To

Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Deva
monarch
and
the mainstay of
continuity and change in Nepal
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Maps
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Foreword

It is often made out that the forces of “tradition” and ‘modernity” or “continuity” and “change” are vying with one another to govern the lives of the Nepalese people. This seeming contradiction, sometimes, generates a pretentious academic discussion and, at other times, forms the basis of an even more pretentious division of political opinion. If among the academics there are “structuralists” and “incrementalists”, at the political level they are generally known as “reformists” and “status-quoists”. The structuralist tends to posit tradition and modernity as polar opposites in a linear theory of social change, and they are treated as mutually exclusive systems, as though change can only come about through total restructuring of the system. The incrementalist feels that the desire to be modern and the desire to preserve tradition can be a concurrent process which is mutually sustainable. Change, in this respect, represents gradual transformation in the historical and cultural continuum. Similarly, the reformist may rely on modern institutions and processes to gain legitimacy for the stated objective of bringing about societal transformation whereas the status-quoist will also make use of traditional forms of legitimacy in seeking what, they hope, will be a more orderly and stable transition to a modern state. A closer scrutiny will reveal that in the case of Nepal the differences seem to be more theoretical than actual both in the process and in the objective.

Nepal, unlike other regions of South Asia, has never been a theatre of contending civilizations, religions or cultures, seeking total domination. In fact, the Nepalese society has through the years, been successful in synthesizing the various religious and cultural strands which sought shelter here at various periods of her history. Thus, the dominant Caucasoid and Mongoloid strains with their religious and cultural practices got assimilated in a unique blend of Hinduism and Buddhism. Another parallel process was that of indigenisation by which the great and little traditions interacted with each other and in the process of adaptation gave rise to a syncretic cultural pattern. These two processes have evolved a product that is uniquely Nepalese in character. Thus, assimilation is the dominant process underlying the historical and cultural aspects of continuity and change in Nepal.
The experiences of the past forty years, particularly those of the post-referendum period, have narrowed the gap between the various streams of thought. Just as the structuralist may have retreated somewhat from a radical view of the world, so also the incrementalist is not as wary of modern values. So, the latter does not necessarily have to view the former as extremist nor is there sufficient reason why the former should look upon the latter as a fundamentalist. The reformists are, by nature, progressive without being revolutionary, and the status-quoists have a more conservative approach without being reactionary. This does not necessarily give either of them a superior position to judge the other with a contrived air of self-righteousness. Consolidation of national political and economic independence remains the dominant objective and the varying emphases on change and continuity constitute two but mutually inclusive dimensions.

In the discussion of “tradition” and “modernity” or “continuity” and “change” there is emerging, on the one hand, a greater confluence of various streams of view but, on the other, a sharper division of opinion. This is because the discussion is no longer centred on tradition and modernity but between plagiarized modernism and superannuated traditionalism. Though there is a growing awareness all-round that they are not acceptable hallmarks of continuity and change, yet their votaries, in the academic and political fields, are widening the differences in order, as a large segment of the people suspect, to conceal the power struggle between the elite and the counter-elite. This may not concern us here nor is it the primary concern of the book or the people at large because it is a matter concerning the interest of those who seek to combine academic and political personalities. But the greater concern is whether or not the increasingly complex situation in Nepal can bring about a wide identity of purpose and objective with greater reliance on the combined use of modern and traditional forms of legitimacy. That is why the book talks about continuity and not change to get the discussion back to where it really belongs. If it can do so the book would have earned itself a distinct place (as did its distant predecessor Nepal in Perspective) in the history of publication in Nepal.

The theme of continuity and change cuts across all aspects of the Nepalese life, terrain, climate, people, history, arts, architecture, culture, beliefs, language, literature and governance. The editor has thought it fit, and rightly so, to dedicate the book to the King of Nepal, Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev. As a ruling monarch, he represents an institution which represents the continuity in the historical process of state-building, nation-building, participation and welfare of the people. As a monarch of the late twentieth century, he personifies the forces of change having had the advantage of contact with the wider world at an
early age. So, no other institution or person could possibly embody the concept of continuity and change in its totality or in their widest manifestation in the total spectrum of the Nepalese life. And yet this effort has to be enriched, enlivened and encouraged by a constant and vigorous intellectual process and interaction so that at some foreseeable future Nepal will attain an identity that is neither anachronistic nor anonymous.

Kamal P. Malla has put together a book that seeks to combine the past and the present to project Nepal that is unique in its diversity and yet composite in its behaviour. He has nurtured the book with meticulous care from editing to proof-reading and even to the extent of designing the cover. Professionalism is evident from content to layout as in its high editorial standard. It is a rare privilege to have a scholar of his eminence and grasp to edit a book of this kind which will surely have a very wide national and international readership. I must appreciate his patience and commend him for a notable contribution to enrichment of the academic life in Nepal.

Khadga Bikram Shah
Executive Director
Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies

October 24, 1989
Preface

Not long after Kumar Khadga Bikram Shah's appointment as Executive Director of Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies I was asked by him to submit a project proposal to edit and publish a more recent and enlarged version of *Nepal in Perspective* which Pashupati Shumshere J.B. Rana and I had edited in 1973. As the book was conceived in 1969 but published in 1973 I had warned Mr. Shah that the planning and publication of a new version might take time. However, he insisted that he could not afford to wait long.

I considered the invitation a great honour, particularly because I had not met Mr. Shah except once in Everest Sheraton where I was rushed, rather unceremoniously, by Dr. Harka Gurung to help them draft the Kathmandu Declaration of the International Mountaineering Association.

I was also greatly encouraged by the support and cooperation I have received from the contributors to this volume — all of them being men of distinction. Some of them have been actively associated with the process of decision-making in the field they have chosen to write about. Still others have studied, contemplated and published on the field for decades. I have greatly valued their trust and support because the contributors to this volume span three generations, including my teachers and students.

When we sent out letters of invitation asking different scholars to contribute to this volume in October 1984 the only contributor to meet the deadline of January 1985 was Dr. Ludwig Stiller. In the meantime, contributions began to arrive in their own time and in their own shape. For we had laid down no rules for the contributions except that each should be on the area specified and that each essay should give a broad perspective on the field.

The book was submitted to the Malla Press in October 1986 — the whole of it except for a paper and the preliminary matter — then it was decided in October 1987 to add one more paper — that of Ganesh Raj Sharma. The paper couldn't go to the press in its final finished form before May 1988.

The Malla Press is about 10 kilometers away from my residence or campus, and I had been running from pillar to post to collect, to correct, and to return the proofs personally, in all about 60 trips spread over 3 years!
In between, the photocomposer at the Malla Press broke down as a result of a big storm that swept Kathmandu. However, a much bigger storm was to affect the quality of the book. In March 1989, with the termination of Nepal-India Trade and Transit Treaties, Kathmandu faced a sudden dearth of, among other things, quality printing paper mostly imported from India. Thus from page 328 onwards we were compelled to use the nearest substitute — although a product of the same factory intended to be of the same weight and quality.

I won't have been able to see through the compilation, editing, and printing of this book had I not enjoyed the constant moral support of Kumar Khadga Bikram Shah and other well-wishers at the Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies which has provided me, during these difficult years, with a cosy cell to work in which, unlike other shady spots in the university campus, is too warm in summer and too cold in winter!

From top to bottom every single page of this book was typed and retyped several times by Gopi Aryal most patiently. Gentle, obliging, harmless, and impeccable, Gopi didn't survive to see the book complete.

Although I had been associated in editing different university publications for a couple of decades or so, I have had to face some of the most critical challenges while editing this volume. I am grateful to Kumar Khadga Bikram Shah and to other colleagues in this project for putting me on this exciting and rewarding course.

Kirtipur Campus
October 25, 1989

KAMAL P. MALLA
Introduction

Like its predecessor volumes, *Nepal in Perspective* (Kathmandu: CEDA, 1973) and *Nepal: A Conspectus* (Kathmandu: 1977), the contributors to this volume are mainly preoccupied with the projection of Nepal from a Nepalese perspective. Five contributors from the first and six from the second, including the editor are common in this volume as well. Yet in the last sixteen years we have all changed, including our perceptions and grasp of the themes. Whereas in the past we were mainly concerned with the problems of national identity, today we are debating the issues relating to continuity and change, or more specifically with the management of change without dislocations in the continuity of our heritage and institutions.

The issues relating to continuity and change are discussed by the contributors to this volume within certain given context be it physiographic, ecological, historical, social, cultural, political and economic. Above everything else, Nepal is both a hero as well a victim of its geography. While its enchanting beauty, its snow-clad mountains and its astoundingly diverse topography are its eternal assets, its geopolitical location as a landlocked nation with an extremely rugged terrain are its insurmountable liabilities, so much so that Nepal's development is, indeed, a most challenging proposition largely because of its geography and its ecological compulsions. As Bal Kumar K.C. puts it, “Nepal presents a diverse and complicated physiography within a very short distance” (p. 15). It is not so much its diversity as its diversity in resource endowment and potential which has been largely responsible for what Gurung describes as “the present level of morbidity at which the Hill economy languishes” (p. 25). He prescribes two approaches that might reduce ecological stress and resolve economic problems of Nepal: the reordering of space in the Tarai and greater emphasis on Hill development. The problem of poverty has to be tackled in the Hills because “it is the poor Hills, as the repository of immense hydro-electric power, that holds the key to the future development” (p. 26).
After closely analysing the demographic profile of Nepal along several parameters, Kansakar concludes that Nepal is rich in human resources. Compared with India or China, Nepal has a low density of population. The problem is of mobilisation of this rich human resource which is adversely affected by, among other things, high growth rate, internal migration and international immigration. Once again, Kansakar, too, suggests, “along with the development of the Tarai, the development of the hill and mountain regions should also go side by side to minimise migration flow.” Similarly, he believes that Nepal cannot afford an unregulated international border and unrestricted immigration if she were to survive as a sovereign independent country, so that “there is an urgent need of arriving at a mutual accord to regulate migration between Nepal and India” (p. 48).

One of the most intriguing aspects of Nepal's survival as a historical state is the interaction between hostile geography and the in-migration of peoples of Mongoloid stock as well as those of the Aryan stock to overlay Nepal's aboriginals, if there were any. The ruggedness of Nepal's terrain did not seem to have deterred the movement and flow of peoples from the east, the west, and the north so that such movement of peoples across natural or man-made borders seems to have been a perpetual feature of Nepal's social history. Toni Hagen, one the early scholars to show interest in Nepal, has observed that Nepal is an ethnic turntable situated on the crossroads of Asia. Three contributors to this volume -- Ram Niwas Pandey, Dhanavajra Vajracarya, and Ludwig Stiller -- have each investigated the formation and re-formation of Nepal as a historical state, ending up in a modern nation-state which suddenly opened itself up after centuries of medieval somnolence. It is debatable whether Nepal was a historical state prior to the mid-fourth century A.D. when it is mentioned as a "frontier state" lying on the borders of the Gupta Empire. The historical evidence from within Nepal also does not go much further back. Firm history of Nepal begins with the Licchavis who may have arrived in Nepal around 1st century A.D. Society, culture, and the economy seemed to have flowered in Nepal whenever the monarchy was strong and stable. Although the ruling dynasties of Nepal have been ardent worshippers of classical Hindu deities they were never sectarian to any particular cult. For example, Vrsadeva (ca. A.D. 400) -- one of the earliest verifiable historical kings of Nepal -- was described by his successors as a partisan of the Order of the Buddha whereas his greatgrandson, Manadeva (A.D. 464-505) erected monuments to Visnu and Siva. Amsuvarma (A.D. 576-621), a feudatory who styled himself as a favourite of the feet of Lord Pasupati, generously endowed Buddhist monasteries as well as Sakta
pithas. It was because of the eclectic and liberal attitude of the Nepal’s royal families that a complex and rich syncretic religious culture developed in Nepal. Pandey evaluates the contributions of the Licchavis, particularly of the three outstanding rulers of the period -- Manadeva, Amsuvarma, and Narendradeva -- in laying the foundations of Nepalese polity, economy, society and culture along Hindu norms and codes. As he puts it, “ancient Nepal set a kind of standard in all spheres of life of the Nepalese, be it the political culture, or the social, religious, economic or artistic standards. The pattern of life commenced by the Licchavis is even today alive in Nepal (still).... influencing (us) with slight changes owing to the modernisation of the country” (p. 75). In a sense, Dhanavajra Vajracarya takes up the theme further to explore how these “slight changes” crept into medieval Nepal (9th century A.D.-16th century AD) in the form of the fragmentation of political power. He shows how Nepal’s medieval history is marked by a constant power struggle, seemingly among the three power centres which had emerged on the horizon -- the Nepal Valley, the Karnali Basin, and the Tirhutya principality. Fragmentation of political power already set in with the evolution of dual administration in which the throne was shared either between two brothers, or between uncle and nephew, or between two contending houses such as the Mallas and the Devas, a system which continued upto the mid-fourteenth century. All this had given rise to a weak monarchy at the centre and strong feudalism elsewhere, resulting in the emergence of the principalities of the Baisi and the Chaubisi in the Khasan and Magarat, the Sena Kingdoms in Kirant, and the three Malla city-states in the Nepal Valley. At the end of the medieval period, there were about fifty principalities in Nepal all engaged in internecine battles and cold war politics of mutual extermination. While in the mountain fastness of the Himalaya the princelings of Nepal were engaged in these petty skirmishes to hold on to their small little forts, the British East India Company had already won the Battle of Plassey and set its first firm political foothold in the Indo-Gangtic plains. “Being far-sighted enough to understand the situation, Prithvinarayan Shah planned the unification of the country, setting aside the cold war politics. He, in due time, materialised his plan (which) ends, the medieval period of Nepalese history and the dawn of modern age” (p. 100).

Between A.D. 1777-1814, the unification of Nepal was completed, and a genuine Pax Gorkhali was introduced in the land. The period, however, gave room to three unhappy trends: factionalism, increasing alienation of land under the Jagir system, and exploitation of the peasantry in order to support militarism (pp. 102-104). Besides, the kings who succeeded Prithvinarayan
Shah enjoyed very short reigns or came to the throne as minors. Nepal was ruled by regents from 1777-1832, except for short intervals. The total power of the state was in the hands of a Chief Minister who was not a member of the royal family. In a most concise and lucid summary of the events leading to the rise of the Ranas, Stiller narrates how Jang Bahadur Kunwar firmly planted himself in command of Nepal for a 30-year rule, and how nine of his successors clung to it for 74 more years by cultivating the British, emasculating the monarchy and eliminating potential political rivals. Towards the end of their rule the Ranas seem to understand nothing about the mood that was sweeping the continent of Asia. The withdrawal of the British from the Indian sub-continent, the rise of the People’s Republic of China and its march into Tibet, and the anti-Rana uprisings that were gaining momentum day by day at home were each bringing the end of the Rana regime closer. They failed to read the writings on the walls of Kathmandu. Consequently, they were swept under the carpet of history. Mohan Shumshere hurriedly signed a Treaty of Peace and Friendship with India on July 31, 1950. On November 6, 1950 King Tribhuvan left the Royal Palace, ultimately to fly to Delhi. On November 11, 1950 the Nepali Congress launched an armed revolution but ordered a cease-fire on January 15, 1951 when a settlement was negotiated to set up an interim government consisting of the Nepali Congress and the Ranas on a fifty-fifty basis. The King returned to Kathmandu on February 15; three days later an Interim Government was installed. For all intents and purposes, the revolution was over, and democracy had arrived in Nepal.

The achievements of the 1950 revolution were mainly two: political power was restored to the Crown where it belongs and freedom of political expression and organisation was achieved. Three scholars -- Devendra Raj Upadhyaya, Lok Raj Baral and Ganesh Raj Sharma -- have each tried to evaluate Nepal’s experiments in parliamentary democracy in the decade of the 1950s. Because it is one of the most controversial issues one might as well delve deep to find out why even three of them disagree. In the words of Baral,

The political process which was experimented in the post-revolution period lacked deep political commitment of Nepali political elites. Second, the traditional political culture that always glorified authority was strong among political participants. The prevailing norm of the aspirants was to seek royal patronage rather than strive for a mass following... The action of the opposition parties of putting the King in the forefront shows that they do not possess any intrinsic strength of their own (p. 321).
Devendra Raj Upadhyaya, on the other hand, believes that the elected Prime Minister, B.P. Koirala, challenged the provision of the Constitution concerning emergency powers of the King. Such an uncalled for situation was bound to lead to a showdown between the Sovereign and his Prime Minister. Naturally, the King intervened to restore order and establish legitimacy (pp. 31-312). In a detailed analysis of the situation leading to the royal take-over, Ganesh Raj Sharma concludes, "had the King not acted, time would not have waited for him too -- some other forces would have superceded him" (p. 349). Thus experiments in parliamentary democracy appear to have failed in Nepal, not because of the temperamental disattraction of the Nepalese royalty to it, but largely because of the ineptitude of our democrats to nurture it and cultivate its norms in practice. In Sharma's analysis at least two of the authors of the 1950 Revolution -- Nehru and the Nepali Congress -- successfully destroyed their own artefact in a chess game of mutual distrust (p. 349).

Democracy is a delicate plant which does not blossom in every culture. Are the people of Nepal, soaked in religious values of Saivisim, Vaisnavism, Sakta cults, Buddhism and other popular religions, such a fertile soil for secular institutions to flourish? At least, one scholar who has deeply studied Nepal's religious history believes, that "the religious and spiritual forces let loose by various courses of events have made a decisive impact on the political, social and economic life of Nepal. Scholars point out the negative impact of these forces" (pp. 137-138). What we call Nepali culture is dominated by the Hindu-Buddhist values steadily encroaching upon the tribal social groups clinging to shamanist practices. Besides in Nepal religion is a part of state ideology because caste was, at least until 1963, not merely a concern of the individual or social groups, but a state-protected ideology. The protection of the Dharma is considered the ruler's most sacred duty. Both Prayag Raj Sharma and Dor Bahadur Bista show how our cultural value system operates in social space. In the words of Sharma, "the notion of high/low, pure/impure remained intrinsic in matters of all caste relations. All the social groups were ranged in five broad categories arranged in a vertical order. This social universe was paraphrased as carvarna chattisjaa, i.e., four varnas and thirty-six castes" (p. 163). Dor Bahadur Bista finds Nepali society, not cohesive, but fragmented, not a melting pot but a bunch of social groups who are used to think in terms of very restricted groups as their only reference of being their own people. To put it in his own words,

The distinction between the ingroup of "us" and the rest of the outsiders as "they" manifest in every walk of social,
cultural and economic life. Everything inside the circle of “us” is predictable and manipulable, and outside the circle is unpredictable (p. 178).

This introversion is not only social, but also ethnic and regional. According to Bista, such an outlook is made even worse by the exploitative and hierachical social organisation where “there is simply no encouragement for hard work, for individual promotion within the Hindu belief system” (p. 180). As productive activities and physical labour are looked down and fatalism encouraged by Brahminism “there is nothing in Nepali values at the present moment which is comparable to the values of work ethics of the Protestant societies of the West, nor anything like the social pressure of the Japanese society to achieve and succeed” (p. 180). This naturally led to a typical Nepali institution known as cakari (lit., to hang around for hours idly to prove one’s loyalty visible). Doling out favours to one’s own sycophants or hangers on also becomes normal and proper social behaviour for any person with some power-base. Bista launches a scathing attack on this value system, diagnosing it as totally enemical to development and modernisation of Nepal.

One of the central themes of this book is change and development which is another word for regulated change. Planning and development, including agricultural development strategy and industrialisation, are discussed by some of the leading economists of the country here in this volume. B.P. Shreshtha begins by arguing that Nepal represents “a typically hard case of development because Nepal is not only landlocked, but also mountain-locked making a large part of the country uninhabitable without any strategic materials, high population pressure on land, leading to a large-scale encroachment upon the forest resources, fragile ecological balance further disturbed by human and animal agents, large-scale migration of the people from the hills and mountains down to the plains” (p. 192). At least in part, these are the reasons why the planned process of economic development over the past three decades “is conspicuous by the high population and low GDP growth rates with very little improvement in per capita income of the people” which in fact has stayed stagnant for nearly a decade or more. He believes that increase in production is a necessary condition, but not a sufficient condition for elimination of poverty whose incidence is very high in Nepal. He pleads for a change in the focus and direction of development efforts followed by similar commitments at the executive level. He argues for the participation of the panchayats on a massive scale both in plan-formulation and programme-implementation. All this demands great deal of efforts and more than that an honest and inspiring leadership at the village and district levels.
The primary objective of development is to improve the living conditions of people by increasing their income which in turn is possible only through gainful employment leading to increase in production and productivity. In Nepal economic development cannot be conceived without developing its agricultural sector -- the major source of livelihood for 94 percent of the labour force, the two-thirds of the GNP and 80 percent of export earnings. As Ram P. Yadav clearly indicates, the objectives of agricultural development in Nepal are to produce agricultural commodities for meeting internal consumption, for supplying raw materials to agro-based industries, and for earning foreign exchange through export, and secondly, to meet basic needs of disadvantaged people, particularly those at the or below subsistence level. The debate is not related to allocation of priority to agriculture sector, but to designing the operational strategies for agricultural development. Based on the principle of comparative advantage of the ecological regions Nepal adopted the policy of specialisation, i.e., the promotion of horticulture and livestock in the hills and mountain and cereal and cash crop in the Terai. But as Yadav says, the lack of adequate transport and marketing systems and the country’s quasimonetised economy are serious impediments to realising these goals. Yadav pleads for the organisation of small-farm owners into active groups which offers a setting for a meaningful participatory planning process or grass-roots planning. He sees decentralisation as the essence of convergent planning where, at the district level, the grass-roots meet the central planning agency. “If implemented they could achieve the dual objectives of growth and equity: however, their implementation depends on new agricultural technologies and the political will” (p. 226).

P. P. Timilsina takes up the task of evaluating Nepal’s industrialisation efforts in the last four decades. During the last three decades of her planned efforts Nepal has established some industries; transportation and power supply networks have been created in some areas of the country. But the economy has not undergone any structural change; agriculture still dominates it. Our efforts have been afflicted by policy inconsistencies, lack of infrastructure, and above all by a merchantalistic approach in economic activities. Majority of our investors are non-Nepalis; raw materials are imported; the market we try to reach is foreign. Timilsina believes that there is an over-concentration of Nepalese private sector not in industry but in mercantile activities and that there is no national corporate sector where foreign private capital and multinational investments can be attracted.

Surveying Nepalese economy up to the Sixth Plan, Mahesh Banskota succinctly sums up Nepal’s experiments in planned development for three decades. He takes up to evaluate four
critical areas: agriculture development, foreign trade and industrial development, public sector enterprises, and rural development -- each of which seems to be problem ridden. For example, the public sector enterprises grew in number from 8 to 73 but their overall performance has been discouraging in so far as employment generation and other returns on investments are concerned. Similarly, evaluation of rural development programme "do not provide an encouraging picture (because) productivity gains have been small and limited to the larger land-holders, agricultural inputs have been monopolised by the rich" (p. 268). Banskota tries to evaluate the impact of development planning mainly in terms of its attack on the problem of poverty highlighting food, income, employment, inequality. His conclusion is very telling "the discussion on the different dimensions of rural poverty clearly indicated that improvements have been slow, if at all" (p. 273).

This willy-nilly takes us to the twilight zone of political economy which assumes that politics and economics are inalienable components of a power structure. The state of a country's economy is a product of its resource endowments and the character of the dominant coalition of interests in a society --this is the basic premise from which Devendra Raj Pandey opens his diagnosis of why Nepal is as poor, agrarian, rural and backward as it was when it embarked upon the road to planning some three decades ago. What he calls "the dominant coalition of interests" in Nepal consists of big landowners, traders, a small political and bureaucratic elite and the educated elite "who derive their rental incomes from their cosmetic value to the political regime, and has a vested interest in the maintainance of status quo, so that the coalition remains small and yet dominant" (p. 276). This, Pandey believes, has conspired to place Nepal's economy in what he calls "a prolonged state of stagnation" (p. 286). Our failure to achieve even a moderate rate of growth in output or initiate a process of much needed structural transformation of the economy is likely to be a burden to Nepal's future particularly if she is to attain economic viability as an independent state situated as she is between two Asian powers aspiring to be dominant in the region. As Pandey puts it, "Nepal's economic stagnation and its implications for internal stability can have repercussions beyond a routine concern for the material quality of life of its citizens" (p. 289). The theory of dominant coalition is not a novel one among sociologists yet what is not clear in Pandey's analysis is the theory of vested interest in keeping Nepal poor, agrarian, backward and rural. The unholy alliance of the politicians, bureaucrats, and contractors is not a phenomenon unique to Nepal. Nor do all educated elites "derive their rental income from their cosmetic value to the political regime" -- if they have any such value for it.
The political regime which is blamed here for failing to take off in the country’s economy deserves some attention on its own. Parliamentary democracy as incorporated in the 1959 Constitution was discarded by King Mahendra because it was of an alien inspiration imposed from above without any foundation in our society; secondly, because it was divisive, not cohesive; and finally, because it didn’t deliver the goods. In its stead, he promised “to build democracy gradually layer by layer from the bottom upwards” for national consolidation, social and economic reconstruction of Nepal. The new system also incorporated two fundamentals congruent with the traditional ethos of Nepali society: an unquestioned royal leadership and partyless character of the new order. Keeping these two fundamentals intact, the new order passed through several phases and innovations, including one-party like phase of Gaun Pharka, culminating in 1975 in the Second Amendment to the 1962 Constitution. However, within four years of the new dispensation the system faced a major “storm” begotten by sycophancy, conformism, regimentation and over-concentration of power in the name of “the politics of consensus.” What was, only a little while ago, believed to be “a system with no alternative” was put on popular test through a national referendum. On May 24, 1979, responding to a two-month long student agitation King Birendra, who himself called the unrest a “storm”, put the entire system on trial by asking the nation to choose between the existing system “with gradual reforms” and a multiparty system of government. Even before the referendum was held King Birendra had made it clear that while discharging his royal duties he would be guided by three principles 1. universal adult franchise as the basis of election to the national legislature 2. the appointment of the Prime Minister on the recommendation of the legislature, and 3. the accountability of Ministry headed by a Prime Minister to the legislature. These three new features had already introduced or re-introduced, except for organised political parties and activities, parliamentary system of government. However, the referendum went in favour of the reformed panchayat system by a margin of 10%. The panchayat side got 55.3 percent as against 44.7 for the multiparty side. The exercise had been, in many ways, educative -- both for those who were in power as well as for those aspiring for it. Nevertheless, the referendum had, in a sense, sharpened rather than resolved the political conflict in the country, by polarising the two camps rather than reconciling them. Despite the royal concern about the political integration of all Nepalis there has been no abetting in explicit demand for the restoration of political parties nor any signs of subsiding of factionalism among the panchas for post, power, privilege and, if possible, easy money, thus defeating the
intrinsic strength and "partyless" content of the polity. The system today has all the disadvantages of a parliamentary democracy with none of its merits.

As Baral observes, "a brief experiment with the adult franchise, the provisions for an elected Prime Minister and cabinet accountability to the Rastriya Panchayat have indeed produced some ominous problems for the partyless system." We have no political parties, at least not any legal ones, but very many factions within as well as outside of the system -- an odd marriage of an authoritarian culture and subject political culture sprinkled with bizarre elements of a politicking society where individuals, groups and factions operate not too discretely what may be called the politics of benefits and convenience in alliance with some or other power pocket.

In a penetrating and provocative analysis of Nepal’s experiments in democratic innovations G.R. Sharma, a one-time party activist, clearly shows how running a political party in a poor, illiterate and traditional society has not proved a successful democratic exercise (p. 364). Although he believes that debates regarding different alternatives to the panchayat system have not been concluded by the 1980 referendum, in a regional context where neighbouring powers have always played critical roles at every turn in the country’s political life, the institution of monarchy has to build up a consensus at home and sympathies abroad because there is no other dependable leadership in the country. He tries to analyse several positive and democratic features of the present constitution. As Sharma puts it,

Knowledge of history has no use if it does not impart wisdom. History of Nepal, and particularly its period of democratic transformation, must make the King and the people both wiser (p. 358).

To him, wisdom lies in distrusting political parties as a panacea to Nepal’s ills, whereas “in a situation in which even God might fail, the monarchy is preserving the national identity and promoting democratic ideals by experimenting with a liberal democratic system based on direct adult franchise” (p. 365). Sharma thinks that this experiment is not without risk because in a liberalised scenario in the country powerful political factions with extraneous loyalties have emerged who use the valuable freedom guaranteed by the constitution as subterfuge. He finds their evil influence in the manipulation of public opinion and judgement, their crooked minds active in tapping enormous resources to contest elections and to influence the media. Not that Sharma denies that there are “a handful of idealists” in such parties, but they too are aware of the malady. This clinical report on the political factions, groups and parties in Nepal may sound
too hostile an assessment for those in Nepal who voted for the multiparty system in the national referendum who after all number a couple of millions some of whom must be at least as well-informed about the disenchancing aspects of party politics. In the words of B.P. Koirala, “the votes cast for the multiparty side are votes committed to democracy”—not to any charismatic individual nor to a ready-made ideology of an alien inspiration. Nor is there anything “alien” in democracy because we do try to establish again and again the legitimacy of all our political culture by appealing to democratic norms. Since the announcement of the referendum the banned political parties have always been in the field. Paradoxically enough, disorganised factions of panchas are more vocal critics of the system than the banned political parties. The most critical politicians are not Ganesh Man Singh and Girija Koirala, but Surya Bahadur Thapa and Lokendra Bahadur Chand. The most hostile assessment of the system has not come from ideologically inspired intellectuals but from ex-Chief Secretary, ex-Finance Secretary, ex-Ambassador, ex-Vice-Chancellor, ex-bureaucrats and technocrats who have in their heydays lovingly nursed this system to what it is today. So glib and superficial attack on the banned political groups alone is not the whole story. One of the fundamental puzzles of the panchayat system has been the fact that in spite of its uncontested and fully protected status, in spite of heavy financial and political investment on it there has been no growth of national leadership cadre. Lack of dependable leadership is not an inherent feature of the political parties alone. Why didn’t it flower through the Back to the Village Campaign, the panchayats, and its class organisations nor through the Panchayat Policy and Evaluation Committee is equally a relevent question to which analytical minds such as Ganesh Raj Sharma should soon address. Sharma also throws some fresh light on “external factors” in shaping domestic politics of Nepal, particularly at critical junctures such as the 1950 revolution, the 1960 royal take-over, the 1975 amendment to the constitution and above all in 1979 popular unrest when “to deny any external design is rather a poor comfort” (p. 356). How regional situation often shapes the turn of events at home is illustrated by the fact that only after India’s debacle in its war with China, a “reconciliation” with India was possible which helped King Mahendra “to develop a political system based on more than a desperate struggle for survival”—as Leo E. Rose and John Scholtz put it. Yadunath Khanal and Dhruva Kumar explore each independently how Nepal has so far been successful in its efforts. In Khanal’s assessment Nepal’s foreign policy outlook builds up on the assumption that India genuinely believes in peaceful co-existence with all her neighbours, including China and
particularly with Nepal. Nepal's strategic assessment regarding China, specially south of the Himalayas, in spite of the 1962 Sino-Indian conflict, is that peaceful co-existence meets the latter's national interest. Nepal's national interest in this triangular India-Nepal-China co-existence under conditions of no military option to itself and in its unenviable geographic position is different in intensity from that of either India or China (p.372).

The Indian and Chinese interests in Nepal "even under the best conditions of peaceful co-existence are," according to Khanal -- who has been Nepal's royal ambassador to India as well as to China -- "not likely to collude against the very sovereignty and independence of Nepal" (p. 372). Dhruva Kumar, in a very detailed and perceptive paper, defines security concern and quest for economic development as two crucial variables in the framing of Nepal's foreign policy. The fundamental dynamics of this policy are Nepal's awareness of the strategic and economic asymmetries in comparison to its immediate neighbourhood. This awareness has been sharpened by a number of recent developments in the region. As a part of the strategy of appeasement the Ranas signed a treaty with India which pushed Nepal into India's security orbit but didn't help shield the oligarchy from popular uprising. Nepal felt itself exposed as a buffer with China's presence in Tibet, though it provided Nepal with an opportunity to explore an alternative course. Nepal cautiously interacted with China and the international community which helped her through the 1960 political change and the adverse Indian response to it. Nepal felt disturbed at India's amputation of Pakistan in 1971 and the annexation of Sikkim in 1975. Nepal encountered several problems with India in the 1970s, including the renewal of the trade and transit treaty, particularly Nepal's urge as a landlocked country for a separate trade treaty and a transit treaty. All these have led to a substantive change in Nepal's relations with India. Nepal has pursued a policy of interaction with the international community by expanding its relations with subtlety to enhance its sense of independence and expand economic interdependence to reduce dependence on a single source. As Dhurva says, "Nepal's neutralisation policy has found its genuine expression in the zone of peace proposal" -- now endorsed by 113 countries of the world. So does Nepal's participation in the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation where she has played, not only a constructive role, but also been a founding factor. This does not, however, mean that Nepal's difficulties with India are over, nor likely to be so in the foreseeable future as long as New Delhi continues to feel that its interests are being ignored in Kathmandu. There is, in fact, a fundamental lack of understanding at the political level because of the incompatibility of their perceptions on security matters.
Nepal, in its efforts at modernisation, has come a long way from the revolution of 1950 when it abandoned the policy of isolationism. The die had already been cast and there cannot be any way of turning back. That the monarchy is genuinely committed to the goals of modernisation is evident from the political innovations experimented through the Interim Government Act of 1951, the 1959 Constitution, the 1962 Constitution, three amendments to it, three general elections and a national referendum—all testifying to the fact that the Crown is fully “responsive to the wishes of the people”. The Land Reform Act of 1964, the New Legal Code of 1964, seven Five-Year Plans, not to speak of the sectoral plans launched since the accession of King Birendra in 1972, each testify to the commitment of the monarchy to the goals of social and economic transformation of Nepal. If these plans have been robbed of their substantive contents in the process of their implementation, the fault lies elsewhere. Committed leadership at the national and the grassroots levels, clean politics, efficient administration and technocracy and a pulsating and performing economy are what we have yet to look for if we, as a nation, really mean to change Nepal without disrupting its continuity as a sovereign, independent and self-respecting Kingdom. We have now only two options: to do our best or to perish. Every Nepali has to choose for himself, without blaming anyone else for the consequences. We have nearly wasted four decades in all manner of experiments only now to stand exposed between the Devil and the Deep Sea.

In conclusion, one may briefly raise three questions which every serious Nepali is asking today. On December 15, 1960, dismissing B.P. Koirala’s government, King Mahendra levelled several charges against the 19-month old government. Among them were misuse of power to fulfil the individual and party interests and encouragement of corrupt practices, instability and incapability of maintaining law and order in the country, encouragement of anti-national elements, implementation of economic measures based on theory but not on scientific analysis and factual study, and threat to the national unity. Looking back at the balance sheet of the system dispensed by King Mahendra and his successor, its achievements are mainly two: stability and national unity. On carefully surveying the national, regional, and international scenerio neither of these achievements can be minimised. To these may also be added two more: increasingly positive projection of Nepal at regional and international levels and the creation of a network of infrastructures where it didn’t exist in any form. But the panchayat system has done no better in the misuse of power, corrupt practices to fulfill the individual interests, in stemming the tide of factionalism, and above all in
poverty amelioration. Despite three decades of planned efforts Nepal has become poorer, more illiterate quantitatively and dependent on external mercy and generosity than ever before.

Secondly, that Nepal treats its political dissidents with cruelty, holding them in detention without trial in inhuman conditions and that neither freedom of expression nor of peaceful assembly exists in Nepal except in paper have both been recently widely publicised by the Amnesty International (UK) and the Asia Watch (USA). These reports do not enhance the image of Nepal nor are these accusations compatible with Nepal’s aspirations for a democratic order. In *Nepal: An Assertive Monarchy* S.D. Muni, an Indian scholar specialising on Nepal, has remarked:

King Mahendra made the single largest and most important contribution in building contemporary Nepal into an aspirant modern society pulsating with life and vigour... The system, the ethos, and the styles of governance initiated and nursed by him seem to have struck firm roots in Nepal.

With a system, a style and an ethos so firmly rooted in Nepalese soil, should we be so harsh towards our critics?

Finally, politicians in Nepal are too fond of hyperboles, and they have not discontinued dwelling on “the supreme and dynamic leadership of the Crown”. However, any kind of personal involvement of the monarch, or of his name -- with or without his knowledge -- in the day-to-day politics of the country is likely to expose the institution to risks in the future. The wisest course for Nepal’s traditional though modernising monarchy is to regulate change so as to maintain continuity and to guarantee conditions in which the people can express their opinions freely by creating processes and institutions through which popular aspirations can both be ascertained and translated into reality. This may have been what King Birendra had in mind when he said, on December 16, 1979:

*In the interest of Nepal and the Nepalese people, we shall, as best we can defend the ideals of democracy. We shall not shirk from the responsibilities we owe to our people in maintaining peace, stability, security, order and justice together with the protection, preservation and safety of the national independence, sovereignty and the territorial integrity of our motherland. We have come to view that, as far as day-do-day governance of the country is concerned, it is desirable that this is a responsibility people’s representatives should shoulder and be held accountable for. It is in this spirit to respect the wishes of the people that we wish this day to inspire all of us Nepalese with reason and wisdom.*

KAMAL P. MALLA
Physiography of Nepal

Bal Kumar K.C.

Introduction

Nepal, the Himalayan Kingdom, covers the Himalayas for a length of some 550 miles. It lies between the latitudes 26° 22' N. and 30° 27' N. and longitudes 80° 4' E. and 88° 12' E. Nepal looks like an elongated brick i.e., the western section stretches more towards the north and the eastern section towards the south. Western Nepal is broader than eastern Nepal. This widening towards the west can be distinctly visualized west of Gorkha district. The maximum length is from Chhinchu in Mechi Zone in the east to Dengsi in the Mahakali Zone in the west. The broadest section of the country is between Nibuwa the Berdia district of Bheri Zone in the south and Changle in the border region with Tibet in Karnali Zone in the north, which covers some 150 miles. The narrower section lies between Malangwa of Janakpur Zone in the south and Kodari of Bagmati Zone in the north, which covers some 76 miles. The average width of the country is 110 to 120 miles. The total land area of Nepal is 56,827 square miles.

The entire northern frontier of Nepal is called 'Himal'. Geologically, however, the whole of Nepal constitutes the Himalayas. Nepal has within its periphery the highest summits down to the youngest member of great Himalayan family. The Nepal Himalaya lies between the Kummaon Himalaya in the west and the Assam Himalaya in the east. The Nepal Himalaya extends from river Mahakali in the west to Shingalila range in the east. It thus acts as a separate division between the tropical India in the south and the dead heart of Asia in the north. The Himalaya forms a unique geographical unit, but Nepal itself has a great diversity in physical features and thus in climate. Within small area the climate ranges from forested tropical type to the barren tundra type.
The different physiographic units roughly cover the following area and percentage of the country’s total land-area: Trans-Himalayas, 15,827 square miles [27.9 percent]; the Mahabharata Lekh, the Bhotes, and the hinterland valley region of the Mahabharata Lekh, 27,000 square miles [47.5 percent]; the Churias and Inner Tarai [Bhitri Madesh], 6,000 square miles [10.6 percent]; the Bhavar region, 3,500 square miles [6.1 percent]; and the tarai region 4,500 square miles [7.9 percent].

Aspects of the Tertiary Fold

The Himalayas are a result of intense and massive folding of the sediments of the Tethys sea in the Tertiary age. During the upheavel of the Himalaya, the main force came from the north, Angaraland. The southern block or Gondwana land acted as a resistant block. These intensely folded earth piles later bodily moved far southwards from their place of origin appearing as the largest single geosyncline on the face of the earth. The total length of the proper Himalaya is 1,500 miles and the width ranges from 50 to 200 miles. Within this, the Himalayas start from ‘Pakir Knot’ sloping eastward to the Indian and the Burmese border. The Himalayan curve maintains a general structural similarity right from Kashmir to Assam. The Himalayas thus seemed an arch-like graduated curve right from their very origin.

The Himalayas took millions of years to form. Successive deposits found in the Himalayas denote certain periods of their formation. It is established well that the force which caused the Himalayan folds came from the north, resulting into five simultaneous thrusts. The Himalayan fold rose first as ‘Islands’ followed by a period of spasmodic movement occurring in the different periods of the Tertiary age. The newly uplifted landmasses had been subject to continuous sculpturing due to agents of erosion. Isostatic movement and frequent earthquakes suggest that the Himalayas may still be rising. The successive stages of the formation of the Himalayas can be depicted as follows:

I. The first movement or upheaval of the Himalaya took place during the middle to upper Cretaceous period. During this period, warping took place in the sediments of the Tethys sea. At the latter part of this period, the Himalayan crust might have come just over the surface of the water as long narrow islands.

II. The second upheaval took place during the upper Miocene period and hills were formed.

III. The third movement took place in the middle Miocene period during which most powerful forces worked in the making of Tertiary fold. During this period, the whole Himalayan ridge entirely obliterated the Tethys sea.
IV. The fourth movement took place during the close of the Pliocene period. The Himalayas during the period got raised again, as a result of which most of the sediments got filled in the Gangetic valley giving rise to the river system south of the Himalayas. The slope of the Himalayas was towards west and south and, therefore, the river system developed through the Doab in Delhi. Later, when the Doab region was raised up, the Bramhaputra had to take a long course parallel to the Himalayas to get into the Bay of Bengal. The geological Siwaliks or the Churias [in the local tongue] came into existence during this period as the last and the youngest member of the Himalayan family.

V. The fifth and the last upheaval in the geological history of the Himalayan fold took place during the early Pliestocene period. During the period, Churias were fully developing as in the case of ‘Pir Panjar’ in the far western Himalaya. By this time, man might have appeared as the Himalayas were still rising.

Thus, the Himalayan folds which are now the loftiest folds in the face of the earth came into being. As the Himalayas were formed almost entirely during the Tertiary period, they are also known as the Tertiary folds.

Although the Himalayas are regionally divided into Punjab, Kummaon, Nepal, and Assam Himalaya, Nepal Himalaya is the longest possessing the greatest number of the highest peaks. This paper attempts to describe various physiographic units of the Nepal Himalaya comprising the whole of Nepal [Fig. 1].

Physiographic Regions

Physiographically, Nepal may be divided into seven sub-regions: 1) The Tarai-Bhavar Region; 2) The Churias [Foothills and Inner Tarai]; 3) Mahabharata; 4) The Hinterland Valley Region; 5) The Greater Himalaya; 6) Inner Himalayas; and 7) Trans-Himalayas or the Border Ranges.

1. The Tarai-Bhair Region

This region occupies the southern most part of the country and consists of deep alluvial material deposited in the fordeep of the Himalayas. The filling up of this trough was accomplished as soon as the final upheaval took place all through the Pliestocene period. The fordeep in front of the Himalayas was due to the ‘forced throw’ checked by the thrust plane of peninsular India. This portion of Gangetic plain occupies a great ‘Rift valley’ which was due to a huge crack in the sub-crust. This cracks is well over 1,500 miles long and 1,000 feet deep. It is described as a ‘Syncline’, a ‘Rift valley’, and as a ‘Sag’ formed from the Tythian basin. The
total thickness of the Indo-Gangetic basin has not yet been measured, yet it is thought that below the present level the depth goes to some 6,000 to 1,000 feet. Aeromagnetic survey of the Gangetic delta shows that the basement rocks are at a depth of 17,000 to 20,000 feet below the present ground level. The Seismological record shows that the cause of earthquake in this region is movement of rocks in a series of fault below the alluvium.

The maximum depth of this trough of Tarai-Bhavar in Nepal is estimated to be in Morang and Jhapa, the south-east border of Nepal, the depth being 6,500 feet or over. But within the political framework of Nepal, the Terai-Bhavar region can be separated into three distinct divisions:

1. The Western Terai-Bhavar covers the Kanchanpur area in the Mahakali Zone; Kailali in the Seti Zone, and Berdia and Banke in the Bheri Zone.
2. The Central or Mid-Tarai-Bhavar covers Kapilvastu Rupandehi, and Nawalparasi in the Lumbini Zone. The southern limit is ‘Danduwa’ up to the Gandaki river.
3. The Eastern Tarai-Bhaver covers Parsa, Bara, and Rautahat districts in the Narayani Zone; Sarlahi, Mohotari, and Dhanusa districts in the Janakpur Zone; Siraha and Saptari districts in the Sagarmatha Zone; Sunsari and Morang districts in the Kosi Zone; and Jhapa in the Mechi Zone.

The Tarai-Bhavar lowlands are absent in the west in Dang and Deokhuri districts of the Rapti Zone. This gap is nearly about 50 miles. Again this absence occurs in the Swomeswor range in central Tarai-Bhawar region, the gap being about 40 miles.

The Tarai-Bhavar region has 8,000 square miles of the total land-area of the country. The width varies from 14 to 16 miles. The Tarai-Bhaver region, according to its nature of soil and slope, can be divided into two groups.

a. The Tarai: Literally, tarai means ‘marsh’ and consists of fine and fertile alluvial soil. This is because of the reappearance of water which percolates into the Bhavar region. The clayey soil of the Tarai does not permit water percolation. The Tarai presents a different landscape with large number of undeveloped drainage system. The rivers do not flow on meandering courses in Nepal except in some marginal areas in the south. The drainage pattern is sluggish and slow. Rivers in their upper courses are rather degrading except some big rivers like the Kosi, the Gandaki, and the Karnali. The Tarai covers 4,500 square miles, and the width ranges from 5 to 15 miles. The maximum width is in Rautahat of the Janakpur Zone. The main soil content of the Tarai is loam i.e., sand and clay mixed with a yellowish brown colour. Along the
river banks when flooding takes place the deposition is that of newer alluvium which is rich in silt. The divide like elevated areas, far from river banks, contain older deposits. Much of the Tarai consists of older deposits of alluvium. These upper areas are referred to as “Tand” [Tar in the hills] and the river-bank areas are referred to as ‘Dhab’. The upper reaches are safe from floods; disastrous flooding may occur in some marginal border areas. The main centres of the flood lie in the Indian states. The climate of these areas is warm and unhealthy. Malaria used to be a nuisance in the past. But these days, due to Malaria Eradication Programme, newer settlements in arable land have grown. The Tarai has been the ‘granary of Nepal’ because of its large production of agricultural crops.

b. The Bhavar: It is the northern part of the Tarai plain well up to the Churias and constituting gravels, sand, pebbles, and boulders. The main difference between the Tarai and Bhavar is the difference in their water level. Bhavar is a region with dry belt of river consisting of riverine forests. These forests are disappearing due to deforestation. Due to porous soil, the water in this region sinks soon and gets out in the Tarai region causing marsh and floods in the rainy season. The Bhavar is the region of hill wash and alluvial fans with no water on the surface except in those rivers which are strong enough to cross this region. The dry-bed is washed during the rainy season only. The swift flowing Himalayan rivers suddenly find a check in the Bhavar and are forced to deposit their materials i.e., the deposits being finer in the south. The Bhavar region especially from Siraha to Amlekhganj is not fit for agriculture. These places are also referred to as ‘Madesh’ or middle land between the Gangetic belt on the south and the hills on the north. Because of porosity this region is forested with the luxurious growth of trees, mostly Sal. The forest is deciduous tropical called “Char Kose Jhadi” because of its consistent width of 8 miles. But deforestation these days has caused heavy and largescale slahing of trees.

2. The Churias

a. Foot-Hills: The Churias are the continuation of extra-Himalayan hills and named geologically as “Siwaliks”. The Churias extend geologically right from Baluchistan taking turn towards the Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Nepal, Darjeeling, Bhutan, Assam, and Burma right up to Rangoon. But the structure forms a long chain of disconnected hills. The Churias are known by different names in different areas such as ‘Makrana’ series in Baluchistan, ‘Siwalik’ in Punjab, ‘Danduwa’ in West Nepal, ‘Churia’ elsewhere in Nepal, ‘Traparn Rupi’ from Arakan coast to Surma Valley, Dihing in Digboi and Assam, and Irrawady System in Burma.
When the Himalayas rose from the Tethyian basin, a long trough was left in the front. This fore-deep, as it is called, connected the Arabian sea with the Bay of Bengal. Today the fore-deep is occupied, after long and continued deposition of alluvium and sedimentary materials by the Indo-Gangetic plain. The continuous deposition was added by the southward advance of the Himalayas and at this time the crumpling which took place added the Churia family as extra Himalaya in the line of the great Himalayan family. This crumpling and folding gave rise to many anticlinal and synclinal folds in the Churia series i.e., Rapti and Dang Valleys. Owing to several compression and stress the Churia folds have been inverted and reversed. The main boundary fault lies along the section where the Churias meet the Mahabharata.

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The Churias in Nepal have a general tendency of gradually lowering in height to the east. This is due to heavy precipitation in the east. The maximum height of Churias is noticed in Garba in west Nepal [6,143']. This lies at the border between Kailali and Doti in the Seti Zone. In general, the Churias are higher between the Mahakali and the Karnali rivers and are lower eastwards between the Karnali and Babai rivers, with an average height of 4,000 feet. Further east, the Churias have an average height of 3,000 feet.

The Churias are not independent as hills in places like West Dang between the Bheri and Babai rivers. In Butaul and Udaipur Garhi they merge with the Mahabharata. In other places, they are widely separated by tectonic synclinal valley as in Chitwan. In places, rivers are divided into two: the northern section being faulted with a perpendicular dip, and in the southern section being more or less anticlinal. In the case of Rapti, Lumbini, and Narayani Zones, the Churia system forms a broad belt. In the Rapti, more or less three parallel ranges are formed: Danduwa range, the next separating Deukhuri and river Babai and the next, north of which lies Surkhet. This has been so due to differential erosion and represent three states in the formation of Deukhuri, Dang, and Surkhet.
In the Narayani zone, Churias are referred to as Someswor range. The highest point is Baneswor [2,882]. There is small stream called Reoor Irapti. It has caused an appearance of two ranges with an impression of fault structure. East of Amlekhganj, the Churias consist partly of calcareous beds of clay containing consolidated conglomerates. East of Amlekhganj up to river Bagmati, Churias are known as Bhavar-churias. In Janakpur zone, further east of the river Bagmati up to Sagarmatha zone [River Kosi] the Churias have another name, the Mahananda danda.

The continuity of Churias east of the river Kosi has been a matter of great controversy. The reality is that east of the Kosi, Churias do not continue as a consolidated chain but rather are discontinued and form isolated hillocks.

In Dharan itself, the Bijayapur danda appears more like a spur of the Mahabharata yet it is only a remnant of the old Churias. Further east in Morang area a north-north-east ranging hill known as Bhatti Churia is present. In Jhapa, the “Chula Chuli” hills are present. East of the river Kankai lies the “Maina Chula”. These are remnants of the old Churia System. The Churias in most places have been laid down as a series of isoclinal folds i.e., anticlines and synclines so closely folded as to have the same dip. The Parewa Bhir in Amlekhganj proves this view. The development of such isoclinal fold is due to the age-long water erosion which has been able to erode effectively. The escarpments of Churias face southwards; towards the north, the slope is comparatively smoother and gentler. The soil of the Churias is coarse and also porous. As such, except in the rainy season, almost all the year dry conditions prevail. The landscape is rugged and is marked by well-developed V-shaped valleys running north-south. Most of the river beds are dry as in the case of Bhavar. After crossing the Churias one enters the broad narrow transverse valleys of the Inner Tarai.

b. The Inner Tarai: The Inner Tarai is a zone of low-land river valleys lying enclosed between the Churias in the south and the Mahabharata in the north. In some places, the Inner Tarai has developed within or in between the Churias itself. The Deukhuri valley can be cited as an example. On the whole, the rivers have nonetheless played important roles in shaping the valleys of the Inner Tarai like the Surkhet Valley. The Kamala Khonch, the Trijuga valley, and the Kankan valley are all the results of river erosion. But also the structural and tectonic types of valley in the Inner Tarai can not be neglected in the geological study. These tectonic valleys are large and well pronounced in the Rapti valley in central Nepal and the Dang Valley in western Nepal. The rivers flowing through the Inner Tarai have their prime destiny to sink.
into the Bhavar after a cut across the Churias. Although the case is not the same throughout, i.e., regarding the big rivers, the Inner Tarai is covered all through with an infertile soil that is predominated by sand, clay, gravel, and unconsolidated materials. Chitwan, Hetauda, Sindhuli Madi, Dang, and Deukhuri are some of the examples of the Inner Tarai.

3. The Mahabharata

Also classed as the lesser or mid-Himalayan ranges, in width from 20 to 40 miles and about 500 miles in length, the Mahabharata covers the entire length of the political boundaries of Nepal right from the river Mahakali to the river Mechi. But the main section of the Mahabharata lies between the river Mahakali and the river Kosi. The height is generally from 5,000 to 9,000 feet. Some summits, however, rise to the heights of 10,000 to 11,000 feet.

Geologically, the Mahabharata consists of ranges adjacent and roughly parallel to the Churias. But the Mahabharata ranges contrast with the Churias in form because of the irregular direction of the spurs marked by deep-cut steep gorges. The Mahabharata mostly forms the steep escarpment towards the south. The Mahabharata Lekh is gently sloping towards the north i.e., the hinterland valley region. Such mountains are called orthoclinal in type. Since the southern slopes of the Mahabharata Lekh are steep, these have resulted in the loss of soil cover. They are barren because of steepness and are exposed except in the protected valleys. Structurally, the Mahabharata range forms the break of the overthrust Nappes and is convex in its eastern and western extents. So, when the force came from the north the materials of the Tethyian basin were squeezed between the peninsula and the Angaraland. Only in Nepal, the Himalayan folds reach the southernmost part. The approach of the Himalaya was checked by Aravallis in the west and the peninsula to the east. Structurally, the Mahabharata forms a large syncline throughout the length of the country. The Nappes here are thicker and deep-rooted than those of the Alpine fold.

The Mahabharata range is chiefly the result of the Kathmandu Nappe. Two other Nappes, Nuwakot and Peuthan between the Seti and the Karnali basin also exist. In the Mid-Himalayan zone the compressive forces have produced thrust folds of recumbent type. Geologically, Mahabharata ranges are different from the Churia in structure also.

They have been formed of highly metamorphosed rocks of various compositions of different ages. In west Nepal, quartzite, slate, shale, and dolomite are prominent. In central Nepal, they
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SCALE

40 0 40 80 120 160 KM
consist of schist, mica, phylite, and some granitic intrusions. The main ranges of the Himalayas with their loftiest heights are formed by the roots [the place from where the squeezing took place] of several Nappes. The back-zone of these Nappes corresponds to the hinterland valley region of the Mahabharata Lekh, and the front zone [heat of the Nappe overthrust southwards along the thrust plane] forms the entire Mahabharata.

4. Hinterland Valley Region

This zone lies between the Mahabharata Lekh in the south and the great Himalayas in the north. The mighty ranges of both north and south have always protected the people and valuable art and architecture of this region. It is along this zone that this kingdom has developed and matured its cultural life and heritage. Physically, the hinterland valley region extends from Pithauragarh district, Indo-Nepal boundary in the Mahakali Zone to the eastern boundary in the Mechi Zone. Backbone of the Himalayan Nappe structure of this region was initially uplifted as bed rock which forms more or less anticlinal archs while the surface features are reverse. The anticlinal formations of valleys are shown by Trisuli-Gandaki region and Kosi-Arun region. Mountainous areas coincide with the trough. The bed rocks are of anticlinal structure and have synclinal approach due to the hinterland valleys sinking gradually under isostatic response in the Pliestocene period. Owing to subsidence, slopes towards the south were reversed towards the north forming a northerly dip as in Manang and Mustang areas and making lakes as in the Gandaki and Karnali basins.

The lacustrine deposits and the nappe structure found in this region indicate that the Mahabharata also rose as the Nappe’s front. The Mahabharata further acted as a barrier to the Himalayan drainage. Ultimately, the water filled in up to the Mahabharata basin subsequently resulted in overflow. This resulted in a few water gaps due to erosion and tectonic action. When escaping water crossed the Mahabharata, a new drainage system might have been set up. These rivers have catchment areas as far as the Trans-Himalayas and Tibet. Although, north of the Mahabharata, the main rivers have many tributaries, they get into the Tarai plains only through three important water gaps corresponding to the structurally weak zones of the Mahabharata. the Karnali system emerges to the south through the ‘Chisapani’ water gap; the Gandaki system through the Deoghat water gap; and the Kosi system through the ‘Chatra’ water gap.

This region has no defined mountain ranges but has a lot of protruding spurs southwards. These spurs are limited to the
transverse valleys of the south. The development of this sort of drainage system supports the rise of the ‘Main Boundary Fault’ in the geological history of the Himalayan orogeny in general.

5. The Great Himalayan Region

The vigorous thrusting forces caused and resulted in the squeezing up of the Nappe’s root as the Angaraland advanced towards the south and the Gondwana land acted as a stable block. Many forces and actions actively cooperated in the formation of the great Himalaya. First, the overall force coming from the north helped form the Nappes extending for a length of 15 to 16 miles with an exception of the Kathmandu Nappe, which is 50 miles long. Second, the Asiatic Continent, moving towards the south, came into violent contact with the stable Gondwana land. Third, the Tethys sea formed a weak zone and therefore, unable to bear the pressure. This resulted in the raising up of also the Tibetan-Highlands and the Trans-Himalayas in western Nepal. Finally, the further closer approach of the mobile north and the stable south gave rise to magnetic flow-fusion and intrusion [observed in the Annapurna and Dhanusha district]. This process did not stop until the violent contact of the Asiatic landmass caused a split arch separated by a crossfault observed along the River Arun and the Krishna Gandaki. Such structures are also termed the ‘Transverse firt structure’. The mighty and insurmountable lofty Himalayas were thus brought into being. In geological terminology this chain is referred to as the great Himalaya. The great Himalaya in Nepal can be divided into various groups.

The first group from the western-most region includes the Lipu Lekh which stretches as far east as the Karnali basin. The second group lies east of the Karnali as the Kanjiroba, Rara, and Sisne Himal. The ranges, further east, become the Dhaulagiri wherein lies the Rift Valley of Kali and Krishna Gandaki. East of the Kali Gandaki the great Himalayas are known as the Damodar, Nilgiri and Annapurna, also known as Lumjung Himal in Lamjung. East of the river Marsyandi, the great Himalayas are recognised as the Gorkha Himal known for its famous peaks like Himalchuli and Manaslu. East of the River Marsynadi and the River Buri-Gandaki, the great Himalayas are recognised by the name Ganesh Himal and east of the Trisuli Ganga, Lamtang Himal. The Helembu area has Langtang Himal on the west and Jugal Himal with Dorje Lakpa and Phurbi-chyachu on the east. Towards the Kodari area the great Himalaya lies between Jugal and Choba Bhamare. Between the rivers Bhone Kosi and Dudh Kosi lies the Rolwaling Himal with Gauri Shankar as the most prominent peak. North of Khumbu region lies the range of
Mahalangur with Sagarmatha, the loftiest of Himalayan peaks. Mahalangur is continued in the east by the Kumbhakarna and the Umbek Himal in succession. The latter sends out a southerly spur. Further east of Umbek Himal there is Janak Himal. Janak Himal is succeeded eastwards by the range of Zongsang [which is also called Janak Himal]. The southward extension of Jongsang range is known as the Shingalila range lying between Sikkim and the Walanchung area of Nepal. In this section, lies the renowned Kanchenjunga, the world's third highest peak.

Sections of the Great Himalaya: The great Himalayas of Nepal, to the east of Ganesh Himal form the actual boundary between Nepal and China. To the west, the great Himalayas penetrate towards the south within the country. The great Himalayas of eastern Nepal form the boundary between Nepal and China and Nepal, Sikkim, and India. The Shingalila range forms the boundary between Nepal and Sikkim. It is structurally separated from the other ranges of Himalaya due to its earlier origin. In the border junction of Illam, Panchthar, and Darjeeling, the Mahabharata merges into Shingalila as Mikling Lekh, south of it lies a pass, the Simana Basti [7000'], and outlet to Darjeeling. North of it lies the Chiya Bhanjyang which together with Kang Pass allows communication between Panchthar and Taplejung. Further north of Kang-pass, Shingalila range is capped by the high and snowy peak of Kabre [24,002'] which is guarded further north by Kanchenjunga [28,168']. Here the Kanchanjunga glacier is a source to the Tamor river. To the north, the Shingalila forms the Jongsongri and Jongsang peak, both with the height over 20,000'. In the tri-junction of Janak, Shingalila and Jongsang lies a high pass of Bhabuk.

On the section of Janak-Himal extending east-west falls the peak of Lawar (22,468'). Further west, the Janak Himal merges into the Umbek Himal with a height of about 19,080 feet. The deep cut gorge of the river Arun through the Karmatharka pass separates the two ranges, Kumbhakarna to the west and Umbek to the east. From the central section of Umbek as southerly spur, Lumbasumba [18,900'] penetrates inland. This spur, after some miles south, forms an arch, one rising towards the river Arun by the name Jaljali Himal [15,700'] and the other continuing southwards by the name, “Milke Danda” [12,020']. The Milke Danda further south is traversed by two parallel hill ranges, the first being the Tinjuri Danda and the second the Patel Danda. These have an east-west direction. The main range continues further south with the name Barbise Danda until it finally merges in the confluence of the river Arun from the north-west and river Tamor from the north-east.
The river Arun entering Nepal through the Kamatharka pass marks the beginning of the Kumbhakarna Himal to the west. The Arun is said to be an example of 'Antecedent Drainage'. It is said to be older than the Himalayas. It is fed by the water of Tibet when it is known by the name Karma-chu, Pung-Chu, and Karba-Chu. The glaciers north of Lamtang supply water to the Pung-chu [Arun]. The continuity of Umbek and the Kumbhakarna Himal is broken by the river Arun. The Arun gorge is tectonically a fault zone throughout. West of this fault zone, the Kumbhakarna Himal rises somewhat vertically. It is continued by the Mahalangur range from Phentangse [22,060']. From the Phetang Tse and Barun Tse rises the Barun glacier which feeds the river Barun. Therefore, Kumbhakarna range falls the Papti pass near Arun gorge in Singra. The prominent heights are Makalu I [27,765'], Chomolomjo [25,640'], Barun Tse [23,389'], and Chamlang [24,012']. Kumbhakarna takes a southerly bend from Phetang Tse. From Phetang Tse, a southerly spur runs southwards, and this group is known as “the Everest Group”. From here starts the Mahalangur Range which is to be identified with “the Everest Goup”. This range forms a formidable barrier between the Tingri region of Tibet in the north and the Khumbu region of Nepal in the south. The Khumbu Region in Nepal is a typical example of the Himalayan range and valley. This region is surrounded by peaks ranging from 18,000 to 21,000 feet. The Khumbu Valley with high surrounding mountains is itself a special feature of tectonic movement. It seems, Khumbu might have been a valley earlier; it was perhaps bodily moved up in more than one upthrust. The Mahalangur range forms a semi-circular arch north of Solu Khumbu and sends two spurs from its two ends. The Rolwaling range joins the Mahalangur in its western spur, and the Kumbhakarna range joins it from its eastern spur. These spurs run as far inland as the Sun Kosi. The Mahalangur range ensloses a rugged area of deep-cut gorges and other topographic features produced by glaciers. Some high passes and noted glaciers are present here. The noted ones are Nang-pa-la [18,044'] in the western section, the Nypla pass south of the Gyachung Kang glacier and south-east of the Nypla pass and very close to Sagarmatha lies the high Lola pass [19,075']. That means, east of the Lola pass, at a distance of about 3 miles lies Sagarmatha [29,028']. Between Loh Tse' and Sagarmatha lies the South col [26,201']. Loh Tse' peak is quite prominent with a height of 27,890' and ranks as the third highest peak in Nepal. Loh Tse' II lies south of the Loh Tse' I and is 27,939' feet. Some notable spurs run in several directions from here. The spur rising westwards is capped by the Nup Tse [25, 771'] Pokalde [19,048']. North of the
Nup Tse, the well-known Khumbu glacier is being fed by the ice from the Sagarmatha massif, which is 20 miles long. South of the Nup Tse peak descends the Nup Tse glacier and east of it, from Loh Tse flows the Loh Tse glacier which feeds the river Khumbu, and the Nup Tse' together with Lothse' feeds the Imaja Khola. The massif of Sagarmatha is followed by peak of Phetang Tse lying in the main range of the great Himalaya and also separating the Mahalangur with Kumbhakarna and Barun Tse from the west and south respectively. From the north-east of Barun Tse originates the river Barun fed by the Barun glacier and from the south-east originates the Ikhu Khola. West of Barun Tse runs another spur marked by the prominent heights of Amadablam [22,349'], Kangtega [22,241'] and Thamserku [21,120']. The latter presents a majestic and picturesque scenery east of Namchebazar. Another spur originating from Amadablam, traverses southwards with Merathanka [21,120']. The Honger glacier originates from Amadablam southwards and feeds the Hongu Khola which later meets the Dudhkosi. West of Mahalangur is Rolwaling Himal which extends as a boundary range between the Nyzam area of Tibet and north of Dolkha in Nepal. In the western section it is dissected by Rongsar-chhu [Bhote Kosi]. Apart from the contact with Mahalangur, Rolwaling runs in a eastward to south-east direction where the noted peaks are Number [22,825'] and Karyolung [21,361']. Pongwong Danda runs parallel to Rolwaling Himal. To the south, Bulu acts as water parting of Khimte and Likhu Khola. Here, the two important rivers are Tama Kosi in the west and Likhu Kosi in the east. North-west of Jum Khola, Shailung [10,135'] makes the waterparting of Sun Kosi and Tama Kosi. Jugal Himal lies west of Bhote Kosi which is the major tributary of Sunkosi in the north-west direction. This range separates Tibet from Nepal. In the east, Jugal abruptly rises from the gorge of Bhote Kosi upwards and drops near Charane Danda. From here the spur runs south to Bhairab Kunda Lekh for about 22 miles, not disappearing before the near about confluence of Balephi and Bhote Kosi. The south-ward flowing glacier gives water to Balephi and Indrawati rivers. To the west of Jugal there is Lamtang Himal. Gosainkunda Lekh running southward branches to many spurs to Nuwakot. Another spur running east forms the water parting of the Gandaki System and Kosi System. One of the spurs running up to Manchura Danda from the neighbourhood of Laurabinayaka makes a waterparting of the Tandi river. Gosainkunda of the east is marked with the series of lakes lying one above the other on the rock benches. Bhairabkunda gives birth to the Trisuli Ganga. In the western extremities there is a famous pass as Rasuwa providing communication between Nepal and Tibet. On the west. Ganesh Himal massif rises from the
Trisuli valley from the Panchsaye Khola region. Chilime Khola separates the Yangra and Ganesh Himal rising 4,000 to 23,300 feet in the south which gives a typical example of rejuvenation. Within a length of 30 miles on the west, the Arguthum Lekh becomes the region of Budhi Gandaki and Ankhu. Gorkha Himal is situated in a north to south-east direction between Budhi Gandaki in the east and Marsyandi in the west. The famous peaks are Manuslu [26,781'] and Himalchuli [25,895']. North of Larke Bhanjyang there is a geological meet where parts of Trans-Himalaya, Larke and Gorkha meet the physiographic tri-junction. The south-flowing glacier descending from Gorkha Himal feeds a number of streams like Dudh Khola, Dorde, Chepe, Daraudi etc. On the south-west of Gorkha Himal is Annapurna which, in the east, extends northwards across the Marsyandi gorge. In the west, it runs from south-west to north-east as Mustang joins with Trans-Himal as Nilgiri, Muktinath, and Damodar Himal. In the west, within 30 miles it drops from 25,000 feet to 5,000 feet at the confluence of Miristi and Kali Gandaki. In the western extermities in between Miristi and Kali Gandaki there is Nilgiri [23,166']. In the easternmost part, Annapurna Himal is called Lamjung Himal. The north flowing glaciers pour water into Marsyandi. Annapurna Himal has many peaks as Annapurna I, II, III, and IV with the heights over 22,000 feet. Machhapuchhre (fish tail) itself is 23,159' feet which is a conical Himalayan horn. To the eastern side of the river Myagdi there is Lagula Himal. Towards the west, there are Dhawalagiri Himal, Kanjiroba Himal, river Mugu Karnali, Bas Rikhi Himal and Lipu Himal respectively. The main ranges of all of them lie to the south of the border. All the tributaries of the river Karnali flowing south-west and south-east from the Trans-Himalayan areas are found here. Ultimately, the Mahakali river is flowing from north to south making the western border of Nepal.

6. Inner Himalaya

Between the great Himalaya and Trans-Himalaya there are extensive valleys starting from Nalakandar [19,888'] such as Lami, Dolpo, Mustang, Manang etc. In this region, the highest dwellers are living up to a height of 14,000 feet. Daily temperature is high. Almost dry conditions prevail due to aridity. To the north, the principal chain rivers have been able to erode wide valleys in the relatively soft sediment between the gnesseys of the principal chain and granite of the Tibetan marginal mountains. Valleys mainly run west to east parallel to the strike of the mountains. These have also been formed due to a transverse fault or trough similar to the upper Rhine which collapsed between the Black
forest and Vosges mountains. Other valleys are Humla, Mugu, Langu, Kutang, Kyirong, Rongshar etc. Some glaciers extend right up to the valley floor as transitional zone extends right up to the valley floor as transitional zone between north Indian monsoon region and the arid high plateau of Tibet. The Inner Himalayan region is also called Bhotes.

7. Trans-Himalayas

The great Himalayas do not form the boundary of Nepal all along its northern edges, it is only up to Ganesh Himal that they form the actual boundary; west of Ganesh Himal the great Himalayas penetrate from within the country westwards. In these regions not only the great Himalayas but also some parts of the Tibetan plateau lie inside the Nepalese territory. So, in the west, there is the Trans-Himalayas or the border Himalayan ranges [Nyan cher Tanyla, its original name as given by the local people]. In this way, the Trans-Himalayas form the boundary between Nepal and Tibet region of China. The noted Himals in the Trans-Himalaya from the west to the east upto the Ganesh Himal [after which both the ranges form one crystalline block stretching eastwards] are the Gurlamandhata range [25,354’], the Changla Himal [21,532’], the Plachung Himal, the Mustang Himal, the Damodar Himal, the Larke Himal, the Kutung Himal, the Thaple Himal and ultimately the Ganesh Himal resembling one another in their physiographic and geological age. The Trans-Himalayas roughly cover an area of 15,827 square miles.

Nepal presents a diverse and complicated physiography within a very short distance. We can say that the physiography and structure of Nepal Himalaya may not be compared with other formations like the Alps and not even that it has its individuality throughout. One can investigate this only by studying the diverse physiography of the country in more detail.

References


The term ‘ecology’, dealing on interaction of living organisms with each other and with their non-living environment has outgrown its earlier connotation with plant communities. It now has a much wider meaning including the human use of the earth [Wagner, 1960]. One of the significant dialogues on man-land relationship was convened by the Wenner-Gren Foundation and the National Science Foundation as early as 1955 [Thomas, Jr. 1956]. Presently, much ecological concern is shown not only by the emergence of such organisations as the United Nations Environment Programme and the World Watch Institute but the word ecology also has become a much exploited term in development literature.

Since the first U.N. concern with desertification in 1951, the highlands [land above 1,000 m] have become a new area of ecological focus. The 1974 Munich meeting on mountain environment sponsored by UNESCO adopted a nine-point statement of concern that highlighted increasing degradation of mountain ecosystem due to human intervention. The Man and Biosphere report on mountain environment states that there has been marked increase in deforestation, floods and soil damage over the last decade and “In sum, human pressures on tropical high mountain ecosystems are increasing nearly everywhere....They are unusually prone to sudden, rapid, and irreversible loss of soils if slope stability and vegetation cover are disturbed” [UNESCO, 1974: 20-21]. Nepal occupying a third of the Himalayan mountain system and with half of its total area over 1,500 metres deserves a closer examination in terms of environmental economics. The country lies or rather hangs, across one of the stupendous relief features on the earth and thus presents a highly broken topography. It has also one of the highest densities of population among mountain countries and the rate of population growth is also very high.
The environmental stress in the Nepal Himalaya—nature ordained and man-made—is a reality that has attracted increasing attention from scientists and policy-makers in recent years. One of the earliest reports on ecological situation of the country with an obvious forestry bias noted:

Tremendous quantities of material are removed each year from the soil and carried in the monsoon floods on to the plain; hillside crops are swept away and farmland in the plains is buried; year by year the tillable land area shrinks, torrents expand, and remnants of forests are often carried away by landslides; in short, erosion is slowly but surely robbing the Mahabharat [Hills] of its habitable land.

[Robbe, 1954:15]

Another forester similarly referred to the increasing phenomenon of landslides due to deforestation of the Nepalese hills. [Willan, 1967] The National Planning Commission task force on land use policy lamented that soil erosion in the country has reached almost the point of no return and stated “It is apparent that the continuation of present trends may lead to the development of a semidesert type of ecology in the hilly region” [National Planning Commission, 1974: 50-54]. The large extent of erosion and much of this silt is washed down the Ganges so much so that an immense new island surfaced in the Bay of Bengal in 1974, all on account of 100,000 square metres of silt. [Stirling, 1976]

The most eloquent exposition on ecological deterioration in Nepal is to be found in Eckholm’s broad survey of environmental stress.

There is no better place to begin an examination of deteriorating mountain environments than Nepal. In probably no other mountain country are the forces of ecological degradation building so rapidly and visible...In this land of unexcelled beauty live some of the world’s most desperately poor...Population growth in the context of traditional agrarian technology is forcing farmers onto ever steeper slopes, slopes unfit for sustained farming even with ashtonishingly elaborate terracing practised there.

[Eckholm, 1976]

He dramatises soil erosion as follows:

Topsoil washing down into India and Bangladesh is now Nepal’s most precious export, but one for which it receives no compensation.

He further refers to the precarious situation of the Hill
economy and the role of Tarai as the only outlet:

If Nepal's borders ended at the base of the
Himalayan foothills the country would now be in the
throes of a total economic and ecological collapse.

Another more recent observation on Nepalese ecology
echoes in a similar vein:

Nepal provides the most dramatic example of the
speed of desertification... In a flash within the decade
ending 1971, Nepal has lost 50 percent of its forest
cover. Two-thirds of its people live in the hills, and
they cannot feed themselves on spreading aridity. Its
people have, therefore, had to flow down with the silt
and water, and spread themselves over the entire tarai
belt, extending into the hills of Garhwal, Kumaon,
Darjeeling, Sikkim and Bhutan; and into the plains of
India.

[Moddie, 1981: 344]

Myth of Ecological Balance

The above scenarios whether products of situation analysis
or dramatisation for arousing policy concern are based on hard
realities obtaining in the Nepal Himalaya. However, they deal not
only with a part of the story but also evidence a myth about
ecological balance. The later aspect is best expressed in the
following statement:

And it is the Himalaya, that greatest, noblest, most
varied and rich of the world's mountain ranges, whose
beauty can only be preserved in the fullest sense by the
achievement of a functioning balance between man
and mountains.

[Ives, 1981: 377-402]

In reality, ever since the appearance of Homo Sapiens with
high cerebral capacity, the earth and its natural resources have not
been the same again. Further technological developments have
indeed accelerated their use and misuse. Moreover, landforms
change even without the intervention of man. Long-term
geological processes may not be perceptible in terms of human
time scale but geomorphic processes of varying categories can be
easily observed and even measured. Thus, the Karnali River is
calculated to move some 75 million cubic metres of silt and debris
every year, an amount that corresponds to a 1.7 millimetre soil
cover of the whole Karnali watershed [World Bank, 1973].
Therefore, when a forester claims, "the brown soil-laden rivers
should go unnoticed during the monsoon, and the fact that they
are carrying away forever the basis of the very life of the people
should mean nothing at all to the vast majority" [Robbe, 1954], it is not ignorance but rather the human incapacity to deal effectively with the natural process of erosion. But for the transport of vast quantities of sand and silt by Himalayan rivers over millions of years, there would be no Gangetic plain and no plain civilization to contrast with hill poverty.

Nepal Himalaya, owing to excessive altitude and steep slope, represents an area of high energy environment resulting in soil erosion, gully and landslides; not to speak of frequent earth tremors and earthquakes. The geomorphic combination of high elevation, slope, angle and gravity cause the flow of materials downhill. Then upon this stage of rugged physical geography is enacted the monsoon drama with seasonal rhythm. The direct impact of rain-drops and hailstones on the land surface and recharged swollen streams and rivers become engines and carriers of vast amount of erosion material. Thus while one study concluded that the Kosi catchment area was "one of the worst eroded in the world" [Department of Agriculture, India 1967:5] another expert estimated that Nepal was losing 164,000 cubic inch of top soil each year [Bhatta, 1981: 26]. In addition, the country has nearly 3,000 square kilometres area under the realm of perpetual snow and ice with large and small glaciers that scour and excavate mountain slopes and transport moraines to the lower heights to be carried further down by surface run-off and other natural erosion processes. The changing physical geography of Nepal Himalaya has been an inexorable process over a long geological time. As an area that is still rising to maintain isostatic balance and where orogenic movements are still active, it must experience greater magnitude to tectonic processes.

In contrast to the long period of natural erosion that shape the physical landscape of Nepal Himalaya, the intervention of man has been only brief. Although brief, the impact of man-made erosion has been significant and far-reaching in consequence. Migration and natural increase in population has put pressure on the available land. Generations of farmers have carved whole hill sides into elaborate flights of terraces and the need for ever more has led to reclamation of further marginal land. Livestock rearing for manure and use of firewood as the sole energy source has contributed to the depletion of forests and exposure of more land to increased natural erosion. The destruction of natural ecosystem is inevitable with human activities [Rieger, 1981]. Thus to speak of ecological balance in its pristine state is only a futile perpetuation of an ancient myth. Yet one must enquire into the human compulsions to eke out a living even in harsh mountain lands.
Limits of Human Occupance

Mountains everywhere are marginal areas for human occupancy. The extant autochthonous people of Nepal were forest dwellers of Inner Tarai and hunter-gatherers of lower river valleys. Most of the other ethnic groups that make-up today's Nepalese population were derived from successive waves of migrants from the Tibetan plateau and the Gangetic plain. Progressive dessication in the north and historical conflicts in the south drove hordes of people to the security of the slopes of the Nepal Himalaya. The Nepal Hills was already densely-populated by the end of the 18th century as evidenced by the Gorkhali military expansion from Tista to Sutlej and the recognition of Tarai as a source of forest revenue.

When the political boundary of modern Nepal was finally defined in 1816, the only alternative to the economic poverty of the Hills was exodus of muscle-power or emigration. While large number of men turned to mercenary service in British India, many more became pioneer peasants in the Eastern Himalaya and even beyond to Burma. By the turn of the 19th century, Darjeeling district and Sikkim had been overwhelmed by migrants from the hills of Nepal. The number of men recruited in Indian Army was 27,428 during 1886 to 1904 and 127,770 in the period 1904-1935, all from Hills. [Morris, 1936: 173-179] In addition, the number of migrants to Indiar cities and industries continued to increase. The earning, remittance and pension of these recurrent migrants sustained the economy of the Hills to a large extent.

There were numerous attempts to reclaim the Tarai land from forests for resettlement during the Rana regime [Collier, 1928: 251-255]. All the while, population pressure in the Hills was increasing and more marginal land was being brought under the hoe if not the plough. As shown in the following table on regional population growth, the Tarai still remained a negative zone of settlement until the mid-20th century.

Population Growth, 1920-1952/54

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Population 1920</th>
<th>Population 1952/54</th>
<th>Absolute Growth</th>
<th>% Growth</th>
<th>Growth Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. Hills</td>
<td>3,144,840</td>
<td>5,142,689</td>
<td>1,997,849</td>
<td>63.5</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Inner Tarai</td>
<td>186,050</td>
<td>506,461</td>
<td>320,411</td>
<td>172.2</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. Tarai</td>
<td>1,937,986</td>
<td>2,418,567</td>
<td>430,581</td>
<td>24.7</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total:</td>
<td>5,573,788</td>
<td>8,473,478</td>
<td>2,899,960</td>
<td>52.0</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Hill region had a large absolute increase over the three decade period: nearly five times that of the increase in the Tarai. In other words, the Hills claimed 68.8 percent of the increase in population. Thus, the Hills that carried 61.9 percent of the total population in 1920 was still overburdened with 60.6 percent of the total population. The percentile growth of the Hill population exceeded overall percentile growth. The growth rates varied from 5.2 in the intermediate Inner Tarai, 19 in the Hills and only 0.7 percent in the Tarai compared to the national growth rate of 1.5.

The intervention of technology that controlled malaria and turned the Tarai into a new frontier for human occupation is the story of the last two decades. This resulted in a major shift in population from the Hills to the Tarai with far-reaching consequences in population redistribution and land use change [New ERA, 1981]. The Tarai and inner Tarai population doubled during the last two decades [1961-81] and its share of total population increased from 36.3 percent in 1961 to 48.8 percent in 1981. However, the Hill population continued to grow although with a lesser magnitude. The Hill population increase was 25.7 percent and its share of total population decreased from 63.7 percent in 1961 to 51.2 percent in 1981. The decreasing capacity of the Hills to support the increasing population is indicated by the differential growth rates among the geographical regions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Growth Rate 1961-1971</th>
<th>Growth Rate 1971-1981</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. Mountain</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Hills</td>
<td>1.68</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. Inner Tarai</td>
<td>4.51</td>
<td>3.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. Tarai</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>4.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. Kathmandu Valley</td>
<td>10.91</td>
<td>1.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>2.27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Mountain districts show a declining growth rate and the three districts of Rasuwa, Manang and Mustang actually had a negative growth rate of 1.79. The growth rate for the Hills was lower during the last decade. Growth rate for Inner Tarai declined slightly while the rate of decline for Kathmandu Valley was substantial. The Tarai was the only region to evidence an increasing growth rate during 1971-81 compared to the previous decade.
The pressure of population on the Inner Tarai and Tarai plain due to natural increase, Hill migrants and foreign immigrants had a significant impact on the land use pattern. For example, population increase and forest depletion in the Eastern Tarai districts of Jhapa, Morang, Sunsari and Siraha show a close correlation. During the period 1952-1971, their population nearly doubled while the forest area was halved [Gurung, 1975: 23-42].

A macro perspective on land use change in the entire Tarai region is provided by a comparison of 1927 maps with 1977 satellite imageries. The extent of deforestation in the Tarai and parts of Inner Tarai during the 50-years span comes to 853,510 hectares or 60 percent of the forest cover in 1927. The magnitude of population growth during the same period was 163.2 percent. In other words, there was an average per annum population increase of 63,858 persons at the cost of an average per annum forest depletion of 17,070 hectares during the period 1927-77. Thus the Tarai region was left with only 28.3 percent of its total area under forest by 1977.

However, the Tarai cannot be regarded as an unlimited frontier for the ever increasing population. The shift of Hill out-migration to the Tarai, seen particularly in the last two decades, has its own limitations. First, not all Hill outmigrants end up in the Tarai as a sizable number cross the national border in search of livelihood. Second is the basic question regarding the optimum carrying capacity of the Tarai. The time the Tarai can provide breathing space to the national economy is being foreshortened by the present pattern of extractive use of forest resources and extensive nature of land occupancy.

**Imperatives of Development**

It would help to focus on basic issues on ecology and development by discarding some prevalent notions. For example, the establishment of so-called ecological balance between man and land is no more feasible and much less in Nepal where natural processes and population pressure are intense. National space has no meaning without human survival or welfare. Since the very objective of development is to free man from natural constraints, ecological conservation cannot be isolated from human welfare.

Then there is immense difference in time span between what nature processes and man utilises. There would be no alluvial plains without loss of valuable soil at the headwaters and no fertile river basins without bank-cutting. Nature has a long sequence of sand or silt deposition, vegetation colonisation and humus formation while man thinks in terms of immediate use or exploitation.
There is no denying the increasing ecological stress in Nepal and some of it accentuated by population pressure. But what are the alternatives? It might be pertinent here to refer to an interesting observation on witnessing a landslide in Lamjung (precipitated by the earthquake of 1933):

Whether it takes place little by little or in one swift calamity, soil erosion is generally attributed to man's careless greed, his idleness or neglect. It would not, I think be fair to blame the people of these valleys on the Himalayan fringe for the frequent landslips which occur here. In turning the steep slopes into fruitful field they have neither been lazy nor neglectful... One might say that on such hillsides the forest should never have been cleared, in which case the country must be left uninhabited; or that belts of trees should have been planted which would imply first the giving up of their goats by villagers: [Tilman, 1952: 126-127]

Indeed, the Hills of Nepal evidence optimum utilisation of marginal land under the given technology. In other words, the hill peasants are being forced to struggle for survival in a hostile environment. One need not venture into remote Himalayan valleys to realise the poverty of rural Nepal. The pressure on marginal land is evidenced by hamlets on the Mahabharat Lekh traversed by the country's oldest and latest highways. The field slopes above Khanikhola on the Tribhuvan Rajpath exceed 45 degrees in angle and with top-soil so poor that the maize crops stand to the height of millet. Meanwhile heavy traffic has been trundling past them over the last 25 years as if through a tunnel without any visible impact. Another example of human struggle in a harsh land is presented by the area along the Narayanghat-Mugling road through the Trisuli gorge where the native Chepangs subsist on wild yam and tubers and Magar and Gurung migrants tend tiny maize and millet fields that overhang the steepest slope.

The precarious ecology of the Nepalese hills cannot be improved without first tackling the economic poverty of the people. And the Hill economy cannot be improved without massive investment. But technical assistance that purports to teach them on how to make terraces or simply prescribes alternative energy will no do. Laying-out field terraces is the hill man's elemental device to deal with adverse slope and the native technology perfected through generations of trial and error cannot be improved upon with outside advice. The outward-facing dry terraces are not products of native ignorance or indolence but represent the equation between labour and output.
Neither is shifting cultivation a general practice as it is prevalent only in areas of high rainfall and fast vegetation regeneration.

Much emphasis has been laid on the need for the use of alternative energy to relieve the pressure on forests for fuelwood [RECAST, 1981]. The case for alternative energy becomes theoretical if not futile when one realises the extent of rural poverty where the value of a cheap biogas plant far exceeds the entire capital asset of a farmer including his simple hut. Intermediate technology can be applied only in an economy with some capital formation or on community basis but in the case of rural Nepal, where most live below the poverty line, it is a questionable proposition.

That economic exigencies force peasants to misuse the resources they once considered valuable is shown by their present exploitation of forest. “Many of the old established hill tribes, including the Rais, Limbus, Tamangs, Lepchas, Sherpas, Sunwars, Danuwars, and Majhis, maintained this [kipat] communal land system to regulate the tribes relationship with the environment” [Poffenberger 1980: 53-54]. But the intervention of outsiders in tribal areas as well as sheer population growth have destroyed the traditional control mechanisms that once preserved forests or allocated land according to need. Thus, it is apparent that new programmes such as community afforestation and watershed management [UNDP/FAO, 1980] will have only limited impact as long as the Hill economy languishes at the present level of morbidity.

There seems only two approaches that may reduce ecological stress and resolve economic problems of Nepal. These relate to the reordering of the space in the Tarai and greater emphasis on Hill development [Gurung, 1971: 17-24]. They are presented as complimentary measures to be pursued simultaneously since the ecology of the Hills and the Tarai are closely interlinked. Similar to emigration in the past, the Tarai has now become the outlet and cushion for Hill poverty. However, neither is the Tarai’s absorbative capacity for migrants unlimited nor can its forest revenue be seen always as one of harvesting without planting. The Tarai forests that still remain have a bleak future due to the increasing population pressure. There is, therefore, the need for an entire rethinking on the land use of the Tarai whereby maximum area should be converted into farmland and existing infrastructures be fully utilised for expanding secondary and tertiary economic activities.

Yet the economic disease that bedevils the country is located in the Hills. It is there that the problem of poverty has to be tackled. This will require massive development input. Fortunately, it is the poor Hills, as the repository of immense
hydro-electric power that holds the key to the future development of the country. The silt will continue to flow down the Himalayan rivers as it did for millions of years but the real loss is in the silent passage of the white energy ever beckoning us to harness it for a better life.

References


Population of Nepal

Vidya Bir Singh Kansakar

The population of Nepal shows both Indo-Aryan and Mongoloid strains and their blending. The character of Nepal's population has been shaped by its long history, culture and civilisation. This paper presents a profile of the Nepalese population. It will also attempt to highlight the implications of emerging population trends in the context of the nation's overall development.

Population Census

The existing political boundaries of Nepal date back to 1861, and prior to the Anglo-Nepal War of 1814, only scattered references on censuses of the various parts of Nepal exist in the form of number of houses as well as population from Lichhavi period [Kansakar, 1977:1]. Before the 1911 census, the population was estimated at 3,661,200 persons [Fraser, 1820:514], 4 million in 1850s [Oldfield, 1880:1,3], 5 million in 1879 [Husain, 1970:120] and 5.2 to 5.6 million at the beginning of the 20th century [Vansittart, 1906:8].

The census of 1911 was the first of its kind intended to be taken decennially [Department of Statistics, 1957: Appendix 7]. However, the succeeding censuses taken in 1920, 1930, 1942 and 1952/54 do not show an exact decennial regularity. The 1952/54 census of Eastern Nepal [excluding Mahottari in 1952] and Western Nepal [including Mahottari in 1954] was a benchmark of modern scientific census since it was conducted under the supervision of trained personnel and incorporated most of the UN schedules prepared for cross-country comparison. Since 1961, Nepal has had regular decennial census, the census of 1981 being the 8th as reckoned from 1911.

The census in Nepal lacks, among other things, synchronisation and proper documentation. It also suffers from
frequent changes in the census schedules, definitions, and administrative boundaries, as also from lack of qualitative and adequate enumerators as well as stable administrative and technical set-up in the census bureau [Kansakar, 1977: 7-35]. In this regard, it is worth noting that the Central Bureau of Statistics has not so far attempted to adjust the population data of the different censuses according to the change in administrative boundary. In fact, the census data of 1981 fail to conform even to the present administrative boundary. The present paper is, therefore, confined to the inter-censal comparison at the national level and takes up comparison and analysis by ecological regions only.

Population Size

The 1981 census gives the population of Nepal as 15,022,839. Comparatively speaking, China is 69 times larger and India nearly 46 times. Internally, Morang shows the largest number [534,692 persons] and Manang the smallest [7,021 persons].

Density and Distribution of Population

In land space China and India are 65 and 22 times as large as Nepal [area 147,181 sq. km.]. As for population density Nepal does compare quite favourably with China [102 vs. 107 persons per sq. km.], but India is nearly two times ahead [216 persons per sq. km.].

The density of population appears highest in the Tarai [193], followed by the hill region [117] and the mountains at the tail of the list [22]. Among the 75 districts, Bhaktapur claims the highest figure of 1,343 persons with Dolpa trailing at the bottom with nearly 3 persons per sq. k.m.

Patterns of population distribution in Nepal show, among various factors, a strong influence of the availability of agricultural land. The overwhelming proportion of population in the past was concentrated above 4000 feet altitude, the area below being infested with malaria. In the forests of Tarai, patches of farms were scattered here and there cultivated and settled by malaria immune groups such as Tharus, Dhimals, Meches, Kochs [Rajbanshis], Kumals and Danuwars [Kansakar, 1983: 2–3]. The initiation of malaria eradication in the Tarai in 1958 led to a large-scale migration of hill population and also from India towards both the Tarai and the Inner Tarai. In general, the plains and valleys bear dense patches of human settlements, whereas hills slopes and ridges carry sparsely settled chunks of population. Permanent settlement is confined to altitudes up to 3000 metres above sea level. The highest settlement is located at an altitude of 4300 metres in Phopagaon in Dolpa [Hagen, 1961: 46–7].

29
Table 1
Nepal: Area, Population, Density and Annual Growth Rate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>147,181</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>15,022,839</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>2.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountain</td>
<td>51,817</td>
<td>35.2</td>
<td>1,302,896</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hill</td>
<td>61,345</td>
<td>41.7</td>
<td>7,163,115</td>
<td>47.7</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>1.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tarai</td>
<td>34,019</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>6,556,828</td>
<td>43.6</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>4.07</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: *Population Census of Nepal, 1971 and 1981*
The largest number of population is distributed in the hill region with 47.7 percent of the total population and 41.7 percent of the total land [Table 1]. In contrast, the Tarai with less than one-fourth of the land area today retains over two-fifths of the total population [more precisely 43.6 percent], whereas the mountain region with more than one-third of the nation's land area bears only 8.7 percent of the nation's population.

Eradication of malaria and accompanying growth of highways and roads as well as development of agriculture, industry and commerce have resulted in large-scale migration of population into the Tarai from within and outside the country. The share of the Tarai in Nepal's population has increased from 38.1 percent in 1971 to 43.7 percent in 1981. If the trend continues, the Tarai will surpass the combined population of the hill and the mountain regions before long.

**Rural-Urban Distribution**

Globally speaking, Nepal has one of the lowest rates of urbanisation. In percentage, the urban population registered a figure of 3.57 in 1961, 3.61 in 1971 and 6.39 in 1981. In the ten years between 1971 and 1981, the number of urban centres increased from 16 to 23, and 6 more of them have been added since. The low level of urbanisation is also characterised by disparity in their growth as well as distribution of urban centres and population. Of the 29 such centres, 18 are located in the Tarai and 11 in the hill region; the mountain region appears conspicuous in that not a single of urban centres is located there. The data available for 23 urban centres in 1981 show that the hill region has 51.8 percent of the urban population of Nepal, but the urban population constitutes only 7.1 percent of the total population of the hill region which almost equals the urban population of the Tarai [7 percent of the total population of the Tarai]. The three cities of the Kathmandu Valley, Kathmandu [the largest town in the country], Lalitpur and Bhaktapur together account for 38 percent of the nation's urban population and 73 percent of the total urban population of the hill region.

**Population Growth**

Fertility, mortality and migration have each played their role in the population growth of Nepal in different periods of history. From the very beginning a host of social, economic, religious and psychological factors have influenced fertility. Mortality, marked by wide fluctuations in the past, was governed mainly by epidemics, famines and natural calamities, but has been considerably reduced by modern medical facilities. Migration was formerly governed by political factors but is now more related with the economic factors.
**Fertility.** The high fertility of 6.8 in Nepal is related basically with social factors such as child marriage and early marriage, the Hindu traditional preference for son [who is expected to look after the aged parents and to improve father’s fate in the afterworld through mortuary rites], the economic value of children in subsistence agricultural economy, the tendency to get more children to offset the loss of children from prevailing high infant and child mortality. Even the crude birth rate is quite high compared to the neighbours China and India (42 per 1000 vs. 21.1 and 33.9).

**Mortality.** In the absence of adequate medical facilities mortality remains high. The country has been able to control and eradicate major killer diseases like malaria and smallpox and to control the deaths of epidemic proportions resulting from cholera, typhoid, bacillary dysentery, gastroenteritis, measles, etc., as a result of modern transport facilities as well as modern medicines. However, some 24 districts in the mountains and hills do not yet have a single hospital. Even in those areas that are more lucky, the difficult terrain poses a major challenge in delivering the basic minimum facilities. Inadequate medical facilities thus keep infant mortality at a very high-level 152 per 1000 as against 34.68 and 127 respectively in China and India. Thus crude death rate of 21 per 1000 is also very high compared to 6.3 and 12.5 for the same two countries.

**Migration.** Migration has played a dominant role in the overall growth of population in Nepal and regional disparity in the growth rate in particular. Out-migration [migration within and outside the country] has resulted in comparatively low growth of population in the mountain and hill regions, while in-migration [migration from the hill and the mountain regions and immigration particularly from India] has resulted in a very high growth of population in the Tarai.

**Trends in Population Growth.** Nepal’s population growth rate from 1911 up to 1930 was marked by absolute decline. The census of 1911 recorded a population of 5,638,749, while that of 1920 was 5,573,768, which means an absolute decline of 64,961 persons or a negative growth rate of 0.13 [Table 2]. The involvement of 200,000 Gurkhas in the World War I, representing 20 per cent of the eligible male population of Nepal, deaths due to the world-wide influenza epidemic of 1918, slackness in the census and its confinement to ascertaining the number of slaves who were emancipated in 1926, and the harassment meted by the enumerators to the respondents to procure money were said to have been responsible for the decline. The impact of World War I and the stay back of the Gurkhas in India for employment in police, paramilitary and civilian jobs [Mojumdar, 1975:23; and
Bruce, 1934: 200] led to negative growth rate in the hill, the major source of emigration as well as adverse impact upon agriculture, foodgrain production and government revenue from land [Bruce, 1928: xxvii]. A further decline of 41,214 persons in 1930 compared to 1920 has been attributed to the slackness of the census, the harassment meted out to the respondents by the enumerators to procure money despite the strict government notice against such practices [Department of Statistics, 1975: Appendix 16 and 17] and the fear of conscription for the possible war between Nepal and Tibet over the killing of a Nepalese trader.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Census Year</th>
<th>Nepal Growth Rate</th>
<th>Inner Tarai Growth Rate</th>
<th>Hill and Mountain Growth Rate</th>
<th>Annual Growth Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>5,638,749</td>
<td>2,054,959</td>
<td>3,583,790</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>5,573,788</td>
<td>2,122,036</td>
<td>3,451,752</td>
<td>-0.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>5,532,574</td>
<td>2,130,487</td>
<td>3,402,087</td>
<td>-0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1942</td>
<td>6,283,649</td>
<td>2,213,920</td>
<td>4,069,729</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952/54</td>
<td>8,473,478</td>
<td>2,803,225</td>
<td>5,670,253</td>
<td>2.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952/54</td>
<td>8,256,625</td>
<td>2,863,202</td>
<td>5,393,423</td>
<td>1.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>9,412,996</td>
<td>3,427,886</td>
<td>5,985,110</td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971c</td>
<td>11,555,983</td>
<td>4,776,506</td>
<td>6,779,477</td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971d</td>
<td>11,555,983</td>
<td>4,828,736</td>
<td>6,727,247</td>
<td>1.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>15,022,839</td>
<td>7,143,749</td>
<td>7,879,090</td>
<td>52.45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Including population absent from 1911.
b. Excluding population absent, adjustment of population ceded from Dhading and Kabhrepalanchowk (hill) to Chisapani (Inner Tarai) resulted in higher proportion of population in the Tarai despite exclusion of absent population.
c. Based on district boundary prior to 1975.
d. Based on district boundary after 1975.

Figures in the parenthesis are population distribution in percent.

The census of 1942 marked the increase in Nepal's population for the first time since 1911. It recorded a growth of 13.6 percent between 1930-42 or an annual growth rate of 1.07, despite the fact that the inter-censal period was marked by large numbers of deaths in the great earthquake of 1934, and moreover the large-scale migration of Nepalese hill people to the war fronts in the World War II. The census, however, recorded high growth rates in the hill compared to the Tarai.

The inter-censal period between 1942 and 1952/54 recorded a growth rate of 2.68, the highest so far recorded for Nepal. The high figure might be related, to a certain extent, to the return of large number of people of Nepalese origin from Burma in 1942 during Japanese occupation, the return of the Gurkhas after the World War, the return of political exiles from India after 1951 and domiciled Nepalese from India as also of the immigration of Indians to the Tarai as a result of the Nepal-India treaty of 1950. The main reason behind this high growth must be attributed to large-scale under-enumeration in 1942.

The census of 1961 recorded a national average growth rate of 1.7 with a high growth rate of 3.37 in the Tarai and a low growth rate of 1.48 in the hill and the mountain regions. The low figure for the hill region is related to emigration of hill people for recruitment in foreign armies and police and civilian jobs and also to the Tarai and the Inner Tarai. Malaria eradication has already been launched in some areas. Large-scale immigration of the Indians and the hill people boosted up growth rate in the Tarai. The inter-censal period was also seen to experience immigration of the Tibetan refugees [the census of 1961 recorded 8,061 China-born population in Nepal]. Their concentration in the bordering districts brought a high growth rate in the bordering areas of Solukhumbu, Taplejung, Sankhuwasabha, Sindhupalchowk, Rasuwa, Dhading, Gorkha, Mustang, Dolpa and Darchula [Kansakar, 1974:93].

The census of 1971, which showed a national average growth rate of 2.07, was marked by high growth rate in the Tarai.
and very low growth rate in the hill and the mountain regions [1.25]. Migration was further intensified by land resettlement, agricultural, industrial and commercial development of the Tarai. One notable event of the 1971 census is that the population of Nepal doubled between 1911 and 1971. In other words, it took only six decades to double Nepal's population.

The inter-census period of 1971 to 1981 recorded a growth rate of 2.66, the highest rate since the initiation of scientific census in 1952/54. The rate is very high as compared to its neighbours, China and India, with a growth rate of 1.45 and 2.25 respectively. The high growth rate in general is mainly due to continuing high birth rate and decreasing death rate as well as immigration, while regional disparity in particular is due to migration to a larger extent and access to medical facilities to a certain extent. The highest growth rate of 4.07 in the Tarai is mainly due to migration from the hill and the mountain regions and immigration from India as well as access to improved medical facilities to a certain extent. Out migration and lack of access to medical facilities in the hill and the mountain regions seem to have resulted in very low growth rate of 1.23 in the mountain region and moderate growth rate of 1.80 in the hill region. The very high growth rate in some of the Tarai districts like Kanchanpur [9.39], Bardia [6.83], Jhapa [6.74], Kailali [6.60] and Morang [6.26] cannot be explained without migration, and similarly the very low growth rate of the mountain and the hill regions with negative growth rate in Manang [-0.57] and Mustang [-0.48] also cannot be explained without assessing the role of migration. One notable fact about the regional growth of population in Nepal is that from 1911 to 1981, the Tarai has almost 3½ times increase in population while the hill and the mountain regions have only little more than twofold increase.

Migration

Though migration from India and China at different periods of history has played dominant role in the composition and distribution of population in Nepal, immigration from the south exerted pronounced impact on economic, social, cultural, religious and political character of the country. Since the British occupation of India, migration between India and Nepal assumed more of an economic nature than the political one. The recruitment of Nepalese in British Indian army since 1815 heralded the emigration of the Nepalese to India, and at the same time the according of tenurial rights regarding sale and purchase of Tarai land to the immigrants by the first legal code of Nepal [Ministry of Law and Justice, 1966:35] heralded the large-scale
immigration of the Indians into the Tarai and was further augmented by the development of agriculture, industry and trade in the Tarai. The large-scale movement of the hill population to the Tarai is going on since the launching of the malaria eradication programme and accompanying land resettlement programme in 1958.

Economic causes resulting from poor agriculture, in-accessibility to market and absence of jobs outside agriculture sector compelled the hill people to migrate to foreign countries as well as within the country, particularly to the Tarai in search of employment opportunities and in search of agricultural land. The agricultural and industrial potentialities of the Tarai have been attracting immigrants from India for a long time. Considering the skill, enterpreneurship, efficiency and cost effectiveness, neither the government nor the private enterprises have been able or willing to replace Indian immigrants by providing employment to the relatively unskilled and inefficient Nepalese citizens [Kansakar, 1979:54]. Moreover, any attempt at developing industry, trade, commerce and construction activities in the Tarai in particular and the hill in general, has actually benefitted the Indian immigrants who, by virtue of comparatively high level of skill and enterpreneurship, have made it very difficult for the less skilled and less enterprising Nepalese to compete with them. The hill people are reluctant to work in the Tarai other than owning land through government-sponsored resettlement programme or illegal encroachment of forest. Moreover, their preference for joining foreign armies is governed by the prestigious socio-economic position held by the armymen in the hill villages [Hitchcock, 1960:5]. The closure of the Nepal-China border in 1959 led to the movement of border people in the south and the opening of highways and abandonment of traditional trails also have displaced people making livelihood through porterage and trade along the trails.

The most conspicuous movement of population in the country is the seasonal migration from hills to the Tarai particularly during winter to the marketing towns in the Tarai for the sale of their products like ghee, ginger, medicinal plants and herbs, etc., in exchange for their necessities like salt, kerosene, clothes, etc. This type of movement usually involved nearly 20 to 25 percent of the country's population [Hagen, 1961:107].

The census of 1981 recorded a total of 1,272,288 Nepal born persons who were born outside the place of enumeration as against 422,382 persons in 1961. In 1981 internal migration accounted for 8.5 percent of the total population as against 4.5 percent in 1961. The Tarai region had 68.8 percent of the total
internal migrants in Nepal in 1981, of which 82.8 percent were from the hill and mountain regions and 17.2 percent from within the different parts of the Tarai region.

Emigration of Nepalese to foreign countries for army and police service since 1815 had led them to India, the U.K., Hongkong, Singapore, Brunei and Burma, while their search for economic opportunities have led them to migration in different parts of India and Burma as well as to Bhutan, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Fiji and Guyana. The Nepalese who constituted an important trading community in different parts of Tibet have been reduced virtually to insignificance after the Sino-Indian conflict in 1962. However, people living along 30 kilometres on either side of the Nepal-China border are allowed to cross the border up to that limit for trading, matrimonial and social relations as well as for pasturing. Data on emigration is not available, for 1981, but the available data of 1961 shows that 93 percent of the emigrants were from the hill and mountain regions, mostly rural illiterates, predominantly males between the age of 15-44 years, and 92 percent of the emigrants had destination to India where Nepal-born population, according to 1971 census, accounted for 526, 526 persons. Nepal-born population in India constituted less than 0.1 percent of the total population of India while India-born population in Nepal constituted 2.8 percent of the total population of Nepal in 1971. Seasonal migration of Nepalese to India has virtually stopped as a result of agitation in Assam and restriction imposed by Indian government even for movement to Sikkim and Darjeeling.

Immigration to Nepal has a considerable bearing on population growth in Nepal in general and the Tarai in particular. According to the census of 1961 foreign nationals and foreign-born population constituted 1.7 and 3.6 percent of the total population of Nepal. India-born population constituted 96 percent of the total foreign-born population followed by China [2.4%] and the rest from Pakistan, Burma, Malaya and others. 95 percent of the India-born population were concentrated in the Tarai. Analysis of international migration has become extremely difficult, because migration has become such a sensitive issue in Nepal owing to the requirement of citizenship for owning property, and getting access to education, employment, trade, commerce, and industry that census enumerators cannot find correct answer regarding migration. The census data on India-born population is indicating a declining trend; it declined from 338,000 persons in 1961 to 323,000 in 1971, and further to 234,000 persons in 1981.
Age Structure

The proportion of population under 0.14 years of age group increased from 40.0 percent in 1961 to 41.4 percent in 1981, and similarly the age group of 60 years and above also increased from 5.3 percent in 1961 to 5.7 percent in 1981. On the other hand, the active age group [15-59 years] has declined from 54.7 percent of the total population in 1961 to 52.9 percent in 1981. The increasing proportion of 0.14 years groups in Nepal is the result of high birth rate and lowering of the death rate as well as inability of family planning to avert births. Gradual improvement in health facilities is also reflected in the increasing proportion of 60 years and above age group.

The regional disparity in composition of age groups in Nepal has been influenced considerably by migration and also to a certain extent by fertility and mortality. Male preponderance is marked in all the age groups in all the regions excepting the hill region where the age groups of 15-59 years is marked by female preponderance. The Tarai has highest proportion of young age population [0-14 years], accounting for 42.5 percent of the total population, and it seems to be due to high fertility rate in the Tarai as a result of child and early marriage. The proportion of male population in the age group of 15-59 years is higher in Nepal as compared to the female population, and the still higher proportion in the Tarai is basically related to in-migration of able-bodied males, while the higher proportion of females in the hill region is basically related to out-migration of able-bodied males.

The higher proportion of young and old age population in Nepal has resulted in high dependency ratio in Nepal. The dependency ratio in Nepal has increased from 85.5 percent in 1971 to 88.9 percent in 1981. The dependency ratio of China in 1981 was 62.6 and that of India was 85.4 in 1981.

Sex Composition

In Nepal, the trend in sex ratio up to 1942 was marked by preponderance of males over females with a sex ratio of 994 females per 1000 males in 1911, 959 in 1920, 991 in 1930 and 999 in 1942. The preponderance of males seems to be related to inclusion of non-resident population as well. However, in 1952/54 and 1961, the sex ratio was marked by female preponderance, 1932 in 1952/54 and 1030 in 1961. The sex ratio since 1971 indicated increasing male preponderance, 987 in 1971 to 952 in 1981. There is no readily available explanation for sudden change in sex ratio since 1961. Some of the plausible reasons might be under-enumeration of females, large-scale immigration of males, preference for son and resulting female infanticide and high death rate among women due to hard work as well as bearing too many
children. However, the sex ratio of Nepal is high as compared to China [948] and India [930]. Wide regional variation characterises the sex ratio in Nepal with a sex ratio of 923 in the Tarai, followed by 955 in the mountain, and 979 in the hill region.

**Marital Status**

The legal age at marriage in Nepal with the consent of parents is 18 years for the boys and 16 years for the girls, and that without the consent of the parents is 21 years for the boys and 18 years for the girls [Ministry of Law and Justice, 1981:235]. However, the prevailing socio-cultural factors and low level of education among different ethnic groups in the country severely limit its enforcement. The marital status of Nepalese population [including married, divorced and widowed] has come down from 78 percent of the total population of 10 years and above in 1952/54 to 70.7 percent in 1981. The marital status of the reproductive age group of females of the childbearing age [15-44 years of age] in Nepal is 83.29 percent which is very high as compared to China [64.56 percent] and India [80.48 percent].

Wide regional variations in the marital status exist as a result of socio-cultural diversity with a very high percentage in population entering into matrimonial relations in the Tarai [74.8] as against 69.0 and 67.3 respectively in the mountain and the hill regions. The high marital status in the Tarai is related to child and early marriage, for 38.4 percent of the females aged 10-19 were found to have entered into matrimonial relations, the figures for the mountain and the hill regions are 24.5 and 24.2 respectively.

According to the census of 1981, the married in the country accounted for 66.38 percent, 3.87 percent widowed and 0.40 percent divorced and separated. The corresponding figures for the Tarai are 70.08, 4.33 and 0.37 and for the mountain region are 64.79, 3.83 and 0.44 and for the hill region are 63.40, 3.47 and 0.42 respectively. The highest percentage of widows accounting for 6.22 percent in the Tarai indicates the absence of widow marriage among large section of the ethnic groups.

**Families and Households**

In a predominantly rural and agricultural country like Nepal where the main source of income and livelihood for household members is agriculture and where large number of persons are required for agriculture pursuit and where the need of someone to look after the aged is of great importance, extended family becomes inevitable. In such a family, separation of family is late, and it does not take place until the death of both parents. In the urban areas because of the diversity in the income source of individual members of the family, separation of the family is usually early.
The census data on households in Nepal indicate increasing size of the household. The size of the households has increased from 5.4 in 1952/54 and 5.3 in 1961 to 5.5 in 1971 and further to 5.8 in 1981. The increasing population size in the households is the indication of growing dependency of the increasing population in agriculture which is characterised by small holdings. This is clearly revealed by the large household size in the hill and the Tarai regions with 5.8 and 5.9 persons per household respectively. The size of the household in the mountain region is the lowest [5.5].

**Economic Composition**

A fairly high percentage of economically active population in Nepal, is marked by regional disparity in participation rate resulting from uneven geographical terrain, and disparity in resource endowments and development. The Tarai, with fairly large land-holding and surplus agriculture, is characterised by lower participation of population in economic activity, and moreover, as a result of concentration of almost all large-scale industries, the Tarai provides a wider option for jobs. The hill region with small, scattered and less productive terraced slopes is a food-deficit area, and in order to supplement deficit agriculture each and every member of the family has to be active [ILO 1957: 15] and engage as agriculture and construction labour as porter or emigrants to foreign countries for army and civilian jobs. The mountain population has to supplement the inadequate agriculture by cattle-rearing and trade. Therefore, participation rate in economic activities in Nepal increases with increasing hardships and results in participation not only by males but also by females as indicated by the mountain region with highest participation rate for both sexes in the country—89.2 percent for the males and 64.2 percent for the females [age group above 15 years of age] as against 87.7 percent for the males and 45.2 percent for the country as a whole. The economic participation in the hill region, where life is comparatively easy as compared to the mountain region, is 86.5 percent for the males and 55.4 percent for the females. The agricultural and industrial potentialities, coupled with trade and commerce in the Tarai, have led to higher participation of males. The surplus agriculture of the Tarai and its ability to use large number of seasonal labour from India resulted in lower participation of females in economic activities. The participation rate in the Tarai is 88.5 percent for the males and only 30 percent for the females. The lower participation of females is also due to the Hindu-Muslim orthodoxy of keeping females indoors.
Industrial composition of economically active population in non-agricultural sector is marked by gradual decline since 1961 with wide fluctuation in different censuses. The percentage of agricultural population has come down to 90.2 in 1981 from 93.2 in 1961. However, the composition of non-agricultural population is marked by wide fluctuation in different censuses. The data on industrial composition are marked by inconsistency in relation to the development made by Nepal. The number of persons engaged in manufacturing has gone down from 80,768 persons in 1961 to 31,867 in 1981 and those in transport and communication from 16,371 persons in 1961 to 7,381 in 1981. According to the 1981 census, the second largest source of employment is provided by services [5.20 percent], followed by trade and commerce [1.81], manufacturing [0.54%], and transport and communication [0.13 percent], and the rest [2.12 percent] are employed in quarrying, construction, utility services and industry unspecified. Of the total non-agricultural population of the country, 56.5 percent is distributed in the Tarai, followed by 38.6 percent in the hill region, and only 4.90 percent in the mountain region. More than 50 percent of the population are engaged in manufacturing, commerce, transportation and communication, and personal and community services and concentrated in the Tarai, indicating the concentration of development activities in the Tarai.

Ethnic Groups and Languages

Nepal is a land of ethnic diversity. The high mountains, the turbulent rivers and the dense forests, not only confined the different ethnic groups into isolated pockets or habitats, but also made extremely difficult for them to communicate with one another and prevented the establishment of a strong integrated culture. In fact, the effect of isolation and adaptation to the habitat have promoted the differentiation of ethnic groups [Kawakita, 1957: 10-11]. The distribution of ethnic groups in their traditional habitat in Nepal indicates the preference for their own range of altitudes. The case in point is the location of malaria immune ethnic groups like Tharu, Dhimal, Meche, Koch, Kumal, Danuwar, and Rajbanshi in the Tarai. Most of the Indo-Aryan Hindu and Muslims, who are located in the southern part of the Tarai, have migrated from the south during last 200 years. The northern part of Nepal, which is relatively high, is inhabited by people of the northern origin. The location in the northern part of the ethnic groups like Sherpa, Thakali, Manangba, Lhomi and other Bhotiya are the people from Tibet. In the intermediate zone between the malarial lowland and alpine highlands is marked by numerous ethnic groups both of the Mongoloid and the Indo-
Aryan races as well as admixture of the two such as Bahun and Chhetri [along with Damain, Kami, Sarki, Giane, etc.], Newar, Gurung, Magar, Rai, Limbu, Tamang, Sunuwar, Jirel, Thami, Chepang, Darai, Danuwar, Majhi, Lepcha, in the intermediate zone. However, the census of Nepal do not have data on ethnic groups.

Nepal is a multilingual country characterised, not only by diversity of language, but also by diversity of dialects at a short distance. Most of the languages spoken in the country have remained without script and literature, and most of the ethnic groups have even foresaken their traditional script, and in certain cases their traditional language as well. Among the languages of Nepal, Nepali, Newari and Maithili have rich cultural and literary heritage. Nepali language has been the language of administration and *lingua franca* since 1769, and because of the state patronage, it possesses a fully grown literature in the country.

The census of 1952/54 recorded more than 54 languages in Nepal, while the census of 1961 listed only 35 languages and that of 1971 only 17 languages including the category under “other languages”. The census of 1981 listed 18 languages including category under others/unstated [Table 3]. The linguistic composition of the population of Nepal at different censuses seems to be rather ambiguous. Failing to consider a clear-cut division between a language and a dialect, the collected items of information have shown considerable discrepancies between the censuses of 1952/54, 1961 and 1971 [C.B.S., 1977:43] and also in 1981. The main objective of collecting data on the linguistic composition of the population in a census is to obtain a supplementary indicator of ethnic origin. The census data of Nepal on languages has been able to decide neither linguistic characteristics of the population nor that of ethnicity. Moreover, the deletion of the languages of the most economically backward ethnic groups like the Chepang, Thami, Majhi, Dhimal, Kumal, Darai, Jirel, Meche, etc., in the census will have adverse impact on formulateing plans without knowing their number and location.

