by them.

On the 10th August, we travelled to the southern end of the lake, and then along its western shore, and at sunset we arrived at bKor-rdzod (map Karzok. Plate XXIII). The sudden appearance of the monastery in that barren desert was such a surprise that it was at first difficult to believe in its reality. On this march, the Tibetan fauna was much in evidence. There were large herds of *rkyang* (wild asses which look like mules), and one of the *rkyang* came quite close to us and watched our caravan passing by. There were very many hares and marmots which did not show any signs of fear, and also the beautiful tail-less rats of Tibet looked at us curiously from behind many a stone. Whilst animal life was thus well represented on dry land, I could not discover any living being in the water of the lake. But as aquatic plants were plentiful it attracted wild geese and ducks, of which we saw a good number. As Drew says, gulls have their breeding ground on an island in the lake. In spite of the desolation round about, the scenery is very fine. Snowclad peaks, bare hills of brownish colour, dark

¹ This incident is referred to in one of the Tabo inscriptions, as stated above. Cf. *dPag-bsam-ljon-bang*, Part II, p. XVII.