

For practical purposes these routes may be divided into three, *viz.*—

The Kàràkorum route with variations (leading to Yárkand).

The Changchenmo route with variations (leading to Yárkand and Khotan).

The Rudokh (or Changthang)* route (leading to Khotan).

The Karakorum route may be subdivided into two, the Zamistání or winter and the Tabistání or summer road, and although these have a few marches and camping grounds in common, and cross the great water-shed between India and Central Asia at the same point, the Káràkorum Pass, yet they diverge from each other throughout the greater part of their courses. As a rule it may be laid down that the winter road passes wherever possible along and over the beds of rivers, which in the cold season contain but little water, and are generally frozen over: these streams, which form no obstacle in winter, are often impassable torrents in summer. It is therefore no matter of surprise that in spite of the intense cold and hardships of a winter journey the merchant often selects that season for his travels. The first great obstacle to be encountered after leaving Leh, both in summer and winter, is the well known Kailás range, which is said to run in one unbroken line from the sources of the Indus to the junction of that river with the Shyok. To the north of Leh this range divides the drainage of these two rivers, and is one of the most formidable obstacles to be encountered by the traveller to Turkestan. In winter it is crossed by the Digar La † (17,930 feet above sea level), a very difficult pass, in crossing which it is necessary to employ either yáks or men for the carriage of goods. A party of the Mission went over it in June, and even then there was snow lying on the top while ice and snow combined to render the passage difficult along a distance of some miles.

The summer road crosses the Khardung or Leh Pass, ‡ almost north of Leh, and is 17,900 feet in height. This Pass also is impracticable for laden ponies, and is so difficult that late in June on our return journey from Yárkand, after descending the Nubra river, it was deemed advisable to go a long detour *viâ* the Digar Pass in order to avoid the still more formidable obstacles on the Khardung. This made the journey from Sati to Leh 42 miles instead of 29. After crossing the Kailás range and entering the Shyok valley the traveller has now before him the great Muz-tagh § or Káràkorum Range. In the winter by following the narrow, winding, and difficult valley of the Shyok river he reaches the Káràkorum Pass, a distance of 114 miles; in the course of this portion of the journey the frozen surface of the stream has to be crossed no less than 36 times. In winter this can easily be done, as it is generally bridged by snow and ice, but in summer owing to the floods caused by the melting glaciers an entirely different route has to be adopted, and instead of ascending the Shyok the traveller descends that river to a short distance below Sati and then ascends the Nubra river, a large tributary fed from glaciers in the same mountain mass that supplies the Shyok.

The Shyok is crossed in boats near Sati, where in the summer it is a very large and rapid river. Passengers and goods are carried over in boats, while the baggage animals are made to swim across. Many of the latter are drowned in crossing.

Ascending the Nubra valley, one of the most fertile and richly cultivated in Ladakh, the traveller goes as far as Changlung (10,760 feet), almost the highest village in the valley, and situated about 40 miles above Sati. The merchant generally takes this bit very easily, advancing by short marches of ten miles each, in order to make the most of the supplies of grain and excellent lucerne grass, both of which are here obtained in abundance. The caravans from Yárkand often halt a week at Panamik (a large and flourishing village a few miles below Changlung) to feed and rest the baggage animals after the hard work and scant fare that they have had on the journey. It is here that on the outward journey the real difficulties of the march commence. Instead of following one stream right up to its source in the Káràkorum Pass, as is done in the winter route, the traveller has first of all to cross a

* Changthang, in the Thibetan language means ' northern plain.'

† "La" is the Thibetan word for "Pass."

‡ Sometimes also called "Laoche La."

§ In Turki "Muz-tagh" means "Ice Mountain" and "Karakorum" is the equivalent of "Black gravel."