The data on linguistic composition of the population show that population with Nepali as mother tongue accounts for 58 percent of the total population in 1981. It is the leading language in all the ecological regions. Maithili is the second largest language of Nepal, and 95 percent of Maithili-speaking population are confined to the Tarai. The other languages with more than 90 percent concentration in the Tarai are Bhojpuri, Abadhi, Tharu, Rajbanshi and Satar. In the Himalayan region, the Bhoti/Sherpa and Thakali groups are concentrated in overwhelming proportion. The major concentration of Tamang, Newari, Rai/Kirati, Magar, Gurung, Limbu, Danuwar and Sunuwar is to be found in the hill region.
Table 3

Linguistic Composition of Nepal’s Population and Inter-Censal Changes - 1952/54-1981

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Composition of Population by Languages</th>
<th>Inter Censal Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nepali</td>
<td>4,013,667</td>
<td>4,796,528</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(48.74)</td>
<td>(50.96)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maithili</td>
<td>918,211</td>
<td>1,130,402</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(11.15)</td>
<td>(12.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhojpuri</td>
<td>16,335</td>
<td>577,357</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.20)</td>
<td>(6.13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamang</td>
<td>494,745</td>
<td>528,812</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(6.01)</td>
<td>(5.62)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abadhi</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td>447,090</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(4.75)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tharu</td>
<td>359,594</td>
<td>406,907</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(4.37)</td>
<td>(4.32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newari</td>
<td>383,184</td>
<td>377,727</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(4.65)</td>
<td>(4.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magar</td>
<td>273,780</td>
<td>254,675</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3.32)</td>
<td>(2.71)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rai/Kirati</td>
<td>236,049</td>
<td>239,749</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2.87)</td>
<td>(2.54)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gurung</td>
<td>162,192</td>
<td>157,778</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.97)</td>
<td>(1.68)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Limbu</td>
<td>145,511</td>
<td>138,705</td>
<td>170,787</td>
<td>129,234</td>
<td>-4.7</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>-24.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.77)</td>
<td>(1.47)</td>
<td>(1.48)</td>
<td>(0.86)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhote Sherpa</td>
<td>70,132</td>
<td>84,229</td>
<td>79,218</td>
<td>73,589</td>
<td>20.1</td>
<td>-6.0</td>
<td>-7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.85)</td>
<td>(0.89)</td>
<td>(0.69)</td>
<td>(0.49)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rajbanshi</td>
<td>35,543</td>
<td>55,803</td>
<td>55,124</td>
<td>59,383</td>
<td>57.0</td>
<td>-1.2</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.43)</td>
<td>(0.59)</td>
<td>(0.48)</td>
<td>(0.40)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunwar</td>
<td>17,299</td>
<td>13,362</td>
<td>20,380</td>
<td>10,650</td>
<td>-23.0</td>
<td>52.5</td>
<td>-47.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.21)</td>
<td>(0.14)</td>
<td>(0.18)</td>
<td>(0.07)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sattar</td>
<td>16,751</td>
<td>18,840</td>
<td>20,660</td>
<td>22,403</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.20)</td>
<td>(0.20)</td>
<td>(0.18)</td>
<td>(0.15)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danuwar</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td>11,624</td>
<td>9,959</td>
<td>13,522</td>
<td></td>
<td>-14.3</td>
<td>35.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.23)</td>
<td>(0.09)</td>
<td>(0.09)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santhali</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td>10,645</td>
<td>3,193</td>
<td>5804</td>
<td></td>
<td>-70.0</td>
<td>81.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.04)</td>
<td>(0.03)</td>
<td>(0.04)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thakali</td>
<td>3,307</td>
<td>(0.11)</td>
<td>(0.03)</td>
<td>(0.04)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>845,083</td>
<td>50,830</td>
<td>487,060</td>
<td>764,802</td>
<td>-94.0</td>
<td>858.2</td>
<td>57.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unstated</td>
<td>(13.22)</td>
<td>(0.54)</td>
<td>(4.21)</td>
<td>(5.09)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>8,235,079</td>
<td>9,412,996</td>
<td>11,555,983</td>
<td>15,022,839</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td>30.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The figures in the parenthesis represent percentage.

Religious Composition

Though Nepal is a Hindu State, it can aptly be called a land of religious harmony, because religious feuds are not known in the history of the Kingdom. Hinduism and Buddhism are the oldest religions of the country, and both of them have carried on relations, partly of hostality and partly of sympathy, which are almost unparalleled in the history of comparative religion [Landon, 1928, I:213]. The census of 1952/54 and 1961 experienced the difficulty of distinguishing the Hindus and the Buddhists in the hill and the mountain regions for they worshipped deities belonging both to Hinduism and Buddhism [C.B.S., 1967: 41], and some other ethnic groups of the hill and the mountain regions are influenced both by the Lamaistic form of Buddhism and by Hinduism [Bista, 1967:38]. Nepal has also other religious groups like Muslims, Jains, Sikhs and Christian as well as animists.

Hinduism in Nepal has orthodox followers among the Bahun and Chhetri and their occupational caste groups of the hills, among the Brahmins, Rajput and other occupational caste groups of the Tarai, and among sections of the Newar of the Kathmandu Valley and those scattered in other parts of the country. Hinduism set very lightly on the other ethnic groups amounting to little more than respect for the Brahmin and reverence for the cow [H.M.S.O., 1965:26]. The most characteristic and remarkable feature of the aboriginal ethnic groups who have adopted Hinduism, excepting the Newars, is that none of them fall under any of the Hindu caste hierarchy and there is a total absence of caste system in them. According to the census of 1981, 89.5 percent of the total population of Nepal profess Hinduism, and it is the major religion in all the ecological regions.

The followers of Buddhism in Nepal are some of the Newars, and Tamang, Thami, Sherpa, Thakali, Manangba and Bhotiya people in general. It has also followers among Lepcha, Gurung and Magar. Buddhism is the second largest religion of Nepal accounting for 5.32 percent of the total population. More than three-fifths of the Buddhists are found in the hill region and one-fifth in the mountain region.

Nepal had the first settlement of the people with Islamic faith from India in the 15th century when King Ratna Malla permitted them to carry on trade in the Kathmandu Valley and the Chaubise Rajas of Nepal [western hill] had some of them in 17th or 18th century to train the soldiers in the use of firearms [Bista, 1967: ]. The Muslims in Nepal who constitute 2.66 percent of the population are mostly confined to the Tarai, mainly immigrants from India as agricultural labour, cultivators, artisans and
traders. 95.51 percent of the Muslims are confined to the Tarai. The fourth largest group of population are the Jains who had migrated from India to the Tarai as trading community. They constitute 0.06 percent of the population of Nepal, and 86.74 percent of them are concentrated in the Tarai.

The Capuchin missionary driven out of Peking and Lhasa were the first Christians to settle in 1745 at Patan [Landon, 1928, II:235]. However, before, they could make any great progress in conversion, the Gurkhas entered into the Kathmandu Valley and expelled them from Nepal with their few converts, mostly Newars, who settled in Bettiah, Bihar [Oldfield, 1880, II:189–90]. After 1951, the Christian missions from India entered Nepal to run schools and hospitals. They brought with them some Indian and Nepali Christians, and they are also involved in conversion of simple-minded Nepalese [Hagen, 1961:95], but the social discrimination and economic deprivation compel individuals to change ideological beliefs and perceptions. The 1981 census revealed 3,891 Christians.

Another important religious group in Nepal [not recorded in the census] are the Sikhs who entered into Nepal after partition of India and also after the opening of the Tribhuvan Rajpath as truck drivers and transport businessmen. However, the census does not record them.

Literacy

Daniel Wright, who compiled the first history of Nepal during the period of Prime Minister Jung Bahadur, had remarked, “The subject of schools and college in Nepal may be treated briefly as that of snakes in Ireland. There are none” [Wright, 1877:18]. The Rana regime was responsible for the laying of the foundation of modern universal education in Nepal, though it was extremely difficult to get permission to open school, in Nepal. It is clearly revealed by extremely low literacy of 0.7 percent in 1942 [Joshi, 1957:49].

The growing consciousness for education and the resulting mushroom growth of schools after 1951 led to the increase in literacy rate to 5 percent in 1952/54, 8.9 percent in 1961, 14.32 percent in 1971, and 23.36 percent in 1981. However, the sex discrimination towards educating children by the parents is revealed by a very high literacy rate of 33.96 for males and a very low literacy 12.01 for females. The hill region has the highest literacy rate for males and females, 36.90 and 12.90 respectively, followed by the Tarai with 32.11 and 11.93 respectively, and the lowest in the mountain with 27.64 and 7.84 respectively. One notable fact about literacy in Nepal is that Nepal has not been able to reduce illiteracy; illiterates in Nepal has increased from 8.1 million in 1971 to 9.3 million in 1981.
In the distribution of literate population by level of education, the mountain region has lagged behind with its share of population with primary education amounting to 6.91 percent of the country's total, while its share of population with postgraduate education is only 1.91 percent of Nepal. In the field of education, the Tarai has the advantageous position because of easy access to India as well as to the rest of the country. It has more than 50 percent of the country's total population with different levels of education like lower secondary, secondary, S.L.C. and equivalent, Intermediate and equivalent and 47 percent of the total graduates and 36.6 percent of the total postgraduate and above. The easy access to higher education in India and within Tarai resulted in higher proportion of population with high level of literacy. On the other hand, two-thirds of the population of the hills with education level from, S.L.C. and equivalent to postgraduate and above are confined to the central hill region, i.e., the Kathmandu Valley.

Conclusions

Considering Nepal's low density of population, as compared to her neighbours, China and India, Nepal's population holds promise for the future. But Nepal's inability to strike a balance between population growth and development has created a serious population problem as compared to her neighbours. Nepal's problem is the reflection of the low growth of the national economy to mobilise country's rich human resources. Nepal has a tendency to hold population responsible for all the failures in the socio-economic fronts of the country. The major population problems confronting the country are high growth rate, internal migration, and international migration, all of which are closely interrelated.

Nepal's high population growth rate is basically related to constant high birth rate, lowering of the death rate and immigration. Family planning has very marginal impact on birth control, because couples having sterilisation have on the average 4.9 children. Nepal's death rate is considerably high as compared to her neighbours', and improvement in health facilities might further reduce death rate, all of which will further increase the growth rate. Moreover, the improvement in traditional and low productive agriculture of the country in general might increase the value of children and will boost growth rate. Only urbanisation and industrialization might check this tendency.

The disparity in resource endowment, investment and development has led to internal migration of population to resource potential areas of the Tarai which already have been experiencing immigration from India for the last two and a quarter century. The chance of the Tarai having more than 50
percent of the population of the country in the foreseeable future as a result of high fertility and migration will have several implications. One of the implications of such redistribution of population will be that the government's investment on population will gradually increase in the Tarai. Moreover, considering the concentration of transport facilities [three-fourths of the permanent airports and 58 percent of the roads of Nepal] in the Tarai and the ease of movement coupled with the large size of settlements [villages and towns] government's priority area in investment will be the Tarai, because any programme in the Tarai will have large population coverage and the cost of delivery will be low as compared to the hill and mountain regions with scattered distribution of population. The development of the hill region will be thwarted, not only by decreasing investment, but also by large-scale out-migration [both to the Tarai and outside the country] of the predominantly male and dynamic age group, if the trend of out-migration continues. However, given the critical state of the hill economy, the answer—or more precisely, the hope—for the future must lie with the demonstrated ability of the Tarai to produce substantial foodgrain surpluses in addition to other crops, such as jute, sugarcane, and mustard seeds which provide raw materials to the only significant centres of industrial production in Nepal [Blakie et al., 1980:19]. Accommodation of increasing population in the non-agriculture sectors in the Tarai is not possible unless immigration is controlled. Along with development of the Tarai, the development of the hill and mountain regions should also go side by side to minimise migration flow.

International migration will have far-reaching consequences for Nepal. Nepalese migrants to India are lost in a vast country like India. Moreover, most of them return to Nepal after their retirement from army, police and civilian jobs. On the other hand, Indian immigrants, most of whom are skilled labourers and artisans, traders and businessmen, and industrialists and entrepreneurs, settle in Nepal permanently once their activities are well established. Their domination in Nepalese economy is not hidden to anyone. Moreover, their growing and overwhelming concentration in the Tarai might give rise to political risks and Assam-like agitation in Nepal. Nobody would deny that Nepal as an independent sovereign country must regulate international border to control unrestricted immigration in the interest of the country as India did with its border with Bangladesh. Being a bilateral issue, there is no solution to migration between Nepal and India through unilateral action of either Nepal or India. There is an urgent need of arriving at a mutual accord to regulate migration between Nepal and India. Procrastinating migration
issue as a sensitive one will have far-reaching adverse consequences on economic, social, cultural and political relations between Nepal and India.

Internally, solution to Nepal’s population problems lies in an integrated approach to development and improvement of livelihood, education, health, women’s status and employment as evidenced by the Chinese experience. Nepal’s location between the two most populous countries of the world has an advantage of taking lessons and benefits from mistakes and accumulated knowledge of its neighbours, China and India, with regard to population and development.

References


Ancient Nepal

Ram Niwas Pandey

The Beginnings

Nepal is the name given to the region of magnificent mountain ranges of the Himalayas and a thin stretch of plain land on its south between the east meridians of 80° and 88° and the south parallels of 26° and 30°. Different etymologies have been given for the origin of name Nepal. According to the Bhasavamsaivalis, an exalted saint called Ne Muni flourished soon after the denudation of the waters of the Kathmandu Valley by Manjusri in the past and as he beautifully protected the people of the area, after his name this region came to be called Nepal [Sharma, 2022: 47]. However, the Tibetan and Sikkimese etymologies of the name Nepal make this region popular as "the house of wool" and "the cave resorts of the human beings." Truly, this region has got numerous cave resorts and shelters of the saints and seers since the hoary past, and has been famous as the land of wool since the time of the Arthasastra of Kautalya and the composition of the Mulasarvastivadasamgraha [Sharma, 2022: 47-48]. First authentic reference to Nepal is found in the Allahabad Pillar Inscription of Samundra Gupta [335--75 A.D.] [Chaudhary, 1966: 324]. The Varahapurana, and the Vrhatasamhita, written in the sixth century, also contain references to Nepal [Sharma, 2022: 48--50]. The Varahapurana enumerates that the Ksetra of Pasupatinatha extended in 14 yojanas and the Vrhatasamhita enjoins than a special Yoga[conjunction] of the sun and the moon would bring a great natural calamity on the people of Nepal [Sharma, 2022: 48--50]. The Saktisamgama Tantra, Skanda Purana, Devi Purana, Vrhatanila Tantra, Varaha Tantra and Vratakathapaisaci also contain mention of Nepal [Sharma, 2022: 48--50]. Huin Tsiang [635-41 A.D.], a Chinese pilgrim, has given a detailed account of the rulers and people of Nepal 2022: 48--50] Hsuien Tsiang [635-41 A.D.], a Chinese pilgrim, has the inscriptions of Bhimarjunadeva contain the name of the Nepal
These facts show that although Nepal was unknown to the people during the age of the Mahajanapadas, since the time of the Mauryas [fourth century to second century B.C.] it has thrived as an independent state to the south of the Alpine Himalayan region between the Mechi and the Mahakali rivers.

**Influence of Geography**

The geography of the Nepal Himalayas has played a great role in shaping the course of its history. There is a great diversity in the physical features of the country and several ethnic communities of Aryan, Mongoloid and Astroloid stock are found living here amidst its high mountain ranges, river-valleys and plain land since unknown past. The intersection of the land by deep rivers and impenetrable forests fostered a spirit of isolation and cleft the country as under into small political and even social units whose divergences were accentuated by the definite variety of conditions. Owing to the mountainous environment, the people of Nepal became harsh and militant in character and preserved their traditional life-styles or cultures till recently without much change. The Kiratas, Newars, Khasas, Tharus, Magars, Gurungs, Chepangs, Satars, Danuvars and Sherpas are the most important ethnic groups of Nepal besides the Hindus following varnasrama dharma, and some of them have made there great name in the political and cultural history of the nation. Despite variegated conglomeration of races, castes and creeds, there existed a deep unity among the people of Nepal Himalaya in the past. Different religions and their followers--especially the sages and saints, the kings of various dynasties who ruled the country in different periods and the missionaries and pilgrims greatly fostered fundamental unity and created an exceptionally congenial environment for the growth of a uniform civilization in the lap of the Himalayas.

**Prehistory**

Man has been called a ‘tool-using animal,’ and no doubt all progress of culture is due to the increased use of tools and implements in the conquest of nature to make life more happy and comfortable. The material history of man is an account of the progress from a toolless state to the present state of complicated machinery. History, therefore, is the record of the achievements of man [Lunia, 1982:24].

If history is the record of the achievements of man, the history of Nepal begins with the activities of Ramapithecus, the
nearest ancestor of man, who lived in the neighbourhood of Butwal about eleven million years ago [Sharma, 1980—81: 1—15]. The Ramapithecuses spread in the whole Siwalika range of Nepal and they "surpassed all others in reasoning and adaptability". They could walk erect, move their hands freely and had even the power of communicating their ideas with words. The fossil remains found in the neighbourhood of the tooth of this man elucidate that he happened to be a non-vegetarian inmate. The old stone age tools of the Nawal-Parasi district were made by the distant offspring of the Butwal Ramapithecus in the process of evolution about 600000—200000 years ago [Nepal, 1982: 13--17].

Prehistoric exploration at Danda in the Nawal-Parasi district in 1969 brought to light several quartzite tools, made either from the pebbles, or on the pebbles themselves. They comprise hand-axes, cleavers, choppers and scrapers, and were made in the middle and upper palaeolithic periods. The flaking styles show that the technology and material culture had considerably developed by then. Although the tools are much rolled up in the flowing water of the river, they do not carry any patina on them. Such tools have been found at several places of Northern India in the provinces of the Punjab and Kashmir, indicating thereby that the whole landmass of the Siwalika Mountain in India and Nepal for a long time had been the abode of the chopper-chopping and handaxe-cleaver tool-makers till the migration and occupation of the area by the neolithic people from the west and north-west at the beginning of the holocene period [Banarjee, 1969: 6-9].

Recently, some palaeoliths in the shape of hand-axes, cleavers and ovates made on cores have been discovered in the bed of the Dhobikhola in the neighbourhood of Budhanilakantha in the Kathmandu Valley. Professor Schetenko is of the opinion that "the complex has some analogies in Mongolia, China and Soviet Primorye where bobien cores also have been found and can be dated back to 30 millennium B.C." [Schetenko, 1978: 2]. This discovery, not only nullified the views of Dr. R.V. Joshi who concluded in 1962 after a short exploration that "there was probably no trace of the prehistoric man in the Kathmandu Valley," but also elucidated the social contact of the Nepali inhabitants with those of the Europeoid and Mongoloid races in the hoary past. The present discovery reveals that the cultural heritage of Nepal is not local phenomenon but belongs to the whole mankind and contributes to the development of world civilization [Schetenko, 1978: 1--2, Pls. I--II]. These discoveries have now confirmed the views of Toni Hagen who postulated in the fifties of the present century after the geological studies of the Himalayas that about 7,000,000 years ago man was living in the
region of the Himalayas and thus relics should be definitely found in the region on planned scientific explorations and excavations of the caves and cave-shelters [Banarjee, 1969:6].

Although nothing is known so far about the microlithic phase, encouraging evidences of a settled neolithic phase all over Nepal consisting of the neoliths of igneous rock pieces have come to our notice from different explorations of the scholars. These neoliths which are in the form of axes, celts, chisels and spades, elucidate that after the end of the glacial period when temperate climate prevailed on the earth in the holocene period and forests grew on the land, the people, who occupied the area after their migration from east, north and west, used these implements in the course of deforestation of the region and commencement of agriculture along with the domestication of the herbivorous animals. The neoliths have not only come from the various districts of the Tarai and the Inner Tarai but also from the Kathmandu Valley and Dolkha district of Northern Nepal [Sharma, 1983: 1--12, Pls I--II]. Thus, they show their distribution over whole Nepal. The majority of tools of Nepal belong to the cyclic and sub-rectangular varieties of celts with curved medial ground edges which correspond to the principal types of the Assam and the North-Eastern Indian groups [Sharma, 1983: 1--12, Pls. I--II]. However, a few tools from the Dang Valley of the western type, which are similar to the South Western Chinese and Indian Burzhom type of tools, show that the area of mid-Nepal was the meeting place of two types of cultures, and this happened sometime in the second millennium B.C. [Sharma, 1983: 1--12, Pls. I--II]. The geological deposits and river terraces of Nepal show that on exploration there is possibility of discovering a complex neolithic pattern in Nepal.

The terraced strips of land available for cultivation, are the ones where oxen or other animals cannot be employed effectively or economically on account of the inconveniences of mobility or manoeuvrability of narrow ledges. These spades and axes were effectively used for digging the fields and breaking the larger clods of the earth into small ones, as is indicated by the echo of the ancient practice in the methods of cultivation adopted by the farmers in the terraced hill-valleys, particularly by the Jyapus of the Kathmandu Valley [Banarjee & Sharma, 1969: 58]. Banarjee and Sharma are of the opinion that the neolithic period in Nepal should be tentatively dated between circa 1000--200 because like the shouldered celts of Assam they show the marks or striations of cutting with a metallic wire on their body [1969:58]. Owing to the inaccessibility of the most river-valleys placed in the high mountainous region the use of neoliths in Nepal continued till the fifth-sixth centuries of the Christian era. This is now elucidated by
the discovery of two neoliths in the stratified Licchavi layers in an archaeological excavation at Cangu in the Kathmandu Valley.

*Early History*

It appears that the stories of Manjusri and Banasura were fabricated by the Buddhist and Hindu chroniclers of the Kathmandu Valley after the propagation of the tenets of Buddhism and Hinduism among the people of the Himalayas. In fact, the waters of the Nagahrrda got drained out on account of a gorge created near Chobhar owing to a tectonic movement which greatly changed the shape of the Nepal Himalaya in the miocene period. The only acceptable reality in the history of the Nepal Valley seems to be the rule of the Gopalas and Abhiras in the second half of the second millennium B.C. [Sharma, 2022: 62--76]. They were the shepherds of the Aryan stock who migrated to this region from the west and south with the herds of their cows and buffaloes in the beginning of the neolithic period in the style of the Aryan shepherds from central Asia to the region of the Saptasindhu in the middle of the third millennium B.C. At the time they occupied the fertile land of Nepal, two groups of Mongoloid race, called Magars and Gurungs, entered Nepal from the north with their herds and occupied the high mountainous region of the country. These migrant people overpowered the aboriginal inhabitants of the Himalayas such as Rautes Chepangs and Kusundas and forced them to reside in the midst of deep forests with the general appallation of Banamanches [men of the forests].

After the Gopalas, in the first quarter of the first millennium B.C., the Kiratas appeared on the political horizon of Nepal. They find mention in the *Mahabharata*, the *Manusmrti* and the Puranas. The chronicles of the Kathmandu Valley reveal that the Kiratas ruled over Nepal for 32 generations, and for more than one thousand years. Yelambar has been designated the first king of the family who ruled over his vast kingdom extending between the rivers Tista and Trisuli from Yalung and Thankot in the ninth century B.C. The *Mulasarvastivada*, an early Buddhist work, mentions that in the reign of the seventh Kirata King named Jitadasti about 520 B.C. Lord Buddha visited Nepal and at that time he had stayed in the Puchhagra Chaitya, located on the back side of the Swayambhu Hill [Sharma, 2022: 67--77]. Chemjong has written that Parvate was also a Kirata king and he helped Chandra Gupta Maurya with a composite army made up of Saka, Yavana, Kirata, Kamboja, Parasika and Balhika forces in the battle of Kusumpur in 317 B.C. in uprooting the Nandas from Magadha and driving away the Greek Governor Seleucus from
the regions of the Punjab and Sindha. He was ultimately killed by Chandra Gupta Maurya on the inspiration of Kautilya [Chemjong, 1966: 12–13].

The visits of Acharya Bhadrabahu and King Asoka are two most important incidents of the Kirata age. The Jain works mention that on account of a severe famine circa 312 B.C., Bhadrabahu went to Karnataka from Magadha. After 12 years, when famine was over, he again came to Magadha along with his disciples. However, he found the Jain religion had totally declined due to the death of Chandra Gupta Maurya. Therefore, about 300 B.C. he came to Nepal for penances. Here he died about 260 B.C. Although Bhadrabahu happened to be a great scholar and teacher, he could not leave any effect of his religion on the contemporary society owing to the internal conflicts of the Jains and the growing effects of Hinduism and Buddhism in the terrain [Sharma, 2022:66].

The chronicle edited by Wright and the Swayambhu Purana extol that Asoka, not only propogated Buddhism in Nepal but on the incentives of his teacher Upagupta, came to the Kathmandu Valley in person and worshipped the caitya of Swayambhunatha with great dedication of mind. He built five stupas in Lalitpur, four at the corners and one in the centre, which even today stand at the places of their construction with their pristine glory. The stupa of Kirtipur is also attributed to Asoka. On account of a divine inducement Asoka married his daughter Carumati, who accompanied him, to Devepala, a Ksatriya prince, perhaps employed in the service of King Sthunko, the fourteenth Kirata king of the Kathmandu Valley. After this marriage the couple founded the town of Devapatan which later on became the holy tirtha of Pasupatinath after the introduction of the Pasupata sect of Saivism in the first century B.C. In the old age Carumati became a Buddhist nun, constructed the Carumati Vihara and passed the rest of her life in penances and compassionate activities for the well-being of human beings. It has been said in the chronicle that in the reign of Sankhu [Sthanked], Prince Dharmadatta of Kanchi came to Nepal along with his nine sons and Buddhichema, the minister, displaced the king, captured the Kathmandu Valley for his rule and began to rule over the vast terrain of the Mahabharata Mountain from a newly built palace at Visalanagara. The king is credited in the chronicle for the introduction of Hindu varnasrama dharma in society and the construction of the Pasupatinath temple. On the north-west corner of the temple the king built a caitya [Chabbil Stupa] also. B.C. Sharma has written that Dharmakara [Dharmadatta] was appointed and ‘sent to Nepal for the re-organization of the society and administration of the Valley by
Asoka himself after he returned to Magadha from Nepal. Asoka is said to have performed the journey of the Kathmandu Valley about 250 B.C. [Sharma, 2022: 66]. However, we have to authenticate this fact by more concrete evidence in the future.

Asoka may not have come to the Kathmandu Valley but there are definite archaeological evidences in the shape of sandstone columns to attest his visit to the holy sites of Kapilvastu and Lumbini respectively in the fourteenth and twentieth years of his reign. The rule of this Mauryan king stretched in the range of the Siwalika Mountain of Nepal, attested by the reduction of the land tax of the people in the Lumbini zone and mention of the border tribes of northern region in the Kalsi rock edict of Dehradun in the Uttar Pradesh. After the visit of Nepal by Asoka the powers of the Kiratas declined and it was more weakened by the attack of the Somavamsi Rajputs in the reign of King Patuko. The latter left his traditional palace at Gokarna and began to live in a newly built palace at Samkhamula. Gasti, the son and successor of Patuko, was defeated by the Somavamsi Ksatriyas in the first century B.C. and thus the Kirata rule came to an end [Sharma, 2022: 72-76].

The Janapadas of the Tarai
a. Videha

It appears that at the time of the neolithic revolution the region of Videha or Eastern Tarai of Nepal came to be occupied by a group of shepherds who possessed big herds of cows with them. First reference to the cows of Videha is found in the Taitariya Samhita [Mishra, 1981: 17]. The Satapatha Brahmana mentions that it was Videdha Madhava who laid the foundation of the Janaka dynasty and Aryan culture in the region. However, the Puranas give this credit to Nimi Videha [Mishra, 1981: 17]. The kingdom of Videha extended from the Himalayas on the north to the Ganges on the south and between the rivers Kosi and Gandaki on the east and west. It was 96 and 64 Kosas respectively in length and breadth. Videha was called Mithila and Tirhut also, and 15 notable rivers irrigated its fertile land [Sharan----5]

Pargiter minutely studied the Puranas and the Ramayana and came to the conclusion that 94 kings of Janaka dynasty ruled over Mithila [Mishra, 1981: 24--25]. King Sirdhvaja Janaka was the most illustrious ruler of Videha [Mishra, 1981: 24:25]. Under his able administration there developed much prosperity in the kingdom and wise people greatly contributed their energy to the cause of promotion of religion and philosophy conducive to the external peace of mind of the human beings and their salvation in the end. The court of the king was graced with scholars such as
Satyakama Jvala, Arupa Asvapati, Gautama, Svetaketu Yajnavalkya and Gargi who were, not only great scholars, but also great social reformers. For their painstaking efforts Hinduism and *Varnasrama dharma* firmly established in Videha, and the kingdom became an ideal Hindu state [Mishra 1981:17].

Regmi has written that Sivadhvaja Janaka is Janaka I from whose court once Yajnavalkya received 1000 cows as reward in a philosophical competition and King Janaka of the *Ramayana* whose daughter was Sita, the consort of Raja Ram of Ayodhya, flourished long after the rule of King Siradhvaja Janaka [Regmi, 2041:50]. He lived in a magnificent palace which was a huge cluster of buildings of different kinds, mostly decorated with linear designs and hand-made coloured pictures. The city, called Mithilapura, had several ponds, canals, and squares. The houses were mostly made of wood [Regmi, 2041:50].

Several references to Videha or Mithila are found in the *Mahabharata*. At one place [III, 207: 67], it says that Mithila was ruled by Janaka and only religious people having faith in the traditions lived in the capital. The sounds of chanting hymns of the sacrifices and humming voices of the people gathered to celebrate festivals always echoed the environment of the town. Magnificent palaces and temples were abundantly built in the town and protected by a high citadel-wall on the outskirts. There were several roads with innumerable shops on the sides where traders sold their merchandise. The Pandavas lived in this state at the time of their exile. Bhimasena and Karna conquered Mithila and Duryodhana learnt the art of wielding mace *gadavidya* in this kingdom. The king of Videha was killed in the war of Mahabharata while fighting from the side of the Kauravas [Chaudhary, 1966: 105-106].

Kautalya [4th century B.C.] had written in the *Arthasastra* that Karala Janaka happened to be the last king of the Janaka dynasty and after that Videha became a republic under the Vajji confederacy. Although the form of government changed now, the descendants of Nimi of the old solar pedigree, as the nominated leaders of the state senate, called *raja* [king] by the people, ruled over the state till its annexation by Ajatasatru [491-59 B.C.] of the Sasunaga dynasty of the Magadh Janapada [Mishra, 1981: 238]. The Jain chronicles show that Mahavira passed his time of six rainy seasons *[Varsavasa]* in the kingdom of Mithila [Mishra, 1981: 238]. The *Majhima Nikaya* enumerates that the Buddha visited the kingdom of Videha for two times and stayed in the Makhadeva Ambabana where he converted many people to his order [Mishra, 1981: 238]. There is elaborate description of Mithila in the Buddhist works. The *Gandhara Jataka* shows that the measure of Videha was 300 *yojanas*. It contained 16,000
villages. 16,000 stone houses and 16,000 dancing girls and the *Suruci Jataka* mentions that the capital of Videha or Mithilapuri extended 7 yojanas whereas Banaras was 12 yojanas. From great distances tradesmen used to bring their commodities for sale in the city during the Buddhist period [Regmi, 2041: 50].

Till the Sasunagas and the Mauryas ruled over Magadha, Videha was under them. However, no definite evidence of the Sunga and Kushana rule has been found from there so far. When the Guptas became the masters of India, Videha became the frontier state [*tirabhukti*] of their dominion. According to Regmi, King Sasanka of Gauda, the Tibetans after the defeat of Arunasva and the Senas after the conquest of the region by Aditya Sena ruled over Videha one after the other before the beginning of the rule of the Palas in the eight century. In the last decade of the eleventh century [A.D. 1097]. Nanyadeva of the Karnata dynasty captured Mithila and began to rule the region from Simaraunagarh. Nanyadeva has been credited for the unification of Tirhut after several successful military adventures. Under the Karnatas, Tirhut made significant progress on the economic, social and cultural fronts. The Karnatas ruled over Mithila for about 225 years, and after that Gayasuddin Tughlaq annexed it to his dominion [Regmi, 2041: 50].

b. The Sakyas of Kapilvastu and the Koliyas of Devadaha

The Sakyas of Kapilvastu and the Koliyas of Devedaha were two important republics of the Tarai of Nepal during the sixth century B.C. The early Buddhist works furnish us with the information that the republic of the Sakyas was founded by Ulkamukha, an exiled son of Okkaka, the king of Kosala of the solar race of Iksvaku lineage, on the advice of Saint Kapila who lives there in the bygone age. King Suddhodhana, the son of Simhahanu was born in 681 B.C. from Kankana, the sister of Anjana, a king of the Koliya republic, who was not only famous but had introduced an era also after his name. Suddhodhana married Mayadevi, the daughter of King Anjana at the age of 18 in 663 B.C., and from her he got Lord Buddha, the apostle of peace in the world. King Suddhodhana, illustrious like Iksvaku, had repulsed the Pandavas in the battlefield when still a crown-prince and lived a virtuous life in the company of his Sachi-like queen in the magnificent palace of Kapilvastu. This was the reason why the Buddha chose them to be his parents. Lord Buddha was born in the Lumbini Garden of Nepal and lived in Kapilvastu for 29 years. This period of 29 years is synchronized with numerous events in the life of Lord Buddha. In the twenty-ninth year, the Buddha left Kapilvastu in the search of peace for his individual self and the
suffering inmates of the world. After Suddhodhana, Mahanama ruled over Kapilvastu. During the rulership of this king Viruddhaka sacked Kapilvastu and butchered the Sakyas to the extent of almost total extinction of the race. When Lord Budha heard about this incident, he came to Kapilvastu in person and had severe headache for several days. On hearing about the devastation of the Sakyas, Ajatasatru of Magadha attacked Kosala, killed Viruddhaka and annexed both Kosala and Kapilvastu within his dominion. Although now the republic of the Sakyas became a part of the Magadha dominion, the descendents of King Suddhodhana possessed full power to rule the state even after the death of Lord Budha. However, the affairs were on decline and the great palatial buildings of the capital changed into the monastic abodes of the followers of Buddhism. That the Sakyas lived in the territory of the republic is attested by their stupas which they built at Piparahawa on one part of the corporeal relics of the Budha after his *mahaparinirvana* in the memory of king Suddhodhana and Mayadevi. Amritodana, the uncle of Gautama Buddha, had seven sons and a daughter. He married the latter with king Pandavasa [504-474 B.C.] of Ceylon. After the marriage of the daughter her brothers also went to Ceylon and settled there. This shows the growing insignificance of the Sakyas in their homeland. The Buddhist works enjoin that during the reign of King Suddhodhana there were 80,000 Sakya families in the republic and they were quite religious and tradition-bound people. They had much interest in education and fine arts and greatly respected their elders and women. For the purity of blood of their race, they used to marry the daughters of their own clan, or in the Koliya families of Ramgram, who happened to be the offspring of Priya, the sister and queen of Ulkamukha, the founder of the Sakya republic. In order to preserve the purity of their race, they did not give a girl of their race to King Prasenajit of Kosala, who happened to be the overlord of the republic, and this ultimately became the *prima facie* cause of their destruction and total extinction in the hands of Virudhaka in the end [Mukherjee, 1969: 6-17; Pandey, 2033: 34-38].

The territory of the Koliyas of Ramgram was located to the east of the Sakya republic, and river Rohani formed the boundary between the two states. The Koliyas were the progeny of Rama and Priya, the legendary king of Varanasi and the Queen-mother of Kapilvastu [Rijal, 1979: 22]. King Avakaka of Devadaha was a contemporary of King Jayasena of Kapilvastu and his grandson Anjana, who ascended the throne in 691 B.C., was an illustrious king. He has been credited in the Buddhist texts with the introduction of the Anjana era to commemorate his coronation as
the king of the republic. Suddhodhana was the son of the his sister called Kanakana and Mayadevi, the daughter. Lord Buddha was also married in the Koliya republic. The Mahaparinirvana Sutta of the Digha Nikaya mentions that the Koliyas also received a share of the Buddha's relics after his death and built a stupa on that which was protected by a naga [snake] at the time Asoka came there to excavate the casket for precuring the relics [Rijal, 1979: 22--26]. The Moriyas of Piplivana were a branch of the Sakyas and their territory was located in the mountainous region of the Himalayas. Peacocks were abundantly found in their republic, and Chandra Gupta Maurya, the founder of the Mauryan dynasty and grandfather of Emperor Asoka, hailed from this republic. We have yet to identify the territory of this republic [Lunia, 1982: 222].

The people of the republican states were deemed equal and they were often brave, courageous, educated, disciplined and expert in warfare. Only qualified and capable people, irrespective of their caste and creed, were appointed for responsible government posts. The head of the state was always an elected person called pradhana [chief], nayaka [leader] and rajapati [lord of the state]. He was the head of the state-assembly, and he used to appoint ministers for the orderly functioning of the government. Each republican state had a santhagara [assembly--hall]. The members of the santhagara belonged to the noble families of the clan and were designated caja [king]. In the Sakya and Licchavi republics there were provincial santhagaras also, but the Moriyas and the Koliyas had the state santhagaras only in their republics. All the problems of the state were debated in the state-assembly, and the final decision of the members was carried out in the state for the well-being and prosperity of the people. Some republican states had their confederations also and for this reason they survived for longer time. However, they were often fighting and this became the root cause of their downfall after the growth of monarchical power in Magadha. The Kusanas also greatly contributed in the extinction of the republican states from the political horizon of Aryavarta, of which the southern belt of the Himalayas formed a part for a long time [Chaudhary, 1966, 121—125].

**Licchavi Period [ca. 1st Cent. AD--AD 879]**

The Sakyas of Kapilvastu, Koliyas of Devadaha, Vrijis of Videha and Licchavis of Vaisali migrated to the mountainous region of the Himalayas after they were forced to liquidate their states by the kings of Saketa and Magadha. The Gopalas, Mahisapalas and Kiratas were living in the Kathmandu Valley
since the beginning of the neolithic period. Many names of the localities and individuals or institutions occurring in the early inscriptions of Nepal are definitely of non-Aryan origin and belong to Mongoloid or pre-Mongoloid language groups. The facial features of the presentday people of the Kathmandu Valley, till recently called Nepal, betrays features which are not totally akin. Some are yellow, others either white or black showing the amalgamation of the communities in the past after a formidable clash in the beginning. Regmi is of the opinion that when the deposed Licchavis of Vaisali came to Nepal and became its master, the old inhabitants of different communities or ethnic groups lost their identity in them. The social qualities of the Licchavis of Vaisali penetrated into the life-style of the original inhabitants [Regmi, 1960: 16-25]

A large number of coins of the Kusana period have been found in the explorations at Tilaurakot [Rijal, 1979: 36-39]. [Ancient Kapilvastu] and in the Kathmandu Valley [Regmi, 1960: 67]. Regmi is of opinion that after Kadaphises I probably Nepal came under the domination of he Kusanas and the Vakataka kings “who destroyed the Kusana rule who seem to have wielded good deal of influence in the Valley ” [Regmi, 1960: 67]. Till the domination of the Kusanas, Buddhism flourished in the Kathmandu Valley. However, when the Vakatakas replaced them, Saivism penetrated in Nepal under Pasuparekha, the founder of the Pasupati temple, and soon it became the dominant religion of the country. All this happened in the rule of Jayavarman who has been identified with Jayadeva I, the founder of the Licchhavi dynasty in Nepal [Regmi, 1960: 69]. His name has been mentioned in the inscriptions Jayadeva II. In the thirteenth generation of this king, flourished Vrsadeva who was indifferent to “war-like activities” and was an “adherent of Sugata’s religion” [Jha, 1970: 127]. Sankaradeva, the successor of Vrsadeva, became a Saivite under the growing influence of Hinduism of the age, and he is credited for securing the kingdom from the enemies after “winning some laurels in the battlefield” [Jha, 1970: 128]. Dharmadeva, the successor of Sankaradeva, was proficient in dandaniti and karmakanda. He ruled the kingdom on the principles of religion and kept the subjects free from different kinds of troubles. After the sudden and premature death of Dharmadeva, Manadeva became the king of Nepal [Jha, 1970: 128-29].

Manadeva I [AD 464-505]

The Cangunarayana Inscription supplies us with the information that Manadeva was not fully mature to shoulder the
responsibilities of the state at the time of the death of his father, and, that is why, he stopped his mother Rajyavati from going sati and requested her to act as regent for him till he becomes mature and strong in the state. On the death of Dharmadeva the enemies flared up revolution in the east and west. Manadeva then took consent of his mother and proceeded to the east to vanquish his enemies with his valour. The rulers of the east surrendered without raising arms, accepted his suzerainty and then the king reinstated them on the throne to rule their territories as earlier. Although the names of the king are not given in the inscription, it appears that the enemies were the rulers of the Kosi region [Jha, 1970: 130].

After the conquest of the eastern region Manadeva "escorted by hundreds of excellent and caparisoned horses and elephant" attacked Mallapuri and conquered it without much trouble [Jha, 1970: 130]. At the time of his campaign, he was helped by his maternal uncle, who also attacked Mallapur from the north and helped the nephew in the seizure of the place. Mallapur has been identified with Gorakhpur by Jha but Regmi and Vajracarya are of the opinion that it was located in the mountainous region to the west of the Gandaki river. Most probably the Navala-Parasi district to the west of the Gandaki river is the area of ancient Mallas, and Mallapuri, the capital. After the conquest of Mallapuri the dominion of the Lichhavis of Nepal extended over a vast region between the Kosi and Rapti rivers. Manadeva was able to raise his arms much due to the weak successors of Skandagupta in northern India.

Manadeva was a great statesman and builder. He is regarded the first historical king of Nepal. The king built a palace called Managrh from where he ruled over his vast kingdom. He struck coins and gave patronage to Vaisnavism like the Gupta monarchs of India. Although personally a Hindu, he provided equal patronage to the Buddhist faith. This is attested by the mention of Manavihara and Cakramahavihara, which he built for the Buddhist monks of the Kathmandu Valley. The Cangunarayana Inscription reveals that the king was extremely devoted to his mother, highly proficient in warfare and exceptionally compassionate in character. He returned the conquered territories of his enemies and won great fame among his contemporaries. He followed the footsteps of Samudragupta and is rightly called "the Samudragupta of Nepal". Because the enemies got back their vanquished territories, they became devoted feudatories of the king and timely paid their taxes and tributes to him. Thus, he laid an ideal system of administration suited to the mountainous landscape of the dominion. Manadeva's rule is a great landmark in the history of Nepal because since the
beginning of his rule Nepal became an independent and sovereign state like any other state of Aryavarta after the weakening of the political domination of the Guptas in Magadha. Manadeva ruled for 41 years and died in A.D. 505. During the rule of this king “the superstruture of the edifice of Licchavi empire of Nepal, the foundation of which was visualized by Supuspa and his successors and laid by Sankaradeva” became complete [Jha, 1970: 136].

The Successors of Manadeva [AD 505--589]

The Pasupati Inscription of Jayadeva II reveals that Mahideva was the son and successor of Manadeva I. As there is an inscription of Vasantadeva from Thankot Adinarayana dated A.D. 506 [Vajracarya, 2030: 91], Mahideva seems to have ruled for a few months only [Regmi, 2026: 4]. Vasantadeva bore pompous title of paramabhattaraka--maharajadhiraja--sri unlike his grandfather who was satisfied with the titles of raja and nrpa merely. The Lagantole Inscription of Vasantadeva reveals that the king was “held in the highest esteem among his people for his learning, statesmanship, compassion, charity, condescension, virtue and courage” [Jha, 1970: 137]. Till he was on the throne, there was complete peace and tranquility in the country. During his rule the Guptas, who were forced to accept the suzerainty of Manadeva earlier, owing to peaceful environment in the kingdom, entered the government service, held the prestigious posts of sarvadandanayaka--mahapratihara and pratihara. They were very influential in running the day-to-day administration of the country, particularly during the weak successors to the throne.

Vamanadeva became the king of the dynasty when Vasantadeva died in A.D. 532 after a long rule of 26 years [Vajracarya, 2030: 91]. Two inscriptions of Ramadeva, of which one is dated A.D. 547, reveal that he was the son of Vamanandeva and ruled the country after the death of the father. No accountable events of their rules are known to us. Ganadeva ascended the throne after Ramadeva. Eight inscriptions of the rule of Ganadeva reveal that between A.D. 557--67 he was on the throne for full ten years. A coin bearing the legend gunanka in the Licchavi character elucidates that the king had struck coins also. One important thing of the period between A.D. 532--67 is the omission of the high-sounding epithet of paramadaivata--vappabhottaraka--maharaja--sri and use of only simple epithet of bhattaraka--maharaja by the kings. During this period almost all the important government posts were held by the Guptas and they exerted great pressure on the king and in the society. Bhaumagupta, who was a sarvadandanayaka, has been addressed in an inscription with the high title of paramadaivata--sri [Gnoli,
1956: 28, Inc. XX]. It seems that the king was a puppet under him. Thus, the Licchavi sovereignty was at stake during this period [Jha, 1970: 140].

_Sivadeva I and Amsuvarman [AD 590--621]_

Sivadeva I emerged from the midst of the “darkest cloud of Guptas’ perfidy” like a “full-moon” and his “family flag began to flutter uninterruptedly in the enchanting breeze of his glory of learning, statesmanship, pliability, courage, preservance and other qualities” [Jha, 1970: 140]. The king was in search of a noble and powerful man, who would help him against his enemies, and he got it in the personality of illustrious Amsuvarman. The latter shattered the insidiousness of the adversaries and laid “the foundation-stone of the edifice of the well-being of his people and the country” [Jha, 1970: 141]. Amsuvarman perhaps belonged to the line of the Thakuris, and he entered the service of the king as a feudatory in A.D. 571 [Sharma, 2022: 86–87]. Owing to his colossal task of giving protection to ‘the royal flag and country’ soon he became the chief feudatory of the king. In an inscription he has been described to have defeated several enemies by the prowess of his arms. The enemies seem to be the Guptas who had become very powerful in the kingdom before Sivadeva I. Sivadeva has been described in the _Bhasavamsavalis_ [chronicles in the local language] as to have married his daughter to Amsuvarman and retired for penances along with his preceptor in the Yangabahal [Sharma, 2022: 86]. But according to the _Gopalrajvamsavaliti_ Amsuvarma was the nephew of Sivadeva I from the side of his sister, and not his son-in-law [Fol. 22 b line 1]. The first inscription of Sivadeva is dated _Samvat 512 [590 A.D.]_ and the last one in 526 [604 A.D.]. Thus, he ruled for about 15 years before entering the life of monk [Regmi: 2026: 5].

After his marriage with the daughter of Sivadeva I, Amsuvarman became the chief feudatory and received the full authority of looking after the administration and protection of the country. Following the abdication of the throne by the king in A.D. 604 he in fact became the real master of the kingdom. Till A.D. 613 he was satisfied with the title of _mahasamanta_ [chief feudatory] and bore the title of _maharajadhira_ after annexing the territories of Udayadeva, who was aspiring to assume the position of his father Sivadeva I. Amusuvarman lived in the Kailasakutabhavana and ruled Nepal from there till about A.D. 622. During his rule of 14 years he conducted several reforms and even circulated coins for the proper transaction of commodities in the country. He is credited for starting an era also which was counted from the day of his contact with Sivadeva I about 29 years ago.
Amsuvarman was the first ruler who gave peace and prosperity to the country. His fame spread quite far and wide and even attracted the attention of Huien Tsiang [A.D. 634], who had highly praised him for his profound erudition and statesmanship. Amsuvarman was a staunch Hindu, devotee of Lord Siva, and he popularized Sanskrit education by writing a book on grammar. He was the first man to realise the importance of developing ties with foreign countries, and therefore, he married his daughter Bhogadevi to Rajaputra Surasena of the Maukbari dynasty in India [Jha, 1970: 148]. In A.D. 592 he married Princess Bhrikuti to Srong-chen-gampo and thus laid the foundation of deeper cultural ties between Tibet and Nepal [Sharma, 2022: 95–46].

Like the great Mauryan king Asoka, Amsuvarman always tried to do good things for his subjects. In the inscriptions he has been described to have exempted people from oppressive taxes and for getting a canal dug in Lalitpur for the irrigation of the fields. He was always in the deep thought on how he could make his people properly happy [katham me praja sukhi bhavet]. An examination of the life and activities of Amsuvarman reveals that he happens to be among the few noble and notable kings of ancient and medieval Nepal.

The Post-Amsuvarman Period [AD 622–640]

The Pasupati Inscription of Jayadeva II shows that Udayadeva ruled over Nepal for sometime after the death of Amsuvarman. The T'ang Annals indicates that he was able to capture the throne owing to the help rendered to him by Jisnugupta. Because the king wanted to remain free from the clutches of Jisnugupta, unlike his father who was under the great control of Amsuvarman, the two persons could not live together and work peacefully. Dhruvadeva, the younger brother of the king, took advantage of the situation. He sided with Jisnugupta and manipulated to become successful in dethroning the brother and becoming the ruler. After occupying the throne, Dhruvadeva gave up his individuality for the luxuries of the palace [Jha, 1970: 150]. Dhruvadeva lived in the Managrh and Jisnugupta occupied Kailasakutabhavana and ruled from there in the style of Amsuvarman. He also struck coins, issued inscriptions boasting of his high qualities. Jisnugupta called his son yuvaraja [Crown-prince] and put his ansector Managupta Gomi on equal footing of the Licchhavi rulers Mahideva and Manadeva [Jha, 1970: 151]. Jisnugupta happened to be a progeny of the Dynasty of the Abhira Guptas who ruled over Nepal in the past before the rise of the Kiratas. The coins and qualities of Jisnugupta described in the inscriptions may mislead one that he
ruled over Nepal after Udayadeva; however, neither he nor his son Visnugupta ever sat on the throne of Nepal [Jha, 1970: 151]. In all the inscriptions of Jisnugupta the name of the Licchhavi king is given and in one case it happens to be Manadeva [Sharma, 2022: 100]. As his name is not found mentioned in the inscription of Jayadeva II, Jayswal thinks that he happened to be the son of Amsuvarman and belonged to the Thakuri family [Jaiswal, 1936: 157--264]. Manadeva also lived with inferior position like Dhruvadeva till Jisnugupta was alive, however he was active in the management of the affairs of the state. When Jisnugupta passed away in samvat 59 [A.D. 632], Visnugupta became his heir and he is found exercising the position of his father along with Bhamarjunadeva till the latter's dethronement by Narendradeva about A.D. 641 [Regmi, 2026:8]. Because the Chinese envoy, who went to India through Nepal, found Narendradeva on the throne in A.D. 643 the latter seems to have dethroned Bhimirjunadeva sometime in A.D. 642 [Sharma, 2022: 101]

However, the Pasupati Inscription of Jayadeva II claims that 13 kings ruled Nepal after Vasantadeva. It is completely wrong because there is only two years' gap between the last date of Bhimirjunadeva and the first date of Narendradeva [Jha, 1970: 152] and between Bhimirjunadeva and Udayadeva there was only Dhruvadeva.

Bhimarjunadeva was a fickle person who solely depended on Jisnugupta like Dhruvadeva. Although Jisnugupta belonged to a different family, he is found remembering the great glory of Maharajadhiraja Amsuvarman in the Patan Inscription dated Samvat 48 [A.D. 624] for having dug a canal, and he makes fresh endowment for the repair of its damaged part, and for maintenance in future when needed [Jha, 1970: 154]. Like Amsuvarman, Jisnugupta also brought a stream of pure and cold water for the people of the Jolpn village, provided grants for the proper worship of the deities in the temples and freed the people of the state from the oppressive oil-tax.

Narendradeva [A.D. 641--679]

At the time Jisnugupta was consolidating his power in the country and perhaps planning to seize the throne for his son, Narendradeva, the son of Udayadeva, betook himself to Tibet. He did this at the time Dhruvadeva, the younger brother of the king, captured the throne with the help of Jisnugupta. The T'ang Annals shows that he was not only given refuge but valuable military help with which he discomfitted the enemies in A.D. 641, bringing thereby the final doom of Bhimirjunadeva and the nefarious Guptas. Because Narendradeva received the glory of the
Licchavis, he is regarded as the saviour of the banner of the dynasty.

The T'ang Annals indicates that Narendradeva accepted the vassalage of Tibet for the great help he got from Srong--chen gampo [Regmi, 1960: 177]. This fact gets some support from the Lagantole Inscription of Sivadeva II, his son, where it has been said that each year 5 bhari of tributes should be allocated from the businessmen for the purpose of Bhot [Tibet]. However, the suzerainty of Tibet was nominal because Narendradeva held the highest royal epithet of paramabhattaraka maharajadhiraja befitting an independent sovereign king. He decided the destiny of the country according to his own sweet will and maintained cultural ties with the rulers of India through matrimonial alliances. He even had contacts with the sovereigns of India where he sent his own son with presents in A.D. 651 [Jha, 1970: 157, Le Nepal, Pt. II 161]. Because of this in the reign of Tching--koan [A.D. 627--49] when Li--yu--Piao, with some military officers, was sent as ambassador to India in the court of Harsavardhan, he passed through Nepal. While in Nepal [Kathmandu Valley], he was received by Narendradeva with great pomp and taken by the latter to see the Aki--po--li pond, 20 pales in circumference, the water of which perpetually bubbled up and boiled [Regmi, 1960: 177--78].

Another Chinese mission went to India under Wang Huien Tse and it passed through Deopatan in A.D. 646. Before the embassy arrived in India, Harsavardhan was dead and his minister, named Arjuna or Arunasva [A--la--na--shuen], who captured Tirabhukti, attacked Wang-Huien Tse and plundered his tributes. Wang Huien Tse, who had only 30 horsemen in his escort, fled under the cover of darkness at night and went to Tibet to ask for help. Srong--chen--gampo supplied him 1200 troops which passed through Nepal to attack Tirabhukti. In Nepal they were joined by 7000 horsemen, provided from the side of Narendradeva, who escorted Wang Huien Tse for punishing the usurper. The combined force of Nepal and Tibet, determined to take revenge, advanced as far as Cha-puo-ho-lo, the capital, of mid-India where Arunasva lived in his palace and captured it after a seize of three days. The account of the embassy of Wang Huien Tse reveals that the carnage was terrible. "Three thousand of the besieged were beheaded and ten thousand were drowned. The usurper Arjuna fled, rallied his scattered troops and again offered battle. He was defeated and captured, and one thousand of troops were beheaded. The guards of the royal harem opposed the enemy's passage of the river Kien--to Wei. They were defeated. The wives and children of the usurper fell into the hands of the enemy who also took 12,000 prisoners and more than 30,000
domesticated animals of all kinds. Then whole India trembled and 580 walled towns offered their submission. Mukar [Bhaskara- varman], the king of Eastern India, sent the victor, large quantities of provisions and equipment. After this great triumph Wang Huen Tse returned to China in 648 A.D., taking with him Arjuna as a prisoner. The latter remained in China till his death and was given posthumous honours. His statue was placed on the avenue leading to the tomb of the Chinese emperor Tai--tsong” [Jha, 1970: 158--59]. Although Arjuna was defeated, captured and sent to China as a prisoner due to the help of Narendradeva, there is much exaggration in the account of the embassy of Wang Huen Tse in the Chinese Annals.

Jha has written that Bhrikuti was not the daughter of Amsuvarman but of Udayadeva and sister of Narendradeva. The latter gave her in marriage to Srong--chen--gampo and showed his best obligation to the Tibetan monarch for the help he received from him in occupying the throne after deposing Bhimarjunadeva and his favorite Visnugupta. According to the legend the name of the father of Bhrikuti was Gocha. After the marriage, the princess took the images of Aksobhya, Maitreya and Tara and got them enshrined in the properly built temples in the heart of Lhasa. Bhirkuti exercised great influence on the king and the people of Tibet. When she passed away, people deified her and called Harita [Green] Tara. Citing from the writings of Raghuvira, Jha has argued that Srong--chen--gampo is nothing but Sarala--Ugra-- Gambhira and the king belonged to the powerful ruling dynasty of India. Hence, Narendradeva did not marry his sister to an uncivilized ruler but to a civilized king [Jha, 1970: 160]. Narendradeva developed matrimonial relations not only with the king of Tibet but with the kings of India also. The Pasupati Inscription of Jayadeva II shows that Narendradeva married his son Sivadeva II with Vatsadevi, the daughter of Maukhi Bhogavarman and the grand-daughter of king Adityasena of Magadha. These matrimonial relations of the time of Narendradeva show that the Licchavis of Nepal were not inferior in any way to the contemporary royal dynasties of India [Jha, 1970: 162].

Narendradeva was not only a great conqueror and statesman, but also an able administrator. He entrusted the village pancayats [called pancali in the inscriptions] to look after problems of the village level, and to forward only those cases to him in which the village committees were unable to come to any decision. The kumaramatya, yuvraja and dutaka greatly helped him in his task of administration besides the high and low-rank civil and military officials of the state. The king was a highly religious man, exceptionally devoted to Lord Siva
paramamahesvara], and he generously donated money and materials for the efflorescence of the various sects of Hinduism and Buddhism.

The king issued coins of various denominations which contain legend Pasupati on their reverse faces. During about 4 decades of rule of Narendradeva the kingdom of Nepal in the lap of the Himalayas was a zone of eternal peace and unbounded serenity. Although Kailasakutabhavan was the centre of government activities in the beginning, after the construction of Bhadradhivasa it lost its glamour. Now the new palace became the abode of the king and centre of the state activities. The Chinese envoy, who visited this palace of Narendradeva, furnishes us with the information that it had a tower of seven storeys and was roofed with copper tiles; its balustrades, thresholds, pillars and beams were ornamented with precious stones. On each of the four corners of this tower was suspended a copper pipe which terminated below in a gold dragon-spout, and the water from the above flew down the pipes and poured out of the mouths of the dragons like so many natural fountains [Jha, 1970: 163].

According to the Chinese envoy, Narendradeva used to sit on a lion throne in the court clad in costly garment 'covered with a network of strings of pearls, crystal, precious stones, coral and amber,' had earrings of gold with jade pendants and wore a belt having the figure of Buddha, carved from a precious stone. The hall of the throne was made fragrant with flowers and perfumes. The ministers of the state and the courtiers used to sit on the ground in the hall and several hundred soldiers marshalled near the hall as guards and provided protection to the king and the courtiers [Jha, 1970: 163, Quoted from J.R.A.S., 1880: 529]. Thus ruled the king and his spotless glory spread from the palace upto the sea [Gnoli, 1956: 90--91, Insc. 67]. In the Nilsala Inscription, dated Samvat 68, the king has been praised as the protector of the earth who always engaged himself in doing good to others, even at the cost of his own happiness [Gnili, 1956: 90—9]. The Buddhist chronicles record that during the rule of Narendradeva Lokesvara Matsyendranatha came to Nepal. The king retired to a monastery as a monk in his old days for penances [Regmi, 1960: 162].

An examination of the rule of Narendradeva shows that the king did not only provide political stability after subduing the Guptas but also economic prosperity to the country by undertaking various development-oriented activities. During the rule of this king the dharma, artha and kama of the individuals of the state got fulfilled and they designated the king "the full moon of the Licchavi sky". The king was indeed the full moon of the Licchavi dynasty [Gnoli, 1956: 62; Insc. 66].

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Sivadeva II [A.D. 694–705]

Sometime after A.D. 672 but definitely before 678 A.D. Sivadeva II, the third son of Narendradeva, became the ruler of the dynasty [Regmi, 1960: 162]. The most important work before him was to keep vigil over the Guptas whom Narendradeva had subdued during his rule, and he firmly held them down. During this rule the people lived in comfort and led the life of virtueousness [Gnoli, 1956: 116–17, Ins. 81].

Vassalage of Tibet, although nominal, was a black spot on the glory of the Licchavi family and the country. After fully strengthening his position within the country and establishing matrimonial relations with the Maukharis and the Senas of India, about A.D. 703 the king stopped giving payment of annual tribute to Tibet. The Tibetan king got highly annoyed with Sivadeva II and he himself led an army to punish the king, and to capture the Nepalese territory. However, he was defeated and killed in the battlefield. The T'ang Annals shows that all this happened in A.D. 705. This victory of Nepal made the kingdom a sovereign state and the reputation of Sivadeva II established quite far and wide [Jha, 1970: 177–67]. Although some scholars tried to give this credit to Jayadeva II but the Balambu inscription of the king dated Samvat 129 [i.e. A.D. 705] [Vajracarya, 2030: 530–36] leaves no doubt that it was Sivadeva II himself who freed Nepal from the nominal suzerainty of the Tibetan monarch. The Pasupati Inscription of Jayadeva II also describes Sivadeva II to have conquered his enemies in the battlefield, and it is an additional proof in favour of Sivadeva II as the forfeiture of the Tibetan attack. Jayadeva sat on the throne in A.D. 711 only [Jha, 1970: 166–67]. Therefore, he cannot be that king who had inflicted defeat on the Tibetan king, causing his death in the battlefield.

Sivadeva II was a religious man and worshipper of Lord Siva. He made several grants of land for the maintenance and repair of temples [Jha, 1970: 168]. Regmi has written that during his reign 'Sanskrit was restored and the spirit for the veneration of cows and Brahmanas enlivened' [Regmi, 1960: 163]. The Pasupati Inscription reveals that the king 'greatly relieved the sufferings of pious men depending on him.' he possessed huge riches which be liberally spent in charitable works [Gnoli, 1956: 105–110]. The king ruled from the Kailasakutabhavana, held the epithet of paramabhattaraka maharajadhiraja, deserving an independent sovereign king, and protected his subjects like God Yama [Jha, 1970: 167]. For the great qualities of Sivadeva II, "the Nepalese king for the first time in the history of Nepal was admitted into the fold of the Ksatriyas and could woo the hands of the Ksatriya
princess of the plains. The Maukhari king offered his daughter to Sivadeva II and the Gauda king gave his daughter in marriage to Jayadeva II” [Regmi, 1960: 167]. Thus, during the reign of Sivadeva II the glory of the Licchavis of Nepal was at its zenith.

Jayadeva II [AD 713–733]

Jayadeva II, born of famed Vatsadevi, the daughter of the Maukhari King Bhogavarman, ascended the throne on the death of Sivadeva II sometime after Samvat 129 [A.D. 705] and definitely before Samvat 137 [A.D. 713], as is revealed by the Chyasalatole Inscription of A.D. 713 [Vajracarya, 2030: 539–42]. The Pasupati Inscription of the king reveals that he was on the throne definitely till A.D. 733 [Vajracarya, 2030: 539–42]. Virtuous Rajyamati, the daughter of Sri Harsadeva of the Bhagadatta dynasty of Assam, who was the master of Gauda, Odra, Kalinga, Kosala, and other places, was his espouse [Jha, 1970: 169]. Although the inscription reveals that the king exercised supremacy over Anga, Kamarupa, Kanchi and Magadha, Basak takes this statement as a historical fact, [Jha, 1970: 170] it appears to be an eulogistic remark of the scribe. It only shows that the king had good relation with the ruling families of the adjoining regions of India [Jha, 1970: 170]. From the inscription we get the information that the king was called paracakrakama, i.e. “covetous of the kingdoms of the enemies.” He perpetually provided protection to the virtuous people, was true to his words and attained a huge store of spiritual merit through the constant worship of God, Pasupatinatha. Himself a great poet, he greatly contributed to the growth of the Sanskrit language and education in the country [Jha, 1970: 170]. Jayadeva II was very proud of his family’s glory. That is why, the kings, even Sivadeva I, who lived in the hands of their feudatory chiefs as puppets, have been left unreckoned in the chronological table of the dynasty [Jha, 1970: 171].

Jayadeva was an extremely devoted son of his mother. When the latter offered an eight-petalled lotus-flower, made of silver, to the Pasupatinatha temple, in order to immortalise the occasion, he installed an inscriptive slab containing the geneology of his family in the precints of the temple. In the inscription the stuti of the deity, which is composed in exceptionally flowery Sanskrit, was composed by Jayadeva himself. The style and language of the poetry show that Jayadeva II was a great scholar of the Sanskrit language [Vajracarya, 2030: 539–42]. Regmi is of the opinion that Jayadeva II ruled till 740 A.D. [Regmi, 1965: 79].
Kalhana has written in the *Rajatarangini* that Armudi, the King of Nepal, possessed great might and he defeated the Kashmiri sovereign in a battle on the bank of the Gandaki river and threw him in a castle as a prisoner [Regmi, 1960: 168--72]. Although Jayswal has identified Armudi with Varadeva of the *Bhasavamsavalis* and Vijayadeva of the Minanatha Inscription, Regmi thinks that he was a Magar chief and ruled in the Magarat region of the kingdom with Ridi as its headquarters as an independent chief after the hegemony of the Licchavis declined in the Kathmandu Valley and its suburb due to many external and internal causes [Regmi, 1960: 168--172]. However, Jha maintains that as till A.D. 781. Sankaradeva II is found running the administration of the country untroubled, Armudi might have been “a Licchavi chieftian” [Jha, 1970: 171--72]. Quoting from the local chronicles, Sharma has written that during the reign of Varadeva, or Armudi of Kalhana, in the Kali era 3623, Matsyendranatha and Gorakhanatha came to Nepal. Gorakhanatha took the Karkotaka Naga and kept him in confinement on a hill-top which caused a long draught in the country. However, Varadeva got him released with the help of Acharya Bandhudatta and subsequent to it there was plenty of rain and prosperity in the country. Varadeva ruled from Lalitpur before Sankaradeva II according to the chronicle of Wright [Sharma, 106--107].

*The Last Licchavi Rulers* [AD 733--879]

History of the Licchavis becomes faint after Jayadeva II. By this time the inscriptions of Manadeva III and Baladeva [Balideva of the chronicles] and Manadeva IV have come to light [Vajracarya, 2030: 106--107]. This shows that they were the rulers of the Licchavi dynasty. Regmi is of the opinion that after Jayadeva II, till the beginning of the rule of Raghavadeva, there is a gap of 139 years and for filling up this vacuum “we must produce a list of kings at least for 6 generations or even greater.” After analysing the Sanskrit chronicles and writings of Levi, Bendall, Wright and Kirkpatrick, he has finally concluded that after Jayadeva II Sankaradeva [12 years], Manadeva III [13 years], Rudradeva I [27 years] Baladeva [11 years] and Balarjunadeva [21 years 5 months] ruled over Nepal till 879 A.D. His conclusion is based on the *Gopalarajavamsvali* and he accepts that all this is speculation, and the right list would have to be based on more reliable documents in the future [1965: 79--87]. It appears that the invasion of the Pala kings, Dharmapala and Mahipala of Eastern
India was the main reason of the downfall of the Licchavis from the political scene of Nepal [Regmi, 1965: 87-105]. Raghavadeva of the Thakuri lineage took advantages of the weak political situation of the time and ultimately he captured the throne. Raghavadeva is credited in the chronicles for the introduction of the Nepal Era on October 20, 879 A.D. [Regmi, 1965: 75—79; 105—113]. The historians of Nepal take the day of the beginning of the Nepal Era as the last day of the ancient period and the beginning point of the early medieval period. Hence, the history of the ancient period ends at this point.

**Contributions of Ancient Nepal**

Mountains usually repel population by their inaccessibility. This has been a fact in the case of Nepal till the beginning of the rule of the Licchavis. Since the very dawn of human civilization till the hayday of the Kiratas the concept of state and statesmanship was not developed, and people were socially and culturally disorganised and living the neolithic pattern of life in the numerous valleys, hill-tops and river-basins of the country. However, when the rule of the Licchavis commenced in the country, Nepal assumed the form of a politically organised state. Manadeva I, who ruled Nepal in the fifth century, made wide conquests in the east and west and laid the foundation of *varnasrama dharama* in the country. Like the Guptas in India, he appointed ministers for the administration of the country and issued inscriptions for informing the state-affairs to his people. He even struck coins to show the sovereignty of the nation; it helped the people in the proper transactions of commodities also. The Kirata system of administration was like that of the landlords; however the Licchavis, who were ideal rulers like the sovereigns of the classical age, always thought, and even vexed themselves with the thought of providing happiness to the countrymen. They introduced the system of Pancali [Pancayat] for the administration of the village. However, if the problem remained unresolved in the village level, they themselves took the matter and solved them for the satisfaction of the people. The judicial system of the Licchavis was based on the Hindu religious scriptures, and it provided great satisfaction to the people.

Because agriculture formed the main occupation of the countrymen, canals were often dug to irrigate the crop-fields, and the Licchavi kings generously contributed their mite in their construction. Several area and measuring units such as *bhumi* and *manika* were developed during this period which are even today standard in the remote villages and towns of Nepal. Various trades and industries got their full protection by the kings of ancient...
Nepal. The pattern set by them was in vogue till recently.

The kings of ancient Nepal, especially of the Licchavi period, were highly religious and catholic in temperament and they provided equal opportunity to various religions and religious sects without any prejudice for propagating their doctrine in the country. This policy was followed by all the ruling dynasties in the subsequent periods including the Shahas in the last two centuries. The five principles of conduct called yamas were strictly followed in society. One who deviated from these was confiscated of his or her property. Women were highly respected in society during the Licchavi period. Even widows were allowed to live respectfully, if they did not like to go sati.

The most important contribution of ancient Nepal was in the fields of art, architecture and Sanskrit education. Since the very beginning of the Licchavi period we find beautiful sculptures and bronzes of the Hindu and Buddhist deities made by the master-artists of the country. In no way are they inferior to the classical Gupta sculptures of the India sub-continent. The multi-roofed pagoda temples are indigenous to Nepal and they originated in the country during the Licchavi period. From the Annals of the T’ang dynasty we gather that there was a tower in the palace of Narendradeva which had seven storeys and they were roofed with copper tiles. Even today the multi-roofed temples are made in Nepal with copper or brass sheets as their roofing material. Similarly, the types of caityas and monasteries which got built during the Licchavi period became a prototype for the caityas and monasteries of Tibet, China, Burma and Siam, and even Ceylon. The fame of the Nepalese arts grew so much in the world that a Nepalese mission of artists under the leadership of Arniko was invited to visit Tibet and China by Emperor Kublai Khan in A.D. 1246 which built many splendid religious shrines and modeled charming sculptures, and even today they survive in China with their pristine glory and invite the attention of the art-connoisseurs for their appreciation.

Ancient Nepal set a kind of standard in all spheres of life of the Nepalese, be it the political culture, or even the social, religious, economic or artistic standards. The pattern of life commenced by the Licchavis is even today alive in Nepal, and it is influencing the life of the individuals and of the society with slight changes owing to the modernisation of the country.

References

The political unity that existed during the Licchavi period could not be sustained during the medieval period. The early part of medieval Nepal witnessed the emergence of three powers. In the latter part of the period, however, Nepal was divided into small petty kingdoms. The political history of Nepal was influenced by various forces. Therefore, while making an effort to give a clear picture of the political situation obtaining in the country during the medieval period, it is not possible to cover all the activities of those kingdoms in this article. Hence, only a brief introduction is given about the focal political currents prevailing at that time.

With the start of Nepal Samvat in A.D. 879, the medieval history of Nepal begins. The inscriptions set up by the kings are not available. Therefore, the history of medieval period could not be a connected and coherent account. The absence of inscriptions has made it very difficult to give a clear picture of the political situation obtaining in that period. The only available historical materials are the stray inscriptions found in temples, inns and water spouts, manuscript colophons and the chronicles such as the Gopala rajavamsavali which are guides to the medieval history.

Raghavadeva, who is given credit of initiating the Nepal Samvat was the first king of medieval period. In view of the capacity to initiate the new era, it is presumed that the political conditions during the time of Raghavadeva might have been better. The other succeeding illustrious kings after Raghavadeva are Sankaradeva and Gunakamadeva. After this, a political and administrative change, i.e., the evolution of dual administration [dvairajya], in the then style of government was evident.

Among the various administrative practices prevailing down from the ancient times, dual administration is one. In the monarchical system, only one incumbent is entitled to the throne. Administration is centralised in one king whereas in the dual administration system two or more than two are entitled to the
throne. In other words, this is a joint administrative system. In this system, the joint rule between the father and son, or between the brothers and nephews is likely. But under such joint administrative system, the kingdom was divided but not broken into pieces, thereby retaining the entity of the dominion. And under the joint administrative system two or more persons are declared rulers.

A careful glance at the manuscript colophons and inscriptions dating back to the early medieval Nepal manifests the prevalence of dual administrative system. In NS 119 [A.D. 998] there was the dual rule of Narendradeva and Udayadeva as evidenced by the palm-leaf manuscript called Astasahasrika Prajnaparamita which describes “Samvat 19 Margasirasuk-ladivapurnamasyam...... Maharajadhiraja paramesvara Sri Narendradeva bhattarakasya Sri Udayadevayo bhattarakayo Ubhayarajyelikhitam.”

The manuscript dating back to NS 128 [A.D. 1007] showed the prevalence of dual rule between Nirbhayadeva and Rudradeva. This was closely followed by dual administration of Rudradeva and Bhojadeva. The inscription found at Gacanani, Patan dated NS 132 [AD 1012] shows that Rudradeva and Bhojadeva were uncle and nephew. Laksmikamdeva was later included in this fold, according to the manuscript colophon dated NS 135 [AD 1015].

It appears, therefore, that the dual administration seems to have prevailed during the whole medieval period. One of the causes resulting in the strong entrenchment of dual rule in the medieval age is the strong sense of collective feeling, collective work and sharing of burdens. The tradition of undertaking social and administrative activities through Pancali [pancayat] seems to have resulted in the sharing of the crown. Though this tradition had positive impact due to the widespread collective feeling, as opined by Acarya Kautalya his Arthasastra, yet it also sowed the seeds of dissension among the members of the royal families thereby weakening the political unity during the medieval period.

Despite the fact that the political fabric during the early part of medieval period was fragile, the Kingdom of Nepal was not divided. At that time Nepa-Mandala was divided into various Visaya [districts]. The manuscripts, inscriptions, etc. of the corresponding period mention the existence of Visayas called Jiglodagam, Gandigulma, Mangwara, Pannaga, Pancawatadesa, Dhawalsrota, Phanping, Udayapura, etc.

Economically and culturally, too, the condition of medieval period had not deteriorated much. Trade contacts with Tibet and India, development of three main cities of the Kathmandu Valley and other adjoining cities, construction of giant-size idols in the big quantity, etc., provide testimony to the fact that medieval
Nepal had witnessed economic progress. Still more, the addition of new chapters in the Nepalese history from the advent of Tantricism among the people of Saivite and Buddhist cults indicates the creativity and dynamism of the medieval society, nor was the intellectual profile of this period so low. The fact that Nepalese intellectuals had considerably helped spread learning in Tibet is an unmistakable pointer of the presence of the society of intellectuals in this age. In the field of the arts too, the progress was not completely negative. Influenced by their craftsmanship it was in this age that Nepalese artists were invited by the neighbouring countries. This age also saw the development of commercial settlements in the Gandaki and Karnali basin.

Dispite these positive developments, a situation has developed in Nepal endangering the very political unity of the country. First of all, the dual administration had weakened the centre and this was further aggravated by the absence of military power. The rulers after the Licchavi period had granted the local organisations the powers of self-rule following the practice of the modern principle of decentralisation, and as there was no greater need of military strength, the latter declined. During the Licchavi times, the local pancayat organisations were made an integral part of administrative process by granting various kinds of rights to the people for their active participation in the affairs of the state. They had also maintained intact the army strength. The comparative study of Chinese accounts and the Licchavi inscriptions makes the above observation very much clear. But this situation was not found in the medieval period. It appears that the military budget was curtailed due to the peaceful atmosphere prevailing then.

In the eastern and western districts, however, the authorities of those districts who had inherited the rights since generations had converted themselves into feudal lords. Seizing the opportunity provided by the weak centre, these feudal kingdoms had begun to dream about the establishment of independent states.

The Rise of Triangular Power

In the 12th century, Nepalese politics took a new direction. The rulers of the centre could not control in the west beyond the Gandaki area. Seizing this opportunity, the Khas King Nagaraja established an independent kingdom in the beginning of the 12th century. Sinja was made its capital. Immediately after this, another independent kingdom was also established in the southern Tarai area in A.D. 1097 by Doya King Nanyadeva with Simraungadha as its capital. Because the rulers of the centre had become weak, they simply paid attention to self-protection. On
the contrary, the newly established kingdoms continued to prosper and become stronger in several ways.

Thus, the three kingdoms emerged in the first half of the medieval period. They clashed and attacked one another frequently and began to seek help against the third kingdom.

Though the centre prospered economically and culturally, it became weaker from the military point of view. On the contrary, the Khas Kingdom in the Karnali region became stronger militarily. Similarly, the Doya Kingdom of Tirhut had also become stronger militarily than the centre. In the Khas dynasty emerged brave kings like Kracalla, Asokacalla, Jitarimalla, etc. one after another. Kracalla and Asokacalla, aided by strong military power, expanded the sphere of influence in the west and south. Kracalla conquered Kartripur [Kumaun, Garhwal] in A.D. 1223. This campaign was further intensified by Asokacalla. Another succeeding king Jitarimalla turned out still braver than the previous kings. His successors had annexed new territories west of Sinja, westward and southward. Now Jitarimalla concentrated his effort towards conquering the areas eastward. At that time, infighting has begun in the centre [Nepal Valley] ruled by the Malla kings. The Doya kings of Simaraungarh were effortful to spread the sphere of their influence in the centre itself. This prevented Jitarimalla from advancing eastward. Consequently, the power of Khas kingdom extended up to the Gorkha area.

The establishment of Khas kingdom in the west and the Doya kingdom in the Tarai area shook the centre. It realised its security was in danger if things were not improved. As a result of this realisation, the centre once again became stronger in the latter half of the 12th century. That was at the time of King Sivadeva, an able ruler, who not only paid special attention towards economic development but also gave shelter to the learned people fleeing from Muslim persecution. He brought in administrative reforms which find expression in the end of “dual administration”. Accordingly, Anandadeva, Rudradeva and Amirtadeva reigned successively. But this practice came to an abrupt end with the emergence of the Malla dynasty. Arimalla and Abhayamalla of this dynasty established the rule of succession from father to son.

With the coming of the Mallas, two dynasties came to exist in the centre, one dynasty of kings with Deva as their surname and another dynasty with Mallas as their surname. As these dynasties shared various similarities, a novel method of succession was introduced. According to this practice, if a ruler of one dynasty was in the throne the ruler of another dynasty was declared heir to the throne. For instance, when king Jayabhimdeva was occupying the throne, his son was not declared heir to the throne. Similarly, when Anantamalla became king his son Arimalla was not made
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throne. It was the son of Jayadityadeva who was declared the rightful heir to the throne. This rule of alternate succession rendered the centre weaker. The royal palace became the centre of intrigues, internal conflict and power struggle. In such circumstances, one side sought the support of the Doyas [Tirhute] and another side sought the support of Khas Kingdom thereby paving the way for interference and incursions in the centre. It is during this time that the Khas of the west and Doyas of the sough attacked the Valley several times. The people of the valley suffered a lot of hardship, and the loss in terms of cultural decline was no less minimal.

Thus, the political conditions of Nepal did suffer a massive change. Due to the expansion to the east, west, north and south, Khas Kingdom of Karnali region became more powerful and stronger than the Kingdom of Nepal Valley. But they did not claim to have been the kings of Nepal; rather they said that they simply conquered the kingdoms of the valley. Nor did the Doya kings of Simraungadh claim to be the kings of Nepal. On the other hand, the rulers of the centre found it a cause of pride and glory at being able to control simply up to Nuwakot in words “Nuwakotparyanta Samastanepalrajakrtam”. From then onwards, politically the Valley began to be called ‘Nepal’.

In time of crisis hastened by external attacks and interference, Rudramalla appeared on the scene. Though he belonged to the royal family, he was not entitled to direct succession. But gifted with a number of virtues he became a joint ruler with King Anandadeva. Immediately after elevation to the status of ruler, he looked after defence matters for the first time. He constructed strong forts at several places. The main capital Tripura was also converted into the stronghold. He also suppressed the local rulers who attacked the centre during the critical period. This period saw the establishment of atmosphere of peace and security lasting for some years.

Meanwhile, a crisis developed in the Doya kingdom. In A.D. 1324, Emperor Gayasuddin Tughlaq of Delhi was returning home accompanied by the army through Tirhut after quelling rebellion in Bengal. Harisimhadeva was then the king of Simraugarh. News of forces of Tughlaq advancing made Harisimhadeva think that he was being attacked. After calling the people to be prepared for war, he himself came out of the fort. But the army of Tirhute was hardly a match against the strong army of the enemy. Incapable of standing against the army of Tughlaq, the army of Harisimhadeva entered ‘Banudurga’. The army of Muslim emperor then destroyed Simraugadh completely. Harisimhadeva now made a good escape and entered with the members of his family. He died in AD 1325 at a place called
I' inpatan on the way to Dolakha. His wife, son, and minister were jailed. Following the request for amnesty, the wife of Harisimhadeva, Queen Devaladevi and son Jagatsimha were allowed to stay at 'Yuthuniman', the palace of Rudramalla.

This event brought some changes in the political set-up of those days. The balance of triangular forces which existed in the past was disrupted. It is only the Khas Kingdom of Karnali region, and the Malla Kingdom of the Valley which remained. In this situation, the embodiment of youth Rudramalla passed away in AD 1326 at the age of 30. As a result, the administrative set-up of the valley was once again disrupted. On the other side, with the ascension to the throne of Khas Kingdom rulers like Adityamalla and Punyamalla, both brave and able, the influence of the Khas Kingdom spread far and wide. Apprehensive of the rise of influence of Tirhute in the royal palace of the Nepal Valley after the death of Rudramalla, Adityamalla of Khas Kingdom captured Nuwakot in A.D. 1327 and entered the Valley. The attack of Adityamalla was indeed terrible. He set many places on fire and stayed 22 days at Pulabahil, Lalitpur, surrounded by the army. It is only after the people of Lalitpur agreed to pay ransom that he returned home. Since the capture of Nuwakot, the hold of Khas kingdom extended in the west upto Gorkha.

After the death of Rudramalla some changes were made in the political order. The only issue of Rudramalla left after his death was a small daughter named Nayakadevi. The Queens of Rudramalla had followed Sati [the practice of a burning woman at the funeral pyre of her husband]. Therefore, the burden of bringing Nayakadevi up was shouldered by Padumaldevi, the mother of Rudramalla. In this respect, the advanced age of Padumaladevi had posed a problem. The clever wife of Harisimhadeva who had been granted shelter in the royal palace seized the opportunity and promised to take care of Nayakadevi. This provided Devaladevi the opportunity to take part in the affairs of the government.

As Nayakadevi reached the age of 8, a royal bridegroom was searched, and the prince of a dynasty called Raj dynasty of Benaras, Hariscandra by name, was brought to the palace and was married in A.D. 1329. As Nayakadevi was the rightful heir of Rudramalla, it is but natural that the influence of Hariscandra should rise gradually to the displeasure of the courtiers who wanted to do away with him. The plot was implemented only after the death of Padumaladevi by opposing Hariscandra who bought the help of Khas King Punyamalla. The Khas army entered the valley in A.D. 1334 to provide help and the courtiers entered Manigal to save their lives. After staying there for 6 months, the Khas army returned home, collecting fine and
compensation. Immediately after this Hariscandra was poisoned to death.

Even after this tragic event, Nayakdevi was looked after by Devaladevi. Living in one and the same palace the son of Devaledevi, Jagatsimha, and Nayakdevi fell in love and were married. This marriage was also opposed by Gopalcandra, the brother of Hariscandra. But being very much skilled in statecraft Devaladevi won the support of an influential courtier known as Anekarama and marched herself forward in the battle to quell the rebellion. This event marked the rallying of support behind Devaladevi. In the meantime, the reigning King Arimalla died. A weak king, he could not do anything to prevent squabbling and disorder. After the throne remaining vacant for three years, the illegitimate son of Anandadeva named Rajadeva was finally enthroned at the recommendation of both royal families. But he could not bring the situation under control.

In A.D. 1346 a daughter named Rajalladevi was born to Nayakdevi by her second marriage. Ten days later Nayakdevi died. Jagatsimha was already in the bondage of enemies. So Devaladevi brought up Rajalladevi with great care and hard labour. When Rajalladevi reached the age of 8, Sthitimalla was brought in as bridegroom to Bhaktapur and marriage took place in A.D. 1354. With this marriage, the affairs of state went into the hand of an able person.

No sooner than Sthitimalla came to power, the Nepal Valley was faced with a foreign attack of serious magnitude. That was also the time when the rulers were finding it difficult to restore peace and order. In such circumstances Sultan Shams-ud-din of Bengal entered the Nepal Valley through the eastern route. Bhaktapur the capital was the first casualty of this attack for there was no military power and defence equipment to stand by the huge army of the enemy. There was no alternative left for the rulers and the ruled but to find a way out for self-protection. According to the traditional practice, they entered into the fort then known as 'Banadurga' [a hide-out] with food materials and drinking water. Because they had no battle to fight, the Muslim invaders found enough time to loot and set fire on buildings. They also demolished the temples Pasupatinatha and Swayambhu and other famous temples. The people got panicky. After creating a terrible havoc, Sultan Sham-ud-din returned to Bengal. This attack did not bring about political changes immediately. Rajadeva continued to occupy the throne. Devaladevi still held the real power. The adverse impact the attack had was on the public life, especially from the economic standpoint. Pasupatinatha and Swayambhu could be reconstructed in 11 and 23 years respectively. Those temples which could not be renovated lost
their existence for good. This attack for the first time taught the lesson about the need of a strong ruler. That is why people supported Sthitimalla whole-heatedly.

After the demise of King Rajadeva in A.D. 1361 his son Arjundeva ascended the throne with Jayasimharama as Chief Minister and chief ally. But Devaladevi still wielded power. From that time Sthitimalla started taking apart in governing in the capacity of the husband of Rajalladevi. It is not only that the path had been paved by Devaladevi but also Sthitimalla was himself an able and clever ruler who understood the challenge of time. Nor was his courage and fighting skills less. After the death of Devaladevi in A.D. 1366, who made a profound impact on the body politic of that day, Sthitimalla was directly involved in the government. But this was not easily accomplished as he had to fight with the Chief Minister Jayasimharama who had also ambition to rise to power with the help of King Arjundeva.

In those days next to Tripur, Lalitpur Manigal held an important place in the Nepal Valley. Because a Mahapatra [prime minister] of Manigal was related to King Arjunadeva, the influence of Sthitimalla in Lalitpur was not strong. But once he enlisted the support of an influential courtier of Lalitpur named Jayat Mulmi, Sthitimalla was warmly greeted in Lalitpur. In fact, Chief Minister Jayasimharama opposed him but to no avail. Jayasimharama was jailed. Displeased with this behaviour, some courtiers attacked Sthitimalla. In the battle fought at Thimi, Sthitimalla crushed the enemies. A large number of them, encluding the ‘Mahapatra’, were killed.

This battle made Sthitimalla stronger. Now he began to rule as ‘Uparaja’ [deputy king]. He foiled the plots to unseat him. He made an adequate defence provision to strengthen the central administration. Army was organised and strong forts were built in several strategic places. There was peace and security. Public fear subsided. People spoke high of him in words, “Since the start of Sthitimalla’s rule, there is not one single case of theft.”

The incumbent King Arjundeva was now helpless. With the support of nearly all courtiers including Chief Minister Jayat, Sthitimalla drove the King away to Banepa in A.D. 1380 in a befitting manner. The deposed king escaped from Banepa to enter Bhaktapur with great difficulty only to be jailed in one fort at Tripur, Bhaktapur. There was no public support for the deposed king. Confined to jail in strict terms, he died in a year.

Sthitimalla was a far-sighted politician. Though he had already acquired power by suppressing the opponents, he had foreseen opposition. Even after driving away the king, he found it worthwhile to remain in power in the capacity of “husband of Rajalladevi” throughout his life. The people had, however
recognised him “Maharajadhiraja” [His Majesty the King]. Thinking that it was not good to continue enmity with the powerful opponent Jayasimharam Vardhan, he made peace with the family by conferring the title of feudal king to one member of that family.

Therefore, with the rise of Sthitimalla, the medieval history of Nepal takes a new turn. For a long time the administration in the centre had been weak. Therefore, the feudal heads, courtiers, ‘Kwathnayakas’ [local chiefs] frequently conspired to usurp power. Internal conflict was the order of the day. Foreign aggression used to take place due to weak administration. Sthitimalla gradually bought the feudal heads, other chieftains and courtiers under control. The administration in the centre was strengthened. Progress in foreign contacts was also made. For the first time Chinese delegation came to Nepal during the time of Sthitimalla, and a Nepalese delegation also visited China.

The political stability which he restored also enabled him to bring social and economic reforms. He was, therefore, one of the great social reformers. People enjoyed peace and happiness during his time. He gave shelter to learned men, thereby contributing to the advancement of learning.

Sthitimalla breathed his last in August 1395. Sthitimalla had three sons, Dharmamalla, Jyotirmalla and Kirtimalla. According to the traditional practice, all the three sons were declared kings after his death. Sometime after the death of Sthitimalla, Jayasimharam Vardhan had attempted to come to power but in vain. For the time being, the three sons ruled jointly. Later on, the sole authority of ruling went in the hands of the second son, Jyotimalla, who also turned out to be an able and efficient ruler. Peace and security was maintained in the Nepal Valley for about 20 years. A lover of learning and himself a learned man, he not only worked for the cause of learning but also contributed to the development of arts and religion by renovating temples such as Swayambhu.

Jyotirmalla was succeeded by his two sons Yaksa Malla and Jivamalla who ruled jointly. Sometime later the elder son Yaksamalla ruled alone. No less an able ruler, he ruled for 52 years. Like Sthitimalla and Jyotirmalla, Yaksamalla strengthened the Nepal Valley. The Valley once again became prosperous.

In this period of history, the Khas kingdom of Karnali region had become weaker due to internal conflict. Adtyamalla and Punyamalla had extended their sphere of influence upto Gorkha in the east. By the time of Prithvimalla, the kingdom had become very strong and prosperous. But after the death of Abhayamalla, his successors were no longer in power and did not
Mahasamanta Medinivarma concentrated his hold in the Sinja area. Samsarvarma annexed the lower Dullu area. Immediately after this, Jumla was captured by Baliraja who also could not restore the lost glory, though. In such circumstances, their hold extended up to only the Karnali basin area, losing the hold over Gandaki basin area.

The weak government in the Khas kingdom enabled Yakasamalla to expand the area of conquest to Gorkha and Palpa in the west. He also planned to spread his sphere of influence up to Mithila in the south-east. The main routes leading to the south-east were under Lalitpur and Pharping. At that time, the Mahapatras [feudatories] called Saptakutumbaja were ruling in the form of samanta and were powerful. Yakasamalla won the support of Mahapatra Udayasimha. Similarly, the Rabuts of Pharping were ruling in the form of feudals. Yakasamalla made friendship with them, too. The passage leading to Sakh in the northern area held a place of strategic importance. Yakasamalla was able to bring the rulers of Sakh under his control. Yakasamalla had also entered into tacit agreement with those vanquished rulers with a condition not to have any contact with the rulers of Champaran, Lohavar, and Koke and to prevent any foreign attack. In fact, Yakasamalla had issued Dharmapatra [religious bonds] in NS 573 [A.D. 1453] by getting the rulers touch the holy stone inscription erected to that effect. [The inscription is still well intact in the store of Pasupatinatha].

Once this was accomplished, Yakasamalla turned the capital Bhaktapur in the form of a stronghold. The city was surrounded by high walls all around. Forts were constructed near the walls with strong doors. Outside the wall, deep pits were dug. Thus, the city of Bhaktapur was turned into a well-equipped one to prevent external attack. All the inhabitants of Bhaktapur had contributed their labour, and besides this, rules and regulations were formulated for the protection of the fort.

After all these preparations, Yakasamalla had launched an attack over Mithila, as evidenced by the above-mentioned copper plate of Pasupatinatha and the accounts of Jagajyotimalla. The accounts of Jagajyotimalla have explicitly mentioned the conquest of Mithila by Yakasamalla including the expansion of command up to Gorkha and Palpa in the west and up to Sikarjung in the north covering the distance of 7 days. According to the traditional practice, once the area was captured, direct administration was not imposed. The victor was satisfied by making some financial gains through collection of ransom. But this practice rendered political unity more fragile. If the administration in the centre became weak somehow command in other areas was lost. This was what happened after the death of Yakasamalla. Hence, the expansion of the territories did not have enduring impact.
That Yaksamalla was an illustrious ruler of medieval Nepal is an established fact. His forte was not simply in skillful administration but also in the promotion of economic prosperity, literature, music, arts and religion. Himself a man of religious inclination and lover of arts, he erected various artistic temples in Bhaktapur during his time and got various books written.

There is no doubt that Yaksamalla was a competent ruler yet he did not bring about improvement in the traditional administrative practices. Hence, when he died, his sons began to rule jointly following the footsteps of the predecessors. Besides the sons, the sons of his daughters like Bhimmalla were declared joint rulers. The joint rule of six, namely Rayamalla, Ratnamalla, Ranamalla, Ramamalla, Bhimmalla, etc. was indeed a difficult thing without separate allocation of powers.

Among the sons of Yaksamalla, Ratnamalla was clever and ambitious and was not therefore content with the share of joint rule. Ratnamalla now diverted attention toward continuing joint rule in Bhaktapur plus the establishment of an independent kingdom in Kantipur. Kantipur was then economically prosperous. The Vaisya Mahapatras ruled there on hereditary basis. Three years after the death of Yaksamalla, Ratnamalla succeeded in establishing his hold in Kantipur in A.D. 1448 by defeating the Mahapatras.

This incident displeased his brother Rayamalla and others. But quite sagaciously, Ratnamalla instigated his brothers Ranamalla and Bhimmalla against Rayamalla and enlisted their support, too. Besides this, he also brought Mahapatras of Lalitpur under control. This was mentioned in the Dharmapatra, containing tacit agreement to this effect in NS 615 [1495] now preserved in the Pasupatinatha store. Again, with the help of brothers and Mahapatras, Ratnamalla captured Lalitpur and established his own kingdom. The incident of Kantipur had made the Mahapatras of Lalitpur cautious, and Ratnamalla could not easily defeat the Mahapatras of Lalitpur. So, though Ratnamalla commanded Lalitpur, the position of Mahapatras of Lalitpur remained unchanged. Ratnamalla had already annexed Nuwakot to be governed from Kantipur. Thus, the mutual conflict among Yaksamalla’s sons ended up in the creation of three independent kingdoms in the Kathmandu Valley. Later, the conflict took an unmanageable proportion.

Kantipur

A famous settlement since the ancient times, Kantipur developed still more once Ratnamalla turned it into a capital. Especially due to the competition with Bhaktapur and Lalitpur, it developed culturally.
Ratnamalla who was held responsible for limited government died in A.D. 1520. He was succeeded by his son Suryamalla. After him came Narendramalla also known as Amaramalla. This time Narendramalla had a great effort to strengthen Kantipur. He rallied support of the brothers of Pranamalla, the king of Bhaktapur, Mahapatra Bisnusimha of Lalitpur and Indrasimha of Dolakha against Pranamalla and finally a peace treaty was signed in A.D. 1548. This placed Kantipur in an enviable position.

Mahendramalla succeeded Narendramalla. An efficient leader, he was fully confident that political success alone is not enough for making a kingdom strong. Economic progress and social reforms are equally necessary. Therefore, he introduced social reforms. He activised the old panchayat system. He issued orders to the local chieftains to inspect their area to see that nobody dies from hunger, no injustice be done, to increase the production of clothes, utensils, etc, to export them and to learn foreign skills. This had a very favourable impact on economic development. Among the Malla kings it was he who first minted the silver coins. He made an arrangement for the exchange of this coin with the Indian coin. He also constructed the famous temple of Taleju including Mahadeva and Bhimsen temples. He died in A.D. 1575.

Sadasivamalla, who succeeded Mahendramalla, could not run the affairs of government efficiently and was driven away to Bhaktapur. Another son of Mahendramalla, Sivasimha was crowned king. As he was ambitious he made an effort to expand his kingdom. At that time Mahapatra of Lalitpur Visnusimha's successors were ruling in Lalitpur. He found it unbearable and captured Lalitpur in A.D. 1604. Lalitpur now became a satellite of Kantipur. He appointed his son Hariharsimha to rule in Lalitpur. He had also conquered Dolakha. It is also claimed that he had extended his influence upto Morang. This shows that Sivasimha occupies an important place in the medieval history of Nepal.

Hariharsimha had two sons named Laksminarsimha and Siddhinarsimha. Laksminarsimha, who had been living in Kantipur since the time of his grandfather, became the king of Kantipur since the time of his grandfather became the king of Kantipur. Because Laksminarshimha was a man of simple nature, he could not control Lalitpur, and as such it was captured by his brother Siddhinarsimha, to the displeasure of courtiers.

However, Pratapmalla, the son of Laksminarsimhamalla was active since the very childhood. He had a feeling that it was because of the weakness of his father that hold over Lalitpur was gone. On the other hand, he was inflammed by the prosperity of Lalitpur during the time of Siddhinarsimhamalla. He was in the
look-out for an attack Lalitpur. In A.D. 1636 Siddhinarsimha was engaged in ‘Kotihom’ for 40 days. At that time the people of Kantipur attacked Lalitpur and captured some forts. The people of Lalitpur drove away the people of Kantipur. Pratapmalla was then only 13 years old. The hostility with Lalitpur brought about big changes in the ruling pattern of the Mallas in the Valley. Bhaktapur took part in this cold war. Gorkha in the west and Makwanpur in the east also came forward with helping hands.

In A.D. 1641, Pratapmalla was only 18 years old. Impatient to become king he jailed his father by force and occupied the throne. Bhimmalla had fully helped him in this venture. The Malla kings of Bhaktapur and Lalitpur did not like the way Pratapmalla came to power. This was found to make Pratapmalla more cautious.

Pratapmalla played an important role in making Kantipur stronger than before. He had been able to capture half of Kutu and Kerung in Tibet with the help of Kaji Bhimmalla. Trade with Tibet had flourished. Dolakha was still under Kantipur. In 33 long years of rule, Pratapmalla never kept quiet. He played tricks of diplomacy sometimes to suppress Lalitpur with the help of Bhaktapur and sometimes to suppress Bhaktapur with the help of Lalitpur. He also wielded political diplomacy in relation to Gorkha and Makwanpur which had become involved in the affairs of Kantipur. He also contributed to the promotion of arts and culture.

There is no doubt that Pratapmalla was an able ruler. Besides his inclination toward the arts, culture, literature and music, he had curiosity to learn new things. He used to call himself great poet using the title kavindra before his name. He wrote poems in Sanskrit. He was also interested in stagecraft. The only weakness with him was that he was given to wantonness.

In his heyday of power, Pratapmalla ruled even by suppressing his courtiers. This suppression was responsible for the proliferation of various scandals after his death. Politically he was not far-sighted. He had also planned to make his younger son king after his death. But the plan proved abortive enough. After his death in A.D. 1674 Kantipur was shaken by insecurity. The throne lay vacant for three months following the dispute over the propriety of making the younger son the king as wished by Pratapmalla. It is only with the initiative of the king of Lalitpur, Srinivasamalla, that the elder son Nrpendramalla was made the king. Parthivendramalla and Mahipatendramalla were called ‘Mahila Raja’ [second king] and ‘Kancha Raja’ [younger king]. Nrpendramalla, being only 12 years old, the power of government was entrusted in the hands of Cautara [Prime Minister] Cikuti. Parthivendramalla succeeded Nrpendramalla who died at the age
of 18. Even then the influence of Cautara Cikuti did not wane. But apprehending the plot to unseat him, he took shelter in Patan. Power now shifted to Laksminarayana Josi who made a plan to snatch all powers. Parthivendramalla was killed in A.D. 1687 by poisoning. In fact, Cautara Laksminarayana Josi was involved in this death. But cunning as he was, he implicated the ex-Cautara Cikuti in this death. All the members of the family of Cikuti and Bamsidhar were affected. Sometime before this event actually took place, Laksminarayana Josi had an evil eye on Mahipatendramalla. At last, Mahipatendramalla too was mercilessly killed by employing various foul means. The king of Lalitpur had made a whole-hearted effort to protect Mahipatendra. Encouraged by the series of successes Laksminarayana also interfered in the internal affairs of Lalitpur and Bhaktapur. He plotted to dismiss his opponent Cautara Bhagiram of Bhaktapur through public opposition. He also compelled the king of Bhaktapur Jitamitramalla to seek political asylum in Kantipur.

Now the position of Cautara Laksminarayana was unchallenged. He minted coin in his name by side-stepping infant King Bhupalendramalla. But his palmy days were numbered by his opponents in A.D. 1690 by cold-blooded murder. The only monument to remind him is the famous temple ‘Jaisidevala’ in Kantipur.

The mother of King Bhupalendra, Rhidehlaksmi was a courageous woman. She provided instructions to run the affairs of government. Kantipur had succeeded in enlisting the support of other kingdoms in times of crisis. Kantipur had played the role of a mediator in the internal conflict of Sen kings of the east. In A.D. 1691, Vidhata Indrasen himself had come to Kantipur get help and stayed in Kantipur for two months.

Bhupalendramalla died near Ayodhya on his way to pilgrimage. His infant son Bhaskarmalla was placed on the throne. During the time of Bhaskarmalla, too, the diplomacy of Kantipur was of a higher order. Prime Minister Jhagal Thakur was popular. This king was fond of chasing elephants. Once when he was able to capture more elephants he chose the name of ‘Mahindrasimha’ [lord of elephants]. He had also become the king of Lalitpur for some years at the time when the throne was vacant there.

Mahindrasimha had one son who did not live long enough to rule. Therefore, the selection of his successor posed a problem. Later, an issue from the daughter of Mahipatendramalla was chosen as heir to the throne. Jagajayamalla, who became king, soon after the death of Mahindrasimha, was an able and strong ruler.
Jayaprakasamalla was the son of Jagajayamalla. Being a man of short temper, some courtiers wanted to remove him from the throne and replace him by his brother. Therefore, from the start of his rule, he was compelled to face the opposition of his brother. It is only after some of his brothers sought political asylum in Bhaktapur and Lalitpur that the tense situation subsided and peace reigned for some time. But the march of Prithvinarayan Shah upto Sakhu after the capture of Nuwakot was a strong blow to the prestige of Jayaprakasa. On the other side, his opponents made a capital use of it. The opposition group led by the noted courtier Taudhik Pradhan dethroned him and began to rule themselves in the name of his son Jyoti Prakasa. Jayaprakasa lived a wandering life for four years from A.D. 1746. Sometime later Jayaprakasa staged a comeback and seized power from the opposition group whom he crushed. Now Jayaprakasa was a bit more cautious. He made preparation for confronting Prithvinarayan Shah. Indeed Jayaprakasa played a significant role in foiling the first Kirtipur attack by Prithvinarayan Shah in A.D. 1767. But Prithvinarayan Shah had a clear-cut vision. He was already preparing for marching eastward in a planned way. But Jayaprakasa had no such vision nor plan because he had to divert all his attention toward self-protection. Therefore, he was no match in his confrontation with Prithvinarayan Shah. Success sided with Prithvinarayan Shah, and Kantipur was lost to him. After losing the battle for Kantipur in A.D.1768, Jayaprakasa first went to Lalitpur and then Bhaktapur. Wounded in the battle at Bhaktapur he died in A.D. 1769. Thus, though Jayaprakasa was really brave he is considered as one of the unsuccessful people.

Lalitpur

From the political viewpoint, Manigal [Lalitpur] occupied an important place next to Tripur, the capital of Bhaktapur. Among the Saptakutumbaja [seven families], three Mahapatras used to govern Lalitpur at that time. Lalitpur was then administratively divided into Daksina Vihara, Uttar Vihara and Jyestha Vihara. These Mahapatras had established dynastic rule as feudal administrators. After the establishment of independent rule in Bhaktapur and Kantipur followed by conflict between the sons of Yaksamalla, Mahapatra Visnusimha had set up his government unchallenged by others. For the emergence of Lalitpur as an independent kingdom, credit goes to the political sagacity of Visnusimha.

After the death of Vishnusimha, sons Narasimha, Purandarsimha and Uddhavsimha ruled jointly. They called themselves kings instead of Mahapatras. As unity among the
brothers did not last long. Purandarsimha took over the sole right of governing Lalitpur. King Sivasimha of Kantipur did not like the independent status of Lalitpur. He attacked and captured Lalitpur. For some time Kantipur and Lalitpur were united. Lalitpur again became independent during the time of Laksminararsimha and Siddhinarsimamalla after the death of Sivasimha. With the help of mother Lalmati and courtiers Siddhinarsimha was able to win Lalitpur. After the explicit agreement between the two brothers stipulating that one’s enemy is the other’s too A.D. 1620, Kantipur granted recognition to Lalitpur. Thus, Kantipur and Lalitpur were formally separated.

Lalitpur registered a triumphant development under the able stewardship of Siddhinarsimha. Apart from strengthening from defence point of view, he also made foreign contacts. Especially, Lalitpur established an intimate contact with Gorkha. Economically and culturally too, Lalitpur made definite progress. Because of the strengthening of Lalitpur kingdom, it was not shaken hard by the opposition of Kantipur thereby rendering the people to become more agile.

Siddhinarsimha was a man of religious temperament. Being a devotee of Lord Krisna he constructed the famous temple Krisna Mandir in A.D. 1636, a temple which represents the height of progress of Nepalese arts and architecture. He had also constructed Bisweswara and other temples. Because of deep involvement in religious affairs apart from the state affairs, his son Srinivasamalla rebelled against the king and created a rebel government. This paved the ground for Kantipur’s intervention in the affairs of Lalitpur. Pratapmalla was prompt in granting recognition to Srinivasamalla. Besides this the two signed a treaty in A.D. 1638. The treaty bears witness to the fact that Bhaktapur, Gorkha and Makwanpur had not helped Lalitpur in the latter’s critical period. In fact, the father and son took to arms but Siddhinarsimha did not find it good to suppress his son. He officially handed over the power of government to his son in A.D. 1660. Fed up with life, Siddhinarsimha spent the rest of his life in pilgrimage and other religious activities and died in India.

Srinivasamalla was no less an able ruler. He had played an important role in the politics of that time. So long as Pratapmalla and Jagat Prakasa Malla of Bhaktapur reigned, Srinivasa could not venture to push ahead the march of conquest. But once these two opponents were out of the scene, he marched ahead. The new king of Bhaktapur Jitamitramalla did not confront him but rather followed him. As far as Kantipur is concerned, Kantipur came under his control and he appointed the king and ministers there as he liked. He went to the extent of calling himself Nepaleswara [the lord of Nepal]. He had also exerted a considerable influence
towards the Sen kingdom. He had commanded the joint military force of Gorkha, Lamjung and the valley which left for Makwanpur. Therefore, he had to some extent enhanced the prestige of Lalitpur.

One of the reasons of great success of Sriniwasamalla was due to the help of Cautara Bhagirath Bhaiya who held a considerable influence in Lalitpur. Sriniwasa proclaimed, “There is no difference between me and Bhagirath Bhaiya. The people should pay respect to him equal to mine.” This royal announcement was naturally quite annoying to Yognarendra, the son of Sriniwasamalla. The old story repeated itself when Yognarendra rebelled against his father who in turn was forced to pass on the role of succession in favour of his son. Immediately after this Bhagirath Bhaiya, too, passed into oblivion.

Young Yognarendra displayed his administrative skill. He was frequently engaged in battle with Kantipur and Bhaktapur, especially with the latter. He led to the battle front himself when he went to help the Sen kingdom of the east. He died of food poisoning in A.D. 1705 when he was directing the battle from the temporary shelter in Bhaktapur. He was also a great lover of music.

Lalitpur became weak once more after the death of Yognarendra. Because he had no issue from his wife, various persons were installed on the throne. The unstable situation in Lalitpur led Kantipur and Bhaktapur to interfere. Because the infant king was occupying the throne, the power of 6 Pradhans increased. The past glory of Lalitpur could not be maintained well.

Visnumalla, who succeeded Yognarendra, was an able ruler to some extent. In fact, he had sought to strengthen Lalitpur in terms of defence by rebuilding the forts of the kingdom. Successor Rajyaprasamalla was the brother-in-law of Visnumalla. He had escaped from Kantipur and had sought political asylum in Lalitpur. He was succeeded by Viswajitmalla who was also killed due to involvement in an illicit love affair. The Pradhans and the people of Lalitpur chose Jayaprakasa of Kantipur as their king. But Jayaprakasa was dethroned only because of his hot temperament after the lapse of two and a half year. This was followed by the selection of Ranajitmalla of Bhaktapur as their king. He introduced new administrative procedures giving the people share in administration. At that time, the economic and political blockade imposed by the Gorkhalis had weakened the people of Lalitpur. Therefore, Ranajitmalla could not continue long. Once again Jayaprakasa was made the king of Lalitpur. But as Jayaprakasa began taking
revenge against Kajis who dethroned him than directing attention to govern well, he was deposed. One of the Kajis proposed to enthrone Prithvinarayan Shah. In fact, Prithvinarayan Shah himself tried to be the king of Lalitpur in anticipation of the fact that this will help quicken the conquest of the Valley. He, therefore, sent his brother Dalmardan Shah. To prevent the possibility of any revenge against him, Prithvinarayan Shah had kept the sons of Kajis in Nuwakot. But this course of action did not do him any good but rather created a problem. Because Lalitpur was established in the form of a stronghold, Prithvinarayan Shah could not make contacts with his brother as required. The people of Lalitpur were not pleased with Prithvinarayan Shah because the latter failed to put an end to blockade even if he was made their king. They cut off the relations with Prithvinarayan Shah and made Dalmardan the king at their own free will. Yet this had no favourable result. They replaced him by an extremely rich man Tejnarsimha Malla. He was the last king of Lalitpur, for immediately after the conquest of Kantipur by Prithvinarayan Shah, Lalitpur was captured.

Since the death of Yognarendramalla till the conquest by Prithvinarayan Shah, the political history of Lalitpur registered a series of ups and downs. This shows how once the situation is worsened, it is difficult to restore order.

Bhaktapur

Rayamalla, by virtue of being the eldest son of Yaksamalla, became the ruler of Bhaktapur. Though his brothers occupied Kantipur, Lalitpur, and Banepa, he was not interested in fighting with them. Thus, Bhaktapur which had been occupying a pride of place as the central capital of the valley since the last few centuries became the capital of a small kingdom during the medieval period. But culturally, however, Bhaktapur continued to become a centre to some extent.

As the traditional system of joint rule of princes continued in Bhaktapur as in Kantipur, Lalitpur and the Sen kingdom in the west, struggle within the royal family was a regular phenomenon. In comparison, Bhaktapur enjoyed political stability more than other kingdoms.

Bhuban Malla, the son, succeeded Rayamalla. After his death, Jitmalla and Pranmalla ruled jointly. Again Pranmalla alone ruled. Pranmalla was succeeded by his son Biswamalla. Again his sons Trailokya Malla and Tribhuvan Malla began to rule jointly. At that time their queen mother Gangarani turned out to be very active. In memory of her many religious activities in Bhaktapur, she is still remembered by the inhabitants of Bhaktapur.
Jagajyotimalla succeeded Trailokyamalla. Himself a lover of the arts and learning, Bhaktapur saw the advancement of learning during his period. Learned people were looked after well. The commentary on the famous work Narapati-Jayacarya was prepared. Many a book, drama, and song written by Jagajyotimalla and those of other writers are available till now. The famous tank of Bhaktapur called Tawapokhari was constructed by him. It is also that he introduced the noted festival of Bisket Jatra.

Jagajyotimalla was succeeded by his son Naresamalla. He had to confront with Pratapmalla, but peace was restored once the former made a present of elephants. Some of the writings of Naresamalla are still intact in the Bhaktapur Palace.

Naresamalla was succeeded by his son Jagatprakasa Malla who was quite young at the time of succession to the throne. Once he became mature, he became a strong rival of Pratapmalla. Like Pratapmalla he was proud to claim expertise in the field of music and literature. The poems which he had written in Sanskrit and Maithali were inscribed in stones. He had also written dramas and other books which are available. In order to harass him, Pratapmalla along with Sriniwasamalla had attacked Bhaktapur several times. Pratapmalla even looted the artistic objects of Bhaktapur and decorated Kantipur. However, Jagatprakasa Malla did never give in before Pratapmalla. Rather, he was effortful to isolate Pratapmalla with the help of Sriniwasamalla.

Candrasekhar was the person who helped Jagatprakasa most. He had made Kanyadan [the offer of girl] to Jagatprakasa. That is why minister Candrasekhar had become more powerful. Like Sriniwasa he also proclaimed, “Candrasekhar is dearer to me than life.” His name was joined along with Jagatprakasa. The joint name ‘Jagcandra’ circulated in Bhaktapur for some time.

After the death of Jagatprakasamall in A.D. 1672, his son Jitamitra Malla ascended the throne. Being a man of peaceful nature, he used to call himself ‘Sumati’ [mature person]. It was his wish to see that the court intrigue which rocked Kantipur and Lalitpur quite often was not repeated in Bhaktapur. Therefore, he was quite wise and far-sighted enough to train his son Bhupatindra Malla since his childhood and duly handed over the power. Jitamitramalla sought friendship with both Kantipur and Lalitpur. He was somewhat different from other Malla kings. Cautara Bhagiram was powerful at that time. The works of Jitamitramalla are still found in Bhaktapur.

Bhupatindra Malla governed well. It is because of his efficient administration and promotion of cultural activities that the prestige of Bhaktapur enhanced greatly. He confronted with Yoganarendramalla, the King of Lalitpur and finally suppressed
him with the help of Gorkha. Makwanpur, and Tanahu and
signed a peace treaty in A.D. 1701. The peace treaty also hinted at
the isolation of Kantipur. After two and half years Bhupatindra
Malla entered into a treaty with Kantipur against Lalitpur.
Around this time, there was a sort of competition or rivalry
among Malla kings to chase the elephants of the Terai and arrest
them in cooperation with the kings of Makwanpur.
Bhupatindramalla had also captured many elephants and brought
them home in consultation with King Manik Sen of Makwanpur.
Reformer and builder as he was, he had also renovated many
dilapidated forts. Especially he was irresistibly drawn towards
arts and architecture. He had constructed the temple ‘Nyatapola’,
Bhairav Mandir and the palace of 55 windows.

The last Malla king to rule over Bhaktapur was
Ranjitmalla, the son of Bhupatindra Malla. Though a man of
simple nature without any intention of meddling in dirty politics,
circumstances forced him to be involved in various wars. He had
established friendship with Prithvinarayan Shah. But it was
Prithvinarayan Shah who was to profit from it. His intention
behind establishing friendship with Prithvinarayan Shah was to
capture the strategic areas like Sakhu, Cangu and Mahadeva
Pokhari. But finally, the plan simply ended in smoke. His plan was
toned down by the planned unification campaign of Prithvi-

narayan Shah. Once Bhaktapur was captured, he went to Banaras
on pilgrimage and died there. Ranjitmalla inherited traditional
fondness for collecting historical objects, books, etc. He had also
written dramas.

**Sen Kingdom of the East**

Due to involvement in mutual conflict, the Malla
kings could not extend their sphere of influence in the east and the
west. In the meantime, Mukunda Sen rose to power. Among his
sons, the younger one Lohangsen was very much ambitious. He
was able to extend the kingdom from Makwanpur to Vijayapur.
As this kingdom included a considerable portion of terai plain
lands, it was economically more prosperous than other kingdoms.
But in spite of this, this kingdom could not remain far from power
politics.

Lohangsen was succeeded by his son Raghbasen.
Raghbasen was succeeded by his son Harihar Sen. Harihar Sen
annexed some southern area to his kingdom. As a mark of
consolidation of his kingdom, he acquired the title of “Hindupati”
[Master of the Hindus]. The tradition of calling Sen king
“Hindupati” continued in future too. They were also called
‘Patshah of East’. Because of the fact that Harihar Sen and
Pratapmalla had married the daughters of the king of
Coochbihar, Pratapamalla had close contact with Harihar Sen. At one time Harihar Sen’s army had moved toward Kantipur to help Pratapamalla but the opponents diverted the force homeward by distorting the matter. This had created some breach of understanding between the two.

The lust for power seen in the courts of Malla kings of the Nepal Valley also affected the palace of ‘Hindupati’ as evidenced by the express intention of the sons of Harihar Sen to be kings. This sowed the seed of internal conflict in the Sen kingdom. In fact, Prince Shubhasen came to the Kathmandu Valley for help. Pratapamalla who had already the experience of coup now fully encouraged Shubhasen to pursue his effort. Pratapamalla, not only conspired secretly to make Shubasen the king, but also attacked Makwanpur. After the death of Pratapamalla, Srinivasamalla of Lalitpur became the close confidant and helper of Shubhasen. Incidentally, Srinivasamalla, too, had usurped power through rebellion against his father. Gorkha and Lamjung also joined the fray in expectation of getting some benefits from it. Therefore, the Sen kingdom, as a consequence, was divided into Makwanpur and Vijayapur. Shubasen occupied the throne of Makwanpur. The throne of Vijayapur was ensured for his nephew Vidhata Indra Sen. It is very likely that nephew-uncle relation should turn sour. Thus, the two parties made attempts one after another to defeat the rival group with the help of Malla kings and the kings of Chaubisi kingdoms.

Some time later Shubhasen had to face a conspiracy. Ministers like Pradyumna Upadhyaya and Parasuram Thapa on whom he had reposed a good deal of trust joined the Nawab of Purnea Ishfundiya Khan and in due time jailed him [Subhasen]. Nephew Vidhata Indra Sen now marched toward Purnea to release his uncle but due to the conspiracy of Kalu Upadhyaya, both the nephew and uncle were arrested even though the nephew had succeeded in releasing the uncle. Both were dispatched to Delhi in confinement. This created Rajyabyaasen in the Makwanpur kingdom in the east. But the ministers of Vijayapur and Makwanpur took the wise decision of ensuring the thrones of Vijayapur and Makwanpur to the two sons of Mahipati Sen. The Kamala river divided the kingdoms.

After the death of Maniksen, his son Hemkarnasen sat on the throne. As a result of rivalry and struggle for power in the Sen palace, another kingdom called Caudandi was created and the other son of Maniksen, Jagatsen, was made its king. Digbandhansen, the son of Hemkarnasen, was the last king of Makwanpur. Prithvinarayan Shah captured Makwanpur in A.D. 1762. Caudandi was captured only after 11 years. Karna Sen was made its king. In Vijayapur, however, there was no better
understanding between Kamrajdat Sen and his minister Budhikarna Rai. In this context Kamrajdat Sen was killed. Then the ex-king of Caudandi Karna Sen was installed on the throne of Vijayapur by Budhikarna Rai. A year after the capture of Caudandi, Vijayapur was also taken over by the army of Prithvinarayan Shah. This sealed the fate of Sen kings.

_Basi Principalities_

Turning to the situation in the west, we find that the Khas kingdom established by Nagaraja in the Karnali region was becoming more important from several angles. Mention has already been made about this. By the time of Prithvimalla this kingdom had virtually become a mini-imperial power. On account of commercial contacts with Tibet and India, economic position was well improved. The policy of religious liberalism which the rulers of this kingdom embraced in fact paved the way for the growth of various religious communities. The Khas kings inclined to learning also gave shelter to the learned people of other countries. A good number of palaces, temples, Buddhist vihars etc., were constructed and the number of artists and artisans swelled. Thus, the Khas kingdom occupied an important place in the medieval history of Nepal. After the death of Abhayamalla, this kingdom broke into pieces. Medinivarma and Baliraj captured the Jumla area. Samsaravarma occupied the Dullu area. By the end of 16th century, the Karnali region was divided into tiny principalities which numbered 22. Therefore, these kingdoms were called Baisi [22]. These also include Jajarkot, Salyan, Rukum, Acham, etc.

_Caubisi Principalities_

The Khas kings of Karnali region, Aditya Malla and Punya Malla, had also established their control over Nuwakot of Gandaki basin area and western areas too. Once this Khas kingdom was divided into Baisi tiny states, the rulers could not control the Gandaki region. Among the kings of the Valley, Yaksa Malla had once extended the sphere of influence upto Gorkha and Palpa. But due to the mutual bickering, conflict and scramble for power that followed the death of Yaksa Malla, the influence could not spread beyond Nuwakot. Therefore, in the Gandaki area too, the small kingdoms of Sen, Shah, Chand, Samal etc. came to exist.

One of the outstanding rulers were Mukunda Sen who had conquered the vast area. He had also attacked the Kathmandu Valley. After his death the kingdom was divided. The three sons of
Mukunda Sen, Manikyasen, Bhringisen and Vinayaksen ruled in Palpa, Tanahu and Butwal respectively. Another son Lohangsen controlled Makwanpur. Ramasingh, the nephew of Mukundasen, became the king of Rising. Grandson Candrasen became king of Rajpur.

Parbat, Chiring and Galkot were captured by Samals, Pyuthan by Cand, Khanci and Dhurkot by Medhasi, Gulmi, Argha, and Isham by Kala Makewan and Dhor, Garahu, Bhirkot, Satahu, Nuwakot, Karsi, Lamjung by the Shah kings. As the number of these small kingdoms reached 24 they were called Caubisi principalities. Mutual warfare among these principalities was a regular phenomenon. But they also cooperated with each other in times of stress and strain. These principalities had some political mobility. Palpa, Parsa, Kashi, Tanahu and Lamjung were somewhat stronger than other principalities. Thus, the ‘Caubisi’ principalities had an important place in the medieval history of Nepal.

Gorkha

Although the Gorkha kingdom belonged to the of Caubisi principalities, it was not counted as a part of Caubisi. It had acquired an independent existence though it was created in the latter part of medieval history. After seceding with Lamjung, Drabya Shah established a kingdom in Gorkha. Initially, Gorkha was financially weak. Some difference with this kingdom is that its kings believed in ruling with ability rather than through conspiracy. Shah kings like Ram Shah followed a liberal policy with the balance tilting towards justice. This policy attracted people towards Gorkha. Before taking any major decision of public importance, there was a system of Kacahari, thus establishing direct contact with the people in general. The Gorkha kingdom founded by Drabya Shah was strengthened by this grandson Ram Shah. He also expanded the territory of the kingdom. He made some legal and civil codes for providing justice and maintaining peaceful social order. He also established contacts with Jumla, Palpa, and Parbat kingdoms. By establishing intimate contacts with Siddhinarsimha Malla of Lalitpur, he maintained balanced external politics. This had also an impact on the expansion of trade and development of arts and crafts. The temples of Muralidhar, Narayan, Mahadeva, etc. were built in Gorkha.

The son of Ram Shah, Dambar Shah had set his eye on marching towards the east. In fact, he helped Lalitpur and had fought with Pratapamalla. After him Krishna Shah, Rudra Shah and Prithvipati Shah sat on the throne of Gorkha. The latter had
made great effort to advance toward the east. He visited the Nepal Valley twice. In the beginning, however, he had set up good contact with Kantipur. But after studying the situation, he helped Bhaktapur. Prithvipati had several sons some of whom were able. One of them Chandrarupa Shah had established the ammunition factory. The effort for marching towards the east had given political mobility to Gorkha.

Narbhapal, his son, too, shared the similar intention. In the wake of internal strife in Kantipur, Narabhupal had attacked Nuwakot but in vain.

Prithvinarayan Shah had been inspired from his childhood days. Being farsighted enough to understand the situation, he had planned the unification of the country setting aside the cold war politics. He, in due time, materialised his plan. The materialisation of his plan marked the end of medieval period of Nepalese history and the dawn of modern age.
Modern Nepal

Ludwig F. Stiller, S.J.

Historians of Nepal date the beginning of Modern Nepalese history from the year 1769. This is not fully satisfying. The year 1769 marks the end of Malla rule in Kathmandu Valley, but the thrust that created modern Nepal began long before, in 1744. It was then that Prithvi Narayan Shah, King of Gorkha, conquered Nuwakot and took the first step towards the conquest of Kathmandu Valley. One cannot trace in these few pages each step that Prithvi Narayan Shah took from 1744 onwards. But to understand modern Nepal, one must understand two points about that twenty-five year campaign. The first was a pre-condition for the campaign. The second, in effect, created modern Nepal.

To conquer the three kingdoms of Kathmandu Valley, Prithvi Narayan Shah had to motivate and finance his Army. Traditionally, in the hill states of Nepal, all government service was paid for by land-grants called Jagirs. Soldiers were paid through their captains, to whom a Jagir was assigned. Prithvi Narayan Shah adapted the traditional Jagir system so that not only the officers commanding companies of soldiers received land grants, but each single fighting man was given a land-grant proportioned to his rank. A land-grant was an enormous status symbol in the Nepal of that day. In one stroke, Prithvi Narayan Shah not only financed his campaign but created as well the motivation that would drive his troops through twenty-five years it took Gorkha to conquer the Valley. Secondly, that twenty-five year campaign itself must be considered. During these twenty-five years, the Army of Gorkha was welded into a fighting force without match in the hills of Nepal. When they captured rifles from both the Muslim troops that came from Murshidabad in India in 1763 to support the Malla kings and from the British force that tried in 1767 to intervene, Prithvi Narayan Shah had a well-disciplined, tough fighting force that was also the best armed in the hills.
From a military point of view, the actual surrender of the three capital cities of Kathmandu Valley: Kathmandu, Patan and Bhaktapur was an anti-climax. The system of government that Prithvi Narayan Shah introduced was historically more important. Prithvi Narayan ruled through military governors. To each he gave strong, general guidelines. He expected each of his governors to use their own native intelligence in administering those guidelines. The result was a decentralization of rule that allowed local governors to adapt to local conditions. Yet military discipline and his guidelines continued to give Prithvi Narayan the over-all control necessary to a unitary state. This became the pattern of government in united Nepal. Gorkhali rule was throughout characterized by flexibility and central control. This system forced local governors to rule intelligently and responsibly, and provided the flexibility necessary to a unified rule in a country as diversified as Nepal.

One of the practices that Prithvi Narayan followed rigorously and which was to become extremely important in later years was the Pajani. Most hill states, of which there had been over eighty at one time, used some form of the Pajani was an annual review of individual performance, followed by dismissal, promotion, transfer or re-appointment. The Pajani, combined with the King's power to bestow or withdraw land-grants, gave the King absolute control of the government. As the territory of unified Nepal grew, the power to assign land as well as to dismiss or promote increased significantly, the Pajani became a powerful political tool, and the right to wield it became the first objective of those who fought to control the State.

The kings who succeeded Prithvi Narayan Shah enjoyed very short reigns or came to the throne as minors. Nepal was ruled by regents from 1777 to 1832, except for a five year interval, 1794 to 1799, and the year 1816. During thirty-one of those years [1806-37], the total power of the state was in the hands of a Chief Minister who was not a member of the royal family. The achievements of the first half of this period, 1777-1814, were significant. The unification of Nepal was completed, and a genuine Pax Gorkhali was introduced in the land. The people enjoyed real peace. An end, once for all, to the attacks and counter-attacks, the raids and counter-raids that had marked the pre-unification period. This peace, and the security the unification gave to Nepalese against the steady encroachment of British rule in India, are perhaps the two greatest benefits of the unification period.

There were, however, unhappy characteristics of this period also. The first of these was factionalism. It began in November 1777, after the death of Prithvi Narayan's eldest son
and successor, Pratap Singh Shah. Pratap Singh’s widow, Rajendra Laxmi, and his younger brother, Bahadur Shah, entered immediately into a struggle for power that created the first cracks in the unity of leadership Prithvi Narayan had forged and led to factionalism in the Darbar. The campaign of unification continued. Rajendra Laxmi, who first got the upper hand, consolidated the Gorkhali conquest of the eastern hills and the eastern Tarai and pressed westwards to the Gandaki River in western Nepal. She died young, in 1785, and Bahadur Shah became regent. Contemporary accounts make it clear that he first conducted a very thorough Pajani. He removed Rajendra Laxmi’s advisers and followers and introduced his own trusted men. His team worked well. Bahadur Shah added more territory to the kingdom of Nepal than any of his predecessors. In fact, more than all of them combined. He did this with a minimum of actual warfare. Battles were fought indeed. Fiercely contested ones. But far more territory came to Bahadur Shah through the voluntary submission of petty kings to the rule of united Nepal than came by Gorkhali conquest. To those petty kings who submitted to his rule, Bahadur Shah extended the right to continue as governors, with the title of king, to collect taxes and to rule as they traditionally had. Each such king, however, was obliged to acknowledge the sovereignty of Nepal. To obey immediately any commands the Centre issued. To provide troops to assist in campaigns near his territories. And to pay a nominal annual tribute to the Nepali State. These were lenient terms, when the alternative was certain defeat at the hands of an Army that had developed such an esprit de corps and military skills. No hill states in Nepal had the power to withstand the onward march of the Nepal Army. But factionalism continued to plague the administration, and it began with the feud between Rajendra Laxmi and Bahadur Shah.

The second characteristic of this period was the increasing alienation of land under the Jagir system. The Army was financed by Jagirs, and as the Army grew in size, more and more land was assigned in military Jagirs, and was thus “alienated”. This alienation was limited, of course. All Jagir lands remained under the ultimate control of the State, and the State retained jurisdiction over all those who lived on Jagir lands. Within these parameters, however, it must be said that the Jagir-holder held much more than the right to collect taxes from those farming his Jagir. He had the right, also, to decide judicial cases and appropriate judicial fines in all but the Panch Kat. Panch Kat was a generic name for those crimes whose punishment affected life, limb or the confiscation of the total property of the accused, rare crimes in any society and even more rare in Nepal. The Jagir-
holder had the right as well to appropriate compulsory, unpaid labour from his tenants. The Jagir-holder himself was to a manager. In practice this meant that those living on Jagir land were under the jurisdiction of a hired manager in almost all activities that were a part of daily village life. Tenants retained the right of appeal to the Centre for redress from exploitative practices and for final judgement in legal cases, but the cost and the difficulty of such an appeal made this an impractical solution for most individual citizens.

The third characteristic was exploitation. The Central Government opposed exploitation at all times. Whenever villagers called such cases to the attention of the Centre, redress was given. Certain aspects of the system, however, actually encouraged exploitation. For example, the direct link between land-taxes and the salary of a government official encouraged a government official to maximize his salary at the expense of his tenants. His ability to do so enhanced by his control, within limits, over the judicial process on his Jagir and his right to appropriate judicial fines.

These three characteristics had a direct bearing on the political development of Nepal, especially after the Anglo-Nepal War of 1814-16. They did not interfere with the unification process itself. Their immediate impact on the quality of life in Nepal was not at all uniform. Much depended on the personal character of the Jagir-holders and local governors. In years to come, however, when Jagir lands were limited and Jagirs became prizes to be sought, their impact would be profound, and the lot of the people would deteriorate.

Nepal reached its greatest extent in 1811. At that time it extended from the Teesta River on the east to Dharmashala on the west. This was an enormous stretch of land to administer, especially when one considers that the heartland of this long, narrow territory was the Mahabharat Lekh, a mountain range almost fifty miles broad, stretching throughout the east-west dimensions of the country and ranging upwards from 7,000 to 9,000 feet in altitude. Communities were separated by mountain barriers or rivers, and the east-west line of communications was an uncommonly difficult mountain track.

One of the truly impressive achievements of this period was the Hulak system, a simple mail system, based on relays of runners. Local villagers were recruited as Hulak runners in exchange for guaranteed tenancy rights on their land. The average relay was eight miles on either side of a village. A message brought from the east by a runner had to be carried immediately by one of the Hulak runners of the village westward to the next village relay station, approximately eight miles. A message from the west was
carried eastwards about eight miles. Mail on the Hulak system was restricted to official mail. The burden was not too great, especially when one considers that at each relay point there were a number of runners who served in turn. There was no mail system for the general public. But for administrative purposes, the Hulak system allowed the Centre to bridge in some small way Nepal's communications' barriers and made a central administrative system practical.

The Anglo-Nepal War of 1814-16 was a great turning point in Nepal's history. It was a war that Nepal lost, in absolute terms. Territorially, Nepal lost the whole of the area west of the Mahakali River, the Tarai, and the area between the Mekhi and Teesta Rivers in the east. In addition, Nepal was obliged to accept the presence of a British Resident in Kathmandu. This was as unwelcome to the Nepalese people as the loss of territory. The war had other results that reduced the impact of the loss. For one, the British never again seriously contemplated annexing Nepal. In the early twentieth century some British administrators urged an end to Nepal's diplomatic independence. Even at that date, neither the Viceroy nor the Secretary of State for India thought such a restriction could be enforced. One war with Nepal was enough. Secondly, the British military authorities developed a very deep respect for the qualities of the Nepalese soldier. From the time of the Anglo-Nepal War onwards, the Government of India eagerly sought Gurkha recruits. In fact, access to Gurkha recruits became the primary objectives of British policy towards Nepal throughout the last quarter of the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth century. All of this was not achieved by the Anglo-Nepal War. The record of the Gurkha Brigade explained much of this respect. But the Gurkha Brigade would never have existed had the Nepalese soldiers of 1814-16 not made such a lasting impression on British officers and men. In addition to the stubborn Nepal resistance at Nala Pani in October and November, 1814, Nepali troops delivered the most crushing defeat of the war to British troops in the hills above Dehra Dun. These were the same British troops who had fought the Nepalis at Nala Pani. The Nepalese soldiers had neither fortifications nor cannon. It was a straight fight on Christmas Day, 1814. Even so, they rolled up the British line and sent the remnants flying pel-mell back down the mountain to the safety of their camp. Many could not safely flee. They were pinned down by Nepali fire throughout the whole of that Christmas Day. Not until nightfall could reinforcements relieve them. The Nepali reputation for fighting skills and determination in the face of enemy fire was well-earned. British recruitment began in April 1815, at the end of the first phase of the war.
The root cause of the Anglo-Nepal War was misunderstanding and fear. In 1814 the Nepalis and the British had overlapping claims to land in Nepal’s central Tarai. There were no maps to simplify the problem. There were no clear claims. There had been no direct conquest of the area in question by either side. When such a basis for misunderstanding exists, fear can be unbearable. The speed with which the British had swallowed North India frightened the Nepali administration. The British, who held India with a handful of troops, feared the military potential of a nation occupying such a dominant position in the Hills, about whom they knew nothing and whose government steadfastly refused them access. The British, as they had so successfully done before in India, tried to bluff their way to outright occupation of the disputed territory. They set up police posts. The Nepalis spelled out for the British the military cost of their bluff. They wiped out the British police posts in one smashing raid. Unhappily for Nepal, the British backed-up their bluff. The war was fought, and the disputed lands taken. Ironically, these very lands, taken at such cost by force, were returned to Nepal within six months.

Bhim Sen Thapa, Chief Minister from 1806 to 1837, continued to dominate the administration after the war. For twenty-one more years he was Nepal. Though he had led the nation into a losing war, he survived in office by making the Army his constituency and by his own shrewd interpretation of events. While his challengers schemed for a second try at the British. Bhim Sen accepted the defeat and made the best of it. Some thought he alone, among the subcontinent’s leaders, understood the British and their objectives. Certainly, his belated understanding of the very European concept of a “border” and his perception of the roots of British concern about the Nepal-India border enabled him to negotiate with the Governor General for the return to Nepal of the central and eastern Tarai. The western Tarai was lost. The British had handed it over to the Nawab of Avadh immediately after the war.

Despite Bhim Sen’s success in diplomacy, he was not an especially good administrator. In his twenty-one years of rule in post-war Nepal, his administration stagnated, as did law and justice. The hey-days of the Army were over. The land available for Jagir grants had been sharply reduced. In twenty-one years Bhim Sen was unable to reduce the Army to a size the nation could afford. During the same period, Bhim Sen made only two changes among his top administrator, both in the 1830s. Administrative promotions were almost non-existent. The average number per year was six. The maximum recorded in any one year was ten. Some years there were none. There was no new thinking in the
administration. No new initiatives.

Though Nepal was no longer preoccupied with war, no progress was made towards a uniform code of law nor was any effort made to rationalize the judicial system. Observers felt the courts were fair and justice swift, but the courts delivered to each litigant, not his due, but an acceptable compromise. That Bhim Sen accepted this system without any effort at reform indicated his attitude towards the State. He limited his administrative initiatives to redressing complaints. He seemed not to realize that the vast majority of the people had no channel to bring the injustices of the system to his attention. As leader of the most powerful faction in Nepal, Bhim Sen had packed the administration with his own men. These favourites were unlikely to inform him of social and economic injustices resulting from the system that maintained and enriched them. The one sure indicator of the trend of the administration was the incidence of Birta grants. Birta land-grants, unlike Jagirs, were not given in view of services currently performed. Pension-like, they rewarded past services. Jagir grants were scaled to the post one filled. Birta grants were limited only by the regent's willingness to assign them and the greed of those who sought them. Bhim Sen and his colleagues were amply rewarded with Birta grants. So much so that, after Bhim Sen was removed from power in 1837, his successors rushed to appropriate his family's Birta land. In Prithvi Narayan Shah's day, Jagir grants had motivated the Nepal Army to undertake the campaign of unification. In the post-war years, the rule of Birta land-grants motivated the intense factionalism that ate at the heart of Nepal's administration.

Bhim Sen's power structure began to crumble in 1832 after King Rajendra Bikram came of age. King Rajendra was not a strong sovereign, and his queens allowed him small leisure to sue the talents he had. Each of his two queens championed a different faction in the Darbar. The elder and more insistant supported Bhim Sen's arch enemies, the Pandey family. The Pandeys had ample reason for complaint. Their father, once Chief Minister of Nepal, had been unjustly put to death in 1804 at Bhim Sen Thapa's instigation. The Pandey lands had been confiscated. And the Pandey's prestigious position in the Darbar eclipsed. With the help of the Senior Queen, the Pandey brothers came back into their own. They unseated Bhim Sen in July 1837 on the false charge of allowing poisonous medicines to be given the Senior Queen's youngest son. Unable to secure from the grand Council a judgement of death, they hounded Bhim Sen until he committed suicide in 1839.

King Rajendra hesitated to appoint any of the Pandeys to high office, but eventually yielded to his Senior Queen and
appointed Ran Jung Pandey as Chief Minister. Ran Jung unthinkingly authorized encroachment on British Indian territory. A British Army was posted to the Nepal border in response, and the British Resident in Nepal was ordered to intervene. Resident Brian Hodgson, unsuccessful at first, ultimately threatened a possible British re-occupation of the Tarai. The King's resistance collapsed. He dismissed the Pandey and their supporters. A new, strongly pro-British ministry was installed, the creation of Resident Hodgson. But Hodgson was caught in a conflict of interests. He could not support a Nepali ministry and at the same time successfully represent his own government. Hodgson was a crusader, repeatedly at odds with the King and his government over the interests of Indian merchants in Nepal. In this connection, the Governor General ordered him to present a strong letter of protest, and Hodgson was betrayed by his conflicting interests. He refused to deliver the letter. For this he was removed, and the Governor General initiated a policy of strict non-interference for British Residents in Nepal.

The ministry collapsed when the Resident withdrew his support. There followed four years of near chaos in the Nepal administration. The Senior Queen had died, but the King's Junior Queen, not pro-Pandey, more than made up for her absence. The leaders of the Pandey family were convicted of false accusation against Bhim Sen Thapa and put to death. The remaining members of the family were banished for plotting against the State. A nephew of Bhim Sen Thapa Mathbar Singh Thapa, became Prime Minister. By the time, however, a Byzantine power structure had emerged in the Royal Family. A thoroughly frustrated Mathbar Singh eventually espoused the cause of the Crown Prince in a coup d'etat. King Rajendra seemed to accept this, but later ordered Mathbar Singh shot dead by his own nephew, Jang Bahadur Rana.

In the confusion that followed, the Junior Queen succeeded in having her paramour, Gagan Singh, installed in the ministry. Though he maintained a low profile, he was the Queen's voice in government and assumed control. Within a year Gagan Singh was murdered [14 September 1846]. Later that night, the Junior Queen summoned a special session of the whole Darbar. In a terrible fury she demanded the guilty party be given up to her. Before the night had ended, recrimination led to blows. Then massacre! What began as sword-play between nobles ended with the crash of large-bore hunting rifles, as Jang Bahadur's personal bodyguard fire into the melee. Thirty-two lay dead. The injured were uncounted. Moments before the firing began, Jang Bahadur had been with the Queen. He always maintained that she had given the order to fire. True or not, Jang was able to convince the
Queen that she had in fact ordered the massacre and that he was her only help. Before dwan streaked the sky, she appointed him Prime Minister. Prudently Jang had his appointment ratified by the King.

The injustices done in those days cannot be described. We have no clear record, but the few details we have suggest the scope of the disaster. The Queen exiled the families of all those killed in the Kot Massacre. The wounded and their families fled. Literally hundreds of people made their way with whatever possessions they could carry across the mountains and down to the Indian border. There they stayed, refusing to return when Jang recalled them.

For six weeks the confusion continues. Jang Bahadur was the Prime Minister, appointed by the Queen herself, but he seemed no longer to enjoy her confidence. Towards the end of October the Queen conspired against Janga’s life, but Jang proved too nimble for her. When he learned of the conspiracy, he convinced the King that the conspiracy was in fact aimed at the lives of the Crown Prince and his brother and secured the King’s order to suppress it. A second massacre followed in which another fourteen courtiers lost their lives. Jang then informed the Queen that she was at liberty only on sufferance. Rather than accept this humiliation, the Queen chose to live in Banaras. King Rajendra escorted her there. On his slow return to Nepal, King Rajendra naively permitted expatriate Nepalis to use his name to mount plots against Jang’s life. For this, Jang Bahadur persuaded the nobles and the Army to set aside King Rajendra and elevate Crown Prince Surendra to the throne. Not much persuasion was needed. Jang’s Pajani in October 1846 and ensured that only those loyal to him remained in the Army. Surendra became King on 12 May 1847, but he was not recognized by the Governor General. The Governor General insisted that as long as King Rajendra remained on British soil, he was King. If King Rajendra chose to abdicate after he returned to Nepal, the Governor General would consider Surendra. To remedy this, Jang enticed King Rajendra back across the border on 23 July. On the 28th Rajendra was captured and politely but firmly escorted to Bhaktapur, where he was confined in the old Malla Darbar. The Governor General recognized King Surendra on 3 September 1847. From that date Jang Bahadur was firmly in command.

The Rana family ruled Nepal as hereditary Prime Ministers for 104 years. Ten Rana Prime Ministers rather unevenly divided that 104-years period. Events of importance occurred in every Prime Minister’s rule but three periods stand out as especially significant. Jang Bahadur’s thirty-year rule. Chandra’s twenty-nine years, and five-year period between
1945 and 1950, during which Padma and Mohan Shamsher ruled Nepal.

Jang Bahadur was an oriental despot. Cunning, capable of cruelty, and devious, he was also a man of style and consummate charm. As an administrator, Jang was extremely intelligent, and organizer who challenged his administration to investigate problems, to probe for answers and to bring him solutions. In the first five years of his rule he ended the cronyism that had crept into the Jagir system, reorganized and simplified the revenue administration of the Nepal Tarai, reorganized the Hulak system and set the Nepal Council to work on the first codification of Nepalese law. He also fitted into this period an extremely important visit to England, during which he charmed London society and made lasting friends for Nepal in the Court and the higher administrative circles of London.

During his second five years in office, Jang promulgated the new code of Nepalese law [1854], redistribute more equitably the lands reserved for those doing Rakam labor for the State and, regrettably, became involved in an unwinnable war with Tibet [1855]. Jang went to war to test the mettle and organization of the Nepal Army, which had been idle for forty years. Despite expensive and extensive preparations, the war went badly from the start. Within four months, Jang was ready to negotiate a peace. Negotiation dragged on for nine months. While they were going on in Kathmandu, Tibetan forces renewed the war and overran the Nepali positions in Tibet at both Joonga and Kuti. Nepali commanders, in Kathmandu for the negotiations, left immediately for the front and led Nepali troops in smashing raids that destroyed the Tibetan positions. For the first time in the war, the Nepali Army acted with the verve and the will to win that had marked the Army in the old days. Jang was satisfied. Negotiations dragged on for a few more months, but by spring of 1856 a treaty was signed. When this was ratified by the Chinese Amban in July 1956, Jang resigned the Prime Ministership, to the astonishment of the whole Darbar.

Jang’s motives in resigning were not clear to the British Resident, who was convinced that Jang planned to usurp the throne. When Jang had himself named as a “super minister” in charge of foreign policy, the Resident ignored him, saying he was authorized to deal only with the King and his Prime Minister. This annoyed Jang greatly, especially since the Resident was wrong about his reasons for resigning. Jang resigned to avoid political backlash. The war had been costly. To pay those costs, all land-grant holders were taxed one-third of their income for two seasons running. While others paid taxes, Jang was appointed Maharaja.
of Kaski and Lamjung with an income of one million rupees a year.

Bam Bahadur, Jang’s brother and successor, died within a year of taking office, on 25 May 1857. This was just two weeks after the first mutiny of Indian Sepoys. As the Mutiny spread through North-India, Jang had a compliant King Surendra appoint him Prime Minister for life with the fullest powers of the State. This appointment on 28 June 1857 completed the foundation of Rana rule in Nepal. The total powers of Rana Prime Ministers date from this time.

As Prime Minister, Jang pressed the services of his Army on the British. Eventually almost eleven thousand Nepali troops took part in the war that followed the Sepoy Mutiny. Jang himself led a force of eight thousand Nepalese troops to help re-take Lucknow. The remaining three thousand fought in the advance on Lucknow as separate units under the command of British officers. After the fall of Lucknow and the looting of this rich city, Jang and his Nepali contingent were criticized in some private British reports for their performance in the campaign. According to the battle communiques, however, all the Nepali troops performed well. Some of them exceptionally well. The communiques repeatedly cited Nepalese bravery and achievements. Some British officers seem to have resented the Nepali share of the loot and Jang’s withdrawal from the campaign immediately after Lucknow was retaken.

Jang was weary with the British. Except those officers assigned to Nepalese units, the British seemed to distrust all things native, including the Nepalese troops and their Maharaja. This Jang felt, and this he resented. The dying days of the campaign and the long, drawnout process of winking Indian fugitives out of the Nepal Tarai, where British forces had unaccountably driven them, left Jang Bahadur completely disillusioned with the British in India. Nepal was, of course, rewarded for its services, thanks to Nepal’s friends in London. The western Tarai was restored, but this did not reconcile Jang. He ignored British protests when he gave asylum to Begum Hasrat Mahal nor would he give them any satisfaction on the fate of the Nana Sahib. Both were Indian leaders badly wanted by the British. From the end of the war in 1858 until his death in 1877, Jang went his way without too much regard for the concerns or attitudes of the British in India. He encouraged no trade between the two countries. He invested in Nepal, rather than India. And his relations with the British Resident were “civil.”

During this last phase of his life, Jang concentrated on further reform of the Tarai revenue administration and, in 1868, completed a nationwide revenue settlement. For the first time,
records were made of revenue assessments, and on-the-spot estimates of land areas and yields replaced the local records the Centre had once accepted on faith. Jang also encouraged the development of the western Tarai. He persuaded traders to move from their marts south of the Nepal border to towns like Nepalganj, thus assuring the western Tarai of the merchants needed for economic growth.

Jang died on 25 February 1877. His death came as no real surprise. British Residents had commented on his poor health for years. But the fact that Jang died in the Tarai changed the course of Nepal’s history. Jang had planned that the Prime Ministership be given to each of his brothers in turn. His personal and hereditary title of Maharaja of Kaski and Lamjung with its landed-income were to go to his own sons. Jang's brother Ranoddip took advantage of the confusion caused by Jang’s death in the Tarai to have the King bestow both titles on him. Ranoddip was firmly in power when the mourners returned to Kathmandu, but Jang’s sons were furious. The unity of Rana leadership died with Jang Bahadur. From that moment the factions within the Rana family were as deep and as deadly as any Nepal had known.

Ranoddip was assassinated by his own relatives on 22 November 1885. Bir Shamsher succeeded as Prime Minister and ruled for sixteen years, during which Chandra Shamsher served as his “idea man.” Bir died on 5 March 1901 and Dev Shamsher succeeded him. Dev ruled less than four months. On 26 June 1901, Chandra Shamsher forced Dev Shamsher’s resignation at pistol-point and became Prime Minister of Nepal himself.

Chandra was an administrator and diplomat, a man who got things done. The cornerstone of Chandra’s foreign policy was close friendship with British India. This entangled him in Curzon’s forward policy in Central Asia and almost cost Nepal its independence in foreign affairs. Two factors alone saved Chandra and Nepal. The British realized that British India could never enforce restrictions on Nepal’s relations with China and Tibet, and the First World War.

Though Nepal was not party to the complex alliances that led to war on such a scale, Nepal entered into the war with all the vigour of the principal combatants. On 3 August 1914, even before war broke out, Chandra offered the Viceroy Nepal’s full resources. Nepal supplied over 100,000 men, the cream of Nepal’s youth, to the British war effort. A 10,000 man contingent of the Nepal Army served on garrison duty in India, releasing Indian troops for service abroad. In addition, Nepal supplied over 60,000 recruits for the British Gurkha Brigade, and average of over 15,000 men annually. The pre-war average had been 1,500
recruits a year. Chandra’s direct assistance helped enormously. He ordered his district administrators to send possible recruits to centres in the Hills, where Gurkhas from the Gurkha Brigade inspected them. Those that seemed fit were sent immediately to recruiting centres on the Indian side of the border. Chandra gave five rupees to every man sent. At Chandra’s suggestion, the British gave another twenty rupees to each man they accepted. News of the bonus brought applicants in droves. Chandra also urged the British to send recruiting parties into the Hills. The numbers tell the story.

Nepali troops so impressed their British officers that during the troubled post-war years they would trust no others. A contingent of the Nepal Army also served in Afghanistan during the Afghan crisis in the summer of 1919.

In appreciation of Nepal’s services during the war, the British permitted the troops of the Nepal Army to take their complete kit and weapons back to Nepal and gave Nepal one million rupees annually. More to Chandra’s satisfaction, Nepal and India signed a new Treaty of Friendship on 21 December 1923, which formally recognized Nepal’s independence. It also extended to the Government of Nepal the right to import through India any weapons and ammunition needed for the well being of Nepal. Materials imported from third countries for the Government’s own use were to pass customs-free through India. Trade goods imported by merchants from third countries would pay customs duty in Calcutta. If the consignment was shipped to Nepal without breaking bulk and arrived in Kathmandu with customs seals intact, the duty paid was to be refunded.

This last facility delighted Nepalese merchants, but proved a mixed blessing to the people. A rash of Japanese imports flooded the Kathmandu market, overflowed into the Hills and Tarai, and threatened to seep across the border into India. Japanese goods were cheap and the quality good. Many veterans of the war had cash, which they spent freely to celebrate their safe return, happy in being able to buy modern things for their families. Nepal’s thriving cottage industries were killed. The money the veterans had brought back to their villages, which might have financed a boom in the rural economy, was drained off. Only the merchants and their Rana silent partners whose hard currency financed the imports, the tax-contactors who collected Nepalese customs duties, and the Nepal Treasury profitted. Since no distinction was made between the Treasury and the Rana Prime Minister’s purse, Chandra himself shared generously in the bonanza.

As an administrator, Chandra is best known for his many reforms. His objective was an administration that functioned
spontaneously in routine matters and referred all extraordinary decisions to him. In Chandra's Nepal, extraordinary decisions were those concerning appointments and expenditures. To achieve his purpose Chandra insisted in his 1908 *Kitapi Sawal* that Government officers perform their authorized functions without further reference to the Prime Minister and outlined the processes by which he wanted the administration to function. In his far more ambitious *Muluki Sawal* of January 1918, Chandra defined the powers of each office, set out the procedures to be followed, established time limits for the performance of routine tasks and fines for those who overshot those limits, and institutionalized the *Pajani*. He followed-up rigorously. Inspection teams were regularly deployed throughout the country to ensure that the new regulations were followed. The inspection teams were also authorized to investigate corruption and to fine those guilty of flagrant abuses.

The result of this effort was an administration that marched in lockstep to fulfil the wishes of the Prime Minister. Officers, no matter how distant from Kathmandu, learned to execute their prescribed functions within the time limits set. One observer recalls the lot of a revenue officer who failed to submit his accounts on time. He received a letter informing him that his failure to meet the deadline constituted his dismissal. He had no need to await the formal dismissal at the *Pajani*.

It is difficult to estimate the damage Chandra's reforms did to administration in Nepal. The contrast between Chandra and Prithvi Narayan Shah could not have been more marked. Chandra's penchant for conformity effectively wiped out the last traces of initiative in the administration. Chandra's administration performed efficiently, but to what purpose? Certainly not to the benefit of the people. Most administration was directly or indirectly linked with revenue administration. A more efficient revenue administration in reality only further enriched the Prime Minister. Little tax-money ever went back to the people in the form of services. Even the development programme that Chandra had adopted failed to reverse the cash flow. The annual cost of even his most ambitious projects never exceeded the one million rupee annual gift received from British India.

The Nepalese people benefitted from Chandra's reforms in ways Chandra did not intend. In 1910 Chandra fixed the conversion rate for taxes on a long-term basis. The conversion rate was essential for all tax payments. Taxes were assessed in-kind. Payment was made in cash. The conversion rate specified the rate at which the in-kind assessment was converted to cash payment. A realistic, conversion rate reflected the current market price, since
villagers sold their surplus grain on the local market to raise the cash needed for taxes. From 1910 onwards grain prices steadily mounted. Yet taxes were calculated on the old 1910 market rates. The gap between 1910 market prices and current market prices steadily widened, to the benefit of the tax-payers. Chandra had intended only to simplify revenue administration. An annual fixing of the conversion rate was a tedious task, difficult for the Centre to verify. Whether Chandra had intended the benefits they received or not, the people were grateful.

Again, in 1923, Chandra decided that the land registers could most easily be kept up to date if all land transactions were registered. A small fee would be charged on each transaction to pay administrative costs. The results of this simple reform far outstripped his intentions. Originally, those who farmed Raikar land were only tenants. The government itself was the landowner. Since Jang Bahadur’s day, land records specified by name the tenant on each Raikar landholding. Tenants thus became registered tenants, their tenancy rights recognized and secure as long as they paid their taxes and farmed their holdings personally. In 1886 the new edition of Nepal’s Legal Code did not require tenants to reside on their holdings. Tenants began openly selling tenancy rights, though such sales were not legally recognized. Chandra’s 1923 reform required that all land transactions be registered, including the sale of tenancy rights. This gave official recognition to these transactions. Tenancy rights were assimilated to ownership rights, and Chandra’s reform completed the conversion of tenancy on Raikar land to ownership.

Chandra’s social reforms deservedly won him high praise. In 1920 he abolished outright the practice of Sati. As a rule, Rana Prime Ministers had not permitted Rana widows to commit Sati. Sati was not common in Nepal, but its abolition was well received.

In a 1924 social reform, Chandra outlawed slavery. Slavery in Nepal had generally been mild. Some slaves indeed had harsh masters, but many a working man or woman had to put up with harsh treatment simply because there was no other employment. Slavery was slavery, nonetheless. A human being lost his freedom and was counted as chattel. As many as one percent of the population were affected. Before Chandra resorted to legal measures, he argued that slavery be abolished in a very persuasive speech in the Tundikhel. Slavery, he said, was a poor economic investment. The cost of maintaining a slave for any work was far more than the cost of hiring someone to do the same work. And, of course, slavery was morally wrong. Chandra then urged all Nepalis to free their slaves. Some in fact did so. Most, however, waited for Chandra’s law abolishing slavery and received compensation for each slave set free. A sum of over three and a
half million rupees was paid in compensation, which Chandla paid without demur. The money came, not from the Exchequer, but from the temple treasury. The British praised Chandra lavishly and he deserved praise, regardless of how he financed the reform. The abolition of slavery had been long overdue. The fact that slaves had normally not been abused did not remove the stigma of slavery.

Chandra's long rule ended with his death on 25 November 1929. Bhim Shamsher succeeded him but ruled less than three years. Juddha Shamsher then became Prime Minister. Throughout the whole sixteen-year period from Chandra's death to Juddha's resignation on 29 November 1945, the Nepali national movement was gathering strength. Events in India had exercised a strong influence on many Nepali students. Thousands of village Nepalis had been exposed to the world outside Nepal during their service in two World Wars, and their return created a stir in the country. The expatriate Nepali community in India were also clamouring for change in Nepal. Juddha could not suppress the national movement, but he managed to control it. The British in India, because of Juddha's help in the Second World War, collaborated by keeping a close watch on Nepalese in India. Though never openly, the national movement actually spread during Juddha's rule. His arrest of the members of the *Praja Parishad* [October 1940] and his unduly harsh sentences in January 1941 to those convicted of treason caused a groundswell of dissatisfaction throughout Kathmandu Valley. The national movement grew from strength to strength. Juddha wisely retired at the end of the war.

Padma Shamsher, who succeeded Juddha, was considered a weak Prime Minister. Unlike Juddha, he was intimidated by the sons of Chandra. The sons of Chandra formed a strong clique in the highest ranks of the Rana family. They stood foursquare for the old ways, for conservatism and for harsh treatment to those who challenged the Rana right to rule. The sons of Chandra had inherited over five million pounds Sterling each. They also held under the Prime Minister, the highest posts in the land: Commander-in-Chief, Senior Commanding General, and Commanding General of the Eastern Command. Compared to them, Padma was poor as a churchmouse. Almost a dependent, Padma was Bhim Shamsher's son, but Bhim had not been in office long enough to accumulate the wealth normally associated with Rana Prime Ministers. He left Padma little. Padma's predecessor as Prime Minister, Juddha Shamsher, had left the treasury almost bare. When the sons of Chandra called Padma a "nobody", he believed them, because in comparison with their clique, he was a
lonely "nobody".

But Padma was Prime Minister and, in many ways, a very good one. Padma had an ear for the murmurings of discontent and a gift for dealing with the sorts of challenges the national movement posed. In January 1947, the last year of Padma's rule, the Nepali National Congress was born. In March the Congress joined the labour strike at the Biratnagar Jute Mill as agitators. The Congress leaders had learned their trade in India from the Indian National Congress, and they had learned it well. They were able to provoke an official over-reaction to the strike and to portray the Nepal Army units that came to Biratnagar as vicious agents of an unscrupulous Rana regime. Friendly newspapers in Calcutta and Patna printed their stories with gusto, and overnight the Rana image in India was destroyed. In April 1947, the Congress began a nationwide Satyagraha. In May the students of the Sanskrit School went out on strike, demanding that they be taught modern subjects.

Padma took all this in stride. He announced that a constitution would be prepared for Nepal and that municipal bodies would be elected to run the town governments. He also promised a beginning in women's education. All of these promises he fulfilled immediately. No one could doubt his constitutional intentions when they saw a girls' school opened and elections for the municipality held within a month of his announcement. Padma also released those arrested in the Satyagraha. The mood of confrontation ended. Changes there would be, but changes were needed. This was a point that Prime Minister Nehru made after India became independent on 15 August 1947. Nehru made the stabilization of Nepal through the modernization of Rana rule one of his foreign policy priorities. But at this time, Padma was clearly in control.

Padma showed unexpected skill in dealing with the Congress. The Congress President, B.P. Koirala, was in jail for his part in the Biratnagar strike. Believing that Koirala would be held indefinitely, the Congress elected a new Acting President in a July meeting in Banaras. Padma released B.P. in August. The confrontation between the President of the Congress and the Acting President was an ego-bruising session that disrupted Congress plans and gave Padma more time for the changes he intended to introduce.

Padma's run of good fortune continued. Indian independence gave Nepal diplomatic relations at the ambassadorial level with both the United Kingdom and India. Both of these countries also signed an agreement with Nepal to continue the Gurkha Brigade. Nepal's annual gift for assisting in the two World Wars, raised to two million rupees, was partially
capitalized and given to Nepal in a lump sum, twenty-five million rupees. The Indian Government was holding the remaining capital against some worthwhile Nepali development project.

The constitution which the Indian team of experts had prepared in consultation with Padma proved acceptable to Nepali nationalists and equally satisfying to Prime Minister Nehru. In a sense, Padma had done it. After inheriting from Juddha a growing national movement, Padma had come up with an acceptable compromise that satisfied the nationalists' immediate demands and yet promised the Ranas a good many more years of rule in Nepal, albeit on a less grand scale. Padma, however, was not sanguine. He knew his opposition. The sons of Chandra, especially Mohan and Babar, fought the new constitution bitterly. Unable, or unwilling, to face them, Padma planned his retirement.

In January 1948, Padma Shamsher left for India with everything of value he possessed. Mohan Shamsher understood that Padma would retire as soon as he reached India and sent his son along to bring back Padma's letter of resignation. Padma, however, was not as soft as Mohan had thought him. He delayed his resignation while he toured India and waited for Mohan, as acting Prime Minister, to bring the new constitution into force. When Mohan finally made this gesture, and gesture is all we may call it, Padma resigned and settled down in Ranchi. Mohan Shamsher became Prime Minister on 30 April 1948.

Mohan had an excellent reputation in Nepal. He was an impressive-looking aristocrat, with the gift of command. He understood nothing, however, about the spirit of change moving in Nepal and even less about the mood of India. He blundered his way through two and a half years of rule succeeded in uniting the expatriate Nepali politicians into a single opposition political party, and alienated King Tribhuvan. Almost as one destined to destroy Rana rule in Nepal, he set in motion the two forces that would most surely put an end to the Rana period. To make matters worse, he watered down the constitution, gutted the bill of rights, and stripped the municipal bodies of their effective powers. When B.P. Koirala, again in jail for political agitation, went on a hunger strike, Mohan pushed Indian credibility to the limit by ignoring Koirala's deteriorating health. His son Vijaya Shamsher finally convinced him that as an orthodox Hindu he dare not be guilty of a Brahman's death. Only then did he release Koirala.

In 1950 Prime Minister Nehru requested a meeting with the Prime Minister. Mohan chose to go to Delhi. At the confrontation, Nehru made it clear that he wanted peace in Nepal, and peace in Nepal required changes in Rana rule. At that meeting Nehru also presented to Mohan the text of two proposed treaties: A Treaty of Friendship between Nepal and India and a Treaty of
Trade and Commerce. The Treaty of Friendship was threatening. Letters of Exchange that accompanied the Treaty practically recognized India’s right to defend the Himalayan line, should need arise. All of this, unknown at that time to the Nepali public, would cause much trouble later. Clauses in the Treaty of Trade and Commerce shocked Nepalese merchants. The Government of Nepal was to charge customs duties on goods imported from third countries at the same rate India charged on such goods. The Nepal Government would also charge sufficient excise duty on goods manufactured in Nepal for sale in India to raise the prices of such goods to a level comparable to prices charged in India. Controversial as the treaties were, Mohan accepted both, on the condition that Nehru not press publicly for changes in the Rana system of Government at the time of the signing ceremony. Nehru agreed and the treaties were signed.

One cannot imagine what Mohan had in mind when he signed these treaties. If the thought he was buying time, he misunderstood the movement current in Nepal. Only change would quiet that movement, and the minimum acceptable change was exactly what Padma and Nehru had urged. If Mohan thought that Nehru, having agreed not to make public demands for change in Nepal, would stop pressing for changes in the Rana administration, Mohan clearly failed to understand Nehru’s message that peace there must be.

Mohan had to go. The Prime Minister’s intransigence made the finale more dramatic but had little influence on the results. On 6 November 1950, King Tribhuvan and his family left the Royal Palace for a picnic and hunt in the foothills north of the Valley. As they drove past the Indian Embassy, then at Sital Niwas on the main road north, King Tribhuvan turned in at the embassy gate. The King had taken asylum in the Indian Embassy, and at his own request arrangements were made to fly him to Delhi. Mohan meanwhile wasted a day in dithering with his Council over what might be done. The Council recommended installing King Tribhuvan’s grandson Gyanendra on the throne. Gyanendra was accordingly crowned on 7 November. King Tribhuvan flew out of Kathmandu on an Indian Airforce plane on 10 November. The Congress armed revolution began on 11 November 1950.

Mohan’s attempt to set King Tribhuvan aside and continue to rule failed, as did the Congres attempt to achieve their aims by force. The pivotal person was King Tribhuvan, and he, with Nehru’s support, claimed the right to negotiate a settlement. Mohan buckled to King Tribhuvan’s wish after the international community refused to recognize his new puppet king. The Congress held out longer, but yielded when it became clear that King Tribhuvan and Nehru were quite willing to proceed without
Under these conditions, they could not carry on. The key to their strategy was the King himself. To array themselves against him was to court failure.

The Congress accepted the compromise on 15 January 1951. The next day the Congress President, M.P. Koirala, half-brother to B.P. Koirala, ordered a Congress cease-fire. Though some Congress units refused to stop their attack, the revolution was over. In Kathmandu, public enthusiasm burst out in demonstrations on 17 January and continued with growing fervor until King Tribhuvan returned to Kathmandu on 15 February. On the 18th, King Tribhuvan installed an Interim Government and outlined the main features of the new political system.

The Interim Government of Nepal Act came into force on 30 March 1951. The aim of the Interim Government was to create conditions as early as possible for holding elections for a constituent assembly. Those elections were never held. A constituent assembly was never convened. Though the students and politicians continued to thrive on confrontation and demonstrations, they seemed to lose their will to cooperate. The glue that held them together had been their determination to rid themselves of Rana rule. That done, they split into factions and multiplied parties. Political leadership was wanting, and King Tribhuvan's health was failing rapidly. It was left for his successors, King Mahendra and then King Birendra, to discern the true will of the people and to introduce a form of Government that seemed suitable for Nepal. In a land such as Nepal, so fragmented and with a population so diverse in culture and education, this was not easy. Two constitutions, three amendments, and one national referendum constitute a continuous effort to discern the true will of the people.
Religion in Nepal

Jagadish Chandra Regmi

The history of Nepal, according to the *Gopalarajavamsavali*, is approximately five thousand years old. In the Nepal Valley, which was then a dense forest, there emerged Bhrngaresvara [Mahadeva]. The arrival and settlement here of Gautama and other sages and the construction of the temples of gods and Gautamesvara marked the entry of Gopalas into Nepal. The *Gopalarajavamsavali* attributed the discovery of Pasupati to a brown cow named Bahuhri belonging to the cowherd named Nepa. The chronicle also mentions the reign in the Nepal Valley by eight kings of Gopala dynasty, followed by three kings of Mahisapala dynasty, 32 kings of Kirata dynasty and lastly the reign by the kings of Surya and Licchavi dynasty by defeating the Kirata kings. King Haridattavarma, the king of the Surya dynasty, according to the same chronicle, constructed the temples of Visnu Narayana in the four corners of the Nepal Valley [Vajracarya and Malla, 1985: 73-76].

If, on the one hand, some interpolations have been made in the account given above, in the chronicle of later date, [Poudyal, 2020:43] on the other hand, another chronicle gives the account that the origin of the Svayambhu caitya preceded the recognition of Pasupati, Narayana and other gods [Wright, 1877].

The mythology and legends of Nepal also subscribe to this view. But *Himavatkhanda, Nepala Mahatmya* and other legends following the Saiva cult say that the origin of Pasupati and other similar gods took place earlier, whereas the *Svayambhu Purana* has given prominence to the origin of Svayambhu caitya.

Though the question as to which of the two religions, Saivism and Buddhism, made an early entry into the Nepal Valley, the seat of Nepali culture and civilisation, is very much important, it is very difficult to say about it definitely. From the historical point of view, there is a concrete evidence to prove against the entry of Buddhism into Nepal earlier than Saivism. For, Gautama Buddha born in the Tarai part of Nepal in the sixth
century before the inception of Christian era, preached his religion in his youth. Prior to this event, culture and civilisation had flourished in the Nepal Valley. This has been well established. The practice of observing Adi Buddha in the form of Swayambhu caitya Parabrahma, which is the part of Vajrayani wing of Buddhism and which developed only in the 8th century of Christian era, also explains the historical trend.

As mentioned in the Gopalarajavamsavali, in the beginning of Kaliyuga [i.e. around 31101 B.C.] sages professing Sanatana Dharma [eternal religion] made way to the eastern and western hilly areas of Nepal via the southern and western routes. They settled here and performed yajnas and other religious activities in several places. It is about the same time that the kings of Gopala dynasty found passage to the Nepal Valley and conducted political activities. An intensive study conducted recently has shown that Nipa, an important section of Abhira tribe and inhabitants of Mathura Vrndaban, entered into the Nepal Valley through the western hilly areas. The naming of the Valley as Nepal is also attributed to the inhabitants of the very tribe [Nepal, 2020: 17-18]. The account of Gopalarajavamsavali that the start of the worship of Pasupati was credited to the inhabitants of the same tribe called Nipa gives credence to the antiquity of Saivism.

In view of the availability of evidence [Nepal, 2040: 3] of the entry of Buddhist monks into the Nepal Valley during the lifetime of Lord Buddha, it is manifest that the history of Buddhism in Nepal is no less older.

**Saiva Pasupata Religion**

If we accept the view that Nipa and Gopala dynasty were connected with the origin of the shrine of Pasupati, it gives a clue that this dynasty followed the Saiva-Pasupatia religion. This presupposes the observance of Vaisnava religion, then prevailing in Mathura Vrndaban, the original home of the inhabitants of this tribe.

The position of religion during the long reign of 32 kings of Kirata dynasty is yet shrouded in obscurity. According to the chronicles of the later date, these kings, too, observed the Pasupata religion. In consideration of the view of the scholars that Saivism prevailed extensively in the mountainous areas and that the Kirata inhabitants, being the followers of a kind of Saivism, may possibly be linked with Saivism.

The religious tradition of the Licchavis, who became the rulers of the Nepal Valley after vanquishing the Kiratas, is not much clear. If we are to support the view that these Licchavis
originated from Vaisali, we find that the Vedic and Sanatana religions were subjugated by Jainism and Buddhism, the two religions opposed to traditional religions.

It can be understood that the earlier Licchavi kings, as mentioned by the chronicles, observed both Saivism and Vaisnavism. The construction of the four temples of Visnu Narayana in four corners [Cangu, Icangu, Bisankhu and Sikhar] of the valley by Haridattavarma, the king of the earlier part of Licchavi period, shows that this king was much inclined to Vaisnavism. This practice continued up to Sivadeva [A.D. 590-604].

Apart from the fact that the successors had noted in the inscriptions that King Vrsdeva was the follower of Buddhism, the chronicles have also recorded the construction of Svayambhu and Dhando caityas or stupas by him. This explains the definite possibility of the king's initiation into Buddhism. He was so far the only ordained Buddhist in the ancient history of Nepal. This paved way for the adoption of Buddhism by the succeeding Licchavi kings as a second religion. However, it cannot be confirmed that Buddhism was the state religion. Such condition persisted till the reign of Sivadeva I.

Some scholars have also opined that the Licchavi kings after Vrsadeva were influenced by Saivism and Vaisnavism but these kings also protected Buddhism. [Nepal, 2040: 117]

Even though the inscriptions bear testimony to the fact that the illustrious king of Licchavi period, Manadeva [A.D. 464-505], was especially drawn towards Vaisnava rituals, he had installed one Sivalinga [the phallus of Siva]. Other inscriptions confirming the installation of Sivalingas by the two wives and a daughter of King Manadeva have also been found. Besides this, evidences of the construction of many temples with the image of Siva during the time of Sivadeva have also been discovered. No inscriptions are available to prove that the Licchavi kings in the span of a century from A.D. 505-604, i.e., after Manadeva I and before Amsuvarma constructed the temple of Siva or Visnu or any other god. It is, therefore, natural that the Licchavi kings of the period in question did not encourage Saivism, a case quite different from the example set by Manadeva I. On the contrary, there are inscriptions confirming the construction of Siva temples by the courtiers and the general public.

It was Amsuvarma who initiated the effort of giving Saiva Pasupata religion a permanent footing at the state level which lasted to the present day, let alone the ancient times. In the inscriptions of the period of Sivadeva, Amsuvarma has been described as the devotee of Siva. After the handover of the throne to Amsuvarma by Sivadeva around A.D. 604, and after Amsuvarma began to rule entirely by himself, he had acquired the title
"Bhagvatpasupati Bhattarakapadanugrhitā" the sectarian title of Saiva-Pasupata. The acquisition of this religious title by a ruler being the first event in the history of Nepal is by far indicative of Amsuvarma’s bid to bring about an alliance between religion and politics. The acquisition of this title is also the manifestation of the feeling of Amsuvarma that it was by the grace of Lord Pasupati that he could rule all by himself. This view is further supported by the nomenclature of Pasupati and the circulation of coins with the symbol of Siva since the time of Amsuvarma. Once this concept was evolved, it continued to influence generation after generation and even to the present day.

In the inscriptions found sometime after the death of Amsuvarma, mention has been made of sects known as Mundasrnkhalika, Dana, Basa, etc, including temples and monasteries constructed for them. This reveals the popularity as well as expansion of Pasupata religion and sects. Amsuvarma might have encouraged the promotion of these activities. From the view point of non-existence of Pasupata sects in other places, its existence seemed to have been confined to the Nepal Valley. These sects did not survive long and might have passed into oblivion. But as this sect was apparently the only organized religious sect in Nepal, it definitely occupies a place of historic importance.

Though it appears that the Saiva-Pasupata religion existing in the form of a sectional organisation is confined to one specific period of ancient times, continued acceptance of Pasupati and the phallus symbol of Siva and the uninterrupted worship of Siva by all the kings may be the speciality of medieval and modern periods of Nepal’s history. Similarly, at the end of ancient times, one faction of Saiva-Pasupata religion known as Natha sect extended its influence particularly in western and central Nepal and several principalities of Baisi-Chaubisi kingdoms, Jumla, Dang, Sallyan, etc, including Gorkha, in the latter places more prominently.

Probably, since the ancient times and more accurately since the medieval period, the significance of Pasupati had spread to India. There are evidences to prove this. There is an inscription to prove that Sankaracarya of Kashi and Prayag had visited Nepal to pay obeisance to Pasupati in the 13th century A.D. It is not likely that there was an exchange of views and ideas between the Saivities of Nepal and the Saivites of India. It is presumed that Nepal was closely related with Mathura, India, in the ancient times. If we are to believe the stories about Sankaracarya as told in the chronicles, we will find the reiteration of the same view. Later, in the Malla period, Jangam Saivas entered into the Valley from Karnataka [Mysore], south India, and Bhaktapur in particular where this sect exerted a strong influence— which is proved by the existence of several monasteries of that religious following.
The spread of Saivism in the form of a strong religious concept throughout Nepal, more particularly in the central parts, since the ancient times, is proved by the presence of a large number of Siva temples and pilgrimage sites and a host of religious activities and festivals. At the time of compilation of Himavatkhanda, i.e., the 16th century A.D., as many as 64 Sivalingas and 232 sub-Sivalingas had become popular in small confines of central Nepal. Similarly, Gosaikunda, one of the prominent pilgrimage sites of the Saivites, was established even in the remote and difficult Himali area.

As Saivism was granted special recognition here in Nepal, it is equally very important to see the people of other religious leanings observing it in their own ways. The fact that the adherents of Vaisnavism should consider Pasupati as one of the four principal pilgrimage sites worshipping Harihara [Visnu-Siva], that the Buddhists should regard Pasupati as Lokesvara or Nagaloksvara, that other noted eight Sivalingas should be treated in the form of Astabaitaragas and that ceremonial religious activities should be conducted in the Pasupati on the auspicious day of ‘Mukhastami’ corroborate the above view.

**Vaisnavism**

The arrival of Nipa Abhiras in the Nepal Valley may be linked with the introduction of Vaisnav tradition in Nepal because these people came from the vicinity of Mathura Vrndaban, the very heart of Vaisnavism. That the Saligram, regarded as the embodiment of Vaisnavism, was found in the Kali Gandaki also testifies to the belief that Vaisnavism was well-founded in the Gandaki area around 200 BC. There are a good deal of allusions to Narayana in the chronicles. Besides this, Haridattavarma, one of the Licchavi kings, had constructed the temples of Narayana in the four corners of the Nepal Valley. These incidents prove the antiquity of the entry and foundation of Vaisnavism in Nepal.

The illustrious Licchavi king Manadeva I [A.D. 464-505], not only consecrated the image of Garuda in the temple of Cangunarayana, but also got hymns inscribed therein. Besides this, Manadeva consecrated two temples of Visnu in the name of his mother. This shows that the earlier Licchavi king Haridattavarma had initiated the practice of observing Vaisnavism. From the fact that at the top of royal inscriptions installed by the kings after Manadeva and upto Sivadeva I [A.D. 604] there is Cakra [wheel], the emblem of Vaisnavism, it is evident that the kings of the period in question continued to embrace Vaisnavism as their religion. Then, after the take-over of the throne of Licchavi dynasty, acquisition of the title of Pasupata by Amsuvarma, continuation of the same trend by Udayadeva of
Licchavi dynasty restored to the throne by Amsuvarma himself and the maintenance of status quo by other succeeding Licchavi kings, Vaisnavism suffered a setback and could not remain a state religion. In spite of this situation, due to the policy of the government to mete out an impartial treatment to all the religions and sects, Vaisnavism enjoyed its popularity as it was deeply rooted in society. Once inscription found in Anantalingesvara stands as a glowing example of a lot of activities in the name of Vaisnavism in the ancient times. This inscription was installed in A.D. 656 by King Narendradeva, the king of later Licchavi period. According to this inscription, King Narendradeva had reinforced the provision made by the earlier kings to conduct the worship of 'Lokapalaswami' [Visankhu Narayana] and to conduct various festivals held annually. This inscription is a very important evidence of the policy adopted by the initial Licchavi kings to create infrastructures of Vaisnavism in Nepal, the detailed description of which is not possible here in this essay.

At the time when the Licchavi kings granted royal recognition to Vaisnavism allowing other sects to remain no less active, there existed another influential group observing Vaisnavism, i.e., the Abhira Guptas. The inscriptions belonging to the period after the death of Manadeva I and 80 years before the rise of Amsuvarna, show that a large number of courtiers with the name of Gupta existed. Among these courtiers, Ravigupta and Bhaumagupta stand out for becoming powerful by defeating the reigning kings of Licchavi dynasty. Historians subscribe to this view. Anuparam, the father of Bhaumagupta, had consecrated the pillar of Garuda at Satyanarayanasthan, Hadigaon, with an inscription installed in front of it. In this inscription in the form of long eulogy dated around AD 515, there is the eulogy of Dwaipayana Vyasa. In this Vaisnava inscription, which is of great importance from the historical and cultural viewpoint, great praise has been showered on the Vedic tradition and monotheistic Vedanta philosophy and in several places 'atheist' Buddhists have been condemned explicitly.

Some scholars, however, are of the opinion that Anuparam had condemned the Buddhists from the traditional sense of religious discourse and that in actual practice such situation did not exist. But Anuparam, by eulogising the Vedic tradition in his Vaisnava inscription and by condemning the 'atheist' Buddhists, had openly condemned the Licchavi kings for granting protection to the 'atheist' Buddhists. The fact that he had overlooked the reigning king of that time without mentioning his name in the inscription is also the glaring illustration of the same. Another courtier Virocan Gupta, the contemporary of Anuparam Gupta, was a 'yajnik', or in other words, a 'Karmakandi,' a confirmed
believer in Vedic ceremonial and sacrificial rites. In the height of powerful days of Bhaumagupta, the Buddhists were not much active. During the time of Jisnugupta and Visnugupta, the joint rulers after the death of Amsuvarma, the trend continued unruffled. Immediately after the installation of Buddhhanilkantha with great pomp by Jisnugupta and by Visnugupta in particular, there followed a flurry of activities in favour of Vaisnavism.

That the Saiva tradition prevailed in some form or other among the Gupta families was proved by the consecration of Sivalinga by Abhiri Gomini, the wife of Anuparam Gupta, in his name [A.D. 540]. It might be due to the stronghold of Saivism and the family tradition that in the heyday of Bhaumagupta, Svami Varta erected in A.D. 567 the image of Harihara accompanying a theoretical analysis of the syncretic cult.

Keeping the Licchavi period in the background, the practice of worshipping god Visnu and his ten incarnations continued in the mid-Malla period and the modern period, too. In the history of Vaisnavism in Nepal, special emphasis is given to the devotion of Lord Krsna by Siddhinarsingh Malla, the king of Patan, in the 17th century and the construction of the famous Krsna Mandir are memorable events. Inspired by this example, King Pratap Malla also constructed a grand temple of Lord Krsna at the historical Hanuman Dhoka. The example set by Siddhinarsingh Malla was followed by many members of his family by constructing Krsna Mandirs.

Due to the influence of various sects engaged in explaining away the simple ways of Bhakti [devotion] under Vaisnavism since the ancient times and more particularly since the medieval period, an irresistible influence of this religion in the traditional Hindu society is seen. We can also feel the impact of the devotion to Lord Visnu among the the 'Pancayanvadi' [the worshippers of five different gods].

It is important to note that Vaisnavism did not take a conservative turn in the ancient and medieval periods of Nepal's history. In comparison with the formation of various sects under the Saiva-Pasupata religion, this aspect of Vaisnavism prevalent in Nepal is worthy of special mention. The construction of four temples of Narayana by Haridattavarma, already mentioned above, and the availability of Vaisnava inscriptions of the time of Manadeva, do not show any trace of conservatism in any form. Similarly, other inscriptions of the Vaisnava tradition throughout the Licchavi period and the militant inscriptions of Jisnugupta give the same impression. But as an ordinary type of Vaisnavism is called 'Pancaratra,' it would be appropriate if the above-mentioned feature of Vaisnavism is named 'Pancaratra.'

We feel that some contexts and allusions appearing in the form of exceptions may be taken as the characteristics of sects.
Vaisnavism as taken by Anuparam may be construed as hardline Vaisnavism of Vedic and Vedantic tradition. This is not a solitary exception. The inscription dated A.D. 530 and found at Khapichhe, Patan, belongs to the above category. According to the contents of the inscription, the priests Viprasen, Brahmin Vridhisen and priest Vedhatta donated lands individually to start the worship in the temple of sage Vaisampayan with a view to enhancing the importance of Veda of the days Veda Vyasa.

The inscription found at Lele, Patan, consecrated by Manadeva [A.D. 604] mentions the donation of land for “Bhagavadvasudeva Brahman Gausthika.” From this inscription, it is understandable that Brahmins and Vaisnavas were organised in a group.

The inscription of Sankhamula mentions the term ‘Param Bhagvata’ Desavarma. This Vaisnava title was made famous by the Gupta Emperors in India by using it themselves.

In the Anantalingesvara inscription of King Narendradeva, the responsibility of conducting the festivals and processions of Vaisnava Mandir and Lokapalasvami and other ceremonial acts and sacrificial rites has been given to Kulpati. This post of Kulpati must be similar to Mathadhisa or Mahanta. This reference also indicates the organisational aspects of Vaisnavism.

Barahaksetra of Chatara, Muktiksetra of Mustang and Narayanaghat of Chitwan all in Nepal are famous places of pilgrimage for the Vaisnavas, the popularity of which was well-established in India, too, thereby revealing the widespread influence of Vaisnavism. The inscription found in Bengal, India, around the 5th century A.D. establishes its importance still more explicitly.

Buddhism

The traditional beliefs and the history itself bear testimony to the fact that Kanakmuni and other Sapta Buddhas had changed their faiths. This fact has been supported by the historians. As this character of bygone Buddhas was absorbed in the religion propounded by Gautama Buddha, by the term ‘Buddhism,’ it generally means the religion propounded by Gautama Buddha. It is difficult to ascertain the historical meaning of the accounts of various activities undertaken by the earlier Buddhas given in the chronicles.

Born to the Sakya dynasty in Lumbini, Kapilvastu, in the Tarai of Nepal in the 6th century B.C., after employing several means of finding out easy paths of salvation and alleviation of human sufferings, Gautama Buddha propounded the principles of Middle Path. The Buddha also made the codes of conduct for the attainment of the goal, for the practice of which there is no...
need of caste relationships, the performance by yajnas and other acts accompanying Karmakanda and belief in God. Therefore, this religion was labelled by the orthodox Hindus as atheism.

In course of the propagation of his religion, Gautama Buddha had attracted the kings, the wealthy people and the general public. There were attacks and counterattacks against the propagation of Buddhism.

The fact that a Prince of ksatriya origin voluntarily abdicated to become a Buddhist monk to alleviate the sufferings of the people and to find easy means of salvation shows the increasing popularity of Gautama Buddha among the kings of the corresponding period. This very popularity helped Gautama Buddha a lot in propagating his religion. Therefore, this religion became very powerful during the time of Gautama Buddha due to the organised activities of his worthy disciples, followers and preceptors. This influence and popularity was not confined to the borders of Nepal but, rather, extended to the vast Asian continent. But with the passage of time, due to various doctrinal reasons, Buddhism was divided into various factions. In the first century A.D. Buddhism was split into sthviravada and Mahayana Buddhism. The influence of piety and Karmakanda of the orthodox religious followers was instrumental in the formation of Mahayana Buddhism. Later, following the emergence of mystic groups like Vajrayana-Mantrayana under the Mahayana Buddhism, Buddhism as such suffered a good deal of transformation to the extent of obscuring its basic tenets. The massive Muslim invasions around the 13 century A.D. resulting in the devastation of famous Buddhist shrines and viharas coupled with several factors swept away the influence of Buddhism in India. Some remaining faint light of Buddhism was absorbed by Hinduism. That Buddhism should survive in several places of Nepal, particularly in the Valley against the backdrop of its decline in India is a matter of historic importance.

The vagueness and uncertainty of early Nepalese history is shared by the introduction, spread of influence and development of Buddhism. But according to an early Buddhist text Sarvastivadavinaya. Buddhist Sakyas had made way into the Kathmandu Valley even during the lifetime of Gautama Buddha, and Ananda, the well-known disciple of Gautama Buddha, had come to Nepal accompanied by the Buddhist monks. Besides this, the inhabitants of the Tarai area belonging to different clans like Malla, Koli, Sakya, Vrji, and Tharu Sresthi entered the Nepal Valley and the adjoining areas in the same period and sometime later embracing the culture and outlook of their native places. The emergence of Licchavi rulers after the Kirata dynasty followed the same trend. This makes it clear that Buddhism was firmly rooted
in Nepal in the very beginning and in the 3rd century B.C. by
sending the mission for the propagation of Buddhism under the
leadership of Majjhim, Emperor Asoka helped expedite the cause
of Buddhism.

Among the detailed pieces of information gathered from
the internal sources, the adoption of Buddhism by the Licchavi
king Vrsavadeva, construction of Swayambhu caitya, Dhanedo
caitya, the caitya of Bandegaon by him point out to the
characteristics, position of and activities under Buddhism. The
inscriptions of the period of his great-grandson Manadeva I and
other relevant stories are indicative of the great popularity and
mobility of Buddhism in Nepal.

It has already been mentioned above that the family
religion of the Licchavi kings was Vaisnavism, and Buddhism was
given the status of a secondary religion. The reason behind this
logic is the construction of monasteries by Manadeva in his own
name. The instances of the construction of monasteries by many
kings of the ancient times in their own name lend credibility to the
logic. The credit for the strengthening and the expanding
influence of Buddhism is generally given to its inherent qualities
and to its followers who were not only economically active but
also vocationally skillful. The fact that the Tri Ratna Buddha,
Dharma and Sangha [Buddhist organisation] unites and organises
the Buddhists, and the tendency of the Buddhists to refrain from
dabbling in politics might have contributed to bring about such a
favourable climate.

Various inscriptions belonging to the Licchavi period
enlighten about the ‘Karmakanda’ activities of Buddhism practised
in those days. Among such religious activities include the
establishment of trusts, giving away land to the male and female
Buddhist monks, construction of idols and caityas, etc. In this
background, the condition of the existing Buddhist shrines in the
Buddhist viharas may be viewed.

Chinese scholar Husan Tsang has mentioned in his travel
account that Hinayana and Mahayana Buddhism prevailed in
Nepal during the Licchavi period. Several inscriptions have
referred to the existence of the sect called ‘Mahasanghika’, the
antecedent of Mahayana. One who demarcates the border line
between Hinayana and Mahayana Buddhism is known as
‘Mahasanghik’, who is also a doctrinaire Buddhist. Some
inscriptions of the same period give a brief reference to the
activities in the name of Vajrayana Buddhism.

The effort of Srong Tsang Gampo, the king of Tibet, to
establish close relations with Nepal during the time of Amsuvarma
led to the improvement of road link between Nepal and Tibet
thereby increasing the human traffic. The marriage of the
Princesses of Nepal and China by the king of Tibet, the idols of
Lord Buddha and the Buddhist scholars sent to Tibet along with the Nepalese Princess were held responsible for introducing as well as propagating Buddhism in Tibet. This is a shining example of the contribution of Nepal towards the propagation of Buddhism in Tibet.

The establishment of intimate relationship between Nepal and Tibet and Nepal and China, the latter to the lesser extent, upto the medieval period is well recorded in history. After the destruction of viharas and the universities, the Buddhist citadels of learning in India, by Muslim invasions in the 13th and 14th centuries thereby draining out the great scholars to Nepal, fresh avenues of Buddhist studies were opened in Nepal. That this, on the contrary, drew the attention of the students of Buddhist studies is an additional feature of the history of Buddhism in Nepal. Taking into account the mobility and diversity of Buddhism and the ties with Tibet and China, nearly 4th and 5th centuries of the medieval period may be called the Golden Age of Buddhism.

In the glorious days of Khas Mallas in Jumla, western Nepal, spanning for about three centuries in the medieval period, Buddhism occupied the place of a state religion. With the spreading influence of Lamaism originating from Tibet in all the northern parts of Nepal and its gradual assimilation by various sects around the same time, or the entry as well as settlement of the people of Lamaist faith in Nepal lent diversity in the philosophy of Buddhism.

One fact worthy of mention herein this context is that due to the expanding influence of Vajrayana Buddhism in the initial state of Nepal’s medieval history, the practice of Buddhists to remain in the viharas as Brahmacari [celibate] Bhiksus diminished and in its stead, the Bhiksus married, lived in the viharas and began to follow their own kind of Karmakanda. Scholars have therefore, ventured to say that Buddhism exists in Nepal in name only and that there is no real existence of Buddhism. However, in the Buddhist Lamaist monasteries constructed in the Himalayan and hilly areas, spiritual activities increased in terms of the observance of ‘Bahmacarya’, maintenance of strict discipline and devotion to meditation. As result, the sites occupied by the great ‘Avatari’ Lamas flourished. But these activities were directly related to Tibet. As the majority of inhabitants of the entire Himalayan area shared this Lamaist faith, Tibet was the source of spiritual inspiration for them.

Buddhism, which continued to exist in Nepal since the ancient times, is now confined to the Newar society. It was the Newars who were the architects of inscriptions and works of Buddhist art available since the medieval period to the present day. It is difficult to come across originality in century old Buddhist inscriptions. But the superb history of the activities
regarding the religion and *Karmakanda* practised by the Buddhist society is intact.

It is difficult to prepare the true history of the activities in the name of Buddhism in Nepal. But that it should survive against the strong wave of the influence of Saivism and Vaisnavism is an important thing in itself. This is the manifestation of the fact that Buddhism did not have a smooth sailing. In course of its attempt to survive, it sometimes assumed the form of existentialist movement of peaceful co-existence, sometimes a counter-reactionary movement and sometimes an aggressive movement. This may be proved by a good deal of historical evidence and the accounts of the chronicles.

Though now confined to the Newar community only, but in terms of creation of thousands of Buddhist works of art, rare manuscripts and the maintenance of the tradition of hundreds of activities, Buddhism has presented to the world a marvellous and matchless individuality, which is a matter of great importance.

**Other sects**

If, on the one hand, in the religious wave of so-called Sanatana Hinduism, an innumerable number of sects have merged into one group being influenced by various theoretical and philosophical principles, on the other hand, various sects have been able to maintain their individual identities. This may not be wholly true in the case of Nepal but the impact of the above situation obtaining in vast India may be seen in Nepal occasionally.

It is necessary to take into consideration the above matters while dealing with the existence of ‘Sakta’[worship of female deity] Devi] sect. Scholars believe in the antiquity of the recognition of divine power in the form of female. In spite of this, the female deities had become famous in the historical times along with the male deities. In Saivism it was Uma or Parvati vis-a-vis Siva and in Vaisanavism it was Mahalaksmi vis-a-vis Visnu. Similar is the case with other sects, too.

The most ancient inscription to date evoking energy cult is that of Palancok dated A.D. 503, the period when Manadeva I reigned. In the inscription it was described that Vijayavasmini, the wife of Smrad Grhapati, constructed the temple of Vigesvari with the image of goddess Bhagwati. According to some writers the consort of Vijayasvamini had performed the Rajasuya yagna in the traditional belief that one who does this yagna will qualify to be Grhapati. This reveals that the family members of Vijayasvamini belong either to Vaisnava or Saiva faith. They had consecrated the temple of Vijayaswari with the image of Mahisamardini [buffalo-killing] Durga or Mahalaksmi. The image of Palancok Bhagwati, which is now in the same place where the inscription is located, is not the old one but one
constructed during the medieval period. In spite of this, the emergence of the energy-cult during the reign of Manadeva I is a significant thing. But from the standpoint of arts, the discovery of the images of Mahalaksmi and other deities beyond the time of Manadeva I, shows that this tradition is very old in Nepal.

The chronicles mention that King Manadeva I had installed the temple of Maneswari Devi and had offered worship to the same. Though it is difficult to determine its historicity, it appears credible that this king had installed the temple of Siva at Manesvara thereby revealing the recognition of image worship in the ancient times. The concrete proofs of the mention of these gods and goddesses in the pre-medieval period lend credibility to this argument. In the latter part of history, the tradition established by Jayasthitirajamalla by saying: “I am the devotee of Pasupati and Manesvari Devi” in line with the royal title was followed by all his succeeding generations.

On another side, Nanyadeva, the king of Karnatak dynasty, according to the chronicles, was a great devotee of goddess Tulaja Bhawani. Goddess Tulaja Bhawani, worshipped by the kings of Surya dynasty since the time of Lord Ramacandra, was brought to Bhaktapur by Harasimhadeva of the dynasty of Nanyadeva and was installed there. From that time onward, the kings of Bhaktapur began to worship Tulajadevi as their patron goddess. There is no historical evidence to prove this. It seems that the Malla kings considered Tulajadevi the incarnation of Maneswari and began constructing the temples of Tulajadevi, decorating and worshipping the goddess. Following the footsteps, the practice of worshipping the living goddess Kumari as the incarnation of Navadurga and Tulajadevi was evolved. However, in the Kathmandu Valley the worship of Kumari is done with a difference. The Kumari festival is observed in a stately grand manner since the Malla period. The kings of the period followed the cult of worshipping female goddesses in one form or other. It is an established fact that Kali or Gorkhakali [Bhawani] is recognised as the patron goddess by the kings of Shah dynasty.

Though the Bhakti and worship of a number of gods and goddesses were popular in the Tantric and legendary tradition of Nepal, it is the cult of power worship which became popular and circulated widely. Despite the fact that the worship of female deities had become popular in the Tantric tradition, it is Dasa Mahavidya which occupies a place of special importance. Among the traditional religious followers of Nepal [namely, the Brahmins and Ksatriyas], one of the ‘Dasa Mahavidyas’ Mahalaksmi, Durga, etc] is treated as the patron goddess.

Following the Tantric tradition, the people of the Kathmandu Valley, the Newars in particular, worship the Astamatrka and other goddesses following the ritual ‘Bammarga’.
[the lefthand ritual of the Tantras], the practice strongly held by the people. Besides this, there is a practice throughout Nepal of worshipping many gods and goddesses, visiting their sites and temples in different ways. Each worship carries a legend of its own.

In the Sanantana Hindu religion, the existence of 33 crore deities is recognised. Though it is impossible to get a complete list of these deities, these deities have been mentioned in the ‘Sastras’ about the ways of counting them. There are Navagrahas [nine planets] of the same category as far as their popularity is concerned. These planets are adored highly in society. Out of these, there are the Sun and the Moon which are worshipped in various ways. The worship of Ganesa falls into this category. The popularity of Ganesa throughout Nepal and particularly in the Valley is evidenced by the presence of a large number of the temples of Ganesa, numerous legends about it and belief in Ganesa. It is because of the widespread influence of Ganesa that the Buddhists too worshipped this god.

In this context, it will be relevant to mention the name of Josmani sect in Nepal in the 19th century. This sect has launched a number of activities in their own lifetime and sometime later.

Mutual Relationships Between Religions and Sects

Nepal is synonymous with a small piece of earth. The development of culture and civilisation is not evenly distributed to all the regions of Nepal. On account of the lack of survey, research, criticism and counter-criticism, true and real writings about Nepalese history and culture have not been done. Therefore, it is difficult to clarify facts and truths in this brief article. The same thing poses a stumbling block in the writing of Nepal’s religious history.

Like the history of Nepal, the religious history became clear, as if suddenly, only since the time of Manadeva I [A.D. 464]. From the numerous inscriptions of the time of Manadeva, it appears that Vaisnavism, Saivism, worship of Surya and Buddhism prevailed in the society of that time. Manadeva is also credited with the construction of Visnu temples, the erection of Sivalingas, the temples of Maneswari and Manavihara. He had also performed yajnas in the Vedic tradition.

In the ancient Vedic tradition, there is the practice of worshipping gods and goddesses amounting to 33 crores including Siva, Vishnu, Sun, etc. Later, in the name of Siva, Visnu, and Devi, different sects seem to have developed egoistic feelings. Though the scriptural texts say somewhere that all the gods are one, yet in some places they say that some gods are greater than others. Some legends affirm the later view. Stories contained in
the Puranas make the same revelation. Due to these reasons, the prevalence of uniformity and diversity in the research of the essence of Arya Sanatana Hindu religion may be understood. In this perspective, the example set by Manadeva conveys the meaning that it is good to worship all the gods. It is one thing to observe with equal Bhakti Siva, Visnu, Surya, Devi, the gods related to the Vedas in one form or other. But the observance of Buddhism, a religion not believing in God and the Vedas, in an equal footing must be considered as sheer case of religious tolerance. That this view was challenged by Anuparam Gupta around A.D. 515 has already been mentioned.

Irrespective of the theoretical bias, in view of the need to attend to practicability while maintaining livelihood in the same locality or area, the traditional religious believers and the Buddhists seem to have adopted the principle of peaceful coexistence. This feature of Nepal's religious tolerance has been commended by the Chinese scholar Hsuan Tsang in his travel account.

Most of the kings of the ancient times seem to have followed the principle of peaceful co-existence. Some kings might have deviated from this stand becoming tired of Buddhism or other religions. But such incidents have only temporary repercussions.

It is not merely the question of antagonism between the traditional religions and Buddhism. If, on the one hand, though parallel treatment was meted out to Vaisnavas and Saivas, on the other hand, there was a clash over their relative superiority. Though the inscription at the image of Harihara near Pasupati installed by Svamivarta conveys the meaning that Harihara is indivisible, in actual fact the then society held the feeling that Siva and Visnu were two different divinities and that one was considered superior to the other. It is to eliminate this kind of feeling that the image of Harihara was consecrated. From the historical point of view there is a unique experiment in the field of religion, the equal of which is to be found nowhere. Therefore, at different stages of history, the images of Harihara were installed at different places following the above tradition. The procession of Harihara [or Harisankar] was taken out. The similar practice of performing the worship of the combined image of Ardhanarishvara Siva and Lakshmiñarayana seems to have prevailed since the medieval period.

In the religious field of Nepal's history, various ages witnessed struggles and hostilities in the name of Buddhism. Some legends give the account of bloodshed. A similar story is told regarding the arrival of Sankaracarya in Nepal. In the Svayambhu Purana, reportedly written in the latter part of medieval period, Buddhism was glorified at the cost of Saivism which was condemned. In spite of such exceptions, the nobility and
particularly the ruling family had pursued the traditional Sanatana Dharma without discarding the ritual activities of Buddhism. This was the need of the time, rather than a whim and an exception. Jayasimha Ramvardhana and Pratap Malla are examples.

Whatever may be the fate of traditional belief in modern times, due to the fact that Nepal's political image was then enhanced by Buddhism and also due to the fact that Gautama Buddha is held as a national hero, the feelings towards this religion must be genuine and pure.

A comprehensive literature of the religious activities in Nepal is in the making. This literature may be studied under the following headings. 1. Karmakanda [ritual activities], 2. Hymns and eulogy, and 3. Mahatmya and Purana.

The detailed literature regarding the Karmakanda is intact in the form of manuscripts preserved in the National Archives and the Kaiser library. These manuscripts include subjects like Saiva, Vaisnava, Sakta, Buddhist and tantric faiths. In order to ascertain whether these texts are original or not, a comprehensive comparative study is necessary. But the Buddhist tantric texts involving Mahayanī, Vajrayanī and Tantrayanī are not available in other places. The 'Purasāryarnava' of Pratap Simha Shah is considered a standard text on Tantra. Similarly, the Sankalparatnavali of Girvanayuddha Bikram Shah Deva is a famous text of Karmakanda. Such anthologies regarding Karmakanda are found abundantly in Nepal.

Eulogy or panegyric literature is found in the inscriptions of the ancient times and in other forms of writings, too. Among the literary works under Mahatmya and Purana are Himavatkhanda, Pasupatipurana, Nepala Mahatmya, Mallika Mahatmya, Luntikesar Purana, Swayambhu Purana, and Svasthani Mahatmya.

Lokadharma: Popular Religion

By the term Lokadharma, we mean the worldly features of various kinds of religious traditions. This can be divided into three groups—religious matters regarding Aryan Sanatana Hinduism, religion of non-Aryan people and the religion borne out of their combination.

The literature in the written form or scriptures are available about the canons of Arya Sanatana Hinduism. The teachings of these scriptures seem to prevail to maintain the tradition, which we call the scriptural tradition. But among the classes maintaining the scriptural tradition in practice we can see various forms of Lokadharma [popular religion] applied in conservative manner. The practice of worshipping patron gods and Masto among the orthodox Brahmins and ksatriyas in Nepal.
may be taken as example of this. If we undertake research and analysis, we can definitely locate the features of Lokdharma.

In Nepal there are a large number of the people of non Aryan origin. They follow their own religious traditions. But they have so far not been able to preserve their tradition in the written form. But as was the custom, their tradition was confined to memory and hear-say. This aspect of Nepal’s religion is not only widespread, but also diverse. Bonpo, the ancient religious tradition of Tibet, may be cited as an example, though there exists some written records about it.

While living in any part of the world for a long time, it is but natural that one community should mix with another and make cultural exchanges. The Aryan Sanantana Hindus and non Aryans might have shared this religious aspect. May be, the tradition of Dhaki and Jhankri[faith-healers] may be the mixed tradition of the above kind.

In conclusion, while presenting a brief history of religious activities in Nepal, the feelings, social practices, and the religious ritual activities far outweigh the the intellectual aspects. In the absence of any scope for the doctrine, religions have been developing in a fragile way. Its impact is seen in the social, economic and political spheres.

Due to the prominence given to sentiments and feelings, any kind of spiritualism can wield its influence. The incidents of the granting of rights to the Christians to settle here and to propagate their religion by the kings of later Malla period may be cited as one of the examples.

The practice of different kinds of religious Karmakandas affords different kinds of pleasures. This evinces the popularity of Karmakanda. Nepal plays an important place as far as the construction of temples, inns, and rest houses, giving away charities, observance of festivals and fairs, etc., are concerned. It is because of these features of Karmakanda that the religious activities preserve their own separate entities. The observance of the Karmakanda of Sanatana Hinduism by the Newars pursuing the Sivamarga is also a rare phenomenon, the equivalent of which is hard to come across. The Karmakanda followed by the followers of the Pancayavnadi and other sects is very much different from the one followed by the Hindus of India. Similar importance may be attached to the miraculous and mysterious Karmakanda done by the Vajrayani group of Nepali society. The same thing can be said about the Karmakanda regarding the Lokadharma and common tradition mentioned under the heading of Lokadharma.

The religious and spiritual forces let loose by various courses of events have made a decisive impact on the political, social and economic life of Nepal. Scholars have taken pains to
point out the negative impact of these forces on several aspects. Their argument may be correct to some extent. But it must be borne in mind that these forces have contributed to the enhancement of the sense of morality and discipline and to the promotion of the cause of literature, arts and culture. This will remain unforgettable.

At present, Nepal has been specified by the constitution as a Hindu kingdom, which is in conformity with the monarchy. Constitutionally, Nepal is also a democratic state. In such circumstances, if, on the one hand, there is a feeling that Nepal should be given the status of a secular state and that the people should be given the right of religious conversion, on the other hand, the persons swayed by modern ideas have gradually become indifferent to the age-old tradition whereas the majority of people have somehow been maintaining the traditional religious thinking. In the absence of a well-organised education and training on the relevant subject, those people desirous of continuing their native religious tradition have to remain in the pool of doubts and confusion. It is this class of people who have come under the spell of neo-spiritualists such as Rajneesh, Bal Yogeswar, Sai Baba, and Maharshi Mahesh Yogi. In such circumstances, the answer to the question of the future of religious tradition in Nepal lies with the future course of events.

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Nepali Culture and Society: Reflections on Some Historical Currents

Prayag Raj Sharma

Geographical Determinants of Nepal's Culture

The Physical features of Nepal have been in many ways decisive in shaping its culture. Its disparate cultures and languages are themselves a product of a difficult terrain and its relative physical isolation. The fastness of the sub-Himalayan mountains had kept its people cut off from the landmass even in close proximity such as the plains of India. The contact with the north was even more difficult because of the high Himalayan ranges. However, the isolation was also a boon in some respects in that it left its people to enjoy their life undisturbed and in a relative peace. The hills of Nepal did not have to bear the brunt of any large-scale military invasion or an occupation of its territory by attacking hordes from outside in any frequency. So it remained quite untouched by the violent changes sweeping the Indian plains in various epochs which were responsible for many political and cultural upheavals in that land. This has made Nepal's culture, broadly speaking, an introvert one, which shows aversion to changes and displays a keener instinct for retention and preservation of ideas. All this is a trait borne truly of Nepal's isolation. This does not, however, mean that Nepal was totally insulated from the outside world for all kinds of contact. Far from it. In fact, people kept on coming to settle or seek refuge in this safe sanctuary from all directions at various times in history. For the majority of its people, the culture of Nepal is derived from Hinduism the first date of which in the Nepal Valley may go back at least two thousand years. It had travelled here with all kinds of early migrants, such as, princes, political refugees, traders, artists, cultivators and pilgrims from far and near in India. Ideas, having once arrived, tended to persist and endure much longer here, and were not easily supplanted by new ones. The noted French Indologist, Sylvain Levi, author of the monumental work, Le Nepal, observed around the turn of the century, [Levi: 1925]
that one can meet the authentic image of India that is past, still in Nepal. Percy Brown, a noted student of Indian architecture, has also made similar observations in the following words:

Nepal illustrates, as approximately as time and ordinary circumstances permit, the state of India before Islam had imprinted its indelible mark on almost every aspect of its life. The manners and customs of people, their religion, arts and industries, the towns and the country, are practically the same as they were ten centuries ago. Nepal.....presents an ideal picture of the Middle Ages of the East.

[Brown, 1912]

Cultural practices of Nepal are essentially of a Hindu or Buddhist derivation which find expressions in their numerous rites and rituals, beliefs, social values, festivals, art and architecture of the land. All these have piled up as historical accretions of different ages and origin, which make an astounding spectacle of cultural survival.

The reason why Buddhism managed to survive only in Nepal in the whole of the sub-continent is also due probably to its physical isolation from the Indian land-mass. In India it had been rendered a final blow from the double action of Sankaracarya who started the process of revitalization of Hinduism, and a physical destruction of monasteries by Muslim invaders in the 13th century. Nepal's remoteness and its location into the deep hills had made it a safe haven for people and ideas to live on. Buddhist scholars from India took refuge in Nepal where they kept the tradition surviving. Additionally, Nepal had also the option to turn to Tibet to sustain its Buddhism. As Snellgrove observes in his Buddhist Himalaya.

Nepal has preserved the most precious traces of what Buddhist India once was. The Pagoda type temple, which was already characteristic of India of Yuan-Chwang's times, but has now long since been replaced by other styles, was still being built in Nepal in the 13th century. Iconographic traditions continue even today and can be traced back, directly to the Pala art of Bengal. It is well-known that Buddhist scholars fleeing India from the Muslim invasions sought refuge in Nepal, Kashmir and Tibet.

[Snellgrove, 1957: 97]

Another distinctive trait of Nepali culture, historically, is its power of synthesis and assimilation. It has blended and harmonised even the opposing philosophies and dogmas reaching its territorial shores. Buddhism and Hinduism, for example, have been fused in Nepal to a remarkable degree whereby their sectarian distinctiveness is often obscured. This becomes clear by looking at some of the religious life of the Hindu and Buddhist
Newars who have lived and shared the same cultural milieu in the Kathmandu Valley for hundreds of years. In scores of instances, their public festivals and popular rites are devoid of any strong sectarian overtones. Gods like Ganesa Bhairava, Mahakala, or some of the goddesses like Kumari, Ajima [Hariti], Vajrayogini and Guheswari are worshipped, as much by the Hindus as by the Buddhists. The most outstanding instance of this spirit of religious syncretism is represented, perhaps, by the popular god, Matsyendranatha. His main shrines are in Bungamati, Patan Ta Baha, Jana Baha in Kathmandu, Chouvar, Bhaktapur and Nala [Locke: 1980]. As a vast section of the Hindus looks upon Matsyendranatha to be a Natha ascetic and teacher of Gorakhanatha in the Kanphatta order of Saivism, to the Buddhists, however, he is the Avalokitesvara Padmapani, the Bodhisattva, who has an abounding compassion for all creatures of this world [Locke: 1980]. This Bodhisattva in several other forms of his, such as that of Amoghapasa, Nilakantha, Padmanartesvara or Halahala, shares the features and attributes of the Hindu god, Siva [Locke: 1980]. Maintaining the tradition from the days of the Malla kings, the present Shah King still goes to pay his obeisance to this god in Patan on the day of the bhoto dekhaune jatra, annually.

The 18 x 16 miles wide Valley of Nepal, ringed by the Mahabharat hills on all sides, is a green, fertile agricultural bowl where an intense farming enlivens its land all the year round. This must surely have been the single most important factor for an ancient and remarkable culture to be born and thrive here. The Valley had exercised an influence in the countries of the region far greater in proportion than its mere size would suggest. Within Nepal itself, however, the cultural flowering of the Valley spilled over the rims of the Mahabharat hills only to a limited degree. The people who came from the plains at different epochs were more naturally drawn to the place by the openness and the fertility of the Valley than the unending folds of the rugged hills. In the close and narrow confines of the Valley, isolated pockets of settlements growing on their own sets of opposing beliefs would have been an impossible situation to imagine. Even if the place had come to develop more than one set of religious beliefs, which it did in Hinduism and Buddhism, one would expect them to show a understanding between these faiths as they certainly did. When the Valley, by the quirk of circumstances, got divided into three separate political entities later, even then the cultural life in it hardly differed in any marked degree from one another.

The Kathmandu Valley has constituted the oldest seat of Nepal's history and culture. It is here that a cultural efflorescence
unbroken for about two millennia took place, starting from the early Christain era down to the present times. In due course, Nepal made a good name for itself among states of comparable antiquity in the Indian subcontinent as well as elsewhere on account of some of its specialised produces or also as being a centre of art and learning. Such references fill up the Indian literature up to the late medieval period, beginning from Kautilya's *Arthasastra* [Nepal: 1983]. In the *Arthasastra* two special types of woolen blankets made in Nepal are mentioned to make, among other things, the choicest items of collection in the royal wardrobes of the king of Magadha. In many references in the medieval period of India including some inscriptions, musk has been alluded to as a produce coming from Nepal [Nepal: 1983]. Nepal's artistic achievements have been remarked in the accounts of the Chinese travellers in India and Nepal. The remains of this rich artistic heritage present a dazzling sight to the visitor, even today.

Until some thirty years ago, the only approach to the Valley of Nepal was by an overland route over hills and across the valleys and, by reputation, this route was said to be tough and hard to cross. There is a story evoking such a picture in the Buddhist canonical work, *Mulavarastivadavinayavastu*. This work was translated into the Chinese in 700. According to the story, Ananda, the disciple of the Buddha, got a frost-bite while travelling bare-foot to Nepal. When this was narrated to the Buddha in Sravasti by some of the merchants returning from Nepal, Buddha makes allowance to the monks to put on foot-wears under special circumstances. Such and similar accounts helped to fix an image of Nepal as being a remote and difficult-of-access country to the people of the plains. A thick belt of tropical forest infested with deadly malaria made the journey to it even more foreboding. In the last two hundred years, Nepal self-imposed a policy of isolation discouraging outsiders and Europeans to visit its land, which was lifted only in 1951. All this had helped put a veil of mystery around it and, often, in the popular writings, it has hence, been called a *Shangrila*.

Nepal is largely a mountainous terrain extending east-west, and wedged between the Gangetic plains of North India and the high Tibetan plateau. The first people to discover the route leading from the plains to the Nepal Valley must have been an adventurous lot constantly searching for new places. Similar search also resulted in the discovery of the shortest passes across the Himalayas to go to Tibet and China. Soon Nepal served as a good mid-way stop and an ideal break-point in the trans-Himalayan journey between India and Tibet for travellers, traders, pilgrims members of government, embassies and missions, that lasted many centuries. Documentary proofs of the use of this route for regular traffic between South and Central Asia are
found from the seventh century on. Buddhism, too, was introduced to Tibet by way of Nepal. The only other main route to go to Tibet had lain through Kashmir in the western Himalayas. The Nepali route was closed in modern times by the British in India after the Younghusband Mission of Tibet in 1904; a new route to Tibet was opened via Kalimpong and Sikkim then.

Thus Nepal has played quite a vital role in transmitting the Indian Buddhist culture to Tibet. Indian Buddhist scholars and yogis of great power and erudition first came to Nepal before going on to Tibet and acquiring their fame there. According to the 17th century Tibetan pilgrim-historian, Taranatha, the Yogacara philosopher Vasubandhu [4th century A.D.] was the first Buddhist scholar of eminence to have visited Nepal and died there [Snellgrove: 1957]. Snellgrove also mentions many other names of Buddhist scholars and mystics of India and Tibet who either went to Tibet or to India through Nepal. Some of the prominent names in this connection are Santaraksita, Naropa, Darika, Ratnaraksita and Milarepa. Yet another prominent Indian teacher who was responsible for the revival of Buddhism in Tibet was Atisa [980-1054] of Vikramasila monastery in Magadha. He, too, is said to have spent some time in Nepal before going on to western Tibet. These are just a few examples which, by no means, exhaust our list of such names.

Much of this kind of role in history played by Nepal was secured to it by virtue of its intermediary physical position between India and Tibet. Its effect on the evolution of Nepal's own culture has been of no small value, since the cultural efflorescence based in the Nepal Valley has not only got an overwhelming Indian influence, but also elements drawn from the Tibetan sources, especially in the later epochs. This becomes quite clear from the study of Nepal's paintings [thangkas] and bronzes, its architectural forms, dance forms, ritual accoutrements, etc., some of which are very similar to Tibet. The Newari language in its basic structure is said to be Tibeto-Burman in origin [Malla: 1981], and the racial make-up of the Newars, similarly, betrays Mongoloid features. Whereas the Indian influence on Nepali culture was wide-ranging in scope and mostly one-sided, Nepal having drawn on the Indian sources mainly, this exchange was more reciprocal in nature with Tibet. In the beginning of this relationship, Nepal gave profusely to the enrichment of Tibet's art and religion. The episode of Bhrikuti is quite illuminating in this regard. According to a widely remembered Tibetan tradition, Bhrikuti, the daughter of a king of Nepal, was married to king Srong-btsen-sgam-po [died c. 650] [Levi: II: 1905]. She is said to have been one of the instruments for taking the Buddhist religion and art from Nepal to Tibet. This relationship with Nepal continued steadily for many centuries. Nepal's monasteries served
as centres of learning and inspiration to the Tibetan monk-pilgrims travelling in Nepal and India. A good example of this is provided by the biography of the monk pilgrim Dharmasvamin of Tibet who spent many years in the Swayambhu, Vikramasila and Dharmadhatu Vihara of Nepal before proceeding on to Tirhut and Magadha, from where he returned to Tibet, passing once more through Nepal [1226-1334] [Roerich: 1959]. Before him we have the instance of Drok-mi [992-1072], an important personage in the establishment of Sakya-pa sect in central Tibet, visiting Nepal and India for gathering knowledge in his doctrine [Snellgrove: 1957]. Similarly, Snellgrove states from the evidence of Taranath that Ratnaraksita was one of the last Indian Pandits to seek refuge in Nepal after the destruction of the Odantapuri and Vikramasila monasteries by the Muslim invaders. From now on the Indian source stimulating Nepali Buddhism dried up completely, whereupon it gradually began to weaken. Tibet remained the only source open to it to have any meaningful exchange of ideas concerning Buddhism. This became evident in the field of art, bronzes and thangkas. In some stages of this relationship, it becomes impossible sometimes to determine the provenance of such art works between Nepal and Tibet. Nepali artists who went to work in Tibet brought back the more nativized style of Tibet that was used to depict a pantheon popular in Tibetan Buddhism mainly. Recently, a sketch-book belonging to a Nepali artist, Jivarama, [15th century], has been found which strongly suggests this. Jivarama prepared the sketch-book while he was in Tibet, but returned with it to Nepal later. Majority of the figures contained in the sketch-book are from the Tibetan Buddhist pantheon. With the help of this book the artist could work on commissions ordered either by the Nepali or the Tibetan patron [Lowry: 1977] in Nepal itself.

The episode of an young Nepali artist, A-ni-ko [1245-1306], provides another brilliant chapter in the Nepal-Tibet artistic relationship [Petech: 1958]. One learns about his work and achievements from a funerary stèle put up in his grave in Hsia-shan village in Yuan-P'ing district near Beizing. The young artist was sent to Tibet at the head of a team of artists at the request of the Sa-ky-a-pa abbot, Phag-pa, in 1263 to erect a stupa there. This work so much pleased Phag-pa that A-ni-ko was later sent to the court of the Mongol Emperor, Kublai Khan, in Beizing to undertake many more artistic commissions for him there, which he accomplished with great skill indeed. He specially made a name for himself in casting statuaries and left behind a distinct school of his own after his death in 1306. One of his more enduring monuments is the Sveta Caitya which stands near Beizing even to this day.

The sort of land-bridge Nepal provided by joining Tibet with Eastern India through its territory was also responsible for
the development of an entrepot trade between these two countries from an early time. Nepali and Indian merchants, the Kashmiri Muslim traders, especially, pursued this vocation with great profit [Jnavali: 1962]. In Nepal, ‘Urays,’ a Buddhist Newar high-caste, have been long regarded as people specialising in Tibetan trade. A sizable community of Nepali traders was permanently living in Tibet and marrying with the local people which has lasted down to the modern times. Trading privileges for merchants of Nepali origin were also protected by special treaties effected with Tibet. In the late Malla period, Nepal minted all the silver currency for Tibet for which Tibet supplied the necessary silver [Walsh: 1908]. A big dispute over this issue rose between Tibet and Nepal later, as Tibet refused to abide by the old arrangement. A war broke out between them in which China too joined on the side of Tibet. This, however, was wisely ended by Nepal by signing a treaty with China in 1792 under which Nepal agreed to forgo its rights to mint coins and circulate them in Tibet, but the special rights granted to the Nepali traders in Tibet were continued as before.

The Dimensions of Time and Space in Nepali Culture

Having discussed some of the broad features characterising the Nepali culture and its topographical conditionings, further examination of it in a time-space dimension should enable us to understand its evolution even better. In the following lines, I have tried to conceptualise the historical growth of Nepal in a more cohesive framework. Nepal’s history, of course, can be set down conventionally to a straightforward chronological narration dividing it in its scattered and isolated regions in different epochs, quite easily. What I have tried to do in my present framework, however, is to find a basis to thread these scattered events in some sort of a pattern. I have tried to suggest that Nepal’s physical expansions and its territorial integration, which to most people is of a relatively recent happening in the post-18th century period, had its latent tendencies present from a much older historical date. This conception of Nepal is not, however, the same as that which tends to look at the problem of political borders of ancient Nepal to be quite as large as they are today.

The political history of Nepal in the 18th century had consisted of a string of petty states and principalities dotting its hills from east to west, each one ruled by a king of its own. All historians agree with the view that the present political entity of Nepal is the result of a process of unification started by Prithvinarayan Shah, King of Gorkha [1722-1775], in the 18th century. While this may be so, there also seems, curiously, a centripetal force to have been at work in the history of Nepal from
an earlier time with the Kathmandu Valley [Nepal Valley] as its chief focus. Truly, it is this ancient kingdom that had succeeded in attracting all kinds of people to itself from its far and outlying regions, owing to or in the aftermath of such events. The extent to which the centripetal force had been able to exercise its pull corresponded roughly with Nepal's present territory and, occasionally, even transcended it. One might be permitted to think in these circumstances that historical events which were triggered off in these regions as a result of which people fled to Nepal had somehow been stimulated by a centripetal force that Nepal was capable of exercising, far more strongly than any other historical centre in the region around the same time. This is what constitutes the verticality and horizontality of Nepal's cultural history, in my opinion.

There is a class of native writing in Nepal believed to be written around the 14th-15th centuries which renders a mythological account of the early history and the sacred geography of Nepal. Their style of rendering is Puranic. Such writings are represented by works like the *Swayambhu Purana*, the *Pasupati Purana* and the *Nepala Mahatmya*. In their accounts, Nepal is transformed into one of the holiest places, rendered sacred by the presence of numerous divinities and pilgrimage centres. The praise for these places betrays a religious verve approaching a nascent nationalism in these narrations. Mythical accounts of the origin of the Nepal Valley are also repeated in the later series of Nepal's chronicles, called the *Vamsavalis*, redacted probably from these very local *Puranas*. But the *Vamsavalis* extend their accounts beyond myths and legends also to include the rule of historical kings in the various dynasties, their regnal years, and other events in their reign.

The legendary history of Nepal begins with the genesis of the Nepal Valley as a lake. The Adibuddha [Primordial Buddha] self-manifested in this lake in the form of a lotus at the spot where stands the stupa of Swayambhu today. Then all the mortal Buddhas preceding Gautama Buddha are said to have come one by one to this spot to pay obeisance to this deity. Later Manjusri Bodhisattva came from Mahacina and drained the water of the lake by cutting a gorge at Chovar. This event is said to have made the Valley into an inhabitable place for the first time. Alternately, this task is credited to the Hindu god, Krsna, if the chronicle is of a Hindu inspiration. The rule by kings belonging to all kinds of dynasties such as the Gopals, the Mahisapalas and the Kiratas follow this. Sakyamuni himself is said to have visited the Valley in the reign of the Kirata king, Jitedasti. So did king Asoka Maurya of Pataliputra in the reign of another Kirata King, Sthunko. Asoka is said to have set up five stupas around Patan and given his daughter in marriage to a local prince, according to the accounts preserved in these chronicles.
All the incidents narrated above are, no doubt, legendary accounts. They have been perpetuated mainly in the writings of the chronicles purporting to give a complete history of Nepal from the earliest times. Their usefulness insofar as they can be checked against more dependable historical sources cannot be denied. One significant thing about such writings is that a Nepal-centric view seems to have developed slowly in them about the time when they were written, in which Nepal is given a prominent role to play.

Two regions of Nepal in the eastern and the central Tarai give evidence to an early historical beginning there going back to the time of the Buddha. These centre around Janakpur and Tilaurakot in the Dhanusa and Taulihawa districts respectively. In legends and classical writings of India, Janakpur is described as the capital of the old Mithila country, also called Videha, where kings of the Vaideha dynasty ruled. The King who had found Sita while ploughing a field for sacrifice was the twenty-third king to rule in this dynasty. The story relating to Janakpur and described in Valmiki's *Ramayana* may not be more than a poetic creation, yet the force of popular belief makes it sound almost as history. This very belief led to Janakpur's 'rediscovery' in the 17th century. The foundations of modern Janakpur were thus laid only after its 'rediscovery', and all its sacred complex at present dates from this time [Burghart: 1978]. Regarding the history of Videha there is yet another clue to follow up. Buddhist religious texts make many allusions to it. Videha in the Mithila country is said to have federated with the Vrjī confederacy in the time of the Buddha [Thakur: 1956], of which the Licchavis too were a member. It is notable in this connection that some link of the Vrjis with the Nepal Valley, at a later date, however, is suggested by a reference to them in one of the Licchavi inscriptions of Nepal. It mentions a resident of the locality of *Vrjikarathya* in Kathmandu [Vajracarya: 1973]. Such a name to a locality, one believes, was given because people of Vrji origin had come and settled in Nepal already in some number.

At Tilaurakot, the other region to produce an early history, ruins of an extensive ancient site were discovered by Indian archaeologists at the end of the last century. The Indian explorer, P.C. Mukherji, identified this place with Kapilavastu, the capital of the Sakyas where Siddharatha Gautama grew up as a prince [Mukherji, 1901]. About the same time, Lumbini, the birthplace of the Buddha, was also just discovered. An inscribed Asokan pillar found there helped to establish Lumbini's identity beyond all doubts. This pillar was raised by Asoka in the 20th year of his reign in 249 B.C. after doing a pilgrimage at the spot. Buddhist texts describe the felicitous event of the birth of Buddha from Mayadevi holding on to the branch of a *sala* tree to have taken place in the Lumbini gardens, which is calculated to fall in the year
563 BC. Adjacent to the Sakya country, there were states of some other prominent clans connected with the life of the Buddha, such as the Koliyas, the Mallas and the Licchavis [Law: 1943]. Excavations in this area have brought to light a defended settlement, ruins of stupas and Buddhist monasteries, as well as many other kinds of material relics from a history starting in the 7th century B.C. and continuing in some areas down to the mediaeval period [Mitra: 1972; Deo: 1968].

There are certain things in the history of these two regions to connect them with the Nepal Valley even in older times. There is a large section of the Buddhist Newars called the Sakayas which believes itself to be descended from the Sakyas of Kapilavastu who had fled the city after it was burnt down by the ire of Kosala’s Virudhaka in Buddha’s lifetime. It is possible that the Mallas and the Koliyas, too, had similarly found their way to the Nepal Valley after their states were threatened by the rising imperial powers of either Kosala or Magadha. We know at least in the case of the Licchavis that they did so in full measure and eventually succeeded in establishing a rule by their dynasty in Nepal. Thus events happening as far as these places in northern India would bring its people gravitating towards the Nepal Valley, thus underlining the prominent role it played in the region. Nepali chronicles lay so much emphasis on legends connected with Buddhism in which a visit of Buddha to the Valley is also recorded. The fact that Buddhism could survive only in Nepal in the whole of the Indian sub-continent may have a deeper historical significance in view of Nepal’s relations with some of these early Buddhist states, rather than being merely an accidental thing.

Next, we go back to pick up the thread of history in the Nepal Valley once again. Its earliest documented historical period is called the Licchavi Period, beginning in King Manadeva’s reign in the 5th century and going up to the second quarter of the 8th century in Jayadeva II’s reign. Inscriptions of this period are in the Sanskrit language and in Gupta script. The Licchavi dynasty seems to have gradually waned in strength and petered out after Jayadeva II, and the kings who followed seem to have had no special pretensions of an illustrious dynasty to rule Nepal. Historians have named part of this post-Licchavi period from c. 750 to 1200 as the Thakuri Period [Petech: 1958]. One gets names of all kinds of kings ruling in Nep 1 during this long interregnum which lasts almost until the start of Jayasthitimalla’s reign in 1382. Sometimes two or even three kings are mentioned as ruling simultaneously. This certainly suggests a very confusing historical period of Nepal during this time.

Licchavi records for the first time help us to assess to what extent people and ideas had come to invade Nepal from India at
this time. This period of Nepal’s history is the phase of maximum Indo-Aryan cultural penetration. This becomes clear by looking at the instances presented by Nepal’s art and architecture, its religion, social organisations, political and economic systems, their traditions of learning and sciences, all of which, no doubt, are of Indian extraction. It is only fair to record here, however, that all such imported ideas have undergone a process of change and adaptation before their final assimilation in Nepal in accordance with the taste and genius of the local people. This had involved making selections, abridgement, mixings, blendings, and even confounding sometimes of the Indic culture before giving the native tradition a distinctive form of its own.

It is believed that much of the process of nativization of Nepal’s culture in diverse spheres of activity got completed in the Thakuri period [750-1200] and the Malla Period [1201-1768]. The bronzes and the thangkas [Nep: Paubhas] in which Nepal has earned so much name in the world of arts, belong mainly to this time. The so-called ‘pagoda’ temple which has been Nepal’s main architectural expression all through its history was devised in this period. A new native era of Nepal was launched beginning October, 20, 879, which the Newars use as their cultural calendar even now. The three towns of the Valley which in the late Malla Period [1480-1768] also become the three political capitals of the Malla states, viz., Kantipur, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur, also begin to assume their first shape at this time. In short, every characteristic cult, the form of every popular divinity, multiple festivals, popular celebrations, numerous lores and legends, musical repertoire, that is, all the distinguishing features in the social and economic life of the people, were mainly assembled at this time.

The history of Nepal comes to be related with the Mithila country of the plains once more. A new kingdom, the kingdom of Tirhut, was established here with its capital at Simraungarh near Gaur on the Indo-Nepal borders by a Nanyadeva, who is said to have come from Karnataka in South India to found a new Karnata dynasty here, in 1097. The last important king to rule this dynasty was Harasimhadeva [1297-1325]. These two kings are greatly idolised in the Nepali chronicles. Harasimha fled to the hills to save himself from the invading army of Delhi’s Ghiyas-ud-din Tughlaq in 1325, but before arriving in Nepal, died on the way. However, other members of his family did arrive safely in Nepal, where they were well-received and given a place of honour by the ruling nobility there. Ultimately the Malla and the Karnata lines coalesced through marriage of a daughter descended from Harasimhadeva with Jayasthitimalla, king of Nepal [1382-95], an event which their descendants cherished and remembered for long. The later Mallas even fancied adopting the epithet of Karnatavamsi before their names. Beside this, Nepal had had
other relations too with Tirhut. Tirhut is known to have made several raids on Nepal in the 13th and early 14th century, the evidence of which is given in Nepali historical sources [Vajracarya: 1965]. The Maithili language had made a strong impact on Malla court, as this was the language in which even Malla kings attempted to write plays adapted from Sanskrit for staging in their palaces. Taleju or Tulaja, the tutelary deity of the Malla kings, with her shrine invariably lodged in their palace precincts, is said to have hailed from Tirhut. Further, Maithili Brahmans came in large numbers to the Valley to offer their services as temple priests.

The Malla rule was terminated by physical force of the conquering army of Gorkha under Prithvinarayan Shah in 1768-69. Gorkha was a hill state about a hundred kilometres west of Kathmandu Valley, quite outside the political pale of Nepal. It was ethnically, linguistically and culturally a different country from the Newar states of the Nepal Valley, although, broadly speaking, they both were avowed followers of Hinduism of a common origin in the subcontinent. With the conquest of Nepal Valley by Gorkha, the Newar language and culture in the Valley ceases to be a sovereign national culture, and is replaced by the language and culture of the hills. However, save in certain matters which to any political state becomes a natural thing to promulgate after its own fashion, the new rulers, it must be admitted, seemed quite inclined to preserve the many fine legacies left behind by the people of the Valley. Partly, this was a compulsive act, since Gorkha did not have a parallel tradition in every field of art and culture to supplant that of the Newars’. Consequently, Newar art, architecture and a large pantheon of gods created within the Newar religious milieu got instantly recognised and assimilated by Gorkha.

For about three hundred years before the advent of Prithvinarayan Shah [1722-75], the hills and the Tarai lands immediately adjoining them in the plains and forming part of modern Nepal now, were dotted with a myriad of petty states and principalities, which were independent of one another. Their relationship was marred by a feeling of distrust, constant political rivalry, and an ambition to make territorial gains at the expense of one another, though they seldom carried the strength and resources to realise such plans singly. Even a geographically unitary territory such as the Nepal Valley, in these murky political conditions of Nepal prevailing in the late mediaeval period, had split into three separate and independent political entities, after the death of Yaksamalla [1428-82].

For about two hundred years or so in the 16th-18th century, Nepal’s hills remained crowded with these small states gathered in two broad geographical clusters in the Karnali and the
Gandaki basins, known as the *Baisi* [meaning, twenty-two] and the *Caubisi* [meaning, twenty-four], respectively. There was one state, Palpa, in the *Caubisi* cluster, which succeeded in extending its territory farther than the others, and took its frontiers across the Kosi river along the eastern Tarai. The prowess of the enterprising brothers in this ruling house played an important part in the expansion of this kingdom, as they carved out their own little, independent possessions in separate regions. Gorkha, too, was set up in this fashion by Dravya Shah [1559-70] of a different Thakuri house, who came with some of his ardent followers after splitting with his brother, the ruler of Lamjung, and wrested authority from the local chieftains there.

All the *Baisi* and the *Caubisi* states seem to have formed out of the disintegration of a single large state of Jumla earlier in western Nepal [Sharma: 1972]. This kingdom, according to some historians, has been designated as the Khasa kingdom and, according to others, as the Kingdom of the Western Mallas. It was founded by one Nagaraja sometime in the 12th century. From him until its last great King, Prithvimalla [1338-58], after which the kingdom began to slowly break-up, there had in all been fourteen kings to rule it from its twin capitals at Sinja and Dullu in Jumla and Dailekh districts, respectively. In the height of its glory the kingdom embraced the territory as far east as the borders of Nepal, and in the west, included the hills of Kumaon and Garhwal as well as some parts of western Tibet.

Notwithstanding their political feuds, however, all these hill states seem to have a common ethnic, cultural and linguistic ties binding them together. The rulers in these states were various families of the Thakuri, i.e., a Ksatriya caste, claiming a prestigious Rajput descent to themselves. All these states had an identical assemblage of castes with similar social and economic relations to define their groups suggesting a diffusion of essentially the same population throughout Nepal's hills during this time. People of these states spoke a common language, Nepali, variously called the *Khasa kura* or *Gorkhali bhasa*, in different historical ages.

Connected with these hills, historically, was an important group of people called the *Khasa*. *Khasa* is a familiar term which was in common use in Nepal until some short time ago. It ordinarily referred to people of the *chhettri* caste in Nepal. *Khasa* also describes an ancient people who have been widely mentioned in the Indian literature. The ultimate origin of these people, in the opinion of some scholars, was in Central Asia from where they are believed to have entered India in waves of migration [Grierson: 1968] in the early centuries of the Christian era. Their assimilation into the Hindu society was a gradual process, it is said. *Manusmrti*, the most popularly cited authority on Hindu social law, has called them as degraded ksatriyas. This is borne out from the example of
Nepal where the Khasas seem to have made their social elevation starting from a relatively lower social stratum. Those families who succeeded in raising their social status had been able to do so with favours granted to them by rulers upon which they gradually shed their Khasa background. Whatever the well-to-do Chhetris might like to think about their origins nowadays, circumstances strongly indicate their being derived from the historical Khasa tribe.

The Khasas as a people find first mentioned in a copperplate grant of Asokacalla of Jumla in 1278 where this King's dominion has been described as the Khasa country. The oldest form of the Nepali language, i.e., its proto-form, has also been traced to a copper-plate grant of 1321 belonging to another king of this kingdom, Aditya Malla, which should explain why Nepali at one time was called the Khasa kura or Khasa tongue. In view of all this it should not be too difficult for us to postulate that once this Khasa kingdom broke up sometime in the second half of the 14th century it became splintered into a multiplicity of the above mentioned Baisi and the Caubisi states. This also agrees quite well with the chronology in which these various states came to be established [Sharma: 1972] in the aftermath of Jumla's disintegration in these regions.

For about fifty years starting from 1287 in the reign of King Jitari Malla, the Khasa kingdom made multiple forays against the kingdom of Nepal and subjected it to a thorough plunder. Some of its kings also offered worship in the shrines of the more celebrated deities there. These acts of the Khasa kingdom only helped to affirm our theory earlier about a centripetal force to have worked in Nepal which was able to draw in all sorts of people and absorb them within it. Although the raid by the Khasa rulers did not succeed in subjugating Nepal immediately, it can, however, be said that it paved the way for that to Gorkha four hundred years later. In fact the Khasa campaign might have enabled these people to see the vast stretch of sparsely settled hills and their more fertile valleys in the east inviting them to migrate thither. This may have given a sudden boost to the people from Nepal’s western hills to constantly press eastwards in search of new and greener pastures. The hill population may also have swollen in number over time with new people arriving from the south and joining in, laterally. Such a process seems quite likely, which is suggested by a closer examination of data presented by the historical linguistics of the Nepali language. This massive shift of population in the hills from west to east is a striking historical phenomenon of Nepal which was not unaccompanied by its necessary political corollaries. In the hills, regions lying even in short distances of one another would remain cutoff and isolated, so that, in these circumstances, rise of local, independent authorities in them was only a most natural thing to
happen. During all this time, shifting events were developing to a climax around the land of Nepal in which Gorkha played the main role, whereby all the hill states came to participate and get themselves merged finally into this historical land.

The Newars and the hill Hindus, in many respects of their socio-psychological make-up, outlook and attitudes, appear to be a very different people from one another. The Newars are an urban people living in clustered settlements and in a closely-knit kinship network. Their social and cultural life betrays a remarkable spirit of communal cooperation and group participation, rare to see among other cultural groups of Nepal. It is a society betraying a complex hierarchy of castes, professions and skills, which is the result of a diversified urban economy developed over centuries. Their economic forte lay in the practice of trade and crafts. Although a section of them was also good agriculturists, this success, however, may have been made possible by the more favourable ecological conditions of the Valley. The Newars were never induced to move out of the Valley in search of fresh land save for establishing their trading diasporas. They had an excessive preoccupation with religion, rituals and festivities which was often backed up with state efforts.

In contrast, the Parbate [hill] Hindus reveal a different socio-economic behaviour. Their culture is essentially a peasant culture of the rugged hills. Their's is also a caste-based society, no doubt, but it has got fewer caste groups and a simpler hierarchy in it. They also reveal an elaborate kinship network, but it is not as cohesive as that of the Newars. They tend to split and move their home and hearth to another place on the slightest pretext. Their farming skills are adapted to suit the hill conditions in which cutting down of forests for land reclamation, terracing of hill sides and use of plough share are the most notable features. They prefer to live in the lower, warmer altitudes which is best suited for paddy cultivation. Their penchant for exploiting new land was never to be easily appeased. Their ruling class was only too willing to encourage and support individual farming families in this effort, since it too saw itself growing in power and prestige through a process of bringing fresh territories under its control [Stiller: 1973; Caplan; 1970]. Thus the growth of the State was rooted in strengthening it through landed feudalistic practices in which a militant aristocracy and a teeming peasantry played the main role.

Thus, the two main historical streams contributing to the evolution of a unified Nepali culture from the 18th century on have consisted of the Newar based in the Nepal Valley, and the parbate of the more rugged hills, whose virtue lay in an unusual agility to move. Starting from two different points in time and space they have converged like two streams into a single
broad river of an enlarged and a reinvigorated nation in 1769, and flowed together ever since then. In the process, if one of the streams has given the new country its hallowed name, the other stream has given it Nepali, the *lingua franca* of Nepal, which is its single most important integrating force in Nepal today.

**Religion**

As in most countries of Asia, in Nepal, too, religion has played a vital force in the people’s thought, action, and their urge to create. There is no aspect that religion does not touch or effect in the peoples’ day-to-day living. There are few people in Nepal even among the educated urban class who will show a complete unconcern or will remain passive in matters of religion, as people in the industrialised West might probably do.

Broadly, Nepal reveals the following geographical pattern of religious distribution. In the north, close to the Himalayas, the religion of people appertains either to various sects of Tibetan Buddhism, or to Bon-po, a magical pre-Buddhist religion, which, in its ritualistic form became standardised as a contrastive model of the Lamaistic Buddhism later. Buddhism in the Nepal Valley is more Indic in its derivation which about half the population of the Newars follow, the others being Hindus. In the middle hills and along the Tarai, Hindus live in greater concentration which has made Nepal predominantly a Hindu country today. Besides these two main religions of the Great Tradition, the various ethnic groups of Nepal practise other forms of minor religions, animistic in nature, and oracle-based. Despite the seeming similarity in the outward forms of these minor religions, their true significance for the respective societies may not be fully realised outside of their social settings. Hindu rulers of Nepal have been generally tolerant in behaviour towards these religions and have done nothing to hinder their practice. Neither such religions nor their adherents have ever been regarded as aliens to Hinduism and, hence, such people are allowed to enter the precincts of the temple of Pasupatinath, which the Christians and the Muslims are forbidden to do.

It is not our purpose to describe these various religious forms in detail here. In the following lines we will merely describe some interesting historical aspects relating to the practice of Hinduism and Buddhism in the hills of Nepal and in the Kathmandu Valley. Despite some divergence in the local forms of Hinduism as prevalent among the Parbates and Newar Hindus, as well as among the Maithili, Bhojpuri and Awadhi-speaking people of the Tarai, their religion has a common textual base providing them with their fundamental ideologies. The origin of all these forms of local Hinduism was in India where all its philosophical formulations, dogmas and doctrines were first
devised and then gathered in numerous texts written in different epochs, all of which Nepal studiously copied. The piles of manuscripts collected over centuries and kept in the National Archives in Kathmandu today stand witness to this activity.

It is difficult to say which of the two religions, Hinduism or Buddhism, came to Nepal first. The chronicles would have us believe that Buddhism is the older of the two religions in Nepal. Saivism, too, had created a wider appeal among many Himalayan tribes including the Kiratas from an early time, believing the Hindu Epics. By the time written records become available in the 5th century, however, both these religious forms had already made a secure foothold in Nepal.

Let us first briefly review Hinduism. The two theistic cults under it, Saivism and Vaisnavism, were already quite popular in the Licchavi period as one finds hundreds of icons in their respective pantheons depicted freely in the sculptures of that time and mention to them made in its records. Important shrines of Visnu and Siva in the Kathmandu Valley today also survive from that time. The most prominent temple in this respect is the temple of Pasupatinath at Deopatan. This deity came to acquire its preeminent position in the religious life of Nepal in a long historical process in which kings and people of all ages in Nepal have contributed their part.

Brahmans learned in the Vedic worship and sacrifices are referred to in the Licchavi inscriptions [Vajracarya: 1973]. Brahmanical religion of Nepal was not any different then, as it is not now, from that of India. But it is difficult to keep track of its progress after the end of the Licchavi rule, if only because records relating to it are so few and meagre. Such a state of Nepal’s history continues right down to the reign of Jayasthitimalla [1382-95]. Nonetheless, it might still be safe to assume that Brahmanical religion in Nepal was keeping in step with all the developments made with regard to its cults in India. In one or two respects, however, Nepal’s Brahmanism may have suffered a setback, especially as its caste relations led to a confusion in the strict definition of caste hierarchy in the centuries preceding Jayasthitimalla. Perhaps some of the Brahmans themselves were forced to loose their high ritual status because of their subsequent intermarriage with non-Brahman families. Jayasthitimalla’s social reforms which were said to have restrengthened orthodox Hinduism considerably, probably wated to correct this very chaotic situation. For this reason he invited Brahmans from outside and with their help had a social code drawn up and promulgated. The Rajopadhyaya Brahmans, and the Maithili Brahmans, who became priests of the Malla kings and their nobility, are believed to have been brought from outside by Jayasthitimalla. It might be appropriate to mention here a few
Newar high-castes belonging to the Chatha group that in rank are placed only below the Rajopadhyaya Brahmans. Curiously, their clan or occupational names are very Brahman-like. These are the Karmacarya, Josi, Vaidya, etc. Not only do their names, but even their traditional pursuits resemble those of the Brahmans even today. The Karmacarya are temple priests attached mainly to Hindu shrines where worship is done in accordance with the esoteric tantric rules. It is their exclusive privilege which even the Rajopadhyayas may not usurp. This is quite understandable in view of the fact that the Rajopadhyaya as new comers were probably considered unfit for these tantric cults. One may note here that the name Karmacraya parallels that of the Vajracarya in Buddhism. Similarly, the Josi's true profession is astrology, which is again a Brahman's function. Medicine was, similarly, a Brahmanical pursuit. This would probably mean that at one time all these people had Brahman origin but, who under such circumstances as suggested above, had lost their purity and status in the social reforms of Jayasthitimalla.

The religion of Nepal in the mediaeval age, be it Hinduism or Buddhism, came to be heavily influenced by the tenets of the Tantras, although it is difficult to say when it happened exactly. In essence, Tantras are further refinements of the already prevalent theistic precepts in which greater emphasis is put on a complete communion between a devotee and his deity by the use of new ritual techniques. In their outward forms, the new rituals were not only unorthodox, some even were quite ghoulish. The teacher [acarya] who taught a disciple into this path was an essential medium through whom the 'knowledge' of ultimate salvation in the tantric way was transmitted. The teacher was looked upon as the very embodiment of the deity on whom the learner sought to meditate. One fundamental concept in tantrism centres on the principle of female energy--Sakti--which is said to pervade this whole creation. This energy principle was also represented through diagrams, the sri yantra being one such example. Occasionally, however, this symbolism was more potently used through an actual act of coitus between the acarya and his female disciple during ritual, it is said. Such and other esoteric rituals demanded the use of strict privacy in tantric rituals which is usually invoked during such worship and is open only to the properly initiated members of a particular agama in the various Newar caste groups.

The popularity of Sakti cult in Nepal saw a rise of temples dedicated to goddesses of diverse forms in the Hindu and the Buddhist pantheon all over the Valley. Many such temples belonging to the Matrikas often carried only aniconic stones to represent them, since tantrism usually deemphasised iconic forms. Blood and alcohol became common items of offerings in tantric
worship *Samebaji* is a special food concoction prepared by the Newars to be used in their rituals consisting of meat, soyabean, beaten rice, ginger, etc., otherwise considered impure in the Vedic mode of worship.

One significant contribution made by tantrism in Nepal is believed to lie in blurring the sectarian characteristics from Hinduism and Buddhism, and in bringing about the much publicised religious syncretism within them.

Village Hinduism as prevalent in the hills of Nepal was a much less organised and structured affair. Its public celebration was seldom organised at a scale as it was done in the Valley. Public temples were neither numerous, nor made in an imposing manner artistically. These were usually open-air places with a few votive offerings embellishing them. Some of the more properly constructed temples there had perhaps been built from the instances created in the Nepal Valley.

One popular cult spreading right across the hills of Nepal and highly patronised by rulers of the hill states as well as those in the Valley concerned the Hindu Goddess, Durga. She was worshipped under various names of local provenance, her shrines being located on hill-tops, inside forts, or within palace buildings. This popularity may have owed to the story that narrates her exploits in the *Durga Saptasati* and the *Devibhagavatam* in which the main accent put is on protection of the devotees from all kinds of enemies and forms of fear. Its power was especially invoked to help kings in preserving their kingdoms from enemies with Durga's blessings.

Buddhism presents an even more interesting study in Nepal. One thing of singular interest about it is that whereas it disappeared completely from the rest of the Indian subcontinent, it somehow managed to survive in Nepal. Some scholars have called today's Nepali Buddhism, however, a gross distortion from its older monastic character, that is all but absorbed by Hinduism [Snellgrove: 1957]. Although this may be quite so, and a lamentable fact from the viewpoint of a religious puritan, to some extent, such development of Buddhism is not, however, wholly without its historical and anthropological significance.

Buddhism of Nepal is Mahayanistic in form. The philosophy of Mahayanaism had developed centering around the idea of the *Bodhisattva*. In Buddhism, a *Bodhisattva* is a seeker-practitioner in the path taught by the Buddha. He is someone who leads a life of total commitment for bringing salvation to all the creatures and the sentient beings of the world before seeking his own salvation. The highest *Bodhisattva* who is abounding in compassion towards all the beings of the world in this aeon is the Padmapani Avalokitesvara whose cult in Mahayanaism became one of the most popular in Nepal.
The philosophic prop to Mahayanism was provided by the Madhyamika School. It postulates the idea of *sunyata* in which both the phenomenal world and the idea about it are held to be non-existent.

The changes Buddhism later underwent in its philosophical concepts brought the idea of a cosmic theory of Buddhahood to dominate it. This had a far-reaching impact in the development of Buddhism outstripping all other doctrines previous to this. Buddhahood is interpreted now to be an absolute idea—an ever living cosmic presence—transcending time and space. It dispels all thinking in terms of duality, such as between the seeker and salvation, or between the phenomenal world and the liberated mind. Salvation is attainable in this very life and the obstruction to it is said to lie in the very nature of the worldliness. The principle of the Cosmic Buddha is ever active on the phenomenal world and it alone may help to overcome all obstruction to salvation. Therefore, the mercy of the Cosmic Buddha is quite essential to have to attain salvation. The *Panca Buddha* or the 'five' Buddhas popular in Nepali Buddhism represent these very cosmic forms. The *mandala* is said to be a diagramatic representation of this idea and stupas now are said to be made in the mandalic forms. The historical element in explaining the growth of Buddhism was thus replaced by an absolute, transcendental concept [Snellgrove and Skorupski: 1977].

The next stage of Mahayanism is its development into the Vajrayana. The 'five' Buddhas by now are firmly fixed around the stupa in its four cardinal directions, and one in the centre. The older earthen tumulus, held sacred for reasons of its containing the ashes of the Buddha, historically, is totally transformed in its meaning and significance, as it is now related to a cosmic idea. It becomes a cult object in its own right now and, in Nepal, is given an incipient iconic form with a pair of eyes and Buddha's *usnisa* [excrescence] on his forehead painted over the stupa *harmika*. According to Bhattacharya, the idea of the 'five' Buddhas got completed around AD 300. [Bhattacharya: 1958].

Lotus and thunderbolt [*vajra*] are perhaps the two most important symbols of Vajrayana Buddhism. *Vajra* represented the Buddhist concept of *sunyata*. A more Vajrayanic form of the interpretation of the idea of *sunyata* is attributed to Indrabhuti in his work *Jnanasiddhi*. According to him, *sunyata*, which is generally understood to be a total void, is not wholly a non-existent, nihilistic concept, but an idea of eternal consciousness which comes like a throbbing experience on gaining enlightenment. The Vajrayana idea is well-propounded in the *Guhyasamaja* and the *Manjusrimulakalpa*. According to the former, the phenomenal world is said to be nothing more than the emanation of the Adibuddha or the Primordial Buddha. The staggering range of deities that one finds in the Vajrayana...
pantheon was multiplied through this emanation principle in which even the 'five' Buddhas are said to emanate from the Adibuddha.

The last major phase of Buddhism in Nepal was strongly influenced by a set of works called the Tantras. The tantric treatises comprise texts and commentaries both. Like another and still older class of Buddhist texts called the Sutras, their basic philosophies of religion are the same, but where they depart from the Sutras is in the emphasis they lay on new ritual practices, such as recitation of mantras, that is, syllables loaded with magical and mystical potentials, display of mudras, i.e., hand-gestures, use of mandalas in their worship and meditation. Mandalas were cosmic representations in diagrams and deities belonging to a Buddha family were given a place in this Mandala. Each single tantra was devoted to depict such a Buddha-family by laying down its own mandala arrangement.

The sexual element in tantrism was hinted at earlier. Its widespread presence in the Vajrayana-Tantrayana religion becomes quite evident from a large number of Buddhist deities represented in iconic sculptures and paintings showing them in a sexual embrace with their spouses. This posture in Tibetan is called yab-yum and is believed to embody the Buddhist knowledge of ultimate salvation. This also depicted the union of Heruka and Nairatma symbolising the sunyata ideal, on which a practitioner constantly meditated.

One singular feature of Nepali Buddhism today is that, for one does not know how long, it has completely lost its monastic order and, with it, its community of saffron-clad, begging and celibate monks [Allen: 1973]. The Vajracaryas and the Sakyas, the two highest-ranking Buddhist castes among the Newars today, believe themselves to be their modern descendants. But they have forgotten all about their old vows of celibacy and are married people leading the life of a householder today. The Vajracaryas and the Sakyas are still required to fulfill a monk's vows strictly. at least once in their life, during their initiation, the barechuyegu. They are connected even now with one or the other of a large number of still surviving relics of these old monasteries called bahas or bahis, although their modern use and function is greatly altered. They are still places of worship with a shrine dedicated to the Buddha to be invariably located in them. They are made in the form of enclosed courtyards with a ground and an upper storey. Their importance to the Vajracaryas and the Sakyas today derives, however, from the fact that such bahas still provide them a basis of their social organisation. The principal bahas among them maintain a Samgha believed to consist of members of a single patrilineal group and all the Vajracaryas and the Sakyas remain affiliated to one or the other of these Samghas [Locke: 1980]. The bahas provide them a venue
for holding their diverse socio-religions observances including their initiation ceremony, and serve them as a basis of primary belongingness to their respective castes. Thus these Buddhists in their act and behaviour today are like any other caste groups where caste membership is passed hereditarily. The Vajracaryas fulfill among the Buddhists the same role as the Brahmans do among the Hindus; they act as priests in shrines and also to their respective clients. This role is denied to the Sakyas, although the Sakyas and the Vajracaryas may intermarry freely.

Society

Despite the Hindu numerical predominance, Nepal is an ethnic mosaic and presents a cultural plurality. Some aspects of it have been already discussed above. Although the footloose Parbate Hindus went and settled everywhere in Nepal, the smaller ethnic groups have had their own traditional habitats in which they can be seen living in large concentration even now. Such habitats are distributed over practically all geographical parts and ecological zones of Nepal.

A number of these ethnic groups live in the Tarai in the south of Nepal, their population size ranging from several thousand people in the case of the smaller groups to hundreds of thousand in the case of the larger ones. The Meche, the Satar, the Rajabansi, the Dhimal and the Bodo, all of whom live in the eastern Tarai, and the Dhangar of Central Tarai, are among the smaller and economically backward peoples. The largest ethnic group of the Tarai is that of the Tharu which is found settled from east to west. One sees a greater concentration of them living in the Chitwan and the Dang Valleys or the tropical inner Tarai where the Tharu culture is said to be preserved in its pristine form even today.

In Nepal’s hills lives an even greater variety of the ethnic groups, settled in different ecological and altitudinal zones. If some of the less numerous groups like the Raji, the Majhi, the Bote, the Kumal, the Danuwar and the Darai have populated the warmer sub-tropical inter-hill valley bottoms, the other populous groups like the Magar, or the smaller ones, like the Chepang, the Thami, the Hayu and the others live in the Mahabharat hills along their lower reaches. Along the higher but parallel ridges to the north, live such groups as the Kham Magar, the Gurung, the Tamang, the Sunuwar, the Rai, the Limbu and the Lepcha [Bista: 1972; Gaborieau: 1978]. In passing, one might also mention about one of the last surviving hunting-nomadic groups of Nepal, the Raute, who are known to wander between the districts of Jajarkot and Accham, drawing their sustenance mainly from the forest [Reinhard: 1974].
In the north, close to the Himalayas, occupying its southern flanks, or in the cold, arid trans-Himalayan Valleys called Bhot, live the many regional and dialectal groups of people, who are culturally and linguistically-speaking, Tibetan.

Thus for a country of Nepal's size, its ethnic diversity is not only immensely rich, but also the 25 percent combined population of the tribals in comparison to that of the Hindus, is quite high. It is definitely far higher than the seven percent tribal population of India. A close juxtaposition in which the Hindus live with a fairly large tribal population of Nepal has produced a far greater familiarisation and intimate social interaction between the two groups than in India.

Hindus made their first contacts with the various Himalayan tribes in the geographical regions of Nepal, probably about two thousand years ago or earlier. The results of this acculturation can be richly seen in the culture of the Nepal Valley. The Newars are physically believed to be an intermixture of the two different racial strains, the Caucasoid Aryans from the South, and the Tibeto-Burman groups of the northern origins. Inter-marriage is the most effective form of social interaction anywhere, and in Nepal, its incidents had probably been high because of the sheer necessity of the early migrants who needed to marry locally. The Hindus also soon saw the need to give their hypergamous marriages a social legitimation. The offspring born of Hindu-tribal marriages no doubt got adjusted into the various caste rankings given them and ended up being so many castes within the Newar society. This must have been an accepted social norm of Nepal for a long time which the first ever formal Legal Code of Nepal in the 19th century could not fail to take note of and recognise duly. Under such law the offspring born of an intercaste and caste-ethnic intermarriage were granted the privilege of assuming the father’s caste. Where this arrangement was not allowed to prevail, such as in the case of offspring born of a Brahman and a woman of lesser caste, they would usually be adjusted within the Chetri caste, whereupon such offspring would use the father’s surname [Sharma: 1978], or write themselves as Khatri Chetri simply.

The Legal Code [Ain] of 1854 was compiled and promulgated with the orders of Jung Bahadur Rana. Notwithstanding this fact, there had been other laws to regulate the social life in Nepal previous to this code, although they may not have been as comprehensive as the 1854 Code. We get, for example, reference to Jayasthitimalla’s [1382-95] and Mahendramalla’s [1560-75] social laws in the Nepal Valley, and to the royal edicts of Ram Shah of Gorkha [1603-1636], [Riccardi: 1977]. The 1854 Code must have made good use of all these earlier traditions in its compilation and incorporated a good many of their provisions in it.
When Hindus came to the Himalayas first, they already had got their pre-made ideas on social organisation from India. They needed, however, to determine to what degree they were willing to accommodate the people in the new milieu into their social life. The diverse tribes, who were given the generic name of Kirata in the Hindu classics, had inhabited the Himalayan foot-hills from a long time before the arrival of Hindus, and, who, in their culture, quite diverged from the Aryan path. It was their land the Hindus had come to share and live on. When, eventually, the Hindus got control of the politics of Nepal, they assumed the authority to assign status and ranking in their social order not only to themselves but also to the indigenous people. The question to ask now would be what place did they accord to these tribal people in their society? They were too numerous to be easily ignored. In India, people who are called savarnas[meaning probably that they are caste Hindus within the Varna system] keep themselves a world apart from the tribals in their day-to-day living even today. They distance themselves from them [tribals] in all matters of social interaction except perhaps in their economic exploitation. The Scheduled List of the Indian Constitution enumerates these tribals separately in order to give them some economic advantage vis-a-vis caste-Hindus, but this measure has only helped to widen the gulf between the Hindus and the tribals even further. The situation in Nepal in this regard is, however, completely different. It was inconceivable for the Hindus of Nepal to have kept themselves completely apart from the tribal groups in such a close physical contiguity. So the basis of mutual relationship had to be more open and well-defined. It was thought more practical to comprehend them into their broad social order and assign them a definite place in it, at least from the Hindus’ point of view. So in keeping with this idea, ethnic groups were given the lowest Sudra rank in the Hindu Varna-model. This was done despite the many unfamiliar, and even some quite abhorrent, cultural practices and dietary habits of the ethnic groups. However, even this small accommodation made a tremendous psychological difference to the Hindus who became more receptive towards these people. They were taken by them to be a part of their social universe since contacts with them covered many aspects of social interchange. The Hindus also seem to have judged the various tribal groups severally and on the recognition of their individual merit, depending upon the role played by some of these groups as the political ally of the Hindus, or in deference to their differential economic strength, skill and native cunning. Hence the Gurungs and the Magars were held in better esteem and were considered to be equal of the military castes highly favoured for recruitment in the army of the Hindu rulers, because they had both helped the Hindu rulers to win their political battles from early on.
Caste in Nepal was not merely a concern of the individual private social groups, but a state-protected ideology [Hofer: 1979]. The Legal Code of 1854 has devoted a major part of it in defining social relations between various castes, the infringement of which became a state offence. Although the Code underwent many revisions in its subsequent editions, these alterations were only minor, so that the rules of intercaste relations remained unchanged until 1963 when a new law was enforced [Muluki Ain of 1963]. To the Hindus the State boundaries are a sacred land within which the ruler is required to maintain order and harmony in accordance with the laws of dharma [the Hindu concept of righteousness and ultimate moral order]. Thus protection of Dharma became the ruler’s most sacred duty.

The inclusion of all the ethnic groups into the Hindus’ social framework, treating each one of them as equivalent of a caste, a flexible approach to inter-caste marriage, and provisions of an upward social mobility granted to the offspring of such marriage in this Code, were adapted to suit the special situation in Nepal, no doubt. Yet the notion of high/low, pure/impure remained intrinsic in matters of all caste relations. All the social groups were ranged in five broad categories arranged in a vertical order. This social universe was paraphrased as carvarna chattisjat, i.e., four varnas and thirty-six castes. The category at the top consisted of tagadharis, i.e., the sacred-thread-wearing castes headed by the Brahmans, and followed by the Thakuri and Chetri castes. The next social category had the Matawalis or the drinking castes in it. They had two sub-categories: one consisted of the unenslaveable matawalis, who were deemed higher, and the other, made up of the enslaveable matawalis, who were considered inferior. All the ethnic groups were adjusted keeping within one or the other of these two matawalis. Below them came the impure and the untouchable castes, also having two separate categories. One category was considered to be only partially impure, as food and water touched by it could not be accepted by people of higher castes, but whose physical touch was not defiling. The lowest category consisted of the untouchables. Sexual contacts with women of either category was strictly forbidden for people of higher castes as its violation would have resulted in the loss of their caste status.

Since the Code of 1854 was largely a creation of the Hindu rulers of the hills, they have placed all castes of comparable status of the hills higher in status than similar caste groups among the Newar and the Tarai Hindus. The Newar Malla rulers of Nepal were the people who first seem to have devised a complete social system in the 14th century. The caste hierarchy under this system is still followed intact among the Newar society today. The Code
of 1854 has partly adopted this hierarchy. This relates to the low and unclean castes of the Newars. Regarding other higher castes Newar, it has rather given them a cavalier treatment by lumping them all in the matawali category. This attitude stems probably from a perception shared by all the hill Hindus that Newars make use of liquor, which they themselves greatly spurned, in their social and ritual life. Following the varna scheme, however, the Newars were seen to fit in the Vaisya slot because of the trading vocation they mainly practised.

The society laid down in the Legal Code is largely the reflection of an outlook engendered by the Hindus of the hills. The kings that ruled in Nepal throughout its recorded history have been Hindus, or men of such pretension. People belonging to the various caste groups in this society in the past felt no conflict or contradiction in values in viewing themselves or their roles through their respective rankings. But what could be the perspective of the members of the diverse ethnic groups who looked at the Nepali society in its totality and viewed their own role in it? One guesses that they certainly saw a number of features which distinguished their society from that of the Hindus. For example, their society was not a hierarchical one like that of the Hindus. Their women enjoyed a greater degree of social, if not economic, freedom. They had freer food habits and drank not only alcohol, but also ate all kinds of meat, such as chicken, buffalo, pork, and even beef. Within their own society, they had hardly any notion of lower or inferior. This notion, however, would change as soon as they needed to relate themselves to other people outside their own society. At such times they would have no choice but to think in terms of rankings as laid down in the Code, observe the pure/impure rules, show proper respects to the high castes, etc., although they were an egalitarian society themselves. All this has probably led their attitude towards the Hindu society to be one of ambivalence.

The sum and substance of such a unique historicity enjoyed by the Hindus and the various ethnic groups in Nepal produced an intimate relationship and mutual influence between them. As a consequence of it, Hinduism in the Himalayas is said to have been somewhat softened in its orthodoxy. The ethnic groups, too, were similarly affected as they came under an increasing pressure from Hinduisation [Iijima: 1963; Jones 1976]. The process of Hinduisation varied in degree ranging from an outward imitation of Hindu mannerism with some to seeking promotion into the caste order by some others. That is why tribe-caste distinction in Nepal seems less like a dichotomy and more like a continuum [Sharma: 1978]. The caste like Chetri's is no doubt a unique cultural and biological synthesis of diverse social groups. The Hindu state was the prime factor for
unleashing the Hinduisation [also called Sanskritisation by some] process of Nepal’s tribes. People who gained even a little power locally, such as in terms of trading rights or authority to collect revenue, would be led to imitate Hindu mannerisms of the court increasingly, as they grew in influence, locally.

The role of Sanskritisation has been well summed up by Rishikesh Shaha in the following words:

It [Sanskritisation] harmonised behaviour and value patterns to the point of making rationalised interaction between various groups possible [in the past]. It might also be pointed out here that although some of the aspects of Sanskritisation may be altogether at variance with the modernist outlook, the experience and knowledge of the working of Sanskritisation process may be profitably applied to the task of modernization. Sanskritisation was at one time seen as essentially elevating and civilising; so, too, is modernization.”

[Shaha, 1974: ]

In the changed context of the present times, the compulsions of Hinduisation for the different groups of Nepal may not be present to the same degree as in the past. In fact, new concepts of politics and governance in a more modern and democratic age have lain stress on the principle of vox populi, i.e., rule by consensus, and on giving representation to the cultural, linguistic and regional minorities in the various bodies of the government and public organisations. In whatever limited degree this experiment has successfully happened in Nepal has given Nepal's minority groups a new awareness about their group identity and cultural distinctiveness [Iijima: 1977]. To some extent, socialisation through Hinduisation may be said to have been a dispensable process nowadays, because the pressure on all such groups, whether Hindus or otherwise, is to ‘modernise.’ This is no doubt quite true and a new ethic for everyone to have in at least his outward postures. But, perhaps, Nepal has not still been what one may call a fully modern state. One example of this may be that it takes pride in the fact that it is the only Hindu kingdom of the world today, which appeals to its religious rather than secular sentiments. It is struggling even now in its polity, as perhaps in everything else, to fully emerge from its feudalistic past. All measures in modernising the State even now go through a centralised process of selection and get coloured in values that the Hindu State still upholds and espouses. In such circumstances, therefore, one would like to think that an individual, who is politically ambitious and wants to improve his social status in society, will continue to use Hinduisation as a means of a broader socialisation for some time to come.

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The Structure of Nepali Society

Dor Bahadur Bista

Introduction

Social structure is difficult to define with precision and clarity. It could mean so many things to so many people. It touches upon the borderlines of many disciplines. For example, sociology defines its concept and meaning; anthropology describes the structure of a given society and its relations between parts; religion provides the interpretation for the background of its values and norms, and history traces the origin of the process of its evolution in all its different forms. Thus the term social structure, says one of the most famous theoretical anthropologists of our time, "refers to a group of problems the scope of which appear so wide and the definition so imprecise that it is hardly possible for a paper strictly limited in size to meet them fully." He further emphasizes the difficulty when he admits that, "studies in social structure have to do with formal aspects of the social phenomena; they are therefore difficult to define, and still more difficult to discuss without overlapping other fields pertaining to the exact and natural sciences" [Levi-Strauss, 1963: 277].

We admit, therefore, we have ventured into the field with full realization that we will find ourselves, during the discussion, in an area which is so poorly defined and so vaguely demarcated that it will not be possible to defend our position when it appears untenable at times.

To emphasize the nature of the problem, here is a paragraph from Jean Jacques Rousseau:

The researches, in which we may engage on this occasion, are not to be taken for historical truths, but merely as hypothetical and conditional reasonings, fitter to illustrate the nature of things, than to show their true origin, like those systems, which our naturalists daily make of the formation of the World.” [Rousseau 1938: 166-67]
In dealing with the structure of Nepali society one thing that is of paramount importance in common to all levels of the society is the social change that is taking place in and around them. So an attempt has been made to trace the sources and the reason for changes that have taken place long time ago in history as well as in the recent past. In doing so the main focus of our discussion has centered around the subject of hierarchy and cakari, prevalent in Nepali society today. Other aspects and examples mentioned during the course of our discussion are only incidental.

Since the structure is a system made up of several elements, none of which can undergo a change without effecting changes in all the other elements, it is not possible to restrict the discussion and be made exclusive. Also the fact that social relations consist of raw materials out of which models making up social structure are built, while social structure can by no means be reduced to the ensemble of the social relations, makes it almost mandatory for us that we talk about the social relations as well while trying to define the structure.

At a time when our society is being pushed hard and pressurized by all available forces to change for development of an unlimited and unspecified nature it is by no means a simple task to define its structure in an easily comprehensible manner. No structures are allowed to remain intact at such times or allowed to function the way they have been doing traditionally in the past. The pressure has been always upon the processes that help them change boundaries of the traditional structures. The reasons for such pressures may be many, their backgrounds varied and the degree of intensity also may not have been the same all the time. Their sources and origin also could be either internal, or external, or both. In any case, it will not be possible to define the structure without taking these processes into consideration.

In order to help us understand the process and the nature of change as a phenomenon let us begin by bringing an example of an incident that took place in the recent past and in an all pervasive manner. The National Referendum that was exercised in 1980 was historically very important in bringing about a very profound change in the thinking and the behaviour of the people.

King Birendra had declared that a referendum would be held to ask the Nepali people to vote for one or the other of the basic questions: "Should the existing Panchayat System be retained and gradually reformed or should it be replaced by a multi-party system of government" [The Rising Nepal, May 24, 1979].

It may seem at the surface that it was just a political exercise. But it would be a mistake to take it that way and close
our eyes to the profound changes it brought about in every aspect of the Nepali social life. Most important outcome of that declaration was that people were given freedom for open discussions, meetings, campaigns and raising slogans for expressing their political views during one entire year of 1979-80. Whatever the result at the political level, at the end of the year thoughtful people knew that Nepali society was never going to be the same after this. “The trends it generated, and the ferment it displayed are of far-reaching consequences for the country. Politically and economically, Nepal has reached such a stage after the referendum that no ad hoc decisions or arrangements can resolve the crisis confronting the country,” a political scientist declared afterwards [Baral, 1983: 1].

Political consciousness was heightened to an unlimited degree. People who had no idea of politics being an instrument for the furtherance of their individual promotion until then learnt that it was political decision that controlled their destiny. Every adult was reminded constantly to think of one’s own long-term benefit by voting for one side or the other. With the political atmosphere prevalent at the time, the terms of reference did not remain limited within the context of the small group interests alone—whether caste or ethnicity, religion, social class or language.

The exercise during the referendum not just increased the level of political consciousness of the people but it made them increasingly aware of their rights and privileges as individual citizens too. Besides, the referendum was not conducted in an entirely traditional society. It was done against the backdrop of a number of changes already introduced into it. The Land Reform Act of 1965, although not successful to the desired extent, nevertheless had raised hopes for the poor peasants. The Mulki Ain [legal code] of 1963 had already abolished the state support for the caste-based social customs, marriage laws, and rigid hierarchy. The widespread exposure to different social and political systems around the world through modern media, education and contact with the people from outside of Nepal had helped people to raise serious questions about traditional values that supported the existing social structure.

There was a time when students of Nepali society felt quite comfortable in classifying it into neatly defined categories of castes or ethnic groups. It was quite convenient to divide them into such divisions. Once arranged into a matrix of caste and ethnic background it was very easy to pigeonhole all the Nepalis.
into one or the other of the boxes. My own earlier work is an example of such an approach [Bista, 1967]. All the ethnographies done by foreign scholars fall into similar category. And yet it seems rather odd to continue to discuss the structure of Nepali society along these lines for ever. Much of it is in ferment, partly by design and partly by spontaneous process of change.

We cannot describe the structure meaningfully without trying to understand the processes of change and the impact they are having upon the society. We will have to try to follow the direction social values and norms are taking and the factors that are affecting them today. And in order to explain the present it may be helpful to took back into some of their historic background.

The Historical Background

Nepali society has integrated a tremendous amount of change during the past three decades or so since the revolution of 1950. Many old values and traditions have been replaced by new ones although it may not have been exactly the way the master-designers had visualized. But it does not mean that all the old traditions and values have disappeared completely. The old structure and frame of caste principles and of social hierarchy are still there in skeletal form although they are ignored, bypassed and snubbed whenever they have stood on the way of the innovative people of the new generation with ideas different from those of their seniors, elders or community leaders.

Until a generation earlier the vast majority of the people scattered throughout the country lived in isolation and relativley independent of each other. It was, then, much easier for them to maintain their own unique traditions of marriage rules, religious rituals, social-economic and political order. A frame of caste order based on religious principles of Hinduism was provided for by the State at various stages in the history of the country. King Jayasthitiraj Malla of the Kathmandu Valley [A.D. 1382-1395] and King Ram Shah of Gorkha [A.D. 1606-1636], are best known for their zeal. But the most important of all of these and the one which was most pervasive was the Muluki Ain [state law] developed and promulagated by the first Rana Prime Minister Jung Bahadur, during the reign of King Surendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev in A.D. 1854. The interesting part that has to be pointed out and emphasized is that these legal reforms were not imposed
universally; nor were they ever made compulsory for the people having their own traditional laws, practices and rules that governed their community or group except in criminal cases. The state laws at that time were developed on the basis of the Hindu religious laws, whereas the community laws and rules evolved through experiences and pragmatic observations. Both the these practices were allowed to function without one interfering the other, particularly in the outlaying remote areas of the country. Therefore, the interface between the “civilising” Hindu principles and the indigenous, spontaneous, pragmatic community customs and laws will have to be explored if we want to understand the nature of the structure of Nepali society in general today.

Interestingly enough, it is not the people from two different backgrounds that have come to confront each other historically, but the ideologies and the values of life that have come into conflict and have stunted the process of social progress. The people who are sometimes described as coming into confrontation with each other by some scholars [Caplan, 1970] were in fact living peacefully together for thousands of years, specially in the Kathmandu Valley. Not only the Licchavis, Sakyas, Kolis, and Mallas who are mentioned so frequently as the early people who had come to live in the Kathmandu Valley, the ancient Nepal, but the prehistoric Khas and Kirant, along with the other indigenous people were living together in these lower Himalayan mountain areas for thousands of years [see Vajracarya and Malla, 1985].

The ancient Nepali society came to be known as the “Newar” society gradually in course of time during the medieval period. It began the process of isolating itself from the rest of the Nepali society which remained rural and rustic. Otherwise it was an open society which willingly accepted anyone who came to join it and merge into one. Malla makes it clear when he says:

The modern Newars are related to one another, not by descent or race, but by a common culture and language; they are related to one another by the place and function they have in Newar social structure. Already by the end of the first millennium A.D., the ancient clans of the pastoral Nepalas [herdsmen], the Vrijis, the Sakyas, the Kolis, the Mallas, the ruling families of the Licchavis, the Abhira Guptas, and the Thakuri Varmans—all were lost among the aboriginals of the valley in the making of the Newars.

[Malla, 1981: 18]
We can add two more people to the above list of the people who contributed to the melting pot of the Nepali society of ancient Nepal. They were the Brahmans and the Khas. Ample evidence for the existence of the Brahmans in the Valley are found in the inscriptions of the Licchavi period [Vajracarya, 1973], and the reasons for assuming the presence of the ancient Khas are given elsewhere [Bista, 1982].

The important question is when and why did the ancient Nepalis of the Kathmandu Valley cease to call themselves as 'Nepala' and began to call 'Newara' as a distinctly separate community from the rest of the Nepalis. They seem to have done so from the time they were introduced to a rigidly hierarchized social system based on the caste principles. The earlier Licchavi period seems to have been more active in the development of the common "Nepali social structure" without a rigid hierarchy of caste principles. It does not appear from available evidences that they had adopted an exclusive religious values of either Buddhism or Hinduism. [Vajracarya, 1973].

The temples of Pasupatinath and the Narayans installed by the Licchavi Kings were among the prominent institutions in addition to a number of other Saiva, Vaisnava and Buddhist stupas, caityas, shrines and viharas which were supported and maintained with equal zeal during the early Licchavi period.

At a time when most of the Western society was primitive and living in hovels, the Nepalis had already developed an urban culture with a highly advanced technology of building temples, palaces, viharas; technique of bronze work, stone sculpture et cetera. The recently restored Yaksesvara Mahavihara of Pulchok, Patan and the accompanying ritual of Vajarayana Buddhism continuing from the sixth century A.D. when the famous Saivaite king Amsuvarma was the ruler, is a living example of the level of civilization and culture the Nepalis of the Licchavi period had achieved [The Rising Nepal, Feb. 27 1986].

People living closely together in the fertile valley of Kathmandu easily merged with one another into the making of a single community called the Nepala, which subsequently came to be famous as the Newara, la and ra sound being easily and usually interchangeable in many Sino-Tibetan languages including Newari, both Nepal, and Newara, mean the same thing in the native Newari language [Malla, 1981]. These Newars, in course of time, however, came to be regarded and treated as one of the many different groups of the Nepalis of modern days. Most of the Kirant, the Khas, and many other people continued to live in the
isolated river valleys and mountain slopes which are difficult to travel around or across them. Therefore, they could not have merged with each other in these settlements of difficult terrain as easily as they did in the Kathmandu Valley. The Kathmandu Valley continued to attract an increasing number of people into it. It continued to attract an increasing number of people into it. Its people developed skills of intensive agriculture and trade by developing this valley into flourishing entrepot trade centre for the exchange of Tibetan primary goods and Indian manufactured goods. All of this helped the Kathmandu Valley develop a number of urban centres as opposed to the peripheral area of the rest of Nepal. Then the distinction was one of urban versus rural style of living for the people of the two areas rather than one of ethnic, religious or cultural variations any more than a differential economy would support.

In course of time people began to consider and treat the urbanized people of the Valley as having totally different origin and background. Naturally, the rich and prosperous urban centre continued to attract more people from outside, specially from India and therefore its culture continuously became richer, more colourful and eclectic as opposed to other outlying area of the country.

There are parallels of this kind all over the world. The big urban centres such as Benaras, Prayag, Pataliputra etc. must have attracted more people of many different backgrounds than their surrounding rural areas. The big industrial cities of Western Europe, North America, Singapore and Hong Kong continue to do it today. The only difference is that none of these cities mentioned here are surrounded by mountainous area of difficult terrain and forbidding steep slopes that continue, as in the case of Kathmandu, to remain poor and undeveloped.

It has been a quite common practice for the urbanized, the political and social upstarts to look for different and presumably better background of origin and pedigree anywhere outside the simple peasantry of the neighbourhood. In this sense, the Kathmandu people were not doing anything new or unique. There are parallels of people trying to create fictitious historic background to establish legitimacy for unequal treatment of the late-comers too.

The people of Kathmandu, once they achieved the higher social and economic level, began to look for excuses to claim higher and different origin than those of their own close kinsmen with common background. The system of caste hierarchy
provided them with the answer. The people in the western hills did this too. Some people did this earlier and were accepted more easily into the higher levels of caste hierarchies than the late starters. The obvious contrasts are those of the Khas and Magar Thakuris and Chhetris from the far west who succeeded and the Tibetan-speaking Kutak [Thakuri] and the Thakalis of the Mustang Districts who did not get enough time to succeed in achieving this. The latest Mulki Ain of 1963 had made all of the caste hierarchies legally irrelevant even though the values, norms and attitudes of the people at different levels of the Nepali society continue to be dominated by caste principles.

**Ethnicity and Regionalism**

Nepal came into its present form, shape and size towards the later part of the eighteenth century soon after it received its legitimacy as a sovereign country with the existing political boundary. Thus we are now forced to deal with the people living within these boundaries when we talk about the social structure of the Nepali people. It may be slightly arbitrary to do so for reasons that the people living across political boundaries continue to share the common values, norms and more significantly common social and cultural history. The emergence of the vastly superior, politically powerful country around Nepal that caused its fixed political boundaries as they are today also happened to be the reason for its continued isolation. And this isolation meant not only the isolation vis-a-vis outside its political boundaries but more importantly it was isolated from its own course of national development.

The Nepali society at large remained fragmented because the society of expanded Nepal could not develop a system of melting pot process as the Kathmandu Valley society of the Licchavi period had done. In course of time the fragmentation of the society began to affect the mind and the thinking process of the people. People got used to think in terms of very restricted small groups as their only reference of being their own people.

The feudal government of the period saw its security and benefit in keeping the country in its fragmented form both vertically and horizontally. It left the entire population and the land in their natural and pristine form except for their concern for the maintenance of law and order, collection of revenues and the exploitation of its natural resources. This left the country in its primitive form, and the people, the most backward right through
the middle of the present century. Even the progress of the most highly developed material culture and a rich and colourful urban way of the Kathmandu Valley was frozen at the level and was allowed to degenerate.

When the period of isolation was ended almost as a natural course of development by the close of World War II, great majority of the Nepali people at all levels were caught unawares. Many people, socially from very high to very low, and economically very rich and prosperous to very poor and deprived, began to feel insecure. They felt like somebody who had suddenly lost references to their lives and their existence. After more than thirty-five years there are still people at different levels of hierarchy who wish the old feudal structure to come back and are sometimes nostalgic about the Rana regime. Naturally, there were many more people during the fifties who hung themselves to the Rana regime of the past, looking for sense of security. And yet for anyone who looks carefully and objectively into the period the nature and purpose of the regime was entirely for its own support and not for the people at large. Therefore, it does not make sense for the Nepalis to be sympathetic to the Rana days. The Rana regime intentionally kept Nepal undeveloped and people disunited. But unfortunately, the situation of that period continues to influence the minds of the people to a large extent even today. Unless a symphony of common voice and of common interest is nurtured and cultivated carefully and perseveringly out of the existing multiplicity there is very little hope for bright future for the majority of its people.

There is a common interest in hanging to the past both on the part of the Nepalis of the older generation and the visitors from outside who found peace and tranquility that was rare in most part of the industrialized cities of the world. This is accompanied by conservatism, suspicion and distrust of uncertain future and any effort at modernization. The attitude of unsympathetic and indiscriminate criticism, which is common today, has its background to some extent in this situation. So there is a dichotomy of the two sets of attitudes, one towards the people and the other towards the land. But it is not always the same and shared by all.

Attitudes are different depending upon the situation and the background of the viewer. The land is beautiful for those who do not have to work here but bad and difficult for those who have to work and make a living as well as to those who are trying to help develop it. Similarly, different sections are viewed as good and bad at one and same time by different people. The fact that Nepal is undeveloped and backward is a reflection on the people who have lived here before us and those of us who are living here now but ironically enough everybody is looking for a scapegoat, which
leads to the division of oneself, one’s own people and those other Nepalis who are outside of this. People continue to divide with “us” and “them” differentiation. Thus every individual Nepali belongs to one’s own defined group. Most of the time Nepali individuals remain indifferent to and unaffected by events that concern the people outside of one’s own group. They take the situation seriously only when it affects the individuals of one’s own group. The same attitude leads to corrupt practices such as bribery and graft. Once this practice gets institutionalized the circles dividing people become even more pronounced. The circles defining people do not have to be permanent. They do not have to be necessarily described by caste line, ethnicity line, or kinship line. In the rural areas it can be connected with mit-relationship as well while in urban areas they could be defined by different kinds of friendship and comraderie.

But it is true that outside of this circle Nepali individuals feel themselves and treat others almost like non-person. They care less for people without references. Only individuals belonging to one’s own circle of one kind or another are real human beings with flesh and blood. Naturally, there are exceptions to this rule. But increasing practice of favouritism and corruption in politics, administration and business shows the rule rather than the exceptions.

Nepali mind is very clearly structured into several types of divisions. This structure automatically leads into a very well organized hierarchy too. The distinction between the ingroup of “us” and the rest of the outsiders as “they” manifests in every walk of social, cultural and economic life. Everything inside the circle of “us” is predictable and manipulable, and outside the circle is unpredictable. So there is a constant need to maintain the line of that circle. There is no security without the existence of this circle. The persistence of ethnic or regional identity in addition to the social and ritual hierarchy is a manifestation of the need to have one’s own circle defined clearly and maintained permanently. By inference then the ethnic or regional or caste identity would collapse only when new circles of classes, professions or new residential areas with permanent migrations are created. People will be willing to discard their traditional circles and identify with a new one which promises to be more rewarding than the old. There are many instances where people have jumped out of one circle of reference and entered inside another through migration, social mobility and political achievements [Rosser, 1966; Haimendorf, 1966]. But few persons will discard one’s own interest in a secure circle in favour of larger national interest wherein individual interests are not served. On the contrary, one will constantly try to stretch one’s own circle to make it bigger and include more potential human and material resources inside the
ring thus stretched by oneself. Unfortunately, this is being done most of the time at the cost of the broader national interest.

It is ironical that some people are beginning to talk about increasing individualism among young Nepalis. In most instances what they mean is increasing egoism and not really individualism as we understand from the models of the Western industrial cultures. The individualism in the West is what Tocqueville had to define more than hundred years ago:

*Individualism* is a novel expression to which a novel idea has given birth. Our fathers were only acquainted with egoism. Selfishness is a passionate and exaggerated love of self, which leads a man to connect everything with himself, and to prefer himself to everything in the world. Individualism is a mature and calm feeling, which disposes each member of the community to sever himself from the mass of his fellows and to draw apart with his family and his friends, so that, after he has thus formed a little circle of his own, the willingly leaves society at large to itself.

[Tocqueville 1956: 98]

There are very few Nepalis if at all who are willing to leave one’s own secure group-interest, let alone being an individualist in the sense Tocqueville was writing about the American people of his time.

**Hierarchy**

The mental state of the people who define their existence only within a clearly delimited circles also help create the hierarchical structure. Within each circle there is a clearly defined hierarchy, and similarly, the many circles together have their own hierarchical arrangements of vertical order. The caste principles helped reinforce the hierarchy already developing along the lines of economic and political levels at an earlier period. In the recent past the central authorities had allowed to have a dual system of hierarchy in the country. At the central level the predominant system of hierarchy was based on the principles of the caste order. But this was not ever forced upon the various groups of people even in the settlements immediately outside of the Valley and certainly not in the remote regions. This probably was the only practical thing to do when the concern of the state authorities and the feudals was the maintenance of law and order and collection of revenues.

The small number of feudals at the centre and the local chiefs throughout the country were given all the freedom to exploit the people and the resources of the country in any manner they liked. The caste principles developed on the basis of *Manusmrti* and other Hindu texts helped reinforce the stratification from the beginning of the Rana period. With the
nature of the primitive agriculture and marginal productivity except in the Valley and in the Tarai there was very little economic resource to exploit in the rest of the country. But with the authority given from the centre the local chiefs were able to maintain law and order and their hierarchically high social and political positions of importance. And this was by no means less serious and detrimental than large-scale economic exploitation for the entrenchment of the rigid hierarchic world-view even in the remote regions where the caste system was not necessarily imposed.

The Hindu world-view adopted by the centre provided not so much a means of economic exploitation as it gave an elevated social and ritual position for the feudals in the hierarchy. The already existing rather loose and somewhat open hierarchical order of the various ethnic communities was given a rigid and hereditary base by the Hindu faith. Gradually, over the time this Hindu influence helped the hierarchy become increasingly rigid and permanent even among the ethnic groups, who were compartively egalitarian until then. It has been a common belief that the unequal power base provided a congenial ground for the successful introduction of the caste hierarchy in the lower Himalayan region. In the past people from economically and socially higher levels tended to adopt caste principles and life styles. Examples are many in the history of Nepal [Sharma, 1971; Hitchcock, 1966; Haimendorf, 1966; Jones, 1976; Iijima, 1963].

Hierarchies have always been present in all societies. But in most cases they are not as rigidly stratified as in the caste system. Among the Hindus the Vedic theory of the divine origin of the caste system makes it impossible to change one's caste status. It is impossible to raise it into higher level in one's own lifetime. This necessitated to create a belief system in the life after. Puanic texts are replete with various stories of how the individuals succeeded in achieving their goals after death through religious rituals and by giving generous gifts to be rewarded in the life after.

There simply is no encouragement for hard work, for individual promotion within the Hindu belief system. In fact, it discourages economically productive work for the high caste people [Manusmrti, 2: 168], and the Bhagavad Gita advises people to work without expectations of rewards. So the open hierarchy of the basically egalitarian principles of the practical nature that encourages people to be competitive and aspiring to rise within the structure itself is constantly being put under pressure to turn into a fatalistic one where each level of the hierarchy is sealed permanently. The doctrine of karma is popularised to maximum level. It is not very difficult to see that it contradicts inherently with the principle of development
philosophy that the Nepali state has adopted at the official level today. It is not true that everybody would aspire to belong to the high case today although they did very much to do so in the past generations. Sharma [1977] summed up his essay on Caste, Social Mobility and Sanskritization with the remarks that “Sanskritization in a traditional sense is unlikely to exert influence in Nepal in the future and its place is likely to be taken by Westernization or modernization. In the new situation newer symbols of status would come to be created by the upper class families in urban centres which would set the pace for emulation by the new aspirants of social ascendance.” But as long as the emphasis on ascribed status continues to dominate and generate, the negative influence of the value system will not change.

Fatalism does not encourage people to work hard or to believe in self-promotion by means of personal industry. We cannot expect a rapid development of our nation without hard working population. Only people who work hard are those who are forced to by circumstances. Otherwise it is a typically Nepali attitude to work only to a minimum and not more. There is nothing in the Nepali values at the present moment which is comparable to the values of work ethics of the Protestant societies of the West, nor anything like the social pressure of the Japanese society to achieve and succeed. In fact, the religious programme of Radio Nepal, the national media, is completely dominated by the values of self-negation and emphasis on spiritual values. The preachings have no promise or hope for the poor and the deprived except in the life after. Therefore, the enterprising people of the society, including the individuals who are paid to preach, neglect those moral injunctions completely.

Upadhyaya Brahmins of priestly background are no less a victim of the value system they have created themselves. Their preachings have justified the exploitative life-styles of the people of feudal background whether they are among the Khas, Thakuri Chhetri, Magar, Gurung, Rai, Limbu, and Tharu; or the Newars of the Kathmandu Valley. The tell-tale stories of the burgeoning Chathare-Panchthare Shresthas and the dwindling Rajopadhyaya and Mishra Brahmins among Newar community is a glaring example of the case in point. According to orthodox Brahmanic values anyone doing physical labour and in fact anyone trying to accumulate wealth scales down in the hierarchy. It is not a means for climbing up the ladder of social status. As a result, either there are people at the higher level of the social status who are in professions other than economically productive ones, or there are others who are forced to do physical labour, and in fact anyone trying to accumulate wealth scales down in the hierarchy. It is not a means for climbing up the ladder of social status. As a
result, either there are people at the higher level of the social status who are in professions other than economically productive ones, or there are others who are forced to do physical labour because they are poor, uneducated and stand low in the social hierarchy. Consequently, all the important, economically productive and profitable jobs have a tendency to gravitate into the hands of the people who come from outside the Nepalese system of hierarchy. The fact that the Marwaris and the Tibetans are far more successful and prosperous compared to the Nepalis around them within a relatively short period of time speaks for the argument. The reason for their success is that they do not observe the rules of the standard Nepali hierarchy. They have a mental attitude that helps them move up and down the hierarchic ladder with ease. This increases their efficiency by several times over the Nepalis who are stuck with the rigid hierarchic attitude. A few Nepalis who have succeeded are the ones who have challenged the orthodox values effectively and have followed the counsel of common sense. Those who are politically successful and economically prosperous are not among the orthodox Upadhyaya Brahmans and their faithful followers.

We do not yet have an alternative model which would work effectively with the given background of our social structure, social hierarchy and value system. But no effort for economic development will produce impressive results until we adopt a value system that will help knock down the concept of immutability of the hierarchical structure of our social pyramid which we espouse so very ardently today. The existing social values will only continue to encourage corruption and cakari. There is no ethical censorship against corruption and against cakari. It is only personal jealousy that appears to be critical of successes achieved through such behaviour. But there is no social, institutional or ethical basis that discourages corruption or cakari.

Cakari

Cakari is not at all a new concept for the good Hindus, even though the expression may have generated a negative aura around it in the course of our not so distant past history. This expression was overused and vulgarized during the hundred years of the Rana regime to the extreme so that the expression today generates a negative reaction. In the Hindu faith it is a perfectly legitimate word which means to wait upon, hang around, serve, or to appease for seeking favour from any god within the pantheon. But once people get accustomed to the idea and the habit of hanging around for seeking favour from any god or in fact from any power-base they are expected to go into the natural process of
cakari for getting their interest served by means of cakari. The cakari was made official during the Rana regime. People, specially high officials, were made to hang around for hours, sometimes four to five hours in Rana palaces to prove their loyalty still visible in Nepal. Many people have faith in cakari than in work for promotion. It is, therefore, very difficult to teach people to work hard for progress. Some erudite pundit could prove it otherwise in a scholarly way on the basis of some learned treatise. But the popular ritualistic religion that the majority of our people know and practise teaches them to have faith in the efficacy of cakari Many educated people are willing to wait upon for hours on end and run the risk of getting disappointed at the end rather than work in a productive field for a guaranteed result. The failure then is conveniently attributed to either karma, or to the insensitivity of the other person to whom they wait upon.

Theoretically speaking, in a society with a system of rigid and immutable hierarchy there is no concept of vertical social mobility within it. It is not considered a normal feature and natural process to move up and down the vertical ladder. An individual is fixed at the particular rung from the time of one's birth, or at least one's status association of the time one makes a debut into the larger arena of the society. The progress or social mobility by means of personal effort and hard work is not a standard rule that the majority of the people, within a caste society, would accept. In fact, such individuals who dare move up or down have to face a constant barrage of criticism, personal attacks and a campaign of character-assasination tirades. Any self-made man in this country had had a personal experience of this. Candra Shamsher Rana [who was Prime Minister from 1901 until 1928] is quite well--known as a genius in devising strategies to turn paupers out of enterprising individuals who managed to get rich with their personal industry and forced to become the cakariwala of his own, whereupon he would hang around the palace for several hours every day. Consequently, an alternative route of cakari becomes a logical and easier choice for those who are willing to put up with the social criticism and character-assasination in any case. Those who have no patience with struggle will gave up the battle altogether and turn into a spiritualist or a philosopher.

Within the belief system of hierarchy the people in the exalted positions consider doling out favours to one's own sycophants or hangers on as normal and proper behaviour. But gradually they fall prey to that vice of favouring the wrong individuals even when they know that in fact what they are doing is detrimental to the long-tem interest of the country and the nation. It becomes difficult to change the pattern once it falls into
place with our religious values as well. Many important individuals holding high public offices fall victim to this practice and end up with a habit of constant misuse of the privileges and public interests. Unfortunately, this is true today even though a lot of rhetoric and modern jargon is being increasingly used by these very people in an effort to project themselves as modern men.

Lest people think that it is an exceptional behaviour of Kathmanduites we better be reminded that this cakari system is becoming all-pervasive as it comes along with the spread of the model of social stratification. This is spreading throughout the country. For example, all the District and Zonal Headquarters are constantly surrounded by a number of idler sycophants who have no serious business, other than flimsy excuses to hang around the executives day in and day out. The real purpose is, even if there is no other concrete gain through the favours of the executive, that they are able to raise their social status by association with the high powered executives.

During the Rana days people bragged about their identity of being a chakariwala [one who does cakari] of so and so Shamsher Jung Bahadur Rana. Today's Nepal has adopted a democratic value at the official level. Therefore, people do not brag about being a chakariwala of any individual even though they know, just as much as anybody else, the efficacy of cakari. As the enlightened citizen of the society one cannot admit the fact openly that cakari system works more effectively than any other means for the purpose of self-promotion. But, in fact, this is what a large number of the people believe to be true.

The cakariwala of the outlying district and Zonal Headquarters stand to gain one additional benefit by creating an excuse to hang around the executives vis--a--vis the women of the household. The female members of every household have to work at least fourteen to sixteen hours a day in their farms, tending their livestocks, taking care of their children, performing all the domestic chores of cooking, cleaning, washing, and processing food for cooking such as husking, grinding and polishing. The menfolk who idle around the district headquarters and marketplaces believe in the hierarchic structure wherein their status is higher than those of their women.

The non-caste ethnic people do not have this hierarchic model where the male are supposed to be higher than their female. They, therefore, work with their women at least just as hard as the situation requires them even though certain jobs such as cooking and cleaning are as a rule considered as women's job. The six part study on the status of women in Nepal makes graphic presentation of this situation [Acharya, 1981; Molnar, 1981; Pradhan, 1981; Rajaure 1981; and Schuler, 1981]. These studies show that the
hierarchic model comes out quite clearly among the high caste Hindus. The peasant Newars of the Kathmandu Valley have much less of this inequality between men and women [Pradhan, 1981] as compared with the Brahmans [Bennet, 1983].

It is commonsense that there would be no steady economic growth until we are able to develop a system of premiums and incentives for hard work, discipline, and success through straightforward honesty. But with the ethics and the value-system prevalent in our society today we are encouraging cakari and no other positive qualities for good discipline. The increasing corruption through bribery and graft has a root in the value-system where achievement through personal industry is not recognized. People involved in national planning know it too. They must be planning for social change that helps adopt values and ethical standards that are going to recognize hard work and not cakari as respectable style of living when industrious and successful people get recognized and receive support without having to bribe. The basic Principles of the Seventh Plan says, "...it becomes patently clear that mere mouthing of catchy slogans or coining of claptrap phrases cannot be relied upon to overcome the problem the nation is facing today as well as those which it will be added with tomorrow" [1984]. And yet there is no express strategy as to how does the plan envisage to accomplish "the quickening of the tempo of development in the years to come" without building up the system of public recognition of physical labour and personal industry in areas of economically productive sectors. The process of planning based on statistics and on quantitative economic exercise will not necessarily lead to a situation where people would want to cooperate.

Figures, jargons and statistical averages are not sensitive to our national goals by themselves unless we make them through the hands of the people who work. High caste people have always despised those who insist on maintaining their traditional folkways and not "improve" themselves by adopting the caste hierarchy. So it was natural for any ambitious person or society, seeking upward social mobility to mimic caste attitudes even though sometimes this behaviour leads to complete loss of self-esteem and self-confidence. It is simply a truism to repeat that this is not very healthy for the growth and development of honest characteristics. Since there is an alternative way of achieving social status through political power and collection of wealth people are trying to achieve this through corrupt means of cakari and bribery. Our traditional value-system does not prescribe any honest medium of achieving this. Whatever recognition the ancient Nepali society may have given has long since been negated by the caste-oriented Hindu values.
Manusmrti treats the indigenous people of the lower Himalayan regions as Sudra. [Manusmrti, 10.43.44]. This is the reason that all the ambitious people, once made aware of this principle, began to scramble to establish their origin in the plains of India. This produced the most ridiculous situation whereupon all the aristocracy among the Khas, the Magars, the Gurungs and the high Himalayan people began trying to establish their pedigree and lineage with the plains people. Many others followed suit. And there were pundits who provided Vamsavalis, made to measure. [Hamilton, 1819; Hodgson, 1875]. The outcome of this exercise was that people who learnt to lean on falsehood, fictitious ancestry, and an inclination to self-centerism were given higher social status than those people who were honest, straightforward, and had a discipline of physical work.

People living by honest physical work were treated as Sudra, and industrialists and business men as Vaisya. This led to an inevitable value-system that encourages the mushrooming of the Neo-Brahmans today. The Neo-Brahmans loathe physical work, in fact, any honest means of becoming rich just as the priestly Brahmins do. Since the value of our modern education system has always been an extension of the old value-system it tends to produce only Neo-Brahmans even out of technical graduates. The importance of education for the common people at present is in its attraction for getting out of physical work. This attraction penetrates all the way down to primary and pre-primary level of education and into the remotest part of the country. Six of our previous plans have either overlooked the necessity for change of value system or were unable to do much about this. The laid out strategy of the present plan does not show convincingly that it has integrated anywhere the plan for inculcating modern values where frequently mentioned poor and industrious people receive the attention of the higher officials in practice and in reality. As it is, the poor people are made to serve the higher class and caste people and the industrious people are encouraged to bribe and corrupt the officials as the hierarchic order and the cakarasisystem have the most natural tendency to do so. As a consequence, any enterprising and honest individual aspires to be a neo-Brahman. They think that is where the recognition and status awaits them little realising that it is where the maximum degree of frustration and useless verbal culture predominate.

King Birendra had visualized the programme quite some years back, when he made the remark:

It is our belief that in the march of time everything should change: that which does not work, that which proves illusive, that which in the name of tradition only brings exploitation all of these must change.

[as quoted by Stiller and Yadav, 1979]
It makes an interesting quiz to consider that our planners would continue to believe that this country would develop economically by the mere juggling of figures and by publication of these figures along with very pleasant readable text.

The spontaneous process of change is all around in any case today. The values are not going to remain static even if some people wanted to hold unto them for their life. Society is going to change on its own and may not be in a peaceful way unless we provide a planned and thoughtful process for it.

King Birendra had also said in the beginning of his directives that “In the absence of discipline and determination, a plan can be of no more value than the paper it is printed upon.” [Stiller and Yadav, 1979] It is the natural right of the Nepalis to expect that the people responsible for planning are aware that plans are susceptible to “discipline” and determined hard work and not to the sycophancy of the cakriwala.

What particular aspect of the current plan does focus on the processes of ‘change’ of tradition that is exploitative, is not at all clear. We all know that a planned change can be a painful process since it inevitably hurts a few people for the good of the majority. Value systems are no exceptions to this rule. People become nervous and feel insecure when the entire exercise for social change is adopted by the society at large. One small paragraph from Herman Hesse might make our point more clear. He wrote:

Every age, every culture, every custom and tradition has its own character, its own weakness, and its own strength, its beauties and ugliness; accepts certain sufferings as matters of course, puts up patiently with certain evils. Human life is reduced to real suffering, to hell only only when two ages, two cultures and religions overlap...Now there are times when a whole generation is caught in this way between two ages, two modes of life, with the consequences that it loses all power to understand itself and has no standard, no security, no simple acquiescence.

[Hermann Hesse in Ophuls 1977: X]

I want to rush to add one more paragraph by yet another writer on the same subject.

the only way out of the hellish suffering of the transition is to construct the new age as rapidly as possible, so that we are no longer caught “between two ages.” The first step is to acknowledge our distress and understand its roots; only then can we begin to grapple constructively with the task of transition.

[Ophuls 1977: X]
First of all it is the question of having a strong will to do the job. If we waver about the need to change the old social order, traditional social values, and norms then things will take their own course. The theory of *karma*, as popularly believed by the common people and the theory of the divine origin of the rigid social hierarchy, cannot continue for ever. It does not help create an enthusiasm for the building of a better future. It creates only verbosity at one level and cynicism at another.

It is extremely difficult to comprehend the situation where there is more pressure to establish a Sanskrit University and a Royal Academy of Sanskrit Studies at a time when the government has not been able to meet the demand for the expansion of facilities for the several thousand students who want to study technical subjects and want to be trained in various technical professions. If left untrained for another ten years there will be hundreds of thousands of our people forced to come out into the street, and the whole generation of manpower will be wasted. This manpower, if trained in time in important trades and skills and given the right attitude towards work, could help the system to replace the jobs which are increasingly going into the hands of the foreigners. Delayed by another ten years the study of Sanskrit certainly would not cause that much of a damage. And yet our learned community including high-level officials within the government would put all the pressure they could muster for the creation of these institutions which will attract only a handful of people at any given time now or in future. It is not clear whether they are doing this because they are convinced that the creation of these added facilities will help the study process which the creation for the Institute for Sanskrit Studies under Tribhuvan University for more than a decade has not been able to do or because they are still suffering under the vestiges of outdated value-system.

Some people may be justifiably proud of their Vedic heritage and culture. But no one can deny the fact that the caste hierarchy and related attitude, unless reshuffled and remodelled, are going to continue to present as a roadblock against progress and economic development.

Hierarchic value, with the theory of the divine origin of caste people, are not going to provide incentives for hard work without which there is no possibility of economic progress. And hierarchic values are not necessarily the essentials of a Hindu society. If they are, there is no future for us. Hinduism ought to survive without the caste system or hierarchic order. It is also clear that the institution of monarchy in our context today does not require the theory of the divine origin of stratification for its own support. Anyone who looks carefully into the development of the past three thousand years and the nature of the plurality of the composite society will have no difficulty in understanding this.
The dynamic and active leadership of the monarchy, interpreted against the background of the modern need, and not necessarily on the Vedic theory, is an absolute necessity of the day.

The stratified hierarchic model is a dead-end which will never lead to desired goal of economic progress on its own. All the development achieved so far through foreign aid cannot be taken as a gift of God given in return to the Vedic rites and prayers of the Brahman pundits. This is a result of our successful and pragmatic foreign policy initiated by the late King Mahendra and successfully enhanced by King Birendra. What we need is enlightened interpretation of positive Hindu values, where the real meanings of *karma*, as action and not as fatalism is given by people who have made religious preaching their profession. There is no need to take everything written in Sanskrit as sacrosanct and try to dominate the national media by utterly self-contradictory verbiage. Spiritual education does not have much meaning to the poor and ignorant people. Economic prosperity and educated enlightenment are a necessity before spiritualism makes any impact upon the people. The fact that all the soul-shepherds and spiritual Gurus of the sub-continent find the United States of America as their ultimate goal is no accident. So care should be taken so that the coach is not put before the horse.

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Planning and Development in Nepal

B.P. Shrestha

Introduction

Nepal provides a typically 'hard case' of development in several ways. The geographical situation of the country is such that it is land-locked from outside and mountain-locked from within. As a land-locked country, it has no access of its own to the sea which is several hundred miles away. This is a serious handicap in our development process. In a mountainous country like Nepal, it is a formidable task to build roads, bridges and other physical infrastructure of development. The factor-endowment of the country is also poor without any strategic raw materials and minerals of international market. A large part of the country is not even habitable. Only a small part of land is cultivable. The pressure of population on limited land is thus mounting over the years. The problem of high man-land ratio is accentuated all the more by the most disproportionate distribution of man and land between regions. In search of land and living, cultivation is already extended in the hills and mountains beyond the physical limits, endangering the ecological balance of the region. The indiscriminate animal grazing and reckless collection of fodder and firewood for daily life have further deteriorated the fragile hills and mountains with consequent problems of soil erosion and land-slides on an increasing scale. The large-scale migration of people from the hills and mountains down to the plains, leading to a large-scale encroachment upon the forest resources and their fast depletion is yet another dimension of the problem. To this may be added the problem of immigration over the years from across the open border.

And above all, while the outside world had undergone the kaleidoscopic changes, Nepal was relegated to a position of isolation and stagnation well over a century under an autocratic Rana regime which was overthrown only in 1951. The concept of welfare and development was then not only alien but totally anachronistic.
Nepal had, thus, to make a hard beginning of her entire process of economic and social development very late and almost from scratch without any modern institutions and infrastructure. Only 8.3 percent of males and 0.7 percent of females, 5 years old and above, claimed to be able to read and write, while only 0.5 percent of males and less than 0.1 percent of females passed primary, secondary of higher examinations in the early fifties. Until 1956, 162 miles of all-weather roads, 228 miles of fair-weather-roads, 51 miles of narrow-gauge railways, 14 miles of over wrought ropeway and 360 miles of airways represented the entire modern means of transportation across the country. There were only 600 hospital beds manned by about 50 medical doctors and the total installed capacity of hydro-electricity was only 6280 kw.

In the agricultural sector, which accounted for almost four-fifths of gross domestic product [GDP] and more than 90 percent of employment of labour force, both production and productivity were low due to feudal agrarian system characterised by concentration of landownership, absentee landlordism, insecurity of tenure, exhorbitant rent and primitive farming practices. Only a negligible fraction of the cultivated land was irrigated by canal system. Chemical fertilizer was virtually unknown until the early fifties.

During and immediately after the Second World War, more than 50 joint-stocks industrial enterprises were incorporated in multifarous fields out of the scarcity conditions created by the war. Only a few of these speculative ventures survived when the normal conditions prevailed. The decade following the political change in 1951 was also marked by company liquidations which only discouraged the long-term industrial investment.

Just before the outbreak of the Second World War, there was also an announcement of what was then called a 20-year economic plan. Nothing was, however, heard of what was done about it until a National Planning Commission was set-up in 1949 for formulating a 15-year plan. It is believed that the so-called 15-year plan was actually prepared, but it never came to the notice of the people, and the whole idea of economic planning disappeared along with the dissolution of the National Planning Commission.

For several years after the political change in 1951, the overall economy of the country languished in a state of stagnation. Some of the early efforts were frustrated without any tangible results due to the political instability and frequent changes in government before it could work out any perspective or a broad strategy of development in the country. Major economic decisions
were taken more on the basis of political and administrative expediency rather than on an objective judgement and assessment of the economy. The situation was confounded all the more by the mushroom growth of political parties, scrambling for power among themselves.

The concept of planned economic development, though discussed quite often both within and outside the government, could not, however, take any shape until a draft outline of the First Five-Year Plan was announced by the Royal Proclamation of October 10, 1955. It took almost a year when at last the second draft outline was announced on September 21, 1956. The First Five-Year Plan [1956/57—1960/61] was to be followed by the Second Five Year Plan. Its model was also released partially for comments. Subsequently, with the dissolution of the multi-party system of government and the institution of the present partyless democratic Panchayat system of government, the idea of Second Five-Year Plan was given, up, and in its place a Three-Year Plan, characterised as a preparatory plan, was launched. Between the completion of the First Five-Year Plan and the launching of the Three-Year Plan [1962/63-1964/65], there was a gap of the year [1961/62] without any plan as such. The Three-Year Plan was followed by four consecutive Five-Year Plans [1965/66-1984/85]. The current fiscal year 1985/86 marks the beginning of the Seventh [Five Year] Plan [1985/86—1989/90].

**Performance**

The planned process of economic development over the past three decades is conspicuous by the high population and low GDP growth rates with very little improvement in per capita income of the people. Even in the absence of GDP estimates, it may be safely assumed that during the period of the First and Second Plans, GDP growth rate could hardly keep pace with average annual population growth of around 2 percent. During the Third Plan period, while the average annual growth of GDP was slightly higher than that of population, it trailed far behind that of population during the Fourth and Fifth Plans. The average annual growth of GDP during the Sixth Plan is estimated at 4.2 percent which is most likely to be slightly lower when the provisional GDP estimated for the last two years of the plan are finally revised [see Table 1].
### Table 1
**GDP Growth Rates**

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<th>Non-agricultural Sector</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<td>2.4</td>
<td>2.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fourth Plan [1970/71—1974/75]</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>1.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fifth Plan [1975/76—1979/80]</td>
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<td>2.3</td>
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<td>Sixth Plan [1980/81—1984/85]</td>
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<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seventh Plan [1985/86—1989/90]</td>
<td>3.5*</td>
<td>5.7*</td>
<td>4.5*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Planned

The changes in GDP growth rates were largely influenced by the changes in agricultural production. The high or the low GDP growth rates were almost invariably associated with the rise or the fall in agricultural production over the past two decades as agricultural sector accounted for three-fifths to almost two-thirds of the total GDP. Unfortunately, agricultural production depends largely on the vagaries of monsoon as dependable irrigation facilities are available only to small part of the cultivated land. For several years to come, the plan-performance or output-response to additional investment depends largely on how effectively the "uncertainty" due to vagaries of weather can be reduced with more irrigation facilities. This is where the plan-performance always remained very poor.

The structure of economy remained virtually intact during the past three decades. The agricultural sector, which accounted for almost two-thirds of GDP until 1976/77, still contributes almost 60 percent to total GDP. Between 1952/54 and 1981, while the proportion of labour force [15 years and above] in the agricultural sector declined slightly from 93.3 percent to 99.4 percent, its absolute size increased from about 3.65 million to 5.31 million. In a situation like that of Nepal where employment outside agriculture is not growing at a faster rate than labour force and where farming is also done largely on a joint family basis, the volume of labour force on land must be growing with the increase in population at the annual rate of over 2 percent. This explains precisely why more than 90 percent labour force is crammed in
agricultural sector with massive accumulation of idle labour on land. This has affected not only agricultural production and productivity, but also the ecosystem of the country. Any new addition of labour force on land will further deteriorate the existing disproportionate factor-combination, reducing thereby the proportions of both land and capital in relation to labour. A little more capital investment can shift the point of diminishing returns on labour with the fixed supply of land. Since the elasticity of substitution is not infinite, the point of diminishing returns on labour and capital with the fixed supply of land can not be shifted indefinitely. Sooner or later, the diminishing returns will follow in a more accentuated form.

The accumulation of idle labour on land, especially in the hills and mountains, is a colossal waste of the most potential resource of the country. The National Planning Commission survey of 1977 revealed that labour was underemployed during 63 percent of the available working days in rural areas [The National Planning Commission, 1977]. In the hills and mountains, one hectare of land has to support as many as 10 persons as against 3 persons in the plain Tarai. Cultivation has already been extended even on marginal land and steep slopes and pushed far beyond the physical limits at the cost of green vegetation and forest. The result is more frequent landslides and soil erosion on an increasing scale. It is believed that the four major rivers of Nepal with their 6000 tributaries are washing away every year as much as 240 million cubic metres of soil. The sediments washed away from the hills and mountains are deposited on the river beds of the plains. As a result, the bed-level of Tarai rivers is rising fast and the most fertile surrounding land is becoming more and more vulnerable to floods and sedimentation. The forest-area has also been receding due to reckless exploitation without any consideration of the principle of sustained and maximum yield, unauthorised encroachment by the migrants from the hills, and resettlement programme of the government. And above all, more than 90 percent of energy is derived from firewood at the cost of forest. It is estimated that the area under forest has already declined from 6.4 million hectares in 1964 to 4.1 million hectares in 1980.

While a planned migration and resettlement of the people from the most seriously affected area of the hills down to the plains of the Tarai is desirable on several grounds, the basic problem is that this process of planned migration cannot be continued indefinitely. Ultimately, the capability of the hill economy must be developed to absorb the growing population. Migration and resettlement programme can, no doubt, provide a safety valve for sometime. It is this period of breathing-space
which is very crucial and much of the groundwork for expansion and improvement of productive capacity of the hill economy should be done during this period not only to improve the quality of life of the people in the hills, but also to maintain the ecological balance in the country.

As a matter of fact, the development potentialities of the hills are not yet known very well. The back-log of simple technical improvements, however, indicates that there are immense unexplored possibilities in the hills. The directive by His Majesty the King for regional specialization with the hills and mountains specializing in horticultural and livestock products does not rule out the overriding need of making all-out efforts for producing more food from the available land in the hills. The rationale behind the specialization-strategy is that since the cereal cropland alone cannot hold and sustain all people in the hills and mountains, it is imperative to open up an alternative or supplementary thrust of development on a long-term basis to increase production and improve the quality of life of the people. Besides, the regional specialization helps in creating condition for economic integration through complementarities.

The low GDP growth or poor-output response to given levels of investment over the years is largely the result of poor performance in the agricultural sector. In an economy like our own, rationalization of the vast agricultural sector is a pre-condition for industrialization and modernization of the economy. The agricultural sector, instead of playing the role of a leading sector, is continuing to remain a lagging sector. The poor performance in agriculture sector is conspicuous by the low production and its wide fluctuations between years [Table 2]. It is the unpredictable weather rather than the investment-level which is the decisive factor in agricultural production. The average annual growth rates during the Third and Fourth Plans were 2.9 percent and 1.5 percent, respectively. The Fifth Plan was the victim of the worst monsoon, causing serious decline in agricultural production. The high GDP growth rate during the Sixth Plan was largely the result of a better performance in the agriculture sector due to favourable weather through the plan period, except in 1982/83. Starting from the most depressed base year of 1979/80, when agriculture production declined by 4.8 percent due to severe drought, the first year of the Sixth Plan, [1980/81] recorded an impressive growth of 10.4 percent in agricultural production leading to 8.3 percent GDP growth.
Table 2  
Yearly Changes in Agricultural Production

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plan/Year</th>
<th>% change</th>
<th>Plan/Year</th>
<th>% change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Third Plan</td>
<td></td>
<td>Fifth Plan</td>
<td>-1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965/66</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>1975/76</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966/67</td>
<td>-4.1</td>
<td>1976/77</td>
<td>-4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967/68</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>1977/78</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968/69</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>1978/79</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969/70</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>1979/80</td>
<td>-4.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Fourth Plan | 1.5       | Sixth Plan | 4.3       |
| 1970/71    | 0.6       | 1980/81    | 10.4      |
| 1971/72    | 0.7       | 1981/82    | 3.5       |
| 1972/73    | 1.0       | 1982/83    | -2.5      |
| 1973/74    | 6.9       | 1983/84    | 8.7       |
| 1974/75    | -1.3      | 1984/85    | 1.7       |

While population was increasing annually by 2 percent or more, foodgrains production could increase by average annual rate of 1.15 percent during the Third Plan and by 2.0 percent during the Fourth Plan. Foodgrains production declined by 3.11 percent during the Fifth Plan, but increased by 7.91 percent during the Sixth Plan. The increase in foodgrains production during the Third Plan is also attributable largely to increase in area under cereal crops. What should be more disturbing is not the low rate of increase or erratic variation in production, but the erratic variation or declining trend in productivity of the cereal crops. During the past two decades, spanning over the four periodic plans there was hardly any improvement in the yield rate of paddy, the most important among the cereal crops. The yield rates of maize, barley and millet were actually declining from one periodic plan after another, while the yield rate of wheat tended to recover during the Fifth Plan after the setback during the Fourth Plan [Table 3].
Table 3

*Cereal Grains Production and Yield Rates*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Periodic Plan</th>
<th>Cereal Grains Area</th>
<th>Paddy Maize</th>
<th>Wheat Barley</th>
<th>Millet</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Third Plan</td>
<td>1.15 2.31</td>
<td>1.88 1.83</td>
<td>1.17 0.96</td>
<td>1.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth Plan</td>
<td>2.00 1.70</td>
<td>1.92 1.80</td>
<td>1.05 0.92</td>
<td>1.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth Plan</td>
<td>3.11 0.55</td>
<td>1.86 1.59</td>
<td>1.15 0.88</td>
<td>1.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sixth Plan</td>
<td>7.91 3.12</td>
<td>1.87 1.50</td>
<td>1.27 0.86</td>
<td>0.96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The effectiveness of agricultural development plan and its implementation presupposes that adequate efforts are made to reduce the “uncertainties” due to vagaries of weather and the decisions and actions of the millions of farmers working on land. The adverse effect of uncertain weather factor may be reduced to some extent by increasing our knowledge of the weather conditions and adapting the cropping pattern accordingly. But its impact can be offset to a large extent only by bringing more land under dependable irrigation all round the year. Unfortunately, the progress in irrigation is always frustrating and far behind the planned targets. Since the public sector investment represents only a small part of total resources required for reaching the planned level of output in agricultural sector, one way of reducing the second uncertainty is to reallocate the limited public investment in such a way as to redirect a substantial part of it towards influencing the decisions and supporting the major efforts of the farmers themselves.

A plan, however, well articulated on the higher level, is bound to be meaningless if it cannot be implemented at the farmers' level. The administrative machinery and network for implementation of the agricultural development programme should be so structured that the programme can be as effective at the grass-roots level as intended. This is possible only when the resources and knowledge do not get stuck up somewhere in the system without reaching the village. While attempts are being made towards “streamlining”, the structure as it stands at present looks nice as “Inverted Pyramid” with top-heavy paraphernalia without any broad base at the grass-roots level with the result
that the efforts made at the top get dissipated before they can percolate down to the bottom. Virtually the entire burden of programme implementation at the village and farm levels is thrust on the back of the J.T. and J.T.A.s who are neither adequate in number, nor are rained well and provided with adequate means.

For a long time in the past the development process was also greatly influenced by the strategy of concentration of available resources in accessible areas with better potentialities and possibilities of higher pay-offs. This may be seen for example, from the glaring disparity in government allocation of development expenditures during the four consecutive years [1972/73—1975/76]. The Central Development Region alone claimed almost half of the total expenditures allocated for development of industrial and social services sectors. The corresponding shares for the development of agricultural and transport sectors were 38.2 percent and 34.0 percent, respectively. The remote and backward regions of the country, therefore, remained isolated and underemployed. While the planning strategy has been reoriented from the Fifth Plan towards a more balanced and equitable regional development, lack of adequate efforts either for identification of the potential areas of development or for formulation of appropriate development projects, have been serious constraints in making a “breakthrough”

Table 4

Regional Distribution of Development Expenditures*
[1972/73—1975/76]
[Rs. in crore]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>431.57 [38.2]</td>
<td>363.44 [46.2]</td>
<td>541.57 [34.0]</td>
<td>425.13 [47.9]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unidentified</td>
<td>226.89 [20.1]</td>
<td>204.25 [26.0]</td>
<td>184.08 [11.6]</td>
<td>287.05 [32.3]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1129.47 [100.0]</td>
<td>786.55 [100.0]</td>
<td>1591.09 [100.0]</td>
<td>888.07 [100.0]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Budget Estimates
[1] Includes irrigation, land reforms and forestry
[2] Includes power and commerce
[3] Includes communications
Note: Figures in brackets indicate percentages.
One cannot deny the fact that economic planning and development have not succeeded, for whatever reasons, in generating adequate momentum in the economy in terms of GDP growth rates. One can, however, claim without any doubt that the past efforts have succeeded in laying the firm foundation and creating all essential pre-conditions of development. If properly managed, the economy has now reached the state from where a reasonable growth could become available process and gain its momentum by its own force. No nation can pull out its economy from a long period of isolation, backwardness and stagnation with a miracle. And there has been no miracles in Nepal, too. Starting from scratch without any physical infrastructure and modern institutions and organizations, Nepal had to concentrate her limited resources in the early stages in creating essential pre-conditions for social change and economic development. Even today infrastructure and institution-building claims a substantial part of available resources.

The initial efforts were seriously constrained, not only by the lack of organization, knowledge and know-how, but also by the scarcity of resources. The available domestic and external resources could finance investment works only on a limited scale. A larger part of such investment also went into infrastructure and institution-building. Investment in such works by its very nature had lone-gestation period without immediate impact on production.

Two or three decades ago, it was beyond any stretch of imagination and expectation that motorable or truckable roads would criss-cross the country of deep valleys and high mountains. This has broken the physical barriers and widened the mental horizon. The result is the rising expectation and growing enthusiasm for more roads, more bridges and more airports. In a country where chemical fertilizer was not known until mid-fifties, complaints against untimely or inadequate delivery of supplies have been a routine affair even in remote areas. Educational institutions are growing by leaps and bound, but student-population is growing even at a faster rate. Protracted debates and discussions on development issues and criticisms and counter-criticisms of development performance are now the order of the day at village, district and national levels. Essentially, these are all indications and expressions of growing awareness of the people and their concern for development. Such attitudinal changes even at the grass-roots level are perhaps the greatest gain we have had from our past investment and efforts. After all, development should take place first in the minds of people.

Over the past quarter of a century, while 4300 km roads have already been constructed, another 2000 km roads are
planned for construction in next five years. The domestic and external air services have been expanded quite considerably during the same period. Likewise, communications networks have been modernised and extended from 11 or 12 hundred telephone lines to more than 18,000 lines already in use at present. The installed capacity of hydro-electric power has also been expanded from 4,000 kw in 1960/61 to about 156,000 kw by the end of Sixth Plan in 1984/85. The current Seventh Plan has set the target of installing more than 100,000 kw additional capacity. Likewise, the irrigation facilities limited to only 30,000 or 31,000 hectares of land till 1960/61, have been extended to 3,38,000 hectares of land at present. They will be further extended to additional 2,35,493 hectares in next five years.

In the field of human resources development, the progress recorded over the past quarter of a century is most impressive by any standard. The primary school enrollment limited to 14 or 15 percent until 1960, has already reached the proportion of about 80 percent of the primary school-going population; health care facilities expanded with 50 new hospitals, more than 700 additional health posts and 2,000 additional hospital beds. Small-pox has been completely eradicated from the country, while malaria has been controlled to a great extent. The incidence of the endemic diseases is now much lower than before. As a result, life expectancy at birth has gone up from 28 years to 50 years.

Reorientation

The quantitative evaluation of economic planning and development on the basis of GDP growth rates alone is totally inadequate as it fails to make any assessment of the changes such growth brings about in the quality of life of the people. The low-income developing countries are facing both the problems of low production and inequitable distribution. Several years of planning exercises and development efforts have failed either to fulfil the legitimate expectations of the masses or to create adequate conditions for attaining anything near a reasonable level of growth on a viable basis. Even where high growth rates were maintained intermittently, there was hardly any corresponding decrease in the incidence of poverty, illiteracy, disease and squalor. On the contrary, there are indications of a widening gap between the small urban elites and the vast rural masses. In such a situation, the high growth rates, even if sustained for a fairly long time with the present strategy of development and distribution, will only accentuate the disparities. All this tends to indicate the inadequacy or otherwise of the present planning process and development strategy to cope with the problems of both low production and inequitable distribution. An alternative
strategy may, therefore, be found so that production and distribution can go hand in hand without drifting apart.

Following the directives by His Majesty the King, there has been a significant reorientation of development strategy since the beginning of the Fifth Plan. The priority of the previous four periodic plans was determined largely in favour of the physical infrastructure and institution-building and reforms. This is quite understandable. The Fifth Plan was not only bigger in size, but its underlying objectives were also significantly different from the previous plans. The objective of the previous plans was to increase or maximise production, whereas the objective of the Fifth Plan was not only to maximise output, but also to make such output consistent with the felt-needs of the people. Maximization of output is only the means but not an end in itself. It seems that the deliberate confusion between the means and end has only succeeded in turning the tide of modern development against the “have-nots” who unfortunately constitute the major bulk of population in poor countries.

With the growing awareness of the people, the legitimate demand for drinking water, health care, irrigation, agricultural, extension services, suspension bridges and link-roads are also mounting. While considerable progress has been made in all these areas in the past two decades, massive efforts have yet to be made for providing these facilities to a large segment of the population. Any attempt to meet the basic needs of the people through the bureaucratic process alone is most likely to end up with frustrating results. The bureaucratic process by its very nature is cumbersome, expensive and time-consuming. At the present average cost and time required for completion of a suspension bridge construction or a drinking water project in Nepal, it may take several decades and demand enormous resources to meet some immediate needs of the people. This is neither possible, nor even desirable, for no government can find the necessary resources and await that long period of time. And above all, it is sheer waste of time, energy, and resources on the part of the rural people to come all the way from their distant villages to the central headquarters, meet the high-placed officials and make their case for “a suspension bridge” or a “minor irrigation project” in their village. More than that, it is an unnecessary bureaucratization of the entire development process.

The Fifth Plan, therefore, intended to expand village and district-level development activities through the local panchayats with considerable increase in development outlay. It was estimated that the total outlay in the panchayat sector would be in the order of Rs. 931 million to Rs. 1,187 million of which Rs. 253 million would be provided by the government or grant assistance and the balance would be financed by the local panchayats.
themselves through mobilization of their own local resources. While several developing countries are looking for an appropriate institutional and organizational network of development at the grass-roots level, Nepal already has under the panchayat system more than 4,000 village panchayats and 75 districts panchayats, capable of undertaking numerous development works partly with their own local resources and partly with the support of the government.

The “Basic Principles of the Sixth Plan” presented to the eight meeting of the National Development Council made further attempt on the basis of the past experience to bring about substantial changes, not only in the contents of the plan, but also in the methods of plan-formulation and implementation, so that the plan could respond to the basic needs of people and enlist their active participation in a more meaningful manner than in the past. The incidence of poverty in Nepal, as in other low income developing countries, is very high. On the basis of minimum subsistence income, it was estimated that 36.2 percent of population was below the poverty-line [the National Planning Commission, 1977]. While the low-level of production accounts for much heavy incidence of poverty, more increase in production cannot alone ensure corresponding improvement in the living standard of the masses, unless such additional production means additional income for the poor. Increase in production is a necessary condition, but not a sufficient condition for elimination of poverty. In a situation like that of Nepal, neither can production be raised reasonably, nor can poverty be reduced without the maximum use of available man-power now going waste on an enormous scale on account of widespread under-employment in rural areas. The major thrust of the Sixth Plan, as outlined in the Basic Principles, was, therefore, directed towards a gradual elimination of absolute poverty through maximum employment opportunities and improvement in the quality of life by providing minimum basic needs of the people. It was estimated that during plan period 2.3 million man-year employment would be generated as a result of the planned investment based on a series of employment-oriented specific policy measures and programmes. The Basic Principles also set the ambitious targets of providing during the plan period drinking water to as much as 40 percent of population spread over 54 percent of the panchayats, free primary education to 85/90 percent of the primary school-going children, basic health care at the village-level in all the 75 district panchayats through integrated health-posts and irrigation facilities to 20 percent of cultivated land in the hills and 40 percent in Tarai in a decade.

Obviously, such ambitious programme on a massive scale cannot be undertaken through normal bureaucratic process
alone. It does need an effective cooperation and participation of the panchayats and the people both in plan formulation and implementation. The Basic Principles, therefore, worked out clear-cut guidelines and mechanism for formulation, implementation and supervision of the 5-year periodic plan of the panchayat sector through local panchayats and also for total integration of such panchayat sector 5-year plan with the Sixth Plan of the nation. Essentially, it was intended to institutionalise the process of “Planning through Panchayat” for village-and district-level development works corresponding to central planning for development works of regional and national importance. It was also a process of debureaucratization of the planning and development-a process in which development would become gradually as much a political process as it should be. Development is basically a political process, and its objectives should conform to the fundamental principles of social policy of the State. While under the previous plans also the local panchayats had received grants from the government for supporting the local development works, it was the basic principles of the Sixth Plan, presented to the eight meeting of the National Development Council in 1978, which, for the first time, made an earnest effort for evolution and institutionalization of the planning and development process based on the principle of decentralisation of the Panchayat system, which as stated in the preamble to the Constitution of Nepal, is “rooted in the life of the people in general and in keeping with the national genius and traditions, and as originating from the very base with active corporation of the whole people and embody the principle of decentralisation.”

When the Sixth Plan was finally launched, it was unfortunate that the panchayat sector, for whatever reasons, remained as it was before without any 5-year plans of the village and district panchayats envisaged in the Basic Principles and the years of efforts at village, districts and centre levels for necessary preparation and ground-works including, among other things, four regional Pancha Bhela in four Development Regions and similar meetings in almost all the 75 districts for comprehensive deliberations, among other things, on the modus operandi of the whole process of “Planning through Panchayat” ended without intended results.

It is most gratifying that soon after the formal launching of the Sixth Plan, His Majesty’s Government itself took initiative and gave legal sanction to the idea of “Planning through Panchayat” by enacting in 1982 the Decentralization Act, 2039. The Decentralization Act has entrusted to the local panchayats the necessary responsibility and authority of district development plan, including its formulation, allocation of resources,
supervision, management and evaluation. The Act after amendments came into force all over the country in 1984, but its comprehensive implementation is at present limited to one district of each zone. It is on the basis of the Decentralization Act, 2039 the Seventh Plan launched from the current fiscal year 1985/86 has envisaged the process of “planning through panchayat” along the lines discussed above. It may be hoped that necessary efforts will be forthcoming first to integrate the panchayat sector periodic plan with the national periodic plan, and secondly, to resist temptation for bureaucratization of the process.

Limitations

The Fifth Plan, as mentioned above, marks the beginning of a more balanced view in designing a new development strategy geared towards increasing employment-oriented production and fulfilling the basic needs of the people. This may be seen from the shifts of emphasis, order of priority and resource allocation from the areas of physical infrastructure-building with huge investment and long gestation period to quick-yielding programmes in such areas as food production, small and medium-scale industries, irrigation, power, drinking water, basic health care and schooling, suspension bridges, link-roads etc. The Sixth and Seventh Plans also followed the same strategy with increasing emphasis on more production-and employment-oriented programmes designed to meet the basic needs and improve the quality of life of the people. The Fifth Plan, for the first time, drastically reduced the proportion of planned outlay on transport sector from 41.2 percent under the Fourth Plan to 24.4 percent under its minimum programme and 26.4 percent under the maximum programme. Further prunnings were done in the Sixth and Seventh plans. Corresponding to these cuts in transport sector, there has been substantial increase in the proportions of planned outlay on agricultural, industrial, and social sectors [Table 5].
Table 5

Planned Outlay in Public Sector
[Percentage Distribution]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major Sector</th>
<th>Fourth Plan</th>
<th>Fifth Minimum</th>
<th>Fifth Maximum</th>
<th>Sixth Plan</th>
<th>Seventh Plan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture [1]</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>29.9</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td>29.4</td>
<td>30.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport [2]</td>
<td>41.2</td>
<td>24.4</td>
<td>26.4</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>17.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry [3]</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>21.9</td>
<td>26.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[1] Includes irrigation, forest, land reforms etc.
[2] Includes communications
[3] Includes commerce, power, mining
[4] Includes education, health, drinking water, panchayat etc.

The changes in the focus and direction of such development efforts have, however, remained severely circumscribed by numerous practical difficulties and constraints in translating the plan objectives and priorities into specific operational programmes. In the first place, many incompleted projects had always to be carried over from one plan to the next, while many others, once started, continue to remain as on-going projects. Such continuing and spill-over type of projects always claimed a substantial proportion of the available resources in each periodic plan. Such projects claimed, for instance, as much as half of the Fifth Plan total estimated outlay in the public sector. Secondly, not only did the past commitments not coincide with the new development strategy, but the demands for infrastructure-building are far from saturation. The planning cells of the concerned ministries and departments have not yet been developed to their due form and shape, limiting, therefore, their capability in identification, preparation and evaluation of new projects which are necessary to translate the new ideas into actions. And, above all, the heavy dependence on essential resources combined with the inadequate capability of the administration, especially in project-identification and formulation, has often resulted in implementations of projects which could have been selected, designed and executed according to the needs of the country as reflected in the new development strategy, priority and thrust of the periodic plans. The planning agency has virtually no role in negotiating external assistance and
the commitments, once made by the executive agencies, will automatically find their place in the periodic plan and annual programmes. The situation was unavoidable to some extent as our own administration was being geared to the needs of development, and the donor countries and agencies themselves were in the process of learning about our needs, priorities, and problems. All this does not mean to undermine in any way the invaluable contribution of external assistance, both technical and economic, to our entire process of development to its present level and capability.

The external assistance has undergone significant changes both in its quantum and composition over the last 30 years. The First Five Year Plan was financed entirely from the foreign aid, and the aid so received was all outright grants. While the absolute amount increased substantially, the proportion of external assistance declined to 77.8 percent, 56.1 percent and 45.0 percent during the Second, Third and Fourth plans, respectively. The declining trend could not be maintained during the Fifth and the two subsequent plans. During the Fifth Plan the proportion of foreign aid increased to 47.8 percent. It further went up to 48.4 percent during the Sixth Plan. The current Seventh Plans has estimated that the proportion would be as high as 70.6 percent. The loan part of external assistance has increased significantly over the past two decades. It accounted for only 20.6 percent during the Fourth Plan. The proportion increased to 38.9 percent and 54.0 percent during the Fifth and Sixth Plans, respectively. The corresponding figure during the Seventh Plan would be 49.2 percent [Table 6].

While the proportion of domestic resources started declining from the Fourth Plan, the government resorted to deficit financing on an increasing scale. This may be seen from the fact that deficit financing which accounted for only 25.3 percent of the total domestic resource during the Fourth Plan shot up to 31.9 percent and 54.9 percent during the Fifth and Sixth plans, respectively. It is estimated that the proportion will be limited to 41.1 percent during the Seventh Plan [Table 6]. The rate of increase in revenue surplus could hardly keep pace with the rate of increase in the total outlays of the plans. The size of the Fourth Plan was twice as large as the Third Plan in terms of total outlays. But the revenue surplus was only 80 percent larger during the Fourth Plan than that during the Third Plan. The Sixth Plan was one and a half times larger than the Fifth Plan, but revenue surplus was only 63 percent larger than the Sixth Plan as compared to that during the Fifth Plan [Table 6].

While the declining proportion of domestic resources has increased our dependence on external resources and our debt
Table 6
Sources of Financing Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Domestic Resources [a + b]</td>
<td>1.56</td>
<td>13.64</td>
<td>71.93</td>
<td>184.78</td>
<td>460.79</td>
<td>1142.34</td>
<td>852.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[a] Revenue Surplus</td>
<td>[ - 1.25]</td>
<td>[12.33]</td>
<td>[76.54]</td>
<td>[137.87]</td>
<td>[313.69]</td>
<td>[514.36]</td>
<td>[502.0]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[b] Deficit financing</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>-4.61</td>
<td>46.91</td>
<td>147.10</td>
<td>627.98</td>
<td>[350.0]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. External Resources [c + d]</td>
<td>38.29</td>
<td>7.06</td>
<td>47.83</td>
<td>91.98</td>
<td>422.47</td>
<td>1070.81</td>
<td>2048.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[c] Grant Assistance</td>
<td>[38.29]</td>
<td>[6.96]</td>
<td>[43.24]</td>
<td>[90.52]</td>
<td>[262.37]</td>
<td>[492.63]</td>
<td>[1040.0]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[d] Loan Assistance</td>
<td>[ - ]</td>
<td>[0.10]</td>
<td>[4.59]</td>
<td>[1.46]</td>
<td>[160.10]</td>
<td>[578.18]</td>
<td>[1008.0]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. External Resources As Percentage of Development Expenditure</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>81.9</td>
<td>77.8</td>
<td>56.1</td>
<td>45.0</td>
<td>47.8</td>
<td>48.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Revised Estimates for 1984/85
** Seventh Plan Estimates at constant prices of 1984/85
burden, the increasing resort to deficit financing has exerted mounting pressure on our balance of payments position. The extent of deficit financing during the past six years may be seen from the following figures.

Table 7.

**Extent of Deficit Financing**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fiscal Year</th>
<th>Deficit Financing [Rs in Crore]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1979/80</td>
<td>25.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980/81</td>
<td>11.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981/82</td>
<td>95.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982/83</td>
<td>206.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983/84</td>
<td>148.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984/85*</td>
<td>166.81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Revised Estimates

The deficit financing was carried largely by borrowing from the banking sector. The bank loans, therefore, increased annually by 23 percent during 1979/80—1984/85. Such large-scale deficit financing through the bank loans, generated excessive demand for and more imports which, in turn, created great pressure on foreign exchange resources. While exports in US $ value could increase annually by only 6 percent during 1979/80—1984/85, imports increased annually by almost twice that rate. The result was that the annual trade deficit which showed at US $ 30 million in 1979/80 reached the level of US $ 298.9 million in 1984/85. Likewise, the annual current account deficit swelled from US $ 39.6 million in 1979/80 to US $ 167.4 million in 1984/85.

All these resulted in fast depletion of our foreign exchange reserves. The official foreign exchange reserves in mid July 1979 was enough to finance as much as 9 months' imports! By the end of the fiscal year 1984/85, the reserves dwindled drastically. Since then the reserves had further gone down, making it difficult for the government to meet the growing demand and maintain the value of Nepalese currency vis-a-vis other foreign currencies. Thus, the Nepalese currency was devalued on November 30, 1985, by 14.7 percent in terms of other foreign currencies. Such unpopular and costly measures become eventually unavoidable due to gross mismanagement of the economy over the past several years.
It order to accelerate development and meet the basic needs of the people, strong efforts must be made on the domestic front not only to mobilise additional resources but also to make more rational use of available resources.

The total tax revenue of the government remained less than 2 percent of GDP till the beginning of the Second Plan. Since then the proportion gradually went up. However, it is still very low as compared to that in other low-income developing countries. With the same level of per capita income Mali, for instance, collected in 1982 almost twice as much as we did the same year. Many low-income developing countries of Africa and the neighbouring Asian countries collected much higher proportions of their GDP as government revenues. The government revenue as an average proportion of GDP of 35 low-income countries of Africa and Asia stood at 13.2 percent as against 8.7 percent in Nepal in 1982.

In the past, the government revenue registered a significant growth mainly due to changes in tax rates and introduction of new taxes. As the scope for such measures is now limited, attention is directed towards improvement in revenue administration and broadening of the tax base and coverage on a piecemeal basis. While rationalisation of the tax system is an overdue for increasing the elasticity of the system, a thorough review of the entire fiscal system is urgently needed for rationalisation of both regular and development expenditures, government pricing and subsidy system as well as performance of the public sector undertakings. Likewise, while the present low rate of foreign aid utilisation calls for considerable improvement and streamlining there is also a need of new thinking on redirection of the foreign aid, particularly towards expanding the exportable surplus and increasing the capacity of the economy to meet the basic needs of the people.

**Perspective**

The major thrust of the Fifth, Sixth and Seventh Plans, as stated above, has been directed towards meeting the basic needs of the people with increasing investment, within the constraints mentioned earlier, in favour of more productive and more employment-generating areas of development. But neither the planning agency, nor the executive agency, has ever made an attempt either to fix the targets of basic needs in some quantifiable terms or to specify the time-limit within which such targets are to be attained. While addressing the function organised at the Royal Nepal Army Pavillion to mark King Mahendra and Constitution Day and Silver Jubilee Celebration of the
partyless democratic panchayat system on December 16, 1985. His Majesty King Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev has made a historic call upon all the countrymen to attain by A.D. 2000 the standard of living which is adequate to lead a life with human dignity from Asian standard. With the perspective and vision of the future beyond the 20th century, His Majesty the King observed:

In less than fifteen years from now, we shall have stepped into the twenty-first century. The beginning of the third millennia will herald a new chapter in the history of man. Many countries and international organisations have called for development programmes to benefit the occasion. For us here in Nepal, this is an appropriate occasion to set before us the goal of providing to all our people with the basic necessities of life. Let us pledge that we in the remaining years of this century will be able to shake off the poverty imposed on us by our least developed economy and that by the A.D. 2000 we will be able to achieve a standard of living which is adequate to lead a life with human dignity from Asian standard. It is true that the objective of providing for all Nepalese, the basic need of food, clothing, shelter, health, education and security is a difficult goal to achieve but no matter how awesome the task, let us ensure a firm political commitment through a systematic planning, programming and their follow-up.

[The Rising Nepal, Dec. 17, 1985]

Given the necessary political commitment, there is no reason why the goal should not be well within our reach in time. There is no time to be wasted in rhetoric, nor in beating about the bush. What we now need is a comprehensive blue-print, a 15-year perspective planning, setting physical targets in specified areas of basic need such as food, clothing, shelter, health, education and security and other related areas to attain the required standard of living, outlining a set of consistent and operationally meaningful programmes corresponding to the physical targets and identifying the ways and means required for implementation of the programme without any serious constraints—financial, administrative or otherwise. Within the framework of such perspective planning, three periodic plans should be formulated for actual implementation.

The development programmes have developed over the years a lot of “unwanted fat” which, if not removed, may tend to
degenerate the economy to a state of stagnation. The perspective planning exercise will provide an excellent opportunity for such major surgery which has been long delayed or postponed due to the policy of appeasement or lack of commitment and preparedness for hard decision and unpopular measures. The thrust of development has already been directed towards meeting the basic needs and improving the quality of life of the people since the beginning of the Fifth Plan ten years ago. Since then much has been done. Life expectancy has increased, so has literacy. Infant mortality and crude death-rates have gone down. Considerable progress has been made in education, health and drinking water supply. Despite these achievements, we have still a long way to go to reach the social goal we have set for ourselves for the next 15 years. The problems of hunger, malnutrition, absolute poverty and underemployment remain real for a large segment of the population. The current development thrust in terms of both resource allocation and programme contents is totally inadequate to attain the goal by A.D. 2000. For the next 15 years, an “anti-poverty programme” must, therefore, be mounted on a massive scale with sharp focus on “hard core” areas with great potential for increasing people-oriented production through employment generation in a short time. Such programme will create not only the means to meet the basic needs but also make the people capable of using such means for improving their quality of life. This needs the reordering of priority, shifting of emphasis and realignment of sectoral linkages in a substantial manner. Likewise, the weaknesses in the whole process of development such as agriculture and small industries, for instance, have to be strengthened with effective measures.

And above all, a massive programme of this nature also needs a drastic redirection of available resources and manpower. The capacity to do so depends partly on our ability to redirect the external resources towards such programme and partly [or largely] on our own efforts for mobilisation of additional resources and their rational allocation. Secondly, the massive programme cannot be undertaken through the normal bureaucratic process alone. It does need an effective participation of the panchayats and the people on an equally massive scale both in plan-formulation and programme-implementation. There should be no illusion that the process of “Planning through Panchayat” based on the principle of decentralisation of the panchayat system demands great deal of efforts and more than that, an honest and inspiring leadership at the village and district levels. This is where the political ingenuity must be taxed hard.

Reference
Agriculture Development Strategies in Nepal

Ram P. Yadav

Introduction

The general objective of economic development is to improve the living conditions of people by increasing their level of income. However, a fairly common set of specific development objective are: increase in production and productivity; equitable distribution of the benefits of development; Gainful employment; self-reliance; people's participation in the development process; ecological balance, i.e., the proper management of physical resources, such as land, water, and forests. Additional goals may be identified and added to those on the basis of national priorities. These objectives are inter-related and interdependent and any trade off between or among them should be minimized. Agriculture, being the predominant sector in Nepal, can significantly influence the achievement of these objectives.

Nepal, a mountainous Himalayan kingdom with an area of 145,000 square kilometers and a population of approximately 16.0 million is landlocked between China and India. The country is divided into three physiogeographical belts: the Tarai [between 75 and 300 meters above sea level]; the hills [between 300 and 3000 meters]; and the mountains [above 3000 meters]. Approximately 22 percent of the total land area is under cultivation and 29 percent is forest. Thirteen percent is permanent pasture land; 15 percent is under perpetual snow; and the remaining 21 percent is wasteland. The Tarai, which accounts for about two-thirds of the country's total cultivated area is the most fertile. It is called the 'granary of Nepal'.

There is considerable differences in climate due primarily to the variation in altitude. The Tarai is sub-tropical, the hills, temperate, and the mountains, alpine. These wide and dramatic changes in climatic condition prevail between an altitude range of 75 and 8,500 meters above sea level over a north-south distance of only 240 kilometers.

The estimated per capita GNP in 1979 was about US $ 120. The real GDP given at an annual rate of 2.2 percent in contrast to
a 2.7 percent annual population growth rate during the last 10 years, caused a net decline in per capita income in real terms. A survey conducted by the National Planning Commission in 1977 indicated that in the rural area about 6 percent of the total labour force is unemployed and that approximately 63 percent of the total working days of the labour force are underutilized. It was estimated that more than 40 percent of households were below the poverty line of $80 per capita.

Land distribution is extremely skewed. In 1971 approximately 75 percent of the households had holdings of less than one hectare, which accounted for only 25 percent of the total cultivated area. Conversely, 39 percent of the cultivated area, covered by holdings of more than 3 hectares, was owned by only 8 percent of all households.

In Nepal, economic development cannot be conceived without developing its agricultural sector, which is the major source of livelihood for 94 percent of the population, employs about 80 percent of the labour force, and accounts for about two-thirds of the GNP and 80 percent of export earnings. Accelerated growth in agricultural production is not only a means of overcoming the overall stagnation of the country’s economy, but also a means of improving the well-being of the majority of rural people which constitute about 96 percent of the population.

The objectives of agricultural development in Nepal are to:
1. produce agricultural commodities for [a] meeting internal consumption, [b] supplying raw materials to agro-based industries, and [c] earning foreign exchange through export.
2. meet basic needs of disadvantaged people, particularly at or below subsistence level.

These objectives are not mutually exclusive. The first objective is concerned with maximizing output through intensive use of improved agricultural inputs in most productive regions, i.e. the Tarai. The second objective is to improve the income and productivity of farmers at subsistence or sub-subsistence levels-those who own less than one hectare of land and constitute three-fourths of the households in the country. The dual objectives of growth and equity would require production-oriented and basic-needs strategies for agricultural development simultaneously.

Strategies

The controversy between developing agriculture first or industry first is already resolved in Nepal. It is accepted at the policy level that the agricultural sector should receive the highest priority in the allocation of resources. This is indicated by the fact that both the Fifth and Sixth Five-Year Plans have accorded the highest allocation to this sector. However, the unresolved
question at the implementation level is how an agriculture-led strategy can bring about overall development in the economy. Therefore, the problem essentially lies in designing the operational strategies for agricultural development. In the last decade, two five-year plans have emphasized the promotion of horticulture and livestock development in the hills and mountain, cereal and cash crop development in the Tarai, based on the principle of comparative advantages of different regions. These plans, however, do not mention how this specialization is to be achieved; moreover, the lack of adequate transport and marketing systems and the country's quasimonetized economy are serious impediments to realizing this strategy.

Farmers differ in their resource endowments and also in the physical environments under which they operate. The inherent diversities in their resource endowments and agro-climatic conditions have to be fully recognized in designing meaningful and operational strategies. In designing such a strategy the farmers must be placed 'in the centre of the piece'. In other words, the design of such strategies must focus on the farmers.

Considering the resource endowment of farmers, two distinct but complementary strategies are:

1. commercially-oriented farm households—focusing on farmers having large and medium farms.
2. subsistence-oriented farm households—focusing on farmers with small and marginal farms and landless workers.

The strategy for commercially-oriented farm households calls for conventional agricultural programmes and projects where the planning target is set in terms of the quantities of inputs and outputs; where agricultural research is oriented to commodity programmes to develop high yielding varieties highly responsive to industrial inputs, such as fertilizer and other chemicals, and to more effective soil and water management programmes; and where extension and training and other support services such as input, credit and marketing are provided on an individual basis.

The strategy for subsistence-oriented farm households calls for disadvantaged group-oriented programmes and projects where the planning target is set in terms of the number of farmers to be reached. The small farm owners are generally endowed with more labour in relation to land and capital. The maximum possible utilization of this labour research is aimed at planning a project for them. Agricultural research is oriented to subsistence crops, mixed farming systems, and low-cost technology. The research, extension and other support services systems should be oriented to meet the necessities of the mixed enterprise farming operations. Here farming system research becomes crucial. Input, credit, extension and training, and other support services are
Table 1
Tarai versus Hills and Mountains

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regional Variables</th>
<th>Tarai</th>
<th>Hills &amp; Mountains</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Total area</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Cultivated area</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Population</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Population growth rates [1971-81]</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Average farm size</td>
<td>2.63 hectares</td>
<td>0.75 hectares</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Man/Land ratio of cultivated land</td>
<td>5 per hectare</td>
<td>8 per hectare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Farm units</td>
<td>Large and fragmented</td>
<td>Small and fragmented.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Cultivation</td>
<td>Flat and low land cultivation.</td>
<td>Terraced cultivation. A high percentage of hill farms are on terraced hillsides which have slopes ranging from 10 to 40 percent and are even steeper.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Land utilization</td>
<td>Land utilization for crop production is far below the extensive and intensive margins of land use. The potential for improving yields by increased application of improved seed, fertilizers and pesticides, and water management is very substantial</td>
<td>Land Utilization seems to have reached both the extensive and intensive margins. In many parts it has gone beyond the extensive margin in both physical and economic terms. Cultivation on steep slopes have caused soil erosion and landslides, and contribute more flooding and siltation problems in lowland areas of Tarai.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Cropping intensity</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Regional Variables

11. Crops

Paddy is the principal food crop followed by wheat, maize, millet, and barley. Major cash crops are sugarcane, jute and tobacco.

12. Infrastructure

Better physical and institutional infrastructure. Agriculture being more market-oriented, with a proper economic incentives, farmers would respond to increase production as rapidly as improved technologies and inputs are available.

13. Price policy

Foodgrain pricing policy would play an important role in boosting agricultural production, since agriculture is more market-oriented. Both appropriate technology and remunerative prices are crucial in the farming system for the development of agriculture in Tarai.

14. Livestock

The livestock sector is important for milk, manure, and drafting purposes.

Tarai

Maize is the principal food crop, followed by paddy, wheat, millet, and barely. Other crops are potatoes, ginger, cardamon, and vegetables.

Hills & Mountains

Poor physical as well institutional infrastructure. Agriculture is more subsistence-oriented. Less availability of appropriate technology. More years of research would be needed to produce suitable varieties for a wide range of environments. Farming system research is more relevant and technology generation is to be focussed on more efficient management of local resources, and less use of commercial purchases inputs.

Though a remunerative price of farmer's produce is important in the Hills, it does not pose a serious constraint since hill being a subsistence economy. The development of appropriate technology to fit the needs of the hill farmers is crucial in increasing their productivity.

The livestock sector plays an important role in the economy of the small subsistence hill farms for cash income, food, manure, and drafting purposes.
provided through a group of/and association of groups on a preferential basis. Promotion of on-and-off farm employment opportunities through intensification of agriculture, expansion of cottage and small-scale industries and public works is essential to increase the income of small farm owners.

Considering the physical environment of farmers, two distinct but complementary strategies are needed for the:

1. Tarai
2. Hills and mountains.

The conditions in the hills and mountains are substantially different from the Tarai as illustrated in the Table 1.

Productivity in hills and mountains is declining faster than in the Tarai. The Table 2 below indicates that the total production of cereal grains in the hills and mountains almost remained stagnant and its productivity declined by 1.14 percent annually during the period of 1970/71 to 1980/81. The productivity of all cereal crops except wheat declined in the hills and mountains whereas the area under all cereal crops increased. The increase in cropped area is largely due to expansion in cultivation on newly reclaimed marginal land which are more vulnerable to erosion and degradation. Thus the hills and mountains are facing an alarming situation in terms of agricultural production and productivity.

Table 2
Annual Growth Rate in Foodgrain Commodities in Nepal, 1970/71-1980/81*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Cereal</th>
<th>Paddy</th>
<th>Maize</th>
<th>Wheat</th>
<th>Millet</th>
<th>Barley</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Area</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hills and Mountains</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>1.98</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tarai</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>-0.86</td>
<td>8.50</td>
<td>-0.24</td>
<td>-3.25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>1.42</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>5.82</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>-0.71</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Production</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hills and Mountains</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>-1.14</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>-0.54</td>
<td>-1.61</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tarai</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>-0.88</td>
<td>12.79</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>-0.20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>-1.06</td>
<td>8.64</td>
<td>-0.44</td>
<td>-1.19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The total production of cereal grains in the Tarai increased by 1.44 percent annually and its productivity remained stagnant. Since the area under cereal grains increased by 1.5 percent annually in the Tarai, this implies that output growth in the last decade took place mainly due to expansion in cropped area rather than increase in productivities. The table also indicates that the productivities of only wheat and barley increased during this period.

In Nepal as a whole the productivity of all cereal crops except wheat declined, while the cropped area under all cereal crops except barley increased. Though the total cropped area under cereal grains increased by 1.42 percent, the total production increased by only 0.95 percent since productivity declined by 0.46 percent.

In the Tarai, the potential for improving yields in foodgrain and cash crops by application of improved seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, and irrigation and water management is substantial. In the hills, however, dramatic increases in foodgrain production are unlikely. In the long run, however, the prospects of intensive development of horticulture and livestock with processing activities and small-scale agro-industry are enormous. This would require massive investment in developing transport, hydropower, and marketing facilities.

Similarly a large investment is needed in agricultural research on the diverse farming conditions of the hill areas to generate agricultural technology to increase yield and improve soil-conservation and management. Agricultural production in the hills needs to be augmented urgently in view of increasing population pressures. This cannot be done without appropriate technologies. The poor or marginal land that the Nepalese hill farmers cultivate today is mostly abandoned in high income countries. Thus there is no stock of available upland technologies that can be imported and adopted to Nepalese farming conditions. The basic research is yet to be done and the improved technologies are yet to be developed. In addition, micro-climate diversity of the hill makes the process of adaptive research an arduous task. These physical and socio-economic diversities require a large number of quite distinct technologies to promote agricultural productivity without harming the ecological balance in the hills of Nepal. The
farmers are already cropping at a high intensity, and where the modernizing inputs are not available, nor likely to be for a considerable time, the main scope for improvement must come from a more efficient management of land resources. This calls for a farming system research which could focus on solving specific local farming problems and improving the productivities of the total farm households.

The question is: would the investment in hill-agriculture research be cost effective? Although it is obvious that the short-run returns of such an investment would not compare favourably with similar expenditure on research in the prosperous areas, the continued absence of appropriate research for the hill regions is likely to bring about adverse consequences for income distribution as well as depletion of resources for the country as a whole. It is an area where a large investment would be required over a fairly long period of time.

Thus the consideration of both resource endowments and the physical environment requires the following matrix of strategies for agricultural development in Nepal.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Hills (H)</th>
<th>Tarai (T)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commercial (C)</td>
<td>HC</td>
<td>TC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subsistence (S)</td>
<td>HS</td>
<td>TS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The distribution of cultivated land holding according to farm-sizes in the Hills and Tarai is given in the Table 3.

Table 3.

Distribution of Land Holding According to Farm Size in the Hills and Tarai, 1981.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Hill</th>
<th>Tarai</th>
<th>Nepal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HS</td>
<td>HC</td>
<td>TS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household Percentage of</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultivated Land Percentage of</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Farm less than 1 hectare is classified subsistence and more than 1 hectare is commercial.

The Table 3 indicates that 67 percentage of households in Nepal are subsistence farmers cultivating 17 percentage of the total cultivated land while 33 percentage of the households are commercial farmers cultivating 83 percentage of the cultivated land. The dramatic difference is observed between hills and Tarai. About 42 percent of the household subsist in the hills and mountain, barely making their living from 12 percent of the cultivated land. Only 15 percentage of households in the hills own 31 percentage of cultivated land over and above one hectare of land. The situation is drastically different in Tarai, where only 25 percentage of the household subsists on only 5 percentage of cultivated land from farm holdings less than one hectare. About 18 percentage of Tarai households owns 52 percentage of cultivated land from farm holdings more than one hectare. Thus from the consideration of both resource endowments and the physical environments, four different but complimentary strategies for agriculture development is required.

Hill-Commercial (HC)

The hills and mountains have comparative advantage for the production of horticultural and livestock products. However, there is serious lack of improved technology and marketing for both sub-sectors. Farmers would undertake horticultural and livestock activities on commercial scale only if they are guaranteed of marketing of their products. Also present level of research intensity on horticulture and livestock is very low. Research activities need to be strengthened and improved before they can recommend technology. Traditionally, foodgrain sector has always received priority for research and extension and other support services over these two important sectors.

Both horticulture and livestock are of special significance to the poor and to small farmers in the hills and mountains in terms of employment and income, since they are more labour intensive both on and off the farm than the foodgrains. [IFDA, Programming Division Report, 1979]. Due to perishability and bulkiness of their commodities, their fast movement becomes essential. Therefore, an intensive programme of horticulture and livestock development should be initially concentrated in a few potential pockets of hills and mountains which have access to good transport network, and then this programme should be gradually expanded to other regions as the transport and marketing infrastructure develops.

Hill-Subsistence (HS)

Most of the cultivated areas in the hills and mountains are devoted to food production, yet most of the hill districts are deficit
in food. Under the prevailing situation, where transport networks are weak or nonexistent, farmers are naturally interested to produce crops which meet their subsistence needs. The farming system research to identify the constraints and find solution for these constraints is crucial. In addition there is considerable scope for increasing subsistence production through minor irrigation improvement and improved production technology. In view of fairly scattered settlements of about two-thirds of the household residing in the hills and mountains, the services could be made available to them only through organizing them into homogeneous groups.

**Tarai-Commercial (TC)**

In the past decade increase in foodgrain production has taken place mainly due to increases in cropped areas. The scope of further increase in new land to be brought into cultivation will take place at increasing cost. So the main thrust of increase in food production must come from the development of intensive irrigated agriculture and the widespread introduction of improved agricultural technology on existing cultivated land. A substantial investment should therefore go into increasing irrigation facilities and building research capabilities to generate appropriate high yielding crop varieties. Medium and large farmers would respond to increase production with a favourable price structure as improved technologies and inputs are made available to them. Real boost in foodgrain production in the country will come by emphasizing on this strategy. The size of production is positively related to the size of marketed surplus as well as the employment. The increase in marketable surplus will have impact on the prices of food crops domestically depending upon the size of export. Thus the increased food production is likely to have a substantial positive effect on foreign exchange earnings as well as on the income of the rural poor through its price effect and employment generation.

**Tarai Subsistence (TS)**

Small and marginal farmers in the Tarai are subsistence-oriented. And they are interested to produce crops which meet their subsistence needs. Hence again, as for subsistence hill farmers, the objective is to maximize increase in their production [income] through efficient utilization of inputs and resources available to them. The farming system research would play crucial role in meeting their technology requirements and the services are to be made available to them through organizing them into homogenous groups as in small farmer development programme.
Organization of Small—Farm Owners into Groups

Nepal has an acute shortage of development workers, and she is also financially unable to support large numbers of them. Still, the questions remain: How can we reach a large number of farmers through a limited number of development workers? How can we provoke change in the lifestyles of millions of people who have been bypassed in the development process?

In Nepal we have found considerable reason for hope in the organization of small-farm owners into groups. We have found that individually the small-farm owner is socially as well as financially weak. However, organizing a number of small-farm owners into a homogeneous group (10–25 farmers), encourages cooperation for common interests and improves bargaining power. Growth possibilities are also significant since individual groups may later be federated into an association which can meet occasionally to discuss common interests and problems. Essentially, however, these organized groups must remain grassroots organizations. Their functions are to plan, coordinate, and implement programmes at the village level. The experience of the small-farm development owner programme in Nepal has clearly demonstrated that development through homogenous farmers group is a viable approach to ensure equitable participation of the rural poor, particularly small-farm owners, tenants and landless labourers.

For development agencies, groups offer distinct advantages. The group rather than a number of individuals becomes the contact point and thereby the delivery costs are reduced and more people are served.

In terms of planning, the organized group offers a setting in which a meaningful participatory planning process can take place. It is at the group level that the planning from below starts which is called grass-roots planning.

Convergent Planning

If we encourage grass-roots planning and also maintain our national planning structure, it seems evident that they must meet at some point. In the Nepalese case, the district seems to be the appropriate level of this convergence. As a matter of fact, the 1975 District Administration Plan [DAP] was the first effort to coordinate grass-roots planning with national planning. The current Decentralization Act has reinforced this effort further.

The convergent planning process must be conceived of as executed as a two-way operation. The central planning agency should provide all the macro-framework indicators and guidelines for planning. At the same time, it should also indicate
in advance the tentative amount of financial resources and technical manpower support that can be allotted to each district over a given period of time. Those at the lower level in this two-way process feed the higher level the information it needs and prepare their plans below, keeping in mind the given financial, technical manpower, and administrative constraints.

The essence of convergent planning is decentralization. Decentralization means assigning both powers and responsibilities to a lower level, on the one hand, and rendering the lower level fully accountable for its activities, on the other. The delegation of authority and accountability seems to be the core of decentralization. Decentralization and popular participation must be considered to be the *sine qua non* of the convergent planning process. Such decentralization policies seem threatening to many in the administration. Thus there is a reluctance to decentralize effectively, for which the only solution is a strong political 'will' and 'commitment' to the initiation and constant implementation of convergent planning.

**Macro-Level Economic Policies**

The grass-root efforts are effective and meaningful only if they are carried out under a favorable socio-economic environment created by appropriate macro-economic policies. They are:

1. Pricing policy for agricultural inputs and outputs, conducive to spurring agricultural production.
2. Technology policy, encouraging the application of labour intensive technologies and discouraging the capital intensive technology.
3. Trade policy, supportive and protective to local industries and export commodities taking into account the landlocked situation of the country.
4. Land tenure policy, favorable to tenants through tenancy regulation and rent fixation.
5. Investment policy for infrastructure development, massive investments in irrigation, road, electrification, training personnel, and research and development to accelerate and sustain agricultural development.

These policies provide a broader framework under which the micro-level activities are performed. While good policies stimulate or accelerate the farm-level development efforts, the bad ones are likely to inhibit or even retard the whole development processes. Appropriate policies regarding agricultural prices, technologies, trade, and land tenure can be made by the national government while foreign aid is necessary in creating a solid base for a sustained increase in agricultural production. The
investment in irrigation, roads, rural electrification, research, and training will develop such a base.

The strategies and approaches discussed above are in line with the employment-oriented strategy of growth advocated by John Mellor. Mellor points out that an increase in food production through technological change releases the constraints of wage goods which is essential for employment-intensive programmes. Low-income people spend the bulk of additional income on food. A high employment policy increases the income of the poor whose demand for food subsequently increases; this increase in demand for food could be met from the marketable surplus generated by large and medium farms. Similarly, the food needs in the deficit region could be met by the surplus producing regions of the country. Also, the large farm-holders could generate more employment for small holders and landless agricultural labours by practising multiple cropping and adopting improved technology and thus benefit the disadvantaged rural people. The subsistence-oriented farm household, on the other hand, could increase their production of foodgrain crops so that their annual food deficit is reduced and as the transport and marketing infrastructure develops they are guided to produce commercial crops, such as vegetables and fruits, which could be traded in Tarai and foreign markets to earn more income, which, in turn, can be used to buy more foodgrains from food surplus region. So these strategies are complementary to each other. If implemented they could achieve the dual objectives of growth and equity; however, their implementation depend on new agricultural technologies and the political will.
Industrialisation Efforts in Nepal: Problems and Perspectives

P.P. Timilsina

Historical Background

Before the rise of the modern industries in Nepal, the domestic demand for manufactured products was met from cottage industries. Furthermore, Nepalese manufacturers had a good market in Tibet, where manufactured products meant for household consumption used to be exported. On the one hand, the level of demand of Nepalese people in general was very low and on the other, lack of intercourse of Nepalese people with the people of industrially advanced countries the demonstration effect did not influence in raising their demand for manufactured products. After the First World War, the level of imports of manufactured products, especially textile products, grew causing the decay of traditional handloom and other industries. The void created by decay of Nepalese cottage industry was not filled by the development of modern industry, because of the policy of Rana government to encourage the import of manufactured goods, for they used to get custom revenue from such imports.

The realisation for the development of modern industries was made only in mid-thirties of this century. When some public limited companies were formed to establish modern industries in the Eastern and Central Terai regions of Nepal. The factors affecting the location of such industries were the availability of raw materials, availability of transportation service from Indian railway system and the existence of wide market for Nepalese industrial products in India.

The initiation for the development of industries came from the family of Ranas, who invested in the share capital of such industries. In fact, the intermarriage between power and business was the major reason for the formation of industries in the early 1930’s. During the Second World War heavy demand for manufactured products gave better returns to these industries and high rates of dividends were distributed, which attracted for further investment in industries. During the 1940’s some more
industries were established. However, at the second half the 1940's, due to unstable political unrest in India, the market for industrial products was disturbed, on the one hand, and, on the other, due to the acceleration of anti-Rana political movements in Nepal, the management felt threatened, the share-holders, who were mostly Ranas and their courtiers, became indifferent in the management of such industries leading to the closure of many such industries.

The total number of companies registered before 1950 reached the figure of 63 and their authorised capital amounted to about 2.1 million Nepalese rupees and more than 70 million Indian rupees. The number of companies registered in 1955 was only 6 [Pant, 1969: 30]. In this way the industrial bubble which emerged without an adequate infrastructure, absence of feasibility study, lack of institutional financing and management expertise and the negligence of financial and marketing aspects etc. could not thrive. In addition, the losses and failures in the proper functioning of large-scale industries in Nepal developed a sense of fear among the private investors for further industrial investment. After the political change in Nepal, the environment for the development of modern sector could not be created for a long time for the efforts of the government were directed more towards the creation of administrative and other infrastructure. During the first half of the 1950's the industrial growth was negative, many industries were closed, those which were surviving were not functioning up to the maximum capacity. Small-scale industries were also affected very much by the imports of manufacturing products from large-scale industries.

Features of Industrial Economy

a. Position of Industry in the National Economy

Industrialisation has a major role to play in the economic development of a less developed country like Nepal, where agricultural sector has been dominating in the generation of Gross Domestic Products [GDP] of the nation. The structure of Nepalese economy is based on the production from land, which is limited by its topography, and its productivity has not improved due to improper land use practices, due to increasing pressure of population on land. Other resource-base of Nepalese economy are water, forest, and mineral. However, due to inadequate investment and because of difficulties in marketing, water resources have not been able to contribute to the country's economy, in spite of its great potentiality. Some minerals are known, but they have not yet been exploited to create the base for economic
development. The country is thus heavily dependent on agriculture in which almost 94 percent of the economically active population are engaged in producing less than 60 percent of the GDP”[ADB and HMG/N 1982: Vol. II, 20]. In such a situation of the national economy, industrialisation has become very essential in accelerating the rate of economic development in Nepal, though at present it is contributing a very small amount in the GDP of the nation.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total GDP</th>
<th>Agriculture</th>
<th>Gross Modern</th>
<th>Manufacturing</th>
<th>Cottage</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1977/78</td>
<td>19732</td>
<td>11616</td>
<td>531</td>
<td>263</td>
<td></td>
<td>794</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[100.00]</td>
<td>[58.87]</td>
<td>[2.63]</td>
<td>[1.33]</td>
<td>[4.02]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978/79</td>
<td>22215</td>
<td>13365</td>
<td>559</td>
<td>289</td>
<td></td>
<td>848</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[100.00]</td>
<td>[60.16]</td>
<td>[2.52]</td>
<td>[1.30]</td>
<td>[3.82]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979/80</td>
<td>22351</td>
<td>13520</td>
<td>618</td>
<td>318</td>
<td></td>
<td>936</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[100.00]</td>
<td>[57.90]</td>
<td>[2.65]</td>
<td>[1.36]</td>
<td>[4.01]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980/81</td>
<td>27307</td>
<td>15510</td>
<td>712</td>
<td>337</td>
<td></td>
<td>1049</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[100.00]</td>
<td>[56.80]</td>
<td>[2.61]</td>
<td>[1.23]</td>
<td>[3.84]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981/82</td>
<td>30265</td>
<td>16792</td>
<td>820</td>
<td>369</td>
<td></td>
<td>1189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[100.00]</td>
<td>[55.48]</td>
<td>[2.71]</td>
<td>[1.22]</td>
<td>[3.93]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I. Final Estimate, 2. Revised Provisional Estimate.
Source: Central Bureau of Statistics [CBS]

The industry-wise GDP estimation at constant price has not been made by CBS. On the GDP calculation at current prices it is found that the contribution of manufacturing to GDP is around 4 percent only, whereas agriculture is contributing less than 60 pc. of the GDP. The remaining 36pc. of the GDP is contributed by other sectors. In the contribution of manufacturing sector to the GDP of Nepal, cottage industry is also contributing around 1.3 percent of the GDP. This shows that industrial development is still at the initial stage.

i. Organised Industry

The industrial censuses carried in 1972/73 and 1977/78 have shown that the organised industries using 10 or more labourers or using power helped the industrialisation process in Nepal. [Table 2].
Table 2.

Index of Industrial Development
[Organised Industries]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1972/73</th>
<th>1977/78</th>
<th>Increment</th>
<th>Percentage change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Industries [in no.]</td>
<td>2,434</td>
<td>3,570</td>
<td>1136</td>
<td>46.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>41,367</td>
<td>56,340</td>
<td>14973</td>
<td>36.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production [Rs. Million]</td>
<td>1,798</td>
<td>2,575</td>
<td>777</td>
<td>43.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value Added</td>
<td>322</td>
<td>480</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>49.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investment</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>485</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>76.36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: National Planning Commission
The Sixth Plan, 1980-85.

During the intercensus period the number of industries increased by 46.67 percent, number of people employed increased by 36.19 percent, production increased by 43.21 percent, the value addition made by the new industries increased by 49.06 percent, and the investment increased by 76.36 percent.

Table 3 indicates the production of 23 major industries for the last five years. The production trend is not steady due to various reasons. However, variation in the international demand, the shortage of raw materials because of the failure of monsoon are the major reasons for unsteady growth of industrial products in Nepal.
**Table 3.**

*Production of Principal Industries*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Jute goods</td>
<td>M. ton</td>
<td>15520</td>
<td>14777</td>
<td>16264</td>
<td>15502</td>
<td>18958</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Sugar</td>
<td></td>
<td>27200</td>
<td>14158</td>
<td>12020</td>
<td>20764</td>
<td>22357</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Cigarette</td>
<td>00,000</td>
<td>20686</td>
<td>16424</td>
<td>18113</td>
<td>28345</td>
<td>32090</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Matches</td>
<td>000 gross</td>
<td>724</td>
<td>699</td>
<td>626</td>
<td>760</td>
<td>858</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Liquor*</td>
<td>000 litres</td>
<td>455</td>
<td>698</td>
<td>738</td>
<td>477</td>
<td>334</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Soap</td>
<td>M. ton</td>
<td>1121</td>
<td>1174</td>
<td>2631</td>
<td>3050</td>
<td>5100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Shoes</td>
<td>Pairs</td>
<td>55,779</td>
<td>70,299</td>
<td>81,845</td>
<td>61,450</td>
<td>88,148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Leather</td>
<td>000 pieces</td>
<td>1320</td>
<td>1857</td>
<td>1802</td>
<td>1637</td>
<td>2800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Agricultural tools</td>
<td>M. ton</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>368</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Tea</td>
<td>M. ton</td>
<td>326</td>
<td>387</td>
<td>535</td>
<td>625</td>
<td>714</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Stainless Steel utensils</td>
<td></td>
<td>294</td>
<td>760</td>
<td>470</td>
<td>468</td>
<td>374</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Straw Board</td>
<td></td>
<td>1410</td>
<td>965</td>
<td>1638</td>
<td>1189</td>
<td>737</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Brick &amp; title</td>
<td>000 pieces</td>
<td>12403</td>
<td>33791</td>
<td>25642</td>
<td>20884</td>
<td>30689</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Beer</td>
<td>000 litres</td>
<td>1181</td>
<td>1310</td>
<td>1459</td>
<td>1276</td>
<td>1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Fertilizer</td>
<td>M. ton</td>
<td>569</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>863</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Cotton Textile</td>
<td>000 miter</td>
<td>2429</td>
<td>3489</td>
<td>5317</td>
<td>6862</td>
<td>7966</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Cement</td>
<td>M. ton</td>
<td>21013</td>
<td>29163</td>
<td>32326</td>
<td>30378</td>
<td>36959</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Plastic goods</td>
<td>M. ton</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Biscuits</td>
<td>M. ton</td>
<td>2037</td>
<td>1912</td>
<td>1675</td>
<td>2267</td>
<td>2279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Plywood</td>
<td>000 Sqft.</td>
<td>1809</td>
<td>3051</td>
<td>4149</td>
<td>4647</td>
<td>2306</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Polythene pipe</td>
<td>000 metre</td>
<td>575</td>
<td>426</td>
<td>788</td>
<td>1646</td>
<td>2772</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Synthetic Textile</td>
<td></td>
<td>1775</td>
<td>2190</td>
<td>2329</td>
<td>2677</td>
<td>3023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Iron goods</td>
<td>M. ton</td>
<td>4471</td>
<td>5963</td>
<td>5070</td>
<td>7260</td>
<td>11692</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Distillery Production only, + Production of Brick and Tile Factory factory only.


**ii. Cottage Industry**

The position of Cottage and small-scale industry in the industrial sector of Nepal is immense value for it is providing employment to 95.6 percent of the labour force engaged in agriculture [Table 4].
Table 4.

Position of Cottage and Small-Scale Industries in the Industrial Sector

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All Industries</th>
<th>Large &amp; Medium Industries</th>
<th>Cottage &amp; Small Scale Industry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of Industries</td>
<td>754145</td>
<td>3570</td>
<td>750575</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Workers</td>
<td>1271340</td>
<td>56340</td>
<td>1215000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production [Rs. Million]</td>
<td>3288</td>
<td>2575</td>
<td>713</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value [Rs. Million]</td>
<td>698</td>
<td>480</td>
<td>218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investment</td>
<td>826</td>
<td>485</td>
<td>341</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: National Planning Commission.

Majority of cottage and small-scale industries are involved in the processing of agricultural and forest products. The second position is occupied by cotton textile products.

iii. Tourist Industry [Tourism]

Tourism has been acting as one of the important sectors of Nepalese economy, with its forward as well as backward linkages. It has helped to create more employment, and more scope for investment. Though tourism started developing in Nepal after the political change of 1951, tourism as an economic activity developed actually only after 1970. The number of tourists coming into Nepal has been rising. In fact, with some exceptions it has been rising at a compound rate of 19.34 percent per annum [Table 5]. The tourists generally visit during autumn and spring. It is found that above 80 percent per the tourists visit Nepal for pleasure [Table 6]. American tourists used to be the largest group of tourists [about 58.1 percent] visiting Nepal in 1961/62. But in 1978/79 their percentage dropped to 14.9 percent of the total tourists coming to Nepal. At present Japanese tourists are increasing in member. In addition, it was found that Japanese have been staying longer than the Europeans, Australians and Americans. Majority of tourists coming...
from third countries have been found travelling by air [Table 5]. Around 51 percent come to Nepal via India, 28 percent via Bangkok and 12.5 percent via Dacca. Tourists staying in lodges and one star hotels have been found staying longer than tourists staying in other standard hotels. A study has shown that "average per capita tourist expenditure varies from Rs. 111.58 in the case of Japanese to Rs. 828.27 in the case of American" [Dhungel, 1981: 4]. Tourism has been contributing 15.13 percent of the receipts in the current accounts, and 56.85 percent of the receipts from merchandise export in 1979/80. It has been estimated that about 60 percent of the gross earnings are retained in Nepal.

Table 5.

Total Annual Tourist Arrival
1979 to 1982

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total By Air Number</th>
<th>Annual Rate of Change in %</th>
<th>Percent of Total Number</th>
<th>Percent of Total Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>162,276</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>137,865</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>162,897</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>139,387</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>161,669</td>
<td>[-] 0.8</td>
<td>142,084</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>175,448</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>153,509</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Department of Tourism.
Table 6.

Tourist Arrivals by Purpose of Visit
1979 to 1982

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>1979*</th>
<th>1980*</th>
<th>1981*</th>
<th>1982*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pleasure</td>
<td>12881</td>
<td>13060</td>
<td>12770</td>
<td>136693</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trekking and Mountaineering</td>
<td>18270</td>
<td>19302</td>
<td>21668</td>
<td>23507</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>6381</td>
<td>5491</td>
<td>6379</td>
<td>7374</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Official</td>
<td>5495</td>
<td>4654</td>
<td>5674</td>
<td>7166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>3319</td>
<td>2850</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>708</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>162276</td>
<td>162897</td>
<td>161669</td>
<td>175448</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* 1979-1982 figures include Indian tourist arrivals.
Source: Department of Tourism

b. Location

In Nepal, industries are located in the Tarai belt where the simple means of transportation is available and the railway heads of the Indian Railways had or have links with that belt. "The first epicentre of the industries was in the South-Eastern part of the country at Biratnagar and this was diffused through the narrow belt of Tarai" [Timilsina, 1975. Vol. 11. No. IV. p. 21]. In the process of diffusion of industries along the Tarai belt, some nucleuses were developed where certain industries are concentrated. Such centres are Biratanagar, Janakpur, Birgunj, Bhairawa, Nepalgunj and Dhangadhi. Between these centres except some rice mills, leading industries have not been located. After the construction of major highways in the Central and Western Development Regions linking with Tarai, from the late 1950's onwards, other centres of industries in the inner Tarai [Hetauda], and the hills [the Kathmandu valley and the Pokhara Valley] were also developed. The development of industrial centres in the areas where transportation has been developed proves the fact that the locational dynamics of industries in Nepal is determined by transportation factor. Furthermore, the governmental efforts to reap the external economies by creating industrial estates also affected in agglomerating midium sized industries in areas where industrial estates have been created. Transportation and planned governmental supports are the two factors which have influenced the location of industries in Nepal.
The locational pattern of industries in Nepal is unsymmetrical. Majority of industries are located in the central region of the country. The Eastern Development Region takes the second position, the Western Development Region the third, the Mid-Western Development Region the fourth and the Far Western Development Region last position in sharing the location of industries [Table 7].

Table 7.

Development Regionwise Distribution of Industries and Workers
1982/83*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of Industries</th>
<th>Mid-Eastern</th>
<th>Central</th>
<th>Western</th>
<th>Western</th>
<th>Western</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>992</td>
<td>2527</td>
<td>888</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>4884</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[20.3]</td>
<td>[51.8]</td>
<td>[18.2]</td>
<td>[6.1]</td>
<td>[3.6]</td>
<td>[100.0]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of workers</th>
<th>Mid-Eastern</th>
<th>Central</th>
<th>Western</th>
<th>Western</th>
<th>Western</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30239</td>
<td>46418</td>
<td>5132</td>
<td>3900</td>
<td>2927</td>
<td>88616</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[34.1]</td>
<td>[52.4]</td>
<td>[5.8]</td>
<td>[4.4]</td>
<td>[3.3]</td>
<td>[100.0]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Provisional: Figures in parentheses denote percentage
Source: Central Bureau of Statistics.

The Table 7 also shows that 52.4 percent of the labour force is concentrated in the Central Development Region and the small number of labourer is in the Far Western Development Region of the country.

c. Pattern of Industrialisation

Historically, the industrial development in any country should go through three stages, if the process of evolution is not disturbed by governmental action or by any other external factors. In the first stage come industries processing primary products: milling grain, oil extracting, tanning, saw milling, smelting ores, spinning natural fibers etc. In the second stage, the transformation of materials takes place, when industries such as food-processing, foot-wear, cloth, furniture, metal goods etc. involved in changing the forms of products are established. In the third stage, the process is for the development of capital goods industries such as
agricultural tools factory, iron and steel, machinery, and automobile etc. The pattern of development of industries in Nepal tended to such types of products which are most essential for the domestic consumption purposes. Our emphasis was on the development of processing industries only. The industrial development history of Nepal shows that during the 1960's, Nepal endeavoured to develop secondary industries involved in the production of various consumer goods, by changing their forms. Consequently, textile industry, footwear and leather industry, sugar and cigarette industries were developed. In the recent days, the industries have been directed towards the development of various types of consumer goods needed to meet the local demand of the people. Seeing the level of demand and size of the market for the capital goods industries, the immediate potentiality for the development of capital goods industries is not seen except in the development of agricultural tools and in engineering products. At present, Nepal needs to develop the type of industries which will help to meet the domestic demand and to create basic infrastructure of developing export-oriented industries.

The controversy due to strong opinion on import substitution vs export promotion as the approach to industrial development has led to various issues. Basing on the geopolitical situation of the country and the capacity of the nation we need to have the development of both types of industries. In the beginning when the market is not integrated, when all sorts of infrastructure, for more sophisticated industrial development, are not in a position to be developed where to enter into the international market is difficult due to higher cost of production, the development of import substituting industries needed to be encouraged. But with the growth of certain industries external and internal economies are reaped and the industries meant for export promotion can be established because now Nepal will be in a position to compete with other countries. So in Nepal both forms of industries are to be developed. The only difficulty is the identification of appropriate combination and the stages of the development of the two

d. Financing of Industries

The process and the magnitude of industrialisation depends on the ability of a nation to save and invest in the development of industries. In the history of industrial financing of the developed market economies of the West, it is
found that the development of a good capital market led to the raising of the equity capital for the establishment of industries. In addition in the modern developing world, the government has been inducing the financial houses to invest in long-term assets of the industries. In Nepal too, a special financial institution Nepal Industrial Development Corporation [NIDC] has been created to provide long-term industrial investment. Even the commercial banks are channelising their liquid assets for capital investment in industry.

Generally the sources of capital for industrial development in Nepal come from the individual financiers. Nepal industrial Development Corporation [NIDC] is the major organisation providing assistance for the development of Nepalese industries. During the last 24 years [1959-1983] of its operation NIDC “has provided financial assistance of Rs. 575.71 million to 801 industries of which Rs. 8.74 million has gone for the development of 414 cottage-scale industries and Rs. 566.97 million for 387 small, medium, and large-scale industries. Of the total financial assistance Rs. 488.09 million [84.8 percent] was provided in the form of loan, Rs. 53.82 million [9.3 percent] in equity investment and Rs. 33.80 million [5.9 percent] in guarantee loan.” [NIDC, 1983; p. 11]. Out of the 387 small, medium, and large-scale industries 40.2 percent of its total assistance has gone to 112 agrobased industries, 39.5 percent to 75 tourism industries, 9.1 percent to 29 mining and mineral based industries, 2.8 percent to 25 forest-based industries and 8.4 percent to 146 miscellaneous small medium and large-scale industries [ibid. p. 11].

In Nepal as the capital market is not yet properly developed a security purchasing and selling authority has been created to provide help in the mobilisation of capital for industrial development. However, the firms and parties are not so inquisitive to purchase shares of various industries. Some of these industries which are paying dividends are not coming under the security centre. Only those industries and organisation whose financial standing are not strong in comparison with the developed ones are interested is selling their shares through the centre.

The commercial banks under the Priority Sector Investment Programme is investing in industries too. The commercial banks are directed by Nepal Rastra Bank to invest 10 percent of their liabilities to priority sector. This has helped to utilise the commercial banks assets for industrial development. Intensive Banking Development is the second programme, to provide finance to non-traditional activities under which credit is provided not only for production but also for consumption service and social functions. Another
important programme meant for the channelisation of the assets of commercial banks is the Cottage and Small-Scale Industries Project, funded through IDA loan of US $ 6.5 million which has been administered through Nepal Rastra Bank. In the financing of industries in Nepal, “it has now realised that a central bank should not merely be a tender of last resort, but a pioneer in the field of the vital sector like industries” [Adhikari, 1983].

The analysis of financing of industries reveals that the institutions meant for financing industries are NIDC and commercial banks. The NIDC has concentrated for the development of medium and large-scale industries. The small-scale industries have to rely on the commercial banks which are also reluctant in financing small-scale industries. The NIDC has been providing capital on the development of tourist-based activities such as hotels, and this tendency has deviated capital from the production process, inhibiting the development of manufacturing.

e. Industrial Management

The development of both small and large-scale industries demands for qualified and dedicated entrepreneurs. In Nepal there is no historical evidence on the development of modern management system.

The development of organised industries in the 1930's was not made by the creation of some institution for the management of organised industries. Nepal did not have the national Managing Agency System as it was developed in India.

In Nepal the public companies were managed by Indian managing agent. One of the industrialists, J.B. Shrestha has expressed the view that “the members of the Board of Directors of their public companies were big people mostly from Kathmandu, who seldom visited the industries. The meetings were not regularly held. Most of the shareholders never attended the meetings. The representatives of the Nepalese shareholders had no executive authority and whatever they had was not exercised. The Government was a silent spectator. Naturally the Managing Agents dominated the whole show.” [Shrestha, 1969:]. The national managing agency system was not developed and the management simply became the child of the investor directed at the interest of the investor rather than in the interest of the undertakings.

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After the political change of 1951 also the management of industries both in the private and public sectors is being carried individually by the investor. In the private sectors the members and near relatives of the investor manage the industries. The public enterprises are managed mostly by government bureaucrats.

In the industrialisation process the development of entrepreneur is very vital, because he is responsible for the promotion and development of industries. In underdeveloped countries like Nepal, where the traditional values and institutions have been acting as inhibiting factors for the development of modern sector, the management should take proper initiative. But the individualistic approach in industrial management is not in a position to solve the problems of industrial development in Nepal. More institutional approach in the development of management is essential for accelerating the process of industrialisation in Nepal.

Efforts of Industrial Development

In mid-1950's when the process of planned economic development was initiated the government started thinking on the development of both small and large-scale industries. In the development of small-scale industries major stress was laid on the improvement of manpower and technology with the help of foreign assistance. In the case of large-scale industries stress was on the rationalisation of existing industries and on the creation of specific infrastructure for the establishment of large-scale industries. Consequently, the Industrial Development Corporation [initially known as Industrial Development Centre] was established in 1957 and the Industrial Policy was formulated in 1957 to create more congenial atmosphere for industrial investment. Existing industries were rationalised, some industries such as saw milling were started and "few surveys pertaining to industrial development were conducted, no substantial development in the field of industry was made" [Rajbhandari, 1967: Vol. 2. No. 1. p. 57].

The Second Plan [1962-1965] made an effort for the development of industries both in the private and public sector. The Plan accorded importance to the development of such industries producing materials which will decrease imports or the products which can be exported. With regard to the government of cottage industries the Plan emphasised on providing training and giving support to the trained manpower for the establishment of small-scale industries.

With an aim to reap the external economies it was tried to agglomerate the location of industries in some areas by establishing industrial estates. At the end of the First Plan in 1960.
an agreement was reached between the Government of Nepal and United States Agency for International Development, for setting up two industrial estates at Balaju, Kathmandu, and Hetauda, Makwanpur. A third industrial district at Patan, with Indian Government Financial and Technical Assistance was also established.

During the First and Second Plan Period 1956 to 1965 some industries were established. Public sector industries such as sugar, cigarettes, leather and shoes were in operation and in the private sector existing industries were expanded and rationalised and some new industries were established to substitute the imports and to promote exports of some manufacturing products for which Nepal had resource endowment.

The Third Plan [1965-1970] also aimed to develop industries with the active support of both the private and government sectors. Due emphasis was given on the utilisation of the existing capacity of the industries and for the establishment of industries producing new commodities. Creation of more facilities in the established industrial estates and the establishment of three new industrial estates were made. Legislation regarding the provision of facilities to industries and research work done in this area helped in future industrial development. Industrial credit to the tune of Rs. 543 million was provided during the Plan period.

The Fourth plan [1970-1975] aimed to encourage the establishment of industries mainly in the private sector. The Plan gave due emphasis on the development of five types of industries viz. agro-based industries, forest-based industries, mineral-based industries, import substituting industries and industries producing basic materials such as cement, fertilisers and agricultural implements. The Plan made a provision to develop the competency in feasibility studies, consultancy services and quality control and a provision for the establishment of an autonomous institution. In addition, the Plan proposed to extend more loans to industries, focussing in the improvement of the facilities in industrial estates, in providing training in different subjects, in developing labour welfare scheme and in the arrangement for evaluation of industrial activities. In the area of cottage industries emphasis was given for the development of handicrafts for promoting exports and for the establishment of industries which will reduce imports, and for the provision of various sorts of technical services.

In the Fifth Plan [1975-1980] it was proposed to enhance the capacity of public enterprises, to operate the industries established during the Fourth Plan period to establish new industries such as resin and turpentine, magnesite and F.M.P. fertiliser, paper and pulp, cement; to improve the facilities
available in some industrial estates; to provide consultancy services and to establish 127 industries in the private sector. In the cottage industry sector also it was proposed to enhance the products of cottage industries and to use them for creating more employment opportunities. During the plan period the growth rate in the output of some major industries was 6.7 percent. One textile factory, one brick and tile factory and one agricultural lime industry were established in the public sector during the Fifth Plan period. In the area of cottage industry training and credit facilities were provided, and during the Plan period 8230 number of cottage industries were established.

The Sixth Plan [1980-85] has aimed to "create industrial employment opportunities and absorb the excess manpower now clinging on to agriculture for want of viable alternatives to become self-sufficient in daily essentials and some of the building materials, within the shortest possible time, and to develop export-oriented industries which will have the effect of improving the balance of payments position" [NPC/HMG/N, 1981: 77]. The Plan set up the target to increase industrial output by 10 percent per annum, and to achieve this the capacity of the industries established both under private and public sectors will be enhanced. In order to enhance the investment in private sector Nepal Industrial Development Corporation will invest in 168 industries. The Sixth Plan has envisaged to utilise the capacity of existing industries under public sector; to develop more facilities in existing 8 industrial districts and to establish one more industrial district Dhankuta to provide consultancy and engineering services to industries and to carry feasibility studies of different industries. The mid-term review of the Sixth Plan shows that due to favourable circumstances industrial output could increase; however, the achievement of public enterprises could not meet the target. The capacity utilisation in public enterprises could not be brought to the maximum. The NIDC could meet only 32.1 percent of the target; out of that investment also above 33 percent went to tourism.

The Sixth Plan has laid emphasis on the development of cottage industries by providing training, improving technology and making available marketing services. In order to have intensive programme for cottage industry development, the Sixth Plan has envisaged to launch such programmes in 45 districts. The mid-term evaluation of the Sixth Plan has shown that in 29 districts intensive programme for the development of cottage industry has been launched.

In the Basic Principles of Seventh Plan, priority is given to the development of industries in private sector, to the maximum utilisation of the capacity of industries, to the establishment of six
industries in public sector, to the development of monitoring and evaluation system. In cottage industry, the Basic Principles emphasise the extension of intensive programme in other districts, which are not covered in the Sixth Plan.

Review of Industrial Development Efforts

Nepal endeavoured to create basic infrastructure for the development of industries during the last three decades of her planned development [1956 to 1985]. Consequently, some industries are established; infrastructure such as skilled manpower, transportation system, power supply have been created in some areas of the country. But still the economy has not changed structurally: agriculture dominates in the economic system of Nepal. Almost 91 percent of the people are dependent on agriculture and the transfer of people from agriculture to industry has not been so effective. Industry sector is having both micro and macro problems which could not be solved from the efforts at planned development. Every effort of industrial development is to change the mode of production, thereby enhancing the effectiveness and productivity of resources, for the betterment of the people at large. Nepal’s strategy for industrial development has not been able to achieve those goals of industrial development due to following problems in her strategy for industrial development:

a. Inconsistency in the approach to industrialisation
b. Lack of proper development and use of infrastructure
c. Domination of mercantilistic approach in the economic activities.

a. Inconsistency in the Approach to Industrialisation

In all the plan documents it is stressed by the government that certain industries are to be established, and more employment in the non-agricultural sector is to be created. However, the approach towards achieving these objectives has been changed quickly, without waiting to see the implications of certain approach. There exists the debate between i) private and public sector ii) the small-and large-scale industries, iii) the national and foreign investment in industries iv) the import-substituting and export promoting industries. All these elements have been incorporated so far, in designing Nepal’s approach to industrialisation. But still the process of industrialisation is not accelerated. The reasons behind it are that inconsistent approach was pursued for any considerable duration of time.

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b. Lack of Proper Development and Use of Infrastructure

From the point of view of infrastructure of industrialisation there are two important elements: the development of infrastructure and the use of infrastructure. Basic infrastructure such as transportation system, power supply, skilled manpower and market development have not developed properly in all the regions of Nepal. Consequently, the concentration of the location of industries has been made in certain regions of the country, having a very unbalanced distribution of industries. The Tarai and inner Tarai, Eastern Central and Western development Regions have attracted more industries. However, the hills, where agriculture is not in a position to improve the life of the people, have not received due priority on the development of infrastructure. Another very important issue is the optimum utilisation of the existing infrastructure. In many areas, especially in the hills where highways and feeder roads have been created, they are functioning simply as a link between two centres at two ends. Measures have not been taken to develop the peripheries of such roads leading to very under-utilisation of such roads. In some cases, after the construction of a road some other roads are no more used, causing wastage to national investment for the construction and maintenance of such roads. The development of infrastructure should be supported by the development of industries. Otherwise, investment on infrastructure will lead to create merely white elephants which Nepal would not be in a position to maintain with her resource capability.

Domination of Mercantilistic Approach in the Economic Activities

In the history of modernisation of each market-based economy there are certain stages through which each of them had passed. The peasant or traditional society, with heavy dependance on land relation [feudalism] for all forms of social, economic and political relations, gets modernised with the rise of trade and commerce [mercantilism], which leads to the development of mercantile capitalism, which builds up foundation on which the edifice of industrial capitalism can be built up. In Nepal also the traditional society is getting modernised, and the mercantile system is developing at a fast rate, the existence of higher rate of return within a short period of time has led to the over-concentration of Nepalese private sector in mercantile activities. This has diverted the
interest of the private sector from industrial investment. In addition, the intermarriage between the landed aristocracy and the businessmen led them to the development of mercantile activities rather than to industrial development. This sort of intermarriage between the two groups of people in the society, led to think in terms of short-term goals and objectives and the development of this sort of behaviour did not develop their patience to think of industrial development. If this sort of thinking is not changed by adopting a way through industrial development through private sector will be a dreamchild of the middle-class elite.

Prospects of Industrial Development

Industrial development in each society is determined both by the capacity of its resources [supply side] and the need for goods and services [demand side] for its people. So the prospects of industrial development is to be considered from both angles. The major resources in Nepal are: minerals, forest, scenic beauty, land and manpower. However, the base of these resources is characterised by marginalness, scatteredness, and poor quality.

The development of industries demands regular and adequate supply of resources for using the maximum capacity of the industries. For this the sources of industrial resources need to be assessed to identify their capacity to meet the demand for industrialisation. The type of industries developed in the first phase of industrial development will generally process the agricultural, forest and mineral products. In the area of agriculture, the probability of adding more cultivable land is reducing, and due to higher growth rate of population the yield per unit of land has been decreasing, and the output generated in the agricultural sector is being used more for consumption, leading to decline in the marketable supplies of agricultural products, especially food grains. In this context, changing the cropping pattern from cereals to cash crops for the development of agro-based industries fed in cash crop does not seem to have more prospect in the future. However, because of higher growth rate of population there is prospect for the development of food processing industries to meet the needs of growing population.

Another important source of resources is forest, which used to provide substantial revenue to the government in the past. But at present, its base is also very limited for the primary type of industries such as saw milling. The hard-wood supplying Tarai forest is very much pressurised, from the fast growing population of Tarai both due to natural growth and immigration, for the supply of fire wood, timber and forage, on one side, and on the
other, from the existing saw mills. The establishment of big industries fed on forest resources of Tarai is of great concern if some system is not developed to strengthen the base of the forest resources. The hill and mountain forests are also pressurised from the local demand. In some areas of hills and mountains where there exist the stock of forest resources, the accessibility has become a major constraint in the use of such forest for industrial development. The development of forest-based industries in the future will depend on the efforts on making renewable forest resources as real renewable resources by developing them as a base of industrial raw materials rather than as a natural endowment for getting royalties only.

The third major potential source of resource supply for the industrial development in Nepal is mineral resources. At present, non-metallic minerals such as limestone magnesite, talc, lignite, marbles and certain stones have been exploited in order to meet the domestic demand. The development of activities in the mineral resources shows that an integrated approach towards the exploitation of various other minerals has not been taken so far. In this context, it is imperative to take action for the exploitation of already available mineral resources. Now the efforts should be directed towards enhancing investment in mineral exploitation. It should act as the lead sector where the activities of other sectors can be channelised.

The rugged topography with various forms of landscape and the drastic variations in the climate and flora and fauna within a short distance are the characteristics of Nepalese scenic beauty, which is the factor for the attraction of foreign tourists in Nepal. The major reason for the development of tourism is due to the existence of higher level of effective demand from the side of tourists, which has helped to create various sorts of specific infrastructures for the development of tourism in Nepal. Still the majority of tourists are concentrated in the urban areas, mostly in Kathmandu. Considering the revenue of nearly Rs. 55 million [1981/82] earned by the government from tourism the promotional expenditure of Rs. 2.7 million by the government in the same year is very small. In fact, the marketing and promotion activities are very limited. In this regard only the private sector has been carrying the activities of marketing and promotion, which is very limited. Within the country also new areas have not been introduced to the tourists. In addition, it is very often said that tourism in Nepal is expensive compared to other countries of South Asia. The high cost is due to high tax rates levied on hotel bills. There is glut in the supply of hotel beds, travel and trekking agencies are not utilised up to their maximum capacity, and the cost of tourist stay in Nepal is high. There is the
need to analyse properly the cost structure of tourism in Nepal. There must be efforts to reduce the cost as low as possible, with the efforts of the government as well as the private sector involved in tourism, so that more tourists could be brought to Nepal in the future. If concerted efforts are carried there is ample potentiality for the development of tourism in Nepal.

Manpower is another important element for the development of industries in any country. In Nepal, too, the population growth rate is 2.6 percent per annum, leading to very large size of population in the country. It is imperative to use this huge manpower resource. If it is not exploited properly it will exert pressure on the supporting capacity of the country. The natural resources of the country will also be depleted. Nepalese people are very hard-working but they are to be trained to work in the modern sector. The shift of huge manpower resources from the agricultural sector to modern sector can be made with less cost because the wage cost is low in the agricultural sector.

In Nepal the process of industrialisation, if left on the principle of laissez faire, will take a long time to bear fruit. In this process it is imperative that the government should come forward with due support to industrial development. In fact, there must be an operational plan, for industrial development, which should study the resource potentialities of each region and subregion, and basing on the resources capabilities, the forms and types of industries to be developed for meeting the domestic demand and for the promotion of exports are to be identified. In this course, efforts should be directed towards bringing coordination between agriculture and industry. In the operational plan, due consideration should be made not only in the establishment of industries but also for complete analysis of the activities up to the marketing of the products of industries.

In the socio-economic context of Nepal, the role of private sector cannot be ignored. In this regard mere verbal support to the private sector will not motivate the private sector for industrial investment. At present, the coordination between the private and public sectors is lagging, each is carrying its activities in isolation, leading to the development of interventionist approach with the government and more mercantilistic investment on the part of private sector leading to lesser participation of private sector in the industrial development through the creation of corporate sector. In the beginning, initiative should come from the government to identify the private investors of different parts of the country, with whom the government should open dialogue on person to person basis for the development of industries. Otherwise quick industrial development through the participation of private sector investment would be rather a distant dream. The rate of returns from the third country [overseas] trade, public
construction contracts, public supply business are comparatively higher than from industrial investment within a short period of time. Naturally, in this background the investors will not be attracted to invest in industrial development. In this context, the non-economical factors such as recognition, and support of the government to the potential industrialists are essential to divert their interest from trading, construction, supply activities, to industrial activities. It is here that the individual contact will be more helpful than some statutory rules of the government. In fact, the government has been emphasizing the role of the private sector expecting more industrial investment through private sector, but the analysis of the process of participation of private sector in industrial development in the last two decades reveals that in the development of industries the approach of the industrialists is to utilise large amount of NIDC loan and very small percentage of equity participation from their side. The zeal for the establishment of industries should be developed in the mind of the investors, then only industrial development in private sector can take place.

The present approach towards industrial development is influenced by the thinking process which in many senses is affected by the values of traditional folk society [feudalism] in which the role of an individual is identified on the basis of the degree of his command over societal power and assets. The private undertakings are regarded as merely household activities where the management has to function as the servant of the investor but not as the servant of the undertaking. The investors’ over-recognition of personal interest in the modern structure has been the inhibiting factor in the development of corporate sector in Nepal. It has caused for reluctance on the part of the educated people to be involved in corporate sector where they will not have their say so they prefer to work in governmental or semi-governmental organisations even at lower salary scale. In the Nepalese society, with multi-ethnic and caste diversities the creation of modern institution [corporation] will help to narrow down the parochial and commercial interests of such groups because the creation of such public companies with wider base of share participation will provide opportunities to large number of people to enjoy the fruits of modernisation rather than concentrating the ownership in few hands with the creation of private limited companies which can intermarry with power, for the creation of monopolies.

Another important element in the process of industrialisation is the expectation of Nepalese policy-makers for foreign capital participation in industries. The recent amendments in the Industrial Policy of Nepal in 1981 gave more emphasis on the attraction of foreign private capital in Nepalese
industries. However, substantial progress in foreign capital participation has not been made so far. In Nepal where the national capitalism has not developed properly the foreign multinational companies do not find appropriate national private organisation for industrial investment. Furthermore, the interest of multinational companies will be to invest in industries. Where products can be easily sold in the international market, however seeing the present natural resources situation, it is difficult to promote industries by the foreign investors. In this context, it is essential to create and develop first of all national corporate sector, and it will create specific infrastructure for the investment of foreign private capital in Nepal.

At the end, it can be said that the pattern of industrialisation developed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in England and France based on comparative advantage due to resource endowment cannot be the model for Nepalese. In this context, we need to have nationalistic approach developed by other countries, who had accelerated the rate of industrial development by evolving a comprehensive strategy of industrial development in which the goals and purposes of industrial development were spelt out and other sectors of the economy were channelised towards achieving the process of industrialisation at a faster rate. The industrial development in any society could be achieved due to either exploitation of natural or human resources with the help of innovative entrepreneurs either from mercantilists and middle class elites as in England and France or adventurous migrants as in the United States or proletariats and bureaucrats as in the Soviet Russia.

In Nepal thrust to industrialisation has not yet been made, if we judge our efforts with the efforts of the people of other countries. We have been trying to develop industries without bringing any structural disequilibrium in society. Majority of our investors are non-Nepalese, the workers working in the industries are non-Nepalese, raw materials which we have been using are imported, the market which we try to reach is foreign. When this is the feature with many industries in Nepal, the process of industrialisation is on a very weak base. Any turmoil in the balance of payments affects the whole industrial development. The balance of payments is not supported by a strong base of export as in many less developed countries, so the industrialisation has been pressurising on the balance of payments position of Nepal. This pattern and process will not bring the real industrialisation, which should identify the types of industries to be developed within a period of 15 to 20 years. The types of industries to be developed should be in a position to have linkages with other sectors of the economy, and it should develop national
labour and entrepreneur class. If this sort of approach will be taken into consideration then only industrialisation can be accelerated in Nepal.

References


Introduction

Few nations have remained isolated and closed for so long into the twentieth century as Nepal had before 1950. Even after 30 years of planned intervention, Nepal is finding it extremely difficult to break away from the vicious grip of economic stagnation arising out of a primitive agrarian structure that distributes poverty more than it generates socio-economic development. Major development plans spread over a period of 30 years have been completed. The planned expenditures have increased from about Rs. 40 per capita in the First Plan to over Rs. 2000 in the Seventh Plan [which began in 1985], with practically no major improvement in the living conditions of the majority of the people. Nepal has been ranked as the fourth poorest nation in the world.

During the past three decades, population has doubled from eight to sixteen million. Foodgrain production has increased in physical infrastructure, majority of the people are still days’ walking distance away from nearest road and access to power supply is even more limited. Trade diversification efforts and foreign aid have partially reduced Nepal’s economic dependence on India, but this achievement is too fragile to withstand any serious tests. Penetration of development forces into these hills and mountains has been tantamount to defying the forces of gravity. Like water, people and development have tended to move down-hill and gravitate in the plains and valley. While official efforts seem to be moving against the current with it’s limited attempts to move development forces up these hills and mountains, people themselves are moving out. If today Nepal finds itself confronted with many problems, it is also faced with many potentials. How we choose which problems to deal with and what potentials to exploit is essentially the game of planning and
development which we are about to review. In this paper an effort has been made to review the forces of development and change in Nepal, the practice of planning and its impact and present some discussion on some of future choices. While some statistical data are provided wherever they have been available, the lack of data has not been a barrier to speculate about alternative ways out of the poverty trap.

Historical Aspects of Economics Changes in Nepal

In the past, most discussions of economic changes have been confined to the post-1950 era, the beginning of planned development. The reasons have obviously been the lack of information about these earlier periods. However, very few countries can disclaim their historical roots, and it may be useful to open this review by presenting some of the major dimensions of economic events over a bigger time-frame.

The growth of sedentary agriculture accompanied by the introduction of terracing, irrigation and fertilization technologies represent the first major landmark in the economic history of Nepal. Prior to this period, pastoral nomadism, along with some slash and burn agriculture prevailed for a fairly long time. Conditions began changing [around the 10th and 11th centuries] when the people from south lowlands were forced to flee the invading Moslims. Those who were aware of the safe recluse in the laps of the Himalayas turned northwards to find their new homes. With them they brought many things, the notable being lowland agricultural technology.

The technology these new settlers developed to survive and adjust in this new environment could only succeed under a system of permanent settlements. Unlike slash and burn, or even pastoral nomadic practice both of which are land-extensive practices leaving much of the work to natural forces, settled agriculture is far more demanding in terms of various activities like tilling, watering, fertilizing, weeding, harvesting, etc. These are all time-specific activities, far more so than pastoral practices, necessitating a close spatial link between residence and the fields. With settled agricultural practices came all the other institutional attributes. Irrigation demands large dose of organized labour inputs, possible only if the community has institutions to manage these. Similarly, labour shortages during peak working seasons, characteristic of monsoon agriculture, must have created various types of labour-sharing mechanisms. The beginning of the first continuous pressures on the hill environment, therefore, had their origins with the introduction of settled agricultural practices. The situation continued to intensify with time as both population pressure and the resource requirements of various local rulers
continued to increase. The only alternative was to increase the intensity of cultivation, but as we see now, the limits were reached quite quickly. First, even in some parts of the hills prevalence of malaria precluded intensive exploitation of some type of lands. Secondly, difficulties of terrain including the limited possibilities for extracting surplus beyond the needs and greed of local rulers, guaranteed an almost total dependence upon rainfall rather than irrigation. This meant multiple cropping system could not be practical until improved irrigation system developed. The poverty of the local people accentuated by unfair and usurious taxation system that progressively worsened over the years, guaranteed the absence of irrigation systems. Large number of hill areas are still under this same situation today with irrigation as far away as it was during these early periods. One major innovation, however, did occur and that was the beginning of terracing in the hills for the cultivation of paddy during the monsoon. This was a period of major land improvement and capital formation in agriculture of a scale possibly not replicated even today. All these changes in the hill agriculture can be seen to have been economically advantageous, producing at least initially some surplus which was used to develop petty states all over the country. Population growth must also have been fairly rapid during this period. In many respects this represents a dynamic period in the history of the hills of Nepal — at least in so far as agriculture is concerned. Coming from a bigger and far more advanced north Indian culture, these new settlers of the hills [known as the Khas] brought with them new technologies. An interesting question here is: why was it only later that the bigger state of Nepal emerged and not at this time when these new settlers seemed to have been able to subjugate the indigenous groups almost completely? At present this has to remain a question.

After this phase, however, the hill people once again submerge into a total self-contained, isolated existence, excepting the Kathmandu Valley, which had already the makings of a small but thriving state. No contacts with the outside world developed. No major migratory movements from outside were experienced. It became a closed environment until the Anglo-Saxon race began knocking on Nepalese doors. Agriculturally speaking, what followed this hectic period was a dark one. Initial productivity gains were soon lost to population growth and the needs of the petty state. As productivity stagnated on account of limitations in technology, the eastward movement of people along the hills continued even further, sometimes in major spurts and at other times in a trickle, depending upon the political conditions of the receiving places.

This search for more agricultural land has continued to be evident even in recent times, although directions of these
movements have been changing. If in the earlier years it was an eastward movement that at times reached as far east as Burma and northern parts of Thailand, today, it is more southwards and westwards confined within Nepal. Before we move on to another dimension, the significant contribution made by the introduction of potato and maize cannot be overlooked. These two crops played a major role in increasing food supply in the hills. As both of these crops were very suitable for unirrigated uplands, they even replaced some of the earlier crops. This sudden increase in food supply could have had a major effect on the growth of population in the hills.

The next significant aspect in the economic history of Nepal is the development of trade with Tibet. While small-scale trading relationships must have begun much earlier, it became economically significant much later with the traders of the Kathmandu Valley being able to exercise a significant control over it. Although the benefits of such trade remained confined to a limited number of places only, it was economically significant enough for different rulers in the region to try to gain control over it.

The pre-and post-unification periods in Nepal also saw some important developments. These military exercises could hardly have been sustained without substantial improvements in the local armaments industries, an administrative setup capable of holding together a land that had been constantly fragmented by warring groups and a land revenue system that could provide adequate resources to support the state machinery. An interesting point here is the fact that even after the unification, Nepal remained economically disintegrated. The new political entity was unable to overcome the severe limitations of topography, preventing the development of economic integration between the regions and the formation of a bigger market economy. Regions functioned in isolation with their respective links to India and/or Tibet always being far more economically significant than with other regions of Nepal. The period of the Rana-rule did little to improve the forces of economic integration.

Lacking in internal agricultural innovations, economic integration and development and given the practical limits to expansion of trade and commerce with an equally poor Tibet, the pressures on the Nepalese agriculture and forests, and consequently the overall economy, increase substantially. The highly permeable border with India and recruitment of mercenaries by the British undoubtedly played a key role in alleviating some of these pressures.

Remittances and other non-domestic income earning opportunities have been vital for supplementing the meagre agricultural incomes of the hill people leading some observers even
to describe the hills as "money-order" economies. If this analogy of the money-order is extended to include foreign aid the current situation is not very different. It is primarily income transfers from outside that is currently playing a major role in the Nepalese economy. So far the discussion has been mainly of the Hills. Historically, the developments in the Terai must also have been equally interesting, but the tendency to view many events in Nepal with only a "hill-lens" has obscured changes elsewhere in Nepal. Hopefully, this gap will be overcome in the future.

In so far as developments prior to the inception of plans are concerned, the first modern drinking-water project and some schools were opened in 1899. Electricity was introduced in Kathmandu in 1911. Slavery was abolished in 1925. 1933 saw the establishment of the first commercial bank and the opening of the first match and jute factory. Before the beginning of the First Plan, Nepal had 62,000 acres of irrigated land [1.03% of total cultivated land], 390 miles of roads, 5 air-strips, 107 post-offices, 7,700 kw of electricity, 23 hospitals and 1,550 primary and secondary schools [The Three-Year Plan, 1962: 35—36].

The Evolution of Plans and Planning

Prior to 1950, two separate efforts were made during the Rana regime to adopt a planned framework of development. Just before the outbreak of the Second World War, a 20-year plan was prepared in some loose form. However, it could never evolve out of the preparation stage. In 1949 a National Planning Committee was set up to prepare a 15-year plan for the economic development of the country, but a mere gesture of this type was unable to contain the nation-wide political discontent that had already reached a critical phase. In 1951 the Ranas were ousted from power. For the next five years, the country saw frequent changes in the government and although repeated efforts were made to adopt a development plan, it was not until 1956 that the First Plan [1965-1960] was prepared. Institutionally, a separate Ministry of Planning was setup in 1952 to coordinate development activities. The first "scientific" census was conducted in between 1952-54. There was a brief period of plan holiday for about one year immediately following the introduction of the Pancavat System. A National Planning Council was setup to prepare a Three-Year Plan which covered the period 1962-1965. The Council also prepared the Third Plan to be implemented during the next five years up to 1970. In 1968 the Planning Council was changed to a National Planning Commission which was made an advisory body. The Ministry of Economic Planning became the Ministry of Finance and was given the responsibility for administering foreign aid. Since then the
planning body has had no *de facto* control over resources, although it was assigned the functions of annual and mid-term review and evaluation of plan performance. The overall structure of the Planning Commission has remained unchanged since, and has been responsible for the Fourth, Fifth, Sixth and Seventh Plans. A National Development Council was established in 1972 as the highest forum for the formulation of development guidelines on the basis of which the Planning Commission was to formulate the development plans.

While development plans have determined to some extent the overall direction of economic change, the role of the annual budgets has been even more significant as they determine the actual availability of annual resources for divergent activities. The first budget was presented in 1951 and ever since there has continued to be some important improvements in this critical instrument for annual planning. The control over the budget by the Ministry of Finance has in fact made it relatively more influential *vis-a-vis* other governmental institutions than the Planning Commission.

*Periodic Plans*

a. *First Plan [1956-1960]*

The First Plan gave priority to the development of transport infrastructure in view of the severe accessibility problems in Nepal. It also emphasized the development of agriculture and social services. Interestingly, the plan used the concept of community development in its framework for rural development focusing on the propagation of improved farming practices, seeds and expansion in local level physical infrastructure as well as education and trained manpower. The plan also identified the need for greater domestic resource mobilization and a more efficient administration for the implementation of development programmes.

The total outlay for the plan was Rs 330 million of which only Rs 214.4 million [65%] was spent. Rs 95.0 million [29%] was from internal sources while 71% was supported by foreign aid.

The targeted and actual expenditures by sectors show that funds were underspent in all the major sectors except education. The allocations by sectors show that the three biggest claimants were transport and communication, rural development, and education [Table 1].
Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Planned</th>
<th>Actual</th>
<th>% share of Actual</th>
<th>Actual as % of Planned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Rural Development</td>
<td>42.5</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>12.44</td>
<td>62.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Agriculture and Forest</td>
<td>32.0</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>21.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Transport and Communication</td>
<td>124.0</td>
<td>94.9</td>
<td>44.22</td>
<td>76.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Electricity</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>6.22</td>
<td>44.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Industry, Mines and Tourism</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>4.83</td>
<td>41.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Health</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>7.46</td>
<td>64.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Education</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>21.2</td>
<td>9.93</td>
<td>112.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Irrigation and Drinking Water</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>6.12</td>
<td>65.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Miscellaneous</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>5.49</td>
<td>64.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>330.00</td>
<td>214.4</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>65.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Among the major physical achievements of the First Plan, the following stand out:

a. Beginning of the Kathmandu-Hetauda ropeway and completing 70 percent of the construction during the plan period.

b. Resettling 5000 families in the Rapti Valley of Chitwan and bringing under cultivation over 27000 hectares of land.

c. Road network was substantially increased from a pre-plan status of 100 miles to a post-plan level of 664 miles.

d. Undertaking of a major rural development programme focussing on multi-sectoral development through trained village-level worker.

e. A significant expansion in primary and secondary schools throughout the country.

There are other achievements in the development of physical infrastructure and provision of social services. The first three industrial districts were also established during this period.
The most significant aspect of this plan was the fact that it was the first encounter of the country with a process of public sector planning. As most of the successive plans continue to suffer from similar weaknesses of inadequate information, poor sectoral and project planning and management and a weak evaluation and monitoring system, the First Plan should not as much be critiqued for its failures as commended for having successfully introduced a planned framework of development in the country in a period of relative political instability.

b. The Three-Year Plan [1962-1965]

The first plan sensitized the planners as to the requirements and preconditions for enhancing the effectiveness of planning both with respect to an understanding of the economy as well as the institutional requirements. After a plan holiday of one year and the introduction of the Pancayat system, the Three-Year Plan proceeded to address the requirements of improving the planning machinery as well as to bring about the institutional changes envisaged by the Pancayat system.

The plan accorded priority for reforming the prevailing system in landownership, administrative set-up and the industrial organization in the country. It also emphasized the need for comprehensive economic survey and the availability of accurate facts and figures for planning. Expansion in transport, communication and electricity were accorded next priority followed by agricultural development. Regarding industry and social services, the plan highlighted the need for better management of existing facilities and improvement in performance of existing industries.

The Plan proposed a total outlay of Rs. 600 million with an additional Rs. 70 million for disbursement as agricultural and industrial loans. Out of the 600 million, the actual expenditure was Rs. 596.81 million and from the Rs. 70 million, Rs. 25 million was actually disbursed. Internal resources met 24 percent of the plan expenditure while the rest was covered by foreign aid.

The planned and actual expenditure by major sectors are shown in Table 2. Actual expenditures were lowest relative to planned ones in the area accorded the topmost priority i.e., institutional reform and economic data collection and training. Actual expenditures exceeded planned ones in all major sectors, except roads and agriculture where expenditures were only 56.35 and 79.64 percent respectively.
In so far as the Plan achievements are concerned the implementation of land reform is probably the most significant aspect. Some major north-south roads linking the hills with the plains were partially completed. Another significant achievement during the plan period was the effort made to diversify trade.

Preliminary estimates made at the beginning of the Third Plan indicated that per capita income increased from US$ 73 at the beginning of the plan to US$ 137 in the last year of the plan. Although it is difficult to verify this, it cannot be dismissed altogether because agricultural output increased by 5 percent during the three-year period and there was a major spurt in cash crops production, particularly jute and sugar.

Table 2. **Planned and Actual Expenditure in the Three-Year Plan**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sectors</th>
<th>Planned</th>
<th>Actual</th>
<th>% of Actual to Total</th>
<th>% of Actual to Planned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administratrive Improvement, Survey,</td>
<td>79.20</td>
<td>51.81</td>
<td>8.68</td>
<td>65.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statistics Training</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport, Communication and Electric-</td>
<td>234.50</td>
<td>230.86</td>
<td>38.68</td>
<td>98.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>city</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture, Irrigation and Forests</td>
<td>81.60</td>
<td>87.31</td>
<td>14.63</td>
<td>106.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Industry and Tourism</td>
<td>102.0</td>
<td>103.69</td>
<td>17.37</td>
<td>101.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Services</td>
<td>102.7</td>
<td>95.31</td>
<td>15.97</td>
<td>92.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td></td>
<td>27.82</td>
<td>4.66</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>600.00</td>
<td>63.40</td>
<td>10.62</td>
<td>56.35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Specific Sectors**

1. Roads 112.5 63.40 10.62 56.35
2. Electricity 91.0 137.33 23.0 150.91
3. Irrigation 40.0 50.20 8.41 125.50
4. Agriculture 28.2 22.46 3.76 79.64
5. Forest 13.4 14.60 2.45 108.95
6. Industry 90.0 93.61 15.68 104.01
7. Education 40.0 48.98 8.20 122.45
8. Health 37.0 45.82 7.67 123.84

In conclusion, it may be pointed out that while the ability of the government to undertake planned expenditures enhanced considerably relative to the First Plan, the economy still awaited a plan that could bring about far-reaching improvements in the amelioration of rampant poverty.

*The Third Five-Year Plan [1965-1970]*

The Third Plan proposed a national economic growth rate of 19 percent, assuming that the levels of national income could be doubled over the next fifteen years. With population growing at 2 percent per annum, it was expected that per capita incomes would increase by nine percent during the Third Plan period. In so far as the objectives of the plan are concerned they were to enhance agricultural production through institutional changes and the introduction of other inputs, to develop basic infrastructure and industries, diversify trade and eradicate social injustice.

A total plan outlay of Rs. 2500 million was proposed. Rs. 174 million was allocated for the public sector. Rs. 520 was to be invested by private sector and another Rs. 240 million by the Panchayat sector [mainly in the form of labour and other local inputs]. Foreign assistance was to cover a little over 50 percent of the public sector investments.

In the allocation of the public sector funds, transport, communications and electricity were provided with 50.3 percent of the total funds followed by 21.7 percent for agriculture and rural development, 7.2 percent for industry and mines, 16.8 percent for social services and 4 percent for other activities. [Table 3].

The actual expenditure during the Third Plan was Rs. 1779 million which was slightly higher than the planned expenditure. Foreign aid to the tune of Rs. 1039 million was actually made available and this amounted to 58 percent of the total outlay. Regarding achievements in the different sectors, it was 65, 40, 17 and 79 percent of the targets in foodgrains production, irrigation, fertilizer consumption and road construction respectively. In general, targets remained unfulfilled in most of the sectors but the Third Plan succeeded in expanding the role of the public sector quite substantially. Trade diversification measures helped to boost exports.
Table 3.

Public Sector Expenditure during the Third Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Rs. in million</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Transport, Communication</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and Power</td>
<td>875</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Agriculture and Rural</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development</td>
<td>377.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Industry</td>
<td>125.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Social Services</td>
<td>292.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Miscellaneous</td>
<td>70.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Unallocable</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1740.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The Fourth Five-Year Plan [1970-1975]

The Fourth Developmental Plan postulated an economic growth rate of 4 percent per annum and emphasized expansion in infrastructure, diversification of trade, maintaining economic stability, making more effective use of manpower and controlling population growth and also pointed out the need for institutional changes required for the eradication of social and economic exploitation in the country. The Plan document reflects the enhancement of the overall planning capability in the country as it is not only more comprehensive in its identification of basic problems and issues but the sectoral plans can also be seen to be increasing in specificity. Although the conceptual framework behind the macro analysis is based upon simple extensions of the basic Harrod-Domar framework, the plan reflects improvements in economic analysis evident from the production figures, national income estimates, trade figures and the problems of regional development before the nation. Interestingly enough, the plan also emphasizes the necessity for substantial improvements in the implementation process.

The plan envisaged a total outlay of Rs. 2500 million of which Rs. 740 million was in public sector, Rs. 240 million in Pancayat sector and Rs. 520 million in private sector. If the grants-in-aid to the Pancayat sector is included, the total public sector outlay was estimated to be Rs. 1800 million. The actual expenditures by different sectors are shown in Table 4.
Table 4

*Actual Expenditure by Sector in the Fourth Plan*

[In million Rs.]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Estimated</th>
<th>Actual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transport, Communication and Power</td>
<td>928.04</td>
<td>873.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture and Rural Development</td>
<td>497.03</td>
<td>397.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry</td>
<td>97.49</td>
<td>86.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Services</td>
<td>279.18</td>
<td>239.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>236.67</td>
<td>168.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unallocable</td>
<td>62.6</td>
<td>14.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>2101.01</td>
<td>1779.06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Regarding the overall progress made by the plan, the annual average growth rate was 2.65 percent which is only slightly over 50 percent of the planned growth rate. Agricultural production increased by 5.4 percent. The area covered by improved seeds was 88 percent of the target while in irrigation, the achievement was only 4 percent of the target. Similarly, achievements were substantially below targets in road construction, electricity generation, industrial development and drinking water supply.

The overall rate of implementation in development activities during the Fourth Plan was influenced by a number of important developments. Midway through the Plan, there was a special decision by the government to emphasize regional balance resulting in the development of regional administrative framework and the development of regional reallocations of planned development funds. The sudden rise in oil prices during 1972/73 also had a severe impact on the implementation of developmental activities. The increased cost of petroleum products required the government to revise and alter a good deal of the investment programmes once again. These factors undoubtedly played a major role in the overall performance of the plan.

*The Fifth Plan [1975-1980]*

The objectives of the Fifth Plan were to increase production of mass-oriented goods, maximum utilization of the labour force and promotion of regional balance and integration. The planned growth rate of the economy was estimated to be between 4 and 5 percent per annum. The plan postulated a minimum expenditure of Rs. 6170 million and a maximum of Rs. 7545 million.
At the end of the plan period, the annual growth rate was 2.2 percent while population growth was 2.3 percent indicating negative changes in per capita income. Gross savings and investment increased from 4.8 and 9.3 percent of the beginning to 7.4 and 13.5 percent. Government development expenditure increased at 13.5 percent while regular expenditure grew by 9.3 percent. Actual foreign assistance accounted for 47.2 percent amounting to Rs. 4182.80 million during the plan. The actual expenditures in different sectors are shown in Table 5.

One notable characteristic of the Fifth Plan was a relative shift in investment priorities from infrastructure development to production-oriented sectors. While the plan has made some increases in the relative share of agriculture, as compared to the previous plans, the shift is not all that significant, and questions can be raised as to the appropriateness of this particular course amongst others in terms of increasing output. While the size of the public sector investment in any one sector is clearly a very obvious way of indicating government priority, the relationship between increasing public sectors funds and output levels is not all that obvious, in the absence of other changes relating to technology, management, inputs and prices.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Actual Expenditures in the Fifth Plan</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Amount [in millions Rs]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Agriculture, Irrigation and Forestry</td>
<td>2349</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Industry, Mines and Electricity</td>
<td>1679.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Transport and Communication</td>
<td>2380.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Social Services</td>
<td>2460.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>8870.60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


As for the overall performance of different sectors during the Plan period, the agricultural production index declined from 103.3 to 86.8, giving a negative growth rate of 2.8 percent. Achievements in irrigation expansion, and distribution of improved seeds, fertilizer and loans were around 60 percent of the targets. Industrial production increased at an annual average growth rate of 6.7 percent but because of its small base, it was unable to compensate for the poor performance of agriculture. Progress in electricity supply was also poor. Targets were exceeded only in
the case of providing drinking water. Although trade deficit continued to increase, the balance of payments position remained favourable during the entire plan period.

*The Sixth Plan [1980-1985]*

The Sixth Plan postulated the objectives of increasing output, providing gainful employment and meeting minimum basic needs of the people. A growth rate of 4.3 percent was identified and a total development expenditure of Rs. 21750 million was proposed. Foreign assistance equivalent to Rs. 13260 million was expected.

The actual growth rate has been estimated to be 4.4 percent. Agricultural and non-agricultural sectors are reported to have had annual average growth rates of 4.7 and 4 percent respectively. Of the proposed development expenditure Rs. 15582.80 million [71.6 percent] was actually used, and only 60 percent of the expected foreign assistance was made available. While exports were virtually stagnant, imports increased three-fold, widening further the increasing trade deficits, and for the first time starting what could be a long-term trend of negative balance of payments as well.

Food grain production increased by 6.3 percent over the entire plan period while the target was 7.6 percent. Performance in industrial production was quite satisfactory as also with electricity supply, roads, literacy, drinking water supply and hospital beds. On the whole, the Sixth Plan shows a relatively better performance than the previous plans, and this is in spite of one major year of drought.

*The Seventh Plan [1985-1990]*

The Seventh Plan has just begun and the thrust of the Plan is towards consolidation of activities already started rather than undertaking new ones. A national annual average growth rate of 4.5 percent has been postulated, and the total public sector investment has been proposed to be Rs. 50410 million, with Rs. 27000 million in the public sector. Planned foreign assistance is about Rs. 20480 million. The proposed allocation by sectors is shown below. [Table 6].
Table 6

*Planned Development Expenditures for the Seventh Plan*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Total Development Expenditure [Rs. millions]</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Agriculture, Irrigation and Forestry</td>
<td>17280</td>
<td>34.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Industry, Mines and Electricity</td>
<td>10840</td>
<td>21.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Transport and Communication</td>
<td>7260</td>
<td>14.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Social Services</td>
<td>15030</td>
<td>29.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>50410</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.-</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


*Sectoral Development Policies and Problems.*

Having briefly reviewed the plans, the discussion will now focus upon some of the major sectoral policies and problems. This is again fairly brief, focussing upon some of the major thrusts in policy, the overall performance, and problems.

*Agriculture Development*  

In view of the dominant role played by the agricultural sector in the Nepalese economy, improving the performance of the agricultural sector is an important concern in any major development effort. It is also in this sector that planning is most difficult, given the complex production patterns, land tenure systems, micro-climatic variations and other factors. Prior to 1950, the main preoccupation of the Rana government was to grant the Terai agricultural lands for cultivation in lieu of taxes and other requirements imposed by the government. Whatever development effort was necessary had to be initiated by the people themselves. After the overthrow of the Rana government in 1951, the new governments were faced with a massive task of taking the agricultural economy out of its primitive structure.

The choices in terms of development strategies were [a] to expand the cultivated areas in sparsely settled areas of the Terai, [b] to restructure the agrarian institutions, and [c] to introduce new technologies.
During the fifties and sixties, major settlement programmes were launched in the Terai in order to reduce the pressure on the hills. A major land reform programme encompassing practically all aspects of tenancy was launched during 1963/64. Current efforts at agricultural development have focussed on the propagation of improved agricultural technology. A number of major programmes are being launched by the Department of Agriculture in cooperation with the Agricultural Development Bank and the Agricultural Inputs Corporation to expand the coverage of modern agricultural inputs and farming practices.

The green revolution has achieved notable success in limited areas of the Kathmandu Valley, parts of the Terai and some of the valleys in the hills. Efforts are now being made to improve not only rice and wheat production but other crops as well, including the development of livestock and horticulture in the hills. More recently, the major emphasis has been on consolidating the different irrigation systems that were started in the earlier plans.

In spite of these efforts, agricultural productivity has continued to decline consistently and overall production levels have been unable to keep pace with the increasing domestic demand. This has affected agricultural exports markedly. The pace of adoption of improved technology has been the slowest in South Asia. If the performance of public sector irrigation projects has continued to be a major bottleneck for expanding the coverage of improved technology, another important and relatively overlooked aspect has been a very weak district agricultural development machinery. The political pressures to expand the agricultural institutions in the face of severe resource constraints has prevented the development of an effective and responsive agricultural development programme. There has been relatively too much window-dressing at the macro level without careful examination of the critical components of the microplan. This critical problem calls for some hard-headed decisions that go beyond the convenience of responding to political pressure. The strengthening of the district agricultural development plan is clearly an important issue in the context of improving the performance of the agricultural sector in the future. The recent emphasis given to decentralized planning is an important step in this direction and should now be backed with adequate technical, material, and manpower support.

Foreign Trade and Industrial Development

Trade and industrial development are closely interrelated, and it is, therefore, important that both set of policies are mutually supportive and not in conflict. At all stages of
industrialization, trade policy is critical to the growth of healthy industries if it can be used to protect some industries and penalise inefficient ones. Besides industrial development, trade policy has other objectives relating to the import of basic goods, government revenues, earning of foreign exchange and others. Some of these other objectives can easily conflict with those of industrial development.

Given Nepal's landlocked situation, Nepalese trade has remained dominated by India. Various trade treaties with India since 1960 have helped Nepal to develop her industries and diversify her overseas trade. The access to the Indian markets for Nepalese industries is still very limited. Nepal has implemented a number of different industrial development plans but the development of domestic industries has been sluggish. Although import substitution still dominates the industries being promoted, recently there has been some efforts to develop export promotion industries. The industries continue to be plagued by lack of raw materials, skilled manpower and access to markets.

The small size of the domestic market and Nepal's landlocked position have been two important difficulties before Nepal's industrial development. At the same time, very little can be done about both these conditions and policy emphasis should be towards those industries where disadvantages arising out of these conditions are relatively smaller, focussing on products with high value to weight ratios. The liberal imports permitted for industries have not been used properly by the industries and the government must exercise a closer watch over industries that are highly import-based. This is not the place to discuss a full-fledged trade and industrial development strategy but suffice it to say that integration between the two has not been pursued sufficiently for the purposes of promoting the healthy industries and closing the sick. Foreign trade is an effective instrument in this respect.

Public Sector Enterprises

The expansion of the public sector enterprises from 8 in the First Plan to 73 by the end of the Sixth Plan has been a very significant development during the past three decades of planning in Nepal. Public sector enterprises have been established in all the major economic sectors, including industrial production. The overall performance has, however, been discouraging in so far as employment generation, returns on investments and other key indicators are concerned [see Table 7]. Although the pace of establishment of new public enterprises has slowed down recently their claims upon public sector resources have continued to grow without adequate contribution to the economy.
Table 7

Performance of Public Enterprises

Rs. in millions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1970/71</th>
<th>1980/81</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Value</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>536</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital Employed</td>
<td>637</td>
<td>3327</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gross Profits</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>-157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value added as a Percentage of Non-agricultural G.D.P.</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gross profits as a percentage of capital employed</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The overall approach towards the development of public enterprises is as yet unclear. If the government realises the need to manage these institutions more efficiently, it is at the same time unwilling to remove the constraints imposed on them by operating them as government bureaucracies. Apart from identification of some fairly obvious list of problems, plan and policy interventions have been ad hoc with only temporary effects. The hard decisions to reduce costs are very often being postponed, with limited public enterprises resources being increasingly used for political purposes.

Rural Development

In rural development efforts, the first to come were the village development programmes in the fifties. This was followed by the local development activities under the Panchayats. Special rural development programmes have been implemented under different names like the Small Area Development Programme, Remote Area Development Programme, Intergrated Pancayat Development Programme and currently the Intergrated Rural Development Programmes [IRDP]. IRDPs cover about 30 districts. Other non-IRDP districts are supported by line agency programmes and annual grants-in-aid to the local panchayats.

Evaluations of rural development programmes do not provide an encouraging picture. The general findings may be summarized as follows:
Productivity gains have been small and limited to the larger land-holders.

Delivery systems for agricultural inputs have been monopolized by the rich.

Training has been imparted in many fields, but the scope for application and utilization of the skills has been very limited.

The bureaucracy has become politicized to such an extent that planning, economic and financial discipline required for effective economic management are practically impossible. The situation is further worsened by the centre’s lack of responsiveness to district-level problems and its own encouragement to seek politically appeasing solutions.

Financial control is weak and project implementation is very poor.

In the IRDP districts, the indiscrimate allocation of funds is slowly destroying the spirit of self-reliance extending even to areas where rural people had traditionally provided their own resources.

In the IRDP districts, the easy and regular availability of development funds to some groups/pancayats patronized by the District Pancayat has eroded the image of the government in the eyes of the people. Similarly, the fact that all IRDPs have been foreign-funded has reinforced the concept of dependency and helplessness even in rural areas.

Frequency of turnover of key people in the district administration has been very high with the result that no one is willing to take risks. Political pressure and linkages are seen as the primary guidelines for decision. Efforts to mobilize payments from project beneficiaries have been minimal and maintenance of completed projects in district is far too inadequate. There are some projects that never seem to be completed, but funds are made available regularly without attempting to correct the problems.

The above list is by no means complete, but it should convey the massage that IRDPs and other rural development programmes are not delivering the goods. Between the bureaucracy, politicians and local elites, the programmes are bargained, bartered and butchered, the irony of it being that it is all in the name of the poor. If the programmes are continued under the present arrangement, rural inequality, poverty and environmental deterioration will continue to hasten the onset of a major disaster in Nepal.
Almost all the writings about the Nepalese economy tend to be unanimous about the widespread and worsening poverty of the Nepalese people. Life expectancy is low, and the overall literacy rate is about 23 percent. Only about 10 percent of the population have access to safe drinking water. These conditions apply equally to both the urban and rural population, although, the urban picture may be slightly better. Given the distribution of population with more than 90 percent in rural areas, Nepal's problems of poverty and its eradication are primarily rural. Similarly, the distribution of poverty by ecological zones has also become equally marked with the hills and the mountains displaying slugs of more extensive rural deprivation than the Tarai plains.

Poverty can be discussed with regards to any aspect of the socio-economic life of the people. Here our focus will be on a few aspects only, and particularly those related with the economic well-being of the population. It does not at all mean that the other aspects of poverty are unimportant or unrelated with the economic well-being. They are important, and all aspects of socio-cultural living are closely interwoven. It is just that they are far too complex and difficult to discuss under the present terms of reference.

The four components that have been selected for highlighting are [a] food, [b] income, [c] employment, and [d] inequality. The reason for including food as an item of special significance is because of Nepal's special conditions. Some parts of the economy are still non-monetized. Transport and distribution linkages are still on human backs in a large number of places. Surplus from the Tarai plains does not always find its way to the deficit hills. All these conditions stress the importance of local availability of foodgrains for meeting the requirements of that particular place. Obviously, it cannot be isolation, and must be related with other variables in order to provide a fairly comprehensive picture.

a. Food Availability and Consumption

In a country that is largely agricultural with over 90 percent of the households engaged in basically food production activities, food availability may be a useful starting-point for any discussion on the questions of rural poverty. Of itself food availability means little as actual consumption may be supported more through trading activities than local production. But seen in terms of the significance of food-producing activities in the country, it cannot be said to be irrelevant. In Nepal, food consists
of cereal grains and cereal products, pulses, vegetables, spices, fruits and nuts, meat, milk, and eggs, etc. Cereal grains like rice, maize, wheat, millet, and barley account for about 60 percent of total consumption of cereals. The total supply and availability over the years has been slowly declining. One source estimates that during the period 1964/65-1978/79 food availability declined by 13.4 percent. "The Central Food Research Laboratory's norm of 2256 cal per capita per day to be obtained from 605 gms of cereals and 60 gms of pulses for survival was never met during the period 1964/65-1978/79" [Mudbary: 1981, 9-10]. The situation since 1979 has worsened because of the extremely poor performance of the agricultural sector.

Given the great regional heterogeneity in Nepal, some reference to the ecological differences is necessary to provide a more realistic picture. Table 8 shows the nature of food grain balance in different ecological belts. The picture is unmistakable. The number of deficit districts is increasing, primarily in the hills. In general, both the national and regional food availability situations suggest that it has not improved over the years. It might have even deteriorated as the opportunities for alternative sources of income and employment have grown very slowly over the years.

Table 8


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Hills</th>
<th>Mountain</th>
<th>Kathmandu</th>
<th>Tarai</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Valley</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975/75</td>
<td>-1558</td>
<td>-12143</td>
<td>-41451</td>
<td>+608340</td>
<td>+539160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975/76</td>
<td>-19672</td>
<td>-26446</td>
<td>-44964</td>
<td>+649306</td>
<td>+558224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976/77</td>
<td>-31053</td>
<td>-61549</td>
<td>-48906</td>
<td>+493199</td>
<td>+351691</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977/78</td>
<td>-18354</td>
<td>-84428</td>
<td>-54928</td>
<td>+469136</td>
<td>+311426</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978/79</td>
<td>-19985</td>
<td>-70202</td>
<td>-64165</td>
<td>+466062</td>
<td>+311710</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979/80</td>
<td>-37951</td>
<td>-207463</td>
<td>-85540</td>
<td>+296949</td>
<td>-34005</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[-- Deficit/+ Surplus]

Source: P.K. Mudbhary: [1981: 12]

In this context it might also be added that in the hills landholdings below 0.75 ha. appeared generally unable to provide for an average family's food requirements, and this applied to 85 percent of the households. Similarly, for the Tarai plains, farms
under 1.7 ha. were too small for supplying basic food requirements and this applied to 50 percent of the households [Zeverring, 1978: 6-9]. What this indicates is the critical role of both farm and off-farm employment. Both of these are quite limited, given the huge magnitude of those in need of such types of employment support. Given the pressures already active in Nepalese agriculture, it is doubtful how much scope there is for increasing labour-intensity of Nepalese agriculture. While every effort must be made to enhance productivity, in the agricultural sector, the role of non-agricultural activities in rural poverty reduction cannot be overemphasized.

It may be appropriate here to briefly refer to a specific study that examined calories available by different classes of farms. The reference area is very small, and the results can in no way be generalized for the whole of Nepal, but they are very suggestive of the extensive nature of poverty [in terms of basic survival] in one area in the hills and the mountains. This is shown in Table 9. "The figures above suggest that a great majority of the farm holdings [in the hills] could not support those living on them anywhere near an adequate nutritional level. Particularly alarming is the high percentage [38%] of farm holdings with an average supporting capacity of only some 1500 cal/day/ACU". [Birgegard, 1978:25].

**Table 9**

*Distribution of Farm Holdings on Size-Classes Defined to Reflect Supporting Capacity*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Farm Holding</th>
<th>Calorie Intake Per day from grain output</th>
<th>Average Calorie intake/ per day ACU in class*</th>
<th>Percent of Households in class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extremely small</td>
<td>1550 or less</td>
<td>1205</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very small</td>
<td>1500 - 2250</td>
<td>1945</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small</td>
<td>2250 or more</td>
<td>3255</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Recommended calorie levels are:

Sedentary work     2400 cal/day/ ACU
Moderate Work       2800
Heavy Work          2900
b. **Income Levels**

It has already been pointed out earlier that income levels in Nepal are very low and one of the lowest in the world. A number of efforts have been made to measure rural incomes in Nepal, and all of them also suggest that the levels of poverty are very high.

In 1973, ARTEP made a study of number of villages both in the hills and the Tarai and arrived at a figure of Rs. 308 and Rs. 429 respectively in the hills and the Tarai. Both of these figures were found to be substantially below the minimum required annual per capita expenditure. [ARTEP, 1982: 51].

According to the survey by the National Planning Commission in 1976/77, the per capita income stood at Rs. 1038 which is lower than the figures derived from the national income estimates. Although more will be said about the distribution of this income, the same survey also showed that an average rural household would require an annual income of more than Rs. 3500 in 1975/76 to meet the minimum expenditure level for basic requirements of family [ARTEP, 1982: 52].

c. **Employment Levels**

In view of the very limited study on the subject, the estimates given by the National Planning Commission in 1976/77 are reported. The report estimates a rural unemployment rate of 5.57 percent. For the remaining labour force, it was pointed out that of the 273.58 workdays available, only 101.04 [36.93] days were actual workdays. According to the study, the total unutilized labour accounting for unemployment and under-employment was 65.13. These figures were based on the survey taken at the beginning of the Fifth Plan [1976/77]. Today, the country is in the middle of its Sixth Plan. Hopefully, these two developmental plans will have improved the employment situation to some extent, but it is difficult to show this quantitatively.

d. **Inequality**

Inequality will be discussed with reference to land holdings and incomes. In so far as the distribution of ownership of landholdings are concerned, the ARTEP study shows increasing gini coefficients of 0.556 and 0.687 for 1961 and 1971 respectively. [ARTEP, 1982: 63:]. These are obviously one of the highest in the region.
Table 10.

Indices of Income Inequality for Rural Nepal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>NPC Survey</th>
<th>ARTEP Survey 1973</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hills</td>
<td>Tarai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income share of the</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>poorest 40% of the</td>
<td>8.69</td>
<td>13.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>households</td>
<td></td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income share of the</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>richest 20% of the</td>
<td>59.72</td>
<td>49.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>households</td>
<td></td>
<td>56.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income share of the</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>richest 10% of the</td>
<td>46.73</td>
<td>32.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>households</td>
<td></td>
<td>38.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gini coefficient</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>0.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Regarding income distribution, the ARTEP report again shows increasing concentration. This is shown in Table 10. A similar contrast between the top and bottom quartiles is indicated by another survey for a more recent period and for a smaller region. The study points out that the average annual households income of the lowest quartile in Rasuwa and Nuwakot districts was lower by 4.7 and 5.8 times respectively than the upper quartile in the two districts. [DRCG: 1982].

Conclusion

There are many other aspects of the Nepalese economy that have not been discussed in this review. Rapid population growth, environmental problems across the hills, questions of resource mobilization, increasing imbalance in exports and imports, and issues relating to urbanization are some of the other important issues. However, the basic issue of poverty eradication and improvement in the levels of living of the people cannot be sidetracked. Many of the problems in the other sectors are manifestations of the growing poverty in the country, and these different sectors must be meaningfully associated with improvements in the levels of poverty. The discussion on the different dimensions of rural poverty clearly indicated that improvements have been slow, if at all.
There is no better way of closing this review than by reiterating King Birendra's concern regarding the urgency to fulfil the basic needs of the Nepalese people by A.D. 2000. This is both a critique of three decades of development planning as well as a guideline for the future thrust of planning in Nepal. It is also a major challenge before the Nepalese people as it is a call for achieving in 15 years what Nepal was unable to accomplish in 30 years under relatively more favourable circumstances regarding population growth, environmental deterioration, and levels of investments.

References

Nepal's is an economy whose state of backwardness is at odds with the pronounced emphasis placed on its development in political rhetoric, bureaucratic exercises, intellectual discussions and the administration of foreign aid. The country is launching its seventh development plan, but it is as poor, agrarian, rural and technologically backward now as when it embarked upon the road to economic and social development more than three decades ago. Besides, barring some achievements in the fields of health, education and some other infrastructures, the overall productive base of the economy is more fragile now than ever before. By productive base we mean the underlying factors that determine the economy's real capacity to produce goods and services including access to resources for their conversion into higher-value intermediate and final goods, and the degree of diversification in the origin of production and, therefore, in the structure of employment. In over thirty years of development efforts Nepal has seen no improvement in the productivity of the agricultural sector; there has been very little diversification to permit the increasing labour force to seek employment and income outside of agriculture; and the population growth rate has accelerated to make further demands upon the already precariously placed people-land-forests and overall-ecological balance in the country. On the external front, the deficits in trade and current accounts are increasing rapidly, with only foreign aid enabling Nepal to maintain a semblance of external balance. But, here too, there are clear indications that Nepal's inability to develop production for exports and to curb imports of items necessary only for government revenue and private profiteering will tell upon its ability to manage external finance even with the help of foreign aid. And, foreign aid itself is being used increasingly to finance consumption and meet other current liabilities of the government without helping to build-up and diversify the national productive capacity of the country.
That such process can continue over a long period, despite its very serious and adverse long-term implications for the country’s economic viability can be understood better in the context of the nature of Nepal’s political economy. The state of a country’s economy is a product of its resource endowments and the character of the dominant coalition of interests in a society. Often, the latter is more important than the former because in today’s world as in yesterday’s, resources are not only God-given but also created by men and women who value creativity and change. In Nepal, the dominant coalition which consists of big landowners, traders, a small group of political and bureaucratic elite and, now increasingly, the educated elite, who also derive their rental incomes from their cosmetic value to the political regime, has a vested interest in the maintenance of status quo, so that the coalition remains small and yet dominant. Unlike in various other developing countries, the dominant coalition in Nepal is devoid of an agricultural or industrial capitalist class, which mobilises and activates the productive forces, even if it is largely for its own benefit. As a result Nepal has not had the benefit of even unequal growth with unequal accumulation of capital for redeployment and reproduction. The duality in Nepal’s economy to the extent that it has been sharpened by recent development efforts is largely a product of landowners having also become real-estate owners in Kathmandu or political power brokers having also become commissioned agents of foreign export-houses, or other members of the elite in the dominant coalition deriving their rental income from similar sources. As a consequence, the growth of a “modern” sector is discernible not so much in the development of manufacturing and other directly productive enterprises as in such beneficiaries of public investment as construction, real estate, trade or finance.

Even in the formative years of modern Nepal, some “economic development” took place in the country. But at that time also, it ocurred in areas and forms that suited the ruling interests. To the extent that such development helped finance Nepal’s territorial expansion and to the extent that such expansion was necessary for the sustenance of Nepal as an economically viable nation-state, the interest of the ruling minority might have coincided, in this respect, with that of the people at large. But such convergence of interests, if any, seems to have ended there. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, and more so in the nineteenth, as the main resource of the time was land with or without forests on them, the dominant coalition consisting of the ruling aristocracy, military and the bureaucracy devised policy measures to exploit this resource with means available then. This included use of such external inputs as encouragement of
immigration from India for the exploitation of virgin lands in Nepal. Such steps helped increase production at home enlarging the scope for surplus extraction in the name of the state, increase exports of timber, paddy and other primary products, and sustenance of a life style for the ruling elite whose consumption was becoming increasingly import-dependent. The system of ownership, production and redistribution of assets was devised in such a manner that the churning of the economic machine, which consisted mainly of peasant producers, sharecroppers, and agricultural labourers producing for their subsistence and their masters' surpluses, would simultaneously grease the wheels of a socio-political order that depended upon such relationships in production and distribution. The coalition of an authoritarian but weak superstructure at the centre, in terms of financial, communication and managerial means available to the state, with isolated chieftains of various sorts at the local levels, played a mutually supportive role at the cost of a majority who were not a part of the dominant coalition. The coalition members at the centre received rents and revenue to augment personal and public [which was indistinguishable from private] finances, while the local overlords maintained law and order extracting their own shares of the surpluses as they went along.

Of late, many observers of Nepali history and political economy have tended to emphasize, some explicitly and others implicitly, that the basic elements of the dominant coalition has not changed much over the years in Nepal to make a significant difference in the structure and performance of the country's economy. The coalition as well as its spoils is now manifested in different forms, but the substance appears to have remained essentially the same. The landlords might have been relegated to a lower tier in the hierarchy of proprietary classes; but licensing and public procurement authority has become the jagir system of our day, monopolistic rights for running import and agency houses bestowed upon a privileged few constitute the birta awards; and foreign aid now plays some of the role land played in the old feudal system. Its spoils are apportioned to reward specific members or groups in the dominant coalition in much the same way as land was given away as birtas or jagirs in the days gone by.

Meanwhile, even if the content of the dominant coalition and its interest have not changed, the forces of nature are giving birth to new concerns and interests which make the longevity of such coalition less certain for the future. The movement of time alone acting on the country's demographic and natural resources position, with all the implications for the availability and use of life-supporting matters have added a new urgency for measures to support the Kingdom's quest for survival and development.
II

Resource-wise, even for a committed government and the best of planners and implementors, Nepal’s is not an easy economy to develop. Its geographic handicap as a land-locked country is universally recognized. Even the prospect of agriculture, especially crop farming, is limited by topography. Its principal mineral deposits, discovered so far consist of boulders, limestone, magnesite and some lead and zinc. The small deposits of iron ore that have so far been indicated have yet to prove their economic viability. This is obviously a too inadequate base to support mineral-based industry in Nepal. Some hints of petroleum deposits have recently been found, but it is premature to speculate at this stage.

Nepal’s additional problem is that its resources, limited as they are, have also been mis-managed. Forests have traditionally constituted a vital natural resource of the country. But the supply is dwindling rapidly. The official position is that the pressure has come from a growing population which depends upon forest resources to meet 90 percent of its energy needs and to eke out a living by bringing additional land, however unsuitable it might be for cultivation, under the plough. This is true. More significantly, however, forests in Nepal have rarely been considered by the ruling interests a resource of industrial or even commercial importance. They have always been regarded as no more than a source of government revenue from royalties and duties on timber exports to India, and as a means of rewarding the groups in the dominant coalition including the bureaucracy and traders and brokers of various kinds. As a result, the area covered by forests has declined from 6.5 million hectares in 1964 to 4 million hectares in 1980. Since then, there has been an even more rapid decline. Even those areas that are officially marked as forest areas are largely denuded, especially in the hills. There is thus very little scope for starting a forest-based industry in Nepal for a long time to come even if earnest efforts were to be made in this respect. In fact, the main concern in the forestry sector is now to restore its importance, not as an economic enterprise directly, but as an instrument of maintaining ecological balance and counteracting the threat of large-scale erosion, landslides and creeping desertification.

Agriculture also is seriously constrained by inadequate resource base. For an agricultural economy, land is one of the most scarce resources in Nepal. There are various estimates of arable land in the country. Even if we take the highest estimate of 3 million hectare of land that was reportedly under cultivation in
1981, it gives less than 0.2 hectare of land per head of population in a country where more than 90 percent of the population is dependent upon agriculture for livelihood. The problem is further exacerbated by the continuation of landholding and tenurial patterns that cannot be justified on the ground of either efficiency or justice. Here again, the group to benefit is a relatively small number of medium and big landowners who can derive large surpluses from agriculture even under sup-optimum operation because of the size of their holdings and advantageous position vis-a-vis the actual tillers in sharing the output. Besides, now, many of them have sources of income other than land and, therefore, are even less motivated than before to take agriculture as an economic enterprise.

Under such conditions, raising agricultural productivity becomes very crucial, but for the same reason this task also faces serious handicaps. Since agriculture is likely to remain the predominant source of livelihood for a great majority of the Nepali people, some redistribution of land is essential, no doubt. But even if such a step were possible under Nepal's present socio-political conditions, it would at best be a partial solution. As serious as the problem of large holdings of absentee landlords, there is the pervasive problem of small operational holdings, especially in the hills, making the existing production system unviable even for subsistence production. If consolidation is to be an integral part of any land redistribution programme, as it must be under Nepal's present conditions, it is therefore clear that ownership cannot be the basis for working on land for a large number of the people now dependent upon agriculture. They will either have to leave the land altogether or find a more remunerative and equitable position in the production relationship than now mostly as agricultural labourers. The latter can be possible only with a change in tenurial system so that the bigger landholders also either vacate their lands one way or another or resort to some sort of capitalistic farming system, where they are required to hire labour in a competitive setting and induced to make necessary investment on land to increase productivity.

Economic laws make sure that rent on land is high when this factor of production is scarce relative to labour. Add to this the impact of a historical legacy where access to land was concentrated with a small group of largely absentee landlords, who as holders of jagir, birta or other privileges of exploitation have been the main beneficiary of the produce of the land. It is not difficult to understand the self-inhibiting nature of Nepal's agrarian structure, and its stagnation. Even where the reforms
initiated by the government, with the inactment of the Lands Act 1964, have shown partially successful results in fixing rents and guaranteeing tenancy rights to the cultivators, the impact is more apparent than real. For a tenant, even when he is certified and obliged to pay only fixed rent, who is dependent upon the landlord to meet a myriad of his socio-economic needs including loans for production, consumption and social functions, the latter has his own ways of extracting additional “rent” through exorbitant interest rates or requiring the so-called tenant to provide free services of various kinds. The lot of a greater number of producers who have no guarantee of tenancy and who operate directly or indirectly as casual labourers is obviously worse. During the implementation of the land reform programme, an estimated 40 percent of the tenants were not identified at all. Of about 1.8 million identified, only 300,000 tenants were given the tenancy certificates they were entitled to. To this day, the Land Reforms Ministry, whose raison d’etre is more to project a reformist image of the country to the outside world than to introduce reforms, has not shown any concern or interest in completing this task. Given Nepal’s socio-political structure this in itself is not as surprising a phenomenon as the assessment of national and expatriate experts that the land reform measures fell through in Nepal because of administrative constraints. In fact, the primary reason is the interest of a powerful element in the dominant coalition in the country which has benefitted from the fact that land scarcity serves to perpetuate the bonds of dependency in which a large number of agricultural labourers, tenants, and marginal landholders are locked to sustain the age-old social relationships.

It is for the same reason that land reform has had little effect on the skewed distribution of landholdings also. The records of landholdings are incomplete and inadequate to help understand the real degree of skewness. Even then the official figures indicate that, in 1981, the smallest 50 percent of landowners with an average holding of 0.15 hectare had only 6.6 percent of the total land among them. More importantly, the average holding of this group had fallen from 0.23 hectare in 1961 to 0.15 hectare in 1981. On the other hand, the average holding of highest stratum of farmers increased from 18.16 hectare to 21.78 hectare during the same period. This group of farmers who constitute 0.7 percent of all farming households controlled 13 percent of land. Given Nepal’s overall land resource position, this condition of unequal distribution is of serious importance not so much on grounds of equity and justice — the values about which there can be disagreement — but on the merit of efficient utilization of scarce resources. The large farmers are not tilling their own lands, nor
are they making investment, short-term and long-term, to realize much needed gains in productivity. The actual tillers, whatever their tenurial status, have little incentive or resources to invest or work harder on the land. Those who are working hard are small peasant producers. But the size of their holding is so small that, they can subsist only by working outside their own farms. The opportunity for such work is extremely limited.

With these institutional and structural constraints on one hand and the pressure of population, which is growing at a rate of 2.66 percent for year, on the other, economic diversification becomes a matter of paramount importance in Nepal. But again, this task faces not only the constraint of resources but also the handicap of government policies that put greater emphasis on sources of rental incomes for groups forming the dominant coalition than measures that augment and diversify the productive base of the national economy. In an inherently high-cost economy, due to the country's land-locked position and other handicaps, with added difficulties of markets and resources, industrial development in Nepal requires careful and concerted efforts. However, the government's interest has largely been restricted to rhetoric and enactment of certain laws that are either too cumbersome for implementation or not taken seriously by the government itself. Apart from the problems of adhocism in policies and incentives and the bureaucratic hurdles, a climate has been nurtured in Nepal which systematically stifles genuine entrepreneurship. Nepal's trade and fiscal policies are designed in such a manner that they are increasingly dependent upon an import regime which encourages import and re-export of luxury items and some intermediate goods required by industries not based in Nepal. This policy yields revenue for the government to support its development posture, bureaucratic expansion and political patronage. Revenue mobilisation which, in the aggregate, appears satisfactory, even though its base is tenuous and fragile, helps augment the political regime's legitimacy for additional external aid, which is also used to strengthen the power base of the dominant coalition. The same policy also provides benefits to traders and other members of the business community whose short-term interests are in conflict with the long-term considerations required for the pursuit of a genuine economic diversification policy. There is ample scope to make maximum profit with minimum risk in import trade or the so-called industries [that are supposed to assemble watches or transistor radios or other items in which value-added is very low or negligible except for the profits of the proprietors most of which also get repatriated] that do more importing than manufacturing. No individual or enterprise is, therefore, likely to channel its
resources and efforts into productive activities that are inherently risky and with long gestation periods. It is now widely recognized that it is this policy which is more responsible than anything else for Nepal's industrial standstill.

This phenomenon can be analysed from another political economy viewpoint also. It cannot be ruled out that, beneath the developmental and modernization rhetoric, there is a conscious attempt in Nepal to let the industrial sector retard. It is natural for the members and groups in the dominant coalition to want to retain the ways of life and political influence which, for them, have been their's always. That economic development is the over objective of the government suits them fine because, among other things, it brings in benefits in the form of foreign aid on which the same groups have the first claim. But this group cannot be expected to encourage the growth of a sector, namely, manufacturing, which can simultaneously give rise to independent classes of national capitalists and industrial labour both of which can be antagonistic not only to each other but also to the prevailing ruling interests. The garment “industry” that has flourished in and around Kathmandu to exploit the special preferences granted by industrialized countries to Nepal in the latter's status as a least developed country is a case in point. This industry of foreigners by foreigners for foreigners might appear incongruous to the rational mind of a Nepali economist, who sees in it a tremendous potential for developing a labour-intensive industry to absorb the Nepali labour force and to ultimately develop even a textile industry of our own. But for the members of the dominant coalition, what better way is there than the current practice to ensure that the government earns convertible foreign exchange through the export of manufactured items without permitting a substantial role for national capitalists or creating conditions for the emergence of an industrial labour force? As far as industrial labour is concerned is not this the practice that has been followed in some of the older industries in eastern Nepal which continue to rely on imported labour which always feels insecure and unable to organize itself? Furthermore, one can also argue that industries have not developed in Nepal because there is a conflict of interest, in direct economic terms, between manufacturing activities and those from which important sections of the dominant coalition derive their economic rewards. Those who draw rental incomes as commissioned agents or make huge profits as importers and re-exporters are not likely to look at the growth of import-substituting or export-oriented enterprises favourably. Even the government would rather use its limited foreign exchange for the import of luxury goods that carry high import duty than industrial machinery and raw materials that
bring little or no revenue to the government, in the short run. On
the other hand, if there was a class which was interested in
industrial development, it would even be supportive of a measure
like land reform because of the impact it would have on
agriculture production and therefore, on industrial development.
Development of agriculture expands market for industrial goods,
provides raw materials and increases the rate of capital
accumulation in a society. In Nepal, there is no group in the
dominant coalition with a vested interest in such process of
development. The financial resources that are set-aside by the
government regularly for development of manufacturing in the
private sector are routinely diverted to another area of priority to
the ruling the interests, namely, hotel industry. It is disheartening
enough to note that in 26 years of its history, Nepal Industrial
Development Corporation disbursed a meagre sum of Rs. 52
crores as loans to industries in the private sector. This works out
as an average of Rs. 2 crores a year, when the Land Reforms
Ministry with little or no function to perform spends almost Rs. 3
crores a year on largely administrative expenses. Out of the total
amount disbursed as industrial loans, 40 percent has gone to the
hotel industry whose contribution to the national economy
cannot be substantial as long as it is out of step with
manufacturing and even agriculture. Tourism does have a special
role and potential in Nepal as a source of economic diversification.
But this potential cannot be realised even for the proprietors, let
alone the nation, when apparently 65 percent of the bed capacity
in hotels remains unutilized, as in 1982. This is not an atypical
year. In 1981 and 1983, the bed utilization in Kathmandu was only
35.8 percent and 32.9 percent respectively. If there has been some
improvements since then, it is due to the heavy discounts granted
to Indian tourists who pay three-star tariff for facilities that
required “five-star investment” to create them. Why the hotels
don’t close down in spite of such apparently adverse conditions is
a separate subject of study. Besides, development of tourism as an
industry with linkages with other productive enterprises in the
nation, suffers from the same socio-political constraints as the
manufacturing activity.

That the ruling elite lack adequate motivation for
economic diversification is also demonstrated by their inability so
far to make use of one important economic resource the country
has, namely, water. People in Nepal, politicians and professionals
alike, are fond of quoting the theoretical potential of generating
83,000 megawatt of hydro-power from the country’s river systems.
But at the beginning of the seventh development plan, the country
has an installed capacity of only 131 megawatt of hydro-power.
This is not to imply that exploiting the potential is an easy task.
The problem is not only one of raising adequate finance for investment. A more difficult task is one of securing market for the sale of power — a matter which is linked with contentious international issues that need to be resolved. And certainly, India’s attitude has not always been helpful. But precisely because serious issues are involved, this task needs to be taken up more seriously especially since the need for exploiting this resource is greater now than ever before. Here it is interesting to note that despite Nepal’s landlocked position and the difficulties of transit it faces for trade with overseas countries, Nepal has been able, by and large, to work out ways and means of expanding trade with various countries. It is evident that Nepal has been able to put its points across to India periodically to obtain required facilities and to allay the latter’s fear about deflection of trade, a euphemism for smuggling across Nepal-India border. It can be hypothesized that this has become possible because of the existence of lobbies in both countries which together form a broader regional coalition of common interests in both societies. Unfortunately, no such constituency appears visible in the case of water resources in either country. To the extent that power projects bring lucrative contracts to the interested parties, the potential gain appears too distant to them in relation to the opportunities available elsewhere.

Loss has been incurred not only in terms of the benefits foregone of hydro-power but also the immense potential of expanding irrigation which remains unexploited. It has been reported that 70 percent of agricultural land in Nepal can be irrigated with its water resources. At present, only 16 percent of the total cultivated area falls under the command area of the nation’s irrigation systems. Even this estimate is, in reality, on the high side, because there is wide discrepancy between command area and the actual area which receives water for crops.

Another economic resource Nepal has is its labour force. The picture is not encouraging in this front either. There is a vast reservoir of unemployed and underemployed labour force which is growing rapidly under the twin influence of population growth on the one hand and lack of additional opportunities for productive employment on the other. The number of people classified as “economically active” increased from 4.85 million in 1971 to 6.85 million in 1981 which gives an annual compound growth rate of 3.51 percent — far exceeding the annual growth rate of the total population which is 2.66 percent. To what extent the “economically active” population is also gainfully employed is a moot question in Nepal in view of the difficulties inherent in interpreting census data and lack of any other studies on this subject. If economically active population is growing at a rate
faster than the growth of population, this would mean that the proportion of the economically inactive, and by inference those who are unemployed is declining in the country. In fact, there is no evidence that this is happening. More likely, what is happening is that the growing labour force, no matter how it is defined is being "absorbed" mostly in the agriculture sector, where under existing technological condition, there already is "surplus labour". In other words, a large proportion of the so-called economically active population is under-employed as indicated by the survey carried out by the National Planning Commission in 1975/76. It reports that underemployed days per household and per worker in rural Nepal are as high as 63 percent. Not that there is not a possibility of increasing productive employment within the agriculture sector. This would require a change in cropping intensity and other aspects of farm practices which would increase the demand for labour. This, in turn, would necessitate a change in the institutional structure in agriculture and require, in particular, irrigation facilities for round-the-year farming — both of which are not forthcoming under existing socio-political conditions as discussed earlier. The possibility of absorbing additional labour outside the agriculture sector is again a function of economic diversification which is also not an area of interest to the dominant coalition that influences economic policies in the country.

Where some additional employment opportunities are created due to public and private investment in the public works and housing sectors, such opportunities are availed by immigrant labour from across the border in India. Lack of emphasis on skill development inside the country and general uncompetitiveness of Nepali labour vis-a-vis its Indian counterpart are factors responsible for this phenomenon. But there is nothing inherent in the socio-psychological characteristics of Nepali labour that restricts its mobility or motivation as demonstrated by the practice of Nepali people themselves migrating, seasonally or for a longer period, to various provinces in India to work on farms, factories, public works projects or households. Why Indian labourers find it remunerative and attractive to exploit job opportunities in Nepal, be it in the agricultural farms during peak seasons or in public and private construction, while Nepali labour force, instead of adjusting itself to the opportunities in the country prefers to look for jobs in India is a riddle that has not been explored in depth in Nepal. In any case, one of the biggest problems confronting the Nepali economy now is to find ways of absorbing the more than 200,000 people that are entering the labour force every year, not to speak of the need to find productive avenues for the vast number of already unemployed and underemployed citizens.
If we may now come back to our original premise that a country’s economic condition is governed by its resource endowments and the character of dominant coalition in the power structure, we can see how both these elements have conspired to place Nepal’s economy in its prolonged state of stagnation or, as some would say, retrogression. Throughout its development history, the rate of growth of gross domestic product in Nepal has fluctuated around a little over 2 percent per year. Between 1974/75 and 1981/82, the years for which reasonably consistent national accounts data are available, the trend rate of growth appears to have reached 3 percent per year. But with population also having increased at a rate of 2.7 percent per year, there has been virtually no change in the level of per capita income which currently stands at US$ 160.00. The sectoral performance is even more disheartening. During the same period, agriculture production increased at a rate of around 1 percent per year which means that, on a per capita basis, agriculture production including foodgrain production has been declining. Manufacturing sector also grew at a rate of only 1.6 percent per year. The sectors that have shown some buoyancy are precisely those that have a direct link with the interests of important groups in the dominant coalition — contractors, commissioned agents and real estate owners. The construction sector has grown at a rate of 13.3 percent per year, transport and communication at a rate of 9.5 percent and real estate and finance at a rate of 4 percent per year. Such development would have been a perfectly healthy and welcome phenomenon if it was accompanied by a growth in commodity producing sectors also. But that has not been the case. In addition, there has been little or no change in the sectoral distribution of national output. Agriculture continues to contribute 60 percent of GDP and manufactures less than 4 percent as was the case in the early 1960’s.

On the employment side, there is no indication of any shift taking place in its structure either. Close to 93 percent of the labour force continues to be engaged in the primary sector, which mainly means agriculture in Nepal, as was more or less the case two decades ago. The 1981 census shows that employment in the secondary sector has actually gone down with only 0.57 percent of labour force engaged in this activity in 1981 as compared to 1.21 percent in 1971. If census data are to be believed, employment in the manufacturing sector has declined in absolute terms from
about 52,000 in 1971 to 33,000 in 1981. Such data need to be interpreted cautiously, no doubt. Nevertheless, there is no evidence that new opportunities have been created outside the non-agricultural sector, other than perhaps in the small service sector, for the absorption of additional labour force to a significant degree.

This failure, until now, to achieve even a moderate rate of growth in output or initiate a process of much needed structural transformation of the economy is bound to be a burden on Nepal's future. Resources available to help lighten this burden is likely to be more limited in the future than in the past. In the agricultural sector, so far, even the miserably low level of production could be maintained only because the cultivated area was increased markedly. Between 1975 and 1980 only, 800,000 hectares of additional land was brought under cultivation much of it at the cost of pasture and tree cover needed for human, animal and plant life. Much of it also at the cost of land productivity. Any new attempt to bring additional land under the plough is sure to take the country ecologically closer to the brink of disaster, and would not add much to total production.

The internal and external financial situation is also emerging as a serious problem. While this was not an area of major concern in the past, when the government was plagued by a different problem of not having the capacity to spend available funds, the constraint of financial resources is now responsible for the rather modest investment envisaged for the seventh plan. Over the years, domestic savings rate had begun to rise gradually reaching about 11 percent of gross domestic product towards the end of 1970's. This trend was checked in 1979/80 with the ratio actually declining since then and reaching 9 percent of GDP in 1982/83. Since then, this ratio is hovering around 10 percent of GDP. Public savings defined as a difference between the government's current receipts and regular expenditure are declining as a percentage of development expenditure because regular expenditures are increasing more rapidly than revenue. The growth rate in government revenue, which used to be respectable until recently, has slowed down considerably because indirect taxes are reaching a point of saturation while the dominant coalition does not approve, in practice, of direct taxes on income, land or other property as an important source of public revenue. The other potential source of public savings, namely the surpluses of public enterprises is non-existent, because the use of public enterprises as an instrument for bureaucratic expansion leading to inefficiency and corruption and as a source of indirect subsidy to various elements in the dominant coalition has actually meant a perennial drain on public resources. Because
of declining current surpluses, borrowing both internal and external, has become the major source of financing capital expenditure. The share of capital expenditure [not to be confused with “development expenditure” as defined in the government budgets] in total expenditure is itself declining because of growing government consumption. This indicates that the government is borrowing more and more to finance its consumption rather than just investment. Until the end of the 1970’s, government budgetary deficit used to be negligible in absolute and relative terms. In 1980/81, this deficit, defined as internal borrowing plus changes in cash balance, was 0.4 percent of GDP and 2.7 percent of total government expenditure. In 1982/83 such deficit as a percentage of GDP and total government expenditure reached 6.1 percent and 29.5 percent respectively. In 1983/84 government deficit as indicated by these ratios had fallen, but it again showed an increasing trend in 1984/85. What this means is that the urge which the government feels to increase consumption and transfer expenditures in support of its constituent elements in the dominant coalition has not wavered in spite of the looming financial crisis.

Pressure is mounting on external payments situation also. Traditionally, even with a substantial trade deficit, Nepal's balance of payments used to remain favourable largely due to the contribution of foreign aid. But it is no longer the case with three years beginning with the fiscal year 1982/83 ending with an overall payments deficit. In the past, Nepal held foreign exchange reserves that was embarrassingly large in relation to its import requirements. Such reserves also provided the cushion for a liberal import policy which, in turn, helped to sustain some increase in government revenue due to higher collections from import duty and sales tax. Now, despite increased disbursement of foreign aid from increasing number of sources, foreign exchange reserves have dwindled to a barely acceptable level which is equivalent to three months' imports. Though there has been a reversal in 1983/84 from one of the worst record of the preceding year, rising trade deficit on account of more or less stagnant exports is now a major problem facing the economy. Against the principal constraint of supply, various measures adopted in the past to promote exports, from foreign exchange entitlement for imports to direct cash subsidy, have not been able to establish a durable base of a reasonable variety of export products. The devaluation of Nepali Currency in November 1985 is not likely to be of much help either. Even though Nepal ended with a favourable balance of payments that year, the current account deficit has widened. The balance of payments surplus is the result of a very large increase in external borrowing, and other capital in-
flow and not of a better performance of the trade sector. The heart of the problem lies in the investment climate that is not propitious to investment in commodity production as discussed earlier. To top it all, debt servicing requirement, which as a percentage of export earnings used to be negligible, is gradually becoming a burden on available resources.

The measures that Nepal needs to adopt to help its economy bounce back from the morass it is in are dictated by the nature and the source of the problems themselves. Whether and when such measures will in fact materialize depends upon the nature of a new coalition of interests that is bound to emerge from the contradictions in a stagnant economy, in which the demands placed upon it by influential groups in the current coalition rise to the detriment of its own long-term interest.

This much can also be stressed that the future cannot be like the past if Nepal is to attain economic viability necessary for an independent state. Situated between two Asian giants in a tension-ridden world, Nepal's economy is also a subject of geopolitical significance. The two neighbours are showing unmistakable signs of steadfast progress fueling their aspirations of a dominant power in the region. Nepal's economic stagnation and its implications for internal stability can have repercussions beyond a routine concern for the material quality of life of its citizens.

Notes

1. According to one estimate, 28,000 sq. km. of surface area in various parts of the country already show signs of severe degradation.

2. In calculating these growth rates, we have used the GDP deflator for non-agricultural sector to convert sectoral output from current prices to constant prices, since such deflators are not disaggregated beyond the distinction between agricultural and non-agricultural sectors.

3. An analysis of government expenditure of the period 1979/80 to 1984/85 done at Integrated Development Systems, Kathmandu, shows that the share of current expenditure has gone up from 51.5 percent of total expenditure to 60 percent with a corresponding decline in the share of expenditure on capital formation.
A significant political change took place in Nepal in 1951. This marked not only the onset of a new political order but also the end of isolationist policy of the Rana regime (1846-1951). This aroused new aspirations in the minds of the people. Economic prosperity and social uplift became its immediate objectives. This led to the adoption of planned effort for attaining development and the country's First Five Year Plan was put into operation in 1957. Between 1957 and 1985 six plans were implemented and the current Seventh Plan came into force from July, 1985. During this period, the succeeding plans, compared to the preceding ones, have been bigger in size in terms of total outlay and more ambitious in terms of objectives and targets. The current Seventh Plan aims at raising production at a higher rate, increasing opportunities for productive employment and fulfilling the basic needs of the people like food, clothing, fuel, drinking water, health, education and minimum rural transport facilities at a total outlay of Rs. 50.41 billion. The framers of the current plan justify its form and contents, as in the case of other preceding plans, on the ground of desire and pressing need to have the rapid economic uplift for the people.

While this is the aspiration for the rapid economic progress, realities obtaining in the country do not seem to be conducive to its realization. Indeed, they point even to having many a slip 'twixt the cup and lip', if they could not be made favourable in due course of time. Here is a short catalogue of these grim realities. In spite of the implementation of six plans, the country is still one of the poorest in the world with the per capita income of US dollar 170 (1983) and is beset with the problems of rapid growth of population, stagnation in agricultural production, low adult literacy rate (19 percent). Low average life expectancy (46 years) high infant mortality (about 150 per thousand),
depletion of natural resources and rapid environmental degradation. Above all, the country utterly lacks material means of development. Six plans were implemented mostly at the cost of the friendly countries and international agencies. This heavy dependance syndrome for development in the context of Nepal has been characterised by some knowledgeable quarters as 'foreign aid is development and development to a greater extent, foreign aid'. The Seventh Plan also counts heavily upon foreign aid for its execution. Briefly put, there is gross deficiency of material means of development within the country itself, and foreign aid is the sheet-anchor of the nation's planned efforts.

This banking on foreign aid alone for development should not continue for long. Foreign aid is not an unmixed blessing. While it is true that foreign aid provides initial impetus towards growth, it is also a fact that it brings to the recipient country many unpleasant things in its train. The worst of it is that even if a country prepares itself fully to face all the consequences, it cannot be certain about the magnitude and continuity of foreign aid. Foreign trade is considered to be an alternative instrumentality of development for overcoming initial disadvantages of a developing country like Nepal.

Foreign trade enables a poor country to win through the domestic shortages through importation of material means of development, advanced technical skill and know-how and capital, so necessary for fast economic advance. This apart, by geographical specialisation in which international trade is based, a country can also have more efficient employment of its productive resources. In other words, foreign trade enables a developing country to enjoy increasing returns and economic advancement through specialisation, world-wide distribution and clearing off initial hurdles to growth.

Having made these preliminary observations, we would like to focus on the different aspects of Nepal's foreign trade. Beginning with the presentation of pattern of foreign trade, this paper will take up the discussion of balance of payments position including trade and payments system and exchange rate system. Then the problems confronting the foreign trade of Nepal will be spelt out. Lastly, some policy options are suggested for overcoming these problems.

II Pattern

The undeveloped economy and the failure of six plans to improve the economic conditions of the people have resulted in certain peculiar features on the pattern of foreign trade of Nepal. These features give insight into the problems that confront exports and imports of the country and measures that are required to be undertaken for overcoming those problems. For the sake of
clarity and convenient treatment, the pattern of exports and imports has been discussed separately.

1. Exports

Between 1975/76 and 1984/85 the value of exports increased by 131 percent from Rs. 1185.6 million to Rs. 2440.6 million (see Table 1). Although this increase seems to be impressive, certain depressive features are displayed by the value of exports during the decade which corresponds to Fifth and Sixth Plan periods. While fall in export value for five years is a notable feature during the period, the rise in this value for a year followed by descending value in the succeeding year or years is also an equally notable feature. Both the features are demonstrated by behaviour in exports during 1976/77, 1977/78, 1979/80, 1981/82 and 1982/83.

The value of major exports of the country as compared to the value of total exports did not present an impressive picture. The values of the major exports individually ranged between 11.6 percent and 69.8 percent. While exports of food and live animals rose by about 70 percent, exports of crude materials, inedibles except fuel and exports of manufactured goods classified chiefly by materials increased by 30.6 percent and 11.6 percent respectively. Exports of other manufactured products presented a dismal record showing a fall in the value by 3.4 percent. Erratic behaviour like fall and rise in value was shown by exports of food and live animals and crude materials, inedibles except fuel. But the exports of manufactured goods classified chiefly by materials rose continuously although at highly fluctuating rates.

As regards composition of exports (see Table 1) the share of exports of food and live animals in total exports fell by 68 percent and slumped to just 36 percent between 1975/76 and 1984/85. Crude materials inedibles except fuels maintained its position in total exports by recording its percentage of exports at 17.8 percent in 1984/85 as compared to 19.1 percent in 1975/76. It was the export of manufactured goods classified chiefly by materials and other manufactured products which could demonstrate notable rise of about four times in their shares in total exports as their shares increased from 10.7 percent in 1975/76 to 42.4 percent in 1984/85. Apparently, the downfall in the position of food and live animals and the rise in the position of manufactured goods during the
decade shows the composition of Nepal's exports undergoing significant change indicating even the structural change in the country's economy. In reality, when one probes deeply into the behaviour displayed by these exports in individual years and the quantum of exports of these items, one can easily ascertain certain serious weaknesses of Nepal's exports as well as poor performance of the country's agricultural and industrial sectors (see Table 2). The export of rice presented a very dismal picture as it could account for only 24.1 percent of food and live animals and 8.6 percent of total exports in 1984-85 which was once as high as 64.1 percent and 43.7 percent respectively in 1975/76. Moreover, exports of rice did show serious fluctuations by amounting to as high as Rs. 518 million in 1975/76 and as low as Rs. 11 million apart from continuous fall at fast rate. This depressing picture relating to rice exports is also corroborated by fall in the quantum of exports from 164,901 metric tons in 1975/76 to 52,586 metric tons, a fall by 32 percent (see Table 3). The exports of timber also continuously went down and with the banning of its exports in 1982/83 due to serious deforestation, this item totally disappeared from the list of the country's exports. Of the two major items constituting exports of crude materials, while the export of hides and skin surged up from Rs. 25 million in 1975/76 to Rs. 243 million in 1984/85 recording almost continuous fast rise except in two years, 1982/83–1983/84, the exports of raw jute displayed highly fluctuating behaviour marked by rise from Rs. 66 million in 1975/76 to Rs. 133 million in 1977/78 and falling to Rs. 37 million in 1983/84 and downward trend from 1981/82 onwards. However, the exports of jute goods, an important constituent of exports of manufactured goods, increased from Rs. 61 million in 1975/76 to Rs. 102 million in 1979/80, showing fall to Rs. 38 million in 1980/81 but continuously rising from Rs. 83 million in 1981/82 onwards to Rs. 254 million in 1984/85. Of the other major items of exports of manufactured goods, while carpets showed a phenomenal rise from Rs. 9 million in 1975/76 to Rs. 249 million in 1984/85, handicrafts displayed a continuous rise at a fast rate from just Rs. 13 million in 1975/76 to Rs. 42 million in 1978/79, then fell to Rs. 38 million in 1979/80 and rise to Rs. 86 million in 1980/81 and thereafter stuck to the level of almost Rs. 13 million except in 1983/84 when the value of exports of carpets was Rs. 9 million. The only new export item that emerged during the later part of the decade and
that recorded very impressive performance was the exports of ready-made garments, which figuring first as the item of exports in 1981/82, recorded a rise from Rs. 13 million in that year to Rs. 473 million in 1984/85. In sum, as the performance of major exports of rice and raw jute has been poor and whatever increase in these exports recorded was basically due to increase in their values rather than in volume and exports of manufactured goods consisted of traditional manufactured products rather than new products, the composition of exports presented a picture of bad state of agriculture including low productivity and insignificant improvement in the industrial sector.

One of the special features of Nepal’s foreign trade has been the dominance of trade with India in respects of exports as well as imports. This has resulted in categorising Nepal’s international transactions into those with India and those with overseas countries, which include all countries other than India and analysing this aspect of the nation’s economy almost as a matter of convention. During the decade 1975/76 — 1984/85, the exports to India underwent a great fall from 75 percent of the total exports in 1975/76 to 39 percent in 1979/80 and then rapidly picked up and increased from 60 percent in 1980/81 to 73 percent in 1982/83 [see Table 4]. However, exports to India again decreased to 68 percent in 1983/84 and 58 percent in 1984/85. In short, although India’s share in Nepal’s exports considerably fell by 17 percent during the period 1975/76-1984/85 and reached to lowest level of 39 percent once in 1979/80, it still accounts for as high as 58 percent as shown by exports to India in 1984/85. Of the countries other than India, the major buyers of Nepalese products are European countries [such as Federal Republic of Germany, the United Kingdom], the USSR and the USA.

2. Imports

The value of imports surged up almost fourfold from Rs. 1981.8 million to Rs. 7742.1 million during 1975/76—1984/85 [see Table 1]. The rise in imports at fast rate became evident specially after 1977/78 onwards with such rise leapfrogging during bad crop years like 1980/81 and 1982/83 when failure of monsoon led to fall in agricultural production and in turn leading to even considerable increase in imports of foodgrains. In other words, in respect of imports of Nepal, there has always
been rising trend at faster rate during Fifth and Sixth Plan periods with upsurge in the value of imports whenever rain-fed agriculture suffered severe set-back due to failure of monsoon. This behaviour displayed by value of imports becomes evident when increase in imports in individual years over preceding years is analysed. When two abnormal years [1980/81 and 1982/83] are excluded, such increase ranged between 17 percent and 42 percent.

As regards value of major imports, there was considerable increase in values of imports of all items [see Table 1]. In terms of magnitude of increase, while animal and vegetable oils and fats recorded the highest rate [sixteen and half times], it was followed by crude materials and chemical drugs [about five times], manufactured goods classified chiefly by materials and mineral fuels [about four and half times], machinery and transport equipment [four times], other manufactured products and food and live animals [about three times], and tobacco and beverage [about two times].

As regards composition of Nepal's imports [see Table 1] as it stood in 1984/85, one can clearly notice the heavy dependance of the country on imports for its need of manufactured articles including machinery and transport equipment and even food items. The implementation of Fifth and Sixth Plans had virtually no impact on the composition of the country's imports as the shares of all major imports in value of total imports remained almost at the same level between 1975/76 and 1984/85. This is well evidenced by the percentage of share occupied by these imports in total imports in 1975/76 as compared to the situation that prevailed in 1984/85. While imports of manufactured products, machinery and transport equipment, food and live animals, mineral fuels, chemical drugs and crude materials accounted for 36 percent, 21 percent, 14.7 percent, 10.7 percent, 9.6 percent and 4.5 percent respectively of total imports in 1975/76, these import items accounted for 36.5 percent, 21.6 percent, 10 percent, 12 percent, 11.7 percent and 5.5 percent in 1984/85. Over the period of ten years also these imports consistently maintained their position in the country's import trade as these did not show any fluctuating tendency deserving comments. This is evidenced by steady behaviour displayed annually by most prominent imports like manufactured goods, machinery and transport equipment, food, mineral fuels and chemical drugs during the ten year period. Of the imports of manufactured goods,
textiles constitute as major items.

Imports from India fell by 15 percent as India's share in Nepal's imports decreased from 65.5 percent in 1975/76 to 50.3 percent in 1984/85. The annual change in imports from India shows the continuous decline from 1975/76 to 1980/81 and from 1982/83 onwards, this declining trend seems to have been reversed with the steady improvement in India's share in Nepal's import trade. As evidenced by the situation obtaining in 1983/84, in terms of their shares of the country's total imports, major suppliers to Nepal after India, are Japan [10.8 percent], of USSR [8.2 percent], Federal Republic of Germany [3.2 percent], Singapore [2.4 percent], and the USA [2.2 percent]. The countries to record notable increase during the period in their shares in Nepal's import trade are Japan [increase by two and half times from 3.9 percent to 10.8 percent], FRG [increase by three times from 1 percent to 3.2 percent] and Hongkong [increase by two times from 0.7 percent to 1.8 percent]. During the period, both Asia [excluding India] and Europe [except USSR] improved their shares in Nepal's import trade fourfold. However, Asia including India, figured almost as monopolising Nepal's import trade as it supplied 80 percent of Nepal's requirements and Europe's share remained at 9 percent.

III. Balance of Payments

Nepal's balance of payments has been in surplus from 1975/76 to 1981/82 [see Table 5]. However, a sharp swing from surplus to deficit evidenced in 1982/83 and balance of payments sharply deteriorated in the following two years also. As a result, overall balance was in deficit amounting to Rs. 502 million in 1982/83, Rs. 126 million in 1983/84 and Rs. 835 million in 1984/85. The principal factors accounting for the situation were large decline in agricultural exports because of drought and the fast rise in imports caused by steeply rising government expenditures.

If one analyses the main components of the balance of payments, one can see that the recent balance of payments deterioration was in part culmination of adverse trends over many years. Nepal's trade deficit had been rising steadily since the mid 1970s; by 1982/83, it was more than six times as large as in 1975/76. Exports were stagnant during the period 1975/76-1982/83 with the exception of a sharp increase in 1980/81. While the worsening position of exports in 1982/83 was mainly caused by drought induced decline in agricultural production, relatively
better position in 1980/81 was due to favourable weather leading to recovery in agriculture. On the other hand, the value of imports rose about four times during 1975/76-1984/85, as the annual average growth rate was well above 7 percent. The average annual volume increase was well over 7 percent for non-aid imports and more than 9 percent for aid-related imports. This rise in imports was considerably higher than average growth rate of real GDP. As a result of the divergent trend for exports and imports, the ratio of exports to imports declined from 63 percent in 1975/76 to 30 percent in 1981/82 and further to 16 percent in drought-stricken year 1982/83. But there was improvement in the situation with the ratio of exports to imports rising to 26 percent in 1983/84 and to 35 percent in 1984/85 due to favourable weather leading to recovery in agricultural production and exports.

Between 1975/76 and 1982/83 the sharply widening of the deficits on trading account were partially offset by increased surpluses from net services and transfers. In most years net receipts from services rose strongly reflecting mainly tourist receipts. The rising private transfer receipts was mainly caused by increasing remittances by the Nepalese soldiers serving abroad. There was substantial increase in official grants from third countries also during this period. This led to sharp increase in combined surplus in the services and transfer accounts between 1975/76 and 1982/83. However, in terms of proportion of the trading deficit, this combined surplus declined from over 120 percent in 1975/76 to less than 70 percent in 1982/83. As a result, the current account balance deteriorated from surplus of around 1 percent of GDP [in the SDR 11-14 million range] during 1975/76 and 1976/77 to a deficit of 1.2 percent of GDP [SDR 27 million] in 1981/82 and a deficit of 4.4 percent of GDP [SDR 105 million] in 1982/83. Excluding official transfers, the current account balance deteriorated from a deficit of 1.2 percent GDP in 1975/76 to deficits of 5 percent of GDP in 1981/82 and 9 percent of GDP in 1982/83. The recovery in agricultural production and merchandise exports, however, led to some improvement in the situation in the following years of 1983/84 and 1984/85 when the current account deficit was about 8 percent of GDP. One may argue in favour of negative current balance as it implies net borrowing from abroad, for a developing country like Nepal but the rising deficit in the current account in relation to GDP is undoubtedly an undesirable development.

Until 1982/83, the impact of rising trade and current account deficits on overall balance of payments was cushioned by increasing receipts of official grants and foreign loans on highly concessionary terms. Thus after the moderate deficit of 1977/78, the overall balance was in surplus in every year until 1982/83 and
the country had built up a total gross international reserve equal to seven to eight months of import coverage. However, in 1982/83 a large deficit in overall balance was incurred. Since then official grants and loans on concessional terms have not been adequate enough to offset the widening deficits in the current account and overall balance continued to be in deficit. The overall deficits have been financed, by drawing down the international reserves [see Table 5.] As a result, by June, 1985, the gross official international reserves decreased to 1.6 months of imports compared with the peak of 6.2 months at the end of 1981/82.

Nepal’s outstanding long and medium-term external public debts, the bulk of which consisted of concessional loans from foreign governments and international agencies increased from the equivalent of about 4 percent of GDP in mid-1970s to about 12 percent of GDP in 1983/84. Between 1980/81 and 1984/85, the concessionary loans amounted to US dollar 785 million. The government has also contracted commercial loans amounting to US dollar 46.7 million during the period 1980/81-1984/85. Suppliers’ credit tied to specific projects mostly constituted these commercial loans, There has been steady increase in debt service ratio to exports of goods and services between 1975/76 and 1984/85. While the debt service ratio varied within a range of 2 to 4 percent of exports of goods and services during 1975/76-1981/82, it increased in 1982/83 to 7 percent due to sharp decline in exports. However, there has been improvement in the situation due to debt service ratio being 4 percent in 1984/84 and 5.3 percent 1984/85.

**Trade and Payments System**

The peculiarity of Nepal’s economic relationship and open border arrangements with India have provided some special features to trade and payments arrangements between the two countries. These features are that Nepal’s exchange rate system and trade police may not differ too much from those of India. Trade and payments with India are essentially free of quantitative and other restrictions.

Exports of goods of Nepalese origin to India are not usually subjected to any restrictions, but exports to other countries require export licenses. The exchange proceeds from exports other than Indian rupees must be surrendered to the country’s central bank, the Nepal Rastra Bank or to an authorised bank within six months from the date of goods exported from the country. Exports to countries other than India were first promoted by the Exporters’ Exchange Entitlement Scheme [EEE] and then a dual exchange rate [basic rate and second rate], but are now
promoted by subsidies. While the proceeds of exports to India may be obtained in Indian rupees, proceeds from other countries must be received in any of the quoted convertible currencies.

The trade and transit treaties between Nepal and India provide for freedom of trade between the two countries in goods of Nepalese and Indian origin. In principle, Indian goods can be imported freely. However, some Indian goods are subject to quota system for preventing their reexportation to India and some others are subject to export ceilings in India. Excise duties levied on Indian goods that are imported by Nepal are refunded by the government of India to His Majesty's Government of Nepal. Payments for imports that are made through banking system must be on a letter of credit basis. However, imports from India can be settled outside the banking system. Although payments for imports from India are usually made in Indian rupees, convertible currencies are provided for such imports by the Nepal Rastra Bank on the recommendation of Finance Ministry of His Majesty's Government of Nepal.

Official exchange is not normally provided to Nepalese citizens for capital remittances. But conditions relating to receipts and remittances of capital transactions are not specified. Investment by resident or non-resident Nepalese citizens in foreign countries is prohibited. However, some investments like purchase and sale of insurance policies abroad, investments abroad by banks or financial institutions incorporated in Nepal and purchase of shares of foreign companies, are allowed and special notices are issued by the government for these purposes.

*Exchange Rate System*

Till June, 1983, Nepal has maintained fixed exchange rates against both the Indian rupee and the US dollar. Whenever there was divergence between Indian rupee and US dollar, there used to be broken cross rates. In order to overcome the problem of broken cross rates, peg against these two currencies used to be revised. But the frequency of such changes was higher in respect of US dollar than that of Indian rupee. Between October 9, 1975 and June 1, 1983, peg against the US dollar was revised four times but peg against the Indian rupee was changed only once. This points to Nepal being engaged in multiple currency practices: a fixed exchange rate pegged to the Indian rupee with the US dollar peg being adjusted when the cross rates diverged very much. During seventies multiple currency practices resulted also from the Exporters' Exchange Entitlement Scheme [EEE] and proportionality requirements on imports. Under the EEE scheme, an exporter to a country other than India would, on surrendering
his export earnings, receive not only the equivalent in Nepalese rupees, but also an entitlement to purchase a certain amount of foreign exchange for the import of goods not otherwise licensed. The amount represented a proportion of the export earnings which varied with the kind of commodity exported. Although exports beyond the Indian markets might not be profitable to exporter, the imports he could obtain by using his exchange entitlements could be sold at a profit, generating a profit on the transactions as a whole. The EEE Scheme was replaced on March 30, 1978 by introducing a dual exchange rate system and this system was also abolished on September 19, 1981 by the adoption of a unified exchange rate system.

The change in trade weighted nominal effective exchange rate during early seventies was only of limited extent as the depreciation in the rate between January, 1971 and December, 1975 was only 6 percent, due to the Indian rupee and the US dollar against which Nepal maintained its currency pegs accounting for 85 to 90 of the weighting. However, the increase in trade diversification led to great changes in the effective exchange rate during second half of the seventies. The diversification in export trade was marked more in terms of markets rather than in terms of composition of commodities. While exports to India declined markedly, imports from India also under-went diversification significantly with Nepal developing its trade relationship with third country markets. Since this increasing change in ineffective exchange rate was of downward nature, this helped Nepal to increase export growth especially in respect of exports to countries other than India. The fall in trade weightage nominal effective exchange rate during January, 1974-June, 1978, was about 7 percent. But the decrease vis-a-vis third countries was very sharp and excluding India the depreciation of trade weighted effective exchange rate was estimated to be as high as 20 percent mainly due to weakening of pound sterling against which Indian rupee was pegged.

The situation began to change early in 1980, and the following few years saw marked deterioration. High rates of inflation contributed to the weakening in the exchange rate situation in Nepal. Inflation rose from almost 4 percent in 1979 to 10 percent in 1980. There was further intensification in inflation registering increase of 14 percent in 1980. There was further intensification in inflation registering increases of 14 percent, 11 percent and 13 percent respectively in 1981, 1982 and 1983. This intensification of inflation was primarily due to drought, fast increase in credit to the government and rapid rise in money supply. With the better weather leading to agricultural recovery in 1984 the inflation rate has declined.
These developments including many other factors led to the deterioration in trade balance and current account position during this period. This has been primarily responsible for changing in June, 1983 the exchange rate practices and adopting a peg to a currency composite for a basket based on trade weights with the US dollar continuing as the intervention currency. The arrangement of a single or dual-based currency peg makes a currency vulnerable to becoming over-or undervalued as was experienced frequently by Nepal. Pegging to a currency composite (basket), however, diminished the possibility of variation in the effective exchange rate and the risk of currency getting out of the line.

IV. Problems

The preceding discussion has brought to light the four problems confronting Nepal in respect of its foreign trade. These are export stagnation, import growth, export instability and imbalance in balance of payments. In view of the specialities and seriousness of these problems, Nepal is called to adopt, without further delay, a package of policy measures, which will be spelled out after discussing these problems.

I. Export Stagnation

During the period 1975/76-1984/85, total exports of Nepal not only rose at sluggish rate but also displayed that the increases were due to export unit values. The stagnancy in exports was particularly evident in agricultural exports, which accounted for well above half of the total exports as the unit values for the main agricultural exports, for example, rose by about 7 percent a year and the volume of such exports declined over the period 1976-82. The main reason for the situation was poor agricultural production resulting from recurring failure of rainfall, failure to raise the level of agricultural production, increased domestic consumption by rising population, and employment of traditional cultivation methods. In addition, deforestation caused by extension of agriculture to previously forested areas and reckless exploitation of timber resources were also responsible for stagnancy in agricultural production. In fact, declining agricultural productivity caused deforestation which in turn led to erosion of soil, fall in agricultural productivity and so on a classic case of declining agricultural productivity and deforestation caught in a vicious circle. Exports of manufactured goods could not occupy a predominant position as the country’s industrial sector is undeveloped.
and is subject to supply constraints in respect of natural resources, skills and technology. Other factors hindering the growth of exports of manufactured goods are mountainous nature and land-locked position of the country resulting in increased costs of production and transportation and small size of domestic market depriving Nepal from benefits of economies of large-scale production.

An analysis of deterioration in internal competitiveness of the traded goods sector vis-a-vis the non-traded goods sector also points to stagnation in export trade of Nepal. Between 1978 and 1981, the ratio of traded goods prices to non-traded goods prices decreased by about 9 percent and the following years of 1982 and 1983 could record only a slight increase in this respect. Nevertheless, the profitability of traded goods has declined over time as shown by the ratio of export unit prices to non-traded goods prices. There was considerable deterioration in export profitability as the ratio of export unit prices to non-traded goods prices decreased by 28 percent for all exports during the period 1978-1983 with the decrease amounting to 21 percent and 47 percent respectively for agricultural products and manufactured goods. Particular exports to suffer severe declining were raw jute, herbs, spices, and hides and skins.

2. Import Growth

Between 1975/76 and 1984/85, total imports had surged up almost forefold leading to sharp deterioration in Nepal’s balance of payments. There was rapid rise in current account deficits during the period. Until 1982/83, increasing receipts of official grants and foreign loans on concessional terms came to rescue to offset the adverse impact of rising current account deficits on overall balance. Since then the flow of official grants and foreign loans were not adequate to make up the widening deficits in current account and overall balance continued to be in deficit. As a result, the gross international reserve, which was equal to six months of import coverage at the end of 1981/82, declined to 1.6 months of import by June, 1985 due to drawing down of international reserve. The escalation of imports was associated with the higher development expenditure, rapidly rising current public expenditure and weather related short falls in agricultural production requiring substantial food imports. While the growth in aid imports has been faster than non-aid
imports, the former tended to be less than prone to unforeseen fluctuations than the latter.

3. Export instability

A high degree of volatility is another weakness of Nepal's foreign trade and current receipts. This has been responsible for fluctuations in export earnings of Nepal. As shown by a five year moving average measure of instability over a period of thirteen years from 1968 to 1980 prepared by the IMF, Treasurer's Department about variability of commodity exports and current receipts of selected countries and country groupings, the normalised variability measure for Nepal's exports amounted to 13.44, more than twice as high as that for the industrial countries excluding Switzerland. It was also greater than the average export variability of developing countries in Asia, Europe, the Middle East and the Western Hemisphere. Of the fourteen countries of Asia including Bangladesh, Bhutan, People's Republic of China, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Thailand, Nepal was the fifth highest of these countries in respect of instability in trade receipts. Variability was even higher for overall current account receipts.

The high degree of Nepal's export instability is primarily due to heavy dependence on a small number of primary product exports, its vulnerability to uncertain rainfall, the concentration of irrigated land in one part of the country [the Tarai plains] and intermittent weak international markets. As noted in the preceding analysis of composition of Nepal's exports, agricultural products account for over half of total exports and many of the raw materials for Nepal's industries come from agriculture. Since a small proportion of the land is provided with irrigation facilities, the variation in rainfall determines the amount of output and exports generated by the agricultural sector. Agricultural productivity and water resources in the country exhibit sharp regional differences due to diverse topography.

4. Imbalance in Balance of Payments.

As noted above, Nepal's balance of payments has been deteriorating sharply since 1982/83. Since the inflows of official grants and concessional loans did not fully meet the escalating balance of payments deficits, the government was forced to draw down on international
reserve to cover the balance. As a result, the gross official international reserve declined to a precariously low level, just enough for 1.6 months import coverage by June, 1985. On November 30, 1985, the exchange rate of the Nepalese currency was depreciated from Nepalese rupees 1.45 to 1.70 per Indian rupee and Nepalese rupees 17.50 to Nepalese rupees 20.50 per US dollar. Many other policy measures were announced by the government to meet the problem of serious imbalances in balance of payments. Although Indian rupee was also one of the currencies constituting currency composite [basket] to which Nepalese currency was pegged, the fixed exchange rate was pegged to Indian rupee at the rate of Nepalese rupees 1.70 per Indian rupee without making any changes in exchange rate till May 31, 1986, when the exchange rate of Nepalese rupee was also allowed to float, like all other currencies constituting the currency composite. The official justification given for allowing the exchange rate of Nepalese currency vis-à-vis Indian currency to float was that this practice would avoid sudden and the shockingly higher rate of change in exchange rate as was experienced by the Nepalese when Nepalese rupee was depreciated from Nepalese rupees 1.45 to 1.70 per Indian rupee on November 30, 1985.

V. Tasks

In light of the characteristics of the four problems confronting Nepal’s foreign trade that were mentioned above, three tasks are called for to overcome these problems and to strengthen the country’s foreign trade sector. Basically, these tasks relate to adopting policy measures in respect of supply stimulation, demand management and exchange rate and restrictive system.

1. Supply Stimulation Policies

In order to enable exports to pay for imports and to help balance of payments, Nepal needs supply stimulation policies that would increase the production or improve the competitiveness of goods and services that can be exported or be substituted for imports. It is only through reducing costs of production, improvement of quality and developing products suitable to the needs of foreign buyers that competitiveness of exportable goods and services can be improved. Supply stimulation measures are of relevance from long-term point of view.

The agricultural goods that can be developed in Nepal as exports or import substitutes are food and cash
crops, dairy and forest products. Low productivity has been the main constraint in the development of these products. Production of these exports and import substitutes can be increased by improving extension services to disseminate knowledge of improved cultivation practices and to provide adequate improved seeds, fertilizers and other inputs. In addition, distribution facilities should also be improved. For enabling producers to finance the use of agricultural inputs, more agricultural credit should be made available. Remunerative prices of the agricultural products are equally important for achieving desired results. Measures like export bans, quotas and levies or taxes for increasing availability of agricultural products for domestic consumption are detrimental to export production. Such measures should be avoided except under abnormal situations like foods shortage caused by drought or other natural calamities.

Development of industrial exports and import substitutes calls for substantial investment in production facilities and improvement of infrastructures. The country already has Industrial Enterprises Act, 1981 and Foreign Investment and Technology Act, 1981 that are conducive to domestic and foreign investment. These Acts provide for wide range of fiscal and other incentives for industrialists and exporters. Some major provisions of these acts relate to tax holidays and concessions, refund of import duties, excise and sales taxes on imports used in production of exports and guarantees for foreign investment.

As regards for industrial exports, potential is seen in leather goods and labour intensive, high value-to-weight handicraft items like woolen carpets, metal sculptures, ready-made garments, jewellery and wood and paper products.

In respect of services, great potential exists in Nepal for increasing tourist receipts. This calls Nepal for much more dynamic approach to marketing tourism potential. The tourist potential can be realised by further developing places of tourist attractions, developing the products and improving the standards and quality of domestic goods and services that may be purchased by tourists and expanding hotel and other facilities for tourists from neighbouring countries. Tour packages that take tourists to many places lengthen stay of tourists in Nepal and thus increased tourist earnings. Therefore, development of such tour packages deserves serious consideration. This requires
expansion of air services and improvement in the services provided by the national carrier, the Royal Nepal Airlines Corporation.

2. Demand Management Policy

Demand management policy is helpful for improving balance of payments in the short term. Such improvement is attained by reducing domestic demand through adoption of fiscal and monetary policy measures as reduction in domestic demand leads to reduction in demand for imports which in turn leads to improvement in balance of payments. The reduction in domestic demand may also lead to increase in exports by redirecting some domestically produced goods away from domestic markets. However, when demand management is tightened for longer period, it results in restriction of employment opportunities and reduction in production including the production of exportables also.

There has been substantial widening of budget deficits due to a sharp increase in government expenditures, on the one hand, and inadequate revenue, on the other hand. This expansionary fiscal policy has played a major role in causing sharp balance of payments position. Therefore, a tightening of fiscal policy will be an appropriate policy both to reduce overall excess demand and to have a better balance between the investment saving gaps of public and private sectors. In tightening fiscal policy, reduction in budgetary deficits should be complemented by improvements in financial position of public enterprises. All possible efforts should be made to raise revenue because increase in revenue would lessen cut backs in planned increases in development expenditures called for by effort to reduce government budget deficits and thus to lessen the need to curtail the momentum of development activities in the public sector. The unavoidable budgetary deficits should be financed by bank credit to the minimum possible extent. This means maximising the utilisation of foreign aid and mobilisation of more savings from private sector through sale of attractive financial instruments.

As regards the tightening needed in monetary policy, the policy adopted should aim at striking a balance between ensuring an adequate availability of credit for productive purposes and avoiding a rate of credit expansion that could generate balance of payments pressures. The interest rate plays a crucial role in an appropriate monetary
policy. The adoption of an appropriate interest policy is, therefore, equally important for effective implementation of monetary policy. An appropriate interest rate policy should see that nominal interest rates in Nepal are not normally lower than those in India. It is also necessary to maintain real interest rates in Nepal at significantly positive levels for ensuring the channeling of credit towards the most productive uses and providing adequate incentives for savings in financial assets. These considerations about interest rate in Nepal vis-a-vis interest rate in India must be taken into account because prices in border areas adjoining Nepal and India tend to converge and capital flows are highly sensitive to interest rate differentials.

Exchange Rate and Restrictive System

It has been noted above that the use of demand management policies has limitations due to difficulties in having adequate domestic cost price adjustment without risking a severe recession. But exchange rate adjustment must be used combined with restraint in demand management to prevent erosion of competitiveness of traded goods gained from the devaluation through domestic inflation. Like tightening of demand management, depreciation of exchange rate discourages imports and thus it has a quick impact on the balance of payments. Such impact, is, however, weak in developing countries with low import price elasticities or tight restriction. Exchange rate depreciation can also have short term impact on exports in case there are accumulated stocks of exportables and profitability considerations induce switching of exportable goods to from domestic to foreign markets. In fact, it is only in longer run that exchange rate adjustment can have major impact on exports because investment and production decisions requires considerable time to result in increased production of exportable goods.

There are some limitations of exchange rate policy because of the special characteristics of the Nepalese economy. First, the prices of traded goods in the Tarai plains tend to adjust quickly to the Indian price level at the adjusted exchange rate due to the free flow of goods across the border. A partial adjustment of wages also occurs because of mobility of labour across the border. As a result of these adjustments, prices of non-traded goods and services in Nepal also tend to quickly adjust to such prices prevailing across the border in India. These peculiarities
make the gains in competitiveness of traded goods short-lived in the Tarai which is the main economic region of Nepal. Although the erosion of the gains takes long time in hilly and mountainous regions in Nepal, the gains may not last as long as in other developing countries. Second, exchange rate appropriate for the Indian rupee may not necessarily be equivalent of the exchange rate appropriate for trade with other countries. At the outset, this problem may be taken as common problem of developing countries because other developing countries that peg their currencies to other currencies, face similar situations. But the problem of exchange rate being appropriate for trade with India but not being appropriate for transactions with third countries assumes special importance for Nepal because of its concern not only with global balance of payments but also with the separate balance of payments, position with India and Third countries. The policy of Nepal to diversify its trade away from India despite the difficulties involved in trading with third countries further complicated the determination of exchange rate.

To conclude, Nepal's foreign trade faces the problems of export stagnation, import-export instability and imbalance in balance of payments growth. It is only through adopting a package of policy measures consisting of supply stimulating policies, demand management policy, and exchange rate policy and restrictive system that these problem can be, tackled. Owing to some special features of the Nepalese economy, exchange rate policy may not be as effective in management of balance of payments in Nepal as in other developing countries. However, exchange rate policy combined with appropriated demand management can play a useful though limited role in increasing the competitiveness of traded goods. Tightening of demand management is most appropriate for effecting a quick correction of worsening balance of payments position. But it is not the appropriate measure to achieve a long-term strengthening of external account. Supply stimulation policies should be the main plank for achieving long-term balance of payments adjustment and enabling the foreign trade sector of Nepal to effectively play the role of dynamic and effective instrumentality of development.
### Table 1

**Composition of Trade (Nrs. Million)**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Exports, f.o.b.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Food and live animals</td>
<td>389.4</td>
<td>814.6</td>
<td>1,185.6</td>
<td>1,164.9</td>
<td>1,046.2</td>
<td>1,296.8</td>
<td>1,150.5</td>
<td>1,608.6</td>
<td>1,490.6</td>
<td>1,132.0</td>
<td>1,703.8</td>
<td>2,740.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tobacco and beverages</td>
<td>296.4</td>
<td>517.5</td>
<td>804.0</td>
<td>599.5</td>
<td>405.3</td>
<td>488.8</td>
<td>306.5</td>
<td>588.7</td>
<td>735.9</td>
<td>327.7</td>
<td>584.1</td>
<td>942.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Crude materials, inedibles, except fuels</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mineral fuels and lubricants</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>213.3</td>
<td>226.3</td>
<td>377.8</td>
<td>441.2</td>
<td>491.7</td>
<td>469.6</td>
<td>561.6</td>
<td>397.3</td>
<td>336.4</td>
<td>372.7</td>
<td>486.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Animal &amp; vegetable oils &amp; fats</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>1.0</td>
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### Table 2

**Exports of Major Commodities**

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<td>(369)</td>
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<td>(1,788)</td>
<td>(2,914)</td>
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**II. Exports to Third Countries**

| Rice (husked) | MT | 7,185 | 6,676 | 44,931 | 62,121 | 11,336 | 5,451 | 25,211 | - | - | - |
| Timber | Cu M | - | - | - | - | 2,065 | 24,349 | 255 | - | - | - |
| Lagr Cardamom | MT | 685 | 602 | 4,358 | 540 | 392 | 488 | 305 | 260 | 260 | 250 |
| Hides & Skins | Th. | 649 | 844 | 1,056 | 2,115 | 2,585 | 2,120 | 1,818 | 2,455 | 4,034 | 4,786 |
| Pulses | MT | - | - | - | - | - | - | 7,901 | 509 | 687 | 12,089 |
| Raw Jute | MT | 21,814 | 28,877 | 27,884 | 28,481 | 23,009 | 24,349 | 16,300 | 4,011 | - | - |
| Jute Cuttings | MT | 6,112 | 5,346 | 3,739 | 4,426 | 191 | 28 | - | - | - | - |
| Jute Goods | MT | 1,0624 | 10,500 | 9,336 | 14,956 | 11,077 | 3,543 | 153 | - | - | - |
| Hessian | MT | (8,031) | (7,768) | (6,381) | (7,998) | (5,448) | (1,231) | (153) | - | - | - |
| Sacking | MT | (2,188) | (2,170) | (2,275) | (6,724) | (5,576) | (2,332) | (-) | (-) | - | - |
| Twin | MT | (412) | (562) | (70) | (234) | (53) | - | (-) | (-) | - | - |
| Carpets | Sq M | 19,784 | 47,473 | 26,530 | 53,279 | 66,775 | 870,000 | 99,000 | 150,622 | 262,862 | 227,000 |
| Handicrafts | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Ready Garments | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |

**III. Total (I & II)**

**IV. Total Exports, f.o.b.**

Sources: Trade Promotion Center and Nepal Rastra Bank.
Table 3  
Exports of Major Commodities  

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1. Preliminary

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a/ Includes unclassified exports and imports
- Not available

Source: Trade Promotion Center and Nepal Rastra Bank
### Table 5

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**Current account balance, excluding transfers**

-408.9  -421.2  -879.0  -830.2  -1529.8  -1716.0  -2073.9  -3625.4  -3416.8  -3668.1

**Official capital, net**

132.5  214.8  291.9  428.6  577.3  633.8  774.2  1001.6  1203.5  1097.3

**Foreign loans**

...  233.4  310.7  598.0  664.9  806.8  1073.9  1274.3  1159.5

**Amortization**

...  -18.6  -19.8  -20.7  -31.11  -32.6  -72.3  -70.8  -62.2

**Miscellaneous capital items, net** 1/

113.4  -111.5  10.4  115.5  -209.3  -141.0  121.4  72.3  13.9  -521.0

**Overall balance**

397.8  300.0  10.8  583.4  26.4  194.1  504.8  -501.6  -126.0  -835.3

1/ Includes errors and omissions

Source: Nepal Rastra Bank
The Role of the Monarchy and the Political Institutions in Nepal

Devendra Raj Upadhyaya

I

Speaking of political institutions, one is naturally reminded of Socrates, whose search for truth about politics created such a reaction among his contemporaries that he was led to drink hemlock to invite death. But mankind has traversed a long distance from the days of the Greek political philosophers, and politics now is the guiding factor of attitudes, beliefs and sentiments of civilized human beings. They are all reflected in the political institutions developed in any particular country, although in some countries they may not have been influenced either by the ruthless egoism of Niccola Machiavelli or the dialectical materialism of Karl Marx.

Nepal falls in the latter category in so far as the development of its political institutions is concerned, especially since the advent of Pancayat polity a quarter of a century ago. Although the concept of the division of powers is everywhere derived from Western political tradition, in Nepal, during the years of Pancayat polity, it has been nurtured by an assertive monarchy through a partyless system of popular participation and decentralisation.

For centuries the people of Nepal have developed their own ethos and values which have resulted in a political culture independent of others. With a history of apocryphal origin, dependent more on dynastic chronicles than on archaeology, Nepal's ethnic diversity and a tinge of feudal elitism have combined together in creating a political culture so indigenous as we witness in Nepal.

Nepalese political institutions and practices can best be understood through the study of the Constitution of Nepal, where the Crown stands at the apex over the legislature [the National Pancayat], the executive, the judiciary and a few other constitutional organs such as the State Council. As the Crown is the highest leadership as well as the coordinating element of the political institutions in the country, the Constitution of Nepal
does not appear as complex as some other constitutions of the world. But before we discuss the role of the Crown in guiding the destiny of Nepal, it would be worthwhile to look into this institution in a historical perspective.

The dynastic chronicles refer to the existence of kingship in the Valley from the days of yore. So much so that till about two hundred years back, the hills mostly in the western part of Nepal were ruled by feudal chiefs calling themselves kings, the number of which had reached forty-six before the advent of Prithvi Narayan Shah, the consolidator of modern Nepal. When Nepal was unified under the Shah kings, some of the chiefs of these principalities became an influential part of the court of Kathmandu. In the process, the court became the centre for contending elitist families, resulting both in the structural and functional instability of the political institutions existing at that time. This state of affairs caused the emergence of Jung Bahadur, consequent upon the conspiracy and massacre of Kot in 1946. The following century witnessed a familial rule based on the principle of primogeniture. During this period, the state became subordinate to the aggrandisement of the ruling family, and the elite in the capital with close contacts with the power structure suffered a sort of valley complex, similar to the insular complex of people inhabiting the islands. The result was that personal interest of the elites became paramount and the interest of the state was completely ignored.

Even when the rule of the Ranas was absolute and complete, it continued to establish its legitimacy through the authority it received from the King, although for about one hundred and four years the kings were virtual prisoners in the palace. One hundred and two years after the usurpation of power by the Ranas when Padma Shumshere proclaimed the Constitution of 1948, in its preamble he sought his legitimacy in the authority vested in the person of the Rana Prime Ministers by the King.

The Revolution of 1951 not only introduced democracy in the country but also helped the King to regain the authority vested in the Rana family by the crown a century earlier. King Tribhuvan himself revoked all authority vested in the Rana family by his forefathers.

But the Delhi agreement, which was the precursor of democracy in Nepal, seems to have deliberately attempted a triangular division of power among the King, the Ranas and the people. Under this agreement, the King was obliged to accept the same person as his Prime Minister who, two months earlier, had dethroned him, and the Nepali people were forced to accept a Rana Prime Minister in the beginning of a democratic era against whose dictatorship they had led a violent revolution.
As the Delhi agreement was based on the principle of tripartite division of power, it should be viewed as the initiator of democratic instability in Nepal. To a certain extent this agreement was also not in conformity with what Oppenheim says in his *International Law: Peace*. "In every monarchy the monarch appears as the representative of the sovereignty of the State, and thereby becomes a sovereign himself; and this fact is recognised by International Law" [Oppenheim, 1963: 758].

Within the limitations of the Delhi agreement, King Tribhuvan, attempted modernisation process of the political institutions in Nepal. The Interim Government Act of 1951 was ultimately aimed at attempting to establish a representative assembly, while it authorised the King to appoint interim cabinets. The influence of New Delhi over the decisions of the King was so great, that M.P. Koirala was appointed Prime Minister in consultation with New Delhi [Rose and Scholz 1980:45]. In such a situation, and with an Indian advisor even within the Royal Palace, it would have been difficult for Nepal to embark upon the process of developing political institutions according to Nepalese needs.

II

In King Mahendra, Nepal found an assertive monarch, whose domestic policy resiliency and foreign policy consistency made him, on the one hand, an effective national leader capable of dealing with divisive domestic political elements and, on the other, an adroit architect of Nepalese projection in the international arena. He extricated Nepal out of India's sphere of influence.

King Mahendra continued his experiment with political leaders in the process of democracy by asking the leader of one political party after another to form the government, culminating in the first elected government under the leadership of Nepali Congress, which had swept the polls. But the elected Prime Minister, B.P. Koirala, challenged the provision of the Constitution concerning emergency powers of the King. Such an uncalled for situation was bound to lead to a showdown between the Sovereign and his Prime Minister. In the meantime, the performance of the elected government failed to meet the people's expectations, and naturally disorders erupted in different parts of the country.

In many developing countries when the civilian government fails in its performance and consequently disturbs public order, army organisation moves in to restore legitimacy. But in the case of Nepal, since sovereignty emanated from the Crown, the King
intervened to restore order and establish legitimacy. When King Mahendra realised that the multi-party system resulted in chaos and confusion in a multi-ethnic nation such as Nepal, he introduced the non-party Panchayat system to educate illiterate people [ninety percent of at that time] in the art of popular participation through the process of political decentralisation, right up to the village level. The result was that every village in Nepal, as the unit of Panchayat, became the fundamental and functional base of the new polity.

The Panchayat polity may not have been influenced directly by the Western traditional political thinkers, but it certainly attempted to develop a system where both continuity and change prevailed, continuity with the Hindu tradition of monarchy and change through the process of popular participation.

If we look at the genesis of the Nepalese state, the definition given to Nepal by its founder Prithvi Narayan Shah as "a garden of four castes and thirty-six tribes," comes closer to what Aristotle called "every polis or state" as "a species of association." When Prithvi Narayan Shah mentioned the four castes, he must have had Hindu tradition of the caste system in mind.

King Mahendra tried to reflect in Panchayat polity the basic definition of Nepal as propounded by Prithvi Narayan Shah. When he introduced the Panchayat system, King Mahendra was determined to develop Nepal as a recognisable unit in the comity of nations, and as such, his first emphasis in the Constitution of 1962 was to define Nepal as a nation. Article 2 of the Constitution stipulates, "having common aspirations and united by the common bond of allegiance to the Crown, the Nepalese people irrespective of religion, race, caste or tribe collectively constitute the nation." If we analyse this definition, we can conclude that King Mahendra's sole intention was to develop Nepal as a nation whose inhabitants were bound together by common solidarity of loyalty towards the nation. Its multi-ethnic character demanded of Nepal vitality and effectiveness to govern its own action "in consonance with the popular will," by placing total loyalty to the cause of the nation.

King Mahendra picked up many integrative forces essential to nationhood. One of them was religion, which is one of the most powerful integrative subsystems of society. As such, King Mahendra put himself within the bounds of religion traditionally followed by his forefathers and majority of the people of Nepal by declaring in the Constitution that the King of Nepal is "an adherent of Aryan culture and Hindu religion". Karl Deutsch in *Politics and Government* defines religion and philosophy as a great integrative subsystem of every society. He further adds:
"Every one of the world’s great religions asks people whether their pursuit of short-run values or goals is compatible with their long-run interests. Thus religion and philosophy teach the long-run nature of the universe, the long-run values of mankind, and perhaps, the long-run purpose for which mankind itself exists" [Deutsch, 1970:137-135] As a far-sighted Hindu ruler King Mahendra could not ignore the ingrained faith of the majority of the Nepalese people in Hindu religion. Hence, he declared Nepal as the first Hindu state and made this concept a part of the Constitution. Never before the emergence of King Mahendra had there been an attempt by any Hindu sovereign to bring Hindu religion within the parameter of state structure, and as such his contribution to the growth of Hinduism as a powerful integrative force could be best judged by the future historians and political analysts.

If the kings in Nepal have been the protectors of traditional norms and values of Nepalese society, they have equally responded to popular expressions, as witnessed by the three amendments to the Constitution of 1962. The National Referendum [1980], intervening the second and the third amendments to the Constitution, must be considered as a classic example of harmonious interaction between Monarchy and the people in Nepal for the cause of nation-building. Thus the Nepalese Monarchy has established itself as an institution which can effectively deal with domestic problems as and when they emerge. The third amendment to the Constitution was granted to the people by King Birendra. It provides, within the reformed Panchayat system, a universal adult franchise. This proves beyond doubt that the development of political institutions is just the implementation of ideas, and that the Monarchy is the most effective institution in conditions prevailing in Nepal to implement such ideas.

In foreign policy matters the Monarchy in Nepal has acted assertively, time and again. It has helped in reshaping Nepal’s international personality that has culminated in the Zone of Peace proposal of King Birendra. The very fact that more than eighty countries of the world have already supported this proposal established beyond doubt the uniqueness and importance of it. Unique in the sense that it is the first time in the concept of international law that any country has come forward with a proposal to declare itself a zone of peace. Important because so many countries have already responded positively to this proposal. Foreign policy is called an extension of domestic policy: the peace zone proposal is the living embodiment of this concept.

If the polity of Panchayat was devised to develop a political system in Nepal independent of the contending ideologies
prevailing in the two powerful bordering neighbours, India and China, the peace zone proposal should be called an effort to keep Nepal permanently out of any possible military confrontation between these two neighbours. The Monarchy in this regard has foreseen the reality and has acted accordingly. China has supported the proposal as it probably does not consider Nepal to be a threat to its security. But India has not responded favourably to this proposal as it probably considers that Nepal should belong to India’s defence arrangement under the Indo-Nepalese Peace and Friendship Treaty of 1950 and that the peace zone proposal runs counter to the Indian concept.

Many foreign critics of the Nepalese Monarchy have failed to realise that this institution is the manifestation of history, religion, culture and politics of Nepal. The very concept of “active leadership” of the Monarch emanates from this manifestation. But there are also authors who understand very well the effective role of Monarchy in Nepal in nation-building. One could not but agree with S.D. Muni, Indian specialist of Nepal, when he says, “King Mahendra made the single largest and most important contribution in building contemporary Nepal into an aspirant modern society pulsating with life and vigour. ... The system, the ethos and the styles of governance initiated and nursed by him seem to have struck firm roots in Nepal” [Muni, 1977: p. vii].

While discussing the political institutions of Nepal one has to stress the role of the Crown as article 20[2] of the Constitution lays down, “The sovereignty of Nepal is vested in His Majesty and all powers -- executive, legislative and judicial emanate from him.” Although King Birendra ascended the throne with all the royal prerogatives and power as his father’s, his style and agenda were a little different from those of King Mahendra. Naturally, the people of Nepal also expected a different style from a twenty-eight year old King. If we analyse the second and the third amendments to the Constitution of Nepal we easily come closer to the above observation. King Birendra has a strategic sense to match domestic policy with realities of the times. Had it not been so he would not have called the people to national referendum. In the third amendment to the Constitution, King Birendra has presented himself as a great reform leader. Through this amendment he expressed his broader notion of public good at heart. Since his accession to the throne he has addressed a wide range of political, economic, and social problems. Through the Janch Boojh Kendra he directed the design and improvement or modification of public policy. His dynamic of political leadership first appeared in the second amendment to the Constitution by the formation of Back to the Village National Campaign Committee and later through his call for the national referendum.
In foreign policy matters King Birendra, not only made the innovative peace zone proposal, but also provided it with constitutional validity by including this concept in the Directive Principles of the Constitution [Article 19.6]. This was an expression of his consistency in reshaping Nepal’s future free from external threat. Nepal, as we know, continues under political pressure from the south. On occasions Nepal appears to have succumbed to this pressure as evident from what Rose and Scholz have said about the present Treaties of Trade and Transit between Nepal and India. To quote them, “the new treaties reflect the basic position of the Indian Government, and New Delhi is quite satisfied that the agreements serve India’s economic, political and regional interests" [Rose and Scholz, 1980:134]. If what they have said is correct then Nepal must have failed in asserting her rights. The peace zone proposal, once it becomes effective, is bound to save Nepal from such pressures.

King Birendra also presented himself as political and social strategist with new ideas for the welfare of the state. His Education Plan and the concept of decentralisation could be cited as two of the examples. In Nepal, innovation of education was essential to match with the needs of planned economic development. And so was decentralisation to train the people at the functional level of the Pancayat system—i.e., the village Pancayat.

A similar example can be taken from Article 26 of the Constitution regarding the appointment of the Prime Minister. The article stipulates. “Any member of the National Panchayat who is proposed and seconded by at least twenty-five percent of all the members of the National Pancayat may stand as a candidate for the post of the Prime Minister. Any member who, by virtue of being a sole candidate, is elected uncontested, or who, in a contest between more than one candidate, is elected by a majority of at least sixty percent or more votes of all the members of the National Pancayat shall be recommended to His Majesty for the post of the Prime Minister. His Majesty shall appoint the person so recommended in the post of the Prime Minister”. If we analyse this article we bound to come to one conclusion that by introducing this article, His Majesty must have in mind to find out a person, after every national election, in a multi-ethnic society such as that of Nepal, who could muster a 60 percent majority in the House and thus could be safely entrusted to manage the Pancayat government. This article is the evidence of His Majesty’s faith in organising a greater popular participation for Pancayat polity.

The Pancayat policy and Evaluation Committee is another innovative feature of the third amendment to the Constitution [Article 41 b], intended to strengthen popular participation and
democratisation. The last Central Panca Convention has witnessed the widest range of freedom of expression enjoyed and excercised by the participants. It appears that King Birendra has given the maximum participatory power to the people under the mandate of the people as expressed through the national referendum. By making the Chairman of the National Pancayat an ex-officio Chairman of Pancayat Policy and Evaluation Committee, King Birendra has devised measures to coordinate the legislations passed by the National Pancayat to be in conformity with Central Panca Conventions.

What sort of political system is best? There is no definitive answer yet by political scientists to this question. Should it also not apply to the Pancayat system and the political institutions associated with it? The Nepalese people are guided by their own ethos and values. A value system is beyond verification through scientific measurement. It has to pass through the test of time. The Nepalese people have successfully participated in the second national election under the universal adult franchise granted by King Birendra and have elected their representatives to the National Pancayat. The next five years will witness the performance of people’s representatives in the art of government. Let us hope that they will live up to the confidence reposed on them by the people and fulfill their own promises to and the expectations of the electorate.

References

The pancayat political process is characterized by the configuration of elements--either inherited from tradition and history or adopted as change and modernity. Nonetheless, the great impact of indigenous Nepali political culture which is predominantly 'subject' and 'authoritarian' is embeded in the Nepali political tradition. [Almond and Powell, 1966: 58-59] As family was essentially the "core" of the politics during the Shah and Rana periods, until the 1950 revolution-primary loyalty was to elite family [Rose and Fisher, 1970: 19; Chanhan, 1970: Chapter 1] rather than to institutions. The post 1950 period--popularlyknown as "democratic era" — tried to inject a new political culture by innovating popular institutions and values, but these efforts were diluted by the constraints of history and tradition. Consequently, the political culture of Nepal today manifests this trend. In the process, however, conflict between old and new values is also discerned, despite the pervading 'subject' culture.

Political culture is an orientation of the people towards the political system. Almond states that "every political system is embedded in a particular patter of orientation to political actions." [Almond, 1956] Thus the political culture, as Verba indicates, "consists of the system of empirical beliefs, expressive symbols, and values which defines the situation in which political action takes place." [Verba, 1965: 513] So the political culture approach provides a definite clue to understanding the political process even in a country like Nepal. Pye points out that "each generation must receive its politics from the previous one, each must react against that process to find out its own politics, and the total process must follow the laws that govern the development of the individual personality and the general culture of a society." [Pye, 1965: 7]

The present paper concentrates on political actors as the unit of analysis. So it lays more stress on elite behavior and orientations than on institutions. In a polity where ascriptive
criteria seem to be the operating norm, an observation of specific individuals can provide a basis for the political culture approach to Nepali political process. For politics can only be the acts of influentials of whom "the few can so readily overshadow the many." [Pye, 1965, 3] Although no society can be categorised into the traditional or the modern in absolute terms, the orientation of political elites in Nepal has been continuing along traditional lines.

The Hinduised monarchial tradition of Nepal cannot be fitted into the category of a society of participant political culture. On the contrary, the basic thrust of the political process of Nepal embodies the concept of Raja Dharma whereby the ruler performs certain duties ascribed to him by religious and traditional practices and rituals. The King in Nepal performs his functions on his own conscience and is not responsible, constitutionally as well as practically, to the people as other elected heads of government. The government, to all intents and purposes, is King's government, despite provisions for periodic elections for recruiting political elites. Institutions of public opinion are maintained but their powers are limited in scope, thus maintaining the institutional framework of political democracy, whilst the power of initiative lies almost completely with the King. [Davis and Lewis, 1971: 102, Shils, 1960] The Rastriya Pancayata [RP] has some constitutional functions viz., the recommendation of prime minister and the making of laws, but the King can veto the RP's decision, for the pancayat process minus the active leadership of the monarch is not as yet considered to be feasible. The cabinet executes the royal directives and the centrally formulated policies but the cabinet cannot take bold political initiatives without informing the King. Its role is advisory in the Nepali political process. All pancas have unquestionably accepted such an overriding role of the King and have shown a uniform political behavior regarding their faith in the "active royal leadership" and "partyless" nature of the system. Minor personal and political differences that occur are within bounds inasmuch as their differences are not basically focussed on the two fundamentals--royal leadership and partylessness of the Pancayat System [PS].

However, when the leadership is preoccupied with some reformatory ideas or changes, the pancas, particularly those who are proximate to the King, start political debates reflecting the royal thinking. The royal take-over, dissolving the Parliamentary System, imprisoning cabinet ministers, imposing a ban on political parties, and restricting the political freedom in 1960, did not stop the political debates regarding the necessity of liberalism in the country. King Mahendra, for instance, was apparently preoccupied with the abandoned political process. Not only did
Mahendra emphasize the need of restoration of liberal democracy along with the parties, but he was equally emphatic in declaring his new regime as 'experimental'. [Proclamations, 1967] So the new political order—a stop-gap arrangement—suffered from two juxtaposed trends—a make-shift ideology and the lack of a known political mechanism for conducting the system. Political ambivalence then demonstrated by the power elites was also responsible for intra-pancayat conflict that had been in evidence in the 1960s and the 1970s. Debates relating to the system-structure and its evolution are still underway, but substantial political change is always a prerogative of the King.

An Interregnum

In 1950 the Nepali people and the King shared a common front for ending the Rana oligarchy and for establishing genuine democracy in the country. But the enthusiasm of both the King and political groups dissipated when they started behaving contrary to the objective of the revolution. In actual practice, democracy became as elusive as before, though the people were free in articulating their interests. How Nepalis in general behaved in the post-1950 revolution, 'what was their psychology, emotion and feeling has thus been remarked by Malla:
The post-1950 decade in Nepal is characterized, in the first place, by a sense of release and emancipation of the intellect from a century-old political and priestly yoke, and in the second place, by an unprecedented expansion of intellectual and cultural opportunities. The decade can aptly be called a decade of extroversion. For it was a decade of explosion of all manner of ideas, activities and organized efforts. It was a decade when the pre-existing narrow stratum of the intelligentsia was frantically active and vocal socially, culturally and most important of all politically.

[Malla, 1973: 277]

He further states that they "woke up one fine morning from the sleep of the Middle Ages and found themselves exposed to the neon lights of an electronic age." [Malla, 1970: 277] The political culture in the post-revolution period manifested this psyche. So the elite orientations to representative democracy were at best spurious, and at worst negative. Such an abrupt change in 1951, without having a sustained mass movement, could end the family rule of the Ranas but not the deep-rooted authoritarian political culture of the past. Though Nepal has not had agencies that accompanied the birth of the new states of Asia and Africa, it was destined to undergo the same traumatic experiences of
political evolution. Moreover, the formative years of democratic rule were so tumultuous that the revolutionaries themselves were relegated to the background. With the passage of time, politics in the 1950s were marked by the dubious distinction of democracy and authoritarianism, despite occasional rhetorical statements made for democratic rule. Some of the objectives of the revolution—accepted by the three negotiating parties—the King, the Nepali Congress and the Ranas—were: [a] the setting up of a duly elected Constituent Assembly, [b] freedom for the political parties to operate within Nepal, [c] an interim government consisting of both the anti-Rana Congress leaders, and the Ranas. [Gupta, 1964; Joshi and Rose, 1966; Baral, 1977]

It could be seen that the political arrangement made in terms of Delhi-compromise [held under the auspices of the Indian government] was only "extra-systemic change", for "it was neither an evolution from nor a modification of the traditional political system." [Joshi and Rose, 1966: 487] Whatever the future development, the 1950 revolution had accepted the fundamental freedoms as the operating principles of Nepali political life. Therefore, the question of restricting the flow of information did not arise, nor did the Nepalis immediately give up their sense of emancipation from the past. The ascendance of royal power along with the steady decline of political parties as a countervailing force to the King changed the political balance. Now the King "embodies complete and awesome power" reminiscent of the state personified. [Apter, 1968: 452] However, preoccupied with both the process of consolidation of power and the popular demands for holding general elections, King Mahendra awarded the constitution in his own terms. Consequently in 1959, political parties contested the first ever held parliamentary elections on the basis of universal adult franchise. After eighteen months, however, the parliamentary process was terminated by its own creator—the King—on the grounds of its incompatibility with traditional ethos of Nepali society.

In retrospect, the immediate impact of the general elections in Nepal was revealing. First, the victory of the Nepali Congress [NC] as the single largest majority party in the lower House of Parliament creating one-party dominant system as in India, stirred the political forces opposed of such dominance. The smaller parties and other obscurantist elements, who were increasingly becoming irrelevant to the political process, suddenly woke up to put up a stiff opposition to the government. Moreover, they assumed much prominence when all other feudalistic elements formed a coalition in order to precipitate the crisis—urging the King to terminate the government as well as the parliamentary process. And one of the reasons advanced for such an action was
the irrelevance of Western liberal system in an avowedly traditional Nepali society. As Rose and Fisher state:

The most reasonable interpretation of the trend of development during the next twelve months was that King Mahendra had reached the decision that parliamentary democracy as incorporated in the 1959 Constitution should be discarded, but had not come to a settled conclusion as to what should replace it.

[Rose and Fisher, 1970: 51]

The political process which was experimented in the post-revolution period lacked deep political commitment of Nepali political elites. Second, the traditional political culture that always glorified authority was strong among political participants. The prevailing norm of the aspirants was to seek royal patronage rather than strive for a mass following. A Nepali daily, therefore, aptly commented that “the action of the opposition parties of putting the King in the forefront shows that they do not possess any intrinsic strength of their own.” [Baral, 1977, 37-42] All these behavioral patterns of political actors then suggest than King Mahendra had some justification for his action, though his motivation in taking such a drastic action has to be viewed from a much broader perspective.

The Pancayat Decades

The political mevents in the pre-1960 period had established the fact that Nepali politics was the exclusive prerogative of the King. Any major decision could be taken by him alone. Yet the inauguration of the parliamentary process, the operation of political parties and free press had also made him “responsive to the wishes of the people.” [Constitution, 1959, Preamble] These restraining mechanisms were nonetheless suspended in the aftermath of the 1960 royal takeover.

As a leader, interpreter and interlocutor, King Mahendra promised to “open up a new spring of power which will nourish to maturity and fruitfulness the tree of democracy rooted in our soil and suited to our conditions” [emphasis added] [Shah, 1967; 9]. For this, he advocated “Pancayats as the basis of democracy as democratic system imposed from above has proved unsuitable. We have now to build democracy gradually layer by layer from the bottom upwards” [Proclamation, 1967, 9].

Like any other ruler who hates political processes based on the “divisive” party system, King Mahendra's emphasis was on introducing a 'partyless' system which could be used both as a substitute for the abandoned parliamentary system and a mechanism for legitimising his new regime. Two fundamentals
which were congruent with the traditional ethos of the Nepalis, were immediately accepted: an unquestioned royal leadership and partyless character of the new order. However, content analysis of the proclamations and speeches made occasionally by the King and the members of his entourage reveal that they were not opposed to the party system [Thapa, 1980; 5-16 78]. How this psychology created intra-panchayat conflict is a story worth discussing.

In contrast to the preoccupation of their minds with the liberal attributes of PS, the recruitment of pancas started in an overly ostracised political atmosphere. Prior to the Constitution of Nepal [1962] three independent but interrelated tiers of institutions had been created--first, a pancayat framework consisting of the town or the village, the district and the local pancayats, second the class organization structure, consisting of the Women's organization, the Peasant's organization, the Labour organization, the Youth organization, and the Ex-servicemen's organization, third, the Ministry of National Guidance to supervise the workings and affairs of the pancayats and the class organizations [Shaha, 1978; 66].

Elections to all of these tiers were indirectly held, but in town and village pancayats the procedure was direct. In the beginning the local elections were also tame affairs inasmuch as people assembled in one place showed their preference by raising their hands. Subsequently, however, local elections were held on the basis of universal adult franchise making them more lively than others held for upper tiers. If district pancayat executive members were indirectly elected by the representatives of village pancayats within a district, the Ancal Sabha [zonal assembly] that was formed by all executive members of districts falling in a zone, constituted the electoral college to elect members from various districts of the zone to the Rastriya Pancayata [RP]. There were altogether 125 RP members representing the pancayats [90], class organizations [15], graduates' constituency [4], the royal nominees [16]. All Nepalis with bachelor degrees could participate in the Graduates' constituency elections. Being direct and representative in character, the conscious segment of Nepali society could articulate their grievances through these elections. Surprisingly, elections from the Graduates' constituency had almost invariably been characterized by anti-pancayat overtones and ideological encounters. Consequently, this constituency became an arena for openly raising basic issues affecting the 'partyless' system. In 1975, the Second Amendment to the Constitution of Nepal changed the election procedures abolishing the graduates' representation to the RP.
Many political experiments have been made since the introduction of the PS. Its main reasons could be attributed to the dilemma of the power elites as to what procedures or processes could sustain the attributes of the 'command' politics along with the mobilization of the people at large. The Second Amendment to the Constitution, and the constitutional status granted to the *Gaun Pharka Rastriya Abhiyana* [Back-to-Village National Campaign]—converting it into a one-Party-like organisation [Baral, 1976]—was nothing but an awareness of King Birendra and his advisors that the PS required its organizational wing for bringing homogeneity within the rank and file of the PS. Pancas who were bereft of political mechanism were now to behave in a more disciplined manner than before.

The *Gaun Pharka* process was introduced by King Mahendra [the innovator of the PS] with a view to defining the political ideology of the PS and to rectifying the then pro-party trends besetting the camp [Gaun Pharka Rastriya Abhiyana, 1967; Baral, 1976]. Although the campaign was organized on hierarchical order, and launched with unprecedented fanfare, its momentum steadily slackened as the campaign became "bureaucratized" and "ritualized". After a year or so it no longer retained its capacity for system mobilization. So the campaign was more of a ritual than a device for system mobilization.

King Birendra, who ascended the throne in 1972, immediately picked up this body for giving a new dimension to the 'partyless' polity. Before the amendment to the constitution in 1975, he managed to inject the *Gaun Pharka* with new spirit and purpose. The amended campaign indeed resembled a one-party system, but the theorists of the PS were zealous in telling that at the same time it also lacked the characteristics of one-party system. Yet both in its spirit and form, it behaved like a one-party as it patronised the whole political processes starting from the recruitment of ordinary political workers to the selection of RP members, appointment of the prime minister [if the King wished to consult the central committee of the campaign], and maintenance of discipline among the workers. Not only did this organ eliminate the candidates on the basis of their political conformism. This was done in the name of *Sarba Sammati* [consensus] as competitive elections were incompatible with the new-found spirit of the constitution.
Birendra's Democratic Innovations

The Gaun Pharka experiment was shortlived, confirming our earlier hypothesis that the Nepali political process has been marred both by ambivalent elite behavior and extra-systemic factors impinging on the domains of this process. In 1979, responding to the two-month long student agitation and demands of the outlawed parties, King Birendra who himself called the agitation a "storm" put the entire political system on trial by ordering a national referendum in the country. To Panca's dismay, the King gave two options to the Nepalis--continuation of the PS with reforms or multiparty system. Such a decision was interpreted as yet another move for defusing the immediate political crisis heightened by the student movement. Despite such contentious interpretations, the royal proclamation of May 24, 1979 and the freedom granted to the Nepalis afterwards were indeed of far-reaching consequences to the structure and function of the system. King Birendra declared:

...With the objective of clearly ascertaining what type of changes our countrymen desire in the context of the situation prevailing in the country today, and taking appropriate steps thereafter we hereby proclaim that arrangements will be made to hold a referendum by secret ballot of the entire Nepali people throughout the Kingdom of Nepal on the basis of adult franchise. Such a national referendum will be held on two basic questions: Should the existing Pancayat System be retained and gradually reformed or should it be replaced by a multiparty system of government.

[The Rising Nepal, May 24, 1979]

It may be recalled that in 1967, King Mahendra, after soliciting the "unbiased" opinion of the RP, had declared the 'partyless' system had no alternative and hence was going to stay [The Gorkhapatra, September 28, 1967]. The unanimous RP resolution was a departure from the earlier declarations that the PS was only a stop-gap arrangement if only to pave the way for a party-based democracy. Now partylessness was no more a permanent feature because of King Birendra's decision to put it on popular test. The royal decision also accepted the de facto operation of political organizations, despite legal provisions against them. For the first time since 1960, political groups hitherto irreconciled to the partyless PS came to the surface with their resolve to end the system by ballot. This process was further facilitated by King Birendra when he granted freedom to the Nepalis at large enabling them to campaign for or against the PS [The Rising Nepal, May 30, 1979].
It was also interesting to observe that the panca and multiparty activists were at once thrown into the vortex of competitive politics goading them to draw new battle lines for insuring the victory of their respective sides. The panca, who were overly demoralized by the royal decision, steadily regained confidence when they knew that their side had enormous supportive factors. Always accustomed to playing politics under the patronage of power and authority, panca were alien to competitive politics. The changed context had, however, put them into a new role. Surprisingly, they also entered into various aspects of popular politics which, in essence, were the negation of "command politics". Issues such as the active royal leadership, the process of liberalisation, the making of government and its accountability, and economic programmes were fiercely debated in the first Panca Convention held in connection with the impending referendum. Yet they eventually decided to the silent on the question of "active royal leadership." [Nirdaliya Panchayatko Niti ra Karyakrama 2036, Baral, 1983; 75-77]. In the meantime, King Birendra made it clear that irrespective of the verdict of the referendum [on either side], he would be guided by three principles while discharging his royal duties:

1. Universal adult franchise as the basis of elections to the RP;
2. The appointment of the Prime Minister on the recommendation of the RP, and
3. The accountability of Ministry headed by a Prime Minister to the RP.

Observers believed that these three principles were the precursors of a parliamentary system of government. [Shaha, 1982: 156; Baral, 1983: 83-84].

Amidst such speculations and interpretations, the much awaited referendum result went in favour of the Pancayat System with reform by a narrow margin of 10 percent i.e. the pancayat side got 55.3 percent as against 44.7 for the multiparty side. But most political groups supporting multiparty during the referendum rejected the verdict, though the Nepali Congress leader, B.P. Koirala, who was all along championing such an exercise, said that he would accept the verdict however "unexpected" and "inexplicable" it might be. He added: "The fundamental rights of the people are inalienable and cannot be taken away on any excuse, referendum or otherwise. The votes cast for the multi-party side are votes committed to democracy. We will have to build our democratic strategy in the days on the basis of this committed support" [Baral, 1983: ]. Nevertheless, many multiparty leaders were of the opinion that the referendum had in fact sharpened rather than solved the political conflict in the country.
The Post-Referendum Scene

The post-referendum national political scene was as much characterized by the continuation of democratic reforms introduced by King Birendra as by the persisting dilemma on whether to consolidate and promote these reforms for a smooth transition to full fledged democracy in Nepal. Such a contradictory situation once again revealed that political orientation of the panicas as well as others related to the system remained unchanged even after undergoing the processes of democratic exercises. On the contrary, the strenuously held-pancayat solidarity of the referendum days was fast eroding despite their unswerving loyalty to the King and 'partyless' character of the system. The general elections, and the election of the Prime Minister from the RP, and also the cabinet accountability increasingly became contentious issues within the pancayat camp. The constitutional provision that a Prime Minister, who is required to get support of sixty percent members of the RP on an individual basis, seems to come under strain as many diehard panicas and other interested elements see it as antithetical to the active royal leadership and partyless spirit.

Thus it is worthwhile to discuss briefly the relationship between the adult franchise elections to the RP and the procedures of forming and prolonging the life of a government headed by a Prime Minister. The RP has 140 odd members of whom 112 are elected and 28 nominated by the King. Since all 112 members contest elections on an individual basis, their commitment to candidates for the post of Prime Minister would be determined by a number of non-political factors. Moreover, the RP members are still inclined to look upon the King, who is the "active" leader of the system for any probable indications to be given by him. Such behaviors of the panicas may not necessarily continue if the adult franchise exercise is pursued in accordance with the letter and spirit of the constitution. Under the present dispensation, however, all members have come to the RP without programmes, issues, and commitment. In the first pancayata general election of 1981, individualistic, communal, regional and other parochial trends were evident in the absence of issues, programmes and ideology. Moreover, the battle became unequal when the government allegedly approved a list of 112 candidates with adequate financial resources at hand, depriving other panchas who wanted to become candidates. Later it was known that the government went on supporting those who were either becoming potential candidates or were likely to win the elections from various districts.

To the extent, the RP is becoming the assembly of uncommitted individuals, the task of Prime Minister from his
very days of candidature becomes difficult. The Prime Minister who is required to be dependent upon the free-floating and fickle loyalties of the RP members has to mobilise adequate favours to cultivate them, if he wants to survive for a full five-year term as stipulated in the constitution. A short experiment with the amended constitutional process, and difficulties encountered by it suggest that the unsettled political behaviors of Nepali political actors would always be manoeuvred by anti-prime ministerial elements. In 1983, for instance, the first ever elected pancayata government headed by Surya Bahadur Thapa--himself a panca for the last two-decades--was removed in a “dramatic” manner masterminded by what he himself called “extra-constitutional power centres and the new Bhardars” [courtiers]. [The Gorkhapatra, July 11-12, 1983; Nepal Times, July 12; Sharma, 1984: 258-259] Stating that the term of his government had not ended, as it was only a two-year old government, and that the no-confidence motion had been tabled in a “frivolous manner and in an artificial atmosphere,” the Prime Minister defended his role for preserving and nurturing the partyless character of the system thereby denying the charge that the participation of former party workers would sabotage the system.

The impatience and swiftness with which the Thapa government was removed showed that the spirit of the new reforms is yet to be internalised by the power elites in Nepal. Surprisingly, those opposed to the government saw the much wanted “opposition bench” in the antigovernment rallies and demonstrations that preceded the activisation of no-confidence motion. Some RP members, who played oppositional role, acted as an alternative to the government. Such a democratic exercise provided a much needed safety-valve within the framework of the partyless system. They argued that these exercises would make irrelevant the role of the outlawed parties as pancas were themselves capable of fulfilling job of a responsible opposition. Consequently, such public display of oppositional role also paved the way for the ouster of the Thapa government.

Subsequently, however, when another set of RP members took up the same issue by tabling the no-trust motion in the House, the Chairman rejected it on the technical ground thus belying all hopes of encouraging the evolution of responsible opposition within the system. It was said that such an encouragement would undermine the partyless character, and hence the revival of party system. The chairman of the RP said: “Neither the constitution nor the Rashtriya Pancayat Regulations contain any provision for no-trust motion. Mere registration of such a motion does not warrant a debate on it. The motion that had been tabled last year was not a no-trust motion but concerned “non-fulfillment of responsibility” [The Gorkhapatra, July 3, 1984].
The *modus operandi* of panca oppositions was invariably the same—to mobilise all resources for removing the Prime Minister. Sometimes one group succeeds; at times, it fails because of a number of non-supportive factors. Also spurred by the power struggle, the pancas try to put themselves into the rather vaguely delineated camps-liberal and hardliner—forgetting that there is only one policy, and everyone else must accommodate himself to that policy underlined by the leader of the system—the King. No pancayat worker can go beyond the fundamentals of the system. Opinions may be expressed in relative freedom, but in the end both the so-called liberals and hardliners submit to the "acknowledged sources of authority" [See Binder, 1965: 402] The fierce political debates on the rationale of structural changes or the continuation of the *status quo* were often silenced by the balanced political statements of the King. So the controversy that tends to reflect the dynamism of the system is circumscribed, and arguments can proceed only to a certain limit and must cease.

These limitations notwithstanding, the RP members, district pancayata presidents, and other pancas have not completely been barred from indulging in the revived controversy over the probable evolution pattern of the system. The Third Amendment to the Constitution, coming as it did in the wake of the referendum politics, has in fact added many dimensions to the pancayata political process. Since the concept and practice of active royal leadership are much in focus even after the changed context, the elected representatives including the Prime Minister and his colleagues have a delicate role to play. For an elected Prime Minister has to satisfy the monarch—the source of power and authority—and also the members of the RP to whom he is responsible.

The five years’ exercise on this political process has shown that much desired constitutional evolution in Nepal has to rely on the resolve and nourishment of the King. Sometimes it appears as a difficult proposition, yet this seems to be the choice regardless of personal or group predilections for other alternatives. This scenario has both positive and negative impact on the ongoing political process in Nepal. On the one hand, royal patronage and indulgence has provided stability to the political system containing the continued *panca* infighting over the decades. On the other hand, all institutions and political actors below the palace have a tendency to look upon the *Darbar* as the focal point of all policy decisions. The political participants too avoid any risk for taking major decision because as individuals they have a narrow popular base. The post-referendum political process was expected to bring about a balance in this situation in the country, but the domination of a strong ruler over weak institutions continues in spite of constitutional formalities.
Prospect

The political tone and temper set by the politics of referendum and consequent reforms incorporated into the constitution will take some time to crystallise for the evolution of the system. The inability of power elites to accommodate the moderate outlawed political groups in the body politic, and the lack of normative behavior and commitment were the setbacks to the new political process. The panca government, after ascertaining the popular opinion in its favour through the referendum, did not bother to care for the relevance of these groups to the reformed panchayat process. Consequently, the impatience and despondency with which the outlawed groups, claiming as they do as the champion of multiparty democracy, decided to go into a programmatic action against the 'partyless' system in 1985, demonstrated that their action was prompted by their anxiety to be politically potent. The NC's manifesto of the satyagraha [civil disobedience] underlined the abolition of the ban on political parties and establishment of full democracy as the primary objective of the movement. [Satyagrahako Ghosanapatra ND., Rajdhani Weekly, May 20, 1985 Samiskya, May 17, 1985] It was reported that about 7,000 workers went to jail in connection with the satyagraha. Although they are still too weak to influence the course of Nepali politics, their explicit demand for the restoration of political parties, and the open defiance of the constitution through peaceful means could be considered as a major development in Nepali politics. It also showed that the purpose of the referendum is yet to be fulfilled, despite King Birendra's own concern about the political integration of all Nepalis.

It can be said that if the extra-systemic groups exhaust their expectations for suitable constitutional reforms and their sincere implementation, they can do very little to neutralize if not to remove the extremist trend in the country. Sporadic violent incidents which have already been experienced are likely to promote political sensationalism if other channels of interest articulation are blocked. Whether or not such a situation continues depends upon some probable moves King Birendra would take. But inaction on his part will result in demoralization, apathy, and the obstruction of peaceful process of change.

In the present situation the King has also to encounter a number of forces or elements surrounding his regime. Various vested interest groups thriving in the name of the system-maintenance might be vulnerable to positive steps to be taken by the King. The penetration of business power in today's Nepali political process gives ground for concern and it may be difficult to break such a vicious circle with the stroke of a decision. As they
are increasingly becoming entrenched in the political process, their role cannot be regarded inconsequential to the system. Their primary interest is on the continuation of the present political stalemate--neither to go ahead with a broadbased achievement-oriented political process nor to end the trappings of democratic polity on the basis of which they have been able to prove their relevance.

Some so-called liberal-minded pancas seem to be showing unprecedented courage in criticising the role of “the new Bhardars”, despite their own behaviors as erstwhile Bhardars. This is not unnatural because Nepal is not yet a political society in Shils’s sense “inasmuch as involvement with the goals of the total society is not widely dispersed throughout the populace.” [Levine, 1965: 251]. It does not mean that the process of change is absent. What is only peculiar is that Nepal is carrying both an authoritarian tradition and subject political culture along with some elements of “a politicking society”.

Now the most important question is how the political system can be more accommodative or integrationist in the given context. Both positive and negative trends seem to be struggling in this respect. Some positive points are:
1. the continued stability provided by the involvement of the King in the system;
2. the modest political behavior of the Nepalis at large and their qualities of adjustment to change, and
3. the institutional infrastructures created by the system.

Conversely, some negative trends which are looming large are
i. steady erosion of norms and values and its immediate impact on the national political life;
ii. institutions lack capability and resilience in grappling with the emergent problems and crises;
iii. political confusions;
iv. discrepancy between principle and practice;
v. lack of direction and determination;
vi. excessive adherence to old political values and norms;
vii. narrowly set political objectives;
viii. pervasive demoralizing trends in politics and bureaucracy;
ix. politics of benefits and convenience as the motivating force for political life;
x. lack of organizational behavior;
xi. apolitical behavior of political participants, and
xii. trends of fragmentation of political culture.
The foregoing trends which are rampant in the bodypolitic may not show their immediate effects on the growth of the system but in the long run they are likely to eat up its intrinsic strength. So overriding everything else, the political process must show its resilience and capacity in stalling these trends so that other extra-systemic [adventurist] challenges might be curbed in the country. The panchayat elections are prone to parochialism because of the lack of issue, programme, and organizational backing and other inconveniences facing candidates. These elections seem to be inadequate for resolving conflict. Moreover, since elections are always the most sensitive sites in the politics of developing countries, the manipulation of state machinery by some privileged elites for fending off their opponents might create conditions for 'political decay'. Thus the extended participation but lacking some kind of institutional mechanism for regulating the political process may hasten rather than stop the trends of political decay. A brief experiment with the adult franchise elections as also the provisions for an elected Prime Minister and cabinet accountability to the RP have indeed produced some ominous problems for the 'partyless' system.

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Monarchy and the Democratic Development in Contemporary Nepal.

Ganesh Raj Sharma

As an adaptable institution, monarchy in Nepal has been a source of change, as well as the mainstay of continuity and tradition. As a most ancient political institution, it has passed through various stages of political development; it has been as relevant in modern times as it had been in ancient and medieval periods. Though non-elective, it has always commanded allegiance and obedience of the common people for different reasons — not necessarily by coercion alone.

In Nepal, quite a large number of people tend to believe that the King is an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. Belief of the common people has provided impregnable emotional base for the institution of monarchy whose roots go deep in the political tradition of Nepal. Since time immemorial, politics and religion have been complementary to each other, and the institution of monarchy evolved in a mixed milieu. Monarchy in a Hindu polity has a traditionally religious and sanctimonious role. Coronation of a Hindu King is not only an occasion of political oath-taking, it is an elaborate religious affirmation and commitment of the King towards the people and to God. Embedded in the religious sentiments of the people, it prevails more on emotions than on reason. And, it is this kind of emotion which concedes the King a popular base rule. But monarchy was never meant to be absolute in the Hindu polity. Limits imposed by various Vedic and similar sacrosanct religious codes prevented monarchy from becoming absolute.

Religious sanctions and the age-old Divine Rights Theory may seem irrelevant in the modern monarchical constitution, but it does not require constitution to exist. Its legitimacy is established by the universal recognition of its historical role as well as its capability to modernize its role. In recent times, many monarchies have come under great pressure — both internal and
external — and whereas some have succumbed under pressure others continue to exercise effective power. The Spanish people welcomed the restoration of monarchy as soon as democracy revived; and monarchy, in its part, has been a very powerful bastion for the survival of the democratic process in the country. The continuing popularity and legitimacy of monarchy is very much evident in war-ravaged Kampuchea as well. Prince Norodom Sihanouk symbolises the hope for freedom and independence that has enthused masses with a nationalist sentiment. But in other instances, where it has been abolished, like in Afghanistan, Iran, Ethiopia or Libya, the place has been taken by more tyrannical regimes, either of the left or the right.

One of the most glaring instances is that of the Soviet Union, where, during the Second World War, communists who were in power had to appeal to the people of Russia to come forward and defend the country of the Great Czars, recalling the contribution of Peter the Great, and many renowned kings and generals. They formed military battalions and declared army medals in honour of the Czars to arouse nationalist sentiments of the people; the influence of the tradition was appreciated in the grim reality of the war.

Considering its appeal and continuing relevance it is not very difficult to understand why some of the best democracies of the developed world have yet monarchy as the most respectable of all political institutions. And, significantly, this institution has the same respect and credibility in the very rich countries of Arabia as in the poor countries of the Himalayas. These facts belie the notion that the institution of monarchy goes in contradiction with modernisation.

The institution of monarchy is a stabilising force, and it maintains continuity of power and authority of the State. Once a country is destabilised and monarchy is removed, there have been very few instances of stability returning. In most of the Third World countries, no orderly democratic system has been established after the forced abolition of monarchy; one or the other form of dictatorship has been fighting for the legitimacy against the same process of destabilisation which had brought them to power.

In the past when there was not much influence of political ideologies, as they have now, monarchy was a factor for emotional integration of the people of a particular territory. And at present, when political ideologies and parties represent partisan and divisive interests, monarchy seems to have a greater relevance in embodying the common emotional relationship of a nation as well as representing integrated national consensus. Monarchy in its self-interest too cannot encamp itself in a particular political ideology as it is a repository of the trust of the whole nation.
In consonance with its tradition, monarchy at present and particularly in a country like Nepal has a goal to achieve — an ideal to fulfill. Here it has a task of institution-building as well as creating a national consensus too. It has to share a great deal of power with the people and, at the same time, exercise vigilance that power is not going to be used against the interest of the people by endangering the national identity. In a formative stage of democratic institution and the nation as well, the monarch has a progressive role as a democrat as well as a conservative one as a nationalist. Maintaining a balance between these two is a skill which a monarch in a country like Nepal requires most. This paper is mainly focused on the role of the monarchy in such a paradoxical situation.

II

Monarchy in Nepal has passed through various phases of political development since the unification of Nepal in 1769. The period since then can be divided into three major phases:

1. the period of consolidation (1769-1846)
2. the period of stability (1846-1951)
3. the period of democratic transformation (1951-present)

Between 1769 and 1846, monarchy in Nepal played an active role to evolve and consolidate a political system suitable for a unified Nepal, in accordance with its feudal tradition. From a small and homogeneous political unit of the Gorkha kingdom, Nepal had emerged as a nation-state of multi-ethnic, multi-lingual and divergent geographical structure. In a way it was a merger of small states, including Gorkha, to become present-day Nepal. King Prithivi Narayan Shah had to face the challenge of dealing with such a vast and inaccessible country. As a visionary, he conceived the newly formed nation as a partnership of various castes and races situated between the two great powers of Asia-India and China. In his well recorded directives, there are several guiding principles of state policies. In the absence of any written legal codes, his directives had the effect of law. But the King was not the sole determining force on state affairs. The part played by warriors and army officers during the integration drive was also decisive during its consolidation. Because of the traditional stratification of castes by religious codes, upper caste elites, too, had a greater say in state affairs. For the rest of the common people who seemed to have no adequate say in state policies, there evolved a body of nobles, called Bhardars, who played the role of councillors as well as pressure groups in the political process. The Kingdom of Gorkha had a good reputation of rendering justice for which there is still a saying that one should go to Gorkha if
justice had been denied. Similarly, there was a body of councillors consisting of persons from different castes and ethnic groups. This convention was carried on in unified Nepal too. On many occasions the decisions of the King had been affected by pressures and persuasions of such groups. The founder of modern Nepal, King Prithivi Narayan Shah recorded that he could not make one of his favourite persons, Biraj Bakheti, Prime Minister because the people had a liking for Kalu Pande; it was this sensitivity to popular feelings which made him so successful. His “skill of leadership and vision” have been recorded well in Nepal’s history.

After the death of King Prithivi Narayan Shah, the process of consolidation of the regime and evolution of the administrative structure continued with a greater say of Bhardars as successive kings were either too young to shoulder state responsibilities or were quite incapable of exercising influence due to their infancy. With the King as the symbol of the nation, Bhardars continued the mission during such intervening periods with utmost dedication and loyalty to the King in power. But among themselves, there had been severe competition for power, as a result of which none of the Prime Ministers during that period died a natural death. In the rivalry for power based upon family loyalties, there had been cliques of Thapas, Pandey or Basnets coming into power by removing the other in court conspiracies. Worsening of the situation culminated into the Kot massacre in which a large number of Bhardars, including the Prime Minister, were killed.

Taking advantage of the political chaos, Jung Bahadur commanded the loyalty of the army with the help of his seven brothers and prevailed upon the King to procure a Royal Order to rule the country as a Prime Minister. To the bewilderment of King Rajendra, his minor son Surendra ascended the throne. In 1858, King Surendra was persuaded to issue a Royal Command under which all powers of a sovereign were delegated to Jung Bahadur making the King a figure-head.

That command made the office of the Prime Minister hereditary which was renewed to each succeeding Prime Minister until that process was withdrawn by King Tribhuwan after the revolution of 1951. During the Rana oligarchy, the King remained a reigning monarch having no direct access in the administration of the country, though all powers to the government were considered to have emanated from him his position as the source of sovereignty had not been questioned by the Rana in power. Terms used by historians as the “prisoner” or the “puppet” for the King during the period do not reveal the exact position. Historical facts confirm that the successive Rana rulers were acutely aware that the legitimacy of their rule depended upon the consent of the King and, at no time, did they even try to tamper with the institution of monarchy. However powerfully entrenched the
family may have been in the army and the administration of the country, they had learnt the lesson left by previous court conspiracies in which none of the families could continue to enjoy support of the army once they lost the favour of the King. So, not relying upon their command over the army alone, the Ranas forged familial relations with the royal family and this trend continued as a strategy to assure them power as kith and kin of the Royal family.

Besides keeping the King on their favourable terms by providing stability in the kingdom as well as by developing familial relations, the Ranas designed a strategy of keeping Nepal away from foreign machination. Though they had followed various courses of modernisation of the administration, they did manage to keep Nepal isolated. A weak China on the north and all pervading British empire all around Nepal, including its influence in Tibet, had forced the Ranas to align with the British regime in India. With no threat from outside to their regime, the Ranas enjoyed an unparalleled stability at home for quite a long period of history.

The World War II was an epoch-making event in the world. After it was over, the whole world had entered into a reorganisation as well as realignment of states. India's independence and the Communist revolution in China were major events which followed one after the other making change in Nepal, too, inevitable. The timing and the method of change were left to be decided on the interaction of the decisive forces related with it. The revolution of 1951 was its natural consequence. But it was not the outcome of any singular factor in Nepali politics. There were several factors which played a concerted role in the success of the revolution. The King was wearied of reigning without the exercise of his legitimate prerogatives. Politicians inspired with ideals of democracy had already launched sporadic struggles and agitations for their cause. Discord within the Rana family appeared on the surface and prominent among them, Subarna Shamsher and Mahbir Shamsher were prepared for a vendetta against their declassed status in the Rana hierarchy. And, above all, a new power in India was in search of a viable strategy for its security concerns in Nepal. All around Nepal, the status quo had been disturbed the consequences of which the country was soon to witness.

The new government in India initially tried to continue adjustment with the Rana regime in the form set up by the British government by accommodating reforms. Taking the Rana Prime Minister into confidence, Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru, had exerted pressure upon Nepali politicians in exile to call off agitation and to cooperate with the three-tiered partyless Panchayat system promulgated by Prime Minister Padma
Shamsher. In a meeting on 28 May 1947, soon after Padma Shamsher announced basic outlines of his reforms, as a head of an interim government in India, Nehru had a very interesting conversation with M.P. Koirala and Ganesh Man Singh, both leaders of the Nepali National Congress at that time. An excerpt from the recorded advice of Nehru throws light on the strategy adopted by India towards political forces in Nepal:

How could you assert that your movement may not create more power to reactionaries? They may be bent to undertake any stringent measure and if they fall upon your movement relentlessly, this would mean complete setback of your truddling movement. If you call it off now and divert your energy in consolidating your power, expand your propaganda among the masses, you could be better equipped for your next struggle. Calling off does not mean you stop it for ever. If you find that the government is not sincere and she had not given what she declared, you could launch your movement again. Would it not be better if you let us be stronger? The Nepal government has extended her hand of friendship towards us. You know other nations are also eager to exploit her to their benefit but India must not give that chance, she must take it. That is what I want and for this I have suggested to stop the movement for the present. Besides, Nepal government has sent objections regarding the base of your movement in British India. To give shelter to politicians is a different thing and underground work also can be overlooked. But open bases to launch movement against one independent country is quite different thing. That is, however, significant at present but under heavy pressure our position will be rather delicate!

[Unpublished, in Devendra Raj Upadhyaya's collection]

Leaders of the Nepali National Congress, the main opposition force against the Rana regime, heeded the suggestion and called off their agitation. Subsequently, the Government of Nepal Act 1948 was promulgated by Prime Minister Padma Shamsher. It was, in a way, the first written constitution apparently based on the tripartite understanding which India had initiated. The constitution was too drastic to the Ranas in power and too feeble to meet the aspirations of the political leaders. As a result, it failed without adequate trial. Ignoring this mishap, India
had tried to adjust with the last Rana Prime Minister as the Britishers in India had done in the past. India, however, had kept its options open by aiding and abetting armed insurgentaries. A red-carpet welcome to Mohan Shamsher facilitated India to enter into the Treaty of 1950 with far-reaching security and economic implications. Mohan Shamsher failed in his purpose to neutralise India in the internal affairs of the country by conceding what India wanted in the Treaty. Volatile situation in the north, after the arrival of the Chinese army in Tibet, had a direct repercussion in Nepal.

There is a very close link between events in the occupation of Tibet by the Chinese army at the end of October 1950 and the launching of armed insurrections by the Nepali Congress insurgents in Nepal in the beginning of November 1950. Besides protesting the Chinese action in Tibet, India was in haste to entrench itself in Nepal’s strategic position. Politicians inspired by Gandhi’s ideals of non-violence were suggested its irrelevance in the Nepali context. B.P. Koirala had narrated to this author how Nehru at that time rejected his idea of a Gandhian type of nonviolent agitation in Nepal with an outburst, “what nonsense this Gandhism is?” The Ranas in exile were already recruiting ex-servicemen of Nepali origin in India with the tacit approval of India. And the Nepali Congress adopted a resolution in a border town in India on September 27, 1950 for an armed insurrection to be launched urgently. In a pre-arranged manner, King Tribhuvan left the Royal Palace to be confined within another iron gate—this time an alien one. As soon as a safe passage was managed for the King to India, armed movement was triggered at various places of the kingdom. India was very much vigilant, and it never allowed insurgentaries to go beyond its control. It did not allow the King, the Ranas and the Nepali Congress leaders to meet among themselves and negotiate issues. The Nepali Congress leaders who were rushing to Delhi for an audience with King Tribhuvan were not permitted to see him until he had issued a call for cease-fire, approving the reform proclaimed by Mohan Shamsher on the lines suggested by the Government of India on December 8, 1950 [Personal Communication by B.P. Koirala]. A “reconciliation” was imposed upon the reluctant leaders of Nepali Congress along with a share in the coalition government formed for an interim period.

With India’s upper hand in influencing the course of that revolution, it has been observed by Joshi and Rose that “the decisive battles were fought in New Delhi between the Indian government and the Rana government, at the diplomatic level” (1966:70). A question can be asked in this context, what refrained India from annexing Nepal in such a situation? Some of the factors were the same which had refrained the British Empire to
expand in Nepal. Historic tradition of independence had made Nepal difficult to be subjugated by a foreign power. Its geography as well as strategic location in the Himalayas between China and India is also an important factor. Though China had not reacted in any way to the revolution, its military presence in Tibet had certainly a deterrent effect in India’s overt involvement. As forces involved in the revolution had different and contradictory interests, another foreign power, the British government had its strong reactions during the whole turmoil. It had an interest in the stability of the kingdom because of the Gorkha recruitment facilities in Nepal. Apprehending India’s strategy to prevail upon Nepal military on the pretext of helping the cause of the King and the democratic forces, the Labour government in Britain with a fire-brand leftist Bevin, as the Foreign Secretary, had extended open support to Mohan Shamsher but regretted when Mohan Shamsher relented on India’s pressure. On the peak of the conflict between India and the Ranas, according to Daman Shamsher, “the British Ambassador had warned the Indian Ambassador that the British soldiers were to be flown from the U.K. to the capital the very next day Indian soldiers reached Kathmandu”[1978:112] Instead of relying upon the support of a distant ally, the Ranas, who had a huge economic stake in India’s banks, industries and real estates, succumbed to pressure exerted by India to accept a political arrangement of coalition government comprising the Ranas and the Nepali Congress on equal ratio under the constitutional leadership of the King. Compromise of the heterogeneous political forces resulted in a difficult process of democracy for which none of the Nepali constituents had any prior experience, and what occurred in the period that followed is an account of democratic innovation and experiments in the country.

III

The revolution of 1951 was a turning point not only in the political system of the country, but in the concept of monarchy too. It unleashed a process of all-round transformation in society. Monarchy stepped into a new political base of the popular will identifying itself as an institution under democracy. King Tribhuvan had promised to conduct the government in consonance with popular will. People, hence, got an elevated share in the sovereign exercise of power. Acting as a supreme element to coordinate and harmonise conflicting interests, monarchy was temperamentally prepared for a pluralist order. Because of his initiative in the evolution of democracy with a great sense of commitment, King Tribhuvan was esteemed very high by
the people and he, thus, aptly earned a revered honour of the Father of the Nation - nation in a sense that it was going to be a partnership of the people based on the democratic norms.

But realities were much more powerful than the wishes of the King and the people. Modern political institutions were almost non-existent. Everything was to begin from the scratch. There was much antagonism between the forces which had agreed to work together. Even the process of democracy did not remain undisputed among the committed democrats; there had been differences in this regard between those with power and without power. In the absence of any election to reach into power, a competition for nomination into power degraded the standard of politicians. India’s role in the revolution had made it one of the major determinants in this instability. The King had assumed his traditional prerogatives observing democratic norms to conduct executive and legislative functions of the state, and the judicial power also emanated from him. Arriving in Kathmandu after the settlement in Delhi, the King revoked the royal command by which the hereditary post of the Prime Minister was conferred on the Ranas. He declared to hold an election for the Constituent Assembly to adopt a democratic constitution. And, in the same declaration, he appointed Mohan Shamsher again the Prime Minister with a changed role, eulogising him as “a most trusted and loyal” servant of the Crown. It is very interesting to notice that the King had led a revolution for the forcible overthrow of a regime which gained legitimacy by his own command. Element of excess or abuse of power was disapproved by reappointing the same person in consensus with other forces. The King was not alone in the legitimisation of the paradoxical events of the Rana regime and its forcible overthrow.

In the coalition ministry, the Nepali Congress was led by B.P. Koirala as the Home Minister who was persuaded unsuccessfully by Nehru to accept other portfolio and give Subarna Shamsher the home portfolio [Personal Communication by B.P. Koirala]. Surya Prasad Upadhyaya who was excluded despite Nehru’s insistence made his entry into the cabinet very soon after a reshuffle. From the very beginning, the cabinet lacked homogeneity of interests. In the changed situation the Ranas had lost their decisive position as an organised force; they had to depend upon the goodwill of India instead of one or the other constituents of the settlement. Disputes among the constituents were referred to India and occasionally almost the whole team had to fly to Delhi. In their second such visit, B.P. Koirala was so much annoyed by Nehru’s sermonisation that he drove straight to the Nepali Embassy and asked Mohan Shamsher to return to Kathmandu immediately to resolve their differences by

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themselves. Mohan Shamsher passed a sacrilegious remark that previously it was their turn, and now his own, implying the newly earned favour from India [Personal Communication, by B.P. Koirala]. In a mysterious development of the situation, an attempt on the life of Koirala was made by a storm-troopers organised by Bharat Shamsher with the help of the Prime Minister's bodyguards. In sequence to these developments, the Indian Ambassador was found inciting workers and students of the Nepali Congress against the Home Minister [Shrestha, 1984: 166].

The position of the King was ambivalent to all constituents, but his personal rapport with the political leaders and particularly with his Home Minister was very cordial. He too was not happy at impositions from India which were increasing with the instability at home. Besides in the key departments of the government, an experienced cadre of the Indian Civil Service was appointed as the Principal Secretary to the King whose roles and functions were not specified. He used to attend cabinet meetings too. In one cabinet meeting following the police firing on students in which one was killed, he castigated the Home Minister alleging that “students were killed in the streets of Kathmandu like cats and dogs.” [Personal Communication by B.P. Koirala]. The Prime Minister visited the hospital giving money to an injured person from his own purse for treatment in India as a gesture of support. A huge funeral procession came out with the participation of the senior party colleagues of the Home Minister putting him in complete isolation in the party as well as in the government. Koirala resigned after an unexpected radio broadcast. According to Koirala, the King was very much hurt because he had developed a liking for Koirala for his defiance to external dictation. On one occasion, the King had warned him to beware of the Indian Ambassador who had tried to create a misunderstanding between them on an issue of a letter written by Nehru, advising the King on certain personal matters. The relations were so cordial that the King had provided shelter to the Home Minister in the Royal Palace when his official residence was ransacked by a group led by Bharat Shamsher [Personal Communication by B.P. Koirala].

In the next reshuffle, according to the terms of “compromise” in Delhi, the Nepali Congress availed of an opportunity to form a homogeneous ministry. It was not due to the disfavour of the King as is commonly mentioned by some authors that B.P. Koirala was excluded. His party formed a ministry without him in which all important leaders of the Nepali Congress of the previous ministry were included. A one-man enquiry commission of Hora Prasad Joshi was formed in regard to the firing, and it found Koirala to be
personally responsible for the act due to his "arrogance and incapability" [Personal Communication by B.P. Koirala]. B.P. Koirala was still hopeful of getting support from the lower ranks of leaders in the party to be proposed as a candidate for premiership. During the Working Committee meeting of the Nepali Congress which was held to propose a name for the next Prime Minister, it was disclosed that Nehru had written a letter to the King to give preference to M.P. Koirala over his younger brother.Suspending the meeting for a while, four persons, representing various factions in the party including K.P. Bhattarai, rushed to see the contents of the letter in the palace. After reading the contents of the letter, they all acquiesced to Nehru’s will [Personal Communication by B.P. Koirala].

Without taking such instances into account, it is not at all possible to have a realistic understanding of the role played by monarchy in the country’s democratic development. Instead of a chronological narration of the contemporary Nepali history, it would be better to analyse the forces which determine the role played by the monarchy in the democratic transformation of the country. There is hardly a case which cannot be pleaded strongly, but inadequate knowledge of facts always leads to a misperception of judgement and a distortion of intent.

IV

Monarchy deserves credit for its contribution to the dawn of democracy, but in four critical junctures in the contemporary political developments in Nepal, the role of monarchy has come in for some controversy. First, in holding the elections for Parliament under the constitution promulgated by the King himself instead of holding elections for a Constituent Assembly. Second, the switch over to the Partyless Panchayat system, abrogating the multi-party parliamentary system. Third, the introduction of a one-party model in the form of the Go-Black-to-Village-National-Campaign following the Second Amendment of the Constitution. And fourth, in the manner of conducting the first National Referendum in 1980. Political discussion in Nepal is often circumscribed by a preconceived notion that there had been solely internal elements of politics determining the major course of political events in Nepal. There is a kind of King-versus-people misconception on these issues. In the process of democratic development, attention is always focussed on how much the King conceded to the people. Attention has hardly been drawn to how much both lost to the third element - that is external. As it is a monarchical country, it leads to an obsession with the British political development of the King-versus-Parliament. The reality
is far from that. In Nepal's peculiar geo-political situation with its
dependence even for a passage to the sea upon one particular
country, interference by that country in Nepal's internal affairs
has rarely been taken into consideration. It is not to deny that
there have been serious involvement of foreign powers in the
internal affairs of the country, but it would be ridiculous to say
that a country like Nepal has been a cause of worry in the internal
affairs of either India or China. But, in reverse, it causes much
concern if any of its neighbouring countries meddle in Nepal's
internal affairs. As a matter of fact, conflicts of internal interests,
thus, have a tendency to be externalised and become alarming
when they instigate an international rivalry. The Revolution of
1951, which brought to an end Nepal's isolation from world
affairs also brought with it the beginning of international political
and ideological rivalry of serious nature.

With India's greater sensitivity to its security in the north, it
had been prepared to go to any extent to meet its requirements in
Nepal, and democracy was not going to override its security
concerns. Soon after the revolution, persons with no experience of
the state power were suddenly given the task to encounter such
designs. The old fortification for self-preservation had been
demolished, but new ones had not taken shape. In such a fluid
situation, conspiratorial politics was bound to thrive. And, in a
disorganised house like this, it was but natural for a foreign power
to emerge as an effective manipulator, and without taking this
into account, it would be an incomplete account of Nepal's
political development.

In all the four events mentioned above India was involved
openly or in disguise. It always seems to have a double-image:
encouraging populism to the extent of anarchy and thus
compromising policies and adjusting favourable persons with a
harassed person in power, by putting them in a trap between
ultra-radicals and ultra-reactionaries. In the post-revolution
Nepal, India has, on crucial occasions, hindered the normal
functioning of a democratic process. With a little elaboration, it
can be established that India had harmed its interests more by
causing instability in Nepal; by encouraging conflicts between the
King and the democratic elements and among democrats too. The
task of democratisation in Nepal had been made very perplexing.
There had been very little care of the nationalist sensibility of the
people by deputing senior administrative officers from India as
experts to organise Nepali administration along with the
appointment of such persons as the principal secretary to the
King, too, with unlimited access in the government. The network
of administration which had evolved in a Nepali tradition was
being subordinated by foreign experts. The military mission,
which had come in the pretext of modernising the army, had
alarmed other powers too. An organised army of insurrectionaries
called Raksha Dal had a pre-eminence of ex-servicemen of the
Indian Army, though of Nepali origin, whose unruly behaviour
made even their political leaders unpopular. All these causes
angered the common people and a new group of radicals
germinated in politics.

Until the revolution, communists were not a force to be taken
into consideration, but increased Indian activities created them.
In a way, communism in Nepal was a gift of India by error. They
have been, since then, thriving in this country, not on the basis of
support among the peasants and workers, but on a slogan of
non-interference by a foreign power. By arousing nationalist
sentiments of the people, they had been able to make a
breakthrough and even infiltrate a rigid traditional society. In this
way, they were successful to forge a stable alliance with
traditionalists with a long-run strategy for the seizure of the state
power from within.

Communists have no appeal yet on the ideological plane
among the masses. In their formative period, they had the
advantage of monopolising the bruised nationalist sentiment of
the people. After gradually establishing contacts with prominent
communist powers they entered into a reverse role. They did not
stress nationalist sentiments in relation to these powers as they did
against India; in fact, nationalism was submerged under the
hightide of communist ideology. The fragmentation of
international communism inevitably led to the growth of various
communist factions in Nepal and due to their weak ideological
base they relied more on tactically exploiting the situation of
contradiction between different political forces; their own positive
role is yet to crystalise.

In an anomalous situation like this, in the early 1950s, there
had been a spate of groups and factions with extreme polarisation,
which came into being sometimes spontaneously and many a time
by secret manipulation of interested powers. The largest political
party, the Nepali Congress was also a victim of this process due to
its own tussle for leadership. Political situation was very much
unpredictable, the only predictable thing was anarchy. An
unbriddled populism in the possible Constituent Assembly could
have thwarted the very purpose of framing up a democratic
constitution of the country. These factors as well as the increasing
instability drastically changed the situation in which election for
the Constituent Assembly became irrelevant. Though Rishikesh
Shaha was an early initiator of the debate, Prime Minister Tanka
Prasad Acharya closed the debate with an announcement that a
constitution from the King himself instead of holding an election
for a Constituent Assembly was acceptable to the people. Dr. K. I. Singh, the next Prime Minister, who enjoyed the goodwill not only in the palace but an enormous one from the Indian press stood against the idea of a Constituent Assembly.

Singh had major attributes of emerging strong like Jung Bahadur except a favourable national and international environment. His emphasis on the special ties with India had made him popular in Delhi even though he had announced the postponement of the promised general election for Parliament. His dismissal was, in fact, not as surprising as his appointment. And more surprising was the favour he was able to receive from India ignoring the fact that he had been captured with the help of Indian troops in Nepal just about five years before being named the Prime Minister.

Following an agitation organised by three political parties with the involvement of the communists too, a date for the general election was announced by the King. An interim government headed by Subarna Shamshere was formed. To recommend a draft of the constitution, a committee consisting of two leaders of the Nepali Congress, Surya Prasad Upadhyay and Hora Prasad Joshi along with other three was constituted. There was a broad realisation of the mounting pressure on Nepal as a result of which a consensus seems to emerge on a) dropping the demand for a Constituent Assembly and b) an early general election. The configuration of forces operating at that time makes it clear that election to a Constituent Assembly was essentially risky to national integrity and that it was not who had an interest to retreat from the word for a Constituent Assembly.

The first general election for the lower house of Parliament was held under the 1959 Constitution. The Nepali Congress, quite unexpectedly, secured an absolute majority. As a leader of the party B.P. Koirala, who alone had a vote winning charisma in the party, was nominated as the Prime Minister. He had formed a government compromising with the heterogeneous elements of the party. Surya Prasad Upadhyaya, who had lost election from two constituencies, was given the home portfolio with an obvious motive. Another loser in the election, K.P. Bhattarai, was elected for a most dignified office of the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

Though the King and his Prime Minister did not have similar outlook in regard to the democratic transformation of the country yet the King found a common cause of nationalism in Koirala. Because of his persistence to defy terms dictated by any force, the King seemed to have a preference for him over his other colleagues. The reason for not inviting the leader of the house forthwith to form the government was not a personal dislike for
him as was believed. According to Koirala, the King made some delay in inviting him to form the government but it was mainly due to technical reason as a relevant act was being promulgated. The King’s relations with him were nothing if not intimate. The King used to delay bills and proposals if not fully convinced, but he never rejected a single one. Abolition of Birta was drastic yet it got the royal assent a year before the dissolution of Parliament—that enactment in no way effected King’s favour to the Prime Minister. Even the bill on nationalisation of private forest in which some members of the Royal Family and high-ranking officials were substantial losers, was not rejected by the King. There had been periods of pin-pricks and misunderstanding between them, no doubt, but the rapport between them had never been severed. At the final moment of the change-over, the King had given sufficient hint to him that “either the King permit the Prime Minister to do all he wishes, or he pave the way to the King for a complete free hand”, [Personal Communication, by B.P. Koirala] but after a very cordial dinner hosted by the King they parted company for ever; the real cause for it remained unanswered by both.

The government which had been established with a stable procedure of election drew favourable response from everywhere. A definite process of getting into power discouraged unfair competition. A sense of stability prevailed in the mind of the people in spite of the disorganised party in power. Nepal’s foreign relations were diversified. All major countries were coming closer with Nepal. The United States increased its aid programme. The Russians sent President Voroshilov as a goodwill gesture, and the Chinese preceded the Indians in inviting the Prime Minister for a state visit, though on the Indian insistence, an earlier date for the state visit to India was fixed. The Prime Minister also paid a visit to Israel, where he was presented some light arms as gift for the use of the Nepali army. This matter temporarily created a misunderstanding in the mind of the King; to India, it was contrary to its security conception in Nepal. The warm welcome accorded to the Prime Minister along with a peace and friendship treaty signed in China alarmed India about China’s design in Nepal. Respect shown by Khruscho by inviting in a closed dinner attended by other four prominent personalities i.e., Nasser, Crown Prince of Morocco, Nehru and Prince Sihanouk, was an inducement to a young Koirala to compete with others for a leadership in the Third World cause. Nepal getting prominence in this manner was not in good taste for India. It was sensitive about all these developments having a powerful and effective lobby inside the palace, the ruling party and among other opposition parties too. They had the grievances
against the Prime Minister as the whole thing was going through a personal level rather than at the institutional one, where India had a great influence. In spite of these grievances, India would not have gone against the Prime Minister, had their relation with China not deteriorated critically. Like in the background for the revolution in 1951, China again was a major factor behind the events which changed the course of history in 1960.

To understand the underlying reasons for the winding up of the parliamentary process, we have to take into account the deteriorating relations between India and China and their impact on Nepal. To maintain a popular image in politics as a nationalist, Koirala was forced to correct the statement of Nehru in which he had claimed that "any aggression against Bhutan and Nepal would be regarded as aggression against India." This was in the context of Nepal's denouncement of Chinese intrusion in Mustang for which the Chinese government apologised to Nepal. The statement of Koirala, asserting Nepal as a sovereign nation "completely free and able to make its own decisions on any internal and external matter" convinced no one in India. Without an exception, the whole Indian press was critical of the policies of Koirala especially his equating China with India and contradicting the Indian understanding of the 1950 Treaty between Nepal and India. Coinciding with the resentment in India, a wave of protests and demonstrations started coming to the streets in Kathmandu similar to that in 1951 which saw him resign under pressure. An internal feud in the ruling party added the fuel to the fire. Cabinet colleagues were divided into rival factions one loyal to the Prime Minister and the other to the Home Minister. A dharma patra [Sacred Vow] aimed against the Prime Minister had been circulated among the members of Parliament belonging to the Nepali Congress which had been signed by about 32 persons [Paramananda, 1982: 272]. A strong voice of dissent of almost the majority of the delegates in the Seventh National Convention of the Nepali Congress was led by Biswabandhu Thapa, its chief whip in parliament - a clear embarrassment to the Prime Minister [Personal Communication by B.P. Koirala]. In a similar fashion, M.P. Koirala and Dr. Tulsi Giri had issued scathing criticism against the policies of the government. There seemed to be a strange but purposeful alliance between the extreme rightist elements of the landed aristocracy and the extreme leftists under various covers which succeeded to have massive mobilisation of the people for their demonstrations. As a last straw on the back of a camel, there was an organised violence against the police in Gorkha led by a Yogi Narharinath. Curiously, he also, later on, went into exile in India opposing the Panchayat system. The Prime Minister, however, depended much
on the information supplied by his Home Minister Surya Prasad Upadhyaya who had no sympathy left for him. When a communique of the Home Ministry issued in October 1960 implicated the King in the incident, the otherwise severe critic of B.P. Koirala's policies, his own eldest brother, M.P. Koirala, after reading it, scolded the Home Minister charging that he had virtually "stabbed on the back of his Prime Minister" [Personal Communication by M.P. Koirala].

A source confided this author that Nehru had used an emissary to suggest the King that B.P. Koirala was going to create trouble both for the King and India by hobnobbing much with China: and this was just on the eve when a warm welcome was accorded by Nehru to the Nepali Prime Minister [Personal Communication]. Another informed source had a strong view that Subarna Shamshere and Surya Prasad Upadhyaya were in the first line of succession and Dr. Tulsi Giri and Biswa Bandhu Thapa were in the second line of succession after the removal of B.P. Koirala of which he was completely unaware [Personal Communication]. It was quite clear to Subarna Shamshere that the Koirala ministry was not going to last long. Possibility of a drastic change had made the political situation very unpredictable. Just four days prior to the declaration of emergency under the provision of the Constitution, a high-ranking Nepali official had contacted Koirala with a suggestion that he should discipline the provocative utterances of some of his senior colleagues in the cabinet and some members of Parliament [Personal Communication]. The Prime Minister responded with a show of helplessness and requested the King to realise his precarious position. But the time was merciless to him: as an inevitability, Parliament was dissolved and the Ministry was dismissed. Had the King not acted, time would not have waited for him too - some other forces would have superseded him.

Immediately after the declaration of emergency in Nepal under which Parliament was dissolved, the Ministry dismissed and the fundamental rights of the people suspended, people failed to understand why Nehru was so prompt in his criticism of the King's action as the reversal of democracy whereas Subarna Shamshere, the Deputy Prime Minister in the dissolved government, observed complete silence for more than a month in his house in Calcutta.

Formation of the first Council of Ministers was delayed for almost nine suspenseful days. Meanwhile, committed democrats and radicals went into self-exile in India and were there to be used in accordance with the variation in India's relation with Nepal: they had to play a role of a pacifist one time and that of terrorist at the other. No single leader of a popular following was spared to
remain consistent in commitment. In due course of time, all of them lost the will and character as politicians. Where repressive sticks of the regime failed to break them, wooing carrots offered by a foreign hand completely destroyed them; and thus, a smooth evolution of a pluralist order was retarded.

A vast political literature has been published on this happening, but real facts are yet obfuscated. As it was a serious breach of democratic process, there have been allegations against the motive of the King for that step. Had there not been other powerful forces, which, over the time, would have overwhelmed both the institution of monarchy and the independence of the country it would have been very difficult to understand the compulsions behind the King’s actions. Koirala had denied that personal animosity was a factor for his dismissal. The King had a high esteem for Koirala unmatched by any Nepali politician. He had many admirers in India and affection of Nehru was no less for him, but it was politics and, apparently, Koirala’s own high profile personality which stood between him and others that disrupted the democratic process very seriously.

There is nothing on record to infer how the Chinese reacted to this change, but reactions from the Soviet Union were in a way issuing a guideline for the Nepali communists to work. Reflecting the official view of the government, Ilya Redko, a Soviet specialist on Nepal, had justified the royal action with a plea that “It became necessary because the Nepali Congress and its leadership had discredited themselves in the eyes of the people.” He also compared them with “the reactionary political groups led by the Ranas” [Ray, 1983: 37]. Following the guideline, a press release was made by D.P. Adhikary as the secretary on behalf of the Communist Party of Nepal proposing a “united national democratic organisation” on the pattern of the guided democracy of Sukarno of Indonesia [Svatantra Samachar, 2019]. What D.N. Adit had been experimenting in Indonesia to infiltrate into power had become a model for the majority group of the Communist Party of Nepal. And, they had a tactical split in the party with an alternative course of action under the disguise of a “pro-Chinese” label. Except in rhetorics, “pro-Chinese” exiles in India virtually aligned themselves with the Indian strategy in Nepal. For quite sometime it looked very odd that avowed “pro-Chinese” group was supporting armed insurrection launched by Subarna Shamshere from the base in India. Laws were too lenient purposefully to such groups in India even during its war with China during the same period.

The mistake with India was that it thought it was alone in the collusion against the Koirala government. The aftermath of events showed that the table was going to be turned against it too.
In addition to communist powers, the line followed by the British government was also irritating to India. A reference to Nepal in Gailbrath’s journal is revealing.

Indians, as is widely known, are worried about the King who, in their view is opening the door to the Chinese communists and assorted local adventurers. [I had little knowledge with which to agree or dissent.] They wanted us to ask the French and British Ambassadors in Kathmandu to joing Stebbins in persuading the King to broaden his government. I am not very optimistic. The heads of small states must resist such pressures to show that, though small, they are independent. And the British Ambassador seems to be quite an admirer of the King. When Queen Elizabeth visited Nepal a few weeks ago, he prepared for her a speech praising His Majesty as one of the greatest and wisest since [approximately] Solomon. The Queen’s manager removed the part identifying with divinity. The Queen gave that version: by accident, the Ambassador’s version got released to the press [Galbraith, 1969: 101].

However powerful they are in international level, in Nepal, these powers had no other base in the country except the person in power. Whenever there was conflict, they had always been with the person in power and in Nepal, it was the monarchy.

Before the new constitution was drafted, there had been very significant meeting of the then outgoing British Ambassador with B.P. Koirala at his detention camp in which he had discussed the importance of reconciliation of Koirala with the King. He had offered his mediation if Koirala agreed to put contents in the constitution the title of which was to be the Panchayat as the King had advanced much to introduce to that extent [Personal Communication by B.P. Koirala]. History of Nepal could have definitely taken more positive course had Koirala agreed to act in a statesmanly manner.

Only after India’s debacle in the war with China, a reconciliation with India was possible which helped the King “to develop a political system based on more than a desperate struggle for survival” [Rose and Scholtz, 1980: 125]. For two preceding years Nepal was governed by the same constitution which had run a full-fledged parliament; it was the flexibility in the constitution which endured more in an emergency provision than in the normal circumstances. Perhaps, the King did not harbour the thought of doing away with the constitution. It was not in his
interest to destroy a bridge for any possible reconciliation with the democratic forces. The King was still looking for an alternative when Dr. Tulsi Giri was called for an audience almost a week after the declaration of emergency [Personal Communication by Dr. Giri]. Biswabandhu Thapa claimed that he was the one who recommended the Panchayat scheme to the King. His recommendation, however, resembled much to the constitution drafted by a team of Indian advisers at the time of Rana Prime Minister Padma Shamshere in 1948. Thapa had made it public that the King was not willing to outlaw political parties; these people ultimately prevailed upon the King to impose a ban on political parties. To put the political parties in confrontation with the King may have been designed more to ensure their own survival. Explaining how “New Delhi did not want to encourage populism on India’s borders”, Sunanda Dutta-Ray had found in Sikkim’s context that “Indian government did not trust either the palace or the politicians, but felt confident of being able to control the former” [Datta-Ray, 1984: 57]. However, in the case of Nepal, India was in for a bit of surprise for King Mahendra was no Chogyal.

Dr. Tulsi Giri had revealed in public that the draft of the Panchayat based constitution was given to Jaya Prakash Narayan [in India] and Surya Prasad Upadhyaya for perusal. After its promulgation, India’s attitude towards the new constitution did not appear hostile as it was more concerned with the implementation details. India’s former Ambassador in his account had found “the direct democracy at the base and indirect elections upward” as designed in the constitution, in consonance with Gandhi’s ideas [Narayan, 1971: 81]. In an atmosphere of cordial relations with India, and with Surya Bahadur Thapa as Prime Minister in Nepal, the First Amendment of the constitution was promulgated with the term “partyless” inserted for the first time in the document with an overwhelming acclaimation of all shades of views and lobbies in the Panchayat. That was the heyday for Indian influence in Nepal until an incident occurred at a Kathmandu exhibition ground when the Chinese issued a threat to “break skulls of Nepali reactionaries, Indian expansionists and the U.S. imperialists in the streets of Kathmandu” [Ray, 1983: 78]. That perhaps is the worst ever threat issued against Nepal by the Chinese for its too close a tie with India as well as the West. In open defiance of the law in Nepal, revolutionary “red books” and lockets of Mao were distributed freely through a new group of radicals tutored in the thought of Mao tse-Tung. This incident cautioned Nepal that it had a limit to yield upon the pressure of any one power in the region. The political system of the country naturally reflects this reality.
There had been compelling situation for a readjustment in the context and structure of power in 1975 which resulted in the Second Amendment. A change of very big magnitude had occurred in the region after the bifurcation of Pakistan in the east. To face no humiliation like th war with China in 1962, India entered into a “Peace and Friendship Treaty” with the Soviet Union on similar line that brought Soviet troops for the “rescue” of President Amin of Afghanistan. After the American withdrawal from Vietnam, the balance of power further tilted in favour of the Russians. Bangladesh’s birth was the success of the Indo-Soviet alliance in the region. “Operation Sikkim” changed its independent status. Elected representatives of the people were made instrumental to endorse merger with India, whereas the Chogyal of Sikkim did his utmost to preserve the identity of the nation as a testimony of the fact that nationalism was not only an ideal to opt but a precondition for the survival of monarchy in a country. Internal political dissension in Nepal had gone to the extent of calling for an armed insurrection from a base in India, and Panchayat had also undergone through a rampant opportunism and indiscipline in a struggle for positions of power. In this unnerving tension and turmoil, there was a sudden demise of King Mahendra, the visionary and astute leader of the nation. Before perfecting political apprenticeship King Birendra, at the age of 27, had to face suddenly a volatile situation like this. To conduct affairs of the state afresh, the King had rightly encouraged pluralism in the Panchayat forums, and he himself changed the style of addressing the people which was mistaken as his inherent weakness. Instead of reciprocating his gestures, even senior leaders of the Panchayat took refuse in extreme populism by alleging the existence of “parallel administration of the government and the palace”. Under the cover of popular leadership, the call for an armed insurrection from a base in India appeared to pose a “Bangladesh”-type of threat in Nepal [Raina, 1981: 48]. In unawareness of Ganesh Man Singh and without much effort of B.P. Koirala, there had been a major attempt of insurrection in the eastern part of the country - Okhaldhunga. To encounter all these threats and challenge in a political manner and to maintain external and internal peace, the King declared his desire to amend the Constitution. Sribhadra Sharma and D.P. Adhikary, one each from the Nepali Congress circle and pro-Russian communist circle were included in the drafting committee for the Second Amendment to the constitution. But there was no effective leadership on the popular level to explore the possibility for a broadbased accommodation; a nostalgia for “total
revolution” seems to have made politicians prisoners of their own imagination. As the national debate had been launched to evolve a model for change, there was an abrupt suspension of democratic procedure with the declaration of emergency rule in India. Whatever logic Mrs. Indira Gandhi was extending in her self-defence had a direct message to the protagonists of the hard line in the Panchayat.

A section of the Panchayat leadership who were interested in stringent process of one party-like system which would ultimately confront the King for power on the issue of ideological formulation, cadre control and programme implementation began to emerge as a force. A structure of leadership “following the Leninist blue-print of party organisation” [Shaha, 1978:217] was designed with a greater scope of alliance with pro-Russian elements. Before realigning with the Russians, Man Mohan Adhikary had revealed how the Russians had demanded a share in the government as well as in the political leadership to their followers in Nepal, for which “the Soviet Union would support the King to the hilt” [Kumar, 1984:63]. A school of thought known by the name of Kumarmangalam in India had advocated inside the Indian Congress Party, in the tune of one idea state, to have a committed administration and judiciary in order to achieve socialistic goals; it was a guideline for the Indian government at that time. Leaders dependent on India were infected by this doctrine to a great extent. Therefore, it is not surprising that apart from some sections of the communists, even the leaders of the Nepali Congress associated with Subarna Shamshere, individually and collectively, welcomed the Amendment with an expectation to get a proportionate share in the hierarchy of the leadership in the Back to Village National Campaign (BVNC), but the selection was too disappointing to them.

Frustration developed gradually among all including those who opted for the system but were unable to function as a political party. Such people, who got key positions, wanted the political power of the King transferred to them to advance the cause of the Panchayat system. But it was not in the interest of the King to strengthen authoritarianism for it would have been a repetition of the folly by which Rana regime came into existence. Monarchy-and-one-party system is not only antagonistic but is an impossible idea. Partylessness permits pluralism in ideas and monarchy keeps in harmony with such pluralism.

The King’s wish to experiment with a disciplinary body in the Panchayat led to a disastrous confrontation with his own authority. Persons nominated to various levels of leadership did not have the capacity nor the popular support to withstand the crisis generated by the “student’s” agitation. In fact, this was a smoke-screen for contradiction among themselves and
irreconciliable differences among divergent loyalties. If there was a serious struggle to capture positions of power their failure to control the organisation from within induced them to ignite an explosive situation in the country which was diffused only when the King intervened with his call for a referendum. The people rejected the authoritarianism of the BVNC as they saw it inconsistent with the larger interest of the monarchy. And the referendum, itself, was the culmination of various forces, both internal and external, that got linked in an unusual manner.

It is generally believed that the referendum in Nepal was necessitated by a “massive student agitation”. This illusion, particularly among politicians, has done an incalculable damage to the democratic development of the country. Off and on, politicians in the later phase issued threats of a show-down like the people did in 1979. In that halluciation agitations were launched but aborted all the time by compromise elsewhere. It is, indeed, possible in the world today and particularly in “soft states” to create an agitation and destabilise the power structure by an external force having advantageous geographical position and enormous resources at its disposal. Technique of various kinds of propaganda and disinformation can be systematically used to arouse public resentment and dissatisfaction. Or passive discontentment of the people can be fomented into a revolutionary outburst. And amazingly, the whole show remains under the control of a mastermind behind the screen. Masses on streets and leaders with populist stand are maneuvered as a proxy-troop to achieve a goal. In the name of the student agitation, it had happened in Nepal. Otherwise, how on earth could an agitation having purely academic issues in the charter of demands accomplish a dramatic change which no political party had ever visualised? Students were saluted from the public platforms addressed by leaders of the prominent political parties for awakening them from the “slumber of political inactivity”. Almost the lone exception was B.P. Koirala who branded the turmoil as an act of anti-national forces to endanger the national existence. But the so-called “pro-Chinese” politicians like Man Mohan Adhikary were on record saying that it was a spontaneous upsurge of the people and they had expressed satisfactions that India was not implicated in the turmoil for the first time [Kumar, 1984: 172]. Though he himself was involved in inciting people for it, Ganesh Man Singh saw “a national and international conspiracy” [against Nepal], indicating India and the Soviet Union behind it. Elaborating the point he said:

It is the government of India that has been all the time obstructing, preventing and standing in the way of the Nepali Congress. May I tell you that Nehru was angry
with King Mahendra not because he [the King] dismissed democracy, but it was "for something" else. All the time, in the case of all the Prime Ministers in Delhi, and the government of India all through, this is the policy that Prime Ministers in your country have been following of not letting Nepali Congress getting the upper hand. What is being done is to alternatively push it [Nepali Congress] up and then after boosting it, bring it down. This is the way the "big brother" functions: that is how the "big brother" wants the King and the "democratic elements" to sit on the negotiation table and reach settlement. This has always been India’s attitude - to interfere, to push down the Nepali Congress and then to make the King and Nepali Congress sit together on the negotiation table. Ever since 1951-52, India has been doing this. [Kumar, 1984: 49-50].

It is interesting to note that the “student agitation” of 1979 is not an isolated incident occurring in an isolated country. It coincided with the overthrow of the Shah regime in Iran and the Russian occupation of Afghanistan. Whether similar situation would have occurred in Nepal is difficult to say but to deny any external design is rather a poor comfort.

As things are shrouded in mystery, various inferences and conjectures can be drawn of the Royal declaration for the referendum to enable people to choose between the multi-party system and the Panchayat system with suitable reforms. The visit of Dinesh Singh as an emissary of Prime Minister Morarji Desai and his audience with the King had also to be taken into account [Kumar, 1984: 30]. Referendum, in this way, could be a plausible measure to diffuse the turmoil in which foreign powers may have played a prominent part to create. If this interpretation was valid, it would be like another reconciliation similar to that in 1951, in which a person loyal to the King and trusted by India was put into key power with the rest of the dissenters occupying the public platform for the multi-party propaganda.

Whatever might have been the reality, the Royal declaration for the referendum did not stop violent incidents in the far and wide corners of the kingdom until Surya Bahadur Thapa, who had almost been in oblivion, without having any popular image either in the Panchayat or among the agitators, was unanimously recommended by the Rastriya Panchayat for the office of the Prime Minister. Perhaps, it was for the first time after 1951 that the appointed Prime Minister was not able to declare a list of his cabinet colleagues for about three days - perhaps, due to a hard bargaining in the allocation of key portfolios. Then, there
followed a series of resignations and replacements of persons in various strategic departments of the government.

It is not known what role the RAW [Research and Analysis Wing] an intelligence agency formed with a purpose to influence politics of the neighbouring countries of India, played during the upheaval in Nepal. Developed as a highly skilled institution, it had not briefed even Mrs. Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India, before twenty-four hours of the commencement of the “Operation Sikkim” in the process of Sikkim’s annexation [Raina, 1981 :64]. What it was doing in Nepal may not necessarily have been known to the leaders of the Janata Party in power. In the absence of conclusive proof, a little bit of logic can help one to reach a conclusion. At the time of the royal announcement, India had no homogeneous leadership, it was faction-ridden with several over-ambitious persons out to grab power. Within a year of the declaration of referendum in Nepal, there had been three different political parties one after another in power in India. By the time polling for referendum came in Nepal, Mrs. Indira Gandhi had emerged in India to reverse what the Janata Party had done. There was, therefore, a new approach again in India about Nepal. In the meantime, the Russian army had crossed the traditional boundary of South Asia in Afghanistan by endangering India’s superiority as a regional power. All these dramatic events changed the original context of the referendum. After completing a full circle, India again realised Panchayat system as the only alternative for the stability in Nepal which was most essential for India’s stability too. There had been misconception among many that the multi-party side would have mustered much support of the people, had B.P. Koirala combined all anti-Panchayat forces together. There was a gross ignorance over the composition of the anti-Panchayat forces in which a large number was activated by strings elsewhere. As there had been clear clash of interests in Nepal between the communist block countries and India, however alike they appear, a unified opposition with long-term common strategy was a mistaken idea. Inside the Nepali Congress leadership, persons like Surya Prasad Upadhyaya preferred to join forum with either communist leaders like Dr. Raimajhi or an autocratic-minded like Dr. K.I. Singh, instead of his own senior party colleagues. Even B.P. Koirala’s close associates like Ganesh Man Singh and K.P. Bhattarai had no identical stand during the referendum. And, it was not difficult to find external forces behind disruptions in the anti-Panchayat rank. India’s strategy had been to create a pressure to make moderates in the Panchayat acceptable. Had a person like Thapa not been accommodated in power, next round of turmoil was imminent. How handicapped the opposition forces in Nepal had
been by their dependency on external forces is diagnosed by Lok Raj Baral in an earlier but similar context:

From the opposition point of view, the influence of both China and India on different opposition groups is becoming equally determining factors in many respects. For the period under review showed that the oppositional elements i.e., formal political parties, were mostly divided among themselves on their ideological allies - China and India. While growing pro-Chinese and pro-Indian feelings considerably helped this process of the disorganisation of the political forces, this proved to be congenial to the consolidation of the Panchayat system.

[Baral, 1977:179].

The position of the Panchayat side was very anomalous in the referendum. It had no political organisation like the outlawed political parties. The network of the BVNC was dissolved soon after the announcement of the referendum. To propogate political views freely either way, laws were relaxed by a royal declaration, by which politicians were able to reorganise their cadres in the manner of the political parties. Panchayat side had also an ad hoc body to conduct campaign for it in competition with other political parties. Within the parameter of the Panchayat system, referendum was virtually an exercise of multi-party politics; search for an alternative political order was permitted to the people. The element of popular consent had a chance to evolve an accommodating political system. Panchayat had a discredited liability of power for a long period. The most appealing point in its favour was the stability and a deep sense of Nepali nationalism provided by it under the active leadership of the King. The multi-party side had miscalculated the appeal monarchy has among the people. Even die-hard communist leaders like Man Mohan Adhikary had to declare publicly that they would support the stability of monarchy as long as the temple of Lord Pashupati Nath was there. But mere rhetoric was not going to convince the masses for a drastic change in the political system and the traditional support which the monarchy commanded. These were the key factors in Panchayat's favour.

VI

Knowledge of history has no use if it does not impart wisdom. History of Nepal and particularly its period of democratic transformation, must make the King and the people both wiser. Nepal's history has a geographical imprint on it; being sandwiched between two great powers of Asia, it has an advantage
when both have an equilibrium of strength. A weak neighbour on either side had never been in Nepal’s interest. It is, therefore, not in Nepal’s interest to play between two neighbours and weaken the balance of equilibrium. This situation does not permit Nepal to be an appendage of either. Whenever it has aligned itself with one, this has caused tension between the two neighbours; this is a historical reality which both the powers have to keep in mind.

Preservation of Nepal’s own identity as well as promotion of popular aspirations have become more interrelated this time. Stability as well as change has to be entwined through a continuity of power for which monarchy is the only institution which can be conceived in a traditional but a heterogenous composition of the nation. The inherent capacity of this institution to survive historical upheavels is derived basically from religious and cultural sanction of the society. Even democratic reforms need legitimisation of this institution. Monarchy in Nepal has a tradition of leading the nation at the epoch-making moments; some of the Nepali Kings can be remembered as persons of vision with a will to change the course of history. King Prithivi Narayan Shah, being a visionary, was able to formulate a far-reaching strategy in his drive to create a unified nation. The Kingdom of Gorkha was not a viable state to survive long until it could enhance its strength by integrating small kingdoms which on their own were vulnerable. He inspired a dream into his army to unite several smaller states into a great kingdom of Nepal. As the dream was realistic, he succeeded.

King Tribhuvan had performed an exemplary role by his leadership in the establishment of democratic order in Nepal. He conceived a change and formed a common cause with the modernising ideals of the democratic elements of the country before there was any ray of hope of the revolution. The Ranas, who found him hobnobbing with the revolutionaries in 1940, had no other alternative except to live with him with greater vigilance. He was, however, invincible in zeal. But for his commitment, there was hardly any chance for democracy of striking a root in the country even after the termination of the Rana regime.

Another legend in the tradition of monarchy was King Mahendra who, by his ideas and performances, had a very controversial role in Nepal’s history. A dispassionate assessment of his role leads to the conclusion that without abandoning the basic ideals of liberal democracy he had an audacity to initiate an alternative political system suitable to the national conditions. As Nepal had never been under colonial rule and had not been in prolonged hostility against any foreign power, a sense of nationalism had not yet been fostered as a modernising ideal. King Mahendra imparted a multi-dimensional quality to the
newly emergent nationalism which is not merely political but manifests in the social and cultural lives of the people. He saw it as a question of national survival. By his unwavering stand, King Mahendra emerged as a true nationalist in Nepali history.

In continuation of the noble tradition of monarchy in Nepal, the role performed by King Birendra is too early to be assessed fully. Before ascending the throne, he had enough academic briefings on the problems of development in the Third World countries with special reference to Nepal. He formed a conviction during his apprenticeship in power that development was a human problem related to attitudinal changes in people. Adding a new cause to his mission, he emphasised the balanced economic development to do away with regional disparities in the country. He seems to have focussed his efforts on promoting nationalism, democracy and economic development. The greatest achievement of King Birendra is that he has been able to command all-round respect and confidence from all walks of life. As a person he is free from aspersions from which rulers of the Third World are not always exempted. His political norms are ascertainable and behaviour predictable. He has been able to generate a new hope by his commitment and dedication. The monarchy personified by him is a great hope for the development of modern democratic order in the country.

Difficulty with the foreign viewers on Nepal is that their perception developed on their respective political environment at home. Persons from a society which had the experience of the struggle against an alien rule and subsequently ending up in a republic, try to compare their experience in Nepal, where there was no struggle against any such enemy. Preachers of class struggle, similarly, try to fit in a cap on the wrong head in Nepal, and they incite an unreal conflict to grow. The country and its problems have to be viewed in correct perspective in which outsiders often fail. Performance of monarchy cannot be judged properly from a republican ethos. Nepal is in a very precarious position geographically as well as politically. On both sides of the country, there are irreconciliable political systems. Coexisting between the two powerful political systems, it becomes very difficult to resist their pressure. But neither of the political patterns dominating these divergent systems of governance can help Nepal to maintain its equilibrium.

Democracy is a process which can neither be imposed by law, nor be imported from abroad. Even a revolution stands on its way after the revolutionaries capture power to monopolise it. Democracy evolves gradually, and its speed is irritatingly slow. A change of power is possible overnight by the will of the sovereign or by force. Democracy depends on an incessant practice - the more it is practised the more it is strengthened, but it must not be
strained and stretched beyond the objective conditions of the country. It would be a great folly to overlook what Nepal already had achieved on the way to a democratic polity. Compared to the situation before 1951, a revolution has taken place in building infrastructures for democracy, except, of course, the formation of the political parties based upon the interest aggregation of the people. Whatever might have been the form of government, there has been a cohesive process of minimum democratic norm in the country since the revolution of 1950-1951. There has always been some or the other form of popular representation in the government to aid and advise the King to conduct affairs of the State. There has always been a hierarchy of courts in the judiciary with adequate safeguards of tenure and emoluments to make it impartial and independent in disputes between the State and individual as well as among individuals. The Supreme Court has earned a great deal of trust and regard of the common people even in the remote parts of the country by its extraordinary powers in the nature of the Habeas Corpus and other prerogative writs which are popular in other democracies. Decisions of the Supreme Court have a force of law as precedents and in a very short period, the court had made rich contributions to the development of constitutionalism. Acknowledgement of the positive aspect of the democratic development does not rule out the retardation which the process has suffered during the period. Enough has been enumerated in the appraisal of the situation mentioned above. There is, however, no full stop to the process of democratic transformation of a society. The process of modernisation which had so lately been initiated has released forces for an all-round change, including attitudinal change.

VII

In the politics of the region there have been spectacular changes. A movement for rapid modernisation with an openness, though within the framework of one party rule, has already moved ahead in China. In India, a new generation of leadership with a fresh outlook seems to have assumed the task of speedy economic development preserving intact its democratic institutions despite the strain unleashed by forces of destabilisation. Its Peace and Friendship Treaty in the nature of a military alliance with one particular superpower is already showing signs of strain. There is a marked deviation in its regional and global attitudes. The initial distrust towards the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) has been modified with its commitment to regional cooperation. This is evident from Rajiv Gandhi's description of the SAARC as "the democracy of the countries of South Asia" which is certainly not a
mere demagoguery. For the first time in history, leaders of the region have been able to avail of a venue to sort out problems of bilateral concerns informally and that of multilateral nature officially. The direction taken by the regional parley is, indeed, very promising.

In such a changed regional context, in Nepal the institution of monarchy has to build up a consensus at home and sympathies abroad, particularly as there is no other dependable leadership in the country. A working relationship between the King and the people is definite to crystallise with all the attributes of a liberal democracy as understood in our part of the world. It is neither possible for the monarchy to withdraw into a wishful *status quo* nor can the people preserve the independence of the country without the support of a traditionally regarded charisma of a monarch. Independence of a country is *sine qua non* for the freedom of an individual; loss of the independence of the country necessarily results in the loss of freedom of an individual. Along with the independence of the nation, the monarchy in Nepal in the present context has made democracy and economic advancement as its twin goals.

The need is, therefore, for the consensus stemming from rational self-interest without much strain and stress in evolving democratic relationship. People who do not agree with the prevailing political system on ideological grounds, have yet the greatest democratic right—the right to dissent. A right to organise dissent is much ahead in practice. Right to express different views and ideologies are guaranteed by the Constitution except for the restrictions imposed by the enactments of the legislature.

In the general elections, because of the participation of political activists who were hostile to the Panchayat System, there is a very thin veil in the constitution which prohibits groups working like political parties. But a kind of pluralist activity which was permitted within the forums of the Panchayat, has taken much momentum in the present environment which has tempted adherents of the multi-party process to participate covertly in the Rastriya Panchayat and overtly in the local panchayat elections. The way the Rastriya Panchayat has functioned and the freedom of speech exercised in the House, have a reassuring effect on the democratic opinion of the country. Resentments are there and they would be there for a long time to come. But there should be a clear view between what are genuine and popular grievances and what are unreal and manoevred. The King at this moment is destined to play the role of a supreme arbiter. But that power is not to be used arbitrarily; there is no scope in the constitutional system for an absolute monarchy in Nepal. The Constitution of Nepal has provisions of checks and balances of democratic nature which have yet to be strengthened by practice and healthy
conventions. The King has powers and prerogatives laid down in the Constitution which make the position of the King clear as a constitutional monarch. More could be developed in a peaceful and constitutional process by consolidating the political freedom guaranteed by the Constitution. This is, certainly, a system with adequate room for changes for the better.

Debates regarding different alternatives to the Panchayat system have not been concluded by the result of the Referendum held in 1980. That result has left its impact on the process and manner of conducting the politics of the nation; but ideas and convictions in the people's mind could not have been wiped off by it. A considerable number of the population, especially urban-centred elites, have not been fully reconciled to the results of the referendum, though they admit to many democratic contents in the functioning of the Panchayats. Similarly, debates on different alternatives within the Panchayat framework are also in the process. The way the various Panchayat bodies are functioning has not been a matter of full satisfaction to anybody. There is no legal barrier in holding debates for alternatives within or outside Panchayat system openly and freely. Stringent provisions of laws have either been relaxed or amended after the referendum to facilitate much freedom for expression. To preach an idea against the Panchayat System is not only an academic freedom, but it is well in practice too, and to advocate the cause of multi-party or such pluralist concepts is also permitted by the law. The only restriction is upon organised efforts to capture the government on the basis of any ready-made ideologies.

Partylessness of the Constitution has not been strictly defined in the law; it is, therefore, permitted to hold various views individually or in groups or associations. Observing partylessness in practice cannot be equated with totalitarianism - there is enough freedom of thought and expression in the law of the land. If exercised in a spirit of promoting and strengthening democratic ideas and institutions, there is no reason why the law would be a stumbling block. But that is not happening here. Feelings of people are hardly represented by political parties or the media. The sense of social responsibility is quite lacking in them. Opportunities come for momentary upheavals, and politicians fall prey to them. Powerful political factions with extraneous loyalties have emerged in a liberalised scenerio in the country. Valuable freedoms of the people, guaranteed by the Constitution and protected by the judiciary, have become subterfuge to them in denial of which, the image of the nation is tarnished. Such cliques not only control organisations and the media in Nepal, but they manipulate opinions and judgements of the people too. Journalists of long-standing can hardly compete with the organisations and resources of offshoots in the media which appear in giant
proportions for sensationalisation of events. Politicians are similarly built up over-night with greater mass appeal and charisma, than those who have spent the best part of their lives dedicated to their mission. But they also seem to have lost their sense of direction and political grit. Leaders in their respective organisations have become mere show-person who are neither elected by delegates of the party nor are they accountable to any formal bodies within the party. Cadres seem to have lost their right to elect leadership and choose political lines, for ever. They are not aware of their party-rules, and they are just at the mercy of an invisible hand inside the party to be promoted to any leadership position. Whatever resolutions come out in public are prepared, not by leaders or committees in conventions, but in closed-door chambers of unknown centres, and these, therefore, appear usually in disregard to the consensus within the party. Any party-activist, in confidence, expresses his helplessness; but in public as a careerist, he speaks differently. Running a political party in a poor, illiterate and traditional society has not proved a successful democratic exercise. Even if a few handful of idealists in such parties are aware of the malady, they are not capable of reforming these ills, for they require patronage to survive in an unresponsive society. In desperate attempt to continue their career, they compromise to live with the evil.

Money has always been one of the very powerful sources through which political power comes, and that is very much applicable at present in Nepal. It is almost impossible for an honest and patriotic person to solicit support for his views in public as it requires enormous resources to influence the media or to contest elections. Even the government-backed candidates have not been able to mobilise such resources which persons with “proletariate-theme” recently have been able to under publicly known patronage. It has been a common practice with all major countries to patronise and subsidise various friendship and cultural associations, but some of the one-idea states have used these as forums for propoganda of their respective state ideologies. Hence, under diplomatic protection, their local dependents exercise more political freedoms, even to the extent of injecting violent revolutionary doctrines in the raw mind of the teen-agers.

On many occasions, officials of internationally disreputed diplomatic missions having links with international terrorism, have been found involved in various smuggling trades and drugtrafficking and their names have been recorded in confessions of their co-accused. The local money in that way is raised with a clear purpose of financing “revolutionary” persons and the media as their vanguard. That obviously pooled money has every chance of being used in the Panchayat elections making elections undesirable and costlier. Likewise, some of the diplomatic
missions have permitted their local policy-preachers to sell scholarship grants to prestigious learning centres to raise funds for their local activities. Instead of admonishing such nefarious deals, the media popularises them as the champions of the rights of the people. And, the government is always prompt to do balancing act with one against the other to pacify serious destabilisation; in that process each is left to counter-balance the other.

In this undesirable state of affairs, the country is experimenting with a liberal democratic system based on direct adult franchise with an assurance of optimum fairness in elections. A situation in which even God might fail, the monarchy is preserving the national identity and promoting democratic ideals. Here, in this connection, the trust and belief of the common people in monarchy is a strength which it can generate hope for the both.

Preservation of national independence is in the interest of the institution of monarchy without which the country would have lost its existence as an independent and sovereign state. History of Nepal testifies that monarchy symbolises the nation.

Monarchy has come a long way in its commitment to democracy, which has taken shape in various institutions. However, hazardous the task, monarchy has no way to retreat from a process that has already been initiated. Democracy in its full sense has become a goal in Nepal, and the institution of monarchy, at present, appears to be the best guarantee for its meaningful implementation.


Swatantra Samachar, Vikram Era 2019 — Asvin 19,
When I received a telegram from the Director of the Centre for the Study of Nepal inviting me to participate in a seminar devoted to social change in Nepal I was a little hesitant. I saw only vague connection between social change and external relations. Social change as a systematic study, as it has developed in modern times, is not my discipline. I have no doubt lived through periods of slow and rapid change in Nepal. This change has affected my being deeply. As both a process and a result of change, there has been considerable social and geographical mobility in our family within my personal experience. And this change, I am conscious, has affected the country also, again sometimes slowly and sometimes rapidly. But personal experience is one thing and a universalized systematic study of social change in Nepal is another. On the other hand, the opportunity the invitation provided for a renewed academic contact on a subject of living interest to Nepal was not one to be wasted. Therefore, before responding to the telegram, I waited for the promised letter to follow. When it arrived, I read under the subject planned for Session II a hand-written item, Nepal's external relations with particular reference to her neighbouring countries. It gave me some relief.

The present state of Nepal's external relations can be studied with profit as an expression of general change that has affected our society particularly since the Revolution of 1950. The outcome of this social change is deeper, more generalized popular consciousness. With the overthrow of the Rana regime and the shedding of the traditional isolationism in external relations a new twofold awareness has come to our people. First, they have become increasingly aware of the larger place due to them in the society in which they live. They are no longer satisfied with the place given to them either by tradition or by current society if they consider it unjust. A measure of this new awareness is the
neighbours, leading to mistrust and misunderstanding. Some of this mistrust and misunderstanding such as that caused by the abrasiveness of some politicians, diplomats and columnists and periodical frenzied outbursts of the press was avoidable. It was aggravated further by inadequate exchange of views on matter of vital national interest between countries concerned and by a tendency in all in varying measure to take others for granted. But the major part of mistrust and misunderstanding was due, in my opinion, to the differences in perceptions of real respective national interests. The confidence in Indo-Pakistani peaceful co-existence was not such as to make military option irrelevant. Even under improved conditions this option is unlikely to drop out. The evolution of Indo-Pakistani co-existence, though independent of Nepal’s foreign policy influence, is of interest to Nepal for two reasons. First, it has a vital bearing on South Asian regional stability with which Nepal’s national interest is linked. Conversely, Indo-Pakistani arms race, for the same reason, causes unease to Nepal. Secondly, any peaceful progress in Indo-Pakistani co-existence will have to include free accommodation of different perceptions of India and Pakistan within their respective ranges of options regarding political, security and economic matters. The content and intensity of threat perception are different for Pakistan from those for India. Reconciliation in these circumstances will upgrade the quality of understanding which is relevant to Nepal. The conflicting claims of national sovereignty which constitutes the special sensitive concern of smaller countries and of the larger regional security responsibility and capacity which India urges them to take into account will have been addressed.

In Nepal’s foreign policy, outlook unlike Pakistan’s, India is not perceived as a military threat. In a strange contradiction of terms, India’s massive military power as compared with Nepal’s is itself a deterrent. This applies, mutatis mutandi, to Sri Lanka and Bangladesh also. With the military arm of national security thus withdrawn Nepal is left with political and economic choices alone. The non-availability of military option has intensified its national sensitivity about remaining options. Nepal’s special concern some time ago about events leading to the merger of Sikkim into the Indian Union was political. India and Sri Lanka share a special political problem in the ongoing agitation of Sri Lankan Tamila. India and Bangladesh face a special politico-economic problem in the sharing of Ganga waters at Farakka. But India and Nepal have no such specific political problems; and yet there is considerable unease about India in Nepal and about Nepal in India. Some of it has been artificially created by politicians on both sides for internal purposes and has disappeared with the
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in our consciousness even during the period of special relationship between the Rana regime and the British Indian government. The restoration of the so-called Naya-muluk lost during the latter war and the revision of the Treaty of Sagauli in 1923 which upgraded the nature of relationship may be regarded as evidence of this continuing, though subdued, nationalist sentiment.

When Nepal entered the international scene in 1950 in a somewhat big way, outlook appeared bright for fostering this subdued nationalist sentiment into nationalism bringing it in line with the international norm of liberty and furthering it on a broader basis with social, political and economic progress through both national efforts and international co-operation. The evolving international situation encouraged this optimism because the world appeared much friendlier than the traditional view suggested. The British withdrawal from India in 1947 to be followed by similar developments elsewhere in Asia and Africa and the Communist ‘liberation’ of China in 1949 underlined the fact that external forces hostile to independence and progress had retreated. Major powers appeared to acknowledge past errors and make progressive efforts to correct them. Kautalya’s warning that real politic is of a universal nature applicable alike to both Europe and Asia was almost forgotten in this atmosphere. For this reason, the emergent countries in general and Nepal in particular in the first flush of the first half of the fifties rationalized in their innocence the supremacy of ideas over the reality of power in international relations. Egalitarian, progressive political institutions of developed countries, whether capitalist or socialist, came to be grafted, at the first or second remove in accordance with respective circumstances of history, into the professions of independence, democracy and progress of emergent peoples. Nepal did the same through the fifties. In this general uncritical enthusiasm, if the United States appeared as a universal carrier of life, liberty and pursuit of happiness, the Soviet Union was a bulwark of egalitarianism and a moving force for progress. And India and China in their emerging potentialities were even more idealized abstractions. The United Nations occupied a larger-than-life image in the consciousness of the awakened Nepalese people. Peace, democracy and progress seemed in these circumstances just round the corner. Nepal threw its doors wide open to the international community.

The Bandung euphoria was a natural expression of this optimism. Nepal jumped into it even more eagerly for its own reasons. Not only was the old world dead but also a new better world based on the human values of freedom, equality, justice, progress and welfare — *panca sila* as conceived in Buddhism — was believed to be fast taking shape. Even the policy of non-
prevailing intense interest of people in education. Hunger for education in Nepal is truly national. People have made great sacrifice of time, money, energy and material to make themselves and their children more educated than their ancestors. And this awareness is not confined to education alone. It has percolated in varying measure to art, literature, economics and, above all, politics as reflected even recently in the circumstances leading to the historic referendum of 1980. Secondly, people in Nepal have become more deliberately aware of the world around them. This is more sophisticated than traditional awareness. Tradition, by and large, tended to regard the outside world basically as unfriendly if not hostile. The elaborate Kautalyan image of statecraft in so far as external relations are concerned is based on the assumption of general hostility of the outside world to the foster state and vice versa. The humanistic ideal of world citizenship, *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*, was irrelevant in the conduct of relations between and among states. Nepal's historical experience in external relations also appeared to corroborate this insight. Even today, a Nepalese statesman, as he watches the manifold tensions, pulls and pressures in our subcontinent and the general international scene from Afghanistan through Kampuchea to Nicaragua, cannot ignore Kautalya's warning. But the traditional view of an unredeemable hostile external world does not do full justice to the reality of modern international relations. Modern relations are characterized by both sticks and carrots. Indo-Nepalese and Sino-Nepalese relations are not exceptions. Collective security and international co-operation as a matter of policy are modern developments. Thanks to the progress of science and technology as well as transport and communication, free commerce of ideas as of goods has outdated the *kupa-manduka* or frog-in-the-well attitude. People of Nepal in general and the more informed ones in particular have become progressively aware of this complexity of the modern world as compared with the old. The search for a legitimate place by Nepal as a nation in the world community is intimately connected with the search for a similar place by the Nepalese citizen as an individual in his own society. In a very real sense, they will move forward either together or not at all.

Nepal's foreign policy outlook, as it has evolved over the last three and a half decades, has its-base, in my opinion, in this twin nature of our awareness, namely a more articulate awareness of ourselves as individuals as well as of our comparatively intricate relation with the complex modern world. Though the Nepalese national sentiment had met a sharp rebuff in the Sino-Nepalese War of 1791-92 resulting in the obligation of the quinquennial mission and the Anglo-Nepalese War of 1814-16 resulting in the Treaty of Sagauli, it did not disappear completely
harmonization of positions among the three countries. In keeping with the usage governing international rivers, meticulous balance needs to be struck in the benefits, liabilities and administrative control while dealing with the subject at the practical level. In the absence of such equitable balance, as the past experience with such agreements shows, the purpose of goodwill will be defeated as time inevitably brings about its own evaluation. Fourthly, the nuances of peaceful co-existence as a common policy vary between India and Nepal. Nepal's foreign policy outlook, as I see it, builds up on the assumption that India genuinely believes in peacefull co-existence with all her neighbours, including China and particularly with Nepal. Nepal's strategic assessment regarding China, specially south of the Himalayas, in spite of the 1962 Sino-Indian conflict, is that peaceful co-existence meets the latter's national interest. Nepal's national interest in this triangular India-Nepal-China co-existence under conditions of no military option to itself and in its unenviable geographical position is different in intensity from that of either India or China. Faith in peaceful co-existence shares the intensity of faith in peace itself. Finally, while it is recognized in Nepal and India that relations should be cultivated independently of political ideologies, experience shows that this objective is difficult to achieve. The lines drawn by Nepal and India between overt political pressure and absolute non-interference, though different and still subject to mutual suspicion, have proved reconcilable in practice over the years.

Nepal's relations with China, based on the five principles of peaceful co-existence, are dictated by both geography and politics. Normal relations with China are for Nepal not only a contemporary practical necessity but also a fairly continuing historical experience. Unlike Nepal's search for a fuller international identity through the United Nations and the increased and diversified diplomatic relations with the countries of the world, they have a more immediate political significance. China's current internal ideological flexibility and external openness have eased the tensions of the Cultural Revolution to the advantage of Sino-Nepalese relations. This view of Sino-Nepalese relations is not inconsistent with Sino-Indian peaceful co-existence because, in the first place, the experience of the fifties shows that it is not so and, secondly, Indian and Chinese interests in Nepal even under the best conditions of peaceful co-existence are not likely to collude against the very sovereignty and independence of Nepal.

The foreign policy outlook of Nepal as outlined above has received a further practical boost in the objectives of the South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation which has only
coming into power of other politicians more favourably disposed towards good neighbourly relations. And some is traceable to the very size of India and has to be lived with as there is no possibility of India obliging us with a reduced size. Though there is not specific problem to bedevil relations there are differences of perceptions between India and Nepal on several matters of mutual interest. First, perceptions differ, so far as Nepal and India are concerned, on the relationship between sovereignty and security. To India Nepal’s practice of sovereignty specially with respect to external affairs has appeared insensitive to its needs of security. It is understandable that Indians see themselves as no threat to others. From this, it does not necessarily follow that Nepal is indeed insensitive to general security. Again, if the Indian interpretation of security appears to Nepal somewhat insensitive to its sense of sovereignty and to its search for larger geo-political security relevant to it, it does not follow that India is indeed insensitive. A total view of things should be able to reconcile these two perceptions. Secondly, Nepal and India follow different economic policies to meet the needs of their respective developments. Abundant resources and huge potential internal market take India, in deliberate steps, towards a self-sufficient continental economy with protectionism as an instrument in case of serious external competition. This independence includes independence from neighbours also. This course is not open to Nepal because of the nature and scarcity of its resources and the smallness of its internal market. Nepal has to follow a policy of interdependence. This difference in fundamental approach gets reflected not only in the furthering of intended respective economic objectives but also, in the absence of necessary political discipline, in large-scale smuggling and other undesirable activities because of the very nature of trade. This is the problem today; and this problem cannot be solved, as past experience has shown, either by tightening trade and transit measures which only harass innocent people or by promoting illegal trade which benefits only a few questionable characters. Either move adds to mistrust. Thirdly, there are different perceptions in Nepal and India about the proper sharing of water resources. As water is the most valuable resource for Nepal’s economic development its exploitation is a matter of vital national interest. Most of the tributaries of the Ganga originate in Nepal and pass through India and Bangladesh. That any proper utilization of water in these circumstances has a regional implication has been realized in Nepal. Bangladesh is known to favour a multilateral approach. India’s readiness to talk jointly with Nepal and Bangladesh was only very recently announced in the Indian parliament following the SAARC meeting at Dhaka raising the possibility of
recently been formally established. Co-operation as against confrontation is the essence of Nepal's outlook and the Association, as the name implies, symbolizes that fact. This development is an expression of optimism but an optimism tested by the experience of the last three decades and a half. Mistrusts, tensions and conflicts and the kind of zero sum game played so far against each other have tempered the mood of unrealistic optimism of the fifties, instilled realism in it and brought us an awareness of problems and difficulties as well as of possibilities in the uphill task of regional co-operation. It is this awareness and this somewhat sad but wise maturing of outlook as well as the fact that there is no real alternative to SAARC in long term interest either for small powers or for major powers of the region that gives us cautious hope in the future of this new initiative. We must always, as Robert Browning urged us to do

Contrast this petty Done with the Undone Vast
This Present of theirs with their Hopeful Past.

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To any suggestion of Nepalese policy as emanating from the acute need to enhance independence many Indian specialists on Nepali affairs are likely to react with a sense of *deja vu*. It may also be commented that this issue has been discussed several times and needs no further consideration. What is required today, as most scholars in India feel, is that Nepal should explain its relationship with India in a more understandable way to elicit mutual trust. The truth of Nepal's foreign policy, as its Indian discoverers might be tempted to suggest, is its anti-India content, hence the relationship between the two countries has suffered.

Two mutually reinforcing feelings prevalent in India, particularly among the community of scholars and the policymakers, have been noticed in Nepal. One is the tendency in the scholarly community to treat Nepal as India's preserve. A slight deviation from the assumed Indian role, which Nepal has nowhere guaranteed to sustain, therefore, becomes neuralgic. The "We-have-lost-Nepal" syndrome that determines the perception of scholars engaged in the study of Nepal in India apparently has contributed more to the evolution of the distorted image of the tiny Himalayan Kingdom rather than in helping to cement relationships between the two countries. Linked with this is the Indian feeling of betrayal by Nepal which, in turn, is assumed to have impaired the mutual trust and eroded the harmonious understanding between the two.

These feelings are nurtured and asserted time and again to remind Nepal where it stands in the comprehensive regional strategic thinking of the Indian Republic. Obviously, Indian diplomacy towards Nepal, which was urgently framed under the assumption of potential Chinese threat—notwithstanding certain other compulsions—was to encounter difficulties once Nepal began to reassert an independent niche in its foreign policy persuasion. Indian's response to the critical aspect of its "legitimate" interests,
as underwritten in the letter of exchange of the 1950 Treaty, was indeed a logical extension of the policy framework New Delhi had tried to develop so assiduously in the post-independence period, aimed at stability and security of the subcontinent. But pursual of this policy, unfortunately, was not in conformity with the Nepali perception of its own role in international relations.

If one were to review the literature on international politics, one may find relevant materials to understand how perception of nation-states are formed and how the self-image of a particular nation-state leads it to assume a role aimed at protecting its "vital interests" [Wolfers, 1969: 177-78]. India's inheritance in South Asia has been the role the British had successfully played in the region before 1947. Even after partition, India enjoyed a sizeable economy to sustain its military power and project itself as the security manager of the region. The 1950 Treaty with Nepal which India had renegotiated on the basis of 1923 Anglo-Nepali Treaty, was a continuation and reinforcement of policy that the British had transferred to an independent India. The role that India undertook vis-a-vis Nepal since has an element of Realpolitik with considerable emphasis on the national security interests of that country. In the case of Nepal, too, consideration of national security has been the basis that has generated its policy actions in the international milieu. But the way in which Nepal has formulated its responses and developed interaction patterns in world politics is distinct from its neighbour in the south because of geopolitics that limits the options to a comparatively smaller country.

In terms of tangible power, Nepal remains a weak country virtually dependent on India for supplies ranging from food grains to small arms. This dependency has raised the level of "asymmetrical vulnerability" [Singer, 1972] in Nepal. The role Nepal has chosen for itself in world politics primarily falls in the category of a country seeking towards a lesser vulnerability if not greater equality with India. These efforts of Nepal are perceived in India as a deviation from the framework of relationships assumed under the 1950 Treaty having consequences detrimental to New Delhi's security interests. But Nepal feels otherwise. This divergence in perception then brings into light the classical dilemma nation-states face in world politics: "a nation's security is insecurity of the other." This is the irony of Nepal-India relations and it has continued to influence the course of interactions between the two countries. This would form the substance of the discussion that follows.

II

First, impressions set by Indian leaders that Nepal belongs to that category of nations whose independence is operative only
in the strict legal sense but not in the functional one, especially so far as the security of India was concerned, required Nepal to be cautious in its relations with India. Such pensive remarks from responsible quarters that Nepal should be “amalgamated” by India to enhance “democracy” in Asia and Nepal’s border should be treated as India’s border in the north”[see Ayangar in Sharma, 1968: 122] was considered ominous to Nepal’s conception of its own independence.

Second, a tendency to impose Indian security perception on Nepal has complicated the whole gamut of interaction between the two. It could be surmised that India wants Nepal to see China through the prism of New Delhi’s strategic thinking and desires to block any type of relations developing between China and Nepal which the Indian policy-makers think adverse to their interests. Evidence suggests that Nepal’s diplomatic contacts with countries like China and the Soviet Union in 1956 were not viewed approvingly by New Delhi. In particular to Nepal’s relations with China, Nehru had informed Beijing that China’s “signing of a friendship treaty” with Nepal would be viewed “inopportune” by the Indian government. [Gopal, 1984: 35] Such insensitivity to Nepal’s geostrategic position and hypersensitivity to Kathmandu’s Beijing connection had nowhere been so conspicuously shown by India than in the period when parliamentary government was functioning in Nepal. The task the Nepalese government faced at the time was to prove itself as independent of India and strengthen the Nepali Congress party as a force of resurgent nationalism with a popular base. The Indian attitude, however, was not always in consonance with the Nepali perception of the situation developing around it. It lost all subtlety when Nehru announced that an aggression on Nepal would be considered as an aggression on India at a time when the Sino-Indian relations had started to deteriorate over Tibetan rebellion in 1959. The consequent repercussion was obvious, and even B.P. Koirala had to admit that “sometimes India behaves in such a way that it becomes so difficult for me to convince even my colleagues that her intentions are above board.” [Gupta, 1964: 156fn.]

Third, the presumptious Indian role of an “elderly” partner in mutual relationship between Nepal and India had contributed much more to the disadvantage of India than it was thought. The excessive interference in Nepalese politics by an Indian diplomat during the formative period of the country’s relations with India in the 1950s, was observed as “unsophisticated diplomacy,” [Muni, 1973: 91] and caused consternation in Kathmandu. As a result, not only were Indian intentions held suspect, but also the significance of the 1950 Treaty and the arrangements made with India under it were questioned. Debates in Nepal on the merits of the treaty and the need for the revision of its contents were heard
as early as 1953. Even the Nepali Congress, which had previously invited the India Military Mission to Nepal, had to advocate for its withdrawal in the interest of conserving India's ties with Nepal [Muni, 1973: 92].

The sense of antipathy in Nepal towards India and the latter's perceived role in the former's domestic politics were evident as relations developed between these two countries in the 1960-1962 period. The dismissal of the Nepali Congress government in December 1960 in Nepal culminated into certain unpleasant episodes, ranging from armed uprising of the rebels alleged to have come across from Indian soil to the assassination attempt on King Mahendra in January 1962 and the Raxaul blockade in late 1962. On the diplomatic front, even the opinion of a statesman like Nehru, on the developments in Nepal by calling the King's actions as a "setback to democracy", was adverse to the Nepali elites' perception. Broadly, Nepal's primary objective in the immediate aftermath of the changeover in the country was limited to contain the forces against the regime King Mahendra had introduced. For this Nepal had tried to seek accommodation with India and requested for the latter's assistance in checking Nepali Congress activities in the Indian soil bordering Nepal. It was a feeling prevalent in Nepal that the porous border could again be utilized—as was in the 1950 revolution-against Nepal to create internal turmoils that could only be effectively checked with Indian assistance. But contrary to the expectation of Nepal, Nehru had advised the King to seek cooperation of the Nepali Congress to resolve the problem. In a letter to King Mahendra on January 23, 1961, Nehru wrote that he viewed "the King and the Nepali Congress as two major stabilizing factors" in Nepal and advised the King to decide on the interest of the nation in the light of the development across the border in the north. Nehru had also revealed his inner feeling that China might seek to befriend Nepal to "isolate India" and raised a common cause suggesting that Nepal's "friendly relations with India would itself prevent any possible aggression" against Nepal. [Gopal, 1984: 205] Unfortunately, the problem Nepal was facing at the moment was not with China; it was rather the Nepali Congress rebellion which Nepal suspected to have been "encouraged" by India that required solution with the support from New Delhi. But India was not forthcoming on the issue. As the above discussion suggests, one may, therefore, find enough ground to substantiate the Nepalese view that India desired to force Nepal to directly negotiate with the Nepali Congress rebels in order to stabilize the situation by slowly exerting pressure against a system trying to consolidate its hold in its own country.

In the same vein, India took an extreme view of King Mahendra's visit to China and found a breach in the
understanding India had reached with Nepal when it came to be known that Nepal had signed a road-building agreement with the People's Republic in 1961. The emotive outburst in India was not only limited to the policy-makers, it also found chauvinistic and insensitive expression in the writings of certain scholars. What was indeed overlooked in India even in this period was that both B.P. Koirala [during his visit to Beijing in 1960] and King Mahendra in 1961 had declined to sign the mutual non-aggression treaty with China which would have rendered the 1950 Treaty with India ineffective. But given the context in which India found its own relations with China in disorder, it became difficult for India to view Nepal-China relations in the light of two independent countries' persuasion to serve their legitimate interests. Rather Nepal's signing of an accord with China was grossly misinterpreted as a countervailing measure to pressurize India to come to Nepal's term by recognizing the Panchayat system. As one scholar has laboriously put:

The Government of India wanted a liberal democracy in Nepal to ensure stability in a kingdom so vital for its strategic defence. That India was not opposed to monarchy as such was obvious from the fact that it had allowed monarchy to exist in Bhutan as well.

[Ramakant, 1976: 163]

A similar argument has been advanced by another scholar suggesting that:

Nehru who had all along championed the cause of democracy everywhere...had to control himself when the King, without any reasonable ground, pulled down the whole edifice of democracy.... However, in spite of all these restraints on the part of Nehru, King Mahendra, by his revengeful act, gave the Chinese a vantage point in the Himalayas by agreeing to construct the Kathmandu-Kodari road, thus weakening India's security system at a crucial period.

[Jha, 1975: 211]

Interestingly, the attitude reflected in these views are singularly addressed to the security concern of India; relations with Nepal beyond this appeared to have been implied as of considerably lesser value. Such academic (?) discourses give the impression that the writers are either ignorant of their own country's basic stands on the principle of nonalignment or that they have neglected history and tried to put Nepal and Bhutan on the same plane. The context in which these remarks were made was indeed a crucial period in Nepal's diplomatic relations with both India and China. Nepal had tried to maintain neutrality in
the Sino-Indian discord by realistically appraising its own complicated situation and obvious national interests. Any nation placed in Nepal's situation and wise enough to look after its own security interests would have followed the same course as Nepal did during the early 1960s. Hence to believe that Nepal should have shared India's interests was unrealistic in the sense that Nepal should have traded animosity with China for the sake of India's friendship. Whatever the misgivings, an objective observer of Nepal's foreign policy could not have failed to note the diplomatic subtlety with which a smaller nation like Nepal had managed to remain uninvolved when the crisis between the two giant neighbours escalated [Muni, 1973: 98]. Next, it is worth emphasizing that the international status of Nepal as an independent sovereign nation-state unlike that of Bhutan remains undisputed. Hence the equation of Nepal with Bhutan breeds misunderstanding and estrangement.

Fourth, these unfortunate developments in Nepal's relations with India in its historical context have further constrained efforts in sustaining reciprocity of interests between them. The low-key confrontation between Nepal and India was distinct when Nepal mooted the proposal to declare itself a zone of peace in 1975 and India responded by questioning the motive behind the proposal. Although the proposal has an obvious bias towards economic development for which Nepal sought an international guarantee to make the country an area abstention from the power rivalry of other nation-states, it has been increasingly questioned whether the recognition of zone of peace proposal would be enough for Nepal's economic development by making it a conflict-free territory. Interpretive judgements on the proposal are many but the recurrent Indian thinking on it has been that the unilateral Nepali proposition is the final proof of Nepal's aversion towards India. Thus the proposal was allegedly held in New Delhi as a burial of the bilateral understanding on security reached in the 1950 Treaty. There is yet another point the Indians had in mind while pondering on the "zone of peace". They tended to see the proposal as unusual in the sense that nowhere in the world has a single nation ever proposed to declare itself an exclusive area of peace. This has been a factor in leading the policy-makers in New Delhi observe Nepal's position with unease. Hence, to dilute the essence of Nepali aspiration, the Indian leaders from late Indira Gandhi, Morarji Desai during Janata regnum and the present Congress [I] government argue in favour of turning the whole of South Asia—not Nepal in particular—into a zone of peace. This is nothing else but a subtle dismissal of the proposal put forward by Nepal, although the Government of India has not yet rejected the concept of peace inherent in it outright.

The reservation which India has expressed on Nepal's "zone of peace" has also been influenced considerably by the
Indian reading of the situation existing in the Himalayan Kingdom. It is quite often held in New Delhi that the proposal lacks the consensus internally and that Nepali leadership's articulation of the proposal needs the support of countrymen as well as the political leaders of diverse factions. Based on this judgement, it is also argued that the acceptance of the zone of peace proposal by India may become detrimental to the interests of those who do not support the present regime.

Finally, the most ominous feeling that India held in relation to the peace zone proposal rests on New Delhi's assumption that Kathmandu is adverse to India's preeminence and military supremacy in the region. India further holds that Nepal's peace zone proposal is a testimonial to the intrigue of external powers in South Asia aimed at thwarting the perceived regional dominance by India. Hence it is dismissed in New Delhi as a deceitful Nepali move to equate India with China. This has led India to believe that Nepal's assertion to establish equal relations with all its neighbours is in contravention to Indian interests as mentioned in the 1950 Treaty. Hence, Kathmandu's proposal is viewed in New Delhi as an attempt to achieve a separate strategic nuance from the Indian security thinking which threatens the Indian notion of strategic stability in the region. As India considers its security jeopardised by the Nepali initiative, adverse reaction to the proposal became imperative. Indictment of Nepal, then, became the rule.

The following is just an example:

The Nepali ruling elite, like some other South East Asian ones, have aligned themselves on US-China axis and therefore find many common grounds with Pakistanis and Bangladeshis in India-baiting.

[Mitra, 1982: 525]

And to vindicate a judgement on Nepal and what the so-called "India-baiting" might cost to that country, another prejudicial verdict is passed in the following words:

The time has come to speak plainly to the King and tell him that his proposal is an unfriendly act. If he persists in it, India will close the Indo-Nepal border, put adequate forces around it, as China has on the other, repatriate all Nepali aliens back from India to Nepal, and carry out a total crack-down on smuggling. Let King Birendra make his choice after weighing the full consequence of his gimmickry.

[Mitra, 1982: 526]

One need not to go at length to discuss the implications in Nepal of such an overt threat. What is relevant here is to ask: is this a neighbourly reassurance or is this a declaration of war against the proposal of peace? The cold rethoric, however, has
ignored to mention another side of the coin while pointing out finger at smuggling. It would not be out of place to recall the observation of a reputed Indian journalist on the problem of smuggling across the open Indo-Nepali border made more than a decade ago. "The main promoters as well as beneficiaries of the various smuggling rackets" in Nepal, according to Inder Malhotra, are "a particularly unsavoury group of Indian businessmen," and unless their activities are checked" these ugly Indians may do uncalculable damage to India-Nepal relations." [Malhotra, 1970]

The damage has been done, and the problem does not rest there. Both trade and economic interactions between Nepal and India have suffered as a result of suspicion and mistrust at the political level. Being a landlocked country and one relatively at the early stage of economic modernization, Nepal lacks both desirable outlets for its marketable commodities and export earning capital goods. Approximately 69 percent of Nepal's export commodities are primary products, whereas the country's imports constitute about 25 percent of intermediate goods and 70 percent of manufactured products from its international trade. Earlier, Nepal's bulk of foreign trade was almost solely directed to India. This situation gradually changed since the mid-1960s in response to Nepal's trade diversification policy, and a decline in Indo-Nepal trade became apparent. From 84 percent in 1976, Nepal's trade with India shrank to 38 percent in 1980. Not only had the trade with India declined in the period but also had Nepal's intra-regional trade correspondingly plunged to a low level during the same phase. As reported between 1976 and 1982, the intra-regional exports of Nepal fell from 35.6 percent to 13.5 percent. Likewise, imports from South Asian countries fell from 38.6 percent to 19.5 percent [Bhuyan, 1985]. Compared to this, Nepal's overland as well as overseas trade with China registered a marked increase during the period, although the figures are low [ranging from 1 to 6 percent of the overall trade volume of the country].

Though Nepal's strategy of trade diversification has been considered as a factor in the decline in trade between Nepal and India, there are, however, certain economic laws determining this sharp fall. The point is that Nepal produces no specific commodity that sells in India at competitive international market prices. Next, a virtual economic as well as commercial dependence upon India is seen in Nepal as restricting economic choices for the country hoping to develop its infrastructure with available inputs from the developed world. In its economic and trade policies, Nepal faces the "hallmarks of vulnerabilities" that Singer has pointed out elsewhere [Singer, 1972]. Thus, this has, in addition, also been thought as an imperative to absolve the anomaly to the conception of national independence, on the other extreme, in
Nepal. Needless to say, the 1960 Trade and Transit Treaty that Nepal signed with India was an expression of the above facts to which New Delhi had generously responded. This was indeed a resounding fillip to Nepal’s aspiration to interact freely with the international market economy that was completely absent in the 1950 Trade Treaty with India.

But, as the later events proved, this was an exception but not the rule of Indian thinking. The aberration in Nepal’s relations with India came to the fore again when New Delhi asserted its stand against the change in the regime in Nepal in December 1960 and tried to conserve its security interests there against the perceived threat from China. As noted elsewhere, the Raxaul blockade dawned in Nepal as a shattering blow to the understanding reached in the 1960 Trade Treaty, and simultaneously conveying the message that landlocked Nepal should remain within its bound. Should Nepal ever desire to survive economically, the blockade implied that Kathmandu should modify its position and come to India’s terms. Had the blockade continued for long, it would have been an “economic catastrophe” to Nepal. Similarly, the problems which Nepal encountered while signing the trade treaty with India in 1971 further exemplify to what extent Nepal could deal with its southern neighbour on the economic front, to say nothing of the recently concluded trade and transit agreements that will last upto 1989. The complexities and the problems involved in economic and political spheres were also punctuated by the divergence in the strategic perception between the two. As a matter of fact, with every change of ambassador from India to Nepal, Indian diplomats come to Kathmandu with a duty, as Shriman Narayan had observed over two decades ago, “to perform the miracle of turning the low ebb of near hostility into a high tide of friendliness and cooperation” [Narayan, 1971: 114].

True, the new Bir Hospital that stands right in the heart of Kathmandu is a living monument of Indo-Nepal cooperation. The promised Rs. 73 crores assistance to complete the Far Western sector of the Mahendra Highway is another instance of economic aid much appreciated in the Kingdom. One can also say that India’s economic programme in helping Nepal to develop has no parallel in the country’s history. But all efforts at cooperation go down the drain when voices are raised in New Delhi that Kathmandu is an ungrateful neighbour and returns no dividends to India whenever the latter expects them. But economic aid as an instrument to induce policy changes favourable to the donor has not always been successful, although it provides certain bargaining leverage to the donor country.
III

The framing of foreign policy in Nepal, as it could be discerned from the pattern developed through its intensive interactions with India, leads one to assume that it is influenced by two crucial variables. One is the security concern and the other remains Nepal's quest for economic development. Though leadership idiosyncrasies sometimes might have brought certain changes in the emphasis, these two variables have, however, retained their constancy in the policy formulation in Nepal. The reality that Nepal recognizes in its understanding of world politics is that its relative weakness and geopolitical situation have led it to face complicated external environment which is beyond its capacity to influence, let alone control. Hence a feeling prevalent in Nepal is that it is likely to become the victim of the situational determinism. Cognizance of this fact led to the development of the perception that unless Nepal tries to achieve some tangible results through the processes of its policy performances, the task of preserving national independence would not go unchallenged. Another reality that Nepal inherited from the past has been the condition of subsistence economy that required to be changed with the rising expectation of the people as Nepal has opened its frontiers for international interactions.

It would, therefore, be appropriate to suggest here that the fundamental dynamics of Nepal's policy are the national awareness of the strategic and economic asymmetries in comparison to its immediate neighbourhood. This fact was reflected in Prithivinarayan Shah's intuitive suggestion that the country was juxtaposed as a yam between two boulders, later supplemented by his saying that praja mota bhaya Raja balio huncha. Needless to say, foreign policy is related to national needs, and Nepal's foreign policy, as its formulations indicate, has continued to attempt to maximize the chances to meet its internal goals, i.e., the preservation of the state's territorial integrity and the concern for a general upliftment of the living standard of its people.

Assuming that these twin goals of security and development are the paramount objectives of Nepal's foreign policy, one can reflect on how and why the transformations in Nepal's relations with India have occurred and to what extent Nepal has enabled itself to achieve its set objectives.

First, the conception of the national security doctrine of balance between two big neighbours was not always prominent in the policy persuasion of the country because of the emergent factor of British domination in the south, and foreign power's entanglement and weakening of China's imperial might in the north. The accommodation to the British interests in the subcontinent to which Nepal had willingly conceded, remained
unaltered even after the British withdrawal from India. However, the sense of weakness and limits to its policy choices did not hinder Nepal from imparting on a policy arising out of the need to preserve independence of the country. The new relationship with India that began to surface in the 1950s was also influenced by the sense to limit the damage to the system in the domestic realm and protect the territorial integrity by reaching an accord with India against the perceived communist encroachment from the north. This strategy of appeasement, however, has pushed Nepal into India’s security orbit and later became an issue of discord between the two. Ironically, the treaty which an independent India had signed with the Rana oligarchy appeared at first to have provided a security shield and enhanced the political interests of the Ranas but later failed to sustain what the oligarchy had expected. Concurrent with the political change in the country, a mild crisis in Nepal’s relations with India ensued as the content of the treaty revealed that Nepal’s national interests were affected adversely.

Second, as communism in China was apparently a factor in Nepal’s treaty relations with India and that was more so after China’s presence in Tibet, Kathmandu inversely held an exceptional view on what Sino-Indian treaty on Tibet in 1954 furnished to both these countries. Notwithstanding the general applause for the principle of peaceful coexistence and the bilateral context in which New Delhi dealt with Beijing to confirm Tibet’s incorporation in China, Nepal felt itself exposed as a buffer. Coupled with this, unease was felt in Nepal with the report that India had ascertained Chinese acquiesce to treat Kathmandu as falling within New Delhi’s sphere of influence. This was not in conformity with what Nepal had expected India to do in the case of its smaller neighbour.

Third, albeit with uncertainty, the Chinese presence in the north provided Nepal an opportunity to explore an alternative course that was absent previously. The external environment produced both opportunity and risk to the country. By virtue of becoming the “frontline state” during the Cold War, Nepal had successfully drawn the attention of the international community thereby generating a competition to influence the course of relations Nepal would develop in the future. The lacuna created by isolation was filled by Nepal’s entry into the United Nations, participation in the Bandung Conference as well as by the establishment of the diplomatic relations with China.

Fourth, this cautiously built interaction with the international community in general and China in particular was further justified when Nepal experienced a domestic crisis with the change of government in 1960, and the Indian response to it was felt undersirable and as constituting a threat to the system, the preservation of which became the primary goal of the national
elite. The way in which Nepal ensured stability in the domestic realm by gradually turning international support in favour of the system established by the King by even acquiring the Chinese assurance against the latent Indian intimidation against Nepal is documented history. What is pertinent here to recall is that the 1960's episode, in the perception of its national elites, had clearly conveyed that India had both failed to stand behind or support the interests of Nepal. As the foreign policy decision of any country is made by the national elites on the basis of the perception they develop, Nepal felt that the significance of the 1950's Treaty was reduced to obscurity in furtherance of the interests of the country and has become an instrument for India to impose the "legitimacy" of the latter's interests which is not always acceptable to Nepal. The content of the mutual security arrangement then became an aspersion to Nepal as the understanding does not support the country's interests that became apparent from the facts mentioned above.

Fifth, certain other developments in the region that were to collectively influence the perception of national elites in Nepal were the cases of India's amputation of Pakistan in 1971 to help create a new state of Bangladesh, as well as the annexation of Sikkim in 1975, the imprints of which on Nepal's security consciousness were both distinct and disturbing. India's assertion of power as was evident in the so-called "peaceful" explosion of the nuclear device in 1974 after the successful military exploits in the war with Pakistan in December 1971 increased the possible danger that India might be tempted to exert the leverage of military power-threatened or used-in extending its economic, diplomatic or even politico-ideological influence in the neighbourhood. The arena where India demonstrated its willingness to use the armed forces was in its territorial dispute with Bangladesh over the New Moore island in the Bay of Bengal. India had repeatedly threatened to use force against Bangladesh after 1975 coup that had brought about change in the regime in Dhaka and had supported the pro-Mujib Siddiqi insurgents against the Bangla government until the armed support was relinquished by Prime Minister Morarji Desai in 1978. India's ambivalence on the Soviet move into Afghanistan in December 1979 was further seen as erosion of morality in Indian foreign policy. Its inducement of a regional security doctrine at a time when another smaller nation, Sri Lanka, was facing an adverse situation at home over the ethnic conflict that had turned into a bloody civil war waged from the sanctuaries in India by the Tamil militants has generated a feeling in the region that what India has failed to achieve diplomatically has been sought to ascertain through coercion.
Bilaterally, the problems Nepal encountered with India in the mid-1970s were also not congenial to its interests. By 1975, the issue at hand was the renewal of the trade and transit treaty. The crux of the problem was Nepal's impending demand for the signing of separate trade and transit treaty to which India as a transit country was not willing to concede. Meanwhile, the problem was wrapped up with the development in Sikkim and the general resurrection of anti-Indian demonstration in Nepal. As Nepal's zone of peace proposal has already raised the problem in the security sphere, the problems in the economic and political spheres dramatized by the difficult negotiations in the trade and transit treaty and the Sikkim episode, increased India's reluctance against Nepal. Consequently, the Indian Ambassador withdrew to New Delhi; stalled the negotiation on the trade treaty and once again reiterated the threat to close the border, as was the case in 1969 when the then Indian Foreign Minister Dinesh Singh had announced while stalling the negotiations of the trade treaty due to expire in 1970. The counter pressure India put in return to Nepal's urge for a separate trade and transit treaty and Kathmandu's assertion of transit rights a landlocked country supposedly enjoys in accordance with the international law, was that Nepal-India trade should be conducted in hard currency. The dilemma for a country short of foreign exchange reserve was obvious, and this, as Mrs. Gandhi had recalled in February 1980, has "soon brought the Palace to its knees" [Mansingh, 1984: 263].

Finally, the cumulative impact of these developments in the bilateral and regional spheres led to a substantial change in Nepal's relations with India. It can, therefore, be said that, given the context of the relationship, Nepal's attempts have been influenced by the policy of accommodation to its physical reality which remains unchanged. However, at the same time, it has striven to change the functional parameters of the relationship that can be altered to suit its own liking. Assuming that asymmetry generates fear of intimidation, if not absorption, and recognizing that weakness prompts a country to search for policy alternatives, Nepal has singularly pursued a policy to enlarge the arena of interaction in the international community by expanding its relations with subtlety in order to sustain its declared objectives through bilateral as well as multilateral contacts. By cautiously increasing its maneuverability in the immediate neighbourhood and maintaining international links Nepal, on the one hand, has continued its policy to enhance the sense of independence and, on the other hand, expand the arena of economic as well as commercial interdependence to reduce dependence on a single source. An endorsement and adherence to this policy is illustrated in King Birendra's address to the Fifth Nonaligned Summit in Colombo in 1976:
Prosperity and security of a nation no longer depends upon living within the umbrella of a powerful nation. Nevertheless, there are moves and furtive stratagems, when a poor nation is made a helpless object of subjugation. It is ironic that some countries which themselves achieved independence out of long and bitter struggles should embark upon a course against the currents of their own history.

[HMG, 1977: 25]

In as much as Nepal's security interest is concerned, the country's doctrine of balance in its normative sense was essentially antithetical to the conception of alliance in disguise as in the 1950 Treaty. Similarly, the Indian doctrine of predominance is understood as a politically induced formula forcing the smaller states to remain within the security perimeter of that country. However the geostrategic shift that occurred in the course of the Sino-Indian War in 1962 provided Nepal with an opportunity to alter the imbalance in the relations with the two neighbours in dispute. Nepal's declared neutrality and refusal to stand behind India that raised indignation in New Delhi against the Himalayan Kingdom was indeed Kathmandu's rejection of "alliance" the 1950 Treaty had mooted. Neutrality was expressed in similar fashion during the Indo-Pakistan wars in 1965 and 1971. But Nepal's neutrality in the Sino-Indian War was apparently a crucial factor in determining and restructuring its foreign policy. Significantly, the doctrine of balance then came into full play as Nepal deliberately reaffirmed this historical element in the behavioural dimension of its foreign policy [Khanal, 1971: 37]. The Sino-Nepali joint communique of December 1973, signed in Beijing incorporating both countries' pursuit against "hegemonism" by any power, was another example of a cautious approach to enhance the security needs of Nepal.

Apart from this bilateral context, Nepal's neutralization policy has found its genuine expression in the zone of peace proposal projected at the multilateral and global forums [The Rising Nepal, September 5, 1981]. The proposal has been endorsed by many, and China, in particular, has promised to "assume appropriate commitments arising therefrom" in recognizing the country as a zone of peace; the support to which was reiterated during the visits of Deng Xiaoping [1978], Premier Zhao Ziyang [1981] and President Li Xiannian [1984] to Nepal. The seven points which the proposal has incorporated as its essential features are directly addressed to free Nepal from being engulfed in any disputes between its neighbours that may jeopardise its security interests.

Again, Nepal's participation in the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation is the reflection of the sum
and substance of the objectives of its foreign policy as outlined above. Notwithstanding several trappings ingrained in the newly-formed South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, the significance of it for Nepal lies not in the residual benefits that member countries have expected to share but in the nature of the relationship that may develop to cater to and strengthen its security needs. As is the case with other countries of the region, SAARC provides Nepal with a venue where it can congenially participate in the multilateral forum and reach decisions pertaining to the common interests along with other partners. Such a participatory organization provides an opportunity to a smaller country like Nepal to enhance its role in the regional order modelling process as the country’s interests would be induced in the region and may help produce adaptive behaviour among the participants.

Hence, despite certain scepticism relative to the organizational basis, [Shah and Khatri, 1985; Baral, 1983] SAARC is viewed and commonly held in Nepal as an instrumental process in the application of preventive diplomacy in the regional context. The basic orientation of regional cooperation is seen as an honest attempt made by the member countries from the conflict interactions towards building harmonious relations. Although the transition towards such a conducive method to structural stability has been gradual, it is however expected that the process may result in some tangible understanding in furthering interests of the member nations.

A retrospective analysis of the regional interactions would suggest that most of the countries had found a little basis for configuration in South Asia because of the embedded inter-state conflicts overshadowing mutual interests. Countries such as India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and even Bangladesh in different times, in the past, had ignored the viability of such an organization and were tempted to forge an extra-regional linkage to sustain their respective interests. India, with its greater role aspirations in international politics, had claimed its share in the Asia-Pacific Council [ASPAC]. While touring Tokyo and Australia in summer 1969, Mrs. Gandhi had reportedly shown much interest in erecting an Indo-Japanese-Australian axis by suggesting that “the need to cultivate a tripod Indian-Australian-Japanese framework within which the smaller countries of Southeast Asia can achieve greater cohesion and progress” [Van der Kroef, 1969]. By unequivocally asserting that India is a “part of Southeast Asia, too,” the late Prime Minister had sought access to ASEAN in the same year but was effectively rebuffed. Failing this, India turned to West Asia in the mid-1970s. The $1 billion Iranian fund for India’s developmental activities had lured Mrs. Gandhi to initiate an Indo-Iranian condominium and her
Spring 1974 visit to Iran was seen as a watershed in the new relationship. The possibility that Mrs. Gandhi had asked the Shah of Iran to consider New Delhi for the membership of RCD to test other members' opinion is too strong to ignore. However, this enterprise became obsolete as Pakisfan strongly opposed this endeavour made by Iran, [Vicker, 1976] and also by the removal of the Shah from the international scene.

Pakistan's strategic and economic needs, on the other hand, have much facilitated its cordial relationship with the West Asian countries in comparison to the countries of the region it belongs as a geographical entity. Hence, it is not surprising for Islamabad to nurture a desire to be integrated into RCD. Even today there is a strong indication of the revival of this organization and Pakistan certainly desires to actively participate in it. Pakistan, therefore, covets the role of becoming a bridge between South and West Asia. Of late, ASEAN, had also turned down Sri Lanka's request to join the organization. Bangladesh still cherishes to play a role in bridging South and Southeast Asia, and it is motivated by the ambition to turn east rather than west where it faces the traditional "Bhadralok" of India.

All these attempts were functional for the absence of a regional understanding collated by the mutual distrust among the interacting countries. As suspicion of intentions between the neighbours still persists, this very factor limits the SAARC system from encompassing political dynamics that determine the state of relations in South Asia. A major reason as to why "bilateral and contentious issues" were excluded from the SAARC framework indicated the chasm and difficulties in resolving the epic conflicts the region has witnessed in contemporary history. Though regionalism in South Asia begins with an objective to "ensure that the weak are not exploited and that the strong do not dominate", it has so far deliberately prevented the chance to evolve consensus among the neighbours and has left outstanding issues to be tackled bilaterally. The missing link in the South Asian Seven, therefore, is the political understanding that apparently makes the efforts at cooperation an appendage, not the core of the system. The abnegation of primacy of politics minimises the value for which the countries of the region are attracted towards each other. As said above, the geophysical proximity alone is not a guarantee for them to cooperate.

Pointedly, the SAARC deliberations have confirmed such a judgement. Though it would be premature to conclude that SAARC promises less than expected, it would, however, not be an inadvertent opinion to suggest that the December Summit in Dhaka was indicative of simultaneous operations of the two contradictory forces at one level even as the Seven Heads had cautiously moved to signal the success of the proceedings. A
simple content analysis of the formal speeches addressed by the
Seven Heads of State and Government illustrates the complexities
embedded in the structure of relationships among South Asian
neighbours. The yawning gap between the rhetoric of cooperation
and the reality of persistent conflict apparently has made SAARC
an exercise in futility. The spectrum of issues that surfaced during
deliberations, undertaken by the Foreign Secretaries and the
External Affairs Ministers before the final seal was put by the
authoritative Heads by adopting the Dhaka Declaration on
December 8, 1985, evinces the recurrent pattern of their conflict
interactions that failed to submerge the animosity and invoke
change in the substance of relationships.

The polarization of views among the neighbours is
obvious. Their lack of conviction and trust of each others’ intents
clearly found expression on issues like terrorism in the regional
context which would have otherwise been a welcome feature had
there been a political understanding among themselves. The
regional effort to control terrorism was considered beyond the
purview of the SAARC “integrated programme of action”, and a
commission was asked to evaluate the aspects of terrorism before
reaching any conclusive agreement pertaining to the subject.
Though, the Dhaka Declaration, after laborious deliberations,
had succeeded in incorporating an urgent plea to the nuclear
weapons powers to invigorate decision for a “complete cession of
testing, production of testing, production and deployment of
nuclear weapons” in order to save the world from the “threat of
self-extinction”, [The Rising Nepal, December 11, 1985] Incidently, the question of de-nuclearization of the region revived
by President Zia of Pakistan in his summit speech and exclusively
death with by the Monarchs of Nepal and Bhutan was taken with
awe by the Indian delegation. What could be more paradoxical to
observe than the fact that even trade and other aspects of
economic relationships did not find a concerned hearing in the
deliberations although SAARC suggests an attempt at economic
integration, if not a political one.

Given the context, what role could a country of Nepal’s
stature impart in a regional organization in pursuance of its policy
objectives? How strongly could it enliven the prospects of peace
and stability and maximize the chances of cooperation to serve its
national interests? It is broadly assumed that SAARC provides a
measure to arrest the current tendency of power fluctuation in
South Asia. The movement for regional cooperation since 1980
has at least brought seven governments of the region together to
share and exchange dialogue pertaining to the course the region
should take. Despite the hostility embedded in the bilateral
relations of certain countries-the prominent among them is
between India and Pakistan-the frequent meetings of government

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representatives have increased the chances of understanding each other’s views concerning the critical issues facing them. It is expected that the continuity of interactions between the nation-states of the region may, in the long run, help modify their behaviour towards each other leading towards a substantial change in the present conflict interaction pattern. This indicates the pattern of influence relationships which Nepal is desirous to build through SAARC.

Whatever the state of SAARC today, the cooperative process is assumed on the basis of two principles: the principle of equality and the principle of reciprocity for common benefits. The first has given dynamism to Nepal’s feeling of enhancing independence with equal status and the second underlines regional support for the country’s development aspirations. The multilateral processes that develop through SAARC as well as Nepal’s international interactions are the elements that enhance both the security and development needs of the country. It is therefore the subtle rejection of the predominance of a single power in the regional affairs by simultaneously aiming at encouraging accommodation and adaptation in the behavioural pursuit of the foreign policies of the interacting powers.

IV

What does all this mean to Nepal’s foreign policy particularly in relation to India? Despite an expansion of international contacts and support to its positions from friendly countries, Nepal’s bilateral difficulties with India still eschew understanding between the two. It is also felt that India has adequate leverage to persuade Nepal to give credence to New Delhi’s interests in the country. There is no denying the fact that Nepal had accommodated Indian interests to the extent that these suit Kathmandu’s own purposes. This was expressed in the functional collaboration in economic and commercial spheres and even in the military sector when Nepal so desired.

But two pertinent aspects that have clouded their relations at present and that might continue to do so in future are the issues of migration and the exploitation of water resources which cannot be resolved satisfactorily without political understanding at the apex of power. Although the open border between Nepal and India and the understanding reached in the 1950 Treaty provide unrestricted mobility of the peoples of the two countries, this has, however, disadvantageously exposed Nepal to the demographic imbalance compelling its citizens to compete with Indians in the limited employment opportunities available in the country. Similarly, on the issue of the sharing of the water resources, Nepal
has reserved doubts on a fair deal by India. The scope for a meaningful sharing of economic benefits through the joint exploration of water resources has remained shelved because of the prevailing mistrust between the two neighbours. The case of the Karnali project is an evident example to prove these doubts.

The lack of understanding at the political level has led both Nepal and India to think of the strategic incompatibility between themselves. The variation in the perception entailed by the bilateral problems has helped to develop a pattern of strategic thinking that appears to have elicited cross-purposes in their policy orientation. Like the Bangladesh issue that generated differences in approach and interpretation between the two before Nepal formally extended its recognition to the newly born nation, there remain differences between Nepal and India in the case of the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan: a nonaligned and a landlocked country. In the same vein, Nepal is least appreciative of the Indian interpretation of the Chinese threat, which in reality New Delhi conceives as a most ominous strategic development vis-a-vis its security conception. Coupled with this is the issue of the mutual security arrangement which Nepal has retained symbolically but changed the ambition behind it substantively.

Finally, as SAARC has initiated a change in the perspective, one begins to think optimistically that there is much room for cooperation and conciliation between Nepal and India in economic and socio-cultural fields. The consensus in the security matters, however, would not be achieved until the current geopolitics in South Asia would be drastically altered.

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Education: Then and Now

Suresh R. Sharma

It was interesting to observe that a couple of years ago the university and many a premier college in and outside of Kathmandu were all making preparations for their silver jubilee celebrations at about the same time.

The results published by Tribhuvan University for the last few years indicated that there was firstly an excessive delay in the publication of results, and secondly the pass percentage was miserably low, in most cases, less than even 10% average.

A number of politicians including Ministers and Rastriya Pancayat members often approached the Education Minister and tried to convince him that their districts needed more secondary or primary schools, while those already established were, in fact, getting into critical difficulties financially and academically. The difficulty in finding qualified subject teachers to teach English, Mathematics, Science, Geography, etc. still continued to be a problem and primarily for this reason most of these schools were producing very disappointing SLC results.

The statistics produced by the Planning Commission, however, showed that there was a great deal of progress in the field of education, in terms of the number of schools, the number of students, the number of teachers and the literacy percentage.

An analysis of all this situation indicates that the development in higher education has also taken place as a result of a rapid growth in the number of primary and secondary schools during the period that preceded the establishment of the colleges. It is true that Nepal witnessed a wave of tremendous awareness of the need for and of great enthusiasm in the expansion of educational activities after the dawn of democracy. Not only did the number of the Western type of secondary schools swell, but also a number of examining boards were established thus entertaining as well as giving a latitude for a variety of views along with the subsequent initiation of the programmes around the same time.
Rastriya Vidyapitha and Nepal Pravesika were, for example, accredited to issue matriculation-level certificates to students even without English. Sanskrit was also an important stream though still affiliated to Varanasi Sanskrit Board. There was also a system of examination which tested the basic skills required for a clerical job. Thus the last few decades have been very eventful years in the field of education.

The question of receiving international recognition for its certificates, the task of designing the type of education most suited to Nepalese needs, the extent of government commitment and priorities to various aspects including Sanskrit education, vocational education, adult education, teachers training programmes, etc., were some of the issues which occupied the minds of the planners and policy-makers of the 1950s, though all these things were only of little interest to the common people.

The attitude of the government of that time was more liberal in giving recognition to schools and to examining boards. Also efforts were initiated in the mid-1950s to introduce skill training programmes by various ministries or departments e.g., training of sub-overseers, auxiliary health workers, auxiliary nurse midwives, agricultural junior technicians, foresters, and cottage industries skill workers. Early 1950s, produced a number of good secondary schools, and mid-fifties, a few skill training centres. The later part of the decade witnessed the opening of a number of colleges and of the university itself. Growth in the number of colleges established, a need to give a national orientation to the curricula, and a need to bring about national integration through the wider use of the Nepali language led to the establishment of a university in 1959. It started as an affiliating-type university with some programmes for postgraduate teaching in a few humanities and social science subjects.

An important report, *Education in Nepal*, was also produced during that decade which advocated for the need to impart more vocational programmes, more opportunities for literacy programmes, and the teachers training programmes.

During the sixties, the expansion continued to take place more rigorously in general education. The rudimentary skill training programmes were, however, strengthened and streamlined. The Technical Training School, which was established in 1942 to produce sub-overseers, was upgraded to Engineering Institute which then offered overseers courses in civil, mechanical and electrical engineering. The auxiliary health workers training programme and the auxiliary nursing school were upgraded to technician training centres. Agriculture extension workers and forest rangers and foresters were similarly produced by the Agriculture College and the Forest Institute respectively.
As most of the modern development activities of that time were taking place in the public sector, manpower development activities were basically initiated to meet the internal demand of the respective ministries. Consequently, all these training programmes were organised as the training wings of the various departments. Towards the end of the sixties, some infrastructure, particularly for producing middle-level manpower in various disciplines was also built.

Prior to the introduction of the National Education System Plan in 1971 the kind of situation that existed in the educational scene of the country was as follows:

i. There were about 50 colleges affiliated to Tribhuvan University, and there were about 400 secondary and 7000 primary schools.

ii. There were three boards offering SLC or equivalent examinations.

iii. SLC syllabuses also included subjects like Sanskrit and Ain Sresta.

iv. Curricular arrangements also included vocational subjects like a. Trade and industries, b. Agriculture, c. Secretarial science, and d. Home science.

v. Primary, lower secondary, and secondary schools were given some grants which were found fairly adequate to support schools in urban and more accessible rural areas because people’s participation to build the physical structure and student’s enrolment were better there. In poorer areas where the student number was small, which had less resources and had difficulty in finding teachers no schools proved to be feasible with the amount of grants that were available.

vi. But with the government grant, though small, many a college sprang up, especially the one for teaching arts and commerce subjects. A few colleges also offered science. These colleges were often housed in local schools in most cases. Proper library facilities, regularity in holding classes, services of highly competent teachers, facilities of sports, hostels, staff quarters were almost non-existent.

vii. There was no well-defined policy on the financing of the schools, on proper manpower planning for promoting vocational and technical trainings and on the language policy. And there was no clear-cut allocation of a reasonable percentage for education on the national budget. These eventualities led to the formulation of a National Education System Plan (NESP). The seventies thus became the decade of NESP’s formulation and implementation.

With the introduction of the NESP, a number of bold and multipronged steps were initiated, the important ones are as follows:
i. The government’s commitment to education was to the tune of 100% support to primary education, 75% support to lower secondary and 50% to secondary and higher education.

ii. To promote vocational education, the government supported 75% of the school cost and helped in developing vocational workshops by providing equipment and teachers to such schools. At the higher education level, six institutes, one each in Agriculture, Forestry, Medicine, Engineering, Applied Science and Technology, and Teachers Training were created. The cost of developing these institutes and running them was modelled as the responsibility of the government.

iii. The operational aspects were, in great measure, decentralized; district education office and regional education directorates were set up to implement school-level programmes. Similarly, campuses and institutes were instructed to implement higher education programmes. The role of the centre consisted mostly in formulating plans and programmes and in coordinating educational activities.

iv. To link education with the country’s and individual’s needs emphasis was laid on imparting employable skills.

v. Certain clear-cut academic programmes were instituted to bring about overall improvement in the quality of education such as:

1. Training was made compulsory to all teachers.
2. Minimum qualifications were fixed for teaching jobs.
3. Supervision system was introduced to back up curricular innovation and vocational education and to establish as viable feedback system.
4. Internal assessment system, district-level, and regional-level examination system and semester system were introduced to manage and boost academic standards.
5. Terminal objectives were set for each level of education.
6. Developing curricula as suited to the country’s needs and preparing textbooks in Nepali were taken up centrally on a nonprofit-making basis.
7. An appropriate student-teacher ratio was recommended.
8. Teachers were to be given attractive service conditions comparable to other sectors.
9. Provisions were made for introducing extra-curricular activities in the schools.
10. A policy was formulated to link education with practical work by:
   a. Designing curricular and instructional materials accordingly.
   b. Introducing a system of making vertical entry from one level of technical training to the next higher level.
This was, however, allowed only to those who had worked in the respective sector for a period of at least three years.

c. One year's compulsory national development service [NDS] scheme was applied to all the students who were preparing for their degrees under which the NDS volunteers were asked to work for about a year in the rural areas.

d. The graduate students were also asked to write dissertation on topics of greater relevance to their future profession.

The National Education System Plan was a campaign which called for determination, discipline, and patience from all sectors for implementing its programmes effectively. Introducing an ambitious programme, for instance, in a society where individual political interests and social pressures exert a strong influence, was, no doubt, a courageous step. To equip inadequately trained teachers with expected qualities and to design programmes for the best utilisation of teachers were the pre-requisites for any tangible accomplishment. Similarly, creating a mechanism where dedicated teachers participated with vigour and discipline as well as an efficient system to take good care of the followup mechanism was anticipated.

Similarly, for vocationalisation of any education system where most of the facilities were just good for classroom teaching only a careful and far-sighted programme was, therefore, needed which also took into account the size of employment market. Supply of suitably trained skilled teachers in requisite number, provision of adequate resources to build and equip the vocational workshops could only lead on to successful vocationalisation.

To make a balanced supply of high, middle and basic level technicians, a mechanism of vertical entry was introduced. This envisaged, among other things the diversion of ambitious and even academically brighter students toward education for the profession of technicians. Making it imperative for students to go out to work under the National Development Service for a year, and making it necessary for students to appear in the entrance test for entering any level of education were some of the measures for which some amount of resistance was not unexpected. Nevertheless, as a result of the determination with which the plan was introduced, the sign of success gradually began to appear on the surface. The move resulted in bridging the gap between haves and have-nots. As a result, the level of literacy in the less developed districts was soon at a par with the national average. Most schools of the country received qualified and trained teachers, the schools received a timely supply of grant, textbooks, educational materials and most schools developed their own
buildings and premises. The implementation of the plan at the school level was phased over for five years and at the higher level for two years.

After its operation for nearly three years, a mid-term evaluation, and after about six years, a full-term evaluation was carried out. Mid-Term Evaluation recommended some minor adjustments in the implementation strategies and most of the recommendations were implemented. The Full-Term Evaluation Team examined the plan thoroughly, and their report suggested some necessary corrective measures on the very plan itself.

But before the Full-Term Evaluation Report was studied and considered for implementation there arose a wave of students' unrest in 1979 and, this, in fact, gave a serious blow to the report and the plan. Some of the major concessions that were made to contain the student unrest were considered by some educationists as suicidal to the plan. For example:

i. The withdrawal of the entrance test system gave a big blow to manpower planning approach. Free access to higher education led to a heavy pressure on campuses, especially in the general education stream. This caused the spreading over of the available resources thinly and efforts at quality improvement became less and less easy.

ii. Abolition of the comprehensive examination system which later on led to the withdrawal of the semester system also shattered a sound academic calendar as it was envisaged initially.

iii. The NDS programme which got popular among the people and the students had to be suspended because of the rupture in the academic calendar.

iv. The lifting up of the time limit for completing courses caused the quality of education to drop and record-keeping a harrowing exercise.

v. The introduction of the partial examination system at the SLC level made standards to fall and record-keeping an arduous, if not an impossible task.

iv. Making private examinations open for ever, meant that the linkage of education with employment would be harder.

Besides making all these concessions, the weak-kneed policy followed by politicians and administrators in upholding the objectives of NESP had a dampening effect. Some of the adverse effects of giving up parts of a complete set of educational programmes are now being gradually felt by parents, teachers, and students.

The academic calendar of the university that got shattered during those years, has, for instance, taken a long time to get back to order. The decentralisation approach has been reversed. The
unplanned growth has led to the excessive expansion in administration in the university. The pressure for admission, which nobody at the higher education level cared to resist, had led to the establishment of a number of private colleges, most of which are starved of resources.

Some of the recommendations made by the Full-Term Evaluation Team, which were accepted for implementation, were as follows:

1. The school structure was changed from 3+4+3 to 5+2+3 and education up to Grade 5 was made free. This was done with a view to widening the base for ordinary people to have an education more easily. And by extending the duration of primary education the possibility of the children's retaining the literacy they acquired was expected to be higher.

2. Some curricular changes were brought about. Only 7 subjects are to be examined at the SLC level of which English, Nepali, Mathematics, and one vocational subject are made compulsory and three subjects are to be chosen from any of the three groups mentioned as the science group, the social science and language group, and the commerce group. The purpose of cutting the number of subjects down was to give greater weightage to the subjects taught.

3. The weightage for vocational subjects in vocational schools and general schools has been drastically reduced and separate skill-intensive trade schools created in place of vocational schools.

4. Sanskrit and moral education subjects are introduced from Grade 4 to strengthen the children's language base and to help them understand their culture.

5. Managing committees are strengthened to make them take more interest in the school affairs so that interests of the school and of teachers are both looked after.

6. Teacher training programmes have been split into professional trainings and regular academic trainings, so that interests of the school and of teachers are both looked after.

7. The technical institutes have been asked to strengthen their basic science component and admissions at the graduate level have been opened up to both technical and science stream students.

8. Dissertation at the degree level was made optional. Because of non-availability of enough of highly competent teachers, making dissertation compulsory proved to be a mockery.

9. The titles or names of the degrees have been changed from Certificate to Proficiency Certificate, Diploma to Bachelor and Degree to Master levels.
This was done with a view to avoiding confusion for students who go in for further studies abroad.

If some of these changes, particularly at the higher education level, were improvements, others were made following the recommendations of the Royal Commission headed by Basu Dev Sharma. The hasty decisions made during that time distorted the plans’ and principles of NESP fundamentally. To correct these a five-member Royal Commission was constituted in 1982 under the chairmanship of the former Education Minister Ranadhir Subba. The report was submitted after a year and a half. The Commission, among other things, made recommendations for the establishment of a separate university for Sanskrit and also for consolidating the programmes of Tribhuvan University. They advocated future autonomy for Technical Institutes and also recommended that the administrative machinery should be cut to size. They pleaded for greater freedom to the colleges and they found the Dean offices of the General Institutes functionless.

Looking at the total situation today the issues confronting us now appear to be the following ones:

1. For the growth and prosperity of good higher education what should be the size of government contribution and to what extent should people’s participation be expected? Should the students be asked to pay more for their education?

   I am of the view that the government should consider its contribution as an investment. Some money should be earmarked for contributing to these programmes where the performance is also better.

2. Should the open admission policy be continued?

   Higher education should be given to the deserving ones only and should be carefully linked to the manpower situation of the country.

3. Should we have one university or more, if more, of what type? residential, affiliated, regional, disciplinewise, Sanskrit or open university?

   We should probably have more universities. One of them should be for residential programmes, another for affiliated colleges and some for Sanskrit or Agriculture.

4. Should the improvement in equality, secondary or higher, level, be based on protection and patronage as at present or should we leave it to a healthy competition?

   It would be a good policy to provide minimum support to general institutes. Additional support should be related to their qualities.

5. What should be the policy for research? Should research activities be integrated to general teaching or should they be strengthened as separate centres.
Teaching faculty has to be strengthened, therefore the research capability there has to be integrated with the academic programmes. Only in some special areas additional research centres should be created.

6. What should be the policy for private colleges? Should the richer and older ones be made private or the smaller and poorer ones as at present be allowed to be private? We should probably allow only the stronger ones as private. The liberal policy to grant sanction has to be withheld and an open university model should be carefully examined for implementation.

7. How should technical education be managed? Is the present model good enough? Or are some improvement in it necessary?

Technical Institutes should receive strong support from the government and at the same time they should also try to generate some resources of their own.

8. What should be the language policy? Should the level of English be raised or a lot more materials be produced in Nepali as rapidly as possible? The need to give a sound English base has to be realised. Producing more Nepali materials is always desirable.

Similarly at the school level the following are some of the pressing issues:

1. How to detach school management from local political interests and make a school a purely social institution? Sooner or later this has to be done.

2. How to develop and manage other aspects of school education, for instance maintaining school properties, expanding playgrounds, introducing important aspects like drama, music, art and sports facilities, etc., in the school. Local pancayats and communities should be given the responsibilities. It is after all their institution.

3. How to stop opening resource-poor new schools? Sanctioning new schools hereafter has to be carefully scrutinised.

4. How are we to initiate intensive quality education programme? For example:
   a. Can recruiting of more competent teachers be improved?
   b. Can appropriate student-teacher ratio be maintained?
   c. Can a mechanism for making the best use of the time and talent of the teachers be established?
   d. Can the erosion of the sanctity of examinations stopped? if so how?
   e. Can the teachers be made heavily occupied with academic activities and liberate them from petty political interests?

I think any further indifference to these issues can have very undesirable consequences.
The Sculptural Art of Nepal

Lain S. Bangdel

The Valley of Kathmandu is like an enormous treasure house of art where thousands of icons of gods and goddesses in stone, metal, wood and terracotta are found scattered all around the Valley. Such art objects are found not only in temples, shrines, viharas, stupas, caityas and old palaces but also in private courtyards, streets, narrow lanes, bylanes, waterspouts, open fields and neglected places. The Valley has been the seat of ancient art and culture since distant past, but the art of Nepal was almost unknown to the outside world until five decades ago.

It is hardly three decades now that books and articles on the art of Nepal are being published, written mostly by foreign writers. However, majority of the scholars thought that the art of Nepal was only of secondary importance to Gupta art of India and that the history of Nepalese art was not traceable before the Licchavi period or prior to the 5th century A.D. But a comprehensive study on the ancient sculpture has revealed that the art of Nepal has its own character and is deeply rooted in its soil. The author’s recent discovery of a hoard of early sculptures, hitherto unknown to the previous scholars, has shown indisputable evidence for the first time that the art of Nepal existed long before the Licchavi dynasty was founded in Nepal whose antiquity goes back to the 1st century B.C. or 1st century A.D. [Bangdel, 1982]. Surprisingly, that the Valley of Kathmandu with its diminutive size and physical isolation should harbour such a wealth of icons, is rare example in the art history of the world.

A close study on the obscure beginning of Nepalese art has shown that the majority of the early icons to be found in the Valley are those of Mother Goddesses. The cult of Mother Goddess has, indeed, been prevailing throughout the proto-historic period to the present not only in ancient Egypt, Babylon, Mesopotamia, Central Asia, Mohenjodaro, Harappa, and India, but also in Nepal.
Early Mother Goddesses

The concept of Gaja-Laksmi, Sri-Laksmi, Hariti-Sitala, Mahisamardini, Durga, Bhagavati or Saptamatrika—the Seven Mother Goddesses, has long been associated with the cult of Mother Goddess. In Nepal, the worship of Mother Goddess has been extremely popular since remote times till this day. The goddess is worshipped by various names. To a common Nepali, she is the same benevolent Mother Goddess who protects the individual or family.

One of the salient features among the Newars of Kathmandu Valley is the worship of Mother Goddess as Ajima is deeply rooted among the Newars who are said to be the original settlers of the Valley. A comprehensive study on the cult of Ajima may unfold many layers of ancient civilization of the Valley.

One of the earliest female divinities in the Valley could be the Gaja-Laksmi from Chyasaltol, Patan (Pl. 1). During the Sunga and early Kusana period, the worship of Gaja-Laksmi and Sri-Laksmi was very popular whose icons are found scattered in the Gangetic Valley. For instance, the Gaja-Laksmi from Kausambi, now in the Allahabad University Museum, is one of the earliest icons are found scattered in the Gangetic Valley. For instance, the Gaja-Laksmi from Kausambi, now in the Allahabad University Museum, is one of the earliest icons of Gaja-Laksmi and is assigned to the 2nd century B.C. It is interesting to note that the Gaja-Laksmi from Chyasaltol and the one from Kausambi referred to above, are very close to each other not only in stylistic treatment but also in iconography. For instance, both goddesses are depicted in a similar fashion flanked by two long stalks of lotus on whose seed-pots stand two elephants who are shown in the act of bathing the goddess with water from long-necked jars held in their trunks. The representation of lotus seed-pots is extremely rare in India art, and it is the only example to be found in Nepalese art. The hair-dress, sash and the heavy anklets of the Chyasaltol Gaja-Laksmi are reminiscent of early Kusana art of India. On stylistic ground this icon can be attributed to the 1st century B.C.

Another early icon of Sri-Laksmi from Hadigaon may be mentioned here. She is sitting on a large full-blown lotus with her knees apart and wearing large anklets. The head is mutilated and details are worn-out, however, the style reveals and early icon which may be dated to the 2nd century A.D.

Among early images of Mother Goddess, two may be cited here; one from Haugal-bahal (Pl. 2) and the other from Kotaltol, Hadigaon. The Mother Goddess from Haugal-bahal is seated in a European fashion with her knees wide apart and wearing large flat circular earrings, necklace, bracelets and heavy anklets. Her right hand is held in varadamudra, the gesture of munificence. While the
left hand is holding a fish, an attribute associated with matrika. However, not being able to notice this attribute, previous writers have wrongly identified this image as Hariti, [Pal, 1974: Fig. 59] the Buddhist goddess of children, or as Sitala, the Hindu goddess of smallpox [Slusser, 1972: Pl. I.II a]. This icon is one of the earliest female divinities of Nepal which can be assigned to the 2nd century A.D.

The Mother Goddess from Kotaltol mentioned above has some remarkable features, such as thickset body, pendulous breasts and the hair which is parted in the middle and made into large lateral tresses behind her ears. It is interesting to note that similar hair styles may be seen in a number of female goddesses predating the Licchavi period. The image may be assigned to the 2nd–3rd century A.D.

The image of Hariti from Balaju could be the only icon of early Buddhist pantheon. However, she may also be represented as Sitala, the Brahmanical goddess of smallpox. Like the Haugal-bahal Mother Goddess, she is seated with her knees apart holding a child in her left arm while her right hand is held in varadamudra. Her hair, large breasts, earrings, bracelets and heavy anklets are stylistically close to the early female divinities of Nepal discussed already. Thus, she may be assigned to the 3rd century A.D.

The above-mentioned female divinities, though worshipped as Mother Goddesses, do not particularly belong to the Saptamatrka group which consists of Brahmani, Vaisnavi, Mahesvari, Indrani, Kaumar, Varahi and Camunda. Curiously, almost all the Mother Goddesses belonging to Saptamatrka group are found scattered around, some are tucked on the walls or niches while others are found in situ or half-buried in the fields. Originally, they must have been consecrated and installed together in a group.

Four icons of early Saptamatrka group were first discovered by the author about seven years ago in a small shrine of Chinnamasta, in the precincts of Cangu Narayana temple, and on the ground of stylistic development assigned them to the 2nd century A.D., [Pl.3] [Bangdel, 1982: 46—47]. Besides these matrikas, an ancient Uma-Mahesvara panel belonging to ca. 3rd century A.D. and two images of Brahmani and Mahisamardini of late Malla period were also found in the shrine. However, unable to distinguish the stylistic difference between the old and new sculptures, some writers have included those two icons of late Malla period as well among the early four icons and wrongly dated them to the 2nd century A.D. [Khanal, 1983: 63-64, Pls. 2,3]. While dating the ancient images, the difference of a century or two is not considered as a grave error but the gap of more than a thousand years will entirely distort the historical chronology of art.
Among a number of early Saptamatrika images found in the Valley, we may mention six from Bagalamukhi temple, Patan; three from Balkhu; five from Kirtipur; three from Jaibagesvari temple; three from Maligaon and one from Subalhiti, Patan. Although, these early Mother Goddesses constitute important icons on the development of early sculptures of Nepal why they have been neglected so far by previous scholars, is difficult to understand.

With the exception of Cangu Narayan Saptamatrikas, almost all the figures of Saptamatrikas referred to above, are seated with one leg resting on the seat and the other pendant. This is the characteristic feature of early matrikas found in the Valley. They are in diminutive form and are carved rather crudely like the early Kusana art of India.

**Vaisnava Sculpture**

The assimilation of Vedic Sun-God Aditva, the cosmic god Narayana and the epic hero Vasudeva Krsna grew into a mighty religion in India and later on in Nepal which is known as Vaisnavism. Under the impact of the bhakti-cult, it conceived three main aspects such as para-the highest, vyuha-the imanatory and bibhava-the incarnatory. Both in India and Nepal, Visnu was conceived and worshipped in this form. The cult of Vasudeva Krsna was widely prevalent during the 2nd century B.C. in northern India, particularly in Mathura, the birth-place of Krsna. A number of early icons of Vasudeva along with his brother Balarma and sister Ekanamsa which have been found around Mathura regions, indicate that in the early stage, the worship of Visnu was affiliated with the cult of a hero-worship of the Vrsni race. A survey of the early Vaisnava art in India shows that the iconography of Visnu was already established before the Kusana period.

In Nepal, too, surprisingly enough, Vaisnava art appears to have been prevalent as early as the 1st century A.D. although previous writers believed that Vaisnava art did not exist before the 5th century, the concept of which was based on the epigraphical evidence of Cangu Narayana of A.D. 464. However, the recent discovery of Sesasayi Visnu from Aryaghat, Pasupati and Sri-Laksmi from Hadigaon whose antiquity goes back to lst–2nd century A.D., are examples of early Vaisnava art in Nepal. [Bangdel, 1982: Pls. 65, 118, 119, 125, 127, 135]. At least four standing Visnu images have also come to light in the Valley of Kathmandu which can be assigned to pre-Licchavi period: two are from Hadigaon area and two from Patan. The discovery of these Vaisnava icons in the Valley of Kathmandu constitutes a significant contribution, for until now nothing was known of early history of Vaisnava art in Nepal.
The four-handed Visnu from Satya Narayana temple, Hadigaon [Pl. 4] stands alone on a simple dias holding his attributes such as cakra and gada in his right and left rear hands respectively which are partly mutilated. He holds a sankha in his left front hand while his right front hand is held in varadamudra, the gesture of munificence. Curiously, the delineation of varadamudra is shown in an awkward fashion like a cupped-palm. It is, however, interesting to note that similar cupped-palm is seen in almost all the ancient divinities of Nepal, whether male or female, but subsequently disappears from the 5th century onwards.

The Visnu image of Satya Narayana temple is badly eroded and details are effaced due mainly to daily ritual-bath for almost eighteen hundred years. However, the stylistic treatment of the crown, the massive arms and shoulders are reminiscent of the Kusana art of India. On stylistic ground this image may be assigned to the 2nd or 3rd century A.D.

Archaeologically speaking though, there are two images of Visnu Vikranta, incorporating the Vamana incarnation, one from Lazimpat, now preserved in the National Museum and the other from Tilganga, Pasupati. They are the earliest dated icons in Nepal. They were consecrated by King Manadeva in the name of his mother Rajyavati in the year A.D. 467.

As stated already, the standing Visnu, in para aspect, is represented holding three attributes in his rear and front hands while the right front hand is shown in varadamudra. This was the iconographical feature of the early Visnu image in Nepal. From the 5th century, there appears a new iconographical development in Visnu image, for instance, besides his usual attributes, Visnu holds a lotus-seed in his right palm instead of showing in varadamudra. Henceforth, this becomes a ubiquitous feature to be seen in almost all male and female divinities whether in stone or bronze, except some deities of Buddhist pantheon. Another striking development is the representation of Visnu with Sri-Laksmi on his right and Garuda on his left. The figure of Visnu which occupies the central position is invariably larger than his attendants, and it stands either on a lotus pedestal or a dias decorated with floral design while his consort Sri-Laksmi and mount Garuda stand independently on lotus pedestals. In most cases, Garuda stands on a semi-circular base delineated with rock design, a feature which was developed only from the early 6th century. This type of Visnu in Sridhara form becomes one of the most popular themes in Nepal, represented for centuries as an innovation of Nepalese artists, for such type of icons are not known in Indian art.

The Licchavi period may be called the Golden Age of Nepalese art, for not only Vaisnava art but also Saiva and
The Sculptural Art of Nepal
Plates
Pl. 1. Gaja-Laksmi, Chyasaltol, Patan, 1st century B.C.
Pl. 2. Mother Goddess, Haugal-bahal, Patan, 2nd century A.D.
Pl. 3. Kaumari, Chinnamasta temple, Changu Narayana temple, 2nd century A.D.
Pl. 4. Vishnu, Satya Narayana temple, Hadigaon, 2nd-3rd century A.D.
Pl. 5. Kaliyadamana, Hanumandhoka, 7th century A.D.
Pl. 6. Shiva, Ganesha temple, Kirtipur, 4th century A.D.
Pl. 7. Uma-Maheshvara, Pashupati, 7th-8th century A.D.
Pl. 9. Standing Buddha, Tawlung, 5th century A.D.
Pl. 11. Visvarupa Vishnu, Boston Museum of Fine Arts, U.S.A., 9th century A.D.
Pl. 13. Vishnu, Changu Narayana temple, 12th century A.D.
Pl. 15. Laksmi, Changu Narayana temple, ca. 15th century A.D.
Pl. 16. Female Terracotta Figurine, Hadigaon, ca 2nd century A.D.
Pl. 17. Sri-Laksmi, Tilaurakot, 2nd century B.C.
Buddhist art flourished side by side without any sectarian bias. Never before in the history of Nepal were artists so engaged in creating outstanding religious sculptures one after another.

Among Vaisvava sculptures of the Valley, Sesasayi Visnu and Kaliyadamana from Hanumandhoka [Pl. 5], Visvarupa Visnu, Visnu Vikranta and Garudasana Visnu from Cangu Narayana, Varaha from Dhumvarahi and Jalasayana Visnu from Budhanilkantha are the finest examples of the Licchavi period. They were carved by great unknown masters. During the Licchavi period, the quintessential quality of the sculptural art reached its zenith which left a lasting impression for more than four hundred years, and then, as if bouncing back, it gradually began to lose its momentum in plastic quality in the subsequent centuries.

Saiva Sculpture

The symbolic worship of Siva in phallic form may be traced from the time of the Indus Valley civilization of about five thousand years ago. Not only the horned deity seated in yogic pose with erect phallus and surrounded by animals, but also numerous stones in conical shape indicating the cult of phallus worship were discovered in Harappa and Mohenjodaro in the Indus Valley. This evidently shows that phallic worship was older than the iconic worship of Siva.

In Nepal, particularly in the Valley of Kathmandu, scores of Sivalingas are found scattered almost everywhere. There are three types of Siva-lingas: one is the plain linga, the other with a single human face known as Ekamukhi Siva-linga, and the third type with four human faces in four directions representing earth, water, fire and air. The top of the shaft represents insan—the sky that overlords all beings. This type of Siva-linga is known as Pancamukhi Siva-linga.

In India, the evidence of the worship of Siva in iconic form goes back to 2nd century B.C. Most probably by the 1st century AD, the temple of Pasupatinath was founded by the Pasupatas who were a prominent Saiva sect in India during the early centuries of the Christian era. It can be inferred from archaeological evidence that Saiva cult flourished side by side along with the Vaisanava cult in Nepal. For instance, an early Pancamukhi Sivalinga and three early icons of Siva which have recently come to light, provide evidence of the prevalence of Saiva cult pre-dating the Licchavi period.

From the very beginning, the worship of Siva-linga was more popular in Nepal than in human form. An early Pancamukhi Siva-linga, mentioned above, has recently been found at Mahadevthan near Balkhu khola, a small tributary of Bagmati
river, along with three ancient Mother Goddesses referred to already. The four faces of the Siva-linga are badly effaced and worn out like those early divinities. It is difficult to identify each face properly. However, a cursory look will at once reveal its stylistic affinity with the Siva-lingas of Kusana period, especially the Ekamukhi Siva-linga from Mathura Museum which is assigned to 1st-2nd century A.D. On stylistic grounds, the Pancamukhi Siva-linga may be assigned to the 2nd-3rd century A.D. How in that distant past such sculptural elements could reach this isolated valley is difficult to explain.

Three early images of Siva in anthropomorphic form have recently been discovered in the Valley. The image of Siva from Balambu is four-handed which are partly broken. He holds a rosary and a trident in his rear right and left hand respectively and in his front left hand a waterpot while his right front hand is held in Varadamudra which is delineated as cupped palm. We may cite another Siva image from the Ganesa temple, opposite to Baghairava temple, Kirtipur [Pl. 6]. The ithyphallic god stands on a simple dias. He is two-handed, but both the arms are mutilated. The image is smoothly treated, enhancing the softness of the contour. On the grounds of stylistic consideration both icons mentioned above may be assigned to the pre-Licchavi period. A seated Siva from Chikamugal, Kathmandu, which is a rare example, is reminiscent of early Mother Goddesses, because of his seated posture with one leg resting on the seat and the other pendant. The ithyphallic god holds a rosary in his left hand while the right hand is held in varadamudra, shown as a cupped-palm. He is wearing a snake round his torso as a sacred thread. The image may be assigned to the 4th century A.D.

A unique sculpture of two-handed Siva with curly locks of hair and third eye on his forehead may be cited from Aryaghat, Pasupati. It is locally known as Virupaksa and has its own legend. Virupaksa is a form of Siva but some iconographical texts refer him as Ekadasa Rudra also. Writers are not unanimous about the proper identification of this icon, however, the god is shown in ithyphallic form with a third vertical eye in his forehead and therefore there should be no mistake of identity for this god. It can be assigned to the 4th century A.D.

Very few examples of Siva in anthropomorphic form are found in Nepal as this form does not seem to have enjoyed the same popularity as that of Siva-linga or Uma-Mahesvara.

The artists of the Kathmandu Valley have played a unique role in creating outstanding images of Uma-Mahesvara with so many variations, sizes and numbers. This theme has caught the fancy of Nepalese artists from the pre-Licchavi period to this day. One of the earliest examples of the theme is from Camunda temple. It must be noted that in the early representation of
Uma-Mahesvara panel. Siva is shown with two hands seated on the right of Uma, resting one leg on the seat and the other pendant. Uma sits in a similar position embracing Siva in an amorous mood. Among their family only their son Kumara and Nandi, the bull, are represented. There are four early panels of Uma-Mahesvara based on the same iconography to be found at Cangu Narayana, Pasupati, Kumbhesvara and the archaeological Garden. On the grounds of stylistic development all these panels may be assigned to the pre-Licchavi period.

From the 5th century onwards, we may notice some iconographical development in Uma-Mahesvara panels, for more attendants and family members of Siva are shown. For instance, in the Uma-Mahesvara panel from Pasupati which is a product of the 8th century, four−handed Siva is seated with Parvati surrounded by his family [Pl. 7]. In the early panels referred to above, Siva does not hold any of his attributes, but here, Siva is seen holding a rosary, a trident, a water−pot and bijapuraka in his four hands. Behind the head of Siva a beautiful flame halo is delineated. Parvati is shown leaning gently on Siva's left arm. She is attended by two of her female attendants on her left. On the right of Siva, Kumara is shown riding on Nandi. Two male attendants holding Siva's attributes are shown emerging from the rock on either side of the stele. On top of the panel, a female figure emerges from the clouds in an acrobatic pose, holding a scarf with her rear hands while the front hands are shown in the act of pouring water over the divine couple, indicating the aspect of Gangadhara−murti. In the lower panel, seven ganas of Siva, with Ganesa in the centre, are shown dancing and singing in a frolicsome mood. What imagination! Each figure is carved delicately with a sense of profound physical proportion and the entire stele is accentuated with rock design, creating a blissful atmosphere of Kailasa mountain, the favourite abode of Siva−Parvati. This is only one example out of scores of Uma−Mahesvara panels that easily surpass in number with the whole output of the Indian art as far as the icons of Uma−Mahesvara are concerned.

The icon of Uma−Mahesvara continued to be represented in later period, but from the 15th−16th centuries onwards, it began to lose its traditional modelling and the hieratic quality. The panels looked more crowded with attendants of Siva, accentuated by ornate designs and disproportionate figures.

Caturmurti

One of the outstanding sculptural pieces by an unknown Nepalese artist is the Caturmurti now located in the courtyard of Rastriya Naagchar. The entire stele is carved out of huge chunk of
sand-stone in a most dynamic and monumental form. Until very recently it remained unknown to the scholars and was lying there in the open almost neglected. The icons represent the Brahmanical triad representing Brahma, Siva, Visnu and also Sakti. Brahma stands on a full-blown lotus, facing the front and is shown holding his attributes; on his right stands Siva in ithyphallic form holding his usual attributes. Likewise, the four-handed Visnu is shown on the right of Siva with his attributes. Between Brahma and Visnu, stands Sakti, the female divinity, holding a mirror in her left hand. This constitutes a rare iconographic trait, for this is the only example to be found in Nepalese art. Brahmanical triad with Sakti is not known in Indian art.

Solar Divinity

The cult of Solar Divinity has a long and continuous history. Its symbolic representations and icons are found in the ancient art of Egypt, Greece, Assyria, Iran, India and also in Nepal. At least, three early icons, whose representation can be associated with the Solar Divinity, may be referred to here.

An enigmatic sculpture to be seen in the precincts of the Kumbhesvara temple, Patan, with six subordinate figures, is worshipped as Ajima—the Mother Goddess by local people though it is a male figure. There has been some controversy regarding its proper identification, however, the author has pointed out elsewhere about the large circular object resembling a disc seen above the left shoulder of the main divinity, hitherto unnoticed by previous writers [Bangdel, 1982: 44-45, Pls. 81–82]. It is, in fact, a full-blown lotus whose details are badly worn out. The lotus on the left, is missing as the entire left portion of the stele is mutilated. It must be remembered that the ancient symbol of the Sun-god was a lotus, a circular wheel or a disc. Such symbols are found in a number of ancient Indian coins. Since the divinity under question is represented by a full-blown lotus above his shoulder and also holds a lotus in his right hand, the figure can be identified as a Solar Divinity and assigned to the 3rd century A.D.

There is another ancient icon to be found at Aryaghat, Pasupati which is associated with the Solar Divinity. The figure is seated with his knees wide apart bearing a mysterious smile. He holds a nilakamala and a boss in his left and right hands respectively. His torso is bare and his hair is treated as judge’s wig. He is wearing armlets, bangles and large type of earring. A semi-circular sash twisted like a rope is looped in between the thighs. His lower garment is secured by a girdle of whose central folds are shown spilling in front of the dias. An interesting feature of this icon is the spoked halo shown behind the head of the
divinity. To my knowledge, this is the only example to be seen in the stone sculpture of Nepal. However, such spoked wheel as a symbol of Solar Divinity are found in ancient tribal coins. The Surya image from Alampur Museum, India, has also similar spoked halo behind his head. On this basis, the figure from Aryaghat can easily be identified as a Solar Divinity and be assigned to the 4th century.

We shall now take an interesting icon whose identity has been a subject of controversy. The image in question, now preserved in the National Museum, Kathmadu [Pl. 8] was previously believed to have been found in Mrgasthali. It was recently confirmed that the image was discovered in the precincts of Satya Narayana temple about three decades ago by Janaklal Sharma and Yogi Naraharinath and later kept under the protection of Yogi at Mrgasthali. Evidently, the hypothesis that 'in the vicinity of the temple of Pasupatinath there was some sort of a portrait gallery of the early Licchavi monarchs like that of Kusanas at Mat near Mathura' as suggested by some writers, [Pal, 1967: 47; Verardi, 1983] is far-fetched. With the exception of a seated figure holding a lotus bud in his left hand with a spoked wheel behind his head, as mentioned already, not a single statue of a king nor of a royal personage, has so far been found in the vicinity of Pasupati temple. Because of the strong Mongoloid physiognomy, local people believed the image under discussion to be the statue of a Kirata king. However, it must be carefully analyzed that the statue is strictly treated as a figure of divinity rather than a king. He stands erect wearing a dhoti, and semi-circular sash is looped across the thighs in a similar fashion as the other divinities such as Visnu, Surya, Siva etc. Moreover, the statue is wearing upavita—the sacred thread which has never been noticed before. Since the image is that of a divinity and not of a king, the conspicuous circular halo behind the head which is represented as a rising sun clearly indicates its affiliation with the Solar Divinity, hence the image can be identified as a Solar Divinity and may be attributed to the 4th century AD. [Archaeological Survey of India, 1984: Pl. XII, A].

The worship of Surya appears to be in vogue during the Licchavi period also. An epigraphical evidence of Sun-worship may be found at Tebahal, of A.D. 480. In the inscription the Sun-god was called Indra. It is interesting to note that Indra was referred to as one of the Adityas in the Atharva Veda. Among the dated images of Surya, one is from Yampi-bahal now preserved at the Archaeological Garden, Patan, dated A.D. 1065, shown standing on a simple dias holding a full-blown lotus in both hands and flanked by Danda and Pingala. But one of the Sun-gods from Naksal, now preserved in the National Museum, Kathmandu, dated A.D. 1159, is shown standing erect and holding two
full-blown lotuses in his two hands. He is represented wearing long boots and Scythian dress.

There are countless images of Surya scattered in the Valley in various shapes, sizes and periods. This evidently shows that the cult of Solar Divinity has been one of the most popular cults prevailing in Nepal from ancient times to this day.

**Buddhist Art**

Though Sakyamuni Buddha was born in the 6th century B.C. in the south-western region of Nepal, Buddhist art began to flourish in the Valley of Kathmandu only from the 5th century A.D. Not a single image of the Buddha or Bodhisattva assignable to pre-Licchavi period has so far come to light. In contrast, hoards of Brahmanical images representing Hindu gods and goddesses belonging to the early centuries of the Christian era, have been found in the Valley. In spite of the fact that numerous Buddhist monasteries are mentioned in the Licchavi inscriptions, the absence of early Buddhist art in the Valley is difficult to explain. However, Buddhism appears to have widely flourished during the Licchavi period. A large number of Buddhist icons found scattered around the Valley attest to this.

The images of the Buddha are basically shown either standing or seated. His head is covered with tiny curls and spirals of hair on top of the head. There are two types of standing Buddha image in Nepal, one is freely standing and the other is carved out of a shaft of the caitya. There are a few standing Buddha images in the Valley. We may cite two freely standing Buddha images from Tawlung and Bangemudha. The standing image from Tawlung [Pl. 9] which is found at the foot of Sivapuri hill appears to be slightly elongated. Both the hands are multilated and detail of the face is effaced. In contrast, the standing Buddha from Bangemudha is well preserved. It is one of the finest examples of early standing Buddha image. Bearing a serene expression, the Buddha stands gracefully holding the hem of the robe in his left hand and the right hand held in *varadamudra*. He has broad shoulders and the entire stele is treated delicately and sensitively. The figure is surmounted by an oval halo. Two devotees, male and female, are shown kneeling on either side with folded hands. The outline of the body is clearly shown beneath the transparent robe indicating the influence of Sarantha school of India. On stylistic ground, the Tawlung Buddha may be assigned to the 5th century A.D., and the Bangemudha Buddha to the 6th century A.D.

There are a number of standing Buddha images belonging to Licchavi, Thakuri and Malla periods. They are carved basically on the same tradition, but like other images they gradually show the decadence in subsequent period.
As stated already, a number of Buddha images are found in caitya. The concept of caitya is derived from stupa which is erected as Buddhist relics in commemoration of the dead. There are countless caityas to be found in the Valley. The early type of caitya is known as Licchavi-caitya in Nepal. One of such caityas may be seen at Bhagvan-bahal in which the standing Buddha is carved out of the shaft. The left arm of the Buddha is mutilated but the right hand is held in varadamudra. A beautiful flame halo is seen behind his head. The style of carving, specially the treatment of robe shown as ripples of fold, reflects the direct influence of Mathura school of India. The image can be assigned to the 8th–9th century A.D.

A relief of the Buddha flanked by Bodhisattvas is found at Chaptal, Patan. The Buddha is shown seated in a yogic posture. On either side of the Buddha two Bodhisattvas stand who are holding fly-whisk and lotus in their hands. The detail of the entire portion is missing. A similar relief is found in a small shrine near Siddhapokhari, Bhaktapur. Both the reliefs are done basically on the same theme and are assignable to the 6th century A.D. There are two more reliefs of the same theme with a slight variation to be found at Yampi-bahal and Guitol, Patan which are now stolen. The Buddha is seated on a full-blown lotus flanked by standing Bodhisattva.

A number of reliefs depicting the incidents from the life of the Buddha are found in the Valley. One of such reliefs is the Temptation of Mara from Yangalhiti, now preserved in the National Museum, Kathmandu. When the Buddha was about to be enlightened-Mara, the Evil Genius, tried to seduce the Master by sending his beautiful daughter. In the relief Mara’s daughter is depicted swaying her voluptuous body accompanied by another female attendant. The Buddha remained unmoved and Mara tried to attack the Master by raising whirlwind and thunderstorm. Though it is a Buddhist relief, it shows demons, including Brahmanical deities such as Ganesa, Camunda and Buffalo-headed demon. This beautiful relief may be assigned to the 7th century A.D.

There is a magnificent relief showing the Nativity of the Buddha, found at Jaibagesvari, now preserved in the National Museum. This narrative relief shows the birth of the Buddha in the Lumbini Garden. Mayadevi, mother of the Sakyamuni Buddha is depicted supporting herself by holding the branch of a tree. The newly-born infant Buddha stands upright on the lotus against an oval halo background. Two celestial figures are shown showering lotus flowers from the heaven. The figure of Mayadevi is tall, slender, beautiful, and graceful. The rhythmic sway of her body is sensuously carved. The slight protuding of her right hip and elongation of the body indicate a product of 11th century. It is
undoubtedly one of the finest examples of Buddhist art belonging to the Thakuri period.

There are scores of reliefs of the Buddha, Bodhisattva and lesser divinities scattered in the Valley. Unlike the sculptures of Licchavi and Thakuri periods which are simple, graceful and superbly modelled, the reliefs of Malla period are over-emphasized with ornate designs and decorative elements.

**Bronzes**

The bronzes of Nepal were little known to the outside world until four decades ago. For the past two decades, however, they have been the collector's highly sought-after item and are universally admired. A cursory survey shows that only from the 6th century A.D. bronzes began to appear in the Valley of Kathmandu though its tradition must have been older than that. Most of the early bronzes are solid cast. The earliest repoussé work so far known may be cited from the Cangu Narayana temple where a gilt copper sheath of Garudasana Visnu with inscription and date of A.D. 607 is found. So far only two bronzes of Kusana period have been discovered in the Tarai area of Lumbini during the excavation in the early sixties. One is the figure of Bodhisattva holding a full-flown lotus in his right hand and a vajra in his left. The other figure is an attendant who is shown with folded hands in adoration. These are the earlier specimens of Kasana bronze found in Nepal which are assignable to 2nd-3rd century A.D. The modelling of these bronzes has a strong Gandharian impact, and they are reminiscent of some stucco heads discovered at the excavation at Taxila by late Sir John Marshall in the early twenties [Marshall, 1921: Pl. i and j].

The earliest dated Nepalese bronze so far known is the standing Buddha from the Cleveland Museum of Art [PI. 10]. The bronze image of A.D. 591 was commissioned by a Sakya nun named Parisudhamati of Yamgval-vihara in Patan with the intention of attaining the supreme enlightenment of all sentient beings. The hieratic frontality of the Buddha image which is represented standing on a full-blown lotus, has a suitable modelling. His right hand is raised in abhayamudra, the gesture of protection, while the left hand gently holds the hem of the robe. The eyes are half open; his lips are full and fleshy. The soft outline of the body is clearly visible through the diaphanous robe reflecting the Gupta tradition.

A few Nepalese bronzes belonging to the Licchavi period are found in Western museums, and among them, the Bodhisattva with Vajrapurusa from the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Vajrapani from pan Asian Collection, New York and the seated
Buddha from the Boston Museum of Fine Arts are some of the best examples.

While discussing the metal images, it must be noted that the dating of Nepalese bronzes has been a subject of great controversy. Even in recently published books by some leading authorities, [Schroeder, 1981] the dates assigned to a number of bronzes are indeed difficult to accept.

We may cite a few bronzes of Thakuri period and discuss their stylistic mannerisms. The Visvarupa Visnu from the Boston Museum of Fine Arts represents a rare iconographic type. It is a gilt copper in solid cast with a hollow rectangular pedestal [Pl. 11]. Here, the god stands firmly in *samabhanga* wearing a sacred thread and a necklace of a single string of pearls. The lower part of his body is clad in a *dhoti* which is secured by an ornamental girdle. A sash is tied around his waist forming a semi-circular loop across the thighs while its two ends in decorative folds sway lightly on either side as if swept away by a gentle breeze. Among his ornaments are jeweled *ratnakundala, sarpavalaya, sankapatras* projecting from behind. The crown decorated with elaborate coronet has three medallions, each bearing a jewel-emitting face of a lion as *kirtimukha*.

Visnu holds attributes in his rear five right hands such as an elephant goad, a broken bow, a shield and a mace while the five left hands are shown holding a wheel, a broken sword and a crucifixion-like object. In his left front hand he holds a conch and a lotus-seed in his right. The attributes of Visnu discussed above corroborate with the attributes of Visvarupa Visnu from Cangu Narayan. Not only that, the treatment of the crown, earrings, necklace and particularly the face, are also stylistically close to each other. The figure is sensitively modelled with a high degree of proportion showing broad shoulders, slightly wide hips, slender knees and firmly planted legs. It is one of the finest bronzes belonging to the post-Licchavi period which can be dated to the 9th century A.D.

Now we shall take another image of Garudasana Visnu with inscription and date from the collection of Jack Zimmerman, New York [Pl. 12]. It is a unique gilt repousse plaque which is dated A.D. 1004 when king Udaydeva was ruling Nepal. Vishnu is shown here in his supreme *para* aspect riding on his mount Garuda. The tail feathers of Garuda are exquisitely delineated forming a beautiful aureole behind the figure of Visnu. The god is flanked by Sri-Laksmi and Bhu-devi who are depicted with folded hands. The stone sculpture of Garudasana Visnu from Hyumatol, stolen about a year ago, has similar composition and iconography, however, Sri-Laksmi and Bhu-devi are shown more prominently in the stone sculpture than in the gilt plaque.
We may cite another Visnu image from Cangu Narayana temple where the four-handed god is shown in the centre of a medallion [Pl. 13]. Characteristic of this repousse is the luxuriant foliage in decorative pattern that bursts forth on either side of Visnu. This motif has frequently been represented in Nepalese bronzes from the 11th century onwards although it was already in vogue in stone sculpture from the 6th century A.D. particularly in the Buddhist caityas in Nepal. The rock design, too, remained ever so popular throughout the history of Nepalese art from the beginning of the 6th century A.D. The style of rock design on the rectangular base on which Visnu stands, is similar to the rock motif of Uma-Mahesvara panel in stone from Gacanani, Patan, of A.D. 1032. It must be further emphasized that the style of the crown, wheel, mace and the manner of holding the lotus-seed is reminiscent of the Garudasana Visnu from the collection of Jack Zimmerman discussed above. Both the images are repousse plaques. On the basis of stylistic treatment a reasonable date for this Cangu Narayana Visnu would be the 12th century A.D. although some previous writers have dated it to the 4th century A.D. [Khanal, 1983: 65 pl. 7]. Considering the stylistic evidence of this repousse work, it is difficult to accept this date. Furthermore, no archaeological evidence of Nepalese bronze prior to the 6th century A.D. has so far been found in the Valley in Kathmandu.

As said earlier, the evidence of the decorative pattern of the foliage in Nepalese bronze became quite popular only from the post-Licchavi period, we may cite an example of a bronze image of Brahma from the British Museum, London. Brahma is represented here sitting majestically on a full blown lotus holding a rosary and a book in his rear right and left hands, respectively. His principal left hand holds a water-pot while the right hand is held in varadamudra. The figure of Brahma is surmounted by a beautiful flame halo and on the left a richly decorated foliage is shown. The foliage on the right is mutilated. Out of a limited number of Brahma images in stone, the one from Mrgasthali, now stolen, has a close affinity with the style of the bronze image of Brahma from the British Museum mentioned above. Both the images appear to be contemporary, and on this basis it can be dated to A.D. 1200.

From the 11th century, Visnu in the form of Sridhara becomes a popular theme among the bronze-makers of Nepal. Four inscribed and dated images of Sridhara Visnu from Cangu Narayana temple may be mentioned here. All icons are repousse plaques dating from A.D. 1050 to A.D. 1121. Curiously, one of the plaques which is dated A.D. 1087, has a peculiar iconographical trait, for contrary to the tradition of Sridhara Visnu in Nepal, Garuda is represented on the right of Visnu while Lakshmi stands
on his left. It must be noted that in all the images of Sridhara Visnu whether in stone or metal, Laksmi stands on the right of Visnu as his consort. In view of this, such an error is likely to happen on the part of the sculptor while working on the copper sheet from the back side to produce a repoussé plaque. It must also be noticed that the elongated figure of Sridhara Visnu, dated A.D. 1087 mentioned above, is stylistically so close to the Surya image from Saugal [Patan] which is dated A.D. 1083 that they appear to be works of the same atelier. We may cite another example of Sridhara Visnu from the same temple. It is a repoussé plaque with an inscription and date of A.D. 1121. Here, Visnu is shown standing in an erect posture with his feet slightly parted and holding his usual attributes in four hands. On his right stands Laksmi holding a *nilotpala* in her left hand and a lotus-seed in her left. Garuda stands on the left of Visnu with his legs awkwardly bending while his hands are held in *anjalimudra*, the entire plaque looks rigid, lacking the smooth linear delineation. The three divinities under discussion are surmounted by a flame-halo and share a common pedestal, however, the front pedestal of Visnu is richly decorated with foliage.

A remarkable Tara from the British Museum, London may be cited here [Pl. 14]. The goddess stands on a double lotus holding a lotus seed in her right palm where the left hand is shown as if holding a lotus stalk. The representation of triple crown on her head is a common feature to be seen in the bronzes of late Thakuri period. She is wearing broad necklace, earrings with a large oval jewel with pearled border, armlets with a central jewel in a triangular flame setting and bracelets. Being the gentle consort of Avalokitesvara she bears a serene expression. An oval-shaped flame halo is seen behind her head. The outline of her graceful body is accentuated by the subtle movement indicating *tribhanga* pose. It is an excellent example of a 12th-century bronze.

The bronze image of Laksmi from the Cangu Narayana temple may be illustrated here [Pl. 15]. The goddess stands on a flat dias holding a lotus stem with two blooming lotuses in her left hand while the right palm holds a boss. She is wearing a crown with a central jewel, circular earrings, broad necklace, armlets and bracelets. The lower part of her body is clearly visible through her diaphanous garment. In contrast with the slim and graceful body of Tara from the British Museum discussed above, the figure of Laksmi from the Cangu Narayana temple appears to be voluminous. The thighs and legs are treated rather heavily, and the *tribhanga* pose, too, is sharply accentuated by her pronounced hips, indicating a product of much later date than a 5th century A.D. as suggested by some writers [Khanal, 1983: 66, Pl. 9]. A comprehensive study on the development of Nepalese bronzes will
clearly show that this bronze from Cangu Narayana temple cannot be dated earlier than the 15th century A.D.

In the beginning, the artists of Nepal borrowed the convention and iconography from India, but later, Nepalese artists created icons according to their own native concept. Thus, whether in stone or in bronze, the style and expressiveness remained characteristically Nepalese.

The bronze sculptures of late Malla period show a steady decline in quality. However, it must be noted that the Newar artists, specially the bronze-makers of the Valley, were highly inspired by the Vajrayana cult. As a result, thousands of male and female divinities with multiple arms and heads began to appear both in Hindu and Buddhist pantheons in the subsequent years. The artists of Nepal seem to have immensely enjoyed creating such mystic and intricate forms enhanced by Tantric mysticism. A bulk of such bronze sculptures found their way to newly established monasteries in Tibet and left a lasting impression on Tibetan bronzes.

The bronzes of late Malla period and Shah period are characterized by heavy ornamentation and sharp tilt. Nevertheless, the Newar artists of the Valley played a significant role in preserving their age-old tradition of bronze-making which has still been continuing on the same basic technique known as lost wax process.

Terracotta

The traditional history of terracotta images is the least explored area so far as it is concerned with the art of the Valley. In the early sixties some excavations on trial basis were carried out at Dhumvarahi by the Department of Archaeology of H.M.G. the excavation yielded potteries, animal figurines, unidentified human figurines and some divinities which could be assigned to the early 5th century A.D. We may, however, refer to a Licchavi inscription of A.D. 573 from Sikubahi, Patan, in which mention has been made of the terracotta image of Saptamatrka.

In the recent excavation carried out at Hadigaon, by the Department of Archaeology, H.M.G. and IsMEO of Rome, which is one of the most ancient sites of the Valley, hoards of bricks, shreds of potteries, including a decorative medallion showing purnaghatā with Licchavi inscription, have been found. Among the findings noteworthy is the discovery of a female terracotta figurine with expansive hips [Pl. 16]. This headless terracotta figurine has some distinct character such as the oblong sash hanging between the thighs and also the broad-ringed bracelet similar to those female figures of Yaksi from Mathura which are datable to the 2nd century A.D. This stylistic evidence strongly
emphasizes its close affinity with the art of Mathura school of Kusana period. The treatment of this terracotta figurine, specially the lower part of the body and the oblong sash shows that it is based on the Mathura-Kusana tradition. It is undoubtedly an early type of terracotta figurine ever found in the Valley of Kathmandu which can be dated to the 2nd century A.D.

Some writers have recently claimed to have discovered a terracotta figurine at Cangu Narayana temple which was wrongly identified as Laksmi and dated it to the 2nd century A.D. [Khanal, 1983: 63, Pl. 1]. The four-handed goddess is shown standing and holding a rosary in her rear right hand which is definitely not an attribute of Laksmi. Her rear left hand is mutilated, but her front left hand is shown holding an unidentified object while the right front hand is held in varadamudra. A cursory glance will at once reveal that the style of modelling of this terracotta, particularly the face, necklace, armlets and girdle or the thin and slender hips, does not at all corroborate with the style of the Kusana period or the 2nd century A.D. The crude delineation of hands and lotus of this terracotta rather strongly suggests a product of late Malla period or even of a later date.

During the excavation in the Tarai regions of Nepal, a number of terracotta figurines belonging to Maurya, Sunga and Kusana periods have been discovered. The female figurines with expansive hips, elaborate head-dress and ornaments consisting of heavy earrings, bangles, necklace and girdle are the characteristic features of Sunga terracotta. They are usually depicted with large breasts, thin waist but wide hips like those early Mother Goddesses found in Harappa and Mohenjodaro.

One of the remarkable terracotta figurines discovered during the excavation in Tilaurakot was that of Sri-Laksmi which can be assigned to the 2nd century B.C. [Pl. 17]. It is interesting to note that similar terracotta figurine was discovered at Kausambi, India. In all probability, both the terracotta figurines were made out of the same moulding. This shows how the cult of this goddess was widely prevalent not only in the Gangetic valley but also in the southern regions of Nepal. The figurine of Sri-Laksmi under discussion stands on a large central lotus flanked by other lotuses which are springing from the same pond. She is shown wearing ornaments of stars and garland of starry design. This terracotta figurine is the earliest representation of Sri-Laksmi to be found in Nepal.

There are countless terracotta images belonging to the Malla and Shah periods. A comprehensive study of these terracotta figurines to be found in the Valley of Kathmandu is long due.
References


Courtesy: Pl. 10 Cleveland Museum of Art, U.S.A.


Nepali Literature: A Critical Survey

Abhi Subedi

The pre-literate Nepali society had a tradition of oral and secular literature. But a tradition of written literature can also be traced alongside. Nineteen manuscripts written in the Nepali language before King Prithvi Narayan Shah conquered the Kathmandu Valley in 1769, have been recorded by Nepali researchers. They belong to the science of medicine. Some of them are the biographies of the kings of Gorkha, and the rest are the Hindu stories of fasting and other rites. These manuscripts are either translations or compilations. But their diffused character provides some insight into the society that these manuscripts were addressed to. Their audience lived in the hills in isolated sections of the principalities scattered in the western and central regions of today’s Nepal. Obviously, they used to lead a pretty difficult life. They subsisted on the produce of poor land. The wealth offered by mines was very insignificant. But each settlement was self-contained: This pre-literate society had its own tradition of oral folk poetry which was free from the overt influence of Sanskrit literature. Old folk ballads and songs manifest a secular character. The feudatory states had very much an isolated position. The folk song that has its origin at the grassroot level presents the secular character of the pre-literate society which remained outside the strong influence of the Indo-Aryan literate culture. Baburam Acharya [1946: 7] cites a verse written in Nepali vernacular to plead that even when pandit poets exposed to the Indo-Aryan literate traditions were writing verses in pakkibat, a name given to the languages of the southern and southwestern regions of modern Nepal and northern India, like Braj, Awadhi, Bhojpuri, Hindi etc., Nepali vernacular was employed to compose songs and folk poetry. Many other texts of vernacular songs and ballads recorded and catalogued so far tend to show a line of continuity in their production to date.

But a large body of manuscripts prepared during the reign of Prithvi Narayan Shah and his immediate successors manifest a
strong Sanskrit and Persain influence in Nepali writing. Didactic and popular narratives, original and translated manuscripts about rituals and rites of Hindu religion were also produced. Some of the important manuscripts — some already published in printed forms — are, Prayaschittapradip [1723], Hitopadesmitralabh [1776], Tulasistab [1809], Gorakshya Sastra [1820], Bahatrasugakokatha [1823-33], Lalhirakokatha [1820], Triratnasaudaryagatha [1833] etc. The assorted list of manuscripts shows the continuation of the secular and Hindu dual traditions, continuing from the last phase of the eighteenth to the middle of the nineteenth century. The traditional scholasticism, inherently conservative in nature, contributed to the continuation of orthodoxy both in literature and social culture. Most of the writers were the scholars of Sanskrit. So, the creative impulses were dominated by the ritualistic didactic elements. The Nepali language, after it became the lingua franca in the second half of the eighteenth century, had an extended and wider use than before. As the Sanskrit scholasticism declined the poets took up several other languages to perpetuate the orthodoxy such as Braj, Awadhi, Bhojpuri and, in most cases, a mixture or a hybrid form of these languages. The hybrid language was not just employed to perpetuate orthodoxy, but also to entertain the dignified audience and gain favour.

Following the gradual decline of Sanskrit as the only vehicle of learning and scholasticism, Nepali poets and writers began to use the Nepali language, first half-heartedly, and later, fully as the medium of poetry. But the impact of Sanskrit or classical scholasticism remained quite strong even in the vernacular literature. The metrical system of classical Sanskrit poetry continued to influence Nepali poetry, and the Sanskrit epics, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana were couched into Nepali. But it will be wrong to say that the poetry written in Nepali in the nineteenth century was only a Nepali transliteration of Sanskrit literature. The poets were also influenced by the oral tradition of the native and secular poetry. So it is very difficult to draw a line and say that the scholastic Sanskritic tradition continued up to such and such time and was succeeded by the literature written in the vernacular. In fact, the dual traditions, the Sanskritic and the free traditions, continue even today.

The history of vernacular Nepali literature is inextricably related to the socio-political history of Nepal. The poets, especially those known today, were associated with the court. They were either the Brahmin scholars who through their learning influenced the kings and the courtiers or others who were in touch with the court. For instance, the court of Gorkha had a number of scholars around it. They wrote poems about the personality of the King himself. Such poets were known as bhat, i.e., the singer of the

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good deeds of the king, a term which has undergone pejoration today which merely means a sycophant. A few bhat poets at the court of King Prithvi Narayan Shah are known today. Most prominent among them was Ragunath Bhat. But other poets wrote poems about the belligerancy of the kingdom of Gorkha and the 'heroic' nature of the king. The euphoria of expansion is echoed in the poems of the contemporary poets. For instance, a poet named Subananda Das writes about the expansion of the Gorkha kingdom by using food symbols. The king's food items, according to the poet, come from various parts of Nepal conquered by him at different times. Nepali critics believe that there exists a long tradition of heroic songs which is carried down in oral indigenous tradition associated with the movements of the Gorkha soldiers. The second half of the eighteenth century saw the movements of the Gorkha soldiers and warriors which ended with the signing of the Treaty of Sugauli with the East India Company in 1816. During this period Nepali poets wrote what the Nepali critics call virkavya or heroic poems. Subananda Das, Shanktiballav Aryal, Udayananda Aryal and Sundarananda Banda have written many poems in this vein. Another poet named Yadunath Pokhrel, a contemporary of Bhimsen Thapa, wrote poems echoing the hostility with the British soldiers. He wrote:

We ought to win
And drive the whites across the Ganges
Only one or two among them are brave
But no one is a coward in the land of Gorkhas.

[My translation]

This poet also describes the personality of Bhimsen Thapa, including his military uniform. Whether the poet was only writing a eulogy about the most powerful man of his times or was inspired to write poetry by the General's personality, is difficult to say, but putting this poem alongside the bullock poems written to please King Rana Bahadur Shah, we might have to doubt the sincerity of the poets who wrote the so-called virkavya. However, judging from the oral tradition, we can say that there was a great deal of fervour about victory and war during the eighteenth and the early nineteenth century.

From the very beginning, the strongest form of literature in Nepali was poetry. Poets found this medium most effective to write about the heroes and gods. Secondly, the oral tradition of the pre-literate society had its own impact on the selection of literary form. The life of the people was full of hardships and a great deal of mobility. Poetry came in handy as a form to recall events and sing about the movements, disasters and the euphoria of victories. Lastly, the Hindu epics and poems such as the Mahabharata, the Ramayana, and the Bhagawatgita had their impact on the society, too. So, the impact of the Indo-Aryan
literate culture also played a great role in popularising the poetic form of writing. In the nineteenth century, Nepali poets popularised the Sanskrit epics among the Nepali readers. These poets are known as bhaktibadikāvi, or, poets writing devotional poems.

The devotional poets were more introvert in nature than the heroic poets. Writing about the background to the devotional poetry in Nepali, Khanal [1980: 87] says:

The nature and strength of the external danger become obvious as in a flash during the Anglo-Nepal war ending in the Treaty of Sugauli in 1816. Even more disturbing was the internal state of the country, as exposed by these traumatic events and of weak and selfish leadership and intriguing courtiers. In this situation, Yadunath Pokhrel's attempts to restore confidence in the destiny of the nation by extolling the achievements of Bhimsen Thapa in patriotic poetry met with feeble response. The mood of the times was not one of hope and optimism which comes when there is a creative interaction between the land and the people. The overall national impulse of the moment was not to accept life and its challenge at its most significant point but escape to a more comfortable state of false or negative response to life. It is no wonder, therefore, that the larger bulk of writing at this time was devotional and introspective and comprised translations rather than original one.

How great was the impact of the treaty of Sugauli on the minds of the poets, it is very difficult to say. The general sense of frustration that surrounded the court then following the defeat must have infected the court pandits and the poets associated with them. There can be no doubt about that. But coupled with that mood was the sense of insecurity within the court itself. The poets who could watch the court intrigues easily would have been concerned about the fate of those power elites with whom they were close. Raghunath Bhatta, who wrote about the order of life in the court and struggle for power among the power elites, tends to present the picture of uncertainty about that time:

The Singh of the sky fell beneath the stroke of the robber
The Var among the heads became maimed
The prince of Fatya also fell under the pressure of treachery
Tell me what is this, fate or chickanery.

[My Translation]

He has presented the literal paraphrase of the courtiers' names. For instance, Singh [lion] of the sky "means Gagan
SINGH," the Var [superior] among the heads [Math] "stands for Mathbar Singh," and "the prince of Fatya [success]" means Fatya Jung. This poem presents the picture of the court following the death of Bhimsen Thapa. The state of uncertainty that prevailed then culminated in the Kot massacre of 1846 and the rise of Jung Bahadur Rana who established the Rana oligarchy which ended only in 1950, after 104 years of despotic rule by the family.

Jung Bahadur Rana himself was not a learned man. He did not encourage learning and enlightenment under his regime. We do not know of any poet commanding any poetic merits who was closely associated with the court of Jung Bahadur Rana. A work produced by someone closely associated with him was a travelogue about Jung Bahadur’s visit to Europe in 1850 written by an anonymous author. Jung’s rise to power probably coincided with the decline of scholastic learning that surrounded the court to a certain extent. The time was conducive for a poet to emerge outside the courtly and the high pandit cultural atmosphere. And there emerged one, but this time not in the vicinity of the court but in a remote village in the western Nepal, named Tanahu. His name was Bhanu Bhakta Acharya, who is variously regarded as the ‘Premier Poet’ of Nepali language, which is a loose term employed to tell about the effectiveness of his vernacular poetry. Curiously enough, the emergence of the poet co-incided with the rise of Jung Bahadur to power. The atmosphere in Kathmandu did not affect the poet who was writing in his own manner away from the world of the courtiers and pandit poets working in close proximity with them. This becomes evident from the fact that Bhanubhakta had completed the translation of the first canto of the Sanskrit Adhyatmaramayana five years before the Kot massacre which brought the Rana rule in Nepal. We get a picture of the common people’s existence in Bhanubhakta’s poetry—their faith, daily round of activities, litigation, social relationships, marriage practices, procrastination and malpractices at the government offices, cleanliness in the Kathmandu town, its streets peopled by beautifully dressed pretty ladies, and merchants, increasing contact of the city with mid-western Nepal from which region people used to frequent the Kathmandu town to get clothes, muskets, Bhaktapurtopi [hats] and for jagir or careers Bhanubhakta’s poetry gives a picture of the background which gave it a shape, and which naturally became very different from the poetry written by the court poets maintaining close contact with the power elites. He employed the spoken Nepali vernacular in his poetry. With his background in the hills and his Sanskrit learning at home only, Bhanubhakta’s poetry combined the oral folk poetry of secular tradition, with the Sanskrit tradition. The poet did not share the frustration of the court poets which were in most cases the frustrations of the courtiers in their unsuccessful
bid for power. Notwithstanding the view held by Nepali critics and historians that the poets writing in the first half of the nineteenth century all gave expression to the mood of frustration following the defeat of the Anglo-Nepalese war, Bhanubhakta does not even mention about the war in his poems let alone sharing the frustration caused by it. This in turn makes it clear that there was very little impact of the war on the common populace. Another interesting thing should also be mentioned in this connection. Though he was very productive during that time, Bhanubhakta does not write anything about the Nepal-Bhot [Tibet] war of 1854-56 either. The poet held his poetic practice as a thing separate or as an aesthetic exercise in its own right. He translated the Ramayana and wrote many others poems in his long poetic career including a few very didactic poems like the Badhusiksya, versified moral precepts for women. But on the whole, the common reading public found that their competence to appreciate literature was within the range of their natural competence in the vernacular, which, to my mind, is the cause of Bhanubhakta’s long and enduring popularity among the reading public. Recent reports also indicate that the sales of his Ramayana exceed those of other poetical works in Nepal with the sole exception of Devkota’s Munamadana.

During the reign of the Rana Prime Minister Bir Shumsher, towards the end of the nineteenth century, Nepali literate culture became influenced by the literary movements taking place in northern India. Nepali youths went to Banaras and Calcutta to get Western education. Chandra Shumsher Rana, who became prime minister himself later on, went to Calcutta to study English. As a result of the exposure to the external, especially the Western literary influences, Nepali writers brought new trends of writing within Nepal, widening the horizons of writing. On the other hand, the Ranas were apprehensive about the new awareness and enlightenment among the young people. They were in favour of maintaining a status quo in all spheres of life. Indoor theatres arrived during the later years of Bir Shumsher’s rule. The first indoor theatres were installed within the palace of the Ranas. Erosion of the traditional open theatres in Kathmandu known as dabulis, raised grounds to stage plays, took place with the coming of the indoor theatres and the Urdu and Persian nachas and natakas which soon grew in popularity. The Persian influence in Nepali literature during this time can be seen in the plays staged in these theatres and in the Nepali translation of the Persian tales into Nepali. Birasikka, a collection of Persian tales in Nepali, was published in 1889.

The Rana courtly life became more and more luxurious. The glamour of the Muslim courts was imbibed to the fullest possible extent. Plays that were staged in the indoor theatres were
erotic and melodramatic. The readership also grew for such literature around the court and outside even among the educated people. The landed aristocrats were getting more and more powerful who helped to perpetuate the interests of the Rana rulers in different parts of the Kingdom. These landed people with the connivance of the government officials rendered many people landless forcing them to leave the land for good and go to banishments in the forests of Assam and Burma and to Darjeeling. Many young people went to serve in the British army. These young people composed songs or sawais in the memories of their lovers and families left behind. The very popular folk poetry known as Premlahari took its origin in this background. In Kathmandu, poets wrote sensuous poems known as ritikavya or erotic poetry. Many experiments were made in the form of poetry writing.

During the last years of the nineteenth century, Nepali literature entered the age of printing. Motiram Bhatta and other Nepali students studying in Banaras printed many Nepali books and a journal named Gorkhabharatjiwan. No copies of this magazine have yet been discovered except its advertisement put up in a Hindi magazine called Bharatjiwan. However, Motiram got the biography and the Ramayana of Bhanubhakta and many other poetical works, plays and stories published from Banaras in the last phase of the nineteenth century. After the death of Motiram Bhatta in 1896 the press activity shifted to Kathmandu itself. Sudhasagar, regarded by many as the first Nepali literary magazine, was published in Kathmandu in the year 1898 under the editorship of pandit Naradev, and Motikrishna Sharma. Jung Bahadur Rana had brought a press from Europe as early as 1851 but no significant publications were made until the appearance of Sudhasagar. The Gorkhapatra was published in 1901. A paper called Gorkhekhabarkagat was already published in Darjeeling under the editorship of padari [clergyman] Gangaprasad Pradhan in 1899. Other literary journals like Upanyasatarangini [1908] were published from Banaras. In the first and second decades of the twentieth century scores of Nepali magazines and books were published both within Nepal and outside.

Chandra Shumsher Rana became Prime Minister in 1901. During the long reign of Chandra Shumsher, Nepali literature made some headway. He was not very enthusiastic about encouraging the growth of literary culture. But a few interesting events took place during his reign nonetheless. They are interesting from the point of view of Nepali linguistic studies. Chandra Shumsher's royal priest Hemraj Pandey published the so-called first standard grammar of Nepali language, Chandrika in 1912. One year after the Gorkha Bhasa Prakasini Samiti
Gorkha Language Publication Committee—was organised which remained solely responsible for the publication of books in Nepali language for many years. Chandra Shumsher reluctantly laid the foundation of Tri-Chandra College in 1918. In 1919 Somnath Sigdyal's *Madhyachandrika*, a book of Nepali grammar, was published. Chandra Shumsher also made arrangements for the publications of Ralph Lilley Turner's *A Comparative and Etymological Dictionary of the Nepali Language* published in London two years after Chandra Shumsher's death in 1929, with due acknowledgements to him for his 'subventions'. The dictionary was the first modern linguistic study of Nepali which traced back its direct root to Sanskrit. Chandra Shumsher made some contributions to the study of Nepali language and the fostering of the literature written in this language, however half-heartedly that may be. But he did not encourage the writing of literature in other languages of Nepal. He is even said to have taken hostile attitude towards them. Many other events took place during the reign of this deft and shrewd Rana Prime Minister. He put an end to the sati system and abolished the slavery, which is curiously enough, not much written about by the contemporary writers.

Nepali literary writing assumed a new dimension with the turn of the century. Under the European influence other genres and forms of writing took rise. So far poetry was the strongest literary genre. With the exposure to the Western literary traditions, other forms of literature such as the novel, the short story, play and essay also became popular. Such popularity of the other literary genres is inextricably associated with the general atmosphere: the very political, social and educational climate of the country. Young people began to aspire for change and innovations. The old learnings and traditional norms were regarded as obstacles to change. Soldiers returning from Europe after the First World War brought stories about revolutions, democratic practices and civil rights. The desire for change in social and political institutions was coupled with the desire to make innovations in the forms of literary writings. Even poets like Lekhnath Poudyal [1884-1965], brought up in the old Sanskrit tradition, shook off the traditional norms and wrote poems in colloquial Nepali vernacular. His famous poem *Pinjarakosuga* [The Parrot in a Cage] is a symbolic representation of the Nepali society within the clutch of the autocratic regime, and the bird's lamentation echoes the desire for change and liberation. Lekhnath made poetry writing an aesthetic practice and a means to give vent to personal feelings. Lekhnath was not wholly modern in his outlook, but he combined his poetic practice with the awareness of his times which can be seen in the use of language and the symbolic representation of the character of his times in the
puranic motifs. Nepali literature enters into the modern phase by achieving maturity with the poetry of Lekhnath Poudyal.

Balakrishna Sama [1902-81] and Laxmi Prasad Devkota [1909-1959] brought Nepali literature to still greater maturity. While Dharanidhar Koirala, Paras Mani Pradhan, and Surya Bikram Gyawali were actively producing magazines and books on creative literature in Darjeeling, Sama, Devkota, Rudraraj Panday, Puskar Shumsher and Sidhicharan Shrestha were producing creative literature in Nepal.

Sama was the first Nepali writer to get a full exposure to Western philosophy and literature and assimilate the impact with his own culture in his creative works of art. His first tragic play *Mutukovyatha* [1929] can also be regarded as the first modern play in the Nepali language. Sama was born into an upper class Rana family. This family house had an indoor theatre. Sama writes in his autobiography that a play was being staged on this indoor theatre in his grandfather's palace at Gyaneswor, in Kathmandu the same night he was born. In fact, Sama was born on the stage. He combined successfully his aesthetic outlook with the advantage of his birth into the Rana family, later on forsaking his family title 'Shumsher' [the lion of battle] in favour of a common title 'Sama' [equal to all]. Sama operates on a very broad canvas. He encompassed oriental philosophy, Western thoughts, aesthetics, modern science, Sanskrit literature and Shakespeare's plays within the range of his study, and assimilated the diverse sources in his creative writing by employing what we might call an associated sensibility, a term used by T.S. Eliot to describe the tenets of metaphorical English poetry of the seventeenth century. Sama wrote tragedies, comedies, history plays, a book of his own philosophy, *Niyamitaksmikta* which, according to Khanal [1980: 94], is 'an impossible task', an epic and hundreds of assorted poems. He remained prolific till the last days of his life. As a poet Sama shares certain common features with Lekhnath. To quote Khanal [ibid: 94] again "...poetry to both of them is the art of maintaining a balance in a fully integrated form between the technique that should be learnt and cultivated as a discipline and inspiration that comes to poets at certain moments of their lives." However, on the whole, these two writers operated on two different scales, and the dissimilarities between them loom large if we bring the study of their works under close scrutiny. Lekhnath in his long poem *Tarunatapasi* presents his world-view in versified colloquial Nepali whereas Sama presents his aesthetic view of life in various forms of poetic style all used in one huge epic poetry *Chisochula* in which he debunks the classical canons of epic poetry. Sama's hero Sante comes from the lower caste *damain* who falls in love with an upper caste women Gauri. In this manner, to the chagrin of the traditional orthodox society, Sama's
epic presented a rebellion against the caste system of the Hindu social order.

These two classicists had different followings among other writers. Chakrapani Chalise, Somnath Sharma and Madhav Devkota belonged to the tradition of Lekhnath whereas the immediate following of Sama was rather uncertain though his impact on the latter poets was quite powerful in both craft and the choice of subject for poetry and drama.

The emergence of Laxmi Prasad Devkota as a poet had far greater impact on the Nepali literary culture than even that of Balakrishna Sama. He was educated in the Western system. He had studied English language and literature better than any of his predecessors and contemporaries. By that token, he had become a rebel and an enthusiastic occidentalist. In one of his essays compiled in Laxminivandhasangraha he says:

... I did not speak Nepali. I would not speak it with people who spoke Nepali. But I would pour out English to anyone I met in the street who spoke it. It seemed to me as though there were no words in Nepali, that feelings could not be expressed, as though Nepali were not a language of scholars. If I did speak Nepali, my tongue—which I'd been polishing with thirteen years of education—got all mixed up. I used to think in English, speak only in English... If I spoke Nepali the students became insolent, if I spoke English I humiliated them. The pandits I saw as fossils, superannuated, unaware of the light of modernism; bigoted, narrow, and without learning, pouring out all that medieval Indian deep sleep over their heads.


Devkota's poetic production is massive. They comprise five epics, more than a dozen khandakavya and long poems, two dramas, a novel, collections of essays, songs and short stories, and fourteen anthologies. He has translated English essays and Shakespeare into Nepali. A large body of his poems still remain unpublished. Devkota had become a legend in his own lifetime, and became even more so after his death after a long and painful suffering. His poverty, his eating and smoking habits, his extempore speeches in English and Nepali, his writing of two epics Sulochana and Shakuntala in ten days and three months respectively, his political beliefs and his filling a post in the Cabinet of K.I. Singh, all became legends. More legends continued to grow around him. No other Nepali writer's life has been the focus of attention as his life had or has been. He lived constantly at odds with society, so much so that he was regarded as insane at one time to which he reacted in his well-known poem Pagal [Crazy]:

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I see sounds,
I hear sights,
I taste smells,
I touch not heaven but things from the underworld,
things people do not believe exist
whose shapes the world does not suspect.
Stones I see as flowers
lying water-smoothed by the water's edge,
rocks of tender forms
in the moonlight
when the heavenly sorceress smiles at me,
putting out leaves, softening, glistening,
throbbing, they rise up like mute maniacs,
like flowers, a kind of moon-bird's flowers.
I talk to them the way they talk to me,
a language friend,
that can't be written or printed or spoken,
can't be understood, can't be heard.


Devkota was a rebel, an individual and a visionary. In spite
of the Rana government's attempts to keep Nepal secluded from
the wise world Nepali people began to feel the importance of an
individual and his right to express his beliefs freely. Devkota's
poems make it clear that each self-conscious Nepali elite could
now assert his individuality and aspire for the establishment of
liberal democratic institutions.

Laxmi Prasad Devkota used the Hindu mythology, Nepali
talelore and Greek legends as the sources of his masterpieces
_Shakuntala, Munamadan_ and _Prometheus_. He also employed the
historical anecdotes and lives of heroes as his poetical themes.
Keeping apart some of his over-obscure and over-Sanskritized
poetry, it can safely be said that in Devkota's poems Nepali poetry
acquires full maturity.

Sidhicharan Shrestha, Kedarman Vyathit and Madhav
Ghimire belong to the Devkotian school of poetry. But each of
them has a very distinct style and poetic merit. Sidhicharan
Shrestha's rise as a poet coincided with the publication of literary
magazine called _Sharada_ published under the editorship of Subba
Ridhi Bahadur Malla who was himself a writer and translator.
Nepali writers were able somehow to get Juddha Shumsher Rana’s
permission to start the magazine in 1934, which remained as the
most important forum for Nepali writers for a long time, until the
deposition of the Rana rule in 1950. In the early years of its
publication a circle of writers grew around it, which consisted of
poets, short-story writers and novelists. They were Sidhicharan
Shrestha, Gopal Prasad Rimal, Govinda Bahadur Malla Gothale,
and Vijaya Malla. Other writers outside the core group of the
Sharada magazine were the short-story writers Guru Prasad Mainali, Bodh Bikram Adhikari, B.P. Koirala and poet Jhapat Bahadur Rana. The writers of the core group shared a common predicament and led a life fraught with dangers and insecurity. Most influential members of these group were involved in secret political activities too. Sidhicharan Shrestha, Vijaya Malla and B.P. Koirala were imprisoned by the regime.

Sidhicharan Shrestha's poems combine romanticism with a social realism as perceived by the poet against the background of his own times. This blend or this cumulative consciousness is very lucidly and at times very vehemently expressed in his poems. That mood is untranslatable because he employs Nepali vernacular in such a way that the vehicle and the subject-matter weld into one to create a powerful poetic effect. The poet views the external reality by projecting his own image in a famous poem Pratibimba in this manner:

Looking as though he had lost something, forgotten something who is that coming along? Walking like a dog whining in its infirmity who is that plodding along the path?

Putting a rock upon two sticks and a pumpkin over the rock saying that it is a man and pulling it like children who is that coming along the path?

A shape without form A language without content A man without faith Thoughts closed on all sides That is my own image

Coming along the path.

[My Translation]

Kadar Man Vyathit’s poetic career was associated with the publication of Sahityasrot (1947) published under the editorship of Hridaya Chandra Pradhan who was himself a dramatist, novelist and a literary critic, and Vyathit himself. Vyathit, like B.P. Koirala, was an active politician who spent some time in the Indian jails too. His revolutionary political conviction finds expression in his poems. He was also influenced by the Indian poets of the thirties and forties belonging to the chayavadi group
in particular by Mahadevi Verma. But Vyathit’s concern for social change is more immediate and less mystical than the chayavadi poetry of India. B.P. Koirala, though he was an active politician, who in course of time even became the Prime Minister in the Nepali Congress government in 1959, does not express his political conviction in his short stories and novels. He holds his literary conviction apart from his political beliefs. His stories broke the convention of representational story writing by depicting in an indirect, subtle and artistic manner the erotic conflict suffered by the characters knowingly or unknowingly. Pabitra, a middle-aged cook bursts into tears while dancing on the wedding night of a young student for whom she cooks, and views the bride with jealous eyes afterwards. She does not know what is happening within her. She is a toy in the hands of her psyche. In his stories, Koirala’s characters fall victim to a kind of predestination, a psychic force beyond the management of the characters. A youthful woman married to an elderly colonel becomes more attached to her husband’s sturdy horse than to her husband. The jealous colonel finds his wife in the stable. He falls flat kicked by his horse, and in utter rage, jealousy and humiliation fires at the horse. His youthful wife, instead of coming to help her husband stand, rushes in alarm towards the horse. In his later novels like Tinghumti [Three Bends] his characters undergo various vicissitudes of fortune. They are impelled to act by the inner psyche. In Summnima, an orthodox Brahmin discovers the hollowness of his Vedic strength so far regarded by him as very powerful and absolute, in front of a young Kiraat girl Sumnima. The psychic power is externalised in this novel to show once again its dynamism and power. Bhawani Bhikshu also wrote stories in the same style as Koirala, and he wrote novels where characters undergo almost similar process of transformation. Guruprasad Mainali wrote action-packed stories in a classical style. Lain Singh Bangdel’s novel Mulukbahira, depicts in essence the life of Nepali people living in Darjeeling, Assam and Burma. In his next novel Langadakosathi he achieves a still greater success in dramatizing the predicament of man in an unfavourable climate created by himself. The use of dog as a regular character in it helps to heighten the tragic effect and bring the irony home.

The mood of the contemporary society which was in a state of transition can be seen in the writings of three young writers who were also the members of the inner circle of Sharada group writers. That mood is expressed in their plays, poems and fiction. Gopal Prasad Rimal who is believed to have brought the influence of the naturalist theatre by writing a play under the influence of the Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen was more obdious as a rebel. In Masan, obviously influenced by Ibsen’s A Doll’s House, he presents the rebellion of a woman who discovers after she gets
her husband married again for producing children to compensate for her sterility, that she had been rendered useless by her husband and leaves the house calling it Masaun or the place where women are cremated alive. He also wrote revolutionary poems in which he called for an end to the despotic Rana rule in favour of a democratic system of government. Rebellious and sensitive women appear in the plays and novels of Govinda Bahadur Mall Gothale, and his brother Vijaya Bahadur Malla. In Gothale's Pallogharkojhyal [The Window of the House Nextdoor] a disconcerted woman symbolically keeps looking out of the window and manages to elope with a young man living next door. But Vijaya Malla's Anuradha depicts the predicament of a woman who takes her sufferings to herself and goes out of her mind under the strain of the internal suffering caused by the disorder of her love life. Apparently, Malla is influenced by the writings of Sigmund Freud, because this novel provides various clues as to this generalisation. What is more, Sigmund Freud and Karl Marx were regarded as two intellectual giants of the West by the writers of this circle in the forties. As can be seen by their writings, these writers were very alive to the reality of the times they were living in. Their writings expressed the fate of, not only the people around them, but of the people of this earth. Vijaya Malla wrote.

Why don't the stars watch their faces into the waters of this earth?
Why isn't Narcissus taken by his own reflection into the water?
What happened to the waters of this earth suddenly in this twentieth century?
Thirstily,
Searching water to drink like a madman
I go to the rivers of this earth-
Ganges, Volga, Hwangho,
Mississippi, Amazon, Nile,
but everywhere the water changes into blood!

[My Translation]

Other writers who belong to this time and who more or less share the common experience are Posan Panday, Ramesh Vikal, Daulatbikram Bista, Lil Bahadur Chetri, Shankar Koirala, Lhankar Lamiche, Liladhoj Thapa, Tulsiram Kunwar and Keshav Raj Pindali. With the sole exception of Posan Panday, who is also a poet, all are novelists and short story writers who have expressed social realism in their writings. They focus on the simplicity of the uneducated people in their novels. They depict
the conflict of the people appalled by the changing institutions and their helplessness in the face of them. Shankar Koirala’s characters believe rather naively that democracy will, with its magic stroke, solve all their problems. Though they get disillusioned soon, they do not give up their struggle for survival. Tulsi Ram Kunwar’s novels depict the society during the period between 1951-58. In Rane he shows how the villagers survive the attack of change and how persistently they work towards that. But Lal Bahadur Chetri’s characters, not being able to sustain the pressure of change, succumb to the foul game of the rich landlord and migrate into Assam.

After the political change of 1951 Nepali writers became even more greatly exposed to Western influences. What could content like traditional writers could no longer content them. The pleasure principle found in the poems of Devkota, Siddhicaran Shrestha, Vyathit and Yudha Prasad Mishra had lost its effectiveness. Devkota’s crazy, in spite of his confessions as an idiosyncratic character, is still a romantic hero who can derive pleasure out of his own situation even as a socially misunderstood person. But such romantic heroes did not have any appeal in the minds of the younger writers. The protagonist in the new writings became an anti-hero, an underground man, who lived in a world where the Hindu or Buddhsit god was dead, and so was the charm of the tradition as he was having a new realization:

Putting across my knees
God’s death
I have fondled it many times
Running fingers over a cat’s coat
I have touched the reliable iciness of death
If this is also a kind of revelation
I’m having a strange self-realization these days.

Parijat [My Translation]

Apparently, the self of the writer in the romantic sense is destroyed in modern Nepali writings. But that should not be taken as its face value. In reality, modern Nepali writing is coming closer to real life, where disillusionments are many and illusions few and far between. The poet’s own sensibility is constantly at odds with the standardized social norms and traditions. But the modern writer, by constantly rebelling against the norms, has become acutely aware of the same. He has become conscious of the tradition only to be able to reject it. But, to his astonishment, he discovers that he has merely become a toy in its hand. Modern Nepali writers appear to be undergoing the tortuous process of the discovery of his tradition and his position in relation to it, and the evaluation of his loss and gain in this regard. He is divided between nostalgia and disillusionment deep down in his heart.
The political change of 1960, which put an end to all party activities, made one go back to himself to his family considerations, and ultimately to his own self. The writer in the capacity of a sensitive elite realized that he was slowly shrinking back to his small periphery, a position which he has to accept with a lump in his throat:

I'm digging a New Road  
Deeper and deeper into me  
I'm standing in Asia, Europe and the world  
Carrying Bhotahiti, Asan, Indrachowk and Kathmandu within me...  
I'm learning to dream in Kathmandu  
Surrounding it with hills around.

Mohan Himansu Thapa [My Translation]

Modern Nepali writing became strangely personal, but by no means lyrical. The poems of Mohan Koirala, Bhoopi Sherchan, Kaliprasad Rijal, Ratna Thapa, Dwarka Shrestha, Krishna Bhakta Shrestha, Jagadish Shumsher Rana, Shailendra Shakar Hem Hamal, Iswor Ballav, Bairagi Kaahila, and Pushkar Lohani demonstrate some or all of the features of modern Nepali poetry discussed above. They keep the immediate world to a minimum level and create a surrogate world, an alternate universe. The universe has a mental dimension which can be explained on the basis of the poet's own philosophy or a kind of self-prepared idealism. Their visible world is fractured and chaotic. As a result, they create a self-sustaining universe. A linguistic study of their poems reveals that their world is replete with dry, unromantic, ugly, ordinary and trivial images, as can be seen in the style they employ. Stylistically, they do not follow the classical principles of poetry writing. They use a rhythm retaining alliteration but using mainly unrhyming line endings at the same time. To express their disillusionment with the established literary norms, almost each of them has developed an independent, or even an eccentric style. Their poems are irregularly spaced, and punctuation is ignored almost completely. Some of the above poets do not even seem to follow the spelling system of Nepali. Mohan Koirala's long poem Suryadaan gives a sunburst effect. There is no coherence, no logical structure as found in the poems of the previous poets. But by achieving such effect Mohan Koirala and other poets of this group present a very powerful picture of life. The images that these poets employ are not sugarcoated. They are raw, coldly realistic and unassuring. They are not employed to embellish the poetry. They do not rely on the rich repertoire of poetic diction left by Lekhnath, Sama, Sidhicharan Shrestha and Vyathit.

These poets brought the modern literary influences home. Their themes are trivial but the content is erudite. In some poems
the degree of erudition is so high that they almost become impossible for ordinary readers to decipher. The poems of Bairagi Kaahila, Tulasi Diwasa and Jagadish Shumsher belong to this category. Their poems are packed with the learnings of the classical and modern world and symbols from the world of folklore. Images from the Western and oriental civilization abound in them. Indra Bahadur Rai, who is a thinker and novelist, Bairagi Kaahila and Iswor Ballabh started a literary movement as early as 1963 inspired by a belief that erudition if expressed in poetry, will be in a position to present a holographic picture of life. They produced some good poetry. But, ironically enough, some of their very celebrated poems have fallen short of giving any picture of life artistically as the preoccupation with intellectuality divorced their writings from the common aspirations of real life—its sentiments, longings and feelings. However, the poets established that the ordinary living language can be employed to write poems, and it is not necessary to choose grand themes to write poetry. Bhoopi Sherchan’s poems combine wit and satire with tenderness and emotion. He is probably the most popular and most widely read poet among the modern group of poets, who is very alive to the reality of the times, and that sensibility finds very acute expressions in his poems.

Similar changes have been taking place in the realm of fiction and essay writing as well. Writers have been making experiments in their styles and in the selection of subject-matter. Indra Bahadur Rai is a great pioneer in the new crafts of fiction. He believes that literature should depict life in its entirety. To achieve this, the writer should be able to project his own view into the story by employing a technique called indirect speech action. Rai’s characters speak their minds all the time, but without employing overt narrative devices. The writer deletes the reporting verb and lets the story proceed from the point of view of the character. Rai is a learned story writer. Curiously enough, there is a very little following of this craftsman within Nepal. However, Shailendra Shakar, Murari Adhikari, Mohan Raj Sharma, Kishor Nepal, Dinesh Satyal, Kabita Ram Shrestha and Kishor Pahadi have been employing modern techniques in short story writing. The anomalies inherent in the post-revolutionary Nepalese society find ample articulation in the artistic essays of Krishna Chandra Singh Pradhan, and the satirical essays of Tara Nath Sharma, Ram Kumar Panday, and the late Bhairab Aryal.

Modern Nepali novelists do not comprise as large a bulk as the modern Nepali poets do. However, the novels of Parijat, Dhrubachandra Gautam, Diamond Shumsher Rana, Daulat Bikram Bista, Ramesh Bikal, Asit Rai, Vijaya Malla and Madan Mani Dixit have gone down very well during recent times. Karthak’s novel Pratyekthaau Pratyekmanche [Every Place Every
Person] presents a symphonic account of life in a very effective style. By depicting the life in Darjeeling and its vicinity, the novel achieves universality. Parijat's novel *Siriskophul* also available in English translation under the title *Blue Mimosa*, presents the picture of a woman character who, in spite of her nihilistic outlook towards life and her emaciated condition, draws a man towards her, but neither the man's attraction towards her nor her own disillusionments have any meaning. The novel ends in an absurd atmosphere, so does its impact on the kind of the reader. Diamond Shumsher Rana has produced two novels based on the lives of the Rana prime ministers, Jung Bahadur and Dev Shumsher, which have serious shortcomings as novels. At times, they present flat accounts of disputable historical anecdotes. Vijaya Malla is producing novels in his own old successful style. Gautam has employed the stream of consciousness technique in his novel *Baluwamathi*, but in the recent novels, has abandoned that style in favour of a simple narrative technique. Dixit utilises *puranic* subject-matter for his novel written in a narrative style.

In recent years the enthusiasm for innovation and change has ebbed away considerably. A new generation of indifferent youths emerged in the seventies. They were too occupied with the free style wrestling with the university curricula. The New Education System Plan proposed and introduced radical changes in the old educational system which produced a number of reactions from the youths. They developed indifferent attitude towards changes and new ideas, and shyness to accept new challenges became the features of their nature. These youths who took to writing literature abhorred experiments and discarded the use of classical allusions in their poetry. They dropped ostantations, learning and ratiotination in their poems, stories and plays. They did not require the complicated props and the glamorous paraphernalia of the state to up out a play, and used the street as their theatre to make a symbolic representation of their contentment with little and the rejection of glamour and pretentions of the post-revolutionary society. Their writings truly reflect their *modus vivendi*, and their indifferent attitude towards the course of history.

Those who stand
will stand anywhere
those who must wake up
have awoken anywhere
like mountains
that can stand
even in the middle of the plains
like mornings
that can break
even out of thick darkness
thus, time is time
no brave person can
shoulder time to a half
as history proceeds
to take a turn.

Bishnu Bibhu Ghimire [My Translation]

But the aliveness of some of these poets to the reality of the
times can be seen in the rebellious poems with overt political
over tone that they have produced in recent years. These young
poets do not use complex images requiring a great deal of
erudition on the part of the readers to decipher them. They use the
common language full of ordinary images. They are confessional
in a very curious manner. By dropping all intellectual pretentions
these poets are still writing about the same themes as the poets of
the sixties did, but with a greater degree of succinctness. Some
critics are enthusiastic enough to accord them the recognition as
phenomenal poets, but others still believe that the poets of the
sixties still have an advantage over them because the former group
of poets produced poems that can be regarded as truly artistic, and
the new poets have still some way to go before they attain that
degree of consummation reached by the previous poets. But the
poems of the young poets depict the Nepali society better than any
other poems have done so far, because their characters are drawn
from the visual world; they do not create a surrogate world, a
self-contained universe of their poems. They have accepted the
concrete, real world around them. So, there is the dominance of
the spatio-temporal dimension over the psychological dimension
in their poems. Another interesting feature of these poets is that
they are comparatively many in number, and the works of most of
them have been published in book-form. They have a large and
expanding circle, and they work in groups. Their attitude towards
life is very earthly, and they know how to manipulate the mass
media for the augmentation of their literary practice. However, in
spite of their aliveness to the mass-media boom these young poets
do not appear to be too concerned with cluttering up their world
with garish items. Their world is clean and simple. But some of
them have built up their so-called self-contained world upon the
foundations of illusions, which is a dominant feature of the
character of the Nepali youths of the seventies. Some of the
important poets, short story writers and playwrights of this new
group of writers are, Krishna Bhusan Bal, Hemanta Shrestha,
Toya Gurung, Ramesh Khanal, Gyan Udas, Manju Kanchuli,
Bimal Subedi, Navaraj Karki, Bishnu Bibhu Ghimire, Dinesh
Adhikari, Ashesh Malla, Ramesh Tufan, Saru Bhakta Shrestha,
Bimal Koirala, Gagan Birahi, Biswo Bimohan Shrestha, Shiva
Adhikari, Min Bahadur Bista, Jivan Acharya, and Vijaya.
Bajimaya. This list is by no means exhaustive. The circle of the new writers is getting wider every day.

Before closing the survey, a few words must be mentioned about the condition of the stage in recent times which has been experiencing a period of renaissance mainly in the hands of the young playwrights and groups. Young playwright Ashesh Malla and his group have made Nepali stage quite popular in recent years. The turbulent events of 1979 which led to the Third Amendment to the Nepalese Constitution, brought these young people to the street with their drama. They brought drama once again to the common people. Passers-by could stop over and watch their performance. After finishing the play the artists become one with the crowd. Their greenroom is not inside the theatre it is beyond the fence, a real world full of problems and attractions. At the same time, there are many other young people working as theatre groups. However, the new movements have not completely severed their links with the early theatre. Vijaya Bahadur Malla is still very productive and active. But there is one conspicuous feature about the drama of the young people. They utilize sentimental themes full of a sense of self-pity. For instance, one can see them laden with a sense of petulance, pacing across the stage uttering dialogues expressing their belief that the society is culpable for the death of their heroes in unceremonious conditions. So, one may wonder whether the run-away theatre reflects the run-away tendency of sensitive youths of the seventies from home, parents and patronage. This makes it evident, though, that these young people are working in full earnest and they will bring about more changes in the Nepali theatre.

In Nepal literature has always attracted the intellectuals more than any other forms of writing. During the years of the revolution against the Rana rule, i.e., in the late forties, literature attracted many brilliant people. The same people who were good writers such as the late B.P. Koirala, Vijaya Malla, Kedar Man Vyathit, the late Gopal Prasad Rimal, Sidhicharan Shrestha, the late Laxmi Prasad Devkota and many others, were also active politicians. Thus the appeal of literature to the sensitive and conscious Nepali elites has been a phenomenon in its own right. These youths had started a forum around the literary magazine Sharada in the early years of the revolution. That forum played a great role in producing rebellion against the Rana rule itself later on. So, the popularity of literature among the elites of Nepal is very great indeed. In contemporary times also literature has the strongest magnetism, which can be seen in the surfeit of literary journals, literary debates, scandals, involving writings and writers and the awards they win, the position they hold, and the political allegiances they have. More importantly, writers have been regarded as the symbols of culture and unity. So the very impact
of the writers on the world of Nepalese letters and the society has become such a phenomenon that it is not possible for anyone to ignore them in any form of evaluation of Nepalese society and culture.

Notes

1. jasle satu garyo makaikana pidhi
   sidro muthima dharyo
   sinki thichi sukaidiya nuna dhiko
   phorera sathma liyo
   kodo phaadi phalyo nakhai dahiko
   theko sikama dharyo
   bhedo choridiyo dasaikana bhani
   tyo ho baro budhiman

2. A poet named Radhaballabh wrote poems about a bullock to entertain King Rana Bahadur Shah who was very fond of bullocks, in a hybrid language that also employs Nepali colloquial and at times even vulgar expressions. Here is a short specimen of the hybrid verse written by an anonymous poet who was apparently the contemporary of the above poet:

   ek baaka kabarya ayo bado tamasakarayo
   ek prahar lagayo an jarkayo aakha karkayo jaatha
   charkayo...
   kabryako kandhamakhi chari jyansahile kabar
   hallayo...
   hambirbastuwar jaise bade bir aur pranasahi
   jyansahi jaise
   birankau muji thapikai har manayo
   duhai phirayo dikka tulyayo
   aise baanka ajit kabarya nama kamayo hai.
References


Language and Society in Nepal

Kamal P. Malla

Historical Perspective

Nepal emerged as a modern nation-state with the present-day boundaries only recently. Within its modern political boundaries there are numerous ethnic groups speaking scores of languages and dialects. The earliest archaeological evidence of the language use found in Nepal is epigraphic. This is inscribed on a sandstone pillar of about 250 B.C. It was erected by the Indian Emperor Asoka in Lumbini to commemorate the Emperor's visit to the birthplace of Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha. For the next 700 years we have no linguistic evidence of any kind. In the Kathmandu Valley, the earliest evidence of language use is attested on a victory pillar erected by King Manadeva in A.D. 464 at Changu Narayana temple. The language of this inscription is Classical Sanskrit and the script is Gupta, a script used in north India at that time. Manadeva belonged to the ruling dynasty known as the Licchavis. It is believed that they came to the Kathmandu Valley from Vaishali around the 1st century A.D., and when they became a dominant political power they, like their kinsmen -- the imperial Guptas -- patronised Sanskrit and made it the prestige language of epigraphy. The indigenous population of the Valley was possibly of a non-Indo-Aryan stock. According to a fourteenth-century chronicle of Nepal, the Kiratas ruled the Valley for nearly two millennia before the arrival of the Licchavis. It is very likely that they spoke dialects of the Sino-Tibetan language family. That the aboriginals of the Valley were ethnically of a non-Aryan racial stock seems to be evident from the non-Sanskrit place-names and words which appear in the Sanskrit inscriptions to be found in the Valley. More than 80% of the place-names in the extant Licchavi inscriptions dated between A.D. 464-879 are non-Sanskrit. Several of these are, in fact, archaic forms of Newari.

Since the Valley was Hinduised very early, the Indic diffusion
must have begun with the religious acculturation of the Valley population. The local laity must, in the meantime, have come in social contacts with the missionaries of apostolic religions and north Indian traders who spoke Indo-Aryan Prakrits. With the arrival of the Licchavis around the early centuries A.D. Sanskrit was encouraged and patronised as the language of epigraphy. As against the local vernaculars it was probably the symbol of the new ruling and cultural elite. The very remoteness of this language from the speech of the common man presented itself as the voice of authority requiring the services of the initiated mediator (dutaka) for interpreting the edicts. Steadily, literacy became the preserved function of the priesthood and Sanskrit was the language of both religions in Nepal. This is evident from the fact that all the extant ancient sacred texts of both Mahayana Buddhism and Hinduism found in Nepal are in Sanskrit. Ancient Nepalese manuscripts belonging to the 9th and 10th centuries are extant in Nepalese and Western collections, but the language of these manuscripts is invariably Sanskrit. As the priesthood built a stronghold in society in the first millennium A.D. they sanctified Sanskrit in all rituals and localised literacy as a priestly occupation. It was the Hindu and Buddhist priests and scribes who composed and engraved the inscriptions; it was they who wrote, copied, and studied the texts and scriptures in ancient and medieval courts and monasteries of Nepal. Sometime towards the beginning of the tenth century A.D. the engravers and copyists in Nepal seemed, out of idiosyncratic or aesthetic impulse, to have evolved an increasingly local variety of script out of the Gupta characters. By the thirteenth century A.D. there were at least three different varieties of Nepalese script in use among the copyists in the courts and monasteries of the Kathmandu Valley.

Vernacularisation of the literate culture started only after the first millennium A.D., perhaps with the decline of Sanskrit scholarship among the priesthood. Scholars must have found it increasingly necessary to write commentaries and translations --however poor they were as substitutes -- to maintain the sanctity of the original texts and rituals. Vernacularisation began first with the inscriptions because they were for lay consumption. At first only technical details (i.e., the location and size of the land granted, the amount of gold donated, etc.) were mentioned in Newari. It was during the early Malla period (A.D. 1200-1482) that the Newari language was instituted as a rival of Sanskrit in epigraphy. As far as manuscripts are concerned, Newari became the language of literature under the court patronage only after the restoration of the Malla dynasty in the second half of the fourteenth century. It was during this period that Newari commentaries on and translations of Sanskrit texts/classics such as Haramekhala (Newari translation A.D. 1374), Naradasmriti
(Newari translation A.D 1380), and *Amarakosa* (Newari translation A.D. 1381) were accomplished. An original chronicle, now known as the *Gopalarajavamsavali* was compiled in Sanskrit and Newari in the 1380s. Under the patronage of Jayasthitiraja Malla's court (A.D. 1382-1395) Newari began to be used for epigraphy, historical records, dramatic and literary compositions. With the arrival of the Maithil ruler Harasimhadeva and his retinue in Nepal in A.D. 1326, the later Malla courts became increasingly polyglot, and with Sanskrit and Newari a number of New Indo-Aryan vernaculars, such as Maithili and Bengali, began to penetrate the literate culture of the Nepal Valley. Although Newari is a Tibeto-Burman language, it has undergone profound changes in its phonology, grammar and lexicon ever since it came in early contacts with Sanskrit and Prakrits. Since about A.D. 1200 written Newari began to be permeated with Sanskrit as well as the New Indo-Aryan diffusion. Between the middle of the fourteenth century and the end of the eighteenth century Classical Newari literature flourished and branched out into several genres such as poetry, drama, narrative and technical literature. The earliest dated poems in Classical Newari go back to A.D. 1573, the earliest drama to ca. A.D. 1673, the earliest narrative text to A.D. 1576 whereas the earliest technical texts go back to A.D. 1374. (See Malla, 1982). Though both native and foreign scholars have recently begun to take interest in this literature much of it is still unexplored. Because of the break in the contunity and the loss of contacts with the written tradition after the conquest of the Valley, the gap between the spoken and the written Newari began to widen. Not many educated Newars can read this literature nor can they decipher the scripts in which it is written.

After the conquest of the Kathmanu Valley, Newari was replaced by *khas kura*, a language written in the devanagari script. It is also known as *parbatiya* (the language of the hill people). Until 1933 it used to be officially called *Gorkhali*. Today, however, it is known as *Nepali*. Assisted by the Magar and Gurung tribes of western Nepal, the Khas brahmins and chetris overran, not only the whole of modern Nepal, but also reached upto Sikkim in the east and the banks of the River Sutlej in the west between A.D. 1742-1814. The *khas kura* spread with the Khas military campaign of expansion and conquest in the Himalayas. As early as 1802-3 Hamilton noted:

> The language spoken by the mountain Hindus in the vicinity of Kathmandu is usually called the Parbatiya Bhasa, or mountain dialect; but west from the Capital, it is more commonly known by the name of Khasa Bhasa, or dialect of the Khas country, because it seems to have been first introduced into the territory of that name....
There can be no doubt that it is a dialect of the Hindwi (sic) language; and it is making rapid progress in extinguishing the aboriginal dialects of the mountains.

(Hamilton, 1819:16)

In the course of military campaigns, the Khasas spread from western Nepal, their original home, to eastern Nepal thus practically all over the hills of Nepal. Recently, they have penetrated the once malarious Tarai plains, often economically and politically displacing the indigenous populations of these fertile lowlands. Thus through migration, conquest, and displacement the khas kura or Nepali has come to serve as the lingua franca between diverse linguistic communities in the Nepal Himalaya. The political and cultural ascendancy of Nepali, at first as a lingua franca and now as the national language of Nepal is, thus, not due to an arbitrary or abrupt political decision, nor is it due to innate resources of the Nepali language. It is a consequence of history.

Language Demography and Multilingualism

Language is at once both a unifying and a dividing force in a society. It would be a happy but over-simplified generalisation to talk of two languages, two peoples, or even two cultures of Nepal --the language and culture of the conquerors (i.e., the Gorkhalis) and the language and culture of the subjugated peoples (e.g., the Newars of the Kathmanu Valley). Such a neat segmentation -- as proposed by the late French Orientalist Sylvain Levi in his classic Le Nepal (1905-8) -- is not very helpful for examining the complex ethnic, cultural, and above all, linguistic situation in Nepal. Although some sort of census is taken in Nepal every ten years since 1911 officially published figures are available only for a short period. In 1952 a census was begun in all the districts except Mahottari, but it was not completed on a nationwide basis until 1954. Although in the 1952/54 Census such unhelpful language labels were used as Eastern Terai Dialects, Mid-Western Terai Dialects, Maithili Pradesh Dialects etc., more languages are enumerated in this census than in the later ones. At any rate, Nepal's language demography is not inspired by a spirit of scientific accuracy: it is dictated by the expediencies of census operations. Neither the instruments of data collection nor the collectors of data are irreproachable. Besides, the inherent ambiguity of the crucial conceptual terms such as language and dialect, in Nepal they are even more so. No wonder that nearly 18 mutually unintelligible East Himalayish languages are lumped together as "Rai-Kirat" in the language census of Nepal!

The 1952/54 Census Report lists 36 languages by name as
spoken in the Kingdom of Nepal. In 1961 the census obtained information on 52 languages but the tabulation was made for 36 languages only (CBS, 1987:67), leaving out the separate enumeration of such languages as Byansi, Hayu, Bote, Loke, Kham, Kaise, Routya, Kusanda, among others. The 1971 Census Report lists 17 languages by name “leaving a residue of 487,060 in the ‘Others’ category. The 1981 Census provided tabulation on 18 languages leaving a residue of 764,802 persons in the category of ‘other/unstated’. This group accounted for 5.09 per cent of the population” (CBS, 1987:67). It is now no longer possible to know what may have happened to these 18 other languages spoken in Nepal. Most people using the census figures raise serious doubts as to the accuracy of the percentage of rise or fall in the number of speakers. On the CBS’s own evaluation the census in Nepal “is not up to the standard expected and low quality operation (with) too small number of enumerators to cope with the increasing population and the difficulties of the mountainous topography which comprise about 83% of (Nepal’s) land mass.” (CBS, 1987, 335-336). However, the language tables, which should be used with scepticism and caution, could give a rough and ready picture of the linguistic diversity and geographic distribution of different communities and the prevailing trends in the sociolinguistic profile of Nepal.

Nepal has about 70 mutually unintelligible languages spoken within its presentday political boundaries. These languages belong to four languages families. The following are some of the more known of them, with the number of speakers returned in the censuses:

<table>
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<th>Year</th>
<th>1952/54</th>
<th>1961</th>
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<th>1981</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Jhangad/Dhangad</td>
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<td>b. The Austroasiatic Language Family</td>
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<td>c. The Sino-Tibetan Language Family</td>
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<td>1. Bramu/Bhramu</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Byansi</td>
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<td>14. Kusunda</td>
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**d. The Indo-European Language Family**

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<td>9. Chauraute</td>
<td>1327242</td>
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<td>10. Danuwar</td>
<td>1668308</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Majhi</td>
<td>20380</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Nepali</td>
<td>4013567</td>
<td>4796528</td>
<td>6060758</td>
<td>8767361</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Rajvamsi</td>
<td>35543</td>
<td>55803</td>
<td>55124</td>
<td>59383</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Tharu languages</td>
<td>359594</td>
<td>406907</td>
<td>495881</td>
<td>545685</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Hindi</td>
<td>80181</td>
<td>2867</td>
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<td>13. Urdu</td>
<td>32545</td>
<td>2650</td>
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<tr>
<td>14. Marvari</td>
<td>4244</td>
<td>6716</td>
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Thus in Nepal there are some 70 languages belonging to four language families. Whereas the Indo-European languages are fewer in number (14 in all) the number of their speakers is greater than those of the Sino-Tibetan languages (about 56 in all). With the exception of Nepali few Indo-European languages are spoken in the highland Nepal whereas the ecological distribution of the Sino-Tibetan languages is mainly in the mountains and hills of Nepal Himalaya. The most striking feature of Nepal's multilingualism is that it has many languages with very few speakers. Out of the total number of languages only 10 languages are spoken by more than 1 per cent of the total population, and among the remaining, some languages such as Hayu/Vayu are spoken by as few as 233 persons! The late Sir Ralph Turner, distinguished scholar of Indo-Aryan languages, remarked on this staggering extent of linguistic diversity in Nepal:

In a population of under six millions in all there are spoken at least a score, if not indeed a still larger number of languages, all mutually unintelligible, and some broken up again into numerous and often very different dialects. Even within the limits of a single valley there may be a village the inhabitants of which speak a language completely unintelligible to their neighbours in the next village a mile or two away.... The origin of this diversity is to be found firstly in the various migrations which have brought the present population into the country, and secondly in the difficulties of inter-communication imposed by the geographical features.

(Turner, 1928:63)

Some scholars have described Nepal as the ethnic turn-table of Asia, and movement of peoples have been just as important a feature of its history as the intractability of its surface been a feature of its geography. Over the centuries the peoples who had arrived here from four quarters have been trapped in isolation by its geography until recently when improved means of transport and communications and other modern institutions such as the army, the police, the bureaucracy and the social services have helped bring the population of Nepal together. Above all, market
economy and monetisation of most economic activities have compelled different speech communities and ethnic groups to interact not only at melas and hat bazaars, but also elsewhere.

**Bilingualism**

There are no sound and reliable studies on the incidence of bilingualism in Nepal (See Subba, 1975; Subba et al., 1977). According to the 1952/54 Census Report, Nepali is used as a second language by 13.3% (11,11,5170) of the total population of Nepal. Some 19% of the populations in the Hills and the Inner Terai used Nepali as the second language whereas only 2.9% did so in the Eastern and Western Terai. The later census reports do not give any figures relating to bilingualism. The lowland Terai had been the Maithili, Bhojpuri, Awadhi, and Tharu-speaking areas in the past. But the resettlement and land distribution policies of His Majesty's Government have both encouraged the hill settlers in these areas. Consequently, there has been a greater incidence of bilingualism and weakening of linguistic homogeneity of these regions. The trend will be clear from the following table comparing the 1971 and 1981 Census figures for the Maithili, Bhojpuri, Awadhi, and Tharu languages in their former strongholds:

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sagarmatha</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>80</td>
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<tr>
<td>Janakpur</td>
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<td>85</td>
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<tr>
<td>Narayani</td>
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<td>13</td>
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<td>75</td>
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<td>Lumbini</td>
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<td>Bheri</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>26</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Seti</td>
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<td>Bheri</td>
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<td>Koshi</td>
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<td>Rapti</td>
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The mother tongues of the majority of the population of some of these zones still continue to be non-Nepali. Among the non-Nepali languages spoken in these zones, Maithili in Janakpur and Sagarmatha and Bhojpuri in Narayani constitute the single most important languages. About 40 per cent of the people in Sagarmatha and 47 per cent in Janakpur speak Maithili in 1981. Bhojpuri was the mother tongue of 44 per cent of the people of
Narayani zone in 1981. Tharu is spoken by about 10 per cent in Rapti, 17 per cent each in Bheri and Seti Zones. In terms of percentage the group total of these Indo-Aryan languages spoken in the Terai is 25 per cent of the total population of Nepal. As a consequence of prolonged isolation of the Terai from the hills, a policy relentlessly followed by the hill-dominated political structure since the days of Rana rule, the social, cultural and economic integration of the Terai with the rest of the hill country of Nepal will take time. Maithili, Bhojpuri and Awadhi each has a literature of its own. But the bulk of literature in these languages were produced not in Nepal but in Bihar and the U.P. In the recent past, there were some activities of a creative nature attempted by the Terai elite mostly confined to the publication of literary journals (Navajagarana, Ijot, Phulpat, Maithili, Vani, Arcana, and Gamghar published in Maithili from Janakpur and Biratnagar). With the exception of Gamghar all other publications have been discontinued. The Maithili Sahitya Parisad, the Triveni Parivar, and the Tharu Cultural Council are the leading literary-cultural groups in the Nepal Terai. Hindi — the lingua franca of the Terai — had been at one time the rallying point of some sections of the Terai intellectuals and politicians. (See Varma, 1988)

The picture is less simple in the hills. The Nepali-speaking Khas brahmins and chetris as well as the occupational castes serving them are scattered all over the hills. They live in overwhelming numbers in the western mountains, but their density decreases relatively as one moves east and from the hills in the north to the lower altitudes in the south. The Khasas are Indo-Aryans and mountain Hindus whereas ethnically speaking almost the whole of the remaining populations of the Nepal Himalaya are Mongoloid tribals or adherents of shamanism or Lamaist Buddhism: the Magars and the Gurungs in the west; the Sherpas in the north; the Tamangs in the central hills; the Raís and the Limbus in the east. All these ethnic groups have their own languages; some have adopted the Tibetan script, others have ancient systems of writing. The Sherpas, in particular, have a rich oral and canonical literature preserved through and studied in their monasteries. The Limbus have a literate tradition including a Veda — Mundhum — of their own. But their links with their traditions and past have become weaker day by day. Although once in a while a few cultural patriots among these speech communities have published sundry items on their cultures and languages the usual tendency among them is to adopt Nepali and become bilinguals. This tendency is most pronounced in the western hills among the Gurungs, the Magars and the Thakalis.

The same tendency to adopt Nepali and become bilingual, or even to cease speaking any ethnic language except among one's
primary group and kinship circle is growing in the eastern hills as well. This is due to a number of factors. First, Nepali has been a *lingua franca* throughout the hills for some time. Secondly, it has been the language of social prestige in terms of civil or military or police service -- mostly military, either in the Nepalese army or the Gorkha Rifles of India or Britain. Thirdly, in terms of literacy and availability of printed materials there is no scope for minority languages of the hills. Finally, as the national language has been identified with Nepal's increasing aspirations towards nationhood, any attempt at language loyalty or revival is often interpreted as communalism or tribalism. As a CBS report puts it, "Nepali is the official language and many people may feel proud in reporting themselves as knowing Nepali" (CBS: 1987:106).

With the rise in literacy and economic standards, a distinct sense of oneness with the tribe or the speech community (language serving as an immediate marker of group identity and loyalty) may grow in the future, but it is unlikely to go further than that. At least, the present trends among the literate in the hills are in the opposite direction. This may also be because there are hardly any opportunities to read their languages in school at any stage and there is little language tradition to rely upon. Where there is something to fall back upon, the links with the past have become weaker as in the case of the Sherpas who are now climbers and trekking guides rather than monks cloistered in Buddhist monasteries. The smaller the size of the linguistic community, the greater becomes the case against a strong loyalty. And most linguistic communities in Nepal are invariably small.

*Language Maintenance: The Case of Newari*

An interesting case in point is the Newari language. If there is any language in Nepal which, in the range of use and cultural importance, approaches Nepali, it is Newari. The Newari-speakers, unlike the speakers of other languages, are scattered all over Nepal though in small numbers in all urban areas, in district headquarters and trade-centres. In 1981 20% per cent of Nepal's urban population spoke Newari. According to the Census Report of 1961, "As a language spoken in every district of the Kingdom, Newari occupies the second place" (p. 44). Their largest concentration has been in the Kathmandu Valley -- their original home -- where they constituted 55 per cent of the total population in 1954. But because of the internal migration of the populations from all over the kingdom into the Valley in the last 30 years, the Newari-speakers now constitute only 35.33 per cent of the Valley's total population. This percentage may have gone even lower because as one study puts it:

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Out of about 19,571 in-migrants Brahmins and Chhetris constitute 44 per cent of the in-migrants. Other Hill ethnic groups account for 26 per cent while Newars constitute another 4 per cent of the in-migrants. The magnitude of in-migrants has increased considerably within the last 10 to 15 years.


Since the 1920s the Newar literary elite have been struggling to revive their language. Determined to suppress all creative activities in Newari, the Ranas imprisoned and exiled several Newari writers and poets. Under the public opinion pressure of Indian Buddhist leaders, publishing in Newari had been permitted since 1946, and roughly 2000 titles have been published since — all of which are financed and sponsored by the writers and their organisations from within the speech community. There are now about 25 journals and magazines — mostly published by the university campus-based literary groups — 1 daily, 2 weeklies, some 110 literary-cultural groups engaged in organising such activities as literary conferences, poetry recitals, staging plays, publishing books and magazines, and popularising the older scripts and sponsoring mediated music and films.

Being in the centre of political activity, administration, trade and education, the Newari-speakers have an advantageous position over other non-Nepali language communities. They also had an earlier educational start than any other non-Nepali speaking community in Nepal. So literacy is very high, comparatively speaking one of the highest in Nepal. They represent about 30% of Nepal's professional-technical-administrative manpower. Prior to 1954, Newari was not taught at any stage in schools. Only a few can write it now. The older scripts were abandoned as early as 1909, and the devanagari script was adopted by Newari writers. Today Newari is a subject studied and taught in schools and university campuses. As far as writing goes it is confined to literary, creative and journalistic use alone. It is very rarely used for the written social discourse by Newari-speakers. Most of them, particularly the urban middle classes, are bilingual speakers of Nepali. Those in the bureaucracy and those who are living outside the Kathmandu Valley tend to switch over to Nepali. Even inside the Valley recently there has been a growing tendency among the middle class parents to use Nepali while communicating with their children though they themselves may still continue to use Newari while communicating in their peer groups. Nepali was adopted by the Newars whose forefathers had migrated or were driven out of the Valley. The size and the
beleaguered position of the Newars is the weakest point in the language loyalty among the Newars. Though they number less than 500,000 in the whole kingdom, their language loyalty has remained one of the strongest in Nepal. In a sense, this is more a manifestation of cultural identity-seeking than of ethnocentricity, because the Newars are a community composed of diverse ethnic, cultural and religious influences so that where they have not adopted Nepali as bilinguals they have no common identity except their language.

**Nepali: From Lingua Franca to the National Language**

The 1959 and the 1962 Constitutions of Nepal confer the status of the national language to Nepali. The term *Nepali* as it is used for this language “was used and made popular by the missionaries and British scholars... The feeling of Nepali linguistic nationalism that grew in India was able to replace the terms like Khasa kura, Parbatiya or Gorkhali by Nepali in India. It also influenced the authorities in Nepal and the first word of Gorkha Bhasha Prakashini Samiti was changed to Nepali”. (Bandhu, 1989:5-7). Several assumptions have been made about the origin of Nepali but they remain to be proved with sufficient linguistic evidence. Nepali was a language in use in Khasa dynasty and was not the language brought by the fleeing Rajput from the midland of India. According to Chatterjee probably the Dardic speaking Aryans (Khasas and other tribes) were penetrating into the central Himalayan area (the western Pahari and eastern Pahari regions) and their Dardic khasa speech was later overlaid by Indo-Aryan from the midland (Chatterji, 1978:52). The earliest attested evidence of *Khasa kura* goes back to a 12-line Tibetan-Khasa bilingual grant dated A.D. 1321, issued by Abhaya Malla. After the 14th century, the Khasa Malla Kingdom of western Nepal broke up into small principalities scattered in the mid-hills, moving slowly eastward. The extant evidence of *Khas kura* during the 14th-17th centuries are all epigraphic and documentary, and the surviving compositions in the language up to the mid-18th century are of doubtful authenticity and literary merit (Hutt, 1988). By the end of the 17th century the Khasa-speakers were encouraged to settle in small communities in the Kathmandu Valley as mercenaries or in the outskirts to cultivate unirrigated hillside or highlands. The earliest evidence of the use of Nepali in manuscripts traced so far is a translation (dated A.D. 1716) of an Ayurvedic book, Jvarottpatti Cikitsa (medication of fever). The use of Nepali prose for literary purposes was, indeed, very rare even after the founding of the unified kingdom because the Khas brahminical intelligentsia favoured Sanskrit as a medium of learned discourse and composition. “As far as original creative
writings are concerned, we are able to discover only some of the works of the unification period -- from later half of 18th century. The Nepali version of the *Ramayana* by Bhanubhakata Acharya (1814-1869) was brought into light by publishing it by another Nepali literary figure Moti Ram Bhatta (1866-1896). With Moti Ram Bhatta Nepali language entered into the age of printing and the domain of the Nepali language got widely extended in various genres of literature” (Bandhu, 1989). With the establishment of the Gorkha Bhasa Prakashini Samiti (Gorkha Language Publishing House) in 1913 some efforts were made to make Nepali a stable language. A secular and modern literature began to flourish in Nepali with the founding in 1934 of the literary monthly *Sharada*. Thus, although Nepali had been the court language for two hundred years, its popular flowering is a recent phenomenon. Nepali was not made a compulsory language of law and administration, let alone the national language, until 1905 when the Rana Prime Minister Chandra Shumshere declared documents written in other languages than Nepali invalid in the courts of justice.

During this century Nepali has taken great strides to raise itself to the status of the national language. Although studies on the comprehension and use of Nepali by non-Nepali speakers are far and few between (See Shrestha, 1979; Tuladhar and Tuladhar, 1979) sheer expediency seems to have driven more and more non-Nepali speakers to use and understand it in their day-to-day transactions, inter-ethnic communication, and above all in the communication with the channels of local and national administration. In all these avenues of communication some form of Nepali has been in use for the last two centuries. The rise of Nepali, first as a *lingua franca* in the wake of the Gorkhali military campaigns (ca A.D. 1742-1814), then its continuous use as the language of authority and administration, the total ousting of all other languages, particularly Newari and Maithili from the courts, and the final triumph of instituting Nepali as the national language of Nepal, complete a long historical process that has been going on parallel to the political unification of Nepal’s fifty or so principalities.

**Language Planning**

“The activity of preparing a normative orthography, grammar, and dictionary for the guidance of writers and speakers in a non-homogeneous speech community” is the function of language planning. The resulting standard language will have two mutually supporting aspects, on the one hand a generally accepted orthography and on the other a prestige dialect imitated by the socially ambitious (Haugen, 1968: 673-674). However, the
standardisation of Nepali has been a painfully slow process. Because of their interest in the Gorkhalis, the British scholars laid the foundations for the standardising process by taking up to study Nepali seriously. As early as 1820, J.A. Ayton published *Grammar of the Nepalese Language* which is the first grammar of Nepali ever written. In the present century Sir Ralph Turner’s *A Comparative and Etymological Dictionary of the Nepali language* (1931) is a work of classic standing. In the last seventy years some Nepali scholars, too, have published grammars and dictionaries. The first indigenous grammar was *Gorkha-Bhasa Vyakarna Candrika* – written by the royal preceptor Pandit Hemraj Pandey and published in 1912. *Madhya Candrika*, a popular version of this scholarly grammar, was published in 1920 by Somanath Sharma. In 1949 Pushkar Shumshere Rana (1902-60) published another textbook version, *Nepali Sajilo Vyakarana*. He also edited a two-volume English-Nepali version of the *Conside Oxford English Dictionary* (1936-1938). The first indigenous monolingual dictionary in Nepali was published in 1951. This was Pundit Ramchandra Dhaungana’s *Samchipta Nepali Sabdakosa*. In 1962 the Royal Nepal Academy published a first major Nepali monolingual dictionary. This is Balachandra Sharma’s *Nepali Sabdakosa*. This was followed recently by yet another somewhat controversial monolingual dictionary *Nepali Vrhat Sabdakosa* (1983). The Academy has also published an elaborate grammar of the Nepali language (Bhattarai, 1976).

Despite the fact that points of grammar and usage are often disputed the dust of controversy tends to settle under the pressure of the needs of everyday communication. The actual points of dispute, very often, are not so much the norms of orthography and grammar as the degree of sanskritisation of Nepali vocabulary. Like all other Indo-Aryan languages of South Asia, Nepali has to rely on Sanskrit roots for learned, abstract, and technical vocabulary. For handling intellectual, abstract or technical discourse of any kind Nepali has to fall back upon sanskritised forms. More than 85% of its vocabulary is cognate with Hindi, from which it has borrowed more words in the last 40 years than from all the rest of Nepalese languages put together in the whole history of modern Nepal. At a certain level Nepali becomes indistinguishable from Hindi, except for structural items and other incidental particles. Linguistic nationalists, however, want to preserve the indigenous flavour of Nepali by coining new terms from indigenous roots while the Sanskrit-oriented writers and scholars want to borrow as many words as possible from Sanskritised Hindi. However, Nepali purists are finding it more and more difficult to make their inventions acceptable, and they have not succeeded in having more than a few dozen words admitted to cultivated usage. Sanskritisation of the literate
culture is thus a most prominent cultural process at work in
Nepal's contemporary history. The media--Radio Nepal, Nepal
Television, the local newspapers, popular books--have in one
way or the other, encouraged the tendency. Other than English or
Hindi, Nepali is the only important language to which an average
literate Nepalese is likely to be exposed. Apart from 8.7 million
Nepali-speakers in Nepal there are about three million Nepali-
speakers in India. Politically and numerically the status of Nepali
is, thus, unquestionable. Like all other languages of the
underdeveloped regions of Asia and Africa, the question about
Nepali is, however, the question of its intrinsic potentialities,
mainly in terms of available vocabulary for the whole range of
functions that a full-fledged language is required to perform.
Nepali may presently burst at the seams with an unmanageable
load of Sanskritised vocabulary, but it is proving effective for a
wide range of communicative activities.

Since the founding of the Gorkha Bhasa Prakashini Samiti
--the Samiti for short--publishing in Nepali has been going on
more or less steadily. It has enriched the treasury of printed Nepali
literature which now totals about 22,000 titles. Originally the
Samiti was a government agency for censorship, but it was also an
embryonic and improvised version of the Academy in that it set
standards by publishing original and translated works in Nepali.
In 1965 it was converted into a publishing corporation called the
Sajha (cooperative) which continued to publish textbooks and
readers in Nepali as well as literary texts.

The Education Materials Production Centre, established in
1962, has produced about 150 standardised textbooks in Nepali
for schools. Similarly, the Curriculum Development Centre of
Tribhuvan University has sponsored and published about 120
textbooks in Nepali for use at different levels and faculties of
university education. The Royal Nepal Academy, founded in
1957, aims at the promotion of the arts, cultures, languages and
letters of Nepal. In the past thirty-two years, it has produced
about 367 commendable works in Nepali, mainly literary in
nature, including translations from Oriental and Western
literatures. Radio Nepal and the Nepal Television sponsor
programmes in Nepali and English. Except for a weekly half an
hour regional music programme Radio Nepal does not broadcast
any item in other Nepalese languages although the network does
broadcast hours of Hindi films and film-songs, Pakistani films
rock music, English crime films and spy movies.

The press in Nepal is too fragmented, and from the
professional and management point of view, not too gratifying an
enterprise. In 1986-87, out of 455 registered newspapers, 417 were
in Nepali, 32 in English, 3 in Newari, 1 each in Hindi, Maithili, and
Bhojpuri. Except for about half a dozen newspapers these 455 papers are nominal and symbolic publications with doubtful news or public opinion value or circulation.

Language Policy

His Majesty’s Government has the declared policy that over the years Nepali should become the medium of instruction at all levels of education. Apart from this, the government policy towards language is that Nepali and only Nepali among the languages of Nepal should be used in administration, courts of justice, information and the media. Nepali is the only language used and promoted also by semi-governmental bodies such as the Royal Nepal Academy and other publishing concerns with large government shares and investment. Only two Nepalese languages, Maithili and Newari, are introduced as optional subjects in the school curriculum at the secondary level from Grade 8-10. At the university level, these two languages continue to be taught in selected campuses up to the Masters level as principal elective subjects. Students may answer questions in Nepali or English. In higher education most subjects, except the languages, are taught in English, although now there is a noticeable tendency to use Nepali instead. Students at the university level are severely handicapped by the problem of medium and the acute dearth of textbooks and reference materials in Nepali. There are hardly 100 textbooks in Nepali usable in campuses most of which are published by the Curriculum Development Centre of Tribhuvan University in the last sixteen years.

His Majesty Government is determined, not only to promote Nepali as an instrument of national integration, but also to discourage all culturally divisive tendencies. For example, Radio Nepal used to broadcast news in Hindi and Newari, together with Nepali and English. Since April 15, 1965, however, the news broadcasts in Hindi and Newari have been discontinued. The official explanation was that this was done "for the time being until more powerful transmitters would become available." On October 12, 1957 the K.I. Singh government announced that to qualify for government aid and recognition under the new policy, the Terai schools were required to use Nepali as the language of instruction in the middle and high schools, and to use textbooks approved by the government. Furthermore, all teachers had to be Nepali citizens and they were required to attain a specified degree of proficiency in Nepali by 1959. This led to a vigorous movement against the imposition of Nepali in the Terai and vocal demands for the recognition of Hindi as the national language. The language issue divided the Terai politicians, not along ideological or party lines, but on the basis of regional loyalties. The Newari-
speakers of the Kathmandu Valley at one time demanded the status of an associate official language for Newari in the Valley. The political instability of post-1950 Nepal greatly favoured all kinds of linguistic wishful thinking. The 1952/54 Census Report became a crucial document in the language controversy. So did the National Education Planning Commission’s Report recommending that Nepali should be the medium of instruction from the 3rd grade on and, as much as possible, in the first two grades. No other language should be taught, even optionally, in the primary school, because few children will have need for them, they would hinder the teaching of Nepali.

These documents gave the government enough evidence and political courage to settle the question of a national language in favour of Nepali, a status it had held informally for quite some time.

Language Movements

The Constitution of Nepal and the national policy documents have conferred the status of the national language to Nepali, presumably, on the basis of three major considerations: 1. it is a language spoken by the majority (58.36% in 1981); 2. it is a language understood by the majority, and 3. it is a language used by the majority. The value which motivates the State in Nepal in the uncontested promotion of Nepali is national unity. In the last few decades, the use of Nepali in public life is being promoted with some determination. This may be why the heads of our constitutional organs unfailingly attend the birthday of Bhanu Bhakta Acharya and Moti Ram Bhatta, basking in the neon lights of the Nepal Television, while the Chief District Officer of Bhaktapur dug out the unveiled statue of Jagat Sunder Malla, a Newari writer who pleaded for education in the mother tongue. The claim that Nepali and Nepali alone can be the instrument of national integration and that the promotion of any other language is disintegrative, is politics. This has recently given rise to unconcealed fear in some quarters that Nepali is being promoted by the State, not so much as an instrument of national integration, but as “an unfailing tool of cultural domination by a minority of Khas Brahmins” (Adhikari, 1987; Lama, 1987; Singh, 1985).

Language movements originate from those who feel a sense of belonging and solidarity among members with a minimal degree of organisation characterised by a commitment to change and a concern with the status. This concern may be related to the achievement of separate identity, recognition for certain statutory privileges, and acceptance for use in certain domains of the public
life. During the 1920s-1940s, the poets and writers in Newari joined hand in hand with the anti-Rana movement and several of them were fined, tortured and jailed and had their property confiscated for writing or publishing in Newari. The language movement launched by the late Dharmaditya Dharmacharya in the 1920s was only a part and parcel of the social, intellectual and political unrest set in motion by Madhav Raj Joshi in 1905. It was a part of the movement against the Rana repression which came to an end with the fall of the Ranas in 1951.

Until recent years few language communities other than the Hindi-using Terai and the Newari-speakers in the Kathmandu Valley have ever made a noise for the status of their languages. The post-1979 political turmoil has unleashed numerous forces in Nepalese society, and one of the most remarkable is the demand for language rights, voiced by the non-Nepali speakers. Various ethnic forums and Leftist writers, intellectuals, politicians, journalists, and publications have voiced their demands for "equal language rights." Since the announcement of the Referendum in 1979 different speech communities of Nepal are getting organised and becoming politically articulate. A number of them have set up their own organisations and launched journals and publications to voice their resentment against the State policy of "one nation one language". Among the opposition political groups, different shades and factions of the Left have raised their voice on behalf of these speech communities. They have raised three main slogans: 1. all languages are equal 2. no language should be given the privileged status of the national language at the cost of others. 3. a contact language will emerge on its own, and the State must not intervene to promote any single language. Equality, not unity, is the core value stressed by the Leftists, most of them drawing their ideological inspiration from a brief paper by Lenin (1914). A few among them also stress the need of a contact language to communicate among the equal languages while others are willing to concede this status to Nepali without calling it the national language. Still others, such as Parijat (1986) and Bhatta (1987) give Nepali the status of the national language.

This has given birth to a lively and vigorous controversy among the Leftists. Underlying the whole controversy is a classic "Orwellian" ideological trap, i.e., all languages are equal, but at least one language will have to be more equal than others to enable the equals to communicate among themselves. Few contributors to this controversy approve the State policy of promoting one language in the name of the national language at the cost of all others. But none has defined the policy and programmatic implications of the concept of equality among the languages of Nepal. If the language demography in Nepal is reliable, there are only 9 languages, other than Nepali, spoken by more than 1% of
the total population. With the exception of these “major languages” all speech communities in Nepal are far too small. Secondly, Nepal has well over 70 mutually unintelligible languages spoken within its political borders. This on-going public debate in print apart, there have also been organised expression of these sentiments, such as the Mother Tongue Council, the All Nationalities Forum for Equal Rights, the Nepal Langhali Family, the Tamang Service Trust, the Maithili Sahitya Parisad, and the Nepalabhasa Mankah Khala. The last mentioned has recently held a convention in Kathmandu (July 28-29, 1989) represented by about 50 literary-cultural groups to approve, among other things, a 10-point resolution demanding equal “constitutional status”, right to education in mother tongue, representation of all languages in the media, information and publicity, non-discrimination of non-Nepali language M.A.s for public service, protection of all scripts, cultures, literatures, and languages through the Royal Nepal Academy, and other government sponsored corporations.

Conclusion

Language is so much a part of one’s way of life, a code through which a people’s culture is transmitted from one generation to another. We have a great deal to learn from the recent train of ethnic violence born out of a policy of benign neglect -- the Tamil problem in Sri Lanka, the Khalistan Movement in the Panjab, the Gorkhaland Movement in Darjeeling, the tribal Jharkand movement in Bihar and, above all, the emergence of Bangladesh. As in every multilingual polity, in Nepal too there are three possible policy options: 1. assimilation of the minority languages, 2. toleration of the minority languages, and 3. encouragement of the minority languages. The first policy equates nationalism with uniformity; the second languages policy equates it with positive tolerance or neglect -- benign or malignant — while the last alternative equates nationalism with a unity based on cultural pluralism and diversity. The so-called “dying languages” can take an agonisingly long time on their death-bed. The question is: unity or uniformity? In a multilingual and multi-ethnic society such as Nepal the important consideration in language policy decisions should be political unity as well as cultural pluralism.

In any case, what Nepal does with her minorities and their languages will be the best test of the maturity of her democracy. To ignore them is convenient, but not necessarily the safest way to national integration.
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About the Book

The experiences of the past forty years, particularly those of the post-referendum period, have narrowed the gap between the various streams of thought. Just as the structuralist may have retreated somewhat from a radical view of the world, so also the incrementalist is not as wary of modern values. So, the latter does not necessarily have to view the former as extremist nor is there sufficient reason why the former should look upon the latter as a fundamentalist. The reformists are, by nature, progressive without being revolutionary, and the status-quoists have a more conservative approach without being reactionary. This does not necessarily give either of them a superior position to judge the other with a contrived air of self-righteousness. Consolidation of national political and economic independence remains the dominant objective and the varying emphases on change and continuity constitute two but mutually inclusive dimensions.

In the discussion of "tradition" and "modernity" or "continuity" and "change" there is emerging, on the one hand, a greater confluence of various streams of view but, on the other, a sharper division of opinion. This is because the discussion is no longer centred on tradition and modernity but between plagiarized modernism and superannuated traditionalism. Though there is a growing awareness all round that they are not acceptable hallmarks of continuity and change, yet their votaries, in the academic and political fields, are widening the differences in order, as a large segment of the people suspect, to conceal the power struggle between the elite and the counter-elite. This may not concern us here nor is it the primary concern of the book or the people at large because it is a matter concerning the interest of those who seek to combine academic and political personalities. But the greater concern is whether or not the increasingly complex situation in Nepal can bring about a wide identity of purpose and objective with greater reliance on the combined use of modern and traditional forms of legitimacy. That is why the book talks about continuity and (not or) change to get the discussion back to where it really belongs. If it can do so the book would have earned itself a distinct place (as did its distant predecessor Nepal in Perspective) in the history of publication in Nepal.

